

Update to Consultative Panel

Thursday 4 March 2021



1. With the current lockdown measures the use of the Forest for local exercise has remained in place over the winter and we have seen visitor numbers at high levels, particularly in better weather, when most of our car parks have been at capacity and verge parking has been an issue.
2. On 22 February the Government announced its 4 stage “roadmap” to easing of lockdown. The timetable and actions are only indicative at this stage, and further guidance will emerge nearer to the start of each stage and dependent on the status of the disease at that time
3. We are preparing locally for increases in visitor numbers as lockdown eases and a likely increase in people staying in the UK this year. We are building on what we learnt and worked well last year and drawing up a shared response plan with other organisations around the Forest including the NPA, NFDC, Fire Service, Police and CDA.
4. Key points:
 - Simple and shared messages across all partner communications channels
 - Co-ordinate partner deployment of staff on the ground to key hotspots and responsive to where pressures build up.



Hotter drier summers are now becoming more frequent and the wildfire risk increases substantially during the early spring and during very dry spells in the summer when the vegetation is tinder-dry.

Last year we had a spate of small wildfires derived from campfires and disposable BBQs on the Forest. We initiated a ban on BBQs last year and we have decided to continue the ban throughout this year.

We are very grateful for the Fire Service's support last year and they have agreed to support again this year with joint patrols with our staff to meet and talk to the public about the dangers.



From 1 April 2019, the Forestry Commission in England and Scotland became separate organisations reporting into their respective Government's following devolution.

Woodland and land managed by the Forestry Commission in England moved under a new organisation, Forestry England. The re-branding of the organisation is being delivered in a phased way as resources permitted.

For example....When the leases on our vehicles expire, the replacement vehicles will be in the new branding. This gradual replacement has been underway for 2 years and will continue over the next 4-5 years.

The rebranding also covers corporate clothing for our staff





In a similar way our main signage on sites in the New Forest will gradually start to be replaced from March this year and it will take several years to complete fully.

Here is an example of a new car park sign. A further board can be added with specific or seasonal messages, such as “No overnight camping”



Controlled Burning

Every year (Jan-Mar) we undertake a programme of controlled burning. A well burnt heath will remove coarse growth and encourage the vigorous regrowth of the heather and gorse.

Sites are carefully planned with perimeter fire breaks cut some months ago.

Conditions are monitored every day and burning only takes place when atmospheric and ground conditions are suitable.

Burning is undertaken by experienced teams and we ensure the Fire Service are notified of locations each day.





Ground Nesting Birds

We released a media campaign last week with partners about protection of ground nesting birds during their breeding season (Mar to July).

Around critical breeding sites we will establish quiet zones marked by orange boundary information signs. These mark the sensitive area ahead and appeal for people to show care and keep to main tracks.

Red “stop” signs highlight nesting sites in the immediate vicinity and ask the public to avoid these areas by choosing an alternative route

Thank you to the New Forest Dog Owners Group and NPA for supporting this campaign and sharing messages.



White-tailed Eagles

We are running a 10 year project in association with the Roy Dennis Foundation to release white-tailed eagles back onto the Isle of Wight.

We are now in the third year of the project and we are planning to receive the next batch of chicks from Scotland in June to join the 10 birds already released. The chicks will held in a pen for about a month before being released into the wild.

The existing birds are currently undertaking exploratory flights around the south of England and two have been around the New Forest recently - so look out for them. Every bird is fitted with a satellite tracker so we can monitor their movements. The birds have been seen fishing in the Solent and feeding on rabbits.

