

# **New Forest National Park Partnership Plan**

**2021 – 2026**

**Issues, Vision and Objectives**

**Draft Consultation Document**

**April 2021**

## Foreword

This draft consultation document represents an important step in the development of the next National Park Partnership Plan. It is an invitation to all with an interest in the future of the New Forest National Park to help shape how we work together for this unique and special landscape and to support the communities that sustain it in the coming years.

As we reflect on what has been an incredibly difficult last 15 months, our collective experience of the pandemic has made us realise just how much we rely on the natural environment for our health and wellbeing. Like all National Parks, the New Forest National Park has provided a vital space for respite and recovery. In turn, this has increased focus on the importance of the natural world and ensuring that the landscape and the nature it supports is sustained for future generations. Many agree that now is the time to redouble our efforts to tackle the huge twin challenges of our age – the decline of nature and the fundamentally connected threat of the climate crisis.

Nationally we have seen a focus on how we rebuild after Coronavirus; how we recover the economy, society as a whole and crucially, the environment – a ‘green recovery’. It is not only the UK which has undergone this realisation; globally there is a clear desire to see change.

In this draft consultation document, we set out a refreshed Vision for the Forest’s future in this context of crisis and recovery. This renews our collective commitments to deliver the purposes for which the New Forest National Park was designated - to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, and to promote understanding and enjoyment of the Forest’s special qualities. And in so doing to foster the social and economic wellbeing of our communities.

The new Partnership Plan is a call to action for individuals, communities, businesses, public bodies, voluntary sector and other organisations to work together to deliver the agreed Vision to secure the future of this special place.

## Introduction

The New Forest has long been recognised as an exceptional landscape, shaped over millennia by the people who have lived and worked here. It is one of the most important areas for nature conservation in Europe and its open landscape, coastline and unique natural beauty have inspired generations of local people and visitors alike.

In 2019, we celebrated the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 which led to the designation of the first National Park in England, the Peak District National Park.

We now have 10 National Parks in England and the New Forest was one of the last to be formally designated in 2005. Covering 220 square miles on the central south coast of England, it is the smallest National Park in the UK, other than the Broads. Yet it is also home to more than 34,000 people and 2,500 local businesses. More than 16 million people live within a 90-minute drive of the New Forest and its ease of access make it one of the most visited National Parks in the country.

Our National Parks are the ‘breathing spaces’ for the nation and 70 years on from the first designation, the Government commissioned Landscapes Review (2019) was a call for all English National Parks ‘*to reignite the fire and vision which brought this system into being in 1949*’. The Review emphasised the role of National Parks in leading nature recovery and the response to climate change; the huge potential of National Parks to improve the physical and mental health wellbeing of the population; and highlighted the challenges facing communities living in National Parks, especially the issue of affordable housing.

At a time when we are looking to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic, when we need to respond to the climate and nature emergencies and as we transition to a new way of life outside the European Union, now more than ever we need a clear, up-to-date plan of action to equip the Forest for the future.

The Partnership Plan will outline the key drivers and challenges facing the National Park and set out how these should be addressed collectively. It will guide and align the resources and priorities of the National Park Authority and those of partner organisations, businesses and communities who are key to its delivery. Our intention is that it will also influence wider decisions and investment of all those who have a part to play in protecting this most special landscape. It will also enable the support of communities in and around the New Forest who have a crucial role in achieving a positive future for the National Park.

This consultation document has been prepared with input and support from the main statutory organisations who will share responsibility for delivering the aims and objectives of the Plan.

A level of engagement has already taken place over the last year with joint workshops, the publication of a summary leaflet setting out the rationale for the Partnership Plan and more recently a public ‘snapshot survey’ that captured people’s

views on how the New Forest National Park can recover from the pandemic and what they would like to see for the future.

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## **Our proposed Vision for the New Forest National Park**

The Vision for the New Forest is to be a national beacon for a sustainable future, where nature and people flourish. In 2050, the National Park is a unique and immediately recognisable place where:

- people live and work sustainably, having successfully adapted to the impacts of the climate emergency and supporting nature's recovery and resilience
- tranquillity and a feeling of naturalness pervade large parts of the New Forest
- the mosaic of distinctive landscapes and habitats have been conserved and greatly enhanced, supporting wildlife to recover and flourish
- there is a strong sense, understanding of and support for the heritage and living culture of the New Forest
- facilities such as car parks, campsites, walking and cycling routes and community green spaces are in the right places to both protect rare wildlife and to provide a better, more informed experience for people
- all communities and visitors gain inspiration, health and wellbeing and enjoy the extensive areas accessible across the National Park whilst respecting the fragile nature and unique environment and culture of the New Forest
- local, regional and national organisations recognise and work to enhance the value of the National Park; there is an appreciation of its importance and role within the wider area
- everyone contributes to caring for the National Park as a special place for present and future generations

## The Qualities that make the New Forest special

The [special qualities](#) of the New Forest are those qualities that define it, make it unique and immediately recognisable and, when taken together, distinguish it from all other parts of the country. These qualities are fundamental to the two National Park purposes and are the underlying reason for its designation.

