

RAPC 436/20

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

RESOURCES, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE – 2 NOVEMBER 2020

Accord between Forestry England and National Parks England

Report by: Paul Walton, Head of Environment & Rural Economy

Summary

This report provides an update on joint working between Forestry England (FE) and the NFNPA in relation to the national Accord between Forestry Commission and National Parks England (attached as **Annex 1**)

Recommendation:

That the Committee note the content of this report and the presentation from the Deputy Surveyor of the New Forest.

1. Introduction

1.1 Forestry England and National Parks England have a joint Accord (April 2018) which sets out 5 priority areas where the two bodies will work together to deliver a shared ambition for the management of woods and forests within England's National Parks.

These 5 priorities are:

- Decision making that enhances National Park landscapes and the woodlands in them
- Woodland creation and expansion in National Parks
- Exemplary FE and NPA owned/managed woodlands in National Parks
- Woodland grant schemes fit for the future
- National Parks woodlands for people

1.2 With almost 50% of the New Forest National Park under the management of Forestry England the relationship between the two organisations is closer here than in many other National Parks. Consequently, the NFNPA and FE have worked to develop local outcomes that can interpret the national accord at the local level. These include

- Sharing resources and capacity
- Data and evidence
- Skills and expertise (especially around land management and woodland creation projects)
- Community engagement
- Staff development and training (secondments, apprenticeships and shared posts)

The Deputy Surveyor will attend the RAPC meeting to provide an update on the main areas of joint working.

2. Progress on local outcomes

• Sharing resources and capacity

The response to the exceptional recreational demands arising from the ending of the national 'lockdown' period in July demonstrated a strong partnership approach with rangers and other staff sharing joint briefings, daily WhatsApp groups to ensure effective communication and joint and flexible patrols focussed on locations where a presence on the ground was needed. Regular liaison ensured joined up messaging about a wide range of issues including the continued closure of the Camping in the Forest sites.

At the start of the financial year the Historic Environment Service SLA was renewed for a further three years. Under the agreement the NPA provides support to FE on archaeology and cultural heritage across the South England Forest District. This complements the archaeology work on the Crown Lands carried out under the HLS scheme.

• Data and evidence

Collating data on ground nesting birds provides important data for informing recreation management decisions. The HLS scheme supports regular monitoring of bird populations. Earlier this year FE commissioned survey work to specifically assess the impact of reduced visitor pressure, associated with COVID-19 access restrictions, on the distribution, behaviour and productivity of breeding waders of the New Forest. The data will help inform the work of the RMS steering group.

• Skills and expertise (especially around land management and woodland creation projects)

There is continued close working on key projects that are of significant mutual interest, including the Recreation Management Strategy, the Higher Level Stewardship Scheme, Special by Design programme and communications on our commitment to Net Zero with Nature.

• Community engagement

The New Forest Ambassadors scheme has assisted the with litter picking on the Crown lands, car parking surveys and distribution of the New Forest Code – nearly 300 people signed up in the first month. In the summer months over 50 local businesses supported the campaign to prevent the use of disposable barbecues in the Forest, helping to reduce the risk of fires.

• Staff development and training (secondments, apprenticeships and shared posts)

The OPOF programme has provide the opportunity to two Apprentice Rangers to work with FE through the summer period and the Working Woodlands Project is carried out by a seconded FE member of staff.

3. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee note the content of this report and the presentation from the Deputy Surveyor of the New Forest.

Papers:

Annex 1 - Accord between Forestry Commission (England) and National Parks England 2018

Contact: Paul Walton

Equality Impact Assessment:

There are no equality or diversity implications arising directly from this report.