

**AM 626/22**

**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**AUTHORITY MEETING – 14 JULY 2022**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

**Report by:** Alison Barnes, Chief Executive

**Summary:**

This report covers the period since the Authority meeting on 24 March 2022. The report has been formatted to accord with the 'Protect, Enjoy, Prosper and Achieving Excellence' themes from the Business Plan, summarised below:

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

### **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.

**AM 610/22**

**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**AUTHORITY MEETING – 27 JANUARY 2022**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

**Report by:** Alison Barnes, Chief Executive

Since our last meeting in March, we have been leading and convening some major programmes that will enable the Forest, its communities and landowners to respond practically to the climate and nature emergencies and enable people's connection with what is special about our National Park.

Habitat improvements in the New Forest have been delivered with funding from the national Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, with 19 projects last year resulting in 406 hectares of land improved and over 4km of hedgerows created. The Environment Secretary remarked in a recent speech that it is the best national scheme that Defra has ever done, which is a great endorsement of the protected landscape teams and panels that have got the scheme up and running across England and focused on where the biggest impacts can be made. We are hopeful that the three-year scheme will continue building from this success to date.

Meanwhile we are working with three landowners and private finance experts Palladium to develop and trial new models to attract private investment to fund large-scale restoration projects. Initial results are being shared with landowners and we plan to make the learnings more widely available in the autumn.

The National Park's exceptional freshwater habitats were the subject of the annual New Forest Water Forum attended by around 100 people on 30 March. Presentations are available on the Freshwater Habitats Trust's website:

<https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/projects/catchment-projects/new-forest-catchment-project/new-forest-events/new-forest-water-forum/new-forest-water-forum-2022/>

Our planning service is central to our work to protect the National Park. Nearly 170 applications have been determined in the past three months, 94% of which were approved, and a further 147 applications were received during the same period. This is a significant achievement against a backdrop of difficulty with recruitment across the planning profession in Hampshire and beyond as well as confirmation of a 3-year flat cash Defra grant settlement for National Parks at the end of March.

We have also seen a number of changes to environmental regulation and policy this quarter, with far-reaching effects across our area. Our policy team has been advising on complying with nutrient neutrality and is working with planning neighbouring authorities and organisations on mitigating recreational impacts and compliance with the Habitats Regulations, including through a very valuable event for surrounding planning authorities at the end of June. We have also been working with colleagues across National Parks to consider the proposed reforms of the planning system within the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill published in May. The team are also pleased to present the updated Hyde Village Design Statement to the Authority for adoption, responding to changes in policy and community aspirations since it was first adopted as an SPD in 2012.

A nationwide education initiative 'Generation Green' has come to an end. Nearly 41,000 young people have had opportunities to connect with nature as a result of the collaboration between the 10 English national parks, YHA, Field Studies Council, Outward Bound, Scouting and Girl Guiding UK. In the New Forest, highlights from our education team include creating a new nature space with Calshot youth club; the first residential opportunity co-ordinated by NPA staff at YHA Burley; the first all-National Parks UK youth voice residential, and the support of our apprentice ranger.

The 'Care for the Forest, Care for Each Other' Campaign 2022 is well underway with Forest organisations and the New Forest Code is being produced in a number of formats to be displayed across Forest campsites and businesses and with messages being reinforced in the New Forest Tour commentary. We have supported the Ground Nesting Birds campaign, Operation Mountie (speed reduction operation with police, New Forest Roads Awareness Group and FE) and worked with the CDA to appeal to people to #KeepYourDistance from cattle and foals and #LookDon'tTouch. The New Forest Spring Clean ran from 25 March to 10 April with 600 volunteers taking part and collecting roughly 320 bags of litter. The Joint Litter Working Group which the NPA convenes with Forestry England, New Forest District Council, Hampshire County Council, National Trust and the Verderers also focused on fly tipping and this partnership effort has reduced the amount of illegal dumping in the area by 50 per cent compared to pre-pandemic levels.

The 'BBQ-free New Forest' campaign has been shortlisted for a Campaign for National Parks 'Park Protector Award'. Waitrose and Aldi have now decided to remove disposable BBQs from sale to protect the countryside and reduce waste from single-use items. More than 50 stores in and around the National Park have stopped selling them. The BBC's The One Show ran a piece about the campaign, including an interview with Lead Ranger Gillie Molland. In the last few months, the campaign has registered over 50,000 impressions on social media and more than 4,000 engagements.

The summer season always allows us to host and meet partners from key organisations out on the Forest to engage them in our work and energise our partnerships for the coming year, notably this quarter the new Chief Executive of New Forest District Council,

Kate Ryan. We're delighted to be launching the new Partnership Plan 2022-2027 at the New Forest Show, following formal approval across our partner organisations. We are looking forward to renewing relationships at the Show and focussing on the delivery of the Plan across its five themes with our partners and Forest communities.

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## **DELIVERY OF NATIONAL PARK PURPOSES AND FUNCTIONS**

The report has been formatted to accord with the 'Protect, Enjoy, Prosper' objectives from the 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.**

##### Farming in protected landscapes

Year 1 of the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme closed at the end of March, with a total of 19 projects supported, 11 completed and the remainder continuing over the three-year period of programme. A total of 406 hectares of land have been supported in Year 1 including over 4km of hedgerows planted. Two projects will help to alleviate flood risk and six helping to increase carbon storage.

Year 2 of the programme has begun and three projects have been supported by the Local Assessment Panel. The programme was introduced as part of the England Agricultural Transition Plan, initially for a three-year period. The Environment Secretary George Eustice reported at a recent agricultural conference that farmers have said it is the best scheme Defra has ever run which offers encouragement that the programme will continue in some form beyond 2024.

##### Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund (NEIRF)

FiPL is part of the public agricultural support programme for environmental enhancement but increasingly private finance will play a significant role in funding nature recovery and carbon storage and sequestration. After securing NEIRF funding in July last year we have been working with global impact firm Palladium to devise a model for landowners who may want to generate ecosystem services for sale to private off takers through nature restoration - this might be via Biodiversity Net Gain, Nutrient Offsetting or via woodland carbon. The models have now been shared with the three landowners taking part in the project and once these have been refined we will be presenting the result of the project to wider audience in the autumn.

The partnership with Palladium is part of the Revere programme with National Parks Partnerships which won the award for Best Nature Based Project at the Business Green Leaders Awards earlier this month.

### *New Forest Water Forum*

Water and water dependent habitats were in the spotlight at the New Forest Water Forum held at the end of March. Speakers from Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Freshwater Habitats Trust, Environment Agency and RSPB highlighted the importance of the fragile New Forest freshwater ecosystems and some of the projects being done to conserve and protect them from pollution. Many of the projects are small scale such as encouraging rainwater harvesting to lessen surface run off, regular maintenance of septic tanks to prevent pollution and encouraging responsible behaviour amongst campers and caravan owners when disposing of their grey water. It is 10 years since the New Forest Water Environment Improvement Plan was published and the Catchment Partnership was created and there is plenty to celebrate in the range of species associated with the Forest's wetlands.

