

RAPC 419/20

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

RESOURCES, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE MEETING – 16 MARCH 2020

DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

Report by: Alison Barnes, Chief Executive and Nigel Stone, Head of Resources

Summary:

To consider the draft Work Programme 2020-2021 and confirm that the Committee is comfortable with the key areas of delivery for the next financial year and provide input on any additional work they would like to see represented.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) have been working since November to begin drafting the budget and work programme for 2020/21; this included an away-day on 24 January and significant further thinking in recent weeks. A full members workshop was then held on 2 March.
- 1.2 2020/21 constitutes the final year of our current Business Plan (2018-21) and our wider Partnership Plan (2015-20) – as Members are aware, both these documents are due to be updated over the coming year. We are therefore proposing to treat the forthcoming 2020/21 year as a ‘bridging’ period in order to reflect drivers for our strategic direction and work programme, making sure we build from what we are delivering in the current Business Plan.
- 1.3 This report proposes a way forward to continue delivery in many areas whilst beginning to strategically change our organisational focus to achieve others. This is only a start and further change is likely to be required over the coming year as higher-level plans develop.
- 1.4 The work programme does not show the total activity of the Authority; items that are included represent the focussed key areas of delivery during the year to be closely monitored by officers and members. Particular attention has been paid to the proposed actions to ensure that targets and goals are clearly defined, measurable and focused and are challenging but achievable.
- 1.5 Quarterly updates on progress will continue to be given to the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee based on the traffic light system of green – on track or completed; orange – off track but not significantly; and red – significantly off track. An additional column has been added to the monitoring sheets on a trial basis to allow officers to highlight communication actions in

order that we can succinctly demonstrate and communicate the impact and effect of our actions.

2 Emerging Programme Drivers

2.1 Since the Business Plan was adopted in 2018, we have seen:

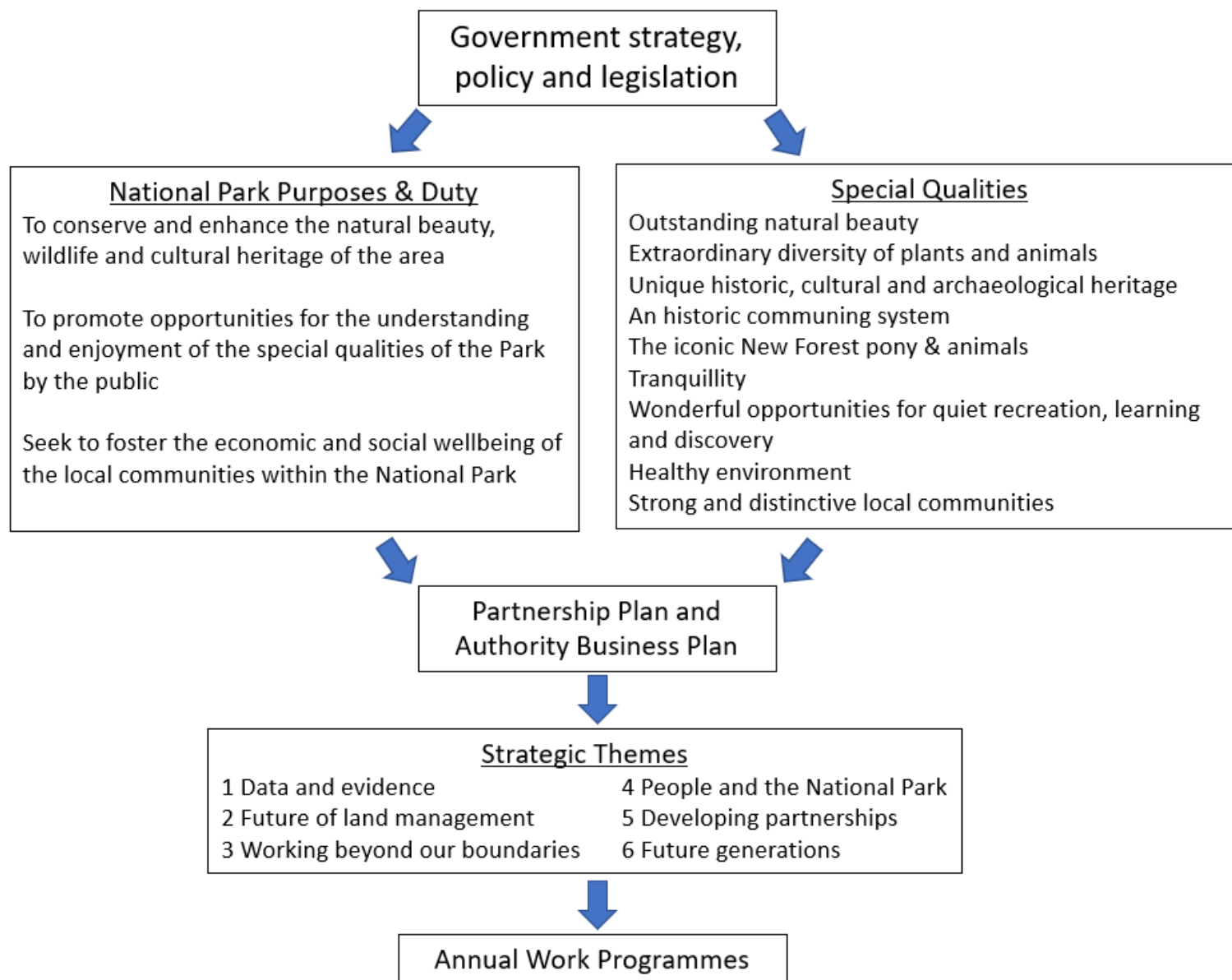
- Publication of the 25-year Environment Plan
- Brexit – and the preparation of domestic Agriculture and Environment policy with implications for funding and regulatory responsibilities (ELMS, HLS, LEADER, Biodiversity Net Gain, etc.)
- Publication of the Glover Report
- Ongoing planning reforms (revised NPPF and extending permitted development rights)
- Adoption of the new National Park Local Plan
- Commencement of the review of the Partnership Plan
- Delayed Comprehensive Spending Review
- Our own declaration of a Climate and Nature Emergency

