



# Annual Review 2019 – 2020

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Protecting  
together,  
shaping  
tomorrow







## Chairman's and Chief Executive's statement

We are delighted to present the highlights of our work with our partners and communities for the New Forest National Park over the past year. It's a fitting representation of how, by working together as 'Team New Forest' in a year that saw the national Year of Green Action and 70th Anniversary of the establishment of our first National Parks in 1949, we engaged people of all ages to take positive action to improve the environment.

This year we have focused on communicating with people about our special wildlife and the unique commoning system which shapes our landscape. Our stand at the New Forest Show, a special issue of our Park Life newspaper and a small grants scheme for schools have enabled us to put wildlife and nature recovery at the forefront of people's minds.

The Government commissioned an independent panel to review the role of the nation's protected landscapes for the 21st Century, which reported in September. We welcomed its call for reigniting the passion for these special landscapes and its challenge to us all to go further to protect and enhance wildlife, engage people and realise benefits to health and local economies. We are pleased that our work in engaging volunteers and delivering affordable housing was highlighted by the report and believe that our work programmes support the recommendations of this important review.

A big milestone for us as an organisation was the declaration of a climate and nature emergency in January 2020. We set out our proposals to become 'net zero with nature' by 2050, working to reduce our own impact and collaborate with partners and communities to reduce the impacts of the climate crisis and help the Forest adapt – so that the special qualities of the National Park are safeguarded for future generations.

The adoption of our Local Plan was another major milestone, guiding where and how development can be accommodated within our National Park; protecting it, yet enabling communities to prosper with new policies protecting the National Park's landscape character and supporting affordable housing.

The revision of the Recreation Management Strategy was also a vital step forward for the National Park following the extensive 'Future Forest' public consultation of summer 2018. The 22 strategic actions to deliver responsible enjoyment of the National Park have been developed and will be taken forward by the partnership of statutory Forest organisations, advised by representatives of community and user groups. There is much to do. This common framework for action enables pooling of resources and a focus on where the biggest impact can be made.

The £4.4m Our Past, Our Future landscape partnership scheme, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, has completed some impressive projects as it moved into its final year of delivery of advice on lost landscapes, land management and support of Forest skills.

We have been focused on championing, with our Open Forest partners, the support of the Forest in land management schemes as we exit the EU. The confirmation that England's largest agri-environment scheme here in the New Forest is to continue for another year was a very welcome and a vital step in securing a positive transition, allowing habitat restoration work to continue and providing support for commoning.

As we ended the financial year heading into a global pandemic, society's wellbeing and how this is connected with healthy environments takes on renewed importance. The 'natural health service' played an increasingly important role in people's lockdown daily routines, providing essential benefits to health, wellbeing and resilience at a time of great difficulty. Calls for a "Green Recovery" make the work we have been undertaking this year with communities and health providers an important focus for the future.

'Team New Forest' is more important now than ever. We'd like to extend a huge thanks to our staff, members, partners and volunteers for all that's been achieved this year; their dedication, experience and love for the New Forest shine through every day in the work they do to help keep our National Park a very special place. We need to grow and nurture our existing collaborations and make new ones at this most challenging of times. This Annual Review showcases the strength of that team spirit and gives us heart as we enter a most important decade for the New Forest.

**Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre, Chairman**

**Alison Barnes, Chief Executive**



# About the New Forest National Park Authority

## Our vision

The vision for the National Park in 20 years' time is of an area which has a unique and immediately recognisable sense of place, where:

- tranquillity and a feeling of naturalness pervade large parts of the Park
- the mosaic of distinctive landscapes and habitats are all of the highest quality and a great variety of wildlife is able to flourish
- there is a strong sense and understanding of the heritage and living culture of the Forest
- all visitors can gain inspiration, health and wellbeing and enjoy the extensive areas of land with open access
- the far-reaching consequences of climate change are taken into account in all policies and future plans
- people live and work sustainably and contribute to the care of the Forest
- local, regional and national organisations recognise the value of the National Park and there is a shared understanding of its role within the wider area
- everyone contributes in appropriate ways to keeping the National Park a special place for present and future generations.

## Our mission – National Park purposes

As guardians of a national park the New Forest National Park Authority has statutory purposes and socio-economic responsibilities as specified in the Environment Act of 1995:

- to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area
- to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Park by the public.

Working in partnership with other organisations it is also the Authority's duty to seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of the local communities within the National Park.

We like to sum this up as:

Protect  
Enjoy  
Prosper

















Left: The UK's 15 National Parks  
Contains Ordnance Survey data.  
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# Our Authority board members 2019 – 20







National Park Authority members have overall responsibility for making decisions. They set policies and priorities, ensuring efficient and effective use of resources, and that money is well spent. It is their job to represent the interests of the National Park and to balance out any conflicting pressures.

Thanks to all members who have served over the last year. Sadly, Harry Oram passed away in April 2020. His tremendous character and knowledge of trees and the complex landscape of the New Forest will be sadly missed.





## Local authority appointees

						
David Harrison, Chairman of Resources, Audit and Performance Committee Deputy Chairman of Standards Committee	Edward Heron, (Deputy Chairman of the Authority to July 2019)	Gordon Bailey, Deputy Chairman of Planning Committee	Richard Clewer	Ann Sevier	Mel Kendal	Keith Mans
						
Leo Randall, Chairman of Planning Committee	Barry Rickman	Neville Penman	Sue Bennison (from May 2019)	Pat Wyeth (to May 2019)	Caroline Rackham (from May 2019)	Richard Frampton (to May 2019)

## Secretary of State appointees

					
Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre, Chairman of the Authority	Patrick Heneghan Deputy Chairman of Resources, Audit and Performance Committee Deputy Chairman of the Authority (from July 2019)	David Bence	George Meyrick (from July 2019)	Prof. Gavin Parker	Stephen Trow (from July 2019)

## Parish appointees

			
George Bisson, Deputy Chairman of Standards Committee	Harry Oram	John Sanger	Richard Taylor

Our 22 members do not represent any particular political group. Driven by the National Park purposes and duty, they work with officers to establish and then deliver our work programme, with operational aspects delegated to officers.

- 12 are appointed by the county, district, and borough councils with land within the National Park
- Six are appointed by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- Four are selected from the parish councils within the National Park.



# Protect

The New Forest National Park has many special qualities which set it apart from anywhere else in the country. We have a commitment to conserving and enhancing its natural beauty and cultural heritage, and ensuring wildlife is supported into the future by protecting the Forest's precious mosaic of habitats.



**Paul Walton**  
Head of Environment  
and Rural Economy

**More must be done for nature and beauty in our national parks. This was the key finding of the Landscapes Review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) that was published in September 2019. The twin crises of nature and climate change are well-documented, and the Review sought to put National Parks and AONBs – our national landscapes – at the forefront of the response.**

Much of the New Forest National Park remains a haven for wildlife; under pressure from climate change, farming practices, recreation and the expansion of neighbouring urban areas but still with many key habitats intact and supporting viable wildlife populations. Our approach has been to help create landscapes that are large in size, in good condition, well connected and more resilient and adaptable to climate change. Our support for the RSPB and its purchase of Franchises Lodge nature reserve and our involvement with the habitat improvements being delivered through the Higher Level Stewardship scheme on the Crown Lands are examples of our approach. Projects in the Our Past Our Future scheme improve the environmental condition of farmland, hedgerows and existing woodlands as well as creating new habitat.

However, we recognise that we must do more if the National Park is to meet the challenge set by the Landscapes Review.

The Agriculture Bill and Environment Bill resulting from the decision to leave the European Union will set out future land use policy. This may lead to the release of agricultural land to other low carbon uses such as catchment-sensitive farming, wetland and heathland restoration and woodland management.

We have been working on this agenda throughout the year with the Forest Farming Group, publishing 'Understanding the New Forest's Natural Capital' ([newforest.gov.uk/NaturalCapital](https://newforest.gov.uk/NaturalCapital)) with the aim of using this to shape future agri-environment policy to support the public goods that the New Forest provides. Focusing on land management is not only good for wildlife but it also helps to improve soil condition, carbon storage and resilience to climate change.

While nationally there is a focus on tree planting as a response to the climate crisis, habitats that are healthy and functioning absorb and store carbon until the point of saturation. The unique and extensive mosaic of woodlands, hedgerows, heaths, mires and saltmarshes of the National Park all provide this function.

In January we set out our proposals to improve the state of nature and reduce the impact of climate change on the natural environment with the aim of achieving Net Zero with Nature by 2050. We began, through the creation of a Wildlife Roundtable, to develop a nature recovery plan in conjunction with our partners, a plan that will create a portfolio of large-scale projects consistent with the principles of creating landscapes that are 'bigger, better managed and more joined up'.

There is much to do and, as highlighted by the Landscapes Review, we will need to work in partnership and set out long term plans for nature recovery to ensure the New Forest National Park is a vibrant, wildlife rich, and ecologically-functioning landscape.







## Working towards cleaner rivers, streams and coastal waters

The New Forest's freshwater and coastal habitats are some of the finest in Europe and are home to many rare wildlife species.

Its rivers, streams, ponds, lakes, bogs, wet woodlands and coastal saltmarshes support more than two thirds of all of the UK's freshwater species and more than a third of the UK's rarest plants and invertebrates.

The New Forest National Park Authority and Freshwater Habitats Trust host the New Forest Catchment Partnership, working with organisations and communities to protect, manage and enhance this water landscape.

New Forest National Park Authority Ecologist Ian Barker said: 'Compared to the rest of lowland England which is a bleak situation for freshwater, species have the chance to thrive here in the New Forest. This is thanks to its fantastic water quality, large scale landscape and long-standing traditional land management practice of commoning.'

