



# **Sustainability Appraisal for the draft New Forest National Park Partnership Plan 2021 – 2026**

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Environment Act 1995 requires all English national park authorities to prepare and publish a management plan for their area. It is the overriding strategy document that directs and monitors the work of an authority and its partners in delivering the two statutory national park purposes and associated duty. Importantly, it is a plan for the place and not specifically for a national park authority or any other particular organisation. The same Act prescribes that “*every national park authority shall review its national park management plan at intervals of not more than five years*” and submit the plan to the Secretary of State.
- 1.2 The first New Forest National Park Management Plan was published in 2010. It includes a summary of the special qualities of the New Forest and describes a Vision for how the New Forest should look and function in 20 years’ time. There is a strong emphasis on working together with partners and the Plan sets out ten key strategic objectives supported by more detailed actions.
- 1.3 The 2010 Plan was updated in 2015 through the Partnership Plan. The same ten objectives are retained but the actions are grouped around the themes of Protect, Enjoy and Prosper, reflecting the two national park purposes and its duty. The Partnership Plan was produced jointly by the nine statutory partner organisations, whose logos are included on the front cover of the published document, underlining the partnership approach to the management of the Forest.
- 1.4 The Partnership Plan for 2021 - 2026 will outline the key drivers and challenges facing the New Forest National Park and set out how these should be addressed collectively. It will guide and align the resources and priorities of the New Forest National Park Authority and those of partner organisations, businesses and communities who are key to its delivery. The 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.
- 1.5 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.

## The proposed Partnership Plan Vision for the New Forest National Park

1.6 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, especially the local tradition of commoning
- 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

### Agendas for action

1.7 In order to deliver the proposed Vision, there is a focus on five theme-based 'agendas for action', which describe in more detail what the Partnership Plan wants to achieve and how it will achieve this. For the next five years, the Plan 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

- 1.8 These are not meant to be seen as a comprehensive list of all the work likely to occur in the Forest, but instead focus mainly on key ideas and initiatives designed to deliver the objectives in the Partnership Plan

## **2. Sustainability Appraisal process and assessment framework**

- 2.1 This Sustainability Appraisal, incorporating the requirements of a Strategic Environmental Assessment, has been prepared to inform members of the public, key stakeholders and consultees about the methods and results of the appraisal of the sustainability of the proposed draft Partnership Plan 2021 – 2026.
- 2.2 The draft New Forest National Park Partnership Plan sets out a set of agendas for action to enable the Partnership Plan to achieve its objectives for the National Park.
- 2.3 A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is required under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 for all new policies, plans and programmes likely to have environmental, social and economic impacts. Although not specifically required by law, the National Park Authority has previously decided that its Management / Partnership Plan should be informed by a Sustainability Appraisal.
- 2.4 The purpose of this Sustainability Appraisal is to promote sustainable development through the integration of social, environmental and economic considerations into the preparation of the Partnership Plan. It involves testing the Plan's proposed new agendas for actions against a set of sustainability objectives and criteria. This SA process informs the development of these agendas and by identifying any potential adverse effects that the plan might have, the plan makers can consider alternative policy options or mitigating measures if required.

- 2.5 Whilst not a planning document, the process and aims of using a Sustainability Appraisal are summarised by Paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework which clarifies that “*This should demonstrate how the plan has addressed relevant economic, social and environmental objectives (including opportunities for net gains). Significant adverse impacts on these objectives should be avoided and, wherever possible, alternative options which reduce or eliminate such impacts should be pursued.*”
- 2.6 The Sustainability Appraisal incorporates a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Whilst an SA evaluates the environmental, economic and social impacts of the policy or objective, the SEA specifically evaluates the environmental impacts of plans in order to ensure the protection of the wider environment. SEAs are required under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations, 2004.

