

AM 655/23

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 13 July 2023

Building a Re:New Nature Partnership

Report by: Paul Walton, Head of Environment and Rural Economy

Summary:

This is the first of a series of papers to be reported to members to show how, along with our partner organisations, we are activating the theme based ‘agendas for action’ in the [Re:New Forest Partnership Plan](#)

The Re:New Nature section of the Partnership Plan is focused on nature recovery and highlights the urgent need for action to ensure the Park’s habitats are more resilient, better managed for wildlife, bigger and more joined up. Ecosystems need to be restored to enable wildlife to move through the landscape if it is to adapt to changing conditions, including going beyond the National Park boundary to the wider countryside.

We have been working with partners to consider the interventions needed to drive improvements for nature at scale in the National Park and beyond. The Partnership Plan has already established a broad consensus around the actions needed to encourage a programme of investment in nature but there is now a need to develop a wider more focused partnership that will encourage joint working to “Re:New Nature“ in the New Forest .

This paper seeks members’ support for a Re:New Nature Partnership that will be shared with wider partners with a view to establishing the Partnership in the autumn.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Authority:

- 1. pursuant to the approved Partnership Plan, take forward the development of the Re:New Nature Partnership as set out in report AM 655/23, to include a partnership forum and practitioner’s forum in accordance with Appendix 2 to the report;**
- 2. delegate authority to the Chief Executive and the Head of Environment and Rural Economy to take all action as necessary in this regard, including drafting Terms of Reference for the Re:New Nature Partnership, determining its membership, convening meetings of the partnership forum and the practitioner’s forum, appointing a chair of the partnership forum, and ensuring the NPA is represented appropriately at meetings; and**
- 3. endorse the introduction of the spatial approach to nature recovery in the New Forest National Park.**

1 Introduction

- 1.1 National Parks cover 10% of England and are reservoirs of the nation's most important habitats and home for endangered species. Currently, almost 30% of land within the English National Parks is recognised as internationally important for wildlife. In the New Forest 56% of the National Park is a Special Area of Conservation, Special Protected Area or Ramsar Site and further 5% is classified as non-statutory sites important for nature conservation – the highest proportion of land in any local authority area in the country. National Parks are working towards a collective ambition to create, restore and manage 120000ha of nature rich areas by 2030 that will contribute to the goals of the Government's Environment Improvement Plan, their international 30 by 30 commitments and the provisions of the Environment Act 2021.
- 1.2 In the New Forest we have been working with key nature conservation organisations and agencies to help focus this work. These bodies - RSPB, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, National Trust, Natural England and Friends of the New Forest - have worked informally under an independent chair as the Wildlife Roundtable. The group have helped inform the agreed priorities and targets for the Partnership Plan, a spatial approach to nature recovery (Appendix 1) and the early development of a project portfolio that indicates the scope of the opportunity for improving nature at scale in the National Park.
- 1.3 The Roundtable members have highlighted the threats and opportunities for nature in the National Park and the need for land managers, landowners, communities and investors to come together to develop ideas and secure the resources needed to ensure the New Forest remains one of the best, most iconic places for nature in Europe.
- 1.4 The Roundtable members support the proposal to develop a wider Re:New Nature Partnership, recognising that their work is done and there is now the need for a wider group, operating within an agreed terms of reference to be established to take this work forward.

2 A Re:New Nature Partnership for the New Forest National Park

- 2.1 Nationally there is key policy and legislation being enabled that will shape how our countryside is managed in the future. This includes the Agricultural transition and the Environmental Land Management Scheme for farmers and land managers; proposals for 30% of the land in England to be positively managed for nature by 2030 – 30x30; and the Environment Act that includes provision for Biodiversity Net Gain and the creation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS). The arrangements for the preparation of the LNRS are being developed by Hampshire County Council and Wiltshire Council. An effective nature partnership for the New Forest can help ensure the strategies will have the greatest impact for nature in the National Park. There is also an expectation that private nature finance will be needed to support publicly funded agri-environment schemes. This will need agencies and organisations to work more closely together to ensure the New Forest is best placed to benefit from these changes.
- 2.2 A Leaders Panel has been formed to oversee, activate and monitor the implementation of the Partnership Plan. Below this, other thematic groups already operate to take forward actions in the Partnership Plan, such as the Recreation Management Strategy Steering Group. It is proposed that a similar forum / partnership be set up to drive Nature Recovery in the National Park that will:

- Be a focal point to drive nature recovery in the National Park and beyond the boundary.
- Bring partners together to have a bigger impact collectively.
- Secure a shared commitment to increasing resources to Re:New Nature.

2.3 It is anticipated that the forum / partnership should have an independent Chair and seek to address key issues in relation to nature recovery in the National Park e.g. data and evidence, policy implementation (30x30, LNRS). In the first instance the NPA will appoint the Chair but in subsequent years it is intended that the forum will do so.

2.4 Likely partners in this forum would include local authorities: Hampshire CC, Wiltshire Council, New Forest DC and Test Valley BC; the Defra group – Forestry England, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency and Natural England; and key non-government organisations - RSPB, National Trust, HIWWT and Friends of the New Forest.

2.5 Complementing the Re:New Nature forum will be a “Practitioner’s forum” convened by the NFNPA. This would coordinate the work of other groups operating within the National Park, maintain a portfolio of potential nature recovery projects for investment and provide a