

# Update to Consultative Panel

Thursday 3 September 2020



1. Mid March - implement Government guidance on control measures for the benefit of the whole community and limit pressures on NHS. We also needed to manage the welfare of our staff and volunteers.
2. From 17 March - offices were formally closed and staff that could work from home did so. Every operation we undertake in the field was assessed against latest guidelines to determine what outdoor work could continue and remain safe for staff. Working practices were revised to meet new guidelines.
3. Sharing of vehicles stopped; all volunteer activity was put on hold. Only essential outdoor meetings were permitted under strict social distancing rules. All permissions for events was stopped.
4. In anticipation of potential loss of staff capacity due to infections we reviewed all our work programmes to consider deferring some activities and focus on essential activities that support our financial position
5. School closures announced from 20 March; flexible working hours given to staff who had to support children at home.
6. 22 March 2020 - in response to Government guidelines all recreation facilities were closed; e.g. campsites, toilets, etc



7. 23 March 2020 - car parks without facilities remain open to allow visitors to access the countryside and disperse. Some of the larger sites with facilities were closed. The facilities at our Forest centres at Moors Valley and Alice Holt closed - cafes, bike hire, visitor centre building, etc
8. Observing massive influx of visitors as many seek outdoor recreation when other facilities are now closed. Government advice on local and essential travel for exercise unclear for the public.
9. 24 March 2020 - Government announced further intensification of measures; Police starting to enforce non-essential travel & gatherings; staff now carrying authority to be travelling while at work in case challenged by Police. Started to close other car parks with barriers. Visitor numbers start to ease. Staff instructed not to enforce social distancing because of risks to their welfare.
10. 27 March 2020 - Government messages about not travelling for exercise; stay local. We started to assess long term financial impacts of closure of facilities and income generating business. Agreed to defer some work programmes and stop all recruitment.



11. Early April - predicting a reduction of £19M nationally in our income; Government asked that we take advantage of the relief schemes available including furlough of staff
12. To protect staff jobs we asked some staff to go on furlough from the start of May. Staff were retained to handle front line activity and essential work programmes.
13. 10 May 2020 - Government announced that people could drive for their exercise for unlimited times per day from 13 May but social distancing must be applied; re-opened car parks
14. With school closed and no retail, pub or entertainment venues open we saw unprecedented use of countryside across the country; staff returned from furlough to support extra pressure
15. Weather created high fire risk; staff dealing with a high incidence of disposable BBQ use, wild camping, campfires, litter and fly-tipping
16. BBQ ban imposed; joint patrols with Fire Service to enforce ban; dealing with in excess of 100 incidents each day



# The Impacts of Covid-19



Joint Patrols with Police



Campfires & disposable BBQs



Joint Patrols with Fire Service



Fly-tipping



Wild camping

17. Throughout May-June - consistent visitor pressure especially during better weather; continued joint patrols with Fire Service at weekends; extra signage used to inform public; warning stickers placed on verge parked vehicles
18. 4 July 2020 - Government announced that hotels and pubs could re-open with social distancing; Camping in the Forest, who operate campsites, declared they would not re-open in 2020 season
19. Working in partnership with National Park and Go New Forest to limit potential impacts of wild camping and promote positive messages about re-opening of tourism businesses; some other campsites given permission to extend capacity for season
20. Staff continue to manage inappropriate activity throughout period; but opening of retail, restaurants and pubs has offered alternatives and easing pressure on the Forest
21. Schools return from September term





At the end of 2019 a Review Group was established, at the request of the Minister, to review the way Forestry England residential properties in the New Forest could support staff and commoners; determine levels of affordable rents whilst ensuring the maintenance of those properties remained financially sustainable

Forestry England has 65 properties for rent in the New Forest

In August the Minister approved the recommendations of the Group which includes:

- An assessment of every property as a base for a practicing commoner
- A clear process for selecting tenants based on their commitment to commoning and their delivery of other public benefits
- A formula for calculating rents based on national models for social housing
- Allowing a small number of larger properties to let on the open market to support the financial management of the whole portfolio

The new process will apply to any property that becomes vacant



# Update on White-tailed Eagles



Forestry England working on a 5 Year project with the Roy Dennis Foundation to re-introduce White-tailed Eagles on the Isle of Wight after an absence of 240 years. 6 eagles were released in 2019 and a further 7 have been released last month. Each bird is fitted with a satellite tracker to monitor their movements and track progress.

As they've matured, the released white-tailed eagles have, as expected, begun to explore widely. Their journeys have taken them across much of England as they discover and learn about the landscape for the first time. Between these explorations, the birds have regularly been seen fishing for grey mullet in the estuaries of the Solent and observed in the skies over the Isle of Wight.

For updates on progress go to:

<https://www.roydennis.org/category/sea-eagle/isle-of-wight-sea-eagles/>