Highlights of the Partnership's work this year include:

- **Practical measures:** The New Forest Land Advice Service worked closely with two farms to reduce nitrate and phosphate pollution running from the farms into the river. They audited the infrastructure, took water samples, identified solutions and agreed these with landowners and helped secure funding for the improvements. The Partnership also worked with the nursery and horticultural industry to install rainwater harvesting systems to solve diffuse pollution.
- **Monitoring:** As well as improvements on the ground, experts and volunteers have been involved in monitoring the health of the freshwater habitats and what measures have been successful in improving water quality. A detailed survey of the Bartley Stream and its tributaries was carried out by experts from Freshwater Habitats Trust. Hundreds of water samples were taken to identify where landowners might be helped to make improvements, as well as

checking the presence of non-native plants, spotting opportunities to help fish passage and areas that could potentially mitigate flood risk.

- **Education and sharing best practice:** Nearly 100 professionals and enthusiasts attended the Water Forum in Brockenhurst in January, hearing presentations on the theme 'Wildlife for Water' and sharing their expertise about this special aspect of the National Park.

Find out more about the Partnership at: [www.freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/projects/catchment-projects/new-forest-catchment-project/](http://www.freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/projects/catchment-projects/new-forest-catchment-project/)



Emperor dragonfly  
© Sue Marshall

## Improving Landford Bog nature reserve



The New Forest National Park Authority and Wiltshire Wildlife Trust were awarded £28,000 to improve Landford Bog for rare plants, invertebrates and reptiles.

The nature reserve – the size of 11 football pitches – is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and is an internationally rare wet heath and bog.

National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) funded measures to prevent the bog from drying out, to secure the reserve for cattle which help manage the site for wildlife through their grazing, and to improve visitor access with new kissing gates, and a boardwalk.

Nearly 30 Nationally Scarce invertebrates have been recorded at Landford Bog as well as species that are locally uncommon including the raft spider and silver-studded blue butterfly, and the Nationally Scarce wood cricket. Protected reptiles include common lizard, grass snake and adder.

The reserve is a refuge for rare plants including heather and cross-leaved heath, bog asphodel, purple moor grass, sphagnum mosses, and carnivorous plants sundew and pale butterwort.



Richard Austin and Julie Melin-Stubbs from NFLAS on the Mentoring Scheme with Charlie Knight and Sami Blastock (centre)

## Supporting the ancient tradition of commoning

Every pony, cow and pig you see roaming freely in the New Forest belongs to a commoner. Commoners are ordinary people who use ancient rights attached to their property to turn out animals to graze. Their commitment is vital to the New Forest, and this traditional system of land management is a unique way of life.

New Forest ponies have been called the 'architects of the Forest' because their browsing and grazing have shaped the Forest landscape over many generations.

They are crucial to the accessibility and ecosystems of the Forest, helping preserve its unique habitats, and allowing plants, fungi, insects, birds and animals to thrive here – some of which are found almost nowhere else in the UK.

The New Forest Land Advice Service oversees a commoner mentoring scheme with the Commoners Defence

Association, matching experienced commoners with six people who are new to the Forest's traditional practices. Helping to round-up New Forest ponies, caring for stock and sheep showing are just a few of the skills learnt by new commoners in the innovative mentoring programme. Each pairing lasts one year, with participants spending time on their mentor's land to learn vital commoning skills that ensure the survival of this unique way of managing the Forest's rare habitats and traditional way of life.

This year, the final pairings through the commoning mentor scheme were completed, with a total of 23 people mentored during the programme. A final social event was held in December which brought all the mentors and previous mentorees together to share experiences and look to the future.



### Commoning Voices

The Commoning Voices exhibition from 2018 was adapted to enable it to tour around various locations during 2019 as an extension to the original Our Past, Our Future project.

Together with the Commoners Defence Association, we helped put together the exhibition, which communicates the importance of commoning.

It visited Lymington Town Hall, Spudworks at Sway, the New Forest Show, Mottisfont Abbey, Ringwood Meeting House & History Centre, Moors Valley Country Park and Hengistbury Head Visitor Centre. 23,000 people have attended the exhibition.



# Our Past, Our Future

The Our Past, Our Future (OPOF) landscape partnership scheme ensures that the New Forest is better equipped to thrive through change and modern-day pressures.

- The 21 projects come under the themes of:
- Restoring lost landscapes
  - Developing Forest skills
  - Discovering Forest heritage and inspiring a new generation
  - Monitoring and evaluation.

The £4.5 million scheme is led by us, with 10 other partners and is backed by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

**Some of the fantastic achievements are featured on these pages.**

Find out more about other Our Past, Our Future work at [newforestnpa.gov.uk/landscapepartnership](http://newforestnpa.gov.uk/landscapepartnership)



Clearing scrubland near Frogham

## Working Woodlands project

Around 40 per cent of private woodlands in the New Forest are unmanaged, meaning they're not as good for nature as they might be.

Since 2016 we've been restoring and enhancing privately-owned woodland sites through practical conservation work.

The project – funded by OPOF – has restored a further 45.6 hectares over the last year. This involved contractors and volunteers helping to clear rhododendron and other invasive non-native species. The woodland sites are now starting to see some positive results and active management by landowners.

At Pleasure Copse, Walhampton, volunteers removed 97% of the rhododendron and carried out coppicing work. Temporary fencing was installed around sections within some of the woodlands to prevent deer getting in to graze and browse. This has resulted in an increase in diversity of wildlife species.



Emery Down overgrown SINC



Emery Down restored SINC

**The impact**

12 hectares of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation restored

## Nature's Stepping Stones project

The New Forest Land Advice Service (NFLAS) has been working with owners and managers of grassland, heathland, coastal and wetland Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), to ensure they're managed in the best way.

Since 2016 the project has restored many hectares of SINCs, and this year it has continued to work with a number of sites and restored a further 12 hectares of habitat. Many of the sites where work has taken place such as scrub removal and reintroduction of grazing stock are now starting to return to more

valuable open habitat such as heathland at Avon Tyrrell and species-rich grassland and meadow at Newlease Copse Meadow and Emery Down Meadows. These in turn will now be supporting more invertebrates and animals up the food chain.

A further highlight was introducing livestock onto Foxhills School's woodland meadow, Ashurst, for the first time and carrying out an outdoor assembly on the same day with 500 children to show them the sheep and introduce them to grazier Trevor Kill.



Tatchbury Mount Trail – The old roadway from Hazel Farm into the New Forest

## Historic routes and past pathways

Residents were asked to help uncover facts, figures and colourful tales relating to the history of five trails in the New Forest. The trails were selected from the Forest's established rights of way for their abundance of historic features and connection to residential areas.

With the help of volunteers, the NPA analysed historic maps dating back to 1759 to research around 700 current rights of way, in 37 parishes. Some 260 walking surveys were conducted to whittle down the contenders.

Project partners:







In the Eyes of the Animals

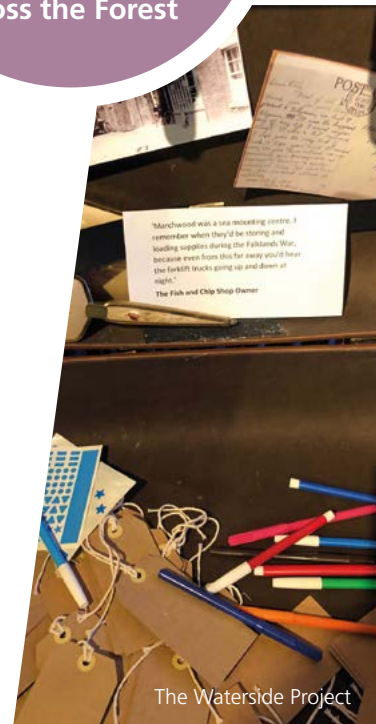
Four events were run in 2019 with support from additional Arts Council funding.

- 1. In the Eyes of the Animals** was a free virtual reality (VR) experience at Spudworks in Sway. It used VR technology to let the user go on a fully immersive journey in the forest, through the eyes of four different animals. Around 900 people visited the event, and an additional 600 enjoyed the experience over three days on our stand at the New Forest Show.
- 2. Time and Place – A photographic heritage project of Hythe and the Waterside.** Four public engagement events took place to gather stories and memories from local communities. These were considered by a playwright and gathered together into a narrative which was used to create an exhibition at the New Forest Heritage Centre in February.

- 3. Folk Orc in the Forest** – Four workshop sessions took place across the New Forest to explore the repertoire of songs inspired by the New Forest. These were performed at a live show at Forest Arts Centre. More than 100 people took part.
- 4. SPUDology – Artist in residence at SpudWorks.** Simon Ryder and Reinhild Beuther were chosen as the artists in residence. Their work focused on interpreting the landscape at Hill Top in Beaulieu as this area includes commoning interests, ecology, animal accidents, historic interest, connections to New Forest Neighbour communities, and estate landowners. Their work considered the idea that humans and nature have been closely entwined for centuries as well as valuing nature for its own sake and cooperating with it.

## The impact

Engaged communities all across the Forest



The Waterside Project

## New Forest Knowledge conference

The 2019 New Forest Knowledge conference was titled Built Environments in the New Forest: Past, Present and Future. NPA speakers included archaeologist Frank Green, who talked about New Forest churches and churchyards, Stephen Fisher on Second World War construction in the New Forest, and Steve Avery with an overview of planning in the New Forest.



Volunteers in the Christopher Tower Reference Library

## Sharing traditional rural skills

Through our New Forest Land Advice Service (NFLAS), we help landowners manage their land for wildlife, with advice, practical work and access to grants. The Service also runs rural skills training and over the past year a further 20 courses were attended by 157 people. Courses covered a range of rural skills including pony breeding, tractor driving, and a woodland tree and wildflower ID course which provided expertise to local landowners, volunteers and commoners.



Commoners Laura Maughan &amp; Charlie Knight

Rural Skills sheep breeding course



## The impact

20 rural skills courses attended by 157 people

Cattle breeding course



Tree safety and surveying course



Wildflower meadow creation course



# Our Past, Our Future

*Working together for the New Forest*

A £4.4m scheme led by 11 partners working across 21 projects to restore lost habitats, develop Forest skills and inspire a new generation to champion and care for the New Forest.