### *National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative funding (LEI)*

The LEI funding continues with the Warrens Copse, Holbury, project entering the management stage; Landford Bog and Franchises Lodge active and progressing with improving access and removing rhododendron respectively; and the fourth project improving access and biodiversity at various locations on the Waterside, is still waiting for OFGEM approval.

## **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 147 applications in the period 1 April to 22 June and in the same period determined 167 applications with an approval rate of 94%.

During this same period, four appeal decisions were received, three were dismissed and one was allowed.

The application for the site allocation at Whartons Lane in Ashurst was considered by Members at the April Planning Committee meeting and was approved subject to the prior completion of a legal agreement. The application for the site allocation at Church Lane in Sway is still under consideration and revised plans have been received for consideration.

Emma Shaw left the team at the end of April to move to a planning officer role in Scotland. We are grateful for her contribution to the team over the last two years. We are pleased to welcome Ethan Townsend as a new planning officer. We have not yet been able to recruit to the senior planning officer role vacated by Clare Ings at the end of January and this reflects a wider recruitment challenge in the planning sector at the moment across Hampshire and beyond.

## *Trees*

Since the last report tree works applications have fluctuated with 155 new tree work applications registered to carry out works to protected trees, 100% of which have been determined within eight weeks.

During the same period 45 consultations have been provided on planning application and continued involvement with several major applications.

One new Tree Preservation Order has been made to protect a group of three oak trees in Ashdene Road, Ashurst.

While minor infringements of damage or unauthorised works to protected trees are managed, further investigation is taking place with the unauthorised removal of two hedgerows in Sway. This is considered a serious breach of the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 and possible legal action will be taken following further legal advice.

## *Planning Enforcement*

Enforcement has been through a period of change saying farewell to David Williams and welcoming back Katherine Pullen and new enforcement officer John Langdown. Lucie Cooper has recently been appointed as the new Enforcement Manager.

After a short period of settling in the team has already started to work through its caseload primarily working to try to achieve a satisfactory outcome through informal discussions and applications before deciding whether formal action is necessary. In terms of new cases, the last quarter has seen varied types of cases including breaches of condition, works to domestic properties and changes of use.

Formal Notices have been issued in respect of extensive hard surfacing and the stationing of a caravan both of which have triggered appeals at two different sites. There are a number of Enforcement Notices in the pipeline if remedial steps are not taken within a reasonable timeframe which the team will be working on over the coming months.

## *Policy*

A key focus of the Policy team's work since the last full Authority meeting has been the protection of the internationally-designated sites of the New Forest (including the River Avon and Solent coast).

- In March 2022 Natural England updated its advice on nutrient neutrality, affecting both the River Avon and Solent catchments. Having been involved in work to address these matters since 2020, the Policy team has led discussions with other national park authorities now caught by the issue.
- Work also continues with neighbouring planning authorities to ensure the



recreational impacts of their planned development on the New Forest's designated sites are appropriately addressed. As part of this work, we hosted an event for surrounding authorities on 30 June where we (and Forestry England staff) outlined the measures being implemented to protect the area from increased pressures.

- A members' day was held in June on the implications of Habitats Regulations for our work as a National Park Authority and the package of measures being implemented to mitigate impacts.

We are also working with several communities on their local planning policy and design documents. This includes the emerging Neighbourhood Plans being prepared for the parishes of Wellow (working with Test Valley Borough Council) and Ringwood (working with New Forest District Council). The revised Hyde Village Design Statement was subject to public consultation between May and June and officers have liaised with the parish council over the responses and the changes required to the design statement. The proposed adoption of the Hyde Village Design Statement is the subject of a separate report.

The team continues to engage with partners from other national parks and protected landscapes on planning policy matters. The National Parks Planning Policy Officers' Group met in June 2022, as did the South East of England Protected Landscape planning group. Both meetings included discussions around the recently published Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (May 2022) which contains a range of proposed reforms to the planning system, including the production of Local Plans, amendments to national planning policy and changes to the national system for developer contributions.

We have also responded to relevant consultations that could affect the National Park. As well as planning policy documents prepared by neighbouring authorities, this has included our consultation response to Hampshire County Council's 'Local Transport Plan 4' consultation, which closed in June. Our response confirms the Authority's desire to engage with Hampshire County Council to help deliver the plan.

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

### Archaeology

The Service Level Agreement with New Forest District Council (NFDC) to provide archaeological support services (relating to Planning) has been renewed for another year and the volume of planning work from NFDC has reduced to a more manageable scale compared to 2021. During this reporting period the Archaeology Team has consulted on 15 NFDC and 12 NPA planning applications and given comments and recommendations on several other ongoing cases.

Forestry England's Service Level Agreement (FE-SLA) work and the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) work has continued.

## Higher Level Stewardship (HLS)

### Wetland /Stream Restoration

There have been two enquiries during this period, Cowleys Heath East & Shirley Holms Mire. Both sites have been worked before, the work being planned is repairs to previous restored sections.

### Natural England Historic Environment team visit

In May Gareth joined Lawrence Shaw (Lead Historic Environment Advisor, Forestry England) on a Natural England Historic Environment (NEHE) team visit at Turf Hill. This was a good opportunity to meet new members of the NEHE team and talk over the challenges faced in the New Forest and how heritage is being cared for whilst still achieving the HLS objectives.

### Adding New Forest Lidar data to the national Archaeology Data Service (ADS)

I can now report that we have had confirmation from Cambridge Enterprise Limited - University of Cambridge (CUTS) and the academics involved that they have reviewed the New Forest LiDAR data that we have submitted to the ADS for public access. CUTS and the academics are happy with the data being made publicly available via ADS.

### Forestry England's Service Level Agreement

We continue to provide archaeological advice, data packs and site mark ups across FE's southern district. During this period seven requests for advice have been received. Three new sites resulting in two site visits and data packs being submitted. We have also been asked for advice regarding a FE Peatland Restoration project and Gareth presented a case study on woodland and managing the historic environment at a FE training session for the Woodland Trust.

### Festival of Archaeology 2022

Sadly, after putting in a significant amount of work to support the Minstead Trust in running a 'Dig Minstead' multi-day event, the project has had to be postponed until further notice due to organisational issues at the client's end. However, two positive developments have come out of this project. Firstly, we have updated the community test pitting guidance from Dig Burley to carry forward into future 'Dig Village' style projects, with a new and improved methodology. Secondly, Wessex Archaeology have expressed that they would happily consider future collaboration on community archaeological projects in the New Forest. A promising working relationship with them has now been established and we are exploring a range of possible future projects. We hope to revisit the Dig Minstead project in the future.

