

RAPC 504-23

**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
RESOURCES, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE – 6 MARCH 2023**

INTERIM WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

Report by: Alison Barnes, Chief Executive and Nigel Stone, Head of Resources (CFO)

1 Business Plan and Work Programme Development

- 1.1 Following the discussion and agreement by this Committee in February 2023, officers will soon finalise the task of updating our own Business Plan in light of the new Partnership (Management) Plan. It is anticipated that the new Business Plan will be brought to this Committee in June and to the full Authority in July for approval. Within this work we will not only be looking at our specific outcomes and the actions with which we deliver them, but also the performance mechanisms required to implement them efficiently and effectively and a clear monitoring framework for officers and members to review / amend as necessary along the way.
- 1.2 As an Authority we are now entering a new phase where our mission must **Re:New** around our core Purposes and Duty, and in light of the Climate & Nature Emergency, Landscapes Review recommendations and as we move past the covid pandemic.
- 1.3 Whilst this key strategic work is underway, we want to make clear that delivery will continue on the ground for the Forest and its communities. We have therefore drafted an 'Interim Work Programme' to reflect the core Authority structures and outcomes expected over the coming months as we start the 2023/24 financial year. For this we have mirrored the five strategic themes from the Partnership Plan (the 'what') and then added a sixth heading to cover governance, performance management, support services and staffing strategy (the 'how').

These heading are:

- Net Zero with Nature
- Nature Recovery
- Thriving Forest
- An Inclusive National Park
- Team New Forest
- Achieving Excellence

2 Draft Business Plan Performance Mechanisms

- 2.1 The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) have established internal 'Programme Steering Groups' for each of the six themes. These have clearly defined Terms of Reference and Responsibilities. The membership of these Groups is 6-10 officers, taken from across all the functional teams of the Authority, have Programme Leads (the SLT member whose role closest fits the theme) but also a further 'independent' SLT member sitting as the Senior Responsible Officer.
- 2.2 The Groups interact with each other and then SLT itself provides an oversight of the overall performance. Actions would be considered both by outcome(s) / project(s) and spatially – we have initially considered/termed this spatial consideration as "4+Core" i.e. the four quarters of the Forest plus the centre. This allows us to consider not only whether overall outcomes are being achieved but how a range of outcomes are making a difference within a geographic area.
- 2.3 These initial ideas will be developed further with members and staff over the coming months, with a new Business Plan presented to the June/July member meetings alongside our final Work Programme for 2023/24.

3 Interim Work Programme 2023/24

- 3.1 As stated, as an interim measure to guide staff, members, partners and our communities on our current priorities for 2023/24, we have initially drafted the following high-level summary within the new themes:

Re:New Climate - Net Zero with Nature

Outcome: A net zero carbon emissions target is achieved by 2050, through significant cuts in land-based emissions and the conservation and restoration of natural ecosystems, to both reduce emissions production and remove emissions from the atmosphere.

Partnership Plan relevant actions -

NZN1: Enhance understanding, identification and monitoring of carbon data

NZN2: Implement nature-based climate solutions to reduce carbon emissions and increase carbon sequestration by identifying suitable interventions, working with land managers and securing sufficient finance

NZN3: Work collectively to reduce carbon emissions and identify investment opportunities

NZN4: Require all developers to build zero-carbon homes

NZN5: Support communities, businesses, and visitors to adopt a more carbon friendly way of living and visiting