2015

TO 2021

HERITAGE  
**58**  
community projects

HABITATS  
**219**  
hectares  
restored

WILDPLAY  
**3**  
sites set up

GROUPS AND SCHOOLS  
**397**  
engaged

COMMONING  
**270,000**  
people learned  
about commoning

NEW FOREST KNOWLEDGE WEBSITE  
**128,000**  
documents  
published

VOLUNTEERING  
**2,000**  
volunteers  
**77,000**  
hours

TRAINING  
**157**  
courses  
**3,230**  
people  
attended

EVENTS  
**789**  
held

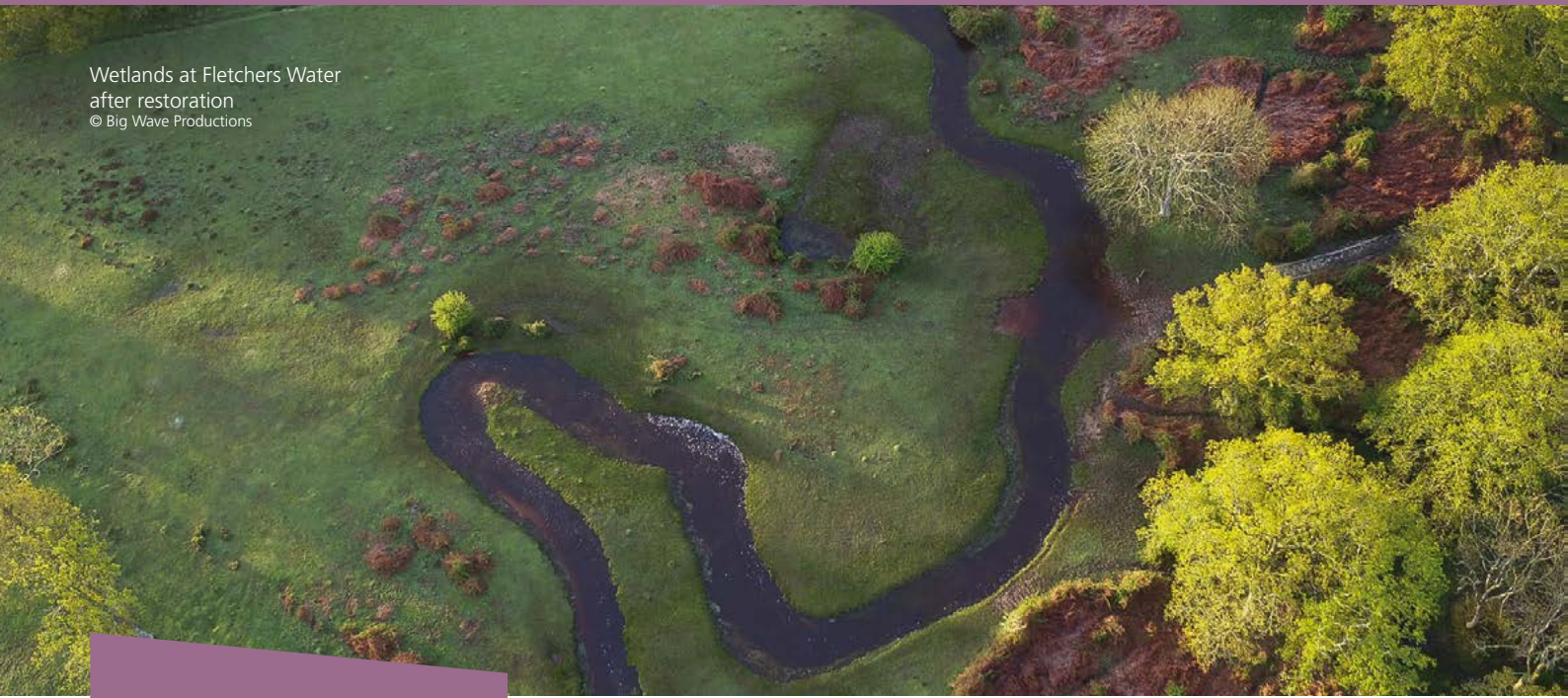
**133,000**  
attended

RIVERBANK AND HEDGEROWS  
**61 km**  
restored

HISTORIC MONUMENTS  
**108**  
restored



Wetlands at Fletchers Water after restoration  
© Big Wave Productions



‘The partner organisations will now carry on with their work of delivering vital environmental benefits to the New Forest. This includes supporting commoning through the Verderers’ Grazing Scheme, thereby ensuring that the free-roaming stock continues to help maintain the New Forest’s rare and internationally-important mosaic of habitats.’

Lord Manners, Official Verderer of the New Forest

## The Verderers of the New Forest Higher Level Stewardship scheme

The Verderers of the New Forest Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme helps to protect the New Forest National Park’s internationally-important wildlife and habitats.

Launched in 2010 as a 10-year agreement with Natural England, it’s managed by the Verderers in partnership with the New Forest National Park Authority and Forestry England. The scheme works to increase the New Forest’s resilience to reduce habitat loss and the impacts of the climate crisis. The scheduled final year of the scheme coincided with the decision

to leave the EU and with it the Common Agricultural Policy, casting doubt on whether the HLS could be extended while a new UK agriculture support scheme is developed. Thankfully an extension was announced in February, ensuring the large-scale conservation of fragile habitats and support for commoners can continue for at least a further 12 months.

### The HLS scheme has achieved an exceptional amount since 2010:

**Wetland restoration** – 20 miles of artificially-straightened drainage channels have been returned to their natural courses. The work, which won the UK River Prize in 2019, helps to improve the carbon storage in wetlands, prevent flooding and support the habitats of rare species such as the southern damselfly and curlew.

**Commoning** – crucial funding and expert advice have been provided to hundreds of commoners to continue

the traditional system of land management – turning ponies and cattle onto the New Forest.

**Archaeology** – Following a laser scanning survey of the whole National Park, 3,000 archaeology sites have been identified, recorded and opportunities for conservation identified.

**Education** – More than 14,000 children have gained a greater understanding of the New Forest through school visits.

**Habitat management** – Invasive rhododendron and other non-native species have been removed or reduced across approximately half of the New Forest, helping native plants flourish.

**Heathland restoration** – 865 hectares of heath and grassland (the equivalent of 1,384 football pitches) have been restored through measures such as tree felling and bracken harvesting to support internationally-protected habitats.

The Scheme is overseen by Natural England, on behalf of Defra, and funds farmers and land managers throughout England to deliver effective environmental management on their land.

The objectives of Environmental Stewardship are to:

- Conserve biodiversity
- Maintain and enhance landscape quality and character
- Protect the historic environment and natural resources
- Promote public understanding of the countryside.



Mare and foal



HLS rangers Erika Dovey (left) and Rhianne Waylen

### HLS rangers

Two HLS seasonal rangers were employed between October and February. They set up or attended 43 different events both inside and outside of the New Forest National Park and spoke with over 1,400 people to share knowledge of the HLS Scheme and the Forest’s special habitats and species.



Silver-studded blue butterfly

### The Micro-Forest

This year our communications focused on how the smaller species of the New Forest were being helped by the HLS scheme. For example the silver-studded blue butterfly’s preferred habitat of short heathland and young heather is helped by grazing, burning and restoring areas of ancient heathland by removing conifer plantations as part of the HLS scheme.

Wetland restoration through the HLS scheme is also improving the habitats of the scarce sundew plant, and the rare southern damselfly.

‘The New Forest is a really critical conservation area, home to landscapes and wildlife which have long since disappeared from many other parts of England. It is really encouraging to see this recognised by continued investment in this scheme which brings together the efforts of all forest organisations.’  
Bruce Rothnie, Forestry England’s Deputy Surveyor of the New Forest

‘The HLS scheme is a perfect example of public money being given in return for public goods, which is at the heart of Government’s policy for all future support for farming and landscape management.’  
Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre, Chairman of the New Forest National Park Authority

Visit [hlsnewforest.org.uk](https://hlsnewforest.org.uk) for more info



# Uncovering our past

Our archaeology team not only cares for the National Park but provides services to Forestry England and New Forest District Council.

With the help of communities and volunteers, we're constantly unveiling new treasures and insights – revealing how the area has been used as a working forest for centuries.



Archaeological training materials for Dig Burley

## The impact

48 test pits were excavated

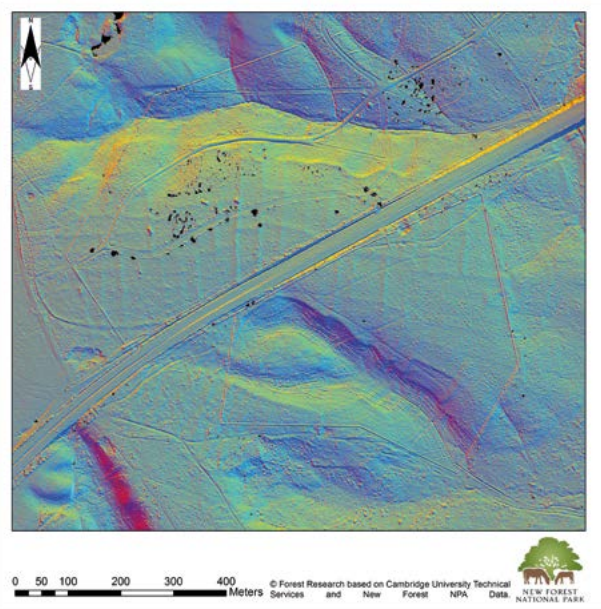
### Dig Burley

Archaeology and history enthusiasts were invited to have their own Time Team experience and take part in a community-wide dig to uncover the hidden history of Burley.

48 test pits – each measuring a metre square – were excavated in fields and private gardens across the village. Local residents and volunteers were encouraged to research and learn about the heritage on their doorsteps. As well as recording a number of finds such as pottery, pipe stems, tiles and Neolithic flint, the project included presentations and training sessions, and a talk from Tim Taylor, creator of Time Team.