For this year's Festival Archaeology (16 July to 1 Aug), we are running two guided walks. The first is a guided walk at Setley Prisoner of War Camp on Thursday 21 July, and the second one is a guided walk at Matley organised together with Forestry England on

Saturday 23 July. This one will cover a WWI training area, a group of Bronze Age barrows, and a prehistoric enclosure monument.

### Working with Community Groups

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 their 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 providing archaeological advice to Forestry England regarding the Romani Community Archaeology Project, which is an archaeological fieldwork charity hoping to launch in Spring/Summer 2022 and currently going through the FE permissions process. The charity's aims are 'educating, encouraging and engaging through the investigation of historic Romani sites by today's Romani people'.

With community groups beginning to re-establish their activities we have been asked to support two groups to continue some of the graveyard surveys conducted during the previous Our Past, Our Future (OPOF) scheme. Meetings with the groups are planned for late June.

### Social Media

On the NPA YouTube channel our [Bouncing Bomb Tests at Ashley Walk](#) video was the most watched during this period (12,522 views accounting for 36.8%).

### New Forest Knowledge website

During the New Forest Heritage Centre meeting in March with the new Centre Manager we were informed that he had decided to not continue in his new post. In June we were told that a new Centre Manager had been appointed, Angus Harley, and a meeting with him has been arranged in late June.

The New Forest Knowledge website continues to be extremely popular. The view stats from March to date are over 31,000 views.

December 2022 sees the end of the legacy funding for the website from the OPOF scheme. It is hoped that with a new Manager in post discussions can start on how the site is funded, maintained and developed going forward.

### *Building Design & Conservation*

Our local listing work has progressed well following presentations at the parish quadrant meetings earlier this year. The first round of new nominations to be added to the existing

National Park Local List were endorsed at our Planning Committee meeting in June. The assets identified included a landmark tree in a village, a World War 2 bombing range, a post box, a village hall and locally distinctive dwellings – all of which highlight the diversity of the built environment of the New Forest. The team also held a walk around Sway with parish councillors and other interested parties in May, which was positively received by those attending and has prompted the parish council to explore how it can help celebrate the built heritage of the village and surrounding parish.

The team continues to respond to a high number of planning applications, consultations and enquiries. In recent months this has included proposals relating to the listed New Park Manor in Brockenhurst; and changes to the use of land within the setting of the Grade II\* listed Pylewell House. The adopted New Forest National Park Design Guide SPD (2022) is being used in discussions with applicants and has been shared with town and parish councils in the National Park area.

## **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*

Our Generation Green funded work has come to an end. Highlights include working with Calshot youth club to develop their own green space, the first residential opportunity co-ordinated by NPA staff at YHA Burley, the first all National Parks UK youth voice residential, and the support of our Ranger apprentice, Ben Atwell.

The residential session formed part of a series of weekly day visits for 13 students from Salisbury who had been selected by the school's safeguarding and wellbeing officer due to individual vulnerabilities and their need to develop resilience.

'I think it has been good for me, I have more confidence and I have made friends with children that I would never have spoken to at school.' Student, aged 12.

Full evaluations and case studies from staff and participants have been submitted to funders and are available to share. The coalition scheme as a whole has been applauded for meeting such ambitious targets during difficult times (40,908 young people have benefitted across the country) and a review of organisational strengths and challenges working as 10 national parks and as a coalition with the YHA, Field Studies Council, Outward Bound, Scouting and Girl Guiding UK has been possible. The coalition is now seeking further funding from various sources to continue achieving our five year 'access unlimited' vision.

Wild Spaces Youth Officer, Claire Pearce remains with us on a temporary contract, delivering activities to local youth groups until August 2022, funded by the Forest Holidays/ National Parks Partnership. Education and Youth Officer Siân Brewer

completes her maternity cover contract with us at the end of June 2022 and we are pleased to welcome Amy Moore back.

School visits to the Forest are back in full swing. Our staff have engaged with 500 pupils already from April to June on topics including river studies, coastal management, history and habitats. The New Forest Educators forum is still active, sharing expertise and creative solutions to issues including the ever-increasing cost of coach travel to schools. The travel grant scheme was launched again this April and take up from schools is very encouraging.

The young people we meet have very mixed experiences of the New Forest, even those who live on its doorstep. We have found that staff and students alike value the experiential discovery of the National Park equally to the curriculum learning. 'We wanted children to experience a real forest, especially as many have not been...they all came back with new language and geographical skills.' (Eling Infants, Years 1 & 2).

Young people's social and emotional skills and well-being have been negatively affected by the pandemic. Many young people have not been on a school trip at all in their school careers and are therefore unfamiliar with an outdoor environment or interacting in different social contexts. A coastal field studies trip for Weston Secondary School helped improve 'understanding of risk assessments and appropriate clothing for outdoor activities, which is a life skill. It helped build their resilience and they felt a sense of achievement from "getting through it"!' (Weston, Year 10). Hyde Primary took part in a mini expedition from their school doorstep 'using skills they wouldn't normally have the chance to use in the classroom...I really liked the way the children were encouraged to be "leaders". It really helped to develop their independence.' (Hyde Primary, Year 4)

Lastly, we are looking to support others in expanding their skills and the capacity of the team. We co-ordinated a 'working with young people' training day, tailored to our staff.

### *Public and community events / rangers*

We visited the University of Southampton Science and Engineering Fair in May, co-ordinating a 'Forest to the city' stand comprising of ourselves, Countryside Education Trust and Freshwater Habitats Trust. The day was very successful with lots of new audiences engaged about the special qualities of the New Forest and over 400 people to the stands.

### *Communications*

Behaviour change campaigns:

The campaign to ban disposable BBQs and to stop the use of BBQs, campfires and stoves in the National Park has moved forward. Nationally Aldi and Waitrose announced it was banning the sale of disposable BBQs in all their stores to reduce fire risk and to cut

down on waste by taking single-use BBQs off sale. BBC's The One Show ran a segment about the campaign, including an interview with Lead Ranger Gillie Molland. The campaign also saw over 50,000 impressions on social media and more than 4,000 engagements. The BBQ-free New Forest campaign has been shortlisted for the Campaign for National Parks 'Park Protector' awards, to be announced in the Houses of Parliament.

The campaign to reduce animal accidents and speed saw a multi-agency approach to patrols on the key roads which have seen the most accidents. 'Operation Mountie' is led by Hampshire Constabulary, with the NPA, Forestry England and the New Forest Roads Awareness group. The joint patrols and awareness have seen a 15-week period of no animal deaths and the numbers reducing significantly over recent years. The campaign registered over 90,000 impressions on social media and nearly 9,000 engagements. Ranger Erika Dovey gave an interview to BBC Radio Solent appealing to people to keep their distance from the animals and watch out for foals on the roads.

The New Forest Spring Clean ran from 25 March to 10 April this year and saw local litter heroes across the New Forest helping to protect the environment. The New Forest Spring Clean is a joint initiative with Forestry England, New Forest District Council, Hampshire County Council, National Trust and the Verderers. Around 600 volunteers took part in the clean-up, collecting roughly 320 bags between them.