NZN6: Adopt and implement sustainable transport plans

Draft Outcomes	Draft Actions / Priorities 2023/24
<p>A robust and consistent evidence base for climate action to deliver a net zero National Park by 2050. (Lead officer, Olivia McGregor)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness of net zero national park report amongst stakeholders • Work to close evidence gaps regarding the carbon storage and sequestration rates of the Park’s habitats • Work to develop a system for tracking progress towards net zero goal • Build an understanding of climate risks the national park faces
<p>Enhanced public engagement with action on climate change amongst National Park residents, and visitors. (Lead Officer, Olivia McGregor)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote community action to reduce carbon emissions and increase carbon removal through nature-based solutions • Through Sustainable Communities Fund provide funding for actions that tackle climate change
<p>Nature-based climate solutions implemented to meet the land change targets of 70ha new woodland a year, 160ha peat restoration a year, 34ha agroforestry, 2ha new hedgerow, 231ha legumes (improved grassland) and 33ha cover cropping. (Lead Officer, Olivia McGregor)</p>	<p>Support the implementation of nature-based climate solutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the targeting of FiPL funding to meet land use change targets • Provide guidance to land managers on the funding sources available for nature-based solutions • With partners develop a means of monitoring progress on land use change targets
<p>New development incorporates sustainable construction standards and techniques and delivers a range of environmental benefits. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the implementation of our adopted Local Plan (2019) policies and the National Park Design Guide SPD (2022), both of which include guidance on sustainability • Annual National Park Building Design Awards held to recognise and celebrate the best green building projects in the National Park • Future review of local planning policies to consider options to promote energy efficient development.

Draft Outcomes	Draft Actions / Priorities 2023/24
Enhanced walking, cycling and sustainable transport in and around the National Park to reduce carbon emissions, improve experience and help manage recreation. (Lead Officer, Jim Mitchell)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scope and deliver an externally funded (corporate partner) electric vehicle charging installation at a visitor location.• With partners, complete a New Forest-wide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan and identify priority improvements to be made• Work with the bus operator and drivers to manage and promote the three New Forest Tour routes, maintaining satisfaction ratings of at least 4.5 out of 5 and overall financial viability• Encourage use of the train, bus, cycling, walking and the New Forest Tour as alternatives to driving - through site / route improvements (e.g. new signs, surface improvements), walking festival, online communications, app and via partners.

Re:New Nature - Nature Recovery

Outcome: Habitats are more resilient, restored, expanded, connected and maintained to enable wildlife to thrive, both within and beyond the National Park.

Partnership Plan relevant actions -

NR1: Restore and expand priority habitats

NR2: Halt and reverse the decline of priority species (from the Hampshire Notables list)

NR3: Promote understanding of natural capital and its role in the New Forest

NR4: Develop closer working with and better support for land managers

NR5: Agree and publish a spatial plan which identifies more appropriate locations for recreation and associated infrastructure

Draft Outcomes	Draft Actions / Priorities 2023/24
<p>A coherent, joined up nature recovery network linking the National Park with neighbouring and regional National Landscapes. (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a “Team ReNew Nature” to coordinate the delivery of the spatial plan for nature and project portfolio for the New Forest • Drive progress towards ReNew Nature targets through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Land advice to farmers and land managers ○ Support for farm clusters ○ Developing opportunities for private investment in the natural environment of the National Park • Ensure the National Park’s spatial plan for nature is supported by the development of Local Nature Recovery Strategies for Hampshire, Wiltshire and Dorset • Work with neighbouring and regional National Landscapes to develop the ‘backbone’ of a Nature Recovery Network in the wider region.
<p>More opportunities for increased investment in the natural capital of the National Park. (Lead Officer, Olivia McGregor)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate opportunities for mapping the extent, depth and condition of peat in need of restoration. • Promote the understanding and application of the Natural Capital baseline amongst partners and stakeholders
<p>Eligible development provides, as an absolute minimum, the mandated level of BNG set out in the Environment Act 2021.</p> <p>Nutrient neutrality achieved for all relevant development in the National Park.</p> <p>The recreational impacts arising from planned new development are fully mitigated, for both the New Forest and Solent designations. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare local guidance for the effective implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain in the National Park, which will be mandatory for most new development from November 2023. • Apply the Nutrient Mitigation Checklist and agreed mitigation measures for all planning applications proposing a net increase in dwellings or providing overnight accommodation within the affected Solent and River Avon catchments • The NPA’s habitat mitigation scheme operates effectively; and in parallel a strategic approach to mitigation is developed, working with authorities within the 13.8km ‘zone of influence’ of the New Forest’s internationally designated sites. To include the pooled use of developer contributions where appropriate • Effectively manage temporary campsites within the National Park through the Article 4 Direction, with future applications assessed against the approved guidance. All sites comply with the Habitat Regulations.