## **Stages for producing a Sustainability Appraisal**

- 2.7 Guidance recommends a process for completing a Sustainability Appraisal in a number of stages. The first stage is to produce a Scoping Report. This contains a list of the policies, plans & programmes relevant to the SA process, which sets out the wider policy context regarding sustainability issues. It also sets out a description of the characteristics of the National Park and the current state and trends for key environmental, social and economic issues that are relevant to the Partnership Plan and which may be affected by the Plan’s actions. Together with the key sustainability issues, this information is used in judging how the Partnership Plan is likely to influence the condition of the Park and contribute to the delivery of sustainable outcomes. Importantly, the Scoping Report establishes the Sustainability Framework containing sustainability objectives and criteria, which have been used to assess the sustainability of the Partnership Plan. The Scoping Report was completed in Dec 2019 and the views of the statutory consultees about the Scoping Report and the Sustainability Framework were then sought (Appendix 3). The Scoping Report is available on request from [policy@newforestnpa.gov.uk](mailto:policy@newforestnpa.gov.uk).
- 2.8 The next stage, represented by this document, involves a Sustainability Appraisal to assess the agendas for action proposed in the draft Plan, and where any adverse impacts are identified, to provide recommendations for mitigation and improvements to sustainability. This assessment will be subject to consultation alongside the draft Plan. The final stage of the process will then be the production of the final Sustainability Appraisal Report, incorporating the environmental report required by the SEA Regulations, to accompany the final version of the Partnership Plan later this year. This will include an assessment of any changes to the agendas for action that have been

made as a result of the consultation responses to the draft Plan and this SA assessment.

## Framework for assessing the sustainability of the draft Partnership Plan

2.9 The Scoping Report established the framework for assessing the sustainability of the draft Partnership Plan (Section 7). This framework comprises of ten sustainability objectives and associated decision-making criteria. In accordance with the relevant guidance and regulations, the three statutory consultation bodies (Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency) were consulted on these proposed sustainability objectives.

2.10 The objectives represent a mix of national and local outcomes relevant to the National Park and are based on those objectives used previously to assess the 2015-2020 Partnership Plan. These have been re-assessed in the light of the changed national and local context, baseline information, the National Park Authority's recent Sustainability Appraisal of the Local Plan and sustainability issues set out in the Scoping Report. Where necessary they have been amended and re-ordered to create an up-to-date set of objectives that are easy to use and reflect changes over the last 5 years.

2.11 To complete the development of the SA Framework, criteria were established to assist the assessment of the impacts on the SA objectives of the proposed agendas for action in the draft Plan. The criteria provide a guide of the possible outcomes that will determine the likelihood of each SA objective being achieved. This enables a judgement to be made of the likely outcome or 'effects' of the draft Plan in sustainability terms.

