RAPC 445/21

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

RESOURCES, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE MEETING – 1 MARCH 2021

2021/22 WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

Report by: Alison Barnes, Chief Executive and the Strategic Leadership Team

1. Purpose

1.1 To consider details of the proposed refresh of the Work Programme for 2021-22, 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 within the final version.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The Authority is currently leading the process to develop an updated Partnership Plan which sets a fresh Vision for the Forest's future in delivering the purposes for which National Parks were designated, to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, and to promote understanding and enjoyment of the Forest's special qualities. The Plan is for the National Park as a place and not specifically for the National Park Authority or any other organisation.
- 2.2 As discussed at the December 2020 Authority Meeting (AM 579-20), following the final ratification of the draft Partnership Plan by all the various delivery organisations within the upcoming months, the Authority will then develop a multi-year (most likely to be 2021-24) Business Plan to provide a framework for those elements of the Partnership Plan directly deliverable by this Authority.
- 2.3 Prior to this updated Business Plan, it is proposed to continue progression through the revised Work Programme structure developed last year. That followed the declaration of our Climate and Nature emergency and responded to the same emerging drivers that are now shaping the updated Partnership Plan.
- 2.4 The biggest change since the 2020/21 Work Programme (attached as **Annex 1** for reference) was drafted, was the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. This impacts in two key ways: firstly, as evidenced within our 2020/21 monitoring, some of the existing actions have had to be amended or delayed over the past

year and secondly, several new issues / actions will also have emerged as a result of the pandemic's impacts.

2.5 We are therefore proposing to refresh the Work Programme for use in 2021/22, rather than either rolling it over entirely or starting again. An updated draft will then be taken to the Authority meeting in April 2021 for ratification by all Members.

3. Framework of the Work Programme

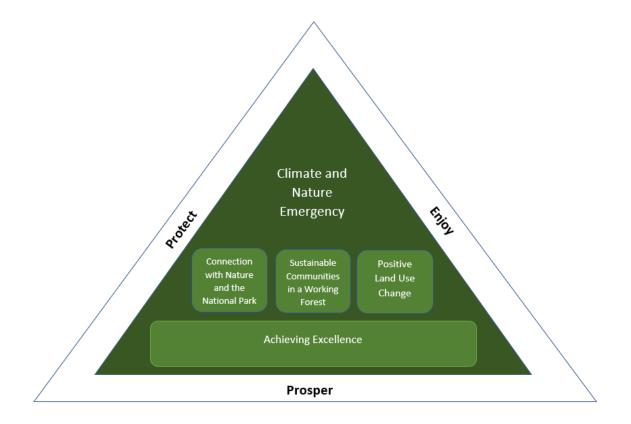
- 3.1 The Authority will always champion the New Forest National Park, working in partnership through co-ordinated and innovative policies and actions, focusing on achieving the two National Park purposes to:
 - conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park;
 - promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.

National Park Authorities also have a duty, in taking the purposes forward, to:

 seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park.

We continue to summarise these two purposes and the duty as: Protect, Enjoy and Prosper.

3.2 For 2020/21 we added internal structure to the Protect, Enjoy and Prosper framework by creating objectives and actions under headings which related to our current Business Plan's Strategic Themes and to the section headings from the Glover Review of National Parks. This was summarised in the diagram below:



- 3.3 Members will recall the new format whereby 'business as usual' items have been removed from the tables, leaving a smaller number of clearly defined and concise actions to be monitored during the year. Progress against these actions will again be measured on a quarterly basis by referring to the RAG (Red, Amber, Green) status under the quarterly column. A further column of RAG status' will confirm whether the complete objectives are still expected to be achieved by the end of the financial year. An amber or red status for the quarter or year will be addressed through an 'action to regain' column aimed at detailing mitigation or corrective action to bring the status back to green.
- 3.4 Having concurrently set our draft Budget for 2021/22 and considered our available resources, both as an Authority and those within partnerships, the Strategic Leadership Team are confident that the outcomes detailed can be achieved within our existing staffing and budgetary resources.
- 3.5 The table below summarises the updates, additions, removals and areas of additional focus where we are proposing to make changes to the existing Work Programme as it is carried forward. Officers now seek Members input on these updates which will then be fed into the new draft to be taken to the Authority meeting in April:

Work Programme Headings	Proposed Re-focus / Changes for 2021/22
Climate and Nature Emergency	 Our Net Zero with Nature Officer and Nature Recovery Officer postholders will be in place shortly – this will significantly accelerate these workstreams and our overall objective is to become recognised as an organisation that is leading / defining how these are achieved (with potential to then assist others in achieving similar success) Further details of the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) are continuing to emerge and will need to be updated within our actions Additional focus to be added around co-ordinated behaviour change campaigns to reduce the impacts of traffic and recreation on commoning and wildlife
Connection with Nature and the New Forest National Park	 Whilst C19 restrictions cause unusually large numbers of people to visit the Open Forest, we need to work with partner organisations to manage demand and address negative impacts, yet maintaining the welcome for responsible recreation - updated (joint) actions likely to include continuing dual patrols, increased signage and information to spread demand, promotion of the NF Code and specific measures to tackle verge parking and camping. This will all only be achieved through the continued, ever closer, working of our 'Team New Forest' Added focus on new ways to achieve the desired outcomes from all our communications, especially increasing the understanding of the special qualities, during and after the pandemic
Sustainable Communities in a Working Forest	 Clarify our affordable homes targets and their monitoring Update actions to incorporate consideration of the recent Planning White Paper impacts and those of other emerging government thinking around the built environment Add an outcome, and accompanying actions, to become a hub for green jobs & skills within the Working Forest Further highlight issues we actively promote, although we are not the delivery body e.g. rural connectivity, pride in our local communities, local food producers Update the New Forest Voices actions around the developing plans shown at the recent members session

Positive Land Use Change	 Capture the opportunity to incentivise better management of land within the catchment which is currently having issues with excessive nutrients entering the Solent Separate the Strategic Habitat Mitigation Scheme into its own 'outcome' line and update the actions to be undertaken within it Remove Vision for the Waterside line (as now published) Increase detail around the Recreation Management Strategy actions, in particular those to redistribute parking and reduce verge parking Include additional action(s) around the quality of our water courses and the monitoring of them
Achieving Excellence	 Harmonising our internal organisational Net Zero work and targets with the upcoming Defra 'Green in Government Commitments', which will set targets to be met by 2024/25 Roll over the new Business Plan development into 2021/22, following the approval of the Partnership Plan, include within this work a full review of our current use of resources in terms of economy, efficiency and effectiveness Update actions around Authority project development and fundraising – this is expected to be the subject of the Members Day on 16th June Updated People Plan actions for the year - prioritised around Equality, Diversity & Inclusion and revising our policies and procedures in light of home/flexible working Fully review and revise the list of local key performance indicators prior to the first monitoring report of 2021/22

4. Recommendation

That the Committee note the contents of the report, advising Officers of any further actions or changes they wish to see within the draft 2021/22 Work Programme.

Papers:

RAPC 445/21: Cover Paper

RAPC 445/21 Annex 1: Work Programme 2020/21 (For reference)

Equality and Diversity Implications:

A number of the work programmes and indicators are directly focussed around improving equality and diversity, for example, our work with the Mosaic project, New Forest Voices, Pedall all-ability cycling and by monitoring attendance of under-represented groups at our events.

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Annex 1

Work Programme 2020/21

Climate and Nature Emergency:

As agreed at the January 2020 Authority meeting, the climate and nature emergencies have created a renewed sense of urgency to stem the decline in biodiversity and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Our response – Net Zero with Nature – will be informed by government policy towards farming, land use and the environment, the response to the Landscapes Review and the 25 Year Environment Plan. We will then need to establish how this emerging policy agenda can best meet the needs of the New Forest National Park.

Nature Recovery – Net Zero with Nature

A spatial plan for nature recovery for the National Park and immediate surroundings, included in the National Park Partnership Plan. (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)	 Lead stakeholders in the development of a spatial plan for nature, based on Lawton principles of bigger, better, more and more joined up habitats. With partners, develop a portfolio of integrated projects for identified Nature Recovery Areas (beyond the core designated sites)
The range of public goods provided by the National Park supported by the developing Environmental Land Management (ELM) Scheme. (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)	 Coordinate the work of the Forest Farming Group as the transition from Environmental Stewardship to ELM continues Examine opportunities for the National Park to be a national pilot for ELM in 2021, ensuring commoning will be supported by the new scheme Support the collaboration between farmers and landowners around farm clusters and delivery of land advice Develop programme of communication for stakeholders around "net zero with nature" and "public money for public goods"
Measures in place to mitigate, and adapt to, the changing climate. (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)	 Map current and potential carbon stores Investigate if carbon offset schemes could deliver environmental benefits in the New Forest Re focus the SCF to deliver innovative action on climate change and nature recovery