Dig Burley



LIDAR survey showing an ancient field system in the New Forest

### Expanding knowledge

As well as providing access to information, the New Forest Knowledge website has been set up as a community portal where individuals and groups, of all abilities and interests, can add their own research, articles and photographs to expand our New Forest cultural heritage story.

Over the year it has continued to grow in content and functionality. Hundreds of articles are now accessible – from excavation and survey reports to 3D models, historic images and oral histories.

### Community geophysics

The LoCATE community geophysics project, which is run in conjunction with Bournemouth University, saw a number of surveys undertaken this year. From hunting for Roman ports in Lepe, identifying new Neolithic burial mounds in the Avon Valley, recording Bronze Age barrows at Denny Lodge or recording Roman villas as part of the Festival of British Archaeology, the results were wide-reaching and fascinating with a great uptake from local groups and volunteers.

This project was also shortlisted for the Campaign for National Parks Park Protector Award, held at the Houses of Parliament.



Geophysics volunteers



LoCATE volunteers receiving training from Bournemouth University





**The Navy and the New Forest**

We supported the exhibition ‘Command of the Seas: The Navy & New Forest against Napoleon’ when it came to the St Barbe Museum, Lymington, for three months in the summer.

A gallery was devoted to the New Forest itself, exploring how timber from the Forest was used to construct some of the warships which made up Nelson’s navy. One of the displays included an interactive ship building exercise.

**Revealing the secrets of gravestones**

Gravestones at a New Forest church were restored and their secrets revealed thanks to a community conservation project.

The fascinating results have revealed a wealth of long-lost information about Lyndhurst’s past residents.

Local volunteers and experts came together for the project, which also saw the gravestones used to create a tranquil new area at St Michael & All Angels Church in Lyndhurst.

More than 80 headstones, which might otherwise have been disposed of, were recovered from a redundant pathway, steps and a ditch. They were cleaned and photographed before being mortared together to form three striking new seats overlooking the burial ground.

The project was completed thanks to OPOF, with the additional help of LEADER funding.

**Recording ancient tree graffiti**

We launched a citizen science project, asking the public to record sightings of ancient tree graffiti in the Forest.

Much like archaeological remains, tree graffiti (also known as an arboglyph) is under threat. Over time, the marks are warping or are being damaged by animals or humans. Trees blowing over or dying also threaten the longevity of these historic records.

Dates, pictures, poems and royal marks can all be found throughout the New Forest. These marks have been left by many different people, including foresters, Second World War soldiers, Kingsmen and even those wanting protection from witches.

There was no central record of the known tree graffiti found across the New Forest. We want to be able to refer back to these glimpses into the New Forest’s past, even when the trees themselves are lost.

Lawrence Shaw, Archaeologist for the New Forest National Park Authority said: ‘The findings will help to map and record the lost and forgotten stories of the New Forest woodlands in a new database which the public can access. It will allow everyone from researchers and landowners to schools and community groups to see how people have interacted with trees here over the centuries.’

The campaign was featured in the local and national media, including an article in the front pages of The Times and a slot on the BBC’s Gardeners’ Question Time. More than 86 records have been submitted so far as part of the citizen science project.



NPA archaeologist Lawrence Shaw surveys historic tree graffiti in the New Forest © BNPS



Volunteers Will Ward (left) and Owen Morgan helping with the excavation

**Park Farm excavation**

September 2019 saw our return to Park Farm near Beaulieu to continue the excavation of a prehistoric enclosure, which started in 2018 with Bournemouth University. The completion of this work has helped to date the site to the early Bronze Age and the work was supported by local volunteers and students over two hot weeks.

The completion of this work has helped to date the site to the early Bronze Age



Park Farm excavation site finds



Excavation site at Park Farm



# Protecting the Forest through our planning service

Our planning service is a crucial tool in our work to protect and enhance the Forest for future generations, and we aim to set the highest bar for development, working within the Government's National Planning Policy Framework.

Our planning policies are key in conserving and enhancing the special qualities that make the New Forest the place it is, including the distinctive New Forest character of our villages and landscapes. They also support the local economy and ensure that any new development is focused on the needs of local people.



**Steve Avery,**  
Executive Director  
Strategy and Planning

**As one of England's busiest national park planning authorities, an extremely significant step for us this year was adopting a new Local Plan for the New Forest national park – one which now contains stronger policies to protect the environment and deliver more affordable homes.**

The Local Plan plays a key role in the delivery of the two National Park purposes and forms the basis for planning decisions.

Our revised suite of policies sets out the planning framework for the National Park, including the scale and location of new housing, as well as protecting the natural and built environment and meeting community needs.

The Plan also includes new policies in several areas, including more support for affordable housing and commoners' dwellings; safeguarding areas of tranquillity; and protecting the National Park's landscape character, trees and historic environment.

Existing planning policies to protect, maintain and enhance nationally, regionally and locally-important sites and features of the natural environment – including habitats and species of biodiversity importance, geological features and the water environment – are retained in the new Plan.

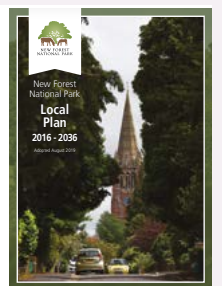
It's a result of many years' work and plenty of local consultation. We started updating our planning policies in 2015 and in total, six periods of public consultation were held on the emerging Local Plan and various policy options. Two planning inspectors were appointed by the Government in May 2018 to independently examine the draft Plan, the representations received and the supporting evidence. This examination included two weeks of hearing sessions involving 25 different individuals and organisations.

The final Local Plan was strengthened by the independent scrutiny of the examination process.

It includes several important policy approaches, such as:

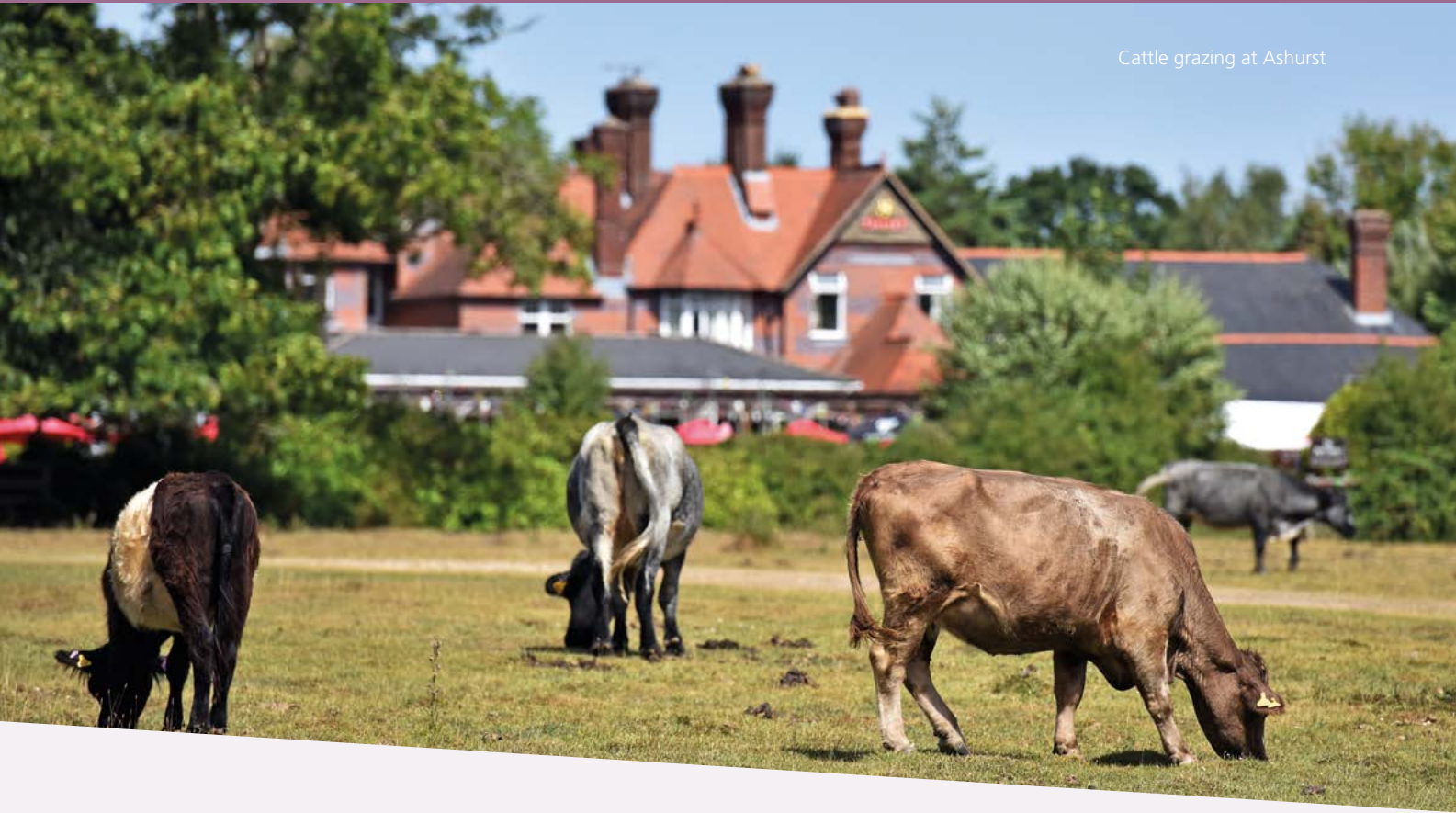
- Restricting the size of new homes to ensure new development is focused on meeting the identified local needs for smaller one-to-three bedroomed properties.
- A small increase in housing development in the National Park. The majority of new development will be on sites which have existing planning consents, on brownfield sites or 'windfall' development which becomes available unexpectedly.
- A lower site size threshold for new developments (three dwellings or more) to make provision for affordable housing in the larger villages of the National Park.
- Retaining the existing approach that all homes on 'rural exception' sites should be affordable for local people.
- A limited number of housing site allocations for the first time since the National Park was designated in 2005. On these new housing sites the Local Plan seeks a significant proportion of affordable housing to meet local housing needs.
- A new policy on major development within the National Park, ensuring a high bar is set and requiring robust justification for any such proposals.
- A new policy ensuring the landscape character of the New Forest is given great weight in planning decisions.
- A strengthened policy on protecting the historic and built environment of the area, including locally important assets that are not recognised by national listings.