Sustainability Appraisal Objective	Criteria
<p><b>1. Conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape and seascape, and safeguard the tranquillity of the National Park</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will it protect the landscape character of the New Forest National Park?</li> <li>• Will it encourage appropriate management of designated landscapes?</li> <li>• Will it protect and retain trees, woodlands and hedgerows?</li> <li>• Will it maintain or extend areas of tranquillity?</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Conserve and enhance local, national and international nature conservation interests</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will it limit pressures on designated sites arising from recreation, development and other uses?</li> <li>• Will it contribute to nature recovery and achieve a net gain in biodiversity?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will it protect and enhance existing local sites of nature conservation importance or create new areas of nature conservation value?</li> <li>• Will it protect ancient woodland and aged and veteran trees?</li> <li>• Will it allow biodiversity to adapt to the effects of climate change, including enhancement of ecological networks / corridors?</li> <li>• Will it protect the range of biodiversity, including rare and vulnerable species where they occur?</li> </ul>
<b>3. Conserve and enhance the character of the historic environment, local heritage and culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will it protect, maintain and enhance listed buildings, conservation areas, archaeological sites, historic landscapes and the setting of these assets?</li> <li>• Will it provide for increased access to and enjoyment of the historic environment?</li> <li>• Will it encourage local cultural traditions including commoning?</li> </ul>
<b>4. Encourage sustainable use of resources, enhance the quality of air, water and soil and help mitigate climate change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will it promote the value and benefits of natural resources and the use of sustainable materials?</li> <li>• Will it encourage water conservation and the sustainable use of water?</li> <li>• Will it protect the quality of air, water and soil and reduce greenhouse gas emissions?</li> <li>• Will it aid delivery of the Water Framework Directive?</li> <li>• Will it ensure the sustainable use of soils and safeguard the best and most versatile agricultural land?</li> <li>• Will it encourage the use of energy efficiency and enable small-scale renewable energy schemes?</li> <li>• Will it help in adapting to climate change?</li> </ul>
<b>5. Enable the delivery of education and opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will it encourage educational development including lifelong learning for those seeking new knowledge and skills?</li> <li>• Will it further the understanding of the special qualities of the Park by local people and visitors?</li> <li>• Will it allow opportunities for all social groups to experience and enjoy the National Park, while ensuring that visitor pressure does not harm the sensitive habitats of the area?</li> </ul>
<b>6. Improve the well-being of local communities by providing access to local services and opportunities for healthy living</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will it reduce the risk from coastal, fluvial and surface water flooding?</li> <li>• Will it support local services, community facilities and community enterprises?</li> <li>• Will it support access to health care?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will it help to maintain, connect or increase green infrastructure for the benefit of local communities?</li> <li>• Will it improve safe access to the countryside and the coast and encourage walking, cycling and other healthy outdoor activities?</li> </ul>
<b>7. Support the delivery of affordable housing for local communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will it increase the amount of low cost or affordable housing for those in housing need?</li> <li>• Will it support special accommodation needs, including active commoners and others?</li> <li>• Will it ensure an appropriate level of utilities infrastructure, while limiting any adverse environmental impacts?</li> </ul>
<b>8. Support the local transport infrastructure, including sustainable transport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will it ensure transport infrastructure (roads/ rail/buses/ cycleways/footpaths) serves the needs of local businesses and communities?</li> <li>• Will it improve the provision and use of sustainable transport?</li> <li>• Will it help reduce any environmental impacts of transport infrastructure, including impacts on the quality of life of residents and the character of settlements?</li> </ul>
<b>9. Encourage and foster the economic wellbeing of local communities, while maintaining the quality of the New Forest environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will it help support sustainable business development?</li> <li>• Will it encourage provision of diverse employment opportunities?</li> <li>• Will it enhance local skill levels and training?</li> <li>• Will it encourage sustainable tourism?</li> </ul>
<b>10. Ensure a thriving land-based economy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will it strengthen the commoning, farming, forestry and woodland management economies while benefitting the landscape of the New Forest?</li> <li>• Will it enable farm diversification appropriate to the character of the area?</li> <li>• Will it encourage training in rural skills relevant to land-based businesses?</li> </ul>

2.12 These sustainability objectives and criteria are used to make an assessment of the sustainability of the agendas for action that have been proposed in the draft Partnership Plan. The SA objectives and criteria can help identify any imbalances and conflicts of the social, economic and environmental objectives with the agendas for action. Once inconsistencies and adverse effects have been identified, options and the agendas themselves can be refined further, and the Plan's sustainability can be improved where necessary.



2.13 To fulfil the requirements of a Strategic Environmental Assessment, the SA objectives cover biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage, landscape, and the interrelationships between them. Appendix 2 shows how the SA Framework meets the requirements of the SEA.

## Developing the agendas for action

2.14 A set of agendas for action have been devised with the aim of achieving the Plan's objectives. When considering these agendas for action, the Authority had to ensure they were compatible with the statutory and policy framework within which National Parks exist (National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, as amended by the Environment Act 1995), including:

- Section 61(1) of the Environment Act, which sets out the statutory purposes of National Parks :
  - a) conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the areas specified in the next following subsection; and
  - b) to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of those areas by the public.
- Section 62(1) of the Act states that in pursuing the two National Park purposes above, the National Park Authority “...*shall seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park...*”
- Section 62(2) of the Environment Act 1995 confirms that if there is a conflict between the purposes, greater weight should be given to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park (commonly known as the Sandford Principle).
- National Planning Policy Framework, particularly paragraph 172, which states that “*Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited.*”

- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations ensures strict conservation of designated nature conservation sites. Specific and stringent tests within the Regulations ensure that no new development will affect the integrity of these sites. New development can only proceed once it is certain that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of a protected sites. These designated sites cover more than 50% of the National Park area.

2.15 The range of alternative approaches considered, therefore, was shaped by the need to comply with the statutory purposes and duty of the National Park and the statutory framework within which it operates, including the large area covered by nature conservation legislation. In many cases there are, therefore, few realistic alternatives for the direction to be followed in the National Park. However, an assessment was made of the likely evolution of the key environment, social, and economic issues in the area if the proposed Partnership Plan is not pursued. This assessment is shown in Section 6 of the Scoping Report.