The Joint Litter Working Group which the NPA convenes has been focussed on fly tipping and we have been supporting this with communications across our channels to raise awareness about fly tipping causes and impacts and encouraging an increase in reporting and raising awareness of patrols and prosecutions. This partnership effort has reduced the amount of illegal dumping in the area by 50 per cent compared to pre-pandemic levels, although fly-tipping in the Forest remains a major problem with the removal of more than 800 tyres and 500 bags of garden waste, plus truckloads of building rubble. NFDC's environmental enforcement team has issued 107 fixed penalties for waste-related offences as well as seizing several vehicles and FE arranged for the specialist removal of hazardous chemical waste and asbestos.

We marked World Curlew Day with a series of social media posts which had 41,000 impressions and 1,900 engagements. Overall, messages to promote keeping yourself and your dogs on the tracks during the ground-nesting bird season had over 51,000 impressions and 2,600 engagements. We shared information from Hampshire Constabulary that a dog walker had been given a Community Resolution Order and issued with a dog behaviour contract after an incident in Burley in the New Forest where her dog destroyed rare curlew eggs in three separate incidents.

Two social posts on the dangers of ticks and Lyme Disease were widely shared with 183,000 impressions and over 29,000 engagements. The other National Parks across the UK are planning to use our content to raise awareness.

Working with the Commoners Defence Association, we appealed to people to #KeepYourDistance from cattle and foals and #LookDon'tTouch. Our social campaign saw 90,600 impressions and 8,800 engagements.

New Forest Marque:

A feature on Marque honey producers and the link to the landscape appeared in several publications and online, and local produce hampers have been promoted. The new Marque members directory is being printed.

Publications and print materials:

The spring/summer issue of Park Life this year is a bumper size at 16 pages compared to the normal 12, featuring articles including about the recipients of Farming in Protected Landscape grants, New Forest Marque members, ambassadors and building design awards winners. The Partnership Plan, an executive summary and the annual review have been written and designed and will be available at the New Forest Show.

We have printed the New Forest Code in different sizes and formats to be displayed by businesses and campsites.

New animal accident cards are being designed and printed and we are looking to source environmentally-friendly 'I go slow for ponies' car bumper stickers.

Events:

We launched the New Forest National Park Awards with the CLA and had the most nominations ever at 130 across the five categories of:

- Young Farmer/Commoner of the Year (aged 40 and under)
- Best Supporter of Local Produce
- Sustainability Champion
- Young Environmental Champion (aged 25 and under)
- Rural Diversification
- Land Management.

The Awards will be presented at the New Forest Show with a reception for the winners, those shortlisted and invited guests.

A stand to promote the Green Halo Partnership and the Greenprint framework was designed with marketing materials for the launch of the Solent Freeport and Solent LEP 2050 strategy at the Horizons Cruise terminal in Southampton. Many useful conversations were had at the stand and Alison Barnes hosted a seminar about the natural capital of the Solent at the event.

We are preparing the New Forest Show stand on the theme of the Nature and Climate challenge – over 620 people have already signed our online pledge to take small steps towards more sustainable living and we'll be working with partners to show how people

can activate their pledge with advice, ideas and games to learn more about the climate and nature emergencies in the New Forest and how we can all play a part.

A reception will be held on the stand on Tuesday 26 July to launch the Partnership Plan.

Horizons scheme:

A blog detailing the volunteer activity over the winter period was produced. Over the course of 47 action days, approximately 1,825 total hours were given by volunteers on various projects across the Forest – that is 109,500 minutes or equivalent to 1,216 football matches.

We attended the University of Southampton Science and Engineering Fair and interviewed partners and visitors about the nature and climate emergencies.

Community engagement:

The Green Groups Network made up of eco groups from across the New Forest district are now meeting regularly online to share best practice and collaborate, convened by the NPA. We attended the Ringwood Against Climate Emergency (RACE) eco fair with a stand in partnership with the Freshwater Habitats Trust and attended the Brockenhurst Repair Cafe. Five green groups have applied to our Sustainable Communities Fund for help to support their projects. Several groups will be joining us with activities on the NPA stand at the New Forest Show.

We supported the policy team to launch the consultation into the Hyde Village Design Statement.

A press release was issued and media enquiries answered about new planning guidelines for new and larger temporary 'pop-up' campsites within the New Forest National Park, to help protect the environment and local communities.

The local listing project is appealing to residents to help identify buildings and structures which help make up the local character of the area, which we have been promoting.

The first artist in residence took place at SPUDworks in Sway and we have been supporting online. The artist will be displaying her works on our stand at the New Forest Show.

The New Forest Tour launched and runs for nine weeks to Sunday 18 September. As well as promoting sustainable travel to visitors, we will be promoting the new heavily-discounted residents' ticket, with a season ticket working out at just over £2 per day (based on daily travel on a concession ticket). New Forest District Council tax bill payers can buy their ticket from the Morebus app by uploading a photo of their council tax bill.



Online:

Our main social media channels saw 1.75 million impressions and nearly 120,000 engagements in the past three months.

Other work has included promoting a Love the Forest grant towards research into pine martens; preparing a visitor survey and film; launching a video showing a new pound for commoners' animals near Beaulieu, which was funded by the Higher Level Stewardship scheme; promoting a number of job vacancies; Walk This May; Mental Health Awareness Week and developing a green health hub website to promote social prescribing activities. A press release was issued on improvements to Landford Bog which have received LEI funding.

We said goodbye to Suzi Shilling who has been with us for over six years and we wish her well in her new role with Romsey Town Council.

### *Fundraising*

We have been awarded £5,000 from Forest Holidays via National Parks Partnerships for a Wild Connections youth initiative. This will support youth groups to visit the National Park often for the first time. The visits will be supported by our travel grant scheme and take place on publicly accessible sites. Feedback will help us pilot a wild connection youth opportunities online portal focused on helping groups continue their relationship with wild spaces close to home and in the National Park.

To mark the Platinum Jubilee we launched Sustainable Communities Fund microgrants and a new upper limit of the wider scheme of £10,000.

We appointed consultant Rachael Gallagher to liaise with partners and run workshops in the coming months. This process will help us develop a portfolio of projects to deliver the Partnership Plan and form the basis of future joint funding bids.

## **2.2 Enabling high quality and beneficial experiences of the National Park**

### *Interpretation projects*

The first National Park 'artist in residence' started their residency in May. Marie Smith met with eight people of difference ethnic minorities and worked with them to record thoughts and photographs as part of her residency 'We belong here'. This will exhibit at SPUDworks in Sway in October. We will be highlighting the residency at the New Forest Show on the Tuesday.

We have worked with Hampshire County Council and Bird Aware Solent to put in an application to the 'Site specific project fund' for interpretation at three key sites on the New Forest Coast- Hurst Spit, Tanners Lane and Lymington-Keyhaven Nature Reserve. The project also contains some new measures to reduce disturbance and also some new habitat creation works. We will find out if we were successful in the Autumn. We have also worked on producing interpretation for the Calshot to Ashlett Creek section of the England Coast Path, which is due to open in August.