Re:New People - an Inclusive National Park

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

Partnership Plan relevant actions -

INP1: Implement a variety of health and nature-based interventions

INP2: Establish programmes to engage with more people from diverse backgrounds and support initiatives

INP3: Establish programmes for communities and residents in fostering local identity

Draft Outcomes	Draft Actions / Priorities 2023/24
<p>Work with health providers, communities and businesses to enable people to benefit from improved mental and physical health through engagement with the special qualities of the National Park. (Lead Officer, Jim Mitchell)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver guided walking and cycling, including 190 cycling sessions for up to 400 participants through PedALL • Support a wider programme of ‘Green Health’ initiatives including walking, volunteering and cultural activity for health, signposting with online and face to face contact • Support the Green Halo health and wellbeing work through delivery of events, webinars and the Health Education England Fellowship programme.
<p>Deliver a portfolio of learning and engagement activities for different audiences, making the National Park inclusive to all and enabling diverse voices in its future. (Lead Officer Jim Mitchell)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2023 programme of inclusion- Open Sight Hampshire (four visits), Southampton NP City (five visits), Visitors and refugees’ group (five visits), ‘Enliven’ Dementia project (five + visits) University groups (two visits) - Total over 20 visits by under-served groups. • Deliver travel grant scheme enabling a diverse range of groups to access the New Forest with a range of providers. • Deliver a month-long National Park artist in residency programme with charity SPUD
<p>Volunteer action from individuals, communities and businesses to tackle the nature and climate emergency and care for the National Park. (Lead Officer, Jim Mitchell)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver 10+ volunteering days directly to restore habitats and enhance nature and 10+ volunteer days to improve access to and understanding of the special qualities, and record heritage involving a minimum of 100 volunteers. • Run 2024 volunteer fair (attended by 40+ volunteering organisations and 500+ prospective volunteers) and signpost local opportunities online.

Draft Outcomes	Draft Actions / Priorities 2023/24
Assisting communities and local organisations to lead and shape cultural and natural heritage projects that foster identity and a sense of place. (Lead Officer, David Illsley)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local Listing Project: working with local communities to identify locally important assets within the National Park to add to the existing 'local list'• Review of the three identified Conservation Area Character Appraisals undertaken

Re:New Place - Thriving Forest

Outcome: A living, working Forest is sustained through its rich cultural heritage and natural beauty and support for commoning. There is a vibrant local produce market, access to affordable homes, a growing green economy featuring sustainable tourism and green businesses.

Partnership Plan relevant actions -

TF1: Promote opportunities in the green jobs sector, especially for young people

TF2: Collaborate with relevant organisations to protect and promote commoning

TF3: Increase green investment opportunities for businesses

TF4: increased number of households benefitting from superfast broadband

TF5: Work collectively in identifying and facilitating site finding, community involvement and the application process

TF6: Increase the resilience of the Park's habitats and adapt Park infrastructure where necessary