We're proud that our new Local Plan allows our planning service to continue its important work helping to protect and enhance the National Park for future generations.



[newforestnpa.gov.uk/planning/local-plan](http://newforestnpa.gov.uk/planning/local-plan)





Cattle grazing at Ashurst

Managing new development

The pressure for new development in the National Park remains as high as ever and this is reflected in the number of planning applications received by our planning team – just under 1,000 this year. This included the outline application submitted in May 2019 to redevelop the former Fawley Power Station, which in combination with the related outline application submitted to New Forest District Council, represents one of the most significant schemes in the Forest for a generation.

We have worked closely with our colleagues at the District Council in

assessing the two applications, having undertaken extensive consultations and negotiations. It is expected that both applications will be reported to the respective Planning Committees for a decision at the end of July 2020.

Following the adoption of the Local Plan in August 2019, a number of other important sites are now coming forward for new development. These includes proposals to redevelop the former Lyndhurst Park Hotel as well as new housing developments in Ashurst and Sway.

Many people now take advantage of our pre-application service before formally submitting a planning application. This allows us to flag up any issues in advance and generally results in much better informed applications which in turn have a much greater chance of succeeding. This work is supported by a range of supplementary planning documents that include a Design Guide (soon to be updated) and a series of Village Design Statements (prepared by local parish councils). As a result, 85 per cent of planning applications were approved this year.

Planning enforcement

We rely on the vigilance of the public in letting us know where and when development is carried out without planning permission.

We opened and investigated around 300 cases in 2019-20 (an increase of about 20% on the previous year). Government guidance stresses that enforcement action should only be taken as a last resort, so we aim to resolve breaches of planning control through negotiation with property owners. When that isn't possible or appropriate because of the harm being done, we do serve enforcement

notices. We took such action in 12 cases this year.

Typical issues which have been investigated in the last 12 months include:

- use of woodland as private recreational areas and overnight accommodation.
- camping/caravan sites.
- expansion of established use caravan sites with mobile/park homes permitted under site licence.
- high fencing and walls.

- engineering operations involving tipping of earth.
- expansion of residential gardens into paddocks or agricultural land.
- change of use of outbuildings to form separate units of accommodation such as holiday lets.

A number of sites are also monitored to ensure changes are recorded, along with some new developments to safeguard long-term planning control aims and to minimise unauthorised development at an early stage.

Supporting good building design

We place a strong emphasis on the importance of good design in new development. This is reflected in our updated Local Plan policies (2019), the existing Design Guide and the seven Village Design Statements we've formally adopted to help guide planning decisions. This work is supported by our annual Building Design Awards which recognise the contribution that well-thought design makes to the built heritage of the National Park. This year awards were presented to:

- Best Green Building: Peppa Pig Building, Paultons Park (HPW Architecture)
- Best Residential Building: Little Marsh Lodge, Beaulieu (Ben Pentreath Ltd)
- Best Non-Residential: Gallery, Clock House, Beaulieu (Plum-Architects)

This year we also started a review of our National Park Design Guide. Nationally the Government is placing an increasing emphasis on good design and we will be updating our Design Guide to ensure it focuses on the key design issues in the National Park. This review will continue during 2020-21 and will include engagement with local communities, developers and architects.

Traditional building skills videos online

Four videos have been published featuring a series of talks by local historic buildings expert Kevin Stubbs. The videos, which cover roofing, wood, plaster and brick, are available on the NPA website.

The talks were part of a training programme for agents, builders and landowners aimed at teaching traditional building skills and specialist repair techniques.



Little Marsh Lodge, Parkshore, Beaulieu  
© Ben Penreath / NFNPA



Clock House, Beaulieu  
© National Motor Museum, Beaulieu / NFNPA

Hythe & Dibden Neighbourhood Plan

Neighbourhood Plans were introduced by Government to allow local communities themselves to prepare a plan for development and land use in their area. Neighbourhood Plans can be as broad or narrow in scope as the community wishes and should be prepared to be consistent with the Government's national planning policies as well as those set out by the relevant local authority.

Hythe & Dibden Parish Council started work on its Neighbourhood Plan in 2015 and has liaised with the National Park Authority, New Forest District Council and the local community as it has developed its Plan.

The draft Plan was endorsed by the independent Examiner in July 2019 and the final version of the Plan was the subject of a local referendum on 29 October 2019 (where 85% of the

local people who voted supported the Neighbourhood Plan). It has now been formally 'made' by the National Park Authority and District Council and is used to help determine planning applications submitted within the parish of Hythe & Dibden. It's the first Neighbourhood Plan in the New Forest National Park to make it through to adoption and we're now working with six other communities on their Plan preparation.



Hythe Ferry





New signs at Pennington Common

Habitat Mitigation Scheme

Since 2012 we have sought financial contributions from new development within the National Park to fund activities designed to mitigate the potential impacts of resulting increased recreational pressures on the New Forest’s internationally-protected habitats.

This year these funds were spent on a package of habitat mitigation measures including:

- the production of video footage with strong messages about how people can avoid disturbing rare birds that nest on the ground in the New Forest
- printed and online communications including extensive social media highlighting the vulnerability of the New Forest’s habitats and species
- a contribution towards the employment of four seasonal rangers who spent three months talking directly with people who are out in the protected habitats
- preparatory work on improved signage for selected rights of way that provide alternative locations for recreation.

Alongside the recent review of our Local Plan, our ‘Habitat Mitigation Scheme’ was updated to reflect the scale of development planned within the National Park and the advice from key partners (including Natural England) on the most appropriate mitigation measures.

Tree service highlights

Trees play a vital part in the New Forest’s character and communities. Our tree team offers advice and support on arboricultural matters, gives advice on planning applications and determines tree work applications. In 2019-20 in total we:

- dealt with 644 tree work applications and investigated some 15 possible breaches of legislation to protected trees
- made eight new Tree Preservation Orders and reviewed 12 old TPOs which straddle the border with New Forest District Council
- responded to 188 planning consultations from Development Management on planning applications.



Ancient tree

The impact

85% of planning applications approved

Interactive tree map

An innovative online map is now available showing all the protected trees within the New Forest National Park.

The new interactive map from the New Forest National Park Authority is a one-stop place to help people identify trees which need a special planning application to be pruned or felled, and could save thousands of pounds in fines.

The map shows the locations of trees with preservation orders (TPOs), as well as those which have already received applications for tree work. It also shows all the conservation areas within the National Park – where trees over a certain size are automatically protected.

The New Forest is the first National Park in the UK to make all this information publicly available on one online map.



Partnership for South Hampshire

In Summer 2019 the National Park Authority was invited to join the Partnership for South Hampshire – a collaboration of 12 local authorities around the Solent working together across authority boundaries to support the economy and environmental assets of South Hampshire.

Engaging with the Partnership for South Hampshire helps the constituent authorities co-operate on cross-boundary matters. In the context of the New Forest National Park, this includes addressing identified housing needs, ensuring the recreational impacts of new development on the National Park are mitigated and seeking solutions to the current requirement for new development to be ‘nitrate-neutral’.

Affordable housing

The New Forest housing market makes it difficult for many local people to find affordable homes which will allow them to stay in the area. In 2016 we pioneered an innovative scheme and built two affordable homes at Bransgore which were then let out to local families. Working closely with Burley Parish

Council, we have now secured planning consent to build two further affordable homes at Burley. We’re continuing to talk with landowners, agents, housing associations and other parish councils with a view to bringing more ‘rural exception’ sites forward for affordable housing.



Bransgore affordable housing



# Enjoy

## Enjoying the National Park responsibly

Our National Park is a special place, and one which has been enjoyed for hundreds of years. We're helping to protect this internationally-important landscape through promoting responsible recreation, and encouraging residents and visitors to respect and protect the New Forest's special qualities.

Wild Play, Holmsley



**Nigel Matthews,**  
Head of Recreation Management  
and Learning

**The New Forest National Park is home to 35,000 residents. It is also much loved by a further one and a half million people who visit it each year, many of these on multiple occasions, together amounting to over 15 million day visits. It's a place to go to school or college, and to earn a living – and it's a source of health, wellbeing and inspiration. All this goes on around rare and sensitive wildlife species and habitats, commoners' animals, forestry operations and farming. It's a precious yet active place**

For many years, and certainly since the 1960s, the organisations tasked with managing the New Forest have wrestled with how best to both protect the Forest itself and enable people to enjoy and benefit from it. Over the decades, many important decisions have been made, not least in the 1970s when the current boundary to the open heathlands and woodlands was marked with stock-proof fencing and cattle grids, and car parks and campsites were established. The designation of the New Forest as a national park was another pivotal moment – conveying clearly that its internationally-important landscape should be protected and enhanced, and that people should be encouraged to enjoy and understand its special qualities.

The Recreation Management Strategy for the National Park was first published in 2010 but in 2019, following a review led by the National Park Authority, a new suite of 22 strategic actions was agreed with other statutory organisations with a remit for managing recreation. These actions confirm the importance of putting the Forest first, but again recognise the many benefits that people derive from the National Park.

As you will see from this Annual Review, key elements of the strategy are now being taken forward. High on the list are educational campaigns designed to reach people who unknowingly risk harming the very place they come to enjoy. We have worked with other organisations, including the Police, to strengthen the response where laws are deliberately broken.

Alongside these we are pleased to be working proactively to ensure people learn about and can spend valuable time in the National Park. There are new initiatives to benefit health and wellbeing, for example in partnership with local GPs and link workers. We're working with partner organisations to improve green spaces and routes close to where people live, including wild play sites for local communities. Our education staff have taught thousands of school students both inside their schools and out in the National Park, and our rangers engaged with hundreds of young people on the National Citizen Service. Through PEDALL, people with disabilities have enjoyed time on adapted bikes. Our volunteer schemes go from strength to strength and our apprentice rangers have gone on to full time employment in the environmental sector.