***The New Forest's outstanding natural beauty:*** the sights, sounds and smells of ancient woodland with large veteran trees, heathland, bog, autumn colour and an unspoilt coastline, with views of the Solent and Isle of Wight.

***An extraordinary diversity of plants and animals and habitats of national and international importance:*** the mosaic of lowland heath, mire, ancient pasture woodland and Forest lawns that forms the Open Forest is unique in Britain and Europe. In addition, the Solent coastline comprises extensive areas of mudflats, salt marsh and shingle, backed in places by low cliffs, supporting large populations of wintering wildfowl and waders. In total 56% of the National Park is designated for its national or international nature conservation value - a far higher proportion than any other English National Park.

***A unique historic, cultural and archaeological heritage,*** from royal hunting ground, to shipbuilding, salt making and 500 years of military coastal defence. The cultural landscape of the New Forest has developed continuously from prehistoric times to the present. The National Park has 214 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, constituting almost 10% of all scheduled monuments in the south east region, together with many important unscheduled sites.

***An historic commoning system*** that maintains so much of what people know and love as 'the New Forest' forming the heart of a working landscape based on farming and forestry. The New Forest remains one of the few extensive lowland commons where rights are still widely practised and a strong commoning culture continues. The right of mast allows the turning out of pigs to feed on the acorn crop, while common pasture allows the grazing of ponies, cattle and donkeys.

***The iconic New Forest pony*** together with donkeys, pigs and cattle roaming free. The grazing of ponies and cattle has always been central to the pastoral economy of the New Forest. They are one of the most obvious and distinctive features of the area, and for many visitors they are undoubtedly a very important part of their experience of the New Forest.

***Tranquillity*** in the midst of the busy, built up south of England. The tranquillity and sense of remoteness that can still be found in many parts of the National Park is a quality of importance to many people. This contrasts with the increasingly built up and intensively managed landscape of southern England and provides a means of release from the pressures of modern life.

***Wonderful opportunities for quiet recreation,*** learning and discovery in one of the last extensive gentle landscapes in the south including unmatched open access on foot and horseback. There is open access on foot or horseback to more than 30,000

hectares (116 square miles) in the centre of the National Park, and an extensive network of footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths across the rest of the area.

**A healthy environment:** fresh air, clean water, local produce and a sense of 'wildness'. The coastal location and prevailing south westerly winds means that air pollution is generally low, and water quality in the New Forest rivers and streams, and on the coastal beaches, is also good. The variety of food and other products produced and sold locally continues to increase, giving the opportunity for people to live healthily and sustainably and at the same time support the local economy.

**Strong and distinctive local communities** with a real pride in and sense of identity with their local area. The New Forest communities have a strong cultural identity, with a wealth of local traditions and a thriving commoning community. Many local people have a strong sense of the Forest's history and are deeply committed to the protection of the area and many volunteers support local organisations improve the Forest environment, its culture and local communities.

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## The role of the Partnership Plan

All National Parks are required by statute to have a Management Plan (often known as 'the Partnership Plan') for their area, to help guide the work of those with responsibilities or an interest in the National Park. The Plan is for the National Park as a place and not specifically for the National Park Authority or any other organisation.

National Parks have two statutory purposes that set out the main reasons for their designation and describe the overall focus for their management. The two National Park purposes as set out in primary legislation are:

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

National Park Authorities also have a duty in taking forward the two National Park purposes to seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of local communities within the National Park.