Draft Outcomes	Draft Actions / Priorities 2023/24
Develop and deliver of high-quality, bespoke curriculum linked education for schools and colleges. (Lead Officer Helen Robinson)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people have improved understanding of the National Park and the climate and nature emergency so that they can take positive action in response. • Teach sessions in and about the National Park, in schools and colleges and through youth activities, providing meaningful connection to nature, meeting curriculum aims where appropriate and addressing social and mental wellbeing needs
People have more awareness of and opportunity to develop green skills and careers. (Lead Officer Helen Robinson)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ at least 3 staff in paid entry level roles (min 6months, apprentices, interns etc) providing appropriate additional support to them and their line managers. Research sustainable funding for these roles. • Support a total of 5 weeks high quality work experience opportunities for 14years+ • Promote green careers awareness via multiagency presence at local school and college careers fairs • Support the establishment of (External) early green careers network.
Improved understanding of the New Forest's special qualities and how to care for them, by local people and visitors through direct engagement. (Lead Officer, Gillie Molland)	<p>Deliver face-to-face engagement, training and online activities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10,000+ ranger engagements throughout the National Park during patrols, with mobile information unit, at events and in local communities • Training and support to 5+ businesses, 5+ accommodation providers, 8+ local information points and visitor centres.
Provide more affordable housing for local communities and retaining the existing stock of affordable and occupancy restricted housing. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure an appropriate level of on-site affordable housing provision for local people on the allocated Local Plan housing sites, windfall sites and rural exception sites • Identify more opportunities for rural exception sites; liaising with local communities / Homes England / Hampshire Homes Hub on site finding • Planning monitoring and enforcement to ensure no net loss of existing stock of affordable and occupancy restricted dwellings to open market housing.

Draft Outcomes	Draft Actions / Priorities 2023/24
Continuity of the landscape-scale collaboration demonstrated by the Our Past, Our Future and Green Blue Horizon schemes. (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Legacy Landscape Partnership, identifying actions to deliver the National Park Partnership Plan priorities • Seek funding opportunities to continue the valuable work of the Partnership (engaging / adding new partners as necessary).
Economic activity benefitting from, and contributing to, National Park purposes and the Greenprint for South Hampshire. (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and expand the Green Halo Partnership and host the annual Green Halo Conference • Work with New Forest Produce Ltd to reinforce the value of the New Forest Marque to primary producers, including commoners. • With the Solent Freeport, Solent LEP and NF Business Partnership, develop the Authority contribution to a green skills and training hub
The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme delivering for the environment, people and the National Park. (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 3 of the FiPL programme delivered • Monitoring and reporting of programme outcomes reported to Defra
Improved management and oversight of land use change in the National Park. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring new development and change of use of land to ensure compliance with new Local Plan • Continue to support the Encroachment Working Party • Develop a data base / map of land use change in the National Park.
Lead and develop the archaeology service to protect cultural heritage and enhance understanding. (Lead Officer, Gareth Owen)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver heritage higher level stewardship scheme commitments - advice and services • Deliver effective planning and advice service including delivery of service to partners, building a more complete picture of heritage assets • Working with communities, volunteers and landowners to engage with the public and improve scheduled ancient monuments and expand 'New Forest Knowledge' users.

Draft Outcomes	Draft Actions / Priorities 2023/24
Reduce recreational impacts on the most vulnerable sites for the benefit of residents, businesses, commoning and wildlife. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a spatial plan for where recreation should be encouraged across the New Forest and surrounding areas and establish procedures to facilitate desirable changes.• Facilitate action (including online campaigns, signage, printed materials and face-to-face engagement), working directly and through working groups and liaison with organisations. Support enforcement of the two PSPOs covering the Open Forest areas.

Team New Forest

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

Partnership Plan relevant actions -

TNF1: Deliver the annual action plan; new Partnership Board established by 2022

TNF2: Annual review and relaunch Care for the Forest, Care for each other' New Forest Code action plan

TNF3: Establish stronger links with neighbouring business communities and councils

TNF4: Understanding our evidence needs, the gaps and how to fill them.