3 Draft Work Programme 2020/21

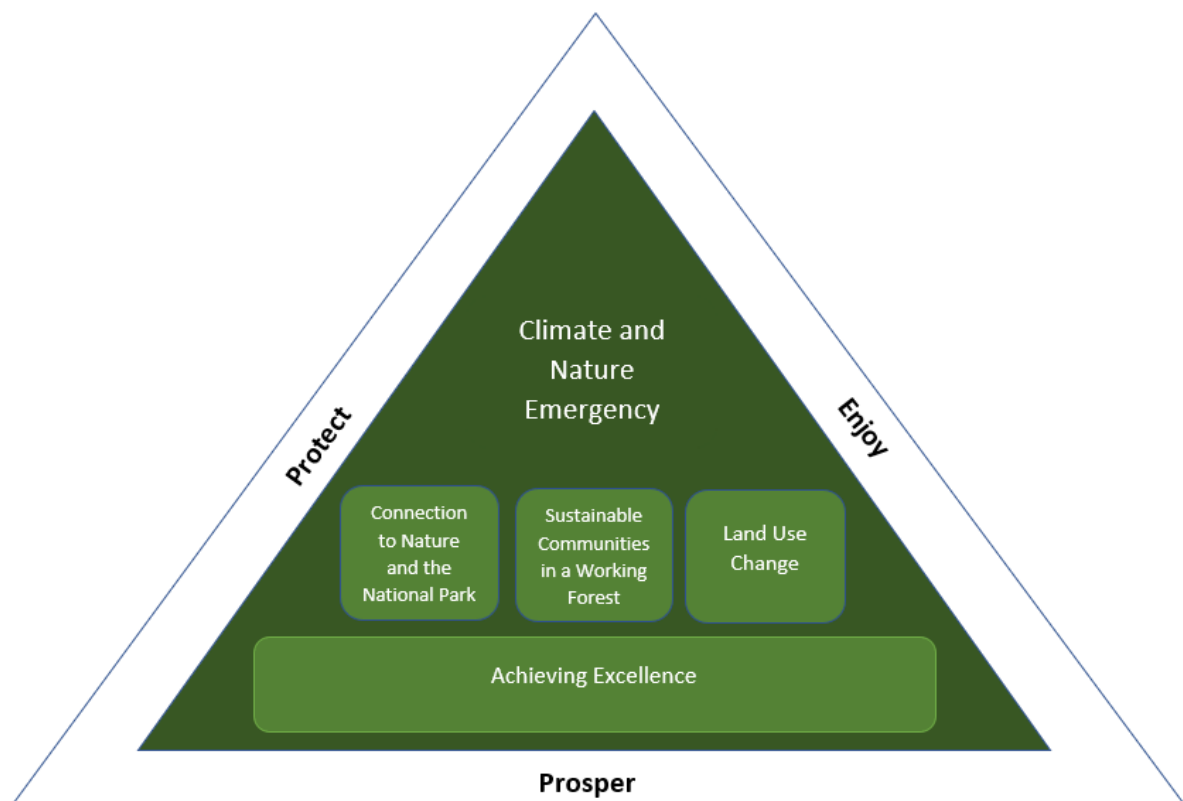
3.1 Prior to drafting the work programme for the year ahead, SLT needed to fully review progress on the 2018-21 Business Plan to date (the first two years of the three-year Plan). The tables in **Annex 2** summarise actions which have been completed, will continue to be delivered in the year ahead and those which will not be achieved:

- Green indicates either completed objectives or those which are on track to be completed by March 2021
- Amber indicates there are some issues in achieving objectives, we are suggesting a number of these be refocussed in 2020/21
- Red indicates either an objective that will not be met or will need significant attention to be met.

3.2 The diagram below demonstrates the development levels of our strategic plans:



- 3.3 The diagram represents that government priorities inform the interpretation of the National Park purposes, duty and special qualities. These are taken up within our Partnership Plan (for the area) and Business Plan (for the Authority). Within our current Business Plan, we set out six Strategic Themes and these have driven the development of the draft annual work programmes.
- 3.4 When considering the specific priorities for the year ahead, SLT concluded that it would be extremely difficult to categorise them under Protect, Enjoy and Prosper alone. Clearly these remain a core reflection of our purposes and duty but so many projects/topics straddle two or more of these headings. The diagram below sets out the proposed structure for the 2020/21 work programme:



- 3.4 Within this draft work programme, Climate and Nature Emergency is 'driving' and 'behind' everything we do, there are consequently some very high-level actions which are directly attributable to addressing these issues. At the next level there is a clear need to enable people to connect with nature and the place, ensure we have sustainable communities and manage the changing use of land/places. The final heading 'Achieving Excellence' is brought forward from previous work programmes to encompass how our organisation itself seeks the highest standard of service, efficiency and effectiveness.

- 3.5 The five new suggested areas of focus take a clear steer from and encompass the Glover review headings of 'Landscapes for Everyone', 'Living in Landscapes', 'Landscapes Alive for Nature and Beauty', 'More Special Places' and 'New Ways of Working'.
- 3.6 The proposed detailed outcomes and actions for the year ahead within the five headings are attached as **Annex 1**.

4. Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Committee, subject to any amendments, recommend the draft Work Programme 2020/21 for approval at the Authority meeting on 26 March 2020.

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Papers: NFNPA RAPC 419/20 - Cover paper
NFNPA RAPC 419/20 – Annex 1 – Draft Work Programme 2020/21
NFNPA RAPC 419/20 – Annex 2 – Business Plan Progress

Equality and Diversity Implications:

There are no specific equality or diversity implications arising directly from this report, however where specific actions within the Work Programme do have equality or diversity implications, they will be considered as appropriate.

DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

ANNEX 1

TABLES TO FOLLOW

ANNEX 2

BUSINESS PLAN 2018-21 PROGRESS SUMMARY

PROTECT

Objective(s)	Current Status Summary
Provide clear advice, guidance and training to deliver the Landscape Action Plan, Biodiversity Action Plan and Cultural Heritage Plan	Significant advice / training provided. Scope of plans to be reviewed in light of Climate & Nature refocus.
Lead a co-ordinated approach to strengthen natural capital and ecological networks within and beyond the National Park boundary, supporting Government's ambition for a 'Nature Recovery Network'	Will continue to deliver.
Deliver landscape enhancement in the National Park and maintain and enhance the ecosystem services on which the Park depends	Needs to be sharpened following EU withdrawal, new Agriculture Bill and ELM developments.
Identify the key evidence and data requirements needed to inform the conservation of the National Park's special qualities	Updated State of the Park Report published. Evidence and data will be key to future prioritisation of resources.
Provide a long-term planning vision for the National Park informed by the special qualities	New Local Plan adopted. Reviews of Design Guide and other Policies underway.
Deliver a high quality, proactive planning service that is focussed on securing the best possible outcomes for the National Park and its communities	Strong performance indicator and applicant satisfaction survey results.
Work with neighbouring authorities in the development and implementation of their planning policies and proposals that may affect the National Park, taking forward the principle of environmental net gain in line with the 25 Year Environment Plan	Good relationships built with neighbouring authorities e.g. local plan work, Fawley/Waterside. Work continuing for joint mitigation of recreational pressures.
Direct the management of scheduled and unscheduled monuments to bring them into good condition	Significant number of additional monuments identified through OPOF/HLS. Monuments mapped and next stage will be to assess condition and develop a plan of management where possible.