### **3. Assessment of draft Partnership Plan Agendas for Action against the Sustainability Appraisal Objectives**

3.1 The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 require the identification, description and evaluation of the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing a plan. Key sustainability issues and how these may be affected by the draft Partnership Plan can be found in the Scoping Report. A number of key sustainability issues for the National Park have been identified from the baseline and trend information. Those which may be affected by the Partnership Plan, together with a summary of how these may develop if the Partnership Plan was not in place are outlined in Section 6 of the Scoping Report.

3.2 The evaluation of the likely significant effects are covered in this sustainability appraisal. Each of the agendas for action are assessed against all 10 of the sustainability objectives. Four outcomes are considered in each case. Firstly, there is the case where the agenda for action has little or no impact on the individual sustainability objective – this is indicated with a '0' ; secondly, where the agenda for action is likely to have a positive impact on the sustainability objective, this is marked with a '+'; thirdly, where the agenda for action is likely to have a negative impact on a sustainability objective, this is marked with a '-'; finally, a '?' indicates where there is uncertainty in the assessment, whether positive, negative or neutral.

3.3 Where appropriate, recommendations have been made for improving the agenda for action or mitigating any uncertain effects that might be potentially negative. In other

instances, however, it may not be possible to quantify the effects, especially as the draft Plan will only be one of many influences on what actually happens in the future. In these cases where the impacts of an action are uncertain, monitoring may be required in the future. It should also be recognised that the draft Partnership Plan’s ‘agendas for action’ are typically strategic, high-level objectives that will be brought forward through more detailed projects over the course of the 5-year Partnership Plan period. The Sustainability Appraisal/SEA of the draft agendas for action is therefore similarly high-level.

Assessment of the likely significant effects of each of the proposed Partnership Plan Agendas for actions on the ten Sustainability objectives.

**Assessment:** + Positive; 0 Neutral; ? Uncertain; - Negative

**SA Objectives:**

1. Conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape and seascape, and safeguard the tranquillity of the National Park
2. Conserve and enhance local, national and international nature conservation interests
3. Conserve and enhance the character of the historic environment, local heritage and culture
4. Encourage sustainable use of resources, enhance the quality of air, water and soil and help mitigate climate change
5. Enable the delivery of education and opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park
6. Improve the well-being of local communities by providing access to local services and opportunities for healthy living
7. Support the delivery of affordable housing for local communities
8. Support the local transport infrastructure, including sustainable transport
9. Encourage and foster the economic wellbeing of local communities, while maintaining the quality of the New Forest environment
10. Ensure a thriving land-based economy

<b>Partnership Plan Agendas for action</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Nature Recovery</b>	+	+	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0
1.1 Make more space for nature										
1.2 Enhance natural capital	+	+	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0
1.3 Support nature recovery through the new	+	+	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	+

Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS)										
1.4 Ensure developers deliver a wider range of environmental benefits over and above the full environmental impact of the proposed development	+	+	+?	?	0	0	?	0	0	0
1.5 Mitigate recreational pressures	+	+	0	0	+?	0	0	0	0	0
<b><u>Net Zero with Nature</u></b>	+	+	0	+	+	+	0	+	+	+
2.1 Establish baseline data and evidence										
2.2 Promote nature-based solutions	+	+	0	+	+	+	0	0	+	+
2.3 Build a New Forest coalition for a Net Zero economy	+	+	0	+	+	+	0	+	+	+
2.4 Activate communities	+	+	0	+	+	+	0	+?	+?	+?
2.5 Increase sustainable travel	+	+	+?	+	+?	+	0	+	-?	0
<b><u>Thriving Forest</u></b>	0	0	0	+?	+?	0	0	0	+	+?
3.1 Increase green skills and jobs										
3.2 Support sustainable land management	+?	+?	+?	+?	0	0	0	0	?	+?
3.3 Champion the future of New Forest commoning	+	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	+
3.4 Support New Forest business and green tourism	-?	-?	0	+?	0	0	0	0	+	+
3.5 Increase the availability of affordable housing	-	-?	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0
<b><u>An Inclusive National Park</u></b>	0	0	0	0	+	+?	0	0	0	0
4.1 Promote health and wellbeing										
4.2 Connect people with nature and landscape	?	?	0	0	+	+?	0	0	0	0
4.3 Lead inclusive place making, celebrate beauty and safeguard our cultural heritage	+	+?	+	0	+?	0	0	0	0	0