Green Halo – Beyond our Boundaries	
An active, thriving Green Halo Partnership recognised for its catalytic role in enhancing the environment of the National Park hinterland. (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)	 Develop the key themes arising from the Green Halo Conference Feb 2020: a National Park City Region / Waterside Vision / Natural Leaders Coordinate a programme of events (min 4) and a further Conference in early 2021 With partners, identify key Nature Recovery opportunity areas beyond the National Park boundary
Nature Solutions – Delivery and Advice	
NPA resources aligned to respond to opportunities presented by the Agriculture Bill, Environment Bill and Landscapes Review during 2020. (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)	 Ongoing liaison with Defra through the National Parks Agriculture and Rural Development group Further develop the 'natural capital' approach to protecting the environment of the National Park Scope the resource needed to implement the Local Nature Recovery Strategy in response to the Environment Bill Examine the opportunities for nature recovery presented by the introduction of Conservation Covenants Post OPOF, identify and plan to secure the resources needed to deliver the nature recovery plan (above)
Data and evidence A suite of data and evidence sources around climate change identified and reporting methods established. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)	 A range of baseline datasets identified Initial list of research opportunities proposed to local Universities

Connection with Nature and the New Forest National Park:

We will champion the National Park as a place of inspiration, where everyone can enjoy, understand, value and care for its special qualities. The Landscapes Review proposes that we need a stronger mission to connect people to National Parks and we have adapted this year's work programme to highlight this. Other proposals in the Landscapes Review include increased inclusivity and diversity in National Parks, partnership working with the health sector, greater access for young people and also to improve routes and information on the ground. Connection to the environment is also key to the 25 Year Environment Plan's goals. Our 2020-21 programme will engender care and action to help the Forest and enable people to take action to tackle the nature and climate emergency. We will also carry out important research to inform delivery of the Partnership Plan and the next business plan.

Action from a wide variety of individuals, communities and businesses to tackle the nature and climate emergency. (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)	 Through direct co-ordination of and facilitation of volunteering activity focused on nature recovery: Deliver 20+ volunteering days directly to restore habitats and enhance nature and 10+ volunteer days to improve access to and understanding of the special qualities, involving a minimum of 100 volunteers Run 2021 volunteer fair (attended by 40+ volunteering organisations and 400+ prospective volunteers) and produce a guide and online volunteering finder Work with five existing groups to develop co-ordinated action to improve nature (through Rangers and Land Advice Service) Deliver two specific outreach projects with underrepresented groups to enable
Through community and individual action. (Lead Officer, Nigel Matthews)	 volunteering Through community and individual action: Work with at least five community groups to enable nature recovery, action on climate and related heritage activity Develop a plan for ambassadors and citizen science initiatives to deliver over the next business plan period Facilitate action through working groups and liaison with organisations to address litter, animal accidents, feeding of ponies and disturbance of ground nesting birds.
(Lead Officer, Paul Walton)	 Through tourism-related businesses and wider business community: In partnership with the New Forest Trust, increase the number of businesses engaged in the Love the Forest Visitor Giving Scheme by 10% from 2018 baseline

	 Support current/new businesses in the scheme by providing four training events.
	 Raise awareness of the Scheme and the benefits it delivers to local
	organisations/business groups by providing four talks/presentations.
Understanding of the New Forest's special	Through face to face engagement, including:
qualities and how to care for them, by all local	 Ranger engagement with at least 15,000 people on the Forest with mobile
people and visitors. (Lead Officer, Nigel	information unit, at events and in local communities, specifically targeted at
Matthews)	helping people care for the Forest and reduce negative impacts.
	 Delivery of nature recovery and climate emergency themed New Forest Show with over 3,000 people attending our stand
	 Develop and teach curriculum-specific sessions about the National Park, nature recovery and climate emergency reaching 10,000 students from pre-schools,
	schools and colleges, both in the 'field' and in school
	 Deliver Travel Grant Scheme (3,000 student visits to the New Forest)
(Lead Officer, Hilary Makin)	Through our communications:
	 Deliver a campaign with partners about nature recovery and climate emergency
	in the context of the National Park and surrounding area with 2,000+
	people/organisations pledging to take action for nature/climate change.
	Continue to deliver wildlife campaign to highlight biodiversity and special
	qualities of the Forest engaging 100,000 in our messages.
	 Trial with rangers and partners a shorter 'caring for the forest code' and measure if new messages help drive behaviour change.
	 Increase numbers signing up to receive our communications by 20%
(Lead Officer, Jim Mitchell)	Through training and on-site interpretation:
	 Support organisations with face-to-face public and visitor-facing roles to be ambassadors for the Forest, improving their own sustainability
	• communicate 'caring for' messages to visitors, including encouraging car-free
	visits, working directly with 5+ businesses, 5+ accommodation providers, 8+
	local information points and visitor centres
	 Complete Our past, Our Future Historic routes and Past Pathways
	interpretation