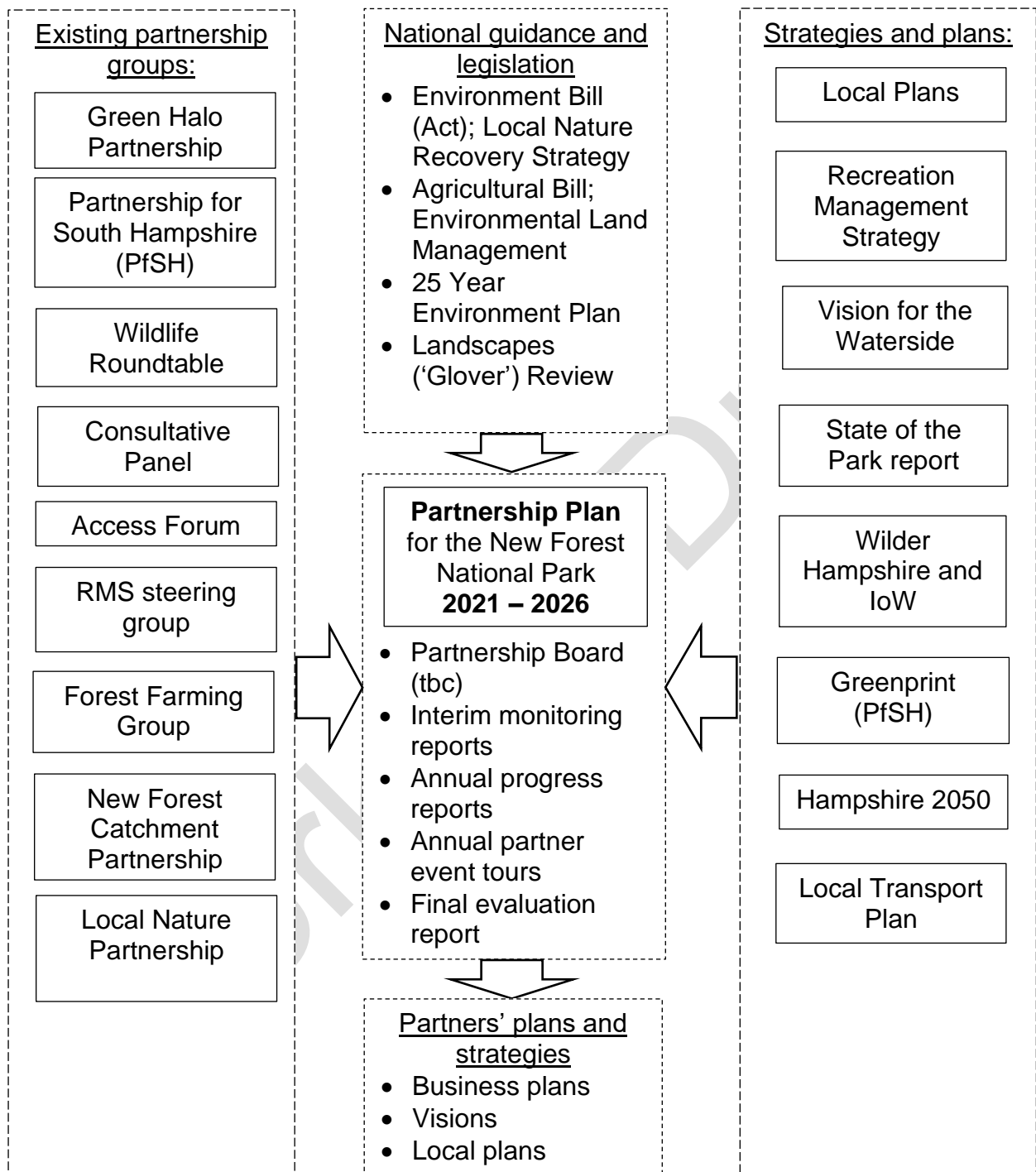
The relationship between the purposes is commonly known as the 'Sandford Principle', which states that every effort should be made to reconcile any conflicts between the purposes, but that if such efforts fail then the priority must be given to the first purpose of conservation and enhancement. The primacy of conservation is especially important in the New Forest National Park which has the highest proportion of its land (56%) covered by international nature conservation designations when compared to other local authority areas in England.

All public and statutory bodies must have regard to National Park purposes when making decisions or carrying out activities relating to or affecting land within the National Park. This legal 'duty of regard' acknowledges that the fulfilment of the National Park purposes rests not only with those bodies directly responsible for their management but also relies on effective partnership working.

More recently, the Landscapes Review (2019) called for Management Plans to be strengthened and to set clear priorities and actions for nature recovery and the response to climate change.



## How the new Plan will fit together with existing forums, plans and strategies



## The challenges and opportunities facing the New Forest

The New Forest faces a period of significant change as the country recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic, confronts the twin challenges of the climate and nature emergencies and adapts to life outside the European Union. New and emerging domestic legislation and reforms are likely to have a profound and lasting impact on how the National Park is managed in the future, although the future direction of national policy and funding is still to be determined at the time of preparing this consultation document. So whilst this document sets out our shared Vision, priorities and objectives for the next five years, a separate more detailed programme of work will be developed alongside the new Plan for the next two years. Thereafter, we will review and publish a revised annual work programme for years three, four and five.

### Climate and nature emergencies

In 2019 the UK became the first national government to declare an Environment and Climate Emergency. That decision marked a renewed sense of urgency in tackling climate change with the Government legally committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2050. The Landscapes Review has since called for our national landscapes to be at the forefront of the national response to the [climate and nature emergency](#).

In the New Forest National Park, we are already seeing wetter winters, hotter, dryer summers, rising sea levels, an increasing frequency of extreme weather events and longer periods of higher fire risk. Combined, these factors have far reaching implications for our biodiversity, our communities, land managers and local businesses.

More than two-fifths of UK species including animals, birds and butterflies have seen significant declines in recent decades. The State of Nature report (2019), which draws on scientific monitoring since the 1970s, showed that there has been no let-up in net losses for the UK's wildlife. More intensive agriculture is still driving declines in farmland nature, while climate change is also having an increasing effect, with average UK temperatures rising by 1C since the 1980s. The state of wildlife in the New Forest remains a major concern, with just over 50% of our Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) judged to be in 'favourable condition'.

A challenging issue for nature conservation and recovery in the New Forest is how to respond to increasing demand for access without compromising the integrity of protected wildlife sites.