We hosted a visit to the National Park for the Southampton National Park City team, to discuss joint working and future engagement opportunities. We also provided activity material to the University of Southampton family packs that are being given to new refugee families arriving in Southampton.

### *Volunteering and Ambassadors*

#### Volunteering update – Pleasure Copse case study

Located in the south of the national park, Pleasure Copse is situated northeast of Lymington and is part of a managed farmland landscape. The woodland is an ancient semi natural woodland due to the quantity of ancient woodland indicator species and is also designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC).

The site was part of the Working Woodlands project through the Our Past, Our Future Landscape Partnership Scheme. The main objectives were to ensure the complete eradication of invasive non-native species and to establish sustainable woodland management practices through thinning, coppicing and ride management.

In 2017, the understory was overwhelmingly dominated by rhododendron, blocking light from reaching the woodland floor. Ground vegetation is absent where rhododendron is present. Volunteers began visiting the site and removing the rhododendron by cutting and burning and contractors followed up by spraying of the invasive species with herbicide, intended to prevent regrowth.

Volunteers continued to visit the site over three winters and reduced the rhododendron coverage by over 90%. Herbicide treatment in September 2021 has removed the presence of rhododendron on site. Light can now penetrate to the woodland floor and this has transformed the character of the woodland and allowed the growth of ancient woodland flora.

Thanks to volunteers, the site has been cleared of rhododendron, hazel has been allowed to regrow and now the woodland supports a greater variety of birds and bat species. Transect surveys carried out revealed the presence of soprano and common pipistrelle bats, as well as the rare Bechstein's bat. Over the course of the scheme the total number

of birds recorded increased by 280% (53 to 202) and the number of species recorded increased by 80% (15 to 27). Species which have been consistently recorded each year include blackbird, blue tit, carrion crow, and wren. Records of species, which hadn't been recorded on site before included blackcap, coal tit, dunnock, gold finch, greenfinch, jackdaw, jay, mistle thrush, pheasant, siskin, swallow, tree creeper and willow warbler.

### Ambassadors

We are working in partnership with the Freshwater Habitats Trust to run litter picking walks across sites in the New Forest. On Wednesday 1 June ambassadors were invited to join us at Hollands Wood campsite, Brockenhurst, to collect litter and listen to messages about the scheme and the effect of litter on terrestrial and freshwater environments. The group collected litter at Balmer Lawn, Tilery Road and Standing Hat and engaged with visitors at the campsite. Plans are being made for further litter picking walks this summer, as well as developing citizen science projects including a plan to survey rhododendron.

### *Health and Wellbeing*

The Nature Health Network met in April and in June. In April the group heard about case studies from UK National Parks including PEDALL (New Forest), digital detox (North York Moors) and beach wheelchair access (Pembrokeshire Coast). In June Natural England presented on green social prescribing. Over 90 people attended the two webinars.

Our Health Education England placement, James Alden, started in March and has been working with PEDALL to broaden links with the NHS (especially young people's mental health programmes) and also provide content for the 'Green health hub' an online portal we are developing with partners to go live this summer.

### *PEDALL*

We have welcomed Phill Ritchie, who has volunteered with PEDALL for a number of years, as seasonal Ride Leader. This addition together with four volunteer Ride Leaders is enabling us to deliver a full programme of rides at Burley, including Saturday and evening rides. Rides are also now running from the Ashurst site, from the Chapel. The retrofitted container, funded by Sport England, is in production at Pentalver in Southampton, with an anticipated delivery to Ashurst in July.

PEDALL has run taster sessions in Lymington, Southampton and Bournemouth to promote the project which has led to new groups and riders regularly riding in the Forest with PEDALL. PEDALL also welcomed staff to ride on a Discovery Day at the New Ashurst base on 20 June.

There are promotional events planned for July at Highcliffe Golf Club, which has chosen Friends of PEDALL as its charity of the year. PEDALL will also be at the New Forest Show running taster sessions for all and fundraising.

## **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 'Care for the Forest, Care for Each Other' campaign is up and running again this year with a new updated Action Plan agreed by partner organisations. This includes taking forward a number of initiatives from last year, such as joint ranger patrols, deploying temporary signage and promoting the New Forest Code. New Forest District Council (NFDC) with support from partners are looking at the feasibility of making a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) to address persistent 'anti-social' behaviour and mis-use of the Forest. The RMS steering group met in June to see how it could best assist NFDC in collecting the evidence necessary to support a PSPO. A further NFDC hosted meeting of partners is scheduled in mid-July.

On 30 June the National Park Authority hosted an event for neighbouring planning authority officers to visit the New Forest to learn more about the international nature conservation designations and the package of mitigation measures being implemented to address recreational pressures. The event at Whitefield Moor was attended by officers from seven authorities and staff from the Authority, Natural England and Forestry England outlined the work taking place through signage, ranger provision, the promotion of alternative recreational areas and education to mitigate the impacts of new development in areas surrounding the New Forest.

Linked to this, the National Park Authority is working with Eastleigh Borough Council, Southampton City Council and Natural England to agree mitigation measures to ensure planned new development in these neighbouring authorities does not impact on the integrity of the New Forest's designated sites. The existing arrangements with NFDC already fund a full time People and Wildlife Ranger working on the open Forest and we have recently recruited to this post following the departure of the previous postholder.

### *Access and Rights of Way*

We have installed new signposts, gate and interpretation posts in preparation for the August opening of the Calshot to Gosport section of the England Coast Path. A week before the August opening we will add England Coast Path waymarkers, interpretation panels and a few other final touches.

We replaced eight stiles with eight new easy access gates on three of our promoted walking routes. Many thanks to the landowners for working closely with us to support accessibility along our public rights of way network.

The New Forest Walks app has been updated and now contains 40 guided walks. The app provides information and digital signage, encouraging people to walk off the designated lands, on paths closer to their homes.

### **3 Prosper**

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

##### *New Forest Marque*

Membership of the Marque remains stable despite the difficulties of the last two years and at 167 is slightly up on last year. The AGM In April heard from Marque member Kathy Sirl and her inspirational story of establishing the zero waste and plastic free grocery and coffee shop – Naked Pantry and Naked Quench. The Marque team is looking forward to returning to the New Forest Show to highlight the great work of the many producers and suppliers of local New Forest produce.

##### *Visitor experience*

We are working with Go New Forest and Forestry England to develop an online visits survey, which goes live in July. We are also commissioning a welcome film to highlight how best to explore the National Park while looking after it at the same time.

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

##### *New Forest Tour*

Working in partnership with the Tour operator, we are delighted to confirm two new elements for the New Forest Tour this season:

- 1) An NFDC resident's ticket with options for one day, seven days or the whole season (all nine weeks) at a reduced price. Residents can access this ticket via a one-off verification process, uploading their NFDC council tax bill via the Morebus app.
- 2) Extending the expiry date on all (standard and resident's) multi-day tickets to ensure they can be used at any point during the entire season.