More people from more diverse backgrounds benefitting from first-hand and meaningful experience of the National Park's nature and landscape. (Lead Officer, Jim Mitchell)	 Through sustainable access and transport: At least four local sites or walking routes to be identified and improved Deliver guided walking and cycling including 190 cycling sessions for up to 400 participants through PedAll (external funding dependant) and a Walking Festival focussed on understanding the special qualities of the National Park Work with the bus operator and drivers to manage and promote the three New Forest Tour routes, maintaining satisfaction ratings of at least 4.5 out of 5 and overall financial viability Encourage use of the train, bus, cycling, walking and the New Forest Tour as
	alternatives to driving through face-to-face engagement by the travel ambassador service (target of 4,000 people spoken with at Brockenhurst station by seasonal travel ambassadors).
(Lead Officer, Jim Mitchell)	 Through a strong partnership with the health sector and local communities: Facilitate our activities to benefit health: walking, cycling, volunteering, connection to nature and wild play Deliver a regional and a local workshop / conference to raise awareness of the benefit of nature to health and facilitate access to nature-based health solutions Facilitate a health fellowship with Health Education England to develop initiatives to benefit young people's health and wellbeing Support New Forest walking for health scheme enabling 10,000 hours to be spent walking for health
(Lead Officer, Jim Mitchell)	 Through a better understanding of our existing and potential audiences and methods of delivery: Clarify which audiences are under-represented among general visitors, those attending our events, activities and volunteering programmes and identify barriers to participation Develop and begin to implement measures to ensure wider engagement with the National Park Develop more accurate measures to evaluate effectiveness of connection and engagement work

Sustainable Communities in a Working Forest:

The Landscapes Review asks 'how do we make sure both natural beauty and society benefit from change rather than suffer?' There are three proposals in the report, around strengthening the duty to foster vitality in communities, a new national landscapes housing association and piloting new approaches to transport. This area of work builds on our new Local Plan (with a range of policies supporting sustainable development) and our experience of working with communities over the last decade, looking where we can make the biggest difference with our resources. Focus will be given to projects to promote local distinctiveness and the commoning way of life.

Built Environment and Housing	
All new development incorporates sustainable construction standards and techniques in accordance with national planning policy and the new Local Plan (DP18). (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)	 Update Design Guide SPD with reference to climate change and sustainability; prepare and issue informal planning guidance in the short term (Q1) Local Design Awards to recognise and promote sustainable development
20 affordable homes granted planning permission. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)	 Identifying more opportunities for rural exception sites; liaising with local communities / Homes England / Hampshire Homes Hub Securing the appropriate level of provision of on-site affordable housing for local people on allocated sites
Two new affordable homes built at Burley. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)	Tender the building work; appoint contractors; complete development and let properties at an affordable rent
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule approved to fund green infrastructure and support sustainable development. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)	Complete review of CIL and viability testing; report to Authority meeting for decision on CIL Charging Schedule.
National Park of the Future	
The New Forest National Park is relevant to the lives of a broad and diverse range of stakeholders and communities. (Lead Officer, Jim Mitchell)	 Explore a range of options to encourage greater engagement of underrepresented groups / interests with the work of the Authority. Agree changes to be implemented at the start of the 2021/22 financial year

All new development achieves the highest standards of design.	Update Design Guide SPD
The Forest's built and historic environment is enhanced. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)	 Review of Conservation Areas (Burley, Forest South East and Forest North East)
	Revise and publish list of non-designated heritage assets
	Run training sessions for parish councils re heritage assets
	Support community led surveys, e.g. fixed-point photography
Strong community-led approach to conveying sense of place and local pride. (Lead Officer, Pau Walton)	Assist communities and local organisations to lead cultural and natural heritage projects that foster identity and sense of place - work with at least four groups in this way (e.g. commoners voices, East Boldre etc)

Positive Land Use Change:

Enabling the National Park to be richer for wildlife, resilient to climate change and deliver benefits for people such as flood alleviation and recreational opportunities. The Authority is in a position to influence positive land use change through its role as the local planning authority, by working with farmers and landowners and showing the leadership to develop a nature network for the National Park and its surroundings. The new Local Plan includes a number of land use based policies in relation to agriculture, green infrastructure, tourism and other leisure uses such as recreational horse keeping.

The current restrictions on the number of new homes that can be built in South Hampshire due to excessive nutrients (mainly nitrogen and phosphates) entering the Solent is an opportunity to incentivise better management of land in the catchment which is currently releasing nitrates, such as fertilised arable land, in order to reduce nitrate pollution reaching the Solent.