Work with property owners to improve the condition of historic buildings and heritage features by encouraging repair and renovation, reuse and appropriate management	All owners who come forward are engaged but harder to proactively action. Will continue to deliver as necessary.
Foster greater knowledge and understanding of the cultural heritage of the National Park	Recent delivery under the OPOF and HLS projects e.g. New Forest Knowledge. Will continue to deliver.
Provide advice and support to secure resources for community-led projects that promote local distinctiveness and commoning way of life	21 projects under Our Past, Our Future delivered. OPOF legacy and future partnership projects currently being considered and drafted.

ENJOY

Objective(s)	Current Status Summary
Deliver learning and engagement activities (e.g. through rangers, education officers, events, exhibitions and interpretation) for different audiences including a focus on children and young people, making the National Park relevant and accessible and giving them a voice in its future	Target of 50,000 face-to-face contacts per year achieved to date. Messages/methods can be flexed to emerging priorities.
Lead the development and delivery of bespoke curriculum-linked education for schools and colleges at selected National Park sites and in the classroom	59% of schools have the National Park on their curriculum and we are on track to reach 70% target by end of 2020/21. Messages/methods can be flexed to emerging priorities.
Maximise the use of social media and online resources to help a growing number of people to understand, value and care for the New Forest	Subscribers/followers up 72% (target was 50%). Increased use of Instagram, targeted event/consultation adverts (resulting in greater attendances/responses) and increased use of wider range of media.
Enable organisations with face-to-face public and visitor-facing roles, including educators, businesses and accommodation providers, to be ambassadors for the National Park and its special qualities	Around 200 people and 30+ groups engaged to date. Will continue to deliver.
Encourage providers of sites for outdoor recreation to highlight in their visitor information and interpretation the New Forest National Park's special qualities and its status as a nationally-important, living landscape	On track to achieve targets by end of 2020/21 – currently around 60% 'complete' (direct community engagement, via OPOF, Franchises Lodge, Camping in the Forest, Special by Design work).

Work with Natural England, local communities, land owners, land managers and highway authorities, to establish the England Coast Path and improve agreed recreational sites and routes in ways that will reduce impacts on sensitive areas	Wildplay sites delivered. Significant improvements to Lepe Loop as well as paths at Godshill, Hyde and Bransgore. On track for 5 historic routes launched in 2020 and funding bids drafted to improve more routes. ECP delayed but will be a significant piece of work.
Work with health providers, communities and businesses to enable people to benefit from improved mental and physical health through engagement with the special qualities of the National Park	Over 1,000 people engaged each year as per target. Will continue delivery through 'Connecting People with Nature and National Park' workstream.
Work with partners to develop a shared approach to promoting volunteering, building on the success of the Our Past Our Future scheme and the annual volunteer fair, to enable more people to volunteer in ways which benefit the New Forest's special qualities and support their own wellbeing	Currently c3,000 volunteering days delivered (overall target 4,000). Dependant of future of OPOF and other projects coming forward with opportunities. Volunteer Fair very successful in 2019 and 2020 (over 700 people each year).
Gain wide agreement and shared commitment to deliver a new suite of prioritised actions that will improve the management of recreation across and beyond the National Park	22 strategic actions jointly developed and agreed. Key actions/commitments will be included within the new Partnership Plan.
Work with partners and facilitate the delivery of co-ordinated communications to influence behaviour and reduce the recreational impact on the 'working Forest' and its special qualities	Fly-tipping reduced by 16% since 2016. 2019 number of ponies killed lowest on record (35). Fewer reports of animal petting via Verderers. Significant number of joint forums and meetings with growing confidence that measures are being effective.
Facilitate a review of the sites and routes used for recreation throughout the New Forest and to gain agreement for changes that need to be made, including working with highway authorities and land owners to create a more joined up and safer network of walking and cycling routes between villages and places of interest	Review currently ongoing, including feasibility work on potential Local Development Order. Drafting of New Forest Countryside Access Plan also underway.
Undertake and support research, and to collate data that clarifies positive and negative impacts of recreation and the success of recreation management initiatives	Estimate of total number of day visits updated. Reports of Footprint Ecology research work currently being written up and will be very useful

