

AM 610/22

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 27 JANUARY 2022

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Report by: Alison Barnes, Chief Executive

Summary:

This report covers the period since the Authority meeting on 21 October 2021. The report has been formatted to accord with the 'Protect, Enjoy, Prosper and Achieving Excellence' themes from the 2018-21 Business Plan, summarised below:

| Protect | Enjoy | Prosper |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Our priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protecting and growing the natural capital across the National park Landscape, connecting with surrounding areas to ensure habitats and wildlife are sustainable.• Ensuring new development is sympathetic and in keeping with the National Park, promoting high quality design and environmental net gain.• Conserving the historic and built heritage; supporting local culture with continued focus on commoning. | <p>Our priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helping more people to understand and value the things that make the New Forest National Park unique and special.• Enabling high quality and beneficial experiences of the National Park.• Facilitating a partnership approach to managing recreation to achieve a net gain for both the working and natural landscape as well as for the recreational experience. | <p>Our priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supporting a distinctive and prosperous local economy where natural capital is an integral component of doing business.• Promoting connectivity across the National Park through sustainable transport and• communication technologies.• Supporting the social wellbeing and sustainability of New Forest Communities. |

Achieving Excellence

- Maintaining and enhancing a capable, motivated team that delivers high quality service.
- Championing the National Park and brokering partnership to achieve collaboration for the benefit of the New Forest and its communities
- Identifying new resources and using them alongside our existing resources, effectively and efficiently.

Recommendation:
To note the report

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Equality & Diversity Implications:

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

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We go into the New Year with a fresh agenda being set for our most precious landscapes, with the 12 week consultation on the [Government Response to the Landscapes Review](#) launched on 15 January. Against the backdrop of emerging from the pandemic, climate and nature emergencies and ambitions for a 'green recovery', this sets out proposals to increase access to nature and equip places such as the New Forest National Park to deliver more for climate, nature, people and place for the next 70 years and beyond. Over the past two years we have been focused on agendas with our partners and communities that align with this direction in preparing our Partnership Plan with five themes of nature recovery, net zero with nature, thriving Forest, inclusive national park and team New Forest. We continue to deliver across these themes as we go into the last quarter of the financial year.

Our work with partners to ensure we are at the forefront of nature recovery in the New Forest is gathering pace with 28 sites identified which have the potential for habitat restoration or as green spaces for wildlife and people. We will now discuss these proposals with landowners and partners and identify funding.

We are focused on allocating funding from a number of different grants to improve habitats, wildlife and access to nature. Under the Farming in Protected Landscapes scheme 13 grants totaling £174,000 have been approved for projects ranging from creating new wildflower meadows, orchards and hedgerows to tree planting and improving soil and acid grassland.

The £800,000 Green and Blue Horizons from City to Forest scheme supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund is gathering pace. It is enabling us and partners to take forward projects to improve grasslands, hedgerows, woodlands and freshwater habitats for wildlife, which includes supporting the Freshwater Habitats Trust to work with the equine community on improving pastures and water quality.

Our Land Advice Service is also supporting farm clusters and landowner networks to undertake test and trials as part of the transition towards a new subsidy system for agriculture which will incentivise landowners to manage their land for nature and people. This work and that of the Forest Farming Group, is preparing the Forest to be ready for the way schemes will be designed after 2024 when the move from the EU schemes to domestic schemes will be complete. It is also useful preparation following the announcement from Defra Secretary of State in early January at the Oxford Farming

Conference that wildlife and nature protection will be supported to run alongside food production as a matter of course for most farmers.

As well as the natural environment, significant progress has been made in protecting the built environment of the National Park.

Planning department caseload remains high with 164 new applications registered and 170 applications determined (94% approved). This has included three significant applications - the redevelopment of the Lyndhurst Park Hotel which was approved (subject to legal agreements) and two major housing schemes at Sway which were set out in our Local Plan and are still under consideration. The enforcement team is handling 180 live cases and the previous quarter has seen several public inquiries and court action, outlined below.

The New Forest National Park Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document has been updated following a six-week consultation and is presented for approval at this meeting. This represents an important updating of the 2012 version to reflect a fresh national drive for good design and the resulting suite of national policy and guidance. The Guide also incorporates views received from a wider range of partners and parishes, including through the quadrant meetings.

Engaging local communities in their heritage has also been boosted through the launch of a local listing project. We are inviting members of the public to nominate buildings and structures which are not eligible to be listed as being of national significance, but which contribute to the character and appearance of the National Park and deserve special consideration. Whilst inclusion on the local list does not add any further controls that already apply to a building or site, it reinforces efforts to preserve the character and appearance of the National Park and enables the architectural or historic interest of these assets to be considered properly against development proposals submitted to us.

Highlighting the issues of the climate crisis have been at the forefront of our communications this quarter. Activity around COP-26 reached over 113,000 people on social media and we launched a Climate and Nature Challenge to encourage steps towards more sustainable living, with over 500 people so far pledging to make changes. Nationally we worked with National Parks Partnerships and national parks across the UK to launch the Revere programme with Palladium and to drive investment into natural solutions to climate change. National parks were also signatories of an international declaration on climate change with all the National Parks and other bodies working for protected landscapes across the world.

We have begun planning a repeat 'Care for the Forest, Care for each other' campaign with our partners and communities following our successful approach of working together to deliver joint actions to reduce the impact of people on the protected habitats in 2021. The joint actions which included increased patrols, communication and signage, plus the launch of the Ambassador scheme and targeted interventions at key hotspots, resulted in a drop in fire-related incidents of one third compared to 2020, fewer verge parking incidents and a reduction in litter at coastal sites of 9% despite increased visitors.

More opportunities for people to safely get back to nature and discover the National Park have taken place this quarter. Over 850 people took part in the Walking and Cycling Festival with 20 events sold out. Further evidence of people gaining in confidence to get active in the outdoors is our highest number of volunteer days per quarter since early 2019 at 335 days.

Over 1,400 people responded to a cycling survey to help inform the New Forest Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, the management of the network of waymarked cycle trails on Crown land, the connectivity between the on-road and off-road network and New Forest organisations' wider approach to sustainable transport and active travel.

Further developments on our access remit included the decision on the route of the Calshot to Gosport section of the England Coast Path with work now due to start this spring and the entire stretch opening in August. In addition, through the Landscape Enhancement Initiative, we are funding access and environmental improvements at Fawley, Landford, Franchises Lodge at Hamptworth, Marchwood, Tatchbury and Cadland.

We are also supporting projects to develop other ways for people to understand and connect with the National Park especially through the Arts. We were delighted to meet with the Regional Director of Arts Council England following their award of £1 million to a consortium of five New Forest organisations, of which we are a partner, for 'Culture in Common'. Inspired by commoning, the scheme and aims to bring local people together to develop the local cultural offer. We also launched a three-year National Park artist in residence programme with the charity SPUD. There were 46 applicants and the two successful artists for 2022 will be announced shortly and start work in May.

Our work for affordable housing was given a boost when the site at Burley for building two new affordable homes and a local heritage centre was secured. The heritage centre will be developed by third parties but we intend to build and let the affordable homes, similar to our scheme in Bransgore some years ago.