By helping people to learn about and enjoy the National Park responsibly, we will not only benefit the current generation – we'll recruit ambassadors for the New Forest and ensure its wellbeing for future generations.







Volunteer Fair 2020

Volunteer  
Chrissie Whiffen

## The impact

We organised or supported more than 2,172 volunteer days this year

## Encouraging volunteering

A record-breaking 760 visitors attended the 10th annual Volunteer Fair to browse almost 60 organisations searching for volunteers. Roles ranged from helping at Hythe Pier and Highcliffe Castle, to working with badgers and butterflies, plus practical opportunities within a host of natural habitats.

The National Trust, Forestry England and RSPB exhibited at the January event, alongside local groups including Rockbourne Roman Villa, Pondhead Conservation Trust and Friends of the New Forest.

Our incredible volunteers are vital to much of the work we do in the Forest, and we organised or supported more than 2,172 volunteer days this year (up from 1,700 the previous year).

Volunteers enjoy a range of opportunities, including archaeological surveys and research, identifying historic routes, events, practical conservation, water quality monitoring and biological surveys.

NPA Volunteer Coordinator Richard Austin said:

**'Volunteering is a great way to help local communities and the**

**environment. It gives people the chance to see parts of the New Forest that they haven't before, all while making new friends, learning about this historic landscape and becoming custodians of it. They can give as much or as little time as they like.'**

[newforestnpa.gov.uk/volunteering](http://newforestnpa.gov.uk/volunteering)



NPA staff at the New Forest Show 2019

## Show time!

More than 4,000 people visited the 2019 New Forest Show stand. The theme was wildlife – particularly the species and habitats supported through the Verderers of the New Forest Higher Level Stewardship scheme. We shared a marquee with Forestry England and the Verderers in the now well-established 'Heart of the Forest' area of the Show and welcomed National Parks Minister Lord Gardiner to celebrate the 70th anniversary of UK National Parks and the Forestry Commission's centenary.



Forest organisations appeal to people to drive slower

## Reducing animal accidents

The winter animal accidents reduction campaign was launched with several Forest partners to warn people about animals on the road. The launch coincided with the clocks changing and the peak period for animal accidents in the darker nights.

Near life-sized silhouettes of the animals were displayed around the Forest, each showing the number that had been killed in the last year.

Along with prominent road signs provided by the Highway Authority, the ever-popular car window stickers, emergency hotline cards and online promotion the message does seem to be getting through. The overall trend in accidents is clearly downwards, with the last five years recording lower numbers of animal deaths than in previous years.

## Protecting rare ground nesting birds

Seasonal rangers are employed each spring and summer to raise awareness of how people can help the New Forest's ground nesting birds by keeping themselves and their dogs to the main tracks during the critical breeding season. In the last year we produced two short films about heathland and coastal birds. They show the rich variety of habitats that enable the rare birds to live in the New Forest, including those that nest on the ground.

We produced short engagement videos with National Park rangers, commoners, local businesses, and Forestry England staff to educate about the importance of keeping to the main tracks, between March and July. These were seen on social media by over 300,000 people.

The New Forest National Park was at the heart of a national summit hosted by The Prince of Wales to discuss ways to save the rare curlew.



Curlew

CEO of the New Forest NPA Alison Barnes meets the Prince of Wales at the curlew summit  
© Paul Burns Photography

Keep your distance partnership

## Keep your distance

We continued to work with other Forest organisations to highlight the dangers of petting or feeding the commoners' livestock. The partnership has added signs and information at Forest car parks, engaged with the general public, produced videos and organised talks and public engagement sessions to increase understanding of commoning and livestock.



Free-roaming livestock



Wild play



This year we have seen two new ‘wild play’ sites open in the New Forest, in Sway and Ashurst, to complement one which opened in Holbury in 2018. These permanent sites have been developed with the local community (part-funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund) and allow families to spend time playing and connecting with nature on their doorstep.

Larger wild play events have also taken place, where around 2,000 people have enjoyed active time with their family outdoors at Milford on Sea, near Brockenhurst and also near Bransgore.

A toolkit is available on our website to help other communities set up wild play sites.

A toolkit is available on our website to help other communities set up wild play sites.



Bumper Walking Festival

Our popular Walking Festival ran for three weeks (12 October – 3 November) to celebrate 2019 being designated the Year of Green Action by Government (see page 44), and help more people discover the National Park’s landscapes and wildlife. We and other partners led 70 walks including regular contributors such as Forestry England and new organisations such as the RSBP at Franchises Lodge and Bird Aware Solent. Over 600 people took part which was a 15% increase on 2018.

More than 200 children from local schools were able to participate in the 2019 Walking Festival thanks to a travel grant and free activities provided by a partnership which included Woodlander at Hoburne Bashley, the Year of Green Action and our education team. The school activities showing children getting back to nature were featured on BBC South Today in October.

Access for all

Independent advisory body the New Forest Access Forum continued to provide countryside access advice and guidance to Natural England, Hampshire County Council, the National Park Authority and other government bodies.

This year it welcomed three new members, attended two site visits, and dealt with several consultations around improving public access to land in the area for open-air recreation.

[newforestaccessforum.org.uk](http://newforestaccessforum.org.uk)



Family Trees

Nearly 100 people came to a native tree seed collection and planting event at Hoburne Bashley Woodland where they planted or sowed a tree seed to celebrate a loved-one. Families were able to take away ‘seed bombs’ with care instructions to plant at home in

their own garden. The event took place in National Tree Week and families learned about the different species in the New Forest, and why local seed sourcing is a more sustainable option and good for wildlife.



With a range of 30 uniquely-adapted bikes, PEDALL enables people who wouldn’t ordinarily be able to cycle to get outside, get active, improve their mental and physical wellbeing, tackle social isolation, and enjoy the wonders of the New Forest.

Since opening its Burley base, the charity which we host and support, has been

able to increase the number of rides and include more people with complex and additional needs. Rides are led by PEDALL staff and volunteers on the off-road cycle tracks surrounded by nature. There has been an increased uptake from older people and PEDALL is working in partnership with the NHS to support its social prescribing initiative. Weekend rides

are also offered, to encourage the whole family to come out and cycle together.

PEDALL has delivered 3,094 rides this year and operates all year round. The project is supported by 28 volunteers, who have given a total of 430 hours of their time in the last 12 months.

[pedall.org.uk](http://pedall.org.uk)





Children at Whitefield Moor

We're working hard to enable people to engage with nature and encourage them to protect it for future generations. We're also promoting the benefits of nature on physical and mental well-being.

## Inspiring young people

This year, the education team engaged over 12,000 students in and around the National Park; raising awareness and understanding, as well as promoting stewardship for the area.

Our 'litter assemblies' were a huge hit with 29 schools (over 6,000 students) who we visited before lockdown brought everything to a halt. Using the theme, 'Is history a load of old rubbish?', the Education Team played the role of an archaeologist looking back at the different layers of the landscape and seeing what has been left behind. It supports our climate change agenda by looking at reducing our global consumption of the earth's resources and encourages students to think about what small changes they can make.

We also delivered a day out in the forest for a group of health and social care students who will be working with a variety of ages and abilities in the future. We encouraged students to rediscover nature through simple and engaging activities, and to notice the benefits of being in nature on mental health. Thanks to the Travel Grant Scheme, we've supported more than 2,500 learning days across 15 New Forest education settings. This scheme is paramount in enabling more children to access the New Forest and gain first-hand experience of its special qualities.



Education officer Sue Palma sharing the magic of the New Forest

## The impact

We've supported 70 groups who are taking this award

### John Muir Award

This environmental award scheme is named after John Muir who established the first National Park in America. It enables participants from all backgrounds to connect with, enjoy and care for the environment. We've supported 70 groups who are taking this award by organising activities and helping them discover the New Forest in more depth. Our Education Team has helped them to connect to or rediscover nature which has positive impacts on well-being. We're looking to expand this support to families and schools so more people can benefit from being in nature.



National Citizen Service in New Forest

### National Citizen Service

More than 500 young people from all over Hampshire spent a fun and educational day in the New Forest National Park as part of their four-week National Citizen Service.

New Forest National Park Authority rangers led summer engagement activities for groups of 15 to 17-year-olds who'd signed up to the nationwide voluntary personal and social development programme.

Topics included woodland and heathland management; commoning; recreation; invasive species; protected landscapes and health and wellbeing.

They particularly enjoyed practical tasks which included a combined total of 240 hours pulling up invasive Himalayan balsam and rhododendron plants; 75 hours transporting and cutting hazel poles for charcoal production; and 28 hours helping to thin out woodland.

### Our apprentice rangers

Our trainee rangers have experienced action-packed apprenticeships. Each year-long, paid environmental conservation apprenticeship has involved working with us as well as with Forestry England, the National Trust, Hampshire County Council and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.

The apprentices received a variety of countryside management experiences with each of the partner ranger teams, and attended Kingston Maurward College in Dorchester, gaining qualifications in environmental management as well as certificates in chainsaw operations, brushcutters and strimmers and the safe use of pesticides.

Our apprentices have gone on to work in a range of roles within the New Forest or environmental conservation sector. Hayden Bridgeman (2018-19 apprentice) became an assistant ranger at Lepe Country Park, while Jake Barnes (2018-19 apprentice) became a seasonal ranger for us here at the New Forest National Park Authority.

#### Beck Sheehan New Forest apprentice ranger 2019-20

'This apprenticeship has given me the chance to gain so many valuable skills while working in a beautifully unique area and alongside some incredible people. I've already made so many memories and invaluable connections along the way and can't wait to see what happens next.'