Key state-of-play indicators:

- Only 53.22% of SSSIs in favourable condition
- Sharp decline in ground nesting birds, in some cases more than 50%

However:

- 44ha of grassland and heathland has been restored
- 12.5km of wetland sites (channels and drains) restored
- Over 90% of respondents to a recent local public survey (2021) want to see the environmental improvements seen during the pandemic continue

## **Managing recreational pressures**

Before the pandemic, it was estimated that there were over 15 million day-visits for leisure and recreation each year to the National Park. 75% of these visits arose from just 300,000 relatively local people travelling from home on a regular, often daily basis. The remainder of the visits were by just over 1 million people who were on holiday. These large numbers and the fact that well over 50% of the National Park is designated for its rich wildlife create a unique management challenge.

In 2019, an extensive consultation known as '[Future Forest](#)' debated and sought views on recreation in the New Forest National Park and surrounding area. Through this work partners have already agreed a comprehensive series of [actions](#) to manage recreation across the New Forest and beyond. Several of the most fundamental actions have been incorporated into this Partnership Plan.

One of these actions is to move towards a coordinated, strategic approach to mitigate the recreational impacts of the significant levels of new housing proposed in the areas surrounding the National Park. Up and until now, this has largely happened independently in local authorities around the New Forest, but the benefits of a more coordinated, strategic approach are recognised.

Over the lifetime of this Plan, there is likely to be an increased demand for 'staycation' holidays and further recreational demands placed on the National Park as opportunities for travel further afield remain limited due to the pandemic. A joint 'care for the Forest, care for each other' action plan has been put in place for 2021 but we recognise that we need to deliver the longer term actions that have already been agreed to better manage these increasing recreational pressures. Partnerships need to be developed to identify and create new green spaces for recreation away from the protected habitats of the New Forest.

Key state-of-play indicators:

- Estimated increase in the level of recreational access to protected sites of around 11%, solely from new housing within a 25km radius of the New Forest's internationally designated nature conservation sites.
- Almost 130,000 new dwellings / 16.4% increase in housing within 25km of the New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar sites by 2036

## Traffic and Transport

The New Forest is one of the most visited National Parks in England. Traffic within the National Park is a major issue for many residents and visitors. This can affect the quality of life of local communities, the quiet enjoyment of the National Park, the welfare of livestock and the integrity of the Forest's landscape and habitats. It is also a significant local contributor to climate change and air quality, with roads and road transport generating the highest emissions in the National Park. Other matters of concern include the levels of traffic generally, verge parking, animal accidents, maintenance of minor roads, congestion in the larger villages (particularly Lyndhurst), failure to observe speed limits, lack of sustainable transport alternatives and commercial lorries/vans' use of minor Forest roads.

Hampshire County Council is preparing a new Local Transport Plan with a focus on sustainable transport and reducing dependency on the private car.

Key state-of-play indicators:

- Total carbon footprint in the National Park was 522kt of CO<sub>2</sub> in 2006 with the largest emissions coming from road transport (47%)
- 50 commoners' animals killed in 2020
- Only 7% of visitors travelling to the New Forest car free
- Over 100km of off-road cycle paths, although network not effectively joined up

## Commoning, farming and land management

The New Forest is celebrated as a living, working landscape where sustainable farming and land management systems deliver many benefits to society – 'public goods'. The Forest's unique and ancient system of common grazing is a critical component of ensuring it survives as an intact cultural landscape. This new Plan coincides with the start of a period of 'agricultural transition' following the UK's

Key state-of-play indicators:

- 22,919 hectares of landcover within the National Park classified as high importance for pollinating insects
- 20 new commoners' dwellings built since 1992

departure from the EU. There will be a phasing out of Direct Payments to farmers, to be replaced with a new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) from 2024 and, for 2021-24, support specifically for farmers and land managers in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This programme will deliver environmental outcomes and contribute towards the delivery of recommendations in the Landscapes Review.

## **Affordable housing**

The provision of affordable housing in the New Forest is consistently raised as one of the biggest challenges facing local communities in the National Park. The affordability of housing is a major barrier to sustainable communities in the New Forest, where the average house price is around 15 times average earnings – making the New Forest the least affordable National Park in the UK.

The high proportion of larger properties, and the associated high price of housing, makes access to affordable housing a key issue facing many local communities. Young people and young families, in particular, find it difficult to get low-cost housing that would enable them to continue living in the area.

There is some early evidence to suggest that the pandemic has accelerated people moving from high density urban areas to the countryside, which together with more people choosing to work from home, is likely to increase pricing pressures on the National Park's limited housing stock.

### Key state-of-play indicators:

- Most expensive National Park in England: average price for a house within the National Park was £643,371 in 2019, about 15 times the average wage of people living in the National Park
- Over 200 eligible applicants on New Forest District Council's housing register waiting for affordable housing opportunities in the National Park
- 51 new affordable homes have been completed in the National Park since 2006

## **Connecting with people**

The Landscapes Review challenged National Parks to do more to reach and welcome people, especially those in ethnic minority communities, those living in deprived areas, as well as first time visitors. The English National Parks were created in part to provide a healing space, both mentally and physically, in the aftermath of the Second World War. The pandemic has similarly raised many fundamental questions about the way we live our lives. There is a greater appreciation for our natural environment and the benefits of having accessible green space on our doorstep. National Parks should be inclusive places, leading the way on sustainable tourism and improving the nation's health and wellbeing.