Despite trading difficulties, the New Forest Marque has reported its highest membership level with 170 businesses part of the scheme. This reflects not only the exceptional produce and service provided by Marque members but greater consumer demand for and recognition of the environmental and economic benefits of local produce.

We go into 2022 feeling positive about the opportunities to work together with our partners and communities to build on the delivery achieved to date and preparing to publish a renewed and shared Partnership Plan which we know chimes with Government's intended direction for National Parks. We will need to work as strongly as ever as a Team for the New Forest if we are to ensure our ambitions are clear and inclusive of all and can attract the significant resources needed to make a difference.

DELIVERY OF NATIONAL PARK PURPOSES AND FUNCTIONS

The report has been formatted to accord with the 'Protect, Enjoy, Prosper' objectives from the 2018-21 Business Plan, a summary of which is set out on the first page. In addition, a fourth section, 'Achieving Excellence', summarises those activities that support and contribute overall to all our work, and the final section lists Members' activities and events.

1 Protect

Protecting and growing the natural capital across the National Park landscape, connecting with surrounding areas to ensure habitats and wildlife are sustainable.

Nature Recovery

Nature recovery and our net zero with nature programme continue to be our priorities. 28 key sites around the Open Forest have been identified as offering the potential for restoration of open forest habitats or for providing quality green spaces for people and wildlife. These sites are now the focus for the Nature Recovery Officer who is developing contacts with the landowners, maximising the opportunities for partnership working with bodies such as the RSPB and Freshwater Habitats Trust and identifying where there is scope to target funding from the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, Green Recovery Fund and the Landscapes Enhancement Initiative to incentivise landowners to manage their land for nature.

Net Zero with Nature Work is continuing with Palladium on the pilot project to develop a model to attract private finance for nature restoration which, if successful will provide a blueprint for projects in and beyond the National Park boundary. Supported by the Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund the NPA, Palladium, and the three landowners in the project will hold a workshop later this month. This will examine detailed natural capital assessments prepared for the three sites and model the potential income that may be generated from different levels of nature restoration. The pilot project is due to be completed in August.

National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative funding (LEI)

LEI funding has recently been received for access and environmental improvement projects at Marchwood, Tatchbury and Cadland with landowners being contacted to plan the works on the ground over the next three years.

The current LEI projects at Franchises Lodge, Hamptworth; Landford Bog; and Holbury Manor, Fawley are at varying stages of progress with all of them showing improvements to access, biodiversity and land management, representing a large investment in the quality of the landscape and its character.

New Forest Land Advice Service (NFLAS)

The NFLAS has been concentrating on four main areas of work this quarter:

- The Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme (FiPL)
- The Water Environment Improvement Fund contract
- Defra Test and Trials – Land Management Plans/Commons
- Green and Blue Horizons (Green Recovery Challenge Fund)

Farming in Protected Landscapes

The Farming In Protected Landscapes programme opened on 1 July with £174,000 to be allocated to qualifying projects in the current financial year. The Local Assessment Panel has met monthly since September and has approved 13 applications. Applications for year one close at the end of January and we are confident that the funding allocation will be fully committed when the panel meets in early February. We are very grateful to all the panel members for making the time to scrutinise the applications, particularly those who are doing so on a voluntary basis.

Approved grants

Rockford Barn Farm – management of acid grassland, scrub management on fen habitat, bracken management, hedgerow, restoration of an historic access gate onto the adjacent New Forest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Yew Tree Farm – orchard creation, species rich grassland restoration, hedgerow planting, associated fencing.

Brockenhurst Park – parkland tree planting.

Hillside Cottage – tree planting, hedgerows and wildflower meadow

Hockey's Farm – soil management, rainwater harvesting

Godshill Meadow – hedgerows, scrub management, livestock management

Scoping for a super farm cluster, Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust – joining existing farmer clusters together. This is a joint project with the Cranborne Chase AONB

Hemmick Court – wildflower meadow, water quality

Radio House – hedgerows, livestock management, trees, orchard, muck management

Kings Hyde – hedgerows and hedgerow trees.

Meyrick Estate – hedgerows and hedgerow trees

Culverley Farm – hedgerows and hedgerow trees

SMF – farm machinery to improve soil carbon

Water Environment Improvement Fund

We are continuing to work with Freshwater Habitats Trust (FHT) and Environment Agency on this programme of enhancements on agricultural land along the Bartley Water and Fleetwater, working with farmers, landowners and equine owners to deliver improvements which contribute towards the Water Framework Directive. For example, in Minstead we are currently working with a commoner, two landowners and an equine owner. Enhancements include separating clean and dirty water on farmyards, horse muck management and removal of plastic sheeting from the bed of a stream.

Environmental Land Management Test and Trials

Since 2018 Defra has been supporting a range of tests and trials to inform the development of the new Environmental Land Management (ELM) scheme to reward farmers for producing public goods that is due to start in 2024.

- The NPA is working with the Forest Farming Group to develop a scheme to replace the current Verderer's HLS Scheme and NFLAS has been supporting two other Trials: carrying out four workshops/walks with commoners to deliver a contract with the Foundation for Common Land which is looking at how the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) can be delivered on commons.
- testing Land Management Plan templates with several more farmers as part of a national Test and Trial run by Wildlife Trusts across the country.

I am also pleased to report that the Verderers HLS scheme has been extended for a further year. This scheme that provides resources vital to support commoners' grazing and deliver conservation, heritage and education projects on the Open Forest was originally due to end in 2020 but is now reviewed on an annual basis ahead of the roll out of the new ELM programme in 2024.

Green and Blue Horizons – from city to forest

Nature recovery is a focus of the Green Recovery Challenge Fund project 'Green and blue horizons from city to forest', administered by the Heritage Fund. This project runs until 31 March 2023 and is supporting projects to create wildlife – rich corridors to buffer and extend the SSSI network and working with farmers and land managers to develop climate resilience.

The NFLAS is leading on two projects and supporting the Freshwater Habitats Trust with two others within this scheme. These are:

- Landowner/farmer collaborations – initiating and galvanising five networks/collaborations between land managers in different areas of the Forest

- Habitat enhancements – working with landowners to enhance grasslands and hedgerows, continuing the Nature's Stepping Stones and Better Boundaries Projects from the previous Our Past, Our Future scheme
- Supporting FHT – preparing a baseline for equine pastures to better target water quality advice
- Supporting FHT - enhancing up to 50ha in five woodlands for nature, continuing the Working Woodlands project from the Our Past Our Future scheme.

1.1 Ensuring new development is sympathetic and in keeping with the National Park, promoting high quality design and environmental net gain.

Development Management

We received 164 applications between 1 October to 31 December and in the same period determined 170 applications with an approval rate of 94%.

During this same period, nine appeal decisions were received; six were dismissed and three were allowed. A notable dismissed appeal decision was that at Broadhill Cottage in Hyde, where the Inspector agreed that the existing building, a local heritage asset, should not be replaced by a new dwelling.