Outcomes	Actions / Priorities 2023/24
A suite of data and evidence sources is collated, analysed and published to inform NPA and partner organisation decision-making. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and refresh our own Performance Monitoring / Key Performance Indicators within the new Business Plan and Work Programme (working with the Programme Support Groups) • Propose initial list of research opportunities to local universities
Sustainable farm businesses contributing to our environmental goals and National Park purposes. (Lead Officer, NFLAS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek support for the New Forest Land Advice Service from a range of partners • Expand the NFLAS Team to incorporate farm business advice • Support the Forest Farming Group to ensure continued financial support from the future ELM Scheme to maintain and enhance the public goods provided by the New Forest
Partnership Plan Leaders Panel drives cross-organisational performance, working together on 'big ticket' issues and projects and to ensure alignment of resources. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the new Partnership Plan Leaders' Panel and the officers' group to encourage genuine partnership working and the sharing of ideas. • Secure shared commitment to achieve the ambitions over the 5-year timespan of the Partnership Plan
Provide mechanisms for feedback, input and activation from a wide range of communities. (Lead Officer, Hilary Makin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct an audit of opportunities for stakeholder interactions • Engage 6,000 people/year through regular two-way conversations with communities and stakeholders (in person meetings/events, surveys, consultations etc). • Support Green Groups activities through the Sustainable Communities Fund with two main joint sustainable living initiatives. • Parish Quadrant meetings held with all 37 town and parish councils within the National Park on a regular basis.

Outcomes	Actions / Priorities 2023/24
<p>Far-reaching communications activities that increase awareness and engagement with the National Park. (Lead Officer, Hilary Makin)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Forest Awakening Festival and New Forest nature and climate emergency campaign with partners generates engagement of 100,000. • Special qualities of the New Forest promoted, in person, online and through the media, reaching 500,000. • New Forest Code and individual campaigns about caring for the Forest deliver a marked reduction in recreation management issues
<p>Data gathered to support an application for International Dark Sky Reserve status for the National Park in 2025/26. (Lead Officer Sarah Kelly)</p>	<p>Work with the CPRE to prepare a submission for Dark Sky accreditation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect light reading data over a 2-year period • Seek commitment from stakeholders to maintain dark sky status

Achieving Excellence

Through the Achieving Excellence theme of our work, we measure progress on objectives designed to achieve the highest quality of service and delivery across the organisation. We also recognise that excellence means reacting quickly and efficiently to emerging issues and operating fairly and sustainably in everything we do.

Draft Outcomes	Draft Actions / Priorities 2023/24
Achieve 'Organisational Net Zero' by 2030 or earlier. (Lead Officer, Nigel Stone)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the Authority's Carbon Reduction Plan (published in February 2022), through development of specific actions to achieve the overall targeted reductions • Fit for purpose and sustainable carbon reduction practices in place throughout the organisation and its supply chain.
New Authority Business Plan agreed. (Lead Officer, Nigel Stone)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following adoption of the updated Partnership Plan, to draft and publish ambitious strategic actions for the Authority to deliver. Ensure full member and staff engagement and clear, adequate and appropriate monitoring mechanisms for the life of the Plan.
People Plan reviewed and implementation successfully continued. (Lead Officer, Nigel Stone)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the three-year review of Plan (Q1) • Continued focus throughout this year on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, leadership of the Climate and Nature Emergency and staff covid-recovery • Update HR policies and procedures in light of new home and flexible working practices (Q2 and Q3)
Succession planning further developed, empowering the next generation of managers and leaders from across the organisation. (Lead Officer, Nigel Stone)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enact the six 'Programme Steering Groups' within the Authority (one for each theme), with clear direction / priorities and links to the Strategic Leadership Team • Review staff resourcing and/or structures in light of new Partnership Plan and Business Plan priorities and actions • Any specific staff learning and development opportunities identified and actioned
Significant fundraising for existing and new projects undertaken and successful. (Lead Officer, Hilary Makin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolio of projects clarified and significant funding applications submitted • Support the New Forest Trust's Love the Forest visitor giving scheme • Limited Authority resources maximised by using our core funding to leverage further funding into the Forest, building on the success of the OPOF and Horizons schemes.
New NPA offices secured. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and select suitable sites for consideration • Secure external funding for build and occupation • Location and design support partnership working and sustainable travel to work • Supports green skills and jobs • NPA's carbon footprint reduced

4 Recommendation

That the Committee endorse the report.

Papers:

NFNPA/RAPC 504/23 – Interim Work Programme 2023/24

Equality and Diversity Implications:

There are no specific equality or diversity implications arising out of this report

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