<b>Team New Forest</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5.1 Seek to work with a wide range of people in our community and beyond										
5.2 Establish strong partnerships and relationships within and beyond boundaries	0	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	0
5.3 Lead the green agenda; seeking to influence, shape and innovate	+	?	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0
5.4 Develop a reputation as a 'Centre of Excellence' in our work together for the National Park and wider area	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

## 4. Conclusions

### The impacts of the proposed agendas for actions on the sustainability objectives

- 4.1 Most of the proposed agendas for action in the draft Partnership Plan would make an overall positive contribution to sustainability. **For most of the proposed agendas for action, there are more positive impacts (and potentially positive impacts) across the ten sustainability objectives than there are potential adverse impacts.**
- 4.2 Whilst this is the case, there are a few agendas for action that have the potential to have an adverse effect on one or more of the individual sustainability objectives, and one agenda for action is identified as having a significant adverse effect on one of the sustainability objectives. These are as follows:
- Agenda for action 2.5. It is possible that increasing sustainable travel by reducing the speed limit on New Forest roads from 40 mph to 30 mph could have a negative impact by increasing travel times for local businesses (SA objective 9). However, given that distances within the New Forest are not great, the impact may not be material. Moreover, increasing sustainable travel may open up new economic opportunities for local communities. Importantly, any negative impact could be outweighed by the potential fall in climate change emissions (particularly given the large number of visitors who travel by car) (SA Objective 4); a potential reduction in animal accidents (SA Objective 3); the potential reduced risk of air pollution that could affect the internationally designated habitats (SA Objective 2) and human health (SA Objective 6); a potential greater use of walking and cycling

could improve health (SA objective 6) and a potential improvement in tranquillity (one of the National Park's special qualities) (SA Objective 1, 5).

- Agenda for action 3.4 Supporting New Forest business and Green Tourism may lead to the expansion of the visitor economy which could encourage more visitors. More visitors, however, could add to greater pressure on the internationally designated nature conservation sites (SA Objective 2); and supporting businesses could result in greater demand for new business premises in rural locations which has the potential to conflict with maintaining the natural beauty of the landscape (SA Objective 1). This agenda for action, however, is likely to have a positive sustainability impact on the local and land based economies (SA Objective 9, 10). Encouraging local produce may also reduce carbon miles in deliveries and encouraging green tourism may reduce the use of vehicles and thus emissions and, therefore, may have a positive sustainability impact (SA Objective 4).
- Agenda for action 3.5. Increasing the number of households will increase the number of people living close to and visiting the internationally designated nature conservation sites – the Habitats Regulation Assessment of the Local Plan concludes that it cannot rule out recreational impacts on these protected areas from the increased visits from new housing. It is also not possible to rule out that an increase in nutrients in sewerage will have an adverse impact on river and coastal habitats in designated sites – these will, therefore, have an adverse impact on sustainability (SA Objective 2); increasing affordable housing, particularly in rural locations, also has the potential to conflict with maintaining the natural beauty of the landscape (SA Objective 1). Increasing the availability of affordable housing, however, will have a positive impact on SA Objective 7 (Support the delivery of affordable housing for local communities).

### **Recommendations for mitigation or alternatives:**

#### 4.3 Agenda for Action 2.5

- The promotion and greater use of electric vehicles by businesses and individuals in the National Park could provide sustainability benefits. This could potentially lead to a fall in climate change emissions (SA Objective 4); a potential reduced risk of air pollution that could affect the internationally designated habitats (SA Objective 2) and human health (SA Objective 6); and a potential improvement in tranquillity (SA Objective 1, 5).

- Encouraging greater use of sustainable travel options (New Forest Tour, cycling, walking) for visitors should reduce the number of vehicle journeys, which could be positive for SA Objectives 1,2,4, and 5.
- Improving broadband coverage and quality and promoting e-business as part of Agenda for Action 3.4 may reduce the need for business journeys, which could be positive for SA Objectives 1,2,4, and 5.