Key state-of-play indicators:

- One of the lowest 'easy to use' footpath network rating compared with other National Parks
- Visitor surveys reveal that of people within 5km of the National Park boundary, 89% of those living in the 10% least deprived areas had visited in the previous year compared to 58% of those in the 10% most deprived areas. This trend continues as you move further from the boundary (source Footprint Ecology 2019)

### **Working together**

There is a huge and diverse range of organisations, charities, groups and fora working in and for the New Forest, with healthy levels of public engagement and participation. There are some excellent examples of partnership working but equally there are many areas where organisations and communities could work better together and in so doing so strengthen understanding of the New Forest beyond our boundaries and present a more unified, powerful voice to national and regional agencies and decision makers.

The Landscapes Review called for partner organisations to work together more effectively and to produce strengthened management plans to secure the ambition for our special landscapes and to better reflect all sections of society.

## Our shared ambition

In order to deliver the proposed Vision, we have focused on five theme-based 'agendas for action', which describe in more detail what we want to achieve and how we will achieve this. The themes do not cover all of the work that will be ongoing within the National Park but instead highlight the areas where we will work together to achieve transformative change. The aspirations in this new Plan will be very ambitious, and we recognise that they will be challenging to achieve, but their inclusion in the Plan is intended to drive action and to target efforts to secure the funding and resources required.

For the next five years, our collective endeavour will focus on achieving outcomes in these key five areas:

- **Nature Recovery** – habitats are restored, expanded and maintained to enable wildlife to thrive, both within and around the National Park
- **Net Zero with Nature** – significant cuts in land-based carbon emissions are secured through restoring natural habitats and carbon capture
- **Thriving Forest** – a living, working Forest is sustained through support for commoning, local produce, sustainable tourism, access to affordable homes and helping to attract high-value businesses and employees
- **An inclusive National Park** – people within reach of the New Forest, of all backgrounds, abilities and socio-economic groups, value the National Park as an important part of their lives and seek to care for it
- **Team New Forest** – communities, businesses and organisations work together as a team to deliver the vision of the Partnership Plan, sharing knowledge, ideas and resources to deliver the best for the Forest

## Key themes at a Glance

	<b>Agenda for Action</b>
<b>Nature Recovery</b>	<p>Produce a local nature recovery plan to (i) restore and expand habitats and help wildlife thrive and (ii) ensure recreation takes place in the most resilient areas</p> <p>Harness the benefits we receive from nature in the New Forest ('natural capital') to generate increased investment and projects</p> <p>Help landowners, farmers and commoners switch to the new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) which rewards working with nature</p>
<b>Net Zero with Nature (NZWN)</b>	<p>Develop a 'net zero with nature' programme with partners and communities to ensure the National Park is carbon neutral by 2050.</p> <p>Promote and develop best practice in nature-based solutions to meet climate and nature goals</p> <p>Help communities to take action on the climate crisis</p>
<b>Thriving Forest</b>	<p>Support commoning and local produce to sustain the landscape for future generations</p> <p>Invest in green skills and jobs, creating a centre of excellence for the future green economy</p> <p>Provide more affordable housing</p>
<b>An inclusive National Park</b>	<p>Create a 'Natural Health Service' within and beyond the National Park, through a programme of measures provided by communities and the health and environment sectors</p> <p>Help new and diverse audiences connect with nature, discover why the National Park is special and how to care for it, with a particular focus on young people</p> <p>Foster a greater pride in the New Forest, its landscape and cultural heritage</p>
<b>Team New Forest</b>	<p>Establish new ways of engaging with our communities and encouraging grassroots action</p> <p>Ensure the New Forest is leading the environmental agenda through our work regionally and nationally</p> <p>Develop a centre of excellence for data and evidence to underpin our collective decisions and actions and use technology to help us manage the National Park more effectively</p>



# 1. Nature Recovery

## Outcome:

Habitats are restored, expanded and maintained to enable wildlife to thrive, both within and around the National Park.

## Why is it important?

The New Forest National Park is one of the most valuable areas for wildlife in Europe and has the highest proportion of designated nature conservation sites of any National Park in the country. Even though they remain important we can no longer simply protect nature from harm through special sites and reserves. The unique mosaic of heathland, mires, grassland, woodlands rivers and ponds of the Open Forest, the fields, hedges and woodlands of the forest fringe, the species rich floodplains of the Avon Valley and the grazing marshes and saline lagoons of the coastal plain; all are under threat from climate change, new diseases and invasive species.

Urgent action is needed to ensure our habitats are more resilient, better managed, bigger and more joined up. Ecosystems need to be restored and wildlife needs to be able to move through the landscape freely if it is to adapt to change, which means looking beyond the Open Forest and working across the wider countryside.

National Park Management Plans should set clear priorities and actions for nature recovery including wilder areas and the response to climate change.

Nature Recovery is a major commitment in the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. More recently, the Government has committed to protect 30% of land in the UK by 2030 to support nature recovery. By bringing together partners, legislation and funding, we can provide nature-based solutions that will restore ecosystems, habitats and prioritise key species for recovery and reintroduction.