The Environment Bill will put biodiversity at the top of the environmental agenda with a requirement for almost all developments to provide at least 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). Developers, consultants and local planning authorities involved in the preparation and approval of planning applications will need to be ready for the changes.

I his programme of work will also need to	consider our response to increasing	g recreational and visitor pressures on land use.

In our role as the local planning authority		
All new development provides, as an absolute minimum, the mandated level of BNG (following enactment of the Environment Bill). (Lead Officer,	Prepare local guidance for the effective implementation of BNG in the National Park.	
Steve Avery)	 Consider the use of Local Development Orders and Article 4 Directions to manage recreational and visitor impacts. 	
Designated nature conservation sites and habitats are better protected and enhanced through effective management of land use. (Lead Officer,	 Implementation of the revised Habitat Mitigation Scheme SPD 	
Steve Avery)	Continue to apply the Nitrate Mitigation Checklist for all planning applications proposing a net increase in dwellings or providing overnight accommodation.	
Nutrient neutrality achieved for all new development in the National Park. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)	• Devise a local scheme to reduce nitrate pollution in the Solent (this will allow already consented small-scale housing developments to proceed).	

Better management and oversight of land use change in the National Park. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)	 Monitoring new development and change of use of land to ensure compliance with new Local Plan. Continue to support the Encroachment Working Party Develop a data base / map of land use change in the National Park
A Vision for the Waterside. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)	Working with partners and communities, agree and secure a pro-active comprehensive green infrastructure strategy for the Waterside
Land Use Change Plan & Campaign	
Creation of a Nature Network for the National Park and surrounding areas, using the range of tools available to the NPA. (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)	Encourage and enable positive land use change from highly-managed countryside to one that works with natural processes based on natural capital principles. Key tools that will help achieve this include: Biodiversity Net Gain Environment Net Gain Harnessing stakeholders Land Advice Policy Influencing Co-ordination of land-owners/managers Supporting clusters Funding Working beyond our boundary
Reduced recreational impact on the most vulnerable sites and increased recreational use of countryside locations away from designated sites. (Lead Officer, Nigel Matthews)	 Improve the condition of rights of way, including more informative signage, so that they are used more often Work with landowners to establish sections of the England Coast Path as they are confirmed, providing clear signage and desire lines that ensure walkers enjoy and stay on the path Work with partners, communities and landowners to identify where increased recreation could be enabled on robust sites alongside nature recovery and sustainable transport

ork we measure progress on objectives designed to achieve the highest quality of also recognise that excellence means reacting quickly and efficiently to emerging ything we do.
rity, Partnerships, People, Processes and Promotion.
Review and document indicators & collection methodologies to fully assess our organisational impacts (Q1 & Q2)
 Develop and publish a full Sustainability Action Plan (Q3 & Q4) Fit for purpose and sustainable procurement practices in place throughout the organisation and its supply chain (Q3 & Q4).
 Draft and develop ambitious strategic actions for the Authority over the next three years, as driven by the wider Partnership Plan developments: Ensure member and staff ownership of, and engagement with, the developing plan at all stages.
 With partners, draft and develop ambitious strategic actions for the next five years: Convene topic-based workshops with Members, staff and partner organisations (Q1 and Q2) Carry out a public consultation (Q3) and finalise Plan.
•
 Review and communication of first years' implementation (Q1) Particular focus this year on equality, diversity and inclusion, mental health and manager development.

Any staffing changes, due to new prioritisation, successfully implemented and staff upskilled as necessary. (Lead Officer, Nigel Stone)	 Staffing structure to deliver new work programme agreed & understood by all (Q1) Any specific staff learning and development opportunities identified and actioned.
Processes	
New 'Project Development Board' constituted and work begun. (Lead Officer, Hilary Makin)	 System to prioritise projects agreed and implemented Fundraising requirements clarified, owned/understood and applications underway.
Smart National Park vision set (challenges people to solve problems using latest technology). (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)	 Build a rural 'Living Lab', taking citizen science to the Forest Establish a 'Futures Panel' to horizon scan for future issues and potential solutions
Promoting	
Contact Management System researched, agreed and implementation timetable set. (Lead Officer, Hilary Makin)	 Single system for developing closer, deeper and more productive relationships with those externally which whom we have contact across the organisation: Develop specification Research options/costs Implement system
Communication to our funders and core partners regarding our impact/effect is clear, targeted and successful. (Lead Officer, Hilary Makin)	 Communication of delivery messages to key stakeholders is fully reviewed, covering considerations such as: How are we viewed? Are our key messages clear? Do we successfully highlight the impacts and effect of our delivery? Are we using the 'right language/phrases for the right audience'?