PROSPER

Objective(s)	Current Status Summary
Provide leadership regarding the significance of natural capital to the economic performance of the National Park and the wider area	Needs additional input and resources from partners. Natural Capital / Green Halo taken forward under other actions.
Use the strength of the National Park designation to increase the viability of products associated with the local area	Protected Food Names – not progressed. Need to further integrate New Forest Marque into all our sustainability work; beneficial for both parties.
Work with partners to develop a sustainable, authentic visitor experience that protects the special qualities of the National Park and respects its communities	Covers RMS work and we are on the Go New Forest steering group. Commitment to support the New Forest Trust and work will be refocussed under our 'Sustainable Communities' workstream.
Encourage travel to and around the National Park by sustainable forms of transport	On target to reach 100 businesses and 8,000 people per year through GNF, Love the Forest and Concierge. More electric charging points being installed around the Forest.
Utilise data and technology to improve sustainability, support economic development, and enhance quality of life for people living in, working in and visiting the National Park	Some projects in early development but needs refocussing in the context of how technology can assist with the nature and climate emergency.
Promote affordable housing to address local needs and support the management of the National Park landscape	Target of 20 consented affordable homes could still be achieved by March 2021 subject to one or more of the allocated Local Plan sites coming forward in the next few months.
Support the sharing of innovative ideas and good environmental practice through local action groups, businesses and residents	Target of 50 community groups engaged met. Repurpose SCF to support climate change initiatives; aim to become an exemplar hub for such community grants (with other local organisations putting in funding too).
Continue to support the take up of low carbon / renewable energy technologies in support of the Clean Growth Strategy	Advice provided to a significant number of community organisations. This will form a key part of the nature and climate emergency response.

ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE

Objective(s)	Current Status Summary
Recruit and retain high-calibre people and provide opportunities for learning and development within a flexible, healthy and safe work environment	People Plan launched in 2019, getting good traction, Staff Survey undertaken and follow up sessions held with staff. All line managers currently undertaking a bespoke Manager Development Course which will continue into 2020/21. All staff will be offered Mental Health and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion support.
Deliver high standards of service that reflects our status as a National Park Authority at all levels, both internally and externally	All teams either have been reviewed within the Business Plan timescale or will be so over the next year. Feeling is that service quality is high (staff survey, event feedback, public comments) but need to ensure this is maintained whilst some resource is reprioritised.
Ensure that we comply with our data protection obligations	All initial GDPR work complete. Some further work once Office 365 is rolled out to all staff (will be complete in 2020/21).
Support and develop partnerships that further our purposes and duty (including for the Partnership Plan, Green Halo Partnership, New Forest Consultative Panel, New Forest Access Forum and parish quadrant meetings)	Partnership Plan revision begun and will continue in the next year. Significant support offered to the fora mentioned but further development required of joint projects.
Increase public engagement with and awareness of our work through our communication channels	This is an ongoing piece of work, significant successes around OPOF, YoGA, Forest Charter, Local Plan, Big Wave documentary, HLS celebration etc
Work with partner organisations, individuals and communities to build a Team New Forest focussed on being greater than the sum of our parts	Supported internally through the People Plan, organisations are working better together for example the OPOF landscape partnership and that the new Partnership Plan will reflect this.
Seek additional opportunities for external / commercial funding for our work	Framework for possible future projects established, emphasis still around grant funding. Draft action for 2020/21 to trial some alternative funding mechanisms (tap to pay, crowdfunding).
Provide reliable, cost effective IT services and robust systems that enable us to be adaptable, responsive and flexible in our work	ICT extremely reliable (downtime of most systems well under 1%). ICT Strategy to be reviewed in 2020 with a focus on ensuring flexibility in hardware and software (to allow away / home working etc).

Ensure we maintain robust financial reporting, records management and cyber security processes	Unqualified audit opinion and clean value for money conclusion for 2018/19. Records management being improved by Office 365 but some work still to complete. Cyber security improved and staff will be given further training in 2020/21.
Continue to deliver efficiency savings by reviewing internal processes, procedures and procurement, ensuring that these support and promote our environmental protection and sustainability lead role in the New Forest	Necessary efficiency savings have been found to balance each years' budget (c£200k over last two years). SLA's have all been reviewed. Improved focus planned in 2020/21 to deliver changes/efficiencies in carbon reduction and/or sustainability terms within our organisation