## Agenda for Action

We will work together, and at scale, to maintain, reconnect and enhance nature. We commit to developing a nature recovery programme for the National Park that:

### 1.1. Makes more space for nature through:

- 1.1.1. Restoration and expansion of the Open Forest heath, mire and pasture woodland habitats; inclosures suitable for restoration and sites that share a common boundary with the Open Forest
- 1.1.2. Restoring grassland, rejuvenating hedgerows, coppice woodland and enhancing arable habitats of the forest fringe
- 1.1.3. A programme of river, wetland restoration and pond creation
- 1.1.4. Opportunities for coastal realignment and saltmarsh restoration
- 1.1.5. Opportunities to reduce flood risk by working with natural processes within catchments
- 1.1.6. A programme of species recovery, reintroduction and control of invasive species

### 1.2. Enhances Natural Capital by:

- 1.2.1. Valuing and accounting for the public goods provided by the New Forest

- 1.2.2. Providing benefits of nature, particularly quality green space near to where people live
  - 1.2.3. Incorporating natural capital in our policies and programmes
  - 1.2.4. Generating opportunities for increased investment in ecosystem services
  - 1.2.5. Coordinating research to better understand the role of peat as a carbon store in the New Forest
- 1.3. Supports nature recovery through the new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) by:
    - 1.3.1. Working with and through the 'Forest Farming Group' to develop a common approach to land management which delivers on the 25 Year Environment Plan's ambition of 'public money for public goods'
    - 1.3.2. Taking a collaborative approach with private landowners, farmers and land managers
    - 1.3.3. Continuing to provide advice to landowners, farmers and commoners
    - 1.3.4. Providing support for ELMS Test and Trial projects and farm cluster groups across the National Park
  - 1.4. Ensures developers deliver a wider range of environmental benefits over and above the full environmental impact of the proposed development by:
    - 1.4.1. Having clear and up-to-date planning policies and new supplementary planning guidance that maximise this Environmental Net Gain (ENG) through new development
    - 1.4.2. Adopting a Design Code for new buildings
  - 1.5. Mitigates recreational pressures by:
    - 1.5.1. Developing a spatial plan for where recreation should be encouraged across the New Forest and surrounding areas
    - 1.5.2. Agreeing a strategy to facilitate changes to the location and capacity of car parking on the open Forest and adjacent commons
    - 1.5.3. Developing a strategic approach to mitigate the potential impacts associated with increasing recreational pressures arising from planned new housing and visitor accommodation development on the internationally designated habitats
    - 1.5.4. Increasing the level of funding available for recreation management so that it is sufficient to address both existing and future needs
    - 1.5.5. Using appropriate and proportionate enforcement strategies to deter illegal use of the Forest

## **2. Net Zero with Nature**

### **Outcome:**

Significant cuts in land-based emissions through restoration of natural habitats and carbon sequestration to achieve net zero by 2050.

### **Why is it important?**

Climate change is the greatest long-term challenge in the present day. The impact of climate change on the New Forest is likely to be wide reaching, with warmer, wetter winters, hotter, dryer summers, rising sea levels and an increasing frequency of extreme weather events, the effects of which are already being seen. The overriding challenge for the Partnership Plan is to make a significant contribution to both mitigating and adapting to climate change.

The National Park Authority declared a climate and nature emergency in January 2020, with a commitment to reduce its own greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2030. Many of the partner organisations have made similar declarations and we all recognise that progress can only be made through collaborative working and a collective ambition to achieve net zero with nature.

The natural environment is one of the most important and effective solutions we have for capturing and sequestering carbon long-term. We will safeguard the New Forest landscape, restore habitats for wildlife to combat biodiversity loss and support behaviour change beyond our boundaries to help communities adapt to climate change.

### **Agenda for Action**

We will provide leadership to reduce carbon emissions, working towards the National Park being 'net zero with nature' by 2050. Net zero is achieved when any harmful greenhouse gas emissions are balanced by an equivalent amount being absorbed by the atmosphere and landscape. We will do this through a programme of work that:

#### **2.1. Establishes baseline data and evidence by:**

- 2.1.1. Enhancing understanding and monitoring of emissions / carbon data
- 2.1.2. Researching and monitoring climate change impacts and trends
- 2.1.3. Developing research agendas and links with national level research bodies
- 2.1.4. Mapping of carbon values/emissions in the National Park

#### **2.2. Promotes nature-based solutions by:**

- 2.2.1. Identifying preferred areas for tree planting
- 2.2.2. Providing advice on low carbon practices and engaging farmers / landowners in agri-practices to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- 2.2.3. Training advisors on low carbon farming practices
- 2.2.4. Increasing levels of carbon storage / sequestration in the National Park, including surrounding estuaries and coast, using the natural capital baseline monitoring
- 2.2.5. Developing an investment model with the National Park's 'Net Zero with Nature' programme