We hope these positive additions will contribute to achieving NPA aims of reducing the carbon footprint and making the National Park more accessible to more people by offering locals a good-value alternative to travelling by personal car, as well as assisting those who rely on public transport to get around.

Tickets will continue to be sold via a range of methods, including the New Forest Heritage Centre, which is much welcomed, being the starting point and interchange of 2/3 routes.

We are grateful for the ongoing sponsors and partners who enable delivery of this operation which serves to a) ease congestion on New Forest roads, b) help people learn about responsibly enjoying the area, c) incentivise passengers to shop and support local via access to discounts whilst visiting towns and villages via the Tour.

We hope to capture more information about passengers' understanding of how to care for the Forest via a customer survey.

#### *Sustainable transport*

At the recent Passenger Transport Forum, we learnt that no Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding was awarded from central government DfT to HCC. Bus services are operating at 80% of pre-Covid levels and government support will continue until October 2022. £800,000 savings in passenger transport services will result in reduced bus and community transport services, and this may well impact on the New Forest area. There was an acknowledgement that rural areas require a different approach, so we look forward to working with HCC to help shape and deliver this work.

#### *Walking and cycling*

Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan development continues with further input into the Hampshire County Council mapping process. An audit is being planned for later in the summer and further engagement with groups later in the year.

We co-ordinated responses on behalf of the Cycle Working Group to the following public consultations: HCC's Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP) and NFDC's Parking Standards supplementary planning document (SPD).

We are engaged with other groups locally with a view to supporting local active travel initiatives.

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

#### *Affordable Housing*

One of the drivers behind the adopted Local Plan (2019) housing site allocations is the delivery of affordable housing for local people in identified housing need. In April our Planning Committee resolved to permit development at the Local Plan site allocation at Whartons Lane in Ashurst, subject to the necessary legal agreement. This application will deliver 31 affordable dwellings for people in housing need with a connection to the local area. We are also currently assessing the application relating to another Local Plan

housing site allocation at Church Lane in Sway which would similarly, if ultimately found to be acceptable, deliver affordable housing for local people in an area with identified housing need. In addition, we continue to work with applicants looking to bring forward small scale rural exception site for affordable housing in other communities within the National Park.

### *Sustainable Communities Fund*

Some of the projects agreed recently are:

Solent Rescue Independent Lifeboat (based at Lepe Country Park)  
£2,000 towards replacing fluorescent lights in the boatshed with energy efficient lighting. Currently the lighting in the boat shed has started to fail and is in urgent need of replacement. Solent Rescue is a small independent charity founded in 1971 initially as a beach rescue service and run entirely by volunteers. The charity has since grown into a lifeboat service and is a member of the Solent Sea Rescue Organisation.

#### Pilley Community Shop Ltd

£2,000 towards new shelving and display units as part of the move to new premises. The Community Shop was established in 2015 and is staffed by a full-time manager, part-time employee, and 14-20 volunteers. The shop focuses on sourcing local products where possible and contributes towards the New Forest Marque. The new building will enable the shop to become even more of a social resource for the community. The fit-out will take place from end of April and the official opening is scheduled for 29 August.

#### SPUD - Our New Common Forest

£2,000 towards artist Luke Pell and Lucy Cash to support under-represented groups in the New Forest to connect with each other and develop inspiration from the National Park via a series of creative walks and activities. During spring-summer 2022 Luke and Lucy will be developing creative work with the LGBTQ+ community in the New Forest as part of their artist residency at spudWORKS. They will be working with Breakout Youth in New Milton and Marchwood and an exhibition/installation will take place in the gallery at spudWORKS and an almanac of poetic responses. This will coincide with the first New Forest Pride event on 22 August.

#### Hythe Pier Heritage Association

£2,000 towards urgent repairs to the railway track involving replacement of the track and the pier boarding to allow the train to continue to operate. This is in addition to funds of £2,000 supporting restoration of one of the train carriages and enabling a wider range of audiences to use the ferry to travel into the National Park.

#### Greener Brockenhurst

£520 towards a series of repair cafés in Brockenhurst. This provides a social opportunity as well as opportunities to repair and reuse items that would otherwise be thrown away. There are also spin-off opportunities such as bike repairs and safety checks,

refreshments on sale providing benefits to local businesses. Funding enables hire of the venue, Repair Café Foundation membership, promotion and refreshments. Once the cafés are up and running and assuming they are successful the group plans to ask for donations to help towards future running costs.

## 4 Achieving Excellence

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

Human Resources

As at 3 July 2022 the total staff headcount was 77 or 68.54 full-time equivalents (FTEs).

	<b>Headcount</b>	Variation from previous report	<b>Full Time Equivalents</b>	Variation from previous report
Core funded	59*	- 7	52.88*	- 5.24
Funded by external projects	18	+ 4	15.66	+ 3.61
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>- 3</b>	<b>68.54</b>	<b>- 1.64</b>

\*Of the core funded roles, one staff member (1 FTE) is working in shared services, one is on a fixed-term contract and 19 are part-time.

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

<b>Role</b>	<b>Contract type</b>	<b>How funded</b>
Project Co-ordinator (Green and Blue Horizons)	Fixed term	Project funded
New Forest Land Advice Service Advisor	Fixed term	Project funded
Inclusive Cycling Ride Leader	Fixed term	Project funded
Seasonal Assistant Ranger	Fixed term	Project funded
Planning Enforcement Officer	Fixed term	Core funded
Senior Planning Assistant	Permanent	Core funded
Planning Enforcement Manager	Permanent	Core funded

We said goodbye to:

<b>Role</b>	<b>Contract type</b>	<b>How role will be filled in future</b>
Project Assistant – Records Management	Fixed term, core funded	N/A – end of fixed term contract



Communications Assistant x 2	Permanent, core funded	1 x permanent, 1 x fixed term
Receptionist (Mon – Tues)	Permanent, core funded	Like for like replacement
Planning Officer	Permanent, core funded	Like for like replacement
Planning Enforcement Manager	Permanent, core funded	Like for like replacement
Partnerships and Community Officer	Permanent, core funded	Assessing vacancy
Education and Youth Officer (maternity cover)	Fixed term, core funded	N/A - return of permanent postholder

#### **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*

The revised National Park Partnership Plan was unanimously approved at the March 2022 full Authority meeting. Since then, key partners have been in the process of approving the plan and it has now been signed off by all the key partners.

An Executive Summary is being produced to provide a high-level summary of the key themes and desired outcomes. The summary will be available for distribution at the New Forest Show to support the formal launch of the revised Partnership Plan at the Show on 26 July. The launch event will be aimed at local people, organisations and stakeholders and will be focused on taking forward the shared commitments.