The application for the redevelopment of the Lyndhurst Park Hotel site was approved by the Planning Committee in November (subject to the completion of a legal agreement) and we hope that scheme can be brought forward soon. The planning applications for the Local Plan site allocations at Whartons Lane in Ashurst and Church Lane in Sway are still under consideration and shall be reported to the Planning Committee in due course.

We are progressing the move to our new planning software system which is due to 'go live' from end of March. This involves the migration of all our planning records and documents to the new system, automating what we can and building in performance monitoring systems.

Some changes to permitted development rights, first introduced in 2020 as a temporary measure to aid high streets and small businesses during national restrictions, were made permanent last December. This includes pubs, cafes and restaurants now being able to install gazebos and marquees on their premises without the need for planning permission, although some limitations do apply.

Clare Ings (Senior Planning Officer) is retiring at the end of January. We would like to thank her for her significant contribution to the work of the Planning Team and the Authority over the last 16 years.

Trees

The table below indicates the workload the Tree Team has managed within the New Forest National Park boundary over the past three years and which remains consistently

high. Interestingly, the figures for tree work applications have also been reviewed for the past 10, 20 and 30 years when our Senior Tree Officer first started work in the New Forest (with the District Council) and the table indicates the increased volume of work over the years.

| | 2021 | 2020 | 2019 | 2011 | 2001 | 1991 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Tree Work Applications registered | 613 | 708 | 626 | 349 | 15 | 23 |
| Consultations form Development Management | 218 | 222 | 195 | | | |
| Tree Preservation Orders made | 7 | 7 | 6 | | | |

The Tree Team continues to advise applicants, residents and neighbours on best arboricultural practice and works closely with contractors and consultants in the industry. This advice extends to developers, architects and agents when consulted on planning applications and the team strive to maintain and promote optimal tree protection and retention where appropriate. The team also seeks to keep Town and Parish Councils informed on any contentious or sensitive tree issues.

Planning Enforcement

There are currently 180 planning enforcement cases at various stages of investigation, action, appeal or prosecution. As always, the bulk of the team's work is responding to suspected breaches of planning control reported by third parties.

During this period the team were able to resolve a long-standing enforcement case following a successful prosecution in the Court. Other cases remain at appeal, with one public inquiry scheduled to last six days. A number of reported cases involve the use of outbuildings as holiday lets and consideration is being given to producing guidance to assist homeowners and others to better understand the planning regulations as they apply to holiday lets and residential annexes.

Policy

The Policy team has produced several reports during the last period and these include: (i) the updated National Park Brownfield Sites Register – which is updated annually in

accordance with Government guidance and the relevant regulations; (ii) the Infrastructure Funding Statement, which sets out the level of developer contributions received and released by the Authority in the reporting period; (iii) the Annual Monitoring Report, which reviews the performance of the adopted development plan policies for the National Park and was considered by the Planning Committee at its January 2022 meeting; and (iv) the updated Self and Custom Build Register, which highlights the demand for this form of new development. All of the relevant reports and statements are available on the Policy team section of the website.

Another key area of the team's work is ensuring the impacts of new development are mitigated in accordance with the requirements of the Habitats Regulations. The main focus is on addressing recreational pressures on the designated habitats of the New Forest and Solent; and impacts on water quality in the River Avon and Solent coast designated sites. The Authority is an active member of the project steering group overseeing work to develop a more strategic and consistent approach to habitat mitigation from new development around the New Forest. The project steering group met in November 2021 and January 2022 and several neighbouring planning authorities (including Test Valley, Eastleigh, Fareham and Wiltshire) are working on mitigation strategies to ensure the recreational impacts arising from planned development are addressed. The Authority is also a member of the Partnership for South Hampshire and has been working through the Water Quality Working Group to address impacts from nitrates on the Solent. In December 2021 our Planning Committee approved the principle of working with neighbouring authorities to ensure the impacts of new housing and other overnight accommodation are 'off-set' in accordance with Natural England's guidelines.

Since the last Authority meeting in October 2021, the Policy team has also responded to several consultations from neighbouring authorities on planning policy matters, including consultations from Wiltshire Council, Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council and on the Highcliffe & Walkford Neighbourhood Plan.

1.2 Conserving the historic and built heritage; supporting local culture with continued focus on commoning.

Archaeology

During this reporting period the Archaeology Team has consulted on 17 New Forest District Council and 16 Authority planning applications and given comments and recommendations on several other ongoing cases. The volume of planning work from NFDC is highlighted as it has, for the first time, exceeded its yearly quota of allocated support.

Higher Level Stewardship (HLS)

We continue to support the HLS for the New Forest including conducting the 'gap filling' surveys with small teams of volunteers- to fill in any gaps in our data for the Crown

Lands. The hope is to invite volunteers that took part in previous surveys as well as recruit new volunteers (from the NFNPA volunteer pool) to join the surveys. Our aim is to progress this in mid to late January 2022.

HLS stump shearing at Turf Hill has now been completed. A site visit was held 14 Jan' with FE and the Verderers. The meeting was to assess the area of the Turf Hill site that, due to potential underlying heritage, had received a different restoration approach than the rest of the site, review the results of the work conducted to date and to examine if the three stated aims of the HLS ridge & furrow program, restoring habitats, enabling future mechanical maintenance and stock management, had been achieved.

During the meeting the Verderers expressed that they wish the remaining ridges and furrows to be removed across the site, and that this was a unique opportunity to restore the habitat and smooth the ground surface to enable commoners to more safely gallop across it while rounding up the New Forest ponies.

It was agreed that as the current custodians of these potential heritage assets we should take no actions that have the potential to cause harm to any potential heritage.

It was recognised that without costly intrusive investigation, we could not fully understand the presence, full extent and significance of the features identified by the geophysical survey. And that intrusive investigation may not result in us fully understanding the features but could help clarify the survey results.

Before costly intrusive investigations were considered it was suggested that a monitored programme of machined ridge and furrow removal take place, outside the exclusion zone/s, to assess if it could be conducted in such a way as not to impact negatively any underlying potential archaeological features if extended into the exclusion zone.

The FE team are now looking to program in the work for late Jan and/or Feb. An outline method statement has been produced and passed on to FE for circulation.

An unexploded ordnance (UXO) survey has now been conducted at Dunces Arch ahead of planned ridge, furrow and stump removal (stump shearing). Zetica Ltd's survey of Area C has identified '105 metallic anomalies that could not be discounted as UXO'. We are now working with the FE team to agree on how to progress works in this area.

Forestry England's Service Level Agreement

Across FE's southern district, the team has received six requests for archaeological advice prior to forestry works, attended six site visits and issued five data packs. We have also completed the Scheduled Monument Management Plan survey sheets held up by Covid-19.

Scheduled Monument Improvement Works

Working with volunteers we have now cleared 14 out of 20 archaeological sites, which have been left in much improved condition and has increased Scheduled Monument visibility. To encourage volunteer diversity during this programme, we have been running weekend events on Saturdays. This has allowed volunteers who were signed up to our newsletters but had not been able to join any events due to their weekday commitments to come along.



A before/after of scrub clearance on a Bronze Age barrow on Beaulieu Heath

LoCATE scheme & Working with Community Groups

Ongoing Covid-19 concerns and restrictions have made it a challenge to engage with heritage groups and communities during 2021. We are continuing with the LoCATE (Local Community Archaeological Training and Equipment) scheme, working with archaeological societies and community groups from across Hampshire and Dorset. However, during this reporting period no requests have been received.

We continue to support a small local group with its research into the history of Lady Hardinge Hospital for Wounded Indian Soldiers in Brockenhurst and a proposed geophysical survey project of the site some time in 2022, subject to permissions.

We are working with Forestry England, Bournemouth University, Southampton University and Burley Historical Society to organise scrub clearance on Castle Hill Iron Age Hillfort in Burley in early 2022, so that we can carry out a geophysical survey afterwards. This will be the first archaeological research on this Scheduled Monument and will involve community outreach through an 'Adopt-A-Monument' scheme.

Excavation

We were contacted in early 2021 by the Finds Liaison Officer (Hants) from the Portable Antiquity Scheme (PAS) asking for our help with a recent find. Working with Hampshire's

County Archaeologist, PAS and the New Forest History and Archaeological Group (NFHAG) an excavation was planned and then conducted in late October. 12 members of NFHAG took part over the three days with a number of finds being made. No more details can be released at this time due to confidentiality, but we are working with David Hopkins (Hampshire's County Archaeologist), Tony King (NFHAG) and Jenny Durrant (PAS, Finds Liaison Officer (Hants)) on the final report which we hope will be able to be made public in due course.

New Forest Knowledge website

We continue to work closely with the New Forest Heritage Centre (NFHC) on running the New Forest Knowledge website. At the NFHC two new team members have joined and we are sad to report that Dr Kath Walker will be leaving in January. The site continues to be very popular with over 24,500 visits during this reporting period.

2021 Guided Walks

The team ran two guided walks as part of this year's Walking Festival - one at Setley prisoner of war camp and the second at Beaulieu. Both were fully attended and well received.

Building Design & Conservation

Following a six-week public consultation, the responses received to the draft National Park Design Guide document have been considered and amendments made. The updated document was endorsed at the Planning Committee meeting in December 2021 and is presented for formal adoption in a separate report to this full Authority meeting.

Work on the local listing project continues to progress well following the receipt of Historic England funding in 2021. A workshop was held with Authority members in November and the project was launched to the wider public in mid-January. Further details can be found on our website at [Local List of Heritage Assets - New Forest National Park Authority \(newforestnpa.gov.uk\)](https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk) and updates on the project are also being given at the round of parish quadrant meetings in early 2022.

There continues to be a significant number of planning applications raising building design and conservation matters. This includes the current applications for the adopted Local Plan housing site allocations at Ashurst and Sway, with officers inputting specialist advice to ensure the developments deliver high quality design in accordance with our revised Design Guide and national planning policy. Officers are also liaising with Development Control and Enforcement officers on detailed applications relating to designated heritage assets, as well as forthcoming appeals.

2 Enjoy

2.1 Helping more people to understand and value the things that make the New Forest National Park unique and special.

Education and Youth

The education and youth team have been focusing on diversifying our audience and providing opportunities for schools and youth groups who haven't previously experienced the New Forest first-hand. To support the walking and cycling festival in November we offered free sessions to secondary schools from around the boundary and were pleased to meet with new students from Redbridge School and Christchurch Junior School for the first time. Wild Space Youth Officer Claire Pearce met with Calshot youth club for the first of a series of sessions, during which they will design and improve their own greenspace, inspired by the New Forest and nearby wildlife rich locations. Claire has also drummed up interest with several other urban venues interested in developing wild spaces, some in conjunction with our Team Wilder partners at the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.

Education and Youth Officer Sian Brewer has been coordinating the very many work experience applications we have had, meeting and providing a realistic application and interview process for them and we are now at capacity for work experience students next summer. There are some fantastic young people joining us and we know that staff all across the Authority will make them feel welcome and share insights into our broad and fascinating work.

In November we said farewell to our Kickstart team member Ella Gardner who has been a huge asset to the team. Her creativity, flexibility (since our teaching timetable this year has still been a little mixed up due to the pandemic), professionalism and communication skills have enabled us to achieve more as a team and proved how valuable having a diversity of ages amongst our colleagues can be. Ella and Sian created and delivered our John Muir Family online award this summer and autumn which has proved popular and families are now applying for their completed awards. We are planning to recruit new kickstart team members this month.

Most of the Recreation, Management and Learning team participated in shared professional development in the form of a refresher 'Outdoor leader' qualification which gave us a chance to share expertise, concerns and a sorely needed catch up too. This leads onto a review of procedures (including bookings, risk management, SharePoint filing and more) for working with schools and groups, which can be applied consistently to school trips, youth groups, young volunteers and guided walks for groups of young people, which will be led by a range of team members in future.

Public and community events / rangers

Rangers led five walking festival walks (one from Ashurst train station where three people arrived by train).

Rangers have been assisting, leading and supporting volunteering across the National Park with both NPA and partners, including clearing nest sites for the nightjars ready for the spring breeding season and clearing archaeological barrows to prevent them from being damaged.

Area rangers have been out and about within their patches patrolling around car parks and busy honey pot sites, delivering literature, keeping in touch with businesses and local groups. New contact was made with Fordingbridge Salvation Army Youth Group and an introduction session delivered. Ambassador litter picking kits have continued to be made up and distributed to local groups.

The team has undertaken the biannual pony collar counts collecting data for use in identifying trends and monitoring across the National Park.

Rangers have worked with the Education and Youth Team to deliver school sessions as well as a suite of wild play pop-up sessions during half-term week. We were pleased to return to delivering pre-school sessions, encouraging an interest and care for the New Forest from early years.

An initial contact has been made with a refugee group in Southampton and discussions are being had how they might benefit from some facilitated visits to the New Forest, focussed around learning and wellbeing.

Communications

The climate and nature emergencies have been at the forefront of our communications, with new ways to interact with our residents, partners and communities.

We launched the New Forest Climate and Nature challenge and pledge, inviting residents to calculate their carbon footprint and pledge to introduce more sustainable lifestyle choices. Over 500 people have signed up to the pledge so far. We have brought together green groups from in and around the National Park to share best practice, join up in initiatives and find out how the National Park can support them. We relaunched the Sustainable Communities Fund and updated the web section on the climate emergency. The campaign has included 73 climate posts on social with 181k impressions and 4k engagements to date.

Our communications around COP26 reached over 113,000 people on social media and included:

- a press release and social posts about the Greenprint framework working with local authorities to embed environmental solutions into their strategies
- content to highlight the COP26 gender and youth days
- the launch of the Revere programme with Palladium to drive investment into natural solutions to climate change
- the signing of an international declaration on climate change with all the National Parks and other bodies; and the launch of the Solent LEP natural capital baseline report.

An exciting programme of events around the climate and nature emergencies is being lined up with partners, businesses and green groups for the second Awakening Festival throughout February.

A new 'artists in residence' programme launched with SPUD attracted 46 applications and two have been selected for the first phase of the three-year programme.

We are working with Southampton University on a climate change theatre production, the Awakening Festival and the New Forest Show.

We produced a joint press release with the Animal Accident Reduction Group (AARG) in October, highlighting the clocks changing and appealing to people to drive according to the road conditions. Operation Mountie is a New Forest speed awareness joint campaign working with New Forest Heart Cops, New Forest Road Awareness, Forestry England, New Forest Verderers, the Commoning Defence Association and New Forest District Council. Since starting this operation in November 72 vehicles have been stopped. As part of the operation, the road safety camera van has issued 112 tickets during operations on Roger Penny Way, the main road through Bramshaw and the C17 from Stoney Cross to Emery Down.

Additional pressures on Forest roads due to the A31 and A35 closures have also been a problem with many drivers shortcutting diversions and venturing onto unfenced roads. Forest organisations and the AARG asked Highways for additional measures to be put in place on the roads effected. We issued another press release on 30 December 2021 asking drivers to follow the official diversions and not deviate onto unfenced roads. This was shared by local councils on social media and in New Forest District, Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole and Eastleigh council newsletters and picked up by local papers, TV and radio. More warning signs will be put on the unfenced roads affected by the closures. Our social media posts reached 682,000 people with over 42,000 engagements. Both press releases gained coverage by local news channels such as BBC South Today and local radio stations.

The Walking and Cycling Festival saw 578,000 impressions on social media with nearly 21.5k engagements. We had to deal with the challenges of Covid19 and reduce the

numbers attending each event. Over 850 people took part with 90 events arranged. The Festival was sponsored by Hoburne Bashley.

We welcomed Communications Assistants Chris Fairhead (who is working two days a week on the Horizons scheme and two days providing comms support for the Commoners Defence Association) and Jess Shepherd (who will be supporting the Environment and Rural Economy team).

Fundraising

We have been awarded funds of £4,000 from the University of Southampton's Public Engagement in Research Unit. This will help us to provide a range of activities and learning opportunities for young people and under-represented groups to connect with nature. The funding also allows us to work with new partners to help make this happen, such as University of Southampton and communities within Southampton and within the 10km surrounding area of the National Park. We will be focusing on developing the 'City to Forest' theme by delivering a new volunteer fair in the city and taking part in the Southampton Science and Engineering Festival. The funding will also be used in developing content for the New Forest Awakening Festival and highlighting regional environmental research-based exhibits for the New Forest & Hampshire County Show.

We are part of a consortium of five New Forest organisations that have been awarded a £1million grant from Arts Council England as part of their Creative People and Place programme. The investment covers the first three years of a 10-year vision to bring the disparate communities of the district together to enjoy 'Culture in Common' and is Hampshire's first Creative People and Places project. The programme focuses on parts of the country where involvement in arts and culture is significantly below the national average. Culture in Common New Forest is inspired by commoning and represents an ambition to unite people through a shared vision of arts and culture that is driven by local people. Culture in Common consortium partners are Energise Me, Folio, The Handy Trust, New Forest District Council, and New Forest National Park Authority. The programme is due to start officially in April 2022.

2.2 Enabling high quality and beneficial experiences of the National Park

Interpretation projects

We have worked with the charity SPUD to launch a new three-year National Park artist in residence programme. The new partnership will deliver a programme of six artistic residencies and accompanying exhibitions focused on the New Forest. The programme aims to develop a creative partnership between the arts and people that work, live, and visit the New Forest, and highlight that to new audiences.

Each successful participant will be hosted by SPUD, with two artists in residence each year, part funded by the NPA. After a call for expressions of interest, 46 people applied and two successful artists for 2022 were selected, to be announced shortly. The first artist will be in residence in May 2022.

We are also working with a group of young people and the not-for-profit organisation Theatre for Life on a programme of visits to the National Park followed by the development of a performance piece about climate change and the challenges it poses to the Forest and to the City of Southampton. The project is a partnership between Southampton University, Theatre for Life, the NPA and Regeneration, a social prescribing programme for young people aged 11-25 years old living with a long-term health condition at Southampton Hospitals. We presented at the first meeting at the University and have facilitated three visits in January.

Historic Routes project:

Some of the trails of the Historic Routes project gained their new Trail Waymarker discs.



New Trail Waymarker on the Tatchbury Trail heading up to the Iron Age Hillfort

Tatchbury Hospital, Trail enhancements and Nature's Stepping Stones:

The team at the Hospital have been able to progress the insulation of the new Trim Trail waymarker posts, carved wooden bench, interpretation panel and 'lift the flap' units. Work started on the carved bench and waymarker posts in early December and continue this month.



Insulation of carved bench underway, Dec 2021

Lift the flap units

These are small handmade wooden door units that when opened they will reveal their content. The content will be printed, or written text and/or pictures that can be changed on a regular basis by the staff at the hospital.



Finished Lift the Flap units

The units will be placed along the Trim Trail and will contain poetry, positive words, short stories, artwork etc. produced by current patients and staff with the aim of helping others as they go through their treatment.

Volunteering and Ambassadors

We presented to the Swedish National Parks and Protected Areas network about the role of volunteers and Ambassadors in the New Forest National Park.

The NPA volunteering programme delivered a range of activities in this quarter, and significantly increased our total of volunteer days to 335, the highest total since early 2019. Volunteers have been invited to take part in the following opportunities:

- Restoring scheduled ancient monuments by removing gorse. Volunteers have visited barrows at Hilltop and at Roundhills campsite.
- Cutting and burning gorse, Scots pine and birch on Poores Common, Burton Common and Cranemoor Common on the Meyrick Estate
- Invasive species removal of rhododendron and laurel at Harrow Wood, Bransgore and Deerholt, Frogham to help restore these habitats to heathland and woodland respectively.

A total of 111 volunteers have given 2,101 hours to our volunteering programme in 2021. The volunteer database has a total of 776 registered volunteers, with 70 new volunteers registered in this period.

The Ambassador scheme continues to attract local residents to become involved by picking litter, recording verge parking, reporting issues in the forest and distributing our New Forest Codes. We continue to supply litter picking kits from our collection points in Lyndhurst, Brockenhurst, Beaulieu, Woodgreen, Lepe, Milford on Sea and Lymington. A total of 808 ambassadors have signed up to the scheme, 178 of whom are young people.

Health and Wellbeing

The New Forest and Surrounds Green Health Group met for the first time on 15 November and has progressed with its first project of developing an online Green Health Hub, to promote opportunities in the area that benefit health and wellbeing through nature connection, volunteering, walking, cycling and more.

A new specialist in Children and Young People's health from Health Education England has been selected for the next year of the Fellowship Programme and will be joining us in March. His name is James Alden.

The Nature Health Network met in November and heard from Richard Dunne from the Harmony Project and his work in sustainable and healthy education and greener prisons.

PEDALL

Despite the weather and the forever presence of Covid-19, PEDALL has welcomed increased numbers of new riders for introduction sessions and it has been fantastic to see the return of old faces from before lockdown. Having an additional Ride Leader James Hunt, has allowed us to widen the PEDALL offer. As James's working pattern includes a Saturday this has enabled us to offer regular Saturday rides, which suits many riders and volunteers. We have also introduced new 'confidence rides'; the uptake has been slow, and we will be working on a new approach in the new year linked to our Ashurst base.

In addition to Saturday rides, we have been able to offer a range of basic and in-depth cycle maintenance training and support for volunteers. The team has been supporting similar inclusive cycling operations at Moors Valley and working with Dartmoor NPA to run a potential pilot event in the future.

PEDALL support from local businesses has continued thanks to Friends Of PEDALL, most notable is the sponsorship by Highcliffe ladies and men's Golf club.

The frustration has been the continued delay of access to the new Ashurst site due to internal challenges at NHS. The lease has now been agreed and signed and it is hoped for a completion date in early January 2022. Ashurst will open up a range of new opportunities including work experience for young people with additional needs. An independent evaluation of PEDALL was undertaken in December as part of the annual report to the Lottery. Rides are back up to 2019 levels and there is some wonderful feedback for the team, plus some super case studies that we will use to promote the project in the New Year.

2.3 Facilitating a partnership approach to managing recreation to achieve a net gain for both the working and natural landscape as well as for the recreational experience

Recreation Management

The results of the 'Care for the Forest, Care for each other' campaign with our partners and communities were promoted over the New Year. Headlines include:

- 400 social posts sharing New Forest Code messages, which resulted in 1.1m impressions and 55k engagements.
- Joint newsletters reaching over 1.6m subscribers.
- Increased joint patrols amounting to over 10,000 hours and digital signs were placed at key entry points to the National Park.
- 1,000 litter picking kits were created and 737 ambassadors recruited.

Targeted intervention at key hotspots led to fewer incidents of verge parking and litter at coastal sites was down 9% despite increased visitors. Fire incidents dropped by a third compared to 2020.



It is likely that a very similar joint campaign will be run with our partner organisations in 2022 and this will be the subject of a more detailed report to the next Authority meeting in March.

In the meantime, the Friends of the New Forest (NFA) have this month published the results of their recent 'New Forest Byelaw Watch' which sought to raise awareness of Forest byelaws as well as evidencing data on byelaw breaches. We recognise that the New Forest byelaws need updating and we welcome evidence such as that collected by the NFA which is helpful in supporting this case.

As well as running a similar 'Caring' campaign in 2022, longer-term solutions for responding to the changing pressures on outdoor spaces is highlighted in the new Partnership Plan, which includes a renewed commitment to address illegal use and activities on the Forest.

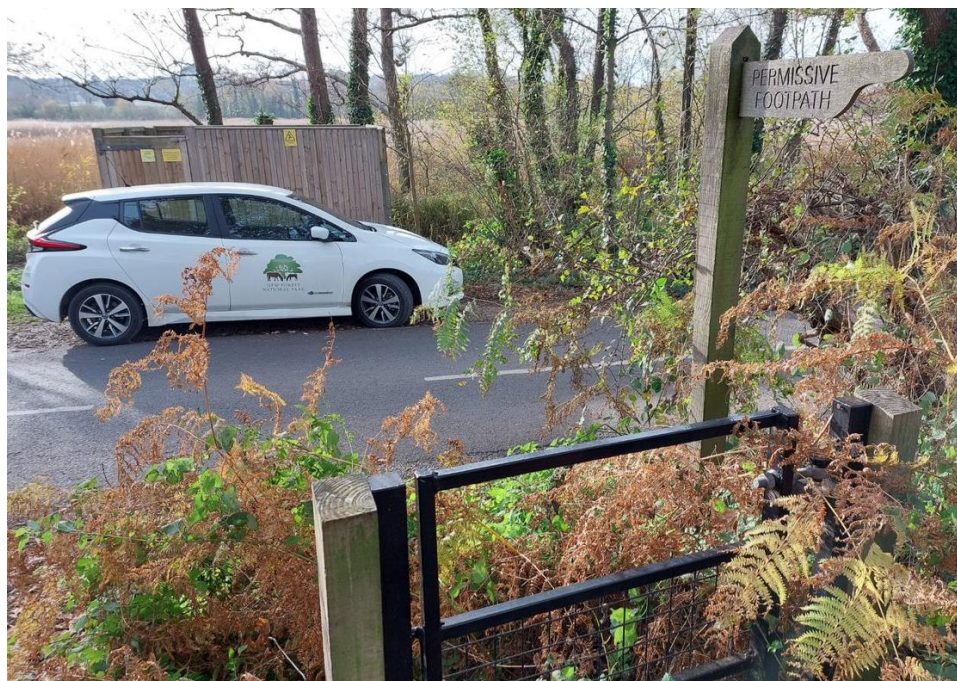
As noted elsewhere in this report, we applaud the huge number of volunteers, Ambassadors and groups such as litter pickers who help look after the Forest.

Access and Rights of Way

The route of the Calshot to Gosport section of the England Coast Path has been decided. We are applying for the RDPE Establishment Fund and are organising ground works to

start March/April. The entire Calshot to Gosport stretch will be officially opened in August. Our volunteer access surveyors conducted a survey over the 30 small parcels of Open Access Land not classed as Section 15 land and over which we have a duty as the Access Authority. This survey is to establish baseline data and identify potential improvements which we work with landowners to achieve.

Improving public access is a key part of the Farming In Protected Landscapes scheme and we have been meeting with landowners to provide access advice and help them add a public access section to their FIPL application.



The 2021 Walking & Cycling Festival saw over 20 walks selling out and over 850 people enjoying a guided experience in the New Forest. This year was the first year we introduced guided cycles. We linked up with three cycle business and PEDALL to provide a wide range of guided cycling products. The new Forestry England HRA events permissions system was in place for this year's festival so we worked closely with FE staff to ensure all walk providers had the correct permits.

3 Prosper

3.1 Supporting a distinctive and prosperous local economy where natural capital is an integral component of doing business.

New Forest Marque

The New Forest Marque has continued to prosper despite the difficult trading environment of 2021. Membership numbers reached 170 at the end of the year, the highest in the history of the Marque reflecting the exceptional produce and service provided by Marque members but also a reflection that the environmental and economic benefits of local produce has become increasingly important to consumers in recent times. Over the year the Marque website was updated, an exclusive seasonally themed subscription box was launched, Marque roadshows taken to locations around the New Forest and showcase event - the Flavours of the New Forest – held for an invited audience of chefs and buyers. Marque members were finalists in eight of the 14 categories of the Brilliance in Business Awards and winners in three.

Visitor experience

An autumn campaign was launched, funded by VisitEngland, to boost the businesses participating in the National Park UK Experiences Collection.

3.2 Promoting connectivity across the National Park through sustainable transport and information and communication technologies.

New Forest Tour

The end-of-season meeting on 22 October with the Tour operator provided useful information for 2022 planning. It was encouraging to learn that boarding numbers had increased at stops served by trains and service buses, suggesting confidence in using public transport. A new, earlier Red Tour from Lyndhurst was popular, proving that customers are keen to start their adventures early and make the most of the day. September was more popular than May in terms of 'shoulder season' comparison. Footfall of Tour passengers hopping off to visit local attractions was reported as higher than in previous years. Follow-up meetings are scheduled to determine the duration of the 2022 season and support will continue to be sought and welcomed from commercial partners. It is unlikely that funding will be identified to fund the NPA concierge role.

Sustainable transport

Nationally, bus patronage has recovered to 80% of normal levels. It is slightly lower in the New Forest given the demographic. It is hoped that normal levels of concessionary customers will resume soon. Covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant finishes in March 2022.

As part of the enhanced partnership stage of the [bus service improvement plan](#) we met with a bus operator, HCC (Hampshire County Council) and Hythe & Dibden Parish Council to discuss how receipt of funding may positively impact services operating into and within the National Park.

To reinstate the shuttle extension bus service to Lepe Country Park, we met with the bus operator and HCC to walk through potential drop-off options. No solution is without its complexities. An update will follow once the operator test-drives potential new stopping sites/arrangements.

We attended the South Western Railway stakeholder conference on 23 November and learnt about various community projects at stations ranging from biodiversity to health and wellbeing. The Three Rivers Community Rail Partnership presented its new [Waterside Wanderer](#) integrated travel ticket which we have promoted as part of our car-free alternatives for residents and visitors.

We have supported the work of the Lymington-Brockenhurst Community Rail Partnership. Projects introducing pupils at New Forest schools to transport modal shift include [Try the Train](#) and an illustrated book with a focus on car-free travel and responsible adventure called *The Squirrel's Tale*. Another sustainable transport initiative is the Brockenhurst-West Wight Wanderer, which is an integrated travel ticket including an activity at a local attraction. This will be launched soon once the distribution of monies between transport providers has been agreed.

Walking and cycling

We continue to work with FE and the lead organisation, HCC, to progress the New Forest LCWIP (Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan). The project timeline has been drafted and the LCWIP cycle network planning exercise is underway.

The New Forest Cycle Working Group (CWG) met on 19 November to discuss matters pertaining to cycling infrastructure and the cycling experience, to discuss and share thoughts and ideas about safety and navigational improvements, and to harness support for CWG objectives through their respective cycling communities.

Through liaison with HCC, the works contractor, Sustrans and the CWG, we have monitored the Holmsley Straight diversion and associated signage for cyclists.

A cycling survey was launched on 15 November and closed on 19 December, with a relatively high rate of 1,441 responses. These are being processed and will help develop the New Forest LCWIP, the management of the network of waymarked cycle trails on Crown land, the connectivity between the on-road and off-road network and New Forest organisations' wider approach to sustainable transport and active travel.

We attended the Hampshire Central Road Safety Forum. Here we updated the forum on ongoing conversations we have been having with National Highways (formally Highways England) about community access across the A36. There is a meeting between local representatives, National Highways and the NPA in January to investigate safer opportunities to cross this road and access the National Park.

3.3 Supporting the social wellbeing and sustainability of New Forest communities.

Affordable Housing

We are pleased to confirm that we have finally acquired the site at Burley for the building of two new affordable homes and a local heritage centre. The heritage centre will be taken forward by third parties but the intention is that we will build and let the affordable homes, as was the case in Bransgore. The build programme and appointment of contractors can now be progressed and this will be the subject of a future report to Members.

Detailed planning applications for two of the adopted Local Plan housing site allocations in Ashurst and Sway are currently under consideration. As submitted both applications include a policy-compliant level of on-site affordable housing (50%), which would be secured for local people in housing need in accordance with the Local Plan policies. Officers are currently considering a wide range of material planning considerations on these applications and ultimately both applications will be presented to future Planning Committee meetings for determination.

Sustainable Communities Fund

Earlier this year we awarded funds to SpudWORKS and investigative artist Simon Ryder to develop a new collaborative project engaging diverse communities in the landscape of the New Forest National Park. The result is a collection of five digital dioramas that explore what it means for people to have a connection to the New Forest. These were presented at an exhibition at SpudWORKS during October. The dioramas have been

constructed from three-dimensional LIDAR and photogrammetric scans of the Forest, which are linked together using gaming technology, with portals allowing participants to move from one diorama to the next. With simple hand movements participants can fly through the imaginary landscapes – Mirror Forest, Sea of Grass, Island, Beach Bus, and Traces – encountering individual audio recordings along the way. Each recording (sometimes spoken, sometimes in the form of music or a sound effect) tells of why the Forest is so special and valued by that person. The intention is for the artwork to bring together views about the New Forest and to stimulate and enable further discussion.

4 **Achieving Excellence**

4.1 **Maintaining and enhancing a capable, motivated staff team that delivers high quality services.**

Human Resources

As at 7 January 2022 the total staff headcount was 82 or 71.59 full-time equivalents (FTEs).

| | Headcount | Variation from previous report | Full Time Equivalents | Variation from previous report |
|-----------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Core funded | 67* | + 1 | 58.73* | + 0.50 |
| Funded by external projects | 15 | - 4 | 12.86 | - 4.65 |
| Total | 82 | - 3 | 71.59 | - 4.15 |

*Of the core funded roles, one staff member (1 FTE) is working in shared services, 26 are part-time and three are on a fixed-term contract.

In the last three months we recruited to the following roles:

| Role | Contract type | How funded |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Heritage Project Co-ordinator | Fixed term | Project funded |
| Communications Assistant | Fixed term | Project funded |
| Communications Assistant | Permanent | Core funded |

We said goodbye to:

| Role | Contract type | How role will be filled in future |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| New Forest Apprentice Ranger | Fixed term, project funded | New apprentices due to be recruited in 2022 |

| | | |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| Assistant Ranger Trainees (Kickstart) x 3 | Fixed term, government funded via Kickstart scheme | N/A – end of fixed term contracts |
| Heritage Project Co-ordinator | Fixed term, project funded | Like for like replacement |
| Seasonal Assistant Ranger | Fixed term, project funded | N/A – end of fixed term contract |

Staff wellbeing

As part of our commitment under Nurture in our People Plan, the Wellbeing Group, led by our HR and Training Officer, has continued to meet monthly to ensure our wellbeing focused initiatives continue to provide our staff with the required support.

In December, our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provider offered staff a free trial of a variety of online wellbeing classes. A wide range of classes of 30 minutes each were available including Beginner Pilates, Stretch and Flex, Upper Limb and Shoulder and Low Impact Cardio. The classes were well received by staff and we will include them in our EAP for 2022.

The dedicated wellbeing area on our internal intranet continues to provide access to information to help staff maintain and enhance their mental health and wellbeing, particularly through another winter period of most staff working from home.

4.2 Championing the National Park and brokering partnership to achieve collaboration for the benefit of the New Forest communities.

Team New Forest / Updating the Partnership Plan

Following the Partnership Plan consultation last summer, the feedback received from individuals and organisations has been analysed and changes have been made to the draft Partnership Plan as a result. Work has also progressed on drafting the work programme which provides more detail on the actions required to deliver the priorities set out in the Plan. An update on the Partnership Plan is the subject of a separate report on this agenda.

4.3 Identifying new resources and using them alongside our existing resources, effectively and efficiently.

ICT Services

Security – this continues to be an ever-increasing challenge with more frequent zero-day attack notifications coming through and countless security upgrades being released. The

team endeavours to roll out security releases as quickly as possible. Urgent updates addressing zero-day vulnerabilities are pushed out to all devices as soon as they are released. There are still a few updates that cannot be set to run automatically requiring IT to manually install them which is taking an increasing amount of time.

We are currently piloting a few members with multi-factor authentication.

A cyber audit was carried out in December, the final report is still awaited. The team has had several meetings with third parties looking at cyber incident response support.

Replacement planning system – the NPA working group meets weekly with Agile Applications. Relevant requirement documents have been completed enabling Agile Applications to build the replacement web interfacing system and to start mapping data fields in the current system to those in the new planning system. IT is continuing to tidy as much data as possible ahead of the move.

Training - A few courses included as part of our Microsoft licence package have been attended over this period:
ICT Technical officer - Microsoft 365 mobility and security course / Microsoft 365 security administration course / Power platform app maker
ICT Technical officer and Systems Support Technician - Power platform fundamentals

A few changes have been made to the IT help desk, making requests flow better and enabling sign off from the Data Protection Officer where requests have GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) implications.

There is still an issue with the HSPN which is delaying the final upgrade of the infrastructure whilst the IT Technical Officer is working to resolve this it may result in an upgrade of the firewall being necessary which would be another major project.

We have just agreed renewal of our Microsoft licensing due to expire end February and will be moving to E5 licencing for all staff. E5 licencing offers enhanced security elements, phone bolt on and Power BI licencing which will be required for the new planning system. With the current phone system proving unsuitable for remote working, we will be looking at Teams as a replacement phone system in the New Year.

Legal and Information management

Our solicitor continues to provide legal advice to the NPA on a range of matters relating to its work, including governance, contractual matters, the planning function. Recent significant pieces of work include a successful enforcement prosecution to remove an outbuilding at Gorley Lynch.

The Project Assistant - Records Management has continued to work with officers across the NPA to finalise our move to SharePoint. All teams are now using SharePoint as their main document library and the old network drives are set to read only. There are now a

significant number of SharePoint sites in respect of which the administration rights will gradually be re-assigned to the relevant teams for the long-term management of the sites and the associated documents.

We continue to work hard to ensure that we meet our obligations under the GDPR and are constantly reviewing and updating our website, documents and privacy notices to improve transparency and compliance, whilst responding to data protection queries as they arise.

We had received 51 formal requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act and the Environmental Information Regulations by the end of Q3, only four less than the same period last year, which was a record year. If the current levels continue for the remainder of 2021/22, it will be the second highest number of requests received. All have been responded to within the statutory time period. Just over half (57%) relate to our planning function. In the last quarter we have also undertaken internal reviews on two of the requests; in both cases the original decision was upheld.

Formal complaints are considerably down on last year. At the end of Q3 we had received eight compared to 18 in the same period last year. As in previous years, all relate to planning matters. All were responded to within our 20 working day deadline.

5 Members

5.1 Some Members were involved in some or all of the following meetings and events

- 16 November – Planning Committee
- 2 December – Consultative Panel
- 6 December – New Forest Access Forum
- 16 December – Members Day – Partnership Plan
- 21 December – Planning Committee
- 18 January – Planning Committee

5.2 Forthcoming activities include:

- 31 January – Standards Committee
- 2 February – Government Response to the Landscape Review Members Day
- 7 February – Resources, Audit and Performance Committee
- 15 February – Planning Committee
- 3 March – Consultative Panel
- 15 March – Planning Committee

5.3 Chief Executive's engagements

- 22 October – NPC meeting
- 22 October – Greenprint meeting

- 22 October – Parks for the Planet Stammtisch
- 25 October – Joint Action Plan meeting
- 25 October – Informal E-NPOG meeting
- 25 October – PfSH Joint Committee meeting
- 27 October – Greenprint Workshop
- 28 October - Parks for Planet Salzburg Global Seminar
- 28 October – Meet Lord Benyon
- 28 October – Partnership Board meeting
- 28 October – Glover Contact Group
- 2 November – ‘Leading the Green Revolution’ leadership development session
- 3 November – Parks for Planet Salzburg – Global Seminar
- 4 November – NPC monthly meeting
- 4 November – Meeting with interim CX NFDC
- 4 November – Glover Contact Group
- 4 November – Solent Net Zero meeting
- 5 November – HIOW CX meeting
- 5 November – Partnership Plan meeting
- 8 November – Adelaide National Park City Inception meeting
- 8 November – St George’s Fellowship, Windsor leadership conversation
- 10 November – The Way We Live: Parks, People and Public Spaces
- 10 November – NPO Informal Briefing
- 11 November – New Forest Leadership Group meeting
- 11 November – Glover Contact Group
- 18 November – Covid-19 – Expert Panel meeting
- 29 November – Defra review
- 30 November – Southampton Uni Webinar
- 30 November – Greenprint meeting
- 2 December – meeting with interim CX NFDC
- 2 December - NF Voices
- 2 December – Glover Contact Group
- 7 December – Greenprint Priorities, Objectives and Action setting
- 8 December – Introductory meeting – Kate Ryan CX of NFDC
- 8 December – National Park City Southampton Discussion
- 9 December – Wildlife Roundtable
- 9 December – National Parks and Health and Wellbeing Strategy Steering Group
- 10 December – World Parks Congress
- 13 December – Informal E-NPOG meeting
- 15 December – Leading the Green Revolution – keeping up momentum
- 16 December – Greenprint meeting
- 16 December – Glover Contact Group
- 22 December – Forest Farming Group catch up discussion
- 6 January – Glover Contact Group
- 6 January – NFNPA/SDNPA/HCC Liaison meeting

- 7 January – Greenprint Steering Group
- 12 January – Green Halo Steering Group
- 13 January – HLS Board
- 13 January – Greenprint meeting
- 14 January – St Georges – Leader to Leader Exchanges
- 14 January – PfSH Planning Officers Group
- 17 January – ENPOG meeting
- 19 January – Leading the Green Revolution Leadership Development Session
- 25 January – PfSH Chief Executives

5.4 Chairman's engagements

- 21 October – meeting with Leader HCC
- 22 October - Solent Freeport Consortium meeting
- 16 November - Planning committee
- 17 November – Solent Freeport Consortium meeting
- 18 November – Local listing meeting
- 29 November – NP UK meeting
- 1 December - NPE Chairs meeting
- 9 December - Solent Freeport consortium meeting
- 16 December - Members meeting - Partnership Plan
- 17 December - new member induction meeting
- 17 December - meeting with Leader NFDC
- 20 December - meeting with Planning Inspectorate
- 21 December - Planning committee
- 10 January - meeting with Defra
- 17 January - meeting with Oliver Crosthwaite-Eyre
- 18 January - Planning committee meeting and chairs briefing
- 21 January - meeting with Lord Montagu
- 21 January - meeting with Defra

6 Recommendation

To note the report.