- 2.3. Builds a New Forest coalition for a Net Zero economy by:
  - 2.3.1. Raising awareness of low carbon land management and business practices
  - 2.3.2. Integrating grey infrastructure projects with the wider natural environment
  - 2.3.3. Promoting investment opportunities to offset greenhouse gas emissions
  
- 2.4. Activates communities by:
  - 2.4.1. Establishing a citizen science and community action programme
  - 2.4.2. Increasing hedgerow and tree planting ('the right tree in the right place')
  - 2.4.3. Enlisting more volunteers and support for the New Forest Ambassadors' Scheme
  
- 2.5. Increases Sustainable Travel by:
  - 2.5.1. Producing an agreed New Forest Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)
  - 2.5.2. Campaigning for lower speed limit across the Forest (30 mph) to secure quieter, slower and reduced traffic impacts
  - 2.5.3. Developing a more co-ordinated and integrated approach to sustainable transport through the relevant Local Transport Plans
  - 2.5.4. Supporting bids for schemes that enable us to decarbonise the transport system

### **3. Thriving Forest**

#### **Outcome:**

A living, working Forest is sustained through support for commoning, local produce, sustainable tourism, access to affordable homes and helping to attract high-value businesses and employees.

#### **Why is it important?**

The New Forest is a living working landscape. It is one of the few remaining extensive systems of common rights operating in lowland Europe. Maintaining a high-quality natural environment can also contribute substantial economic benefits by supporting sustainable tourism and helping to attract high-value businesses and employees. Local produce and local businesses are vital to the health and well being of our rural environment and local economy.

National policy also recognises the need for small-scale, sustainably located development within National Parks to support the socio-economic well-being of our communities. We need to support community and economic recovery from Covid-19 and address societal issues such as the high cost of housing and an ageing population.

#### **Agenda for Action**

We will do this through a collective programme of work that:

- 3.1. Increases green skills and jobs by:
  - 3.1.1. Establishing a centre of excellence for green skills and jobs and invest in Natural Capital skills hub
  - 3.1.2. Developing a strategy and opportunities for young people through education and training
  - 3.1.3. Designing an apprenticeship programme building on the 'Our Past Our Future' (OPOF) ranger scheme
  - 3.1.4. Creating a Green recovery / investment fund
- 3.2. Supports Sustainable Land Management by:
  - 3.2.1. Developing new business models with landowners to support the delivery of public goods
  - 3.2.2. Maintaining and enhancing public goods through commoning and farming
  - 3.2.3. Facilitating the Forest Farming Group
- 3.3. Champions the future of New Forest Commoning by:
  - 3.3.1. Securing the future of commoning
  - 3.3.2. Collaborating at landscape scale with commons groups (Foundation for Common Land)
- 3.4. Supports New Forest Business and Green Tourism by:
  - 3.4.1 Encouraging green investment by businesses
  - 3.4.2 Supporting local produce through the New Forest Marque

- 3.5. Increases the availability of affordable housing by:
  - 3.5.1. Providing more affordable housing for local communities and retaining the existing stock of affordable and occupancy restricted housing
  - 3.5.2. Facilitating site finding, community involvement and application process through the 'rural exception route'
  - 3.5.3. Better monitoring and reporting of availability of restricted housing stock (conditions/leases/tenancy agreements)

Working Draft

## **4. An inclusive National Park**

### **Outcome:**

People within reach of the New Forest, of all backgrounds, abilities and socio-economic groups, value the National Park as an important part of their lives and seek to care for it.

### **Why is it important?**

People need nature and culture for their physical, mental and spiritual health. The future of the New Forest depends on new generations understanding and valuing this internationally-important landscape – and helping to care for it. Our education officers teach 10,000 children and young people a year with sessions tailored to learning about the New Forest and our rangers work with thousands more through their family-focussed events and activities. Many more are engaged through the media, print and online platforms.

We want to encourage greater understanding and appreciation of the National Park ensuring minimum impact alongside the social and economic benefits that visitors bring. We also want to specifically help people who face barriers or particular challenges to access this special place to benefit from engagement with the National Park. Effective partnership engagement, interpretation and communication programmes will be required to ensure we are a National Park for all.

### **Agenda for Action**

We will do this through a programme of work that:

#### **4.1. Promotes Health and Wellbeing by:**

- 5.1.1. Building a strong, mutually beneficial partnership between the health and environment sectors, including a five-year programme of 'Health Education Fellowships' and a regional 'Nature Health Network'
- 5.1.2. Addressing health inequalities locally and regionally through improved green space, targeted interventions and nature-based referrals
- 5.1.3. Increasing uptake of walking for health, inclusive cycling for health and volunteering for health programmes

#### **4.2. Connects People with Nature and Landscape by:**

- 4.2.1. Removing barriers to participation and access – physical and perceived
- 4.2.2. Recruiting more rangers, part of whose role is to help people understand and enjoy the New Forest, including apprentice rangers
- 4.2.3. Using data and evidence to create a more accurate picture of the current and possible users of the New Forest National Park and barriers to participation
- 4.2.4. Developing comprehensive and inclusive programmes of health and youth engagement and outreach to build relationships with diverse communities and audiences, including a Youth Action Project and bespoke education activity