#### Jake Leigh New Forest apprentice ranger 2019-20

'The apprenticeship has been an amazing experience. Not only do we gain a lot of practical qualifications and experiences, but we also get to work with some brilliant teams with years of combined knowledge and experience. So far, we've covered everything from tree felling, hedge laying, working with volunteers and surveying wildlife, and we're really looking forward to working with the other partner organisations later in the year.'



Jake Leigh and Beck Sheehan apprentice rangers



Lepe Country Park

### Natural opportunities for health

We know that access to greenspace and 'bluespace' (rivers, lakes and the sea) is a key factor in improving our health and wellbeing, which is why we're keen to support and develop initiatives that recognise, use and invest in the 'natural health service' here in the National Park.

This year in the New Forest, the Clinical Commissioning Group, National Park Authority and New Forest District Council worked with the NHS to develop how people can be 'socially prescribed' time in nature or helping nature in the New Forest. The NHS has committed to supporting new link workers, employed by clusters of GP surgeries, and these workers have been learning about and actively engaging people with the New Forest and opportunities in nature such as art, walking, cycling and volunteering.



# Prosper

Working in partnership with other organisations it's our duty to help foster the economic and social well-being of the local communities within the National Park, ensuring it thrives as a living, working Forest.



New Forest Marque member Kathy Sirl  
of the Naked Pantry, New Milton





## Promoting local produce

The New Forest Marque membership has continued to grow over the past 12 months reaching a total of 160 members.

Membership includes commoners, farmers and growers based in the New Forest area as well as food, drink and craft producers who are not only based in the New Forest but who also source their raw ingredients and materials locally. Hospitality and retail members champion the New Forest Marque, offering local produce on their menus and to their customers. Locally produced food, drink and crafts are a vital part of the local economy. The National Park Authority provides financial and professional support to the Marque to help ensure the many small businesses who make up the network can thrive.

New Forest Marque Manager Claire Lee said: ‘Building a network of producers and outlets and raising awareness of the local produce that’s available is fundamental to creating a vibrant local economy. It provides employment and preserves traditional practises while respecting and complementing the nature and the unique environment of the New Forest.’

New Forest Marque members’ hard work and exceptional produce has been recognised in local and national awards schemes.

### CLA Awards winners 2019

- Pilley Community Shop
- Naked Pantry
- Forest Meats @ Manor Farm

### NFBP Brilliance in Business Awards 2019

- Montagu Arms Hotel
- New Forest Hamper Company
- New Forest Aromatics

### Hampshire Sausage and Pie Awards 2020

- New Pastures Butchers Ltd
- HG Witt and Sons

### Great Taste Awards 2019

- Hockey’s Farm Pork
- New Forest Spirits – Wyrd Gin
- Real Jam and Chutney Company – Spicy Carrot Pickle
- Lyburn Farm Cheese – Old Winchester – Stoney Cross – Lyburn Lightly Oak Smoked

## The Green Halo Partnership – What if? Why not?

The Green Halo Partnership’s vision is for our most precious landscapes to work in harmony with a thriving, economically successful community.

In the four years since the Partnership was formed the need for this vision has only become greater.

The climate and nature crises have become more urgent; a time of political change now provides the opportunity for Thinking Bigger.

Our mission has been to put natural capital at the heart of the Partnership’s four key themes:

- Enhancing the natural environment
- Supporting the local economy
- Improving health and wellbeing
- Encouraging sustainable living.

We are working through the partnership to champion a ‘natural capital approach’, where the benefits that nature gives us are at the heart of decisions about our communities and environment.

We were delighted to secure an opportunity for the Chairman of the Government’s Natural Capital Committee, Professor Dieter Helm, to host a business round table in early April 2019.

Following this event, we were able to engage with the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and helped them include natural capital considerations in their Local Industrial Strategy. This is a big step forward, with more key partners and businesses acknowledging the importance of maintaining and enhancing our natural assets for the prosperity of our area.

The NPA and Green Halo partners worked with the LEP to present a Natural Capital Master-class for local businesses in September.

Local plans suggest significant growth in the Green Halo area in the coming years, the equivalent of a conurbation the size of Bournemouth or Southampton.

Challenges posed by the need for cleaner air and nitrate neutrality in the Solent will require a strategic approach

if they are to be resolved. Through coordinating a draft delivery framework for environmental net gain, the Green Halo Partnership has encouraged planning officers across Hampshire to address this new approach to decision-making likely to emerge in the new Environment Bill in 2020.

The sell-out Green Halo Conference, ‘Thinking Bigger’, was held on 4 February 2019 at Ordnance Survey’s headquarters.

It challenged the delegates to come together to drive real change in response to the climate and nature emergencies. Speakers encouraged radical, inspirational thinking and the courage to collaborate and

communicate better, to extend good principles across boundaries, to ask What if? and Why not?

Attended by 80 delegates from across the private, public and third sector, the conference recognised the importance of networks such as the Green Halo as a platform to bring people together. We will continue to convene the group, to be the broker for What If? questions and to champion the importance of placing natural capital at the heart of decision-making.







New Forest National Park award winners with National Parks Minister Lord Gardiner (centre) and NPA Chief Exec Alison Barnes (sixth from right) at the New Forest and Hampshire County Show

# New Forest National Park Awards recognise the best of the Forest

The best of the New Forest’s rural businesses, organisations, land managers and champions and were recognised at the seventh New Forest National Park awards in partnership with the CLA. The prizes were handed over by National Parks Minister Lord Gardiner in a special ceremony at the New Forest and Hampshire County Show.

New for 2019, the Young Environmental Champion award celebrates the achievements of young people under 25 years of age who are working to help protect the National Park and its wildlife. The award was won by 19-year-old Dominik Reynolds from Totton, who has been volunteering in the National Park since he was nine years old and thrives on learning, making a difference, and educating and enthusing others.

**The winners of the 2019 awards were:**

- Young Farmer/Commoner of the Year – Daisy Slocombe
- Best Supporter of Local Produce – Pilley Community Shop
- Sustainability Champion – Kathy Sirl, The Naked Pantry
- Young Environmental Champion – Dominik Reynolds
- Rural Diversification – Stephen and Wendy Maughan
- Land Management – Kevin and Fiona Gover

### The impact

A new Young Environmental Champion category for the New Forest Awards

Alison Barnes, Chief Executive of the New Forest National Park Authority, said: **‘These awards have become a shining example of partnership working. It is now more important than ever to work with our partners across the country to secure funding and resources to ensure the New Forest continues to thrive for future generations.’**



The New Forest Tour

### The impact

Reduced traffic on New Forest roads

## Encouraging sustainable travel

The New Forest Tour encourages people to leave their cars behind and discover the National Park on open-top buses, with audio commentary and discounts for local attractions. A rainy August resulted in a 12% fall in patronage on 2018 at 34,511 passenger journeys, although still higher than 2017, and continued

an upward trend since the Tour began. Through customer feedback we know that people choose the Tour to avoid driving, yet still be able to fully experience the landscape and attractions along the way. This supports the Tour’s objective of reducing the number of vehicles on our roads. The hop-on, hop-off

nature of the service also helped contribute to the visitor economy in rural areas. The travel concierge team provided information to over 6,200 visitors, both at Brockenhurst Train Station and while aboard the Tour fleet.

## Brilliance in Business Awards

New Forest Aromatics was announced as providing the best contribution to the National Park at the New Forest Brilliance in Business Awards in December.

The Brockenhurst company, which produces a range of skincare products, scented candles and room fragrances, is now significantly carbon negative.

As part of the New Forest Business Partnership Brilliance in Business Awards, the New Forest National Park Authority sponsors the award for best contribution to the National Park. New Forest Aromatics beat off stiff competition from two other short-listed organisations – Brockenhurst College and New Forest Activities, to claim the trophy at the awards night at Beaulieu National Motor Museum.



New Forest Brilliance in Business Awards 2019 © Dave Dodge



# Achieving Excellence

Working together across organisations and communities is vital to make sure we have a strong collective voice to champion the New Forest National Park.







Forestry England's Deputy Surveyor Bruce Rothnie, National Parks Minister Lord Gardiner (centre) and NFNPA Chief Executive Alison Barnes in a double celebration at the New Forest Show 2019

# Thousands join Year of Green Action

Thousands of people in the New Forest joined in a nationwide Year of Green Action to improve the natural world and mark the 70th anniversary of National Parks.

The year of events and activities kicked off with record numbers attending the Volunteer Fair in Lyndhurst in January. National Parks Minister Lord Gardiner attended the National Park stand at the New Forest Show in July and cut a celebration cake. He then handed out the National Park Awards to winners in categories ranging from Young Environmental Champion to Young Commoner and Rural Diversification.

Other highlights throughout the year included:

- 4,000 people attended our stand at the New Forest Show and 67% said the green activities on the stand such as creating bug hotels had encouraged them to do something positive for the environment. 72% of those surveyed said they learnt more about New Forest wildlife.
- Two new wild play areas were launched – at Ashurst and Sway – to encourage children to connect with nature.
- 43 schools and youth groups bid for Green Action Grants. In total £6,300 was awarded to establish wildlife gardens and composting areas, build bug hotels and raised beds, and buy tools and litter picking equipment.
- Over 1,200 people joined in the Great British Spring Clean in the New Forest in March with 50 litter picks across the Forest and coast.

- National Park and Forestry England staff worked with commoners and filmmakers on a major new BBC Four documentary 'New Forest: a year in the wild woods' exploring the landscapes, history and wildlife that make the New Forest one of the UK's most important ancient woodlands. It was broadcast in January and again in September.

New Forest National Park Authority Interpretation and Outreach Manager Jim Mitchell said:

**'It's been heartening to see people of all ages take positive action to improve the environment as we mark the 70th anniversary of national parks in the UK.**

**'The New Forest National Park is a world capital for wildlife but is under great pressure due to climate change, 15 million day visits a year and thousands of new homes planned close by. It's imperative that we all do our bit to protect this fragile landscape so it thrives into the future.'**

## The Big Green Weekend

More than 15 'green' organisations and homeowners in and around the National Park opened their doors for a weekend in June to inspire others to follow in their footsteps.