Work on establishing the new Partnership Plan Leaders Panel continues to progress. It is anticipated that the Panel would meet twice a year and have a site visit once a year. The National Park Authority would provide the secretariat for the Panel and the membership would comprise senior representation from key partners to drive the delivery of the Partnership Plan.

We have worked with both the University of Southampton and Bournemouth University to establish formal partnerships as part of our drive to become a Centre of Excellence. We are mapping activity between the universities and ourselves and have also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Bournemouth University to set how we can work together to archive the Partnership Plan and where it overlaps with BU's vision.

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

#### *ICT Services*

**Security / Infrastructure** – Urgent VMWare security patching was required. With the increase in cyber security activity Defra is now taking an interest in the IT security of the national parks, with their security team sending regular communications. We submitted answers to a Defra questionnaire on our security for their annual report to central government, this is the first time we have been asked to do this. In line with Defra's advice and that recommended in the Cyber Audit we need to ensure we meet with the NCSC guidelines.

A new security system, Microsoft Azure Identity Protection, which uses advanced AI to look for suspicious behaviour, has been implemented. This system warns ICT of suspicious activity and can block access until ICT has checked it out.

There has been a disc failure on the SAN, fortunately the system did transfer to a spare disc but now this has happened once there is a strong possibility of it happening again. The SAN is out of warranty due to its age, and we cannot guarantee to be able to get spare parts. In view of the SAN problems, urgent work was carried out over weekends and the Jubilee bank holiday to copy over two million documents to the cloud enabling a quicker recovery should the SAN fail.

Work on the infrastructure migration has been hampered due to the convoluted system we currently have with the NPA piggy backing on a system provided by HCC to NFDC. This arrangement (HPSN) is being discontinued from November, so we are looking at alternative options.

Following the Cyber Audit report recommendation to have a cyber security incident response plan in place we have identified a third party that can assist with this and hope to commence that work shortly.

All the SSL certificates for our systems and websites have been renewed.

**Replacement planning system** – The project go-live has been pushed back due to issues on the software provider's side but predominantly difficulties arising with GIS. These issues are the same as those being experienced with the infrastructure migration which is preventing the GIS / Agile systems connecting correctly. To overcome this a migration project for the GIS servers to be hosted in the cloud has started, with completion as soon as possible to enable us to proceed with the new planning system.

A large percentage of the document templates have been set up, but we are still waiting for the software supplier to complete the delivery of all modules and address outstanding issues/changes identified. Once this work is complete and the relevant planning teams

have provided us with initial workflows to install, the system will be available for the planning teams to fully test prior to go live. The go-live date needs to be as soon as possible as the delay in this project has a concerning impact on the critically fragile infrastructure and other IT work.

### **Other work / projects**

We are working with the suppliers of the new media library trying to get all the meta data imported for over 14,000 photos that are held in the current system.

Work has commenced on the implementation of a new logon system for HR hub that will use our own New Forest NPA accounts to logon to the system. Testing and go-live should happen in July.

A new project has started with the Education Team setting up new iPads for students to use.

We are working closely with the Business Support Officer on a new cloud-based printing solution for the printers as we reach the end of the current contract in September.

### *Legal and Information management*

Our solicitor continues to provide legal advice to the NPA on a wide range of matters relating to its work, including governance, contractual matters and the planning function.

We said goodbye to the Project Assistant - Records Management at the end of March. As a result of this project all teams are now using SharePoint as their main document library and the old network drives have been set to read-only. The administration rights for the SharePoint sites have been re-assigned to the relevant teams for the long-term management of the sites and the associated documents. The ICT Team is now responsible for delivering new sites as required and providing training for new starters and assistance, as required, to existing staff. SharePoint is an important part of ensuring that our records are managed in such a way that we can meet the statutory requirements under the access to information regime and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Ensuring that we meet our obligations under the GDPR remains a high priority and we are constantly reviewing and updating our website, documents and privacy notices to improve transparency and compliance. As new projects and areas of work start, we work with officers to ensure we have the relevant Privacy Notices and records management processes in place.

Meeting our obligations under the access to information legislation is also a priority and as can be seen from the table below, because requests do not come in uniformly, there are times when responding to information requests is the main priority. It can also be seen that the number of requests received is increasing over time.

## Year-end summary for 2021/22

### Information requests

We received 66 requests for information between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, which, although being down by 11% on the previous year, is still the second highest number ever received in one year.

	Information requests received by year				
	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Q1	19	22	11	14	14
Q2	12	19	8	20	10
Q3	20	14	15	12	15
Q4	15	19	19	12	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>47</b>
	5-year average = 59.6				

All were responded to within the statutory timeframe (20 working days or one calendar month for subject access requests), with the average response time being 13.1 working days.

Of the 66 requests, two were subject access requests made under GDPR i.e. requests for the personal data of the requester. Nineteen (29%) were handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and related to a broad range of subjects such as our IT arrangements, incidents of bullying and sexual harassment, the gender pay gap, payments made to charities, spend on social media and printing and postage costs.

The remaining requests (68%) were handled under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR) because they related to our planning function or other environmental matters. Of these, 25 were related to specific planning or enforcement cases or sites, where the requester was seeking information which would not generally be publicly available, such as pre-application enquiries or the source and details relating to planning enforcement investigations. The other 20 EIR requests were more general environmental queries and were seeking information on various topics, such as the recreational pressure on habitat, campsites, waste management, commoners' stock, fixed penalty notices for littering or dog fouling, electric car charging and planning policy.

As in previous years, most requests were received from individuals. A few were received from businesses; these tended to be related to matters such as our IT/printing arrangements and confidential waste bins contract. A small number of requests were received from pressure groups or journalists, with five this year being generated by the Taxpayers' Alliance.

In 23 requests (35%) the information was either released in full or only subject to minor personal data redactions, and a further five requests (8%) were partially released. Only eight requests (12%) were withheld in their entirety (generally because they were related to sensitive planning enforcement cases or other potential or ongoing legal matters).

In 20 requests (30%) we did not hold the information requested and where appropriate, the requesters were referred to the relevant public authority. We also had a higher than usual number of requests which lapsed (15%) (this is where we either sought clarification from the requester and did not get a response or they decided not to pursue the matter).

Of the 66 requests received, only four asked for an internal review of our initial response; three of those internal reviews were from the same individual, who had submitted seven requests during the year. In all cases the internal review upheld the original decision. We are not aware of any of these being subsequently referred to the Information Commissioner; however, since the last internal review was only undertaken in May, if it has been appealed it would still be working its way through the system.

### Requests under GDPR

Last year we received one request from an individual to exercise their rights under the GDPR; they objected to the processing of their personal data. In this instance we were not able to comply with the request because we were required to process the data in relation to a planning matter. The request was handled promptly and well within the required timeframe.

### Formal complaints

We received 12 formal complaints last year, which was significantly down on the previous year. As can be seen from the table below the number of formal complaints received do vary year on year, however this is still a notably low figure.