#### **4.3. Leads inclusive place making, celebrates beauty and safeguards our cultural heritage by:**

- 4.3.1. Assisting communities and local organisations to lead and shape cultural and natural heritage projects that foster identity and sense of place
- 4.3.2. Bringing together cultural heritage and archaeological datasets, identify gaps and survey identified areas to achieve a complete picture for future management
- 4.3.3. Interpreting and disseminating landscape, cultural and natural heritage through specific outreach such as the New Forest Knowledge website
- 4.3.4. Developing a better understanding of the impact of development and activities on dark night skies and take opportunities to mitigate those impacts

Working Draft



## **5. Team New Forest**

### **Outcome:**

Communities, businesses and organisations work together as a team to deliver the vision of the Partnership Plan, sharing knowledge, ideas and resources to deliver the best for the Forest.

### **Why is it important?**

The long term survival of the New Forest is just as dependent on what happens around the boundary, regionally and nationally as within. We need to consolidate our networks and influence, nurture a culture of collaboration and enable delivery of policies and a package of measures to ensure the National Park landscape, economy and communities thrive.

We want to capture the wealth of experience, skills and views in delivering the next Partnership Plan. The Plan will be a living programme of work that will evolve over time, adapting and improving to new challenges and changing agendas. We need to ensure that we hear and take account of all sections of our community as we move forwards.

Everyone stands to benefit when we embrace and value the diversity of thoughts, ideas and ways of working that people from different backgrounds, experiences and identities bring to the National Park. Our work and our National Park will be richer if we take account of and include the views of all sections of society.

We will ensure a range of interventions are in place to enable all sectors of our community to have their say, take part and influence action in the National Park.

Data and evidence will underpin and help guide the Partnership Plan and our work with different organisations and groups. We will establish a Centre of Excellence with universities, businesses and other stakeholders to ensure our decision-making is anchored in robust research.

### **Agenda for Action**

We will do this through a programme of work that:

- 5.1. Seeks to work with a wide range of people in our community and beyond by:
  - 5.1.1. Growing understanding of each other and our audiences
  - 5.1.2. Enabling enriching experiences for a diversity of people
- 5.2. Establishes strong partnerships and relationships within and beyond boundaries by:
  - 5.2.1. Increasing the breadth and depth of our engagement
  - 5.2.2. Establishing a new Partnership Board
  - 5.2.3. Advocating regionally, nationally and internationally; identifying key means by which we can realise the ambition of the Partnership Plan
  - 5.2.4. Expanding and consolidating links from the New Forest to Dorset, Hampshire and Wiltshire

- 5.2.5. Activating and channelling people's enthusiasm for caring for the New Forest and learning more about it (such as New Forest Ambassadors Scheme); harnessing and supporting existing movements within our communities
- 5.3. Leads the green agenda; seeking to influence, shape and innovate by:
  - 5.3.1. Ensuring blue-green infrastructure is in place, connecting key network areas to help solve climate challenges by building with nature
  - 5.3.2. Managing recreation across the area effectively, seeking new opportunities for sites where people and nature can benefit
  - 5.3.3. Positioning the Green Halo Partnership to cement our role as thought leaders, influencing, developing and implementing policy in this area
  - 5.3.4. Championing and helping to deliver the green recovery and the 'Greenprint' aspirations of the wider area
  - 5.3.5. Working with Southampton City Council on its bid for City of Culture and developing National Park City campaign
  - 5.3.6. Exploring the National Park City region bid with Southampton City Council, South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) and the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- 5.4. Developing a reputation as a 'Centre of Excellence' in our work together for the National Park and wider area by
  - 5.4.1. Understanding our evidence needs, the gaps and how to fill them; we are known as a centre of excellence for evidence and data – in its commission, collation and application
  - 5.4.2. Successfully scanning horizons using up-to-date evidence and data
  - 5.4.3. Developing a 'SMART' National Park ambition
  - 5.4.4. Working with each other efficiently, effectively and with respect – investing each other as shapers of our future

## How you can get involved

### Write to us about the future vision

You can respond to this consultation in writing to set out how you see the future vision, issues and objectives for the new Partnership Plan. Every comment will be read and can result in changes or amendments to our thinking and how we express the work needed. Given our current working arrangements it would be easiest for us if you email your responses. The email address to use is:

[policy@newforest.npa.gov.uk](mailto:policy@newforest.npa.gov.uk)

#BeTheChangeNewForest (*#to be agreed*)

If social media is more your thing you can tweet us your key thoughts using the above hashtag, you could use text, images or video. You can also use it on Instagram Facebook or any of the platforms that you use in your everyday life.

### Become a volunteer

One of the biggest ways you can contribute to the future management of the National Park is by volunteering to do practical work in the New Forest to improve outcomes for nature, our heritage, access and interpretation. This is a way that you can really make a difference. More details are available here:

[Volunteer registration - New Forest National Park Authority \(newforestnpa.gov.uk\)](http://newforestnpa.gov.uk)

[New Forest Ambassador scheme - New Forest National Park Authority \(newforestnpa.gov.uk\)](http://newforestnpa.gov.uk)