The Big Green Weekend showcased electric cars, rainwater harvesting systems, biomass boilers and other energy-saving technology in homes and gardens.

It also included a special film screening of A Plastic Ocean at Lyndhurst Community Centre, and a Green Hub in Lymington with free tips and devices to help make homes more environmentally friendly.

Andy Brennan, Sustainability Officer at the New Forest National Park Authority, said:

**'This was a great opportunity to find out ways to make your home more energy efficient and your garden environmentally friendly.**

**'We had a whole range of properties, gardens and activities for people to see, with water efficiency advice and free devices from Southern Water, recycling information and advice on reducing food waste.'**



Big Green Weekend 2019

## Partnership Plan review

All national parks must have a management or partnership plan for their area, to help guide the work of partners with responsibilities and an interest in the National Park.

2020 is the final year of the current five-year New Forest National Park Partnership Plan. Most of the 90 actions in the current Plan have been fully or at least partly completed, including:

- 500 people trained in specialist skills such as land management, hedge laying and repairing historic buildings.
- 20 miles of New Forest streams and wetland habitats restored.
- £370,000 of private sector funds invested to establish business, digital and social innovation academies.
- 500 volunteers have provided 6,500 days undertaking a variety of activities to help look after the New Forest's heritage.

We're now reviewing the Plan to cover the next five years, giving us all an opportunity to demonstrate a renewed commitment to delivering the National Park's purposes and duty by aligning our collective skills, knowledge and resources.



National Trust staff talk to partners at their Foxbury plantation

Holger Schiller, Partnerships and Community officer at the New Forest National Park Authority said: 'Much has happened since the last review which will need to be reflected in the new Plan, such as the Landscapes (Glover) Review; a new Agriculture and Environment Bill; the Green Halo Partnership; the upcoming regeneration of the Waterside area to the east of the National Park, and many other developments.'

In September we hosted a partners' event at Foxbury to visit and discuss some of the challenges and opportunities partnership projects face and how to address these in the next Partnership Plan.



The New Forest Trust's Love the Forest campaign works with businesses across the New Forest to raise funds for conservation, education and commoning projects. We support this campaign with administration and business development work, while the public can donate online at

[newforesttrust.org.uk/donate](https://newforesttrust.org.uk/donate)

## Our staff

### Our values

Our values help shape our culture and reflect our principles, standards and ways of working, they can be summarised as PACT:

#### Purpose

We are dedicated to our work

#### Achievement

We innovate, inspire and deliver success

#### Care

We strive to be sustainable in all we do

#### Teamwork

We work together with openness, integrity and respect

### Staff discovery days

All staff are invited to join our 'discovery days' in June each year – a half day out of the office to mix with colleagues in an informal setting and find out about our work in other parts of the organisation. Discovery days this year included taking part in The Big Microplastic Survey at Lepe which involved recording and identifying nurdles and microplastics in the sand, and a guided walk around Pondhead inclosure to learn how traditional woodland skills such as coppicing benefit wildlife.



NPA Ranger Team 2019

### Mental health and wellbeing

As part of our commitment in the People Plan we set out the framework for our approach to mental health and wellbeing. This year 10 staff undertook training to become Mental Health First Aiders and all managers had a training day to become mental health advocates. We set up a wellbeing group which meets monthly to discuss and implement wellbeing initiatives including promoting national events/days.



# Financial Information

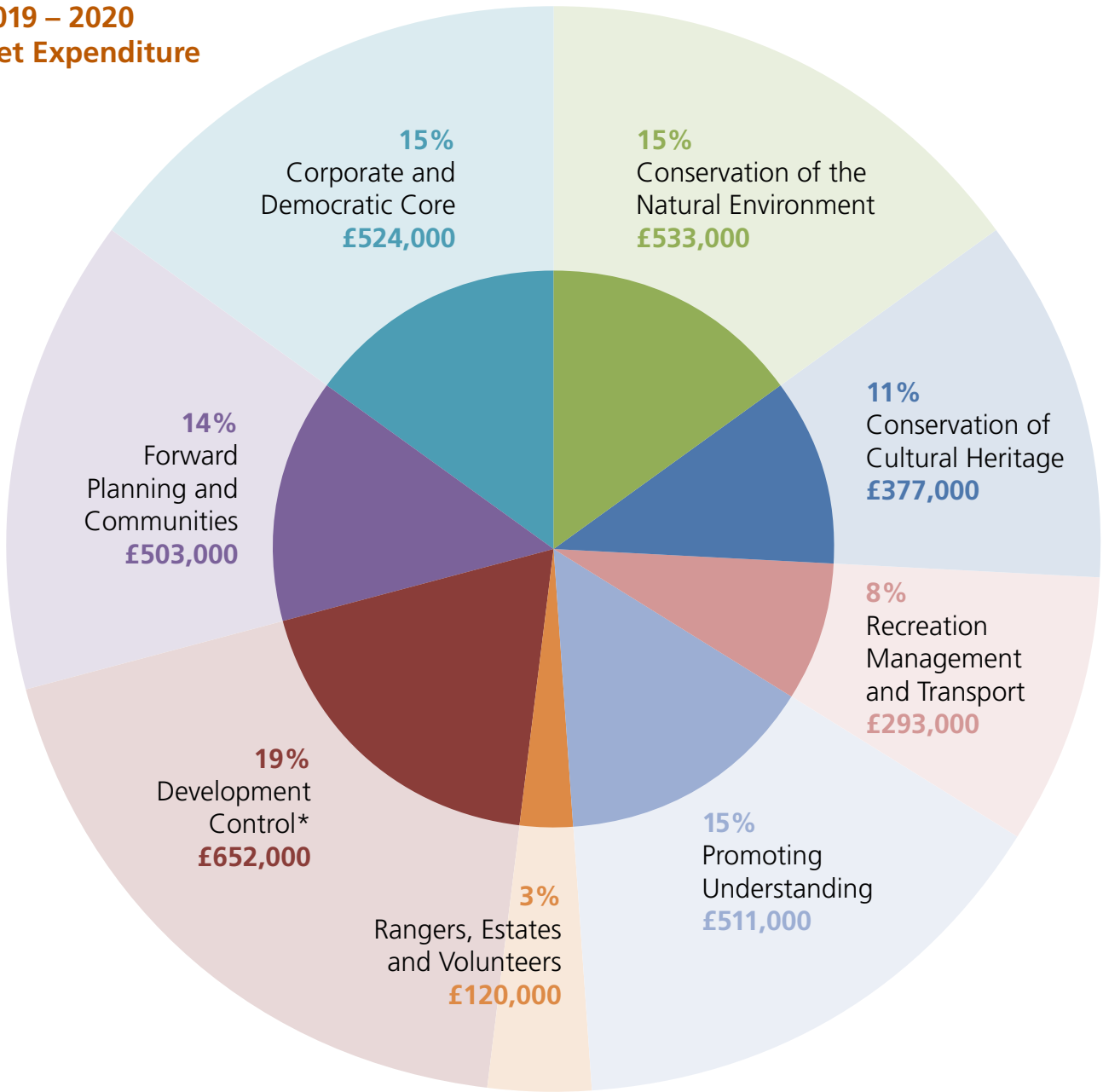
Following a number of years of significant reductions, for the past four years our core grant from Defra has been 'protected', including a 1.7% inflation-offsetting increase (equating to £56,000).

While welcoming this increased financial stability, we have continued to seek cost efficiencies where possible and sought ways to increase effectiveness in the work we do. We continue to generate substantial external partnership funding to further services and delivery. On average every £1 we contribute to joint projects generates a further £15 from partner organisations.

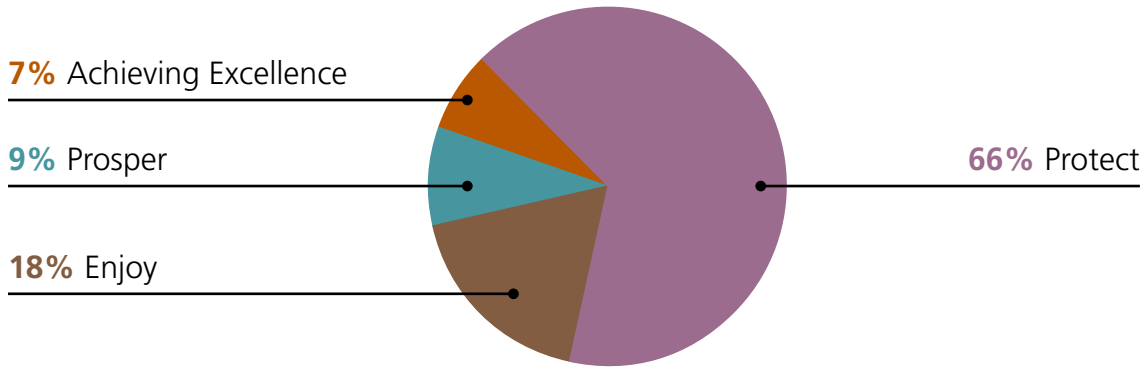
- We received around:**
- £3.252m** from Defra
  - £491,000** in statutory fees for planning and related applications
  - £110,000** for shared services with other local authorities (ecology, rangers, archaeology, communications and administration)
  - £17,000** grants related to the planning service
  - £16,000** on our investments
  - £14,000** in other income generated (such as talks, guided walks, New Forest Tour advertising and charging for expert advice)

- Significant external funding totalling £0.9m was secured for the Forest, including:**
- £578,000** Our Past, Our Future: Landscape Partnership Scheme
  - £100,000** Higher Level Stewardship Scheme
  - £89,000** PEDALL inclusive cycling charity
  - £78,000** New Forest Land Advice Service
  - Plus many more smaller projects...

2019 – 2020  
Net Expenditure



2019 – 2020  
Budget



\*Also includes enforcement and the tree service



# Contact us

We welcome your views and comments about this Annual Review or any other aspect of our performance or services. For regular updates, please sign up to our email newsletter at [newforestnpa.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@newforestnpa.gov.uk)

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