#### Agenda for Action 3.4

- An increase in visitors to the National Park could lead to greater pressure on the designated nature conservation sites. Mitigation for this will rely on measures provided under Agenda for Action 1.5. In addition, any new development of visitor accommodation can make a financial contribution to the Authority's Habitat Mitigation Scheme to secure mitigation for the recreational impacts from additional visitors.

#### Agenda for Action 3.5

- The Authority has devised a package of measures to mitigate the recreational impacts of households from new housing adding to the recreational pressures on the wildlife and habitats of the designated nature conservation sites (see Habitats Regulations Assessment of Local Plan). A contribution from the developer of the new housing to the Authority's Habitat Mitigation Scheme will, in most cases, mitigate negative impacts.
- New affordable housing will also create an increase in nutrients in sewerage and run-off and it is not possible currently to rule out impacts on river and coastal habitats in designated sites. Measures to potentially mitigate this, including on-site foulwater treatment; retirement of intensively managed agricultural land; wetland or woodland creation; or the purchase of off-site nitrate off-setting credits from sites elsewhere within the catchment, may be considered as options.
- If the housing is located too close to the designated nature conservation sites, there may be other impacts which would be difficult to mitigate. Careful assessment of locating new affordable housing is needed.

## **Appendix 1: Agenda for actions – underlying objectives**

### **1. Nature Recovery**

#### **Outcome**

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

#### **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.

### **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.

#### **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)

## **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.

### **Agenda for Action**

We will do this through a programme of work that:

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

- 4.1.1. 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'
- 4.1.2. Addressing health inequalities locally and regionally through improved green space, targeted interventions and nature-based referrals
- 4.1.3. 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

## **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.

### **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

## Appendix 2: Relationship between SEA topics and the sustainability objectives of the Sustainability Appraisal

<b>SEA Topic</b>	<b>Sustainability Appraisal Objectives</b>
<b>Biodiversity</b>	2. Conserve and enhance local, national and international nature conservation interests.
<b>Population</b>	7. Support the delivery of affordable housing for local communities. 5. Enable the delivery of education and opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park 8. Support the local transport infrastructure, including sustainable transport 6. Improve the well-being of local communities by providing access to local services and opportunities for healthy living
<b>Human health</b>	6. Improve the well-being of local communities by providing access to local services and opportunities for healthy living
<b>Fauna &amp; Flora</b>	2. Conserve and enhance local, national and international nature conservation interests.
<b>Soil</b>	4. Encourage sustainable use of resources, enhance the quality of air, water and soil and help mitigate climate change
<b>Water</b>	4. Encourage sustainable use of resources, enhance the quality of air, water and soil and help mitigate climate change
<b>Air</b>	4. Encourage sustainable use of resources, enhance the quality of air, water and soil and help mitigate climate change
<b>Climatic factors</b>	4. Encourage sustainable use of resources, enhance the quality of air, water and soil and help mitigate climate change 8. Support the local transport infrastructure, including sustainable transport
<b>Material assets</b>	4. Encourage sustainable use of resources, enhance the quality of air, water and soil and help mitigate climate change 8. Support the local transport infrastructure, including sustainable transport 9. Encourage and foster the economic wellbeing of local communities, while maintaining the quality of the New Forest environment
<b>Cultural heritage</b>	5. Enable the delivery of education and opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park 3. Conserve and enhance the character of the historic environment, local heritage and culture
<b>Landscape</b>	1. Conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape and seascape, and safeguard the tranquillity of the National Park 3. Conserve and enhance the character of the historic environment, local heritage and culture 9. Encourage and foster the economic wellbeing of local communities, while maintaining the quality of the New Forest environment

### Appendix 3: Consultation responses to the SA Scoping Report

Summary of consultation responses to New Forest National Park Partnership Plan SA Scoping Report

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Action</b>
Natural England	No response received	n/a
Environment Agency	No response received	n/a
English Heritage	<i>"We are content that the scoping report adequately covers the issues that may arise in respect of the potential effects of proposed development sites on heritage assets."</i>	n/a