	<b>Number of complaints received per year</b>				
	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2017/18</b>
Q1	2	3	7	4	9
Q2	3	11	5	3	4
Q3	3	4	2	3	9
Q4	4	3	4	7	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>25</b>
	5-year average = 15.8				

All but two were related to planning matters. Our average response time was 16 working days, and in one case we went over the 20-working day target by just one day. The majority were not upheld although one complaint was upheld and we offered a written apology. In another two instances, we did not uphold the substantive element of the complaint but did offer an apology for the delay in how the matters were handled.

In two cases, on receiving the initial response the complainant requested a review by the Chief Executive under Stage Three of our process. In both cases the original decision was upheld. No complaints have been referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

## **5 Members**

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

- 26 April – Planning Committee
- 12 May – Rangers Members Day
- 17 May – Planning Committee
- 6 June – Resources, Audit and Performance Committee
- 7 June – Members Day – Habitat Regulations and the Approach to Mitigation
- 9 June – Consultative Panel
- 13 June – New Forest Access Forum
- 21 June – Planning Committee

### **5.2 Forthcoming activities include:**

- 19 July – Planning Committee
- 26 – 28 July – New Forest Show
- 16 August – Planning Committee
- 5 September – Resources, Audit and Performance Committee
- 12 September – New Forest Access Forum
- 13 September – Members Day – Planning Tour
- 20 September – Planning Committee
- 27 – 29 September – National Parks Conference
- 18 October – Planning Committee

### **5.3 Chief Executive's engagements**

- 28 March – Meeting with RSPB
- 28 March – Nature Recovery Steering Group meeting
- 28 March – Event at St Georges Windsor (Leadership Fellows)
- 30 March – Speaker at New Forest Water Forum
- 31 March – Local Governance Defra meeting
- 31 March – Diversity and Inclusion meeting with all National Parks
- 1 April – National Park City meeting
- 1 April – NPE Nature Recovery meeting
- 1 April – Landscape Review Consultation meeting with Defra

- 4 April – Wildlife Roundtable meeting
- 4 April – UK NPOs meeting
- 4 April – Nature Recovery Green paper discussion
- 5 April – Meeting with CX, CNP
- 5 April – Meeting with HCC
- 6 April – Staff development session, Green Leadership
- 7 April – New Forest Leadership Group meeting
- 7 April – National Park Health and Wellbeing Strategy Steering Group meeting
- 8 April – Meet with CX, Business South
- 11 April – ENPOG meeting
- 13 April – NPE Landscapes for Everyone meeting
- 14 April – Nature Recovery Steering Group meeting
- 22 April – St Georges, Windsor Leadership Fellows Leader to Leader Exchanges
- 25 April – Discussion about Cairngorms Connect
- 25 April – Meeting with Conservation Director, North York Moors
- 27 April – Meeting with CX, NFDC
- 27 April – Meeting with Friends of Brockenhurst
- 27 April – Meeting with NPE
- 28 April – HLS Board
- 28 April – National Parks APPG meeting with NPE
- 29 April – Phone call with Defra
- 3 May – Wildlife Roundtable workshop
- 4 May – Nature Recovery Network meeting
- 4 May – Diversity and Inclusion meeting with all National Parks
- 4 May – Nature Recovery Green paper discussion
- 5 May – Greenprint meeting
- 5 May – National Parks APPG event planning meeting
- 6 May – Nature Recovery Steering Group
- 9 May – NP Health and Wellbeing Leads meeting
- 10 May – Meeting with Conservation Director, Lake District National Park
- 10 May – Meeting with Defra
- 10 May – Meeting with Convenor, Loch Lomond & the Trossachs NP
- 10 May – Revere Working Group
- 11 May – Green Halo Steering Group
- 12 May – Members Day
- 12 May – Introductory tour of the Forest with Chief Executive, NFDC
- 13 May – Meeting with NPE
- 13 May – St Georges, Windsor Leadership Fellows Leader to Leaders Exchanges
- 13 May – Introductory tour of the Forest with Area Director, Forestry Commission
- 16 May – ENPOG meeting
- 17 May – Landscapes for Everyone meeting
- 18 May – Meeting with NPE and South Downs NPA
- 18 May – Meeting with US National Park Service

- 18 May – Attending Cllr Mans tribute event
- 19 May – Business South Board meeting
- 19 May – Nature Recovery Network meeting
- 19 May – Greenprint Steering Group
- 24 May – NPE Chief Executive Officer development session
- 6 June – UK NPO meeting
- 7 June – Leadership Insights Group meeting
- 7 June – Members Day
- 8 June – Speaker at the Solent Summit launch event
- 9 June – NPE Board meeting
- 10 June – UK Collaboration meeting with Giant Panda National Park, China
- 13 June – Meeting with HCC
- 14 June – Meeting with the Deputy Surveyor
- 14 June – Meeting with NPE
- 14 June – Landscapes for Everyone meeting
- 14 June – New Forest Leadership Group meeting
- 15 June – Meeting with Natural England
- 15 June – Regular meeting with Chief Executive, NFDC
- 15 June – Green Leadership Programme closing session
- 16 June – Regenerate South Conference
- 20 June – Environmental Farmers Group meeting
- 20 June – Directors of Conservation meeting
- 20 June – ENPOG meeting
- 22 June – Nature Recovery Network meeting
- 22 June – Greenprint Steering Group meeting
- 22 June – Nature Recovery Green Paper discussion
- 23 June – Meeting with Chair, Business South
- 24 June – Greenprint meeting
- 24 June – Meeting with Defra, Nature Recovery
- 27 June – COP26 Working Group
- 28 June – Natural Capital Scheme site visit to Keyhaven
- 29 June – APPG briefing meeting x 2
- 29 June – Meeting with RSPB
- 29 June – Meeting with Conservation Director, North York Moors
- 30 June – Nature Recovery meeting
- 30 June – Discovery Days all staff event
- 1 July – Greenprint meeting
- 1 July – Nature Recovery Team meeting
- 3 July – National Motor Museum 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event
- 4 July – Wildlife Roundtable
- 7 July – Natural England & SW National Parks collaboration day
- 8 July – Meeting with CX, HIWWT
- 8 July – Greenprint meeting



- 8 July – Regular meeting with Chief Executive, NFDC
- 12 July – Green Halo Steering Group meeting
- 12 July – National Parks APPG briefing
- 12 July – National Parks APPG – Nature Recovery presentation
- 13 July – Meeting with Chief Executive, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation
- 13 July – HLS Board meeting

#### **5.4 Chairman's engagements**

- 24 March– Solent Freeport Board meeting
- 1 April – Landscape Consultation meeting with Defra
- 6 April – Solent LEP AGM
- 12 May – Members Day
- 23 May – UK Chairs Forum
- 24 May – Solent Freeport Board meeting
- 7 June– Members Day
- 9 June– NPE Board meeting
- 5 July – PfSH Joint Committee

## **6 Recommendation**

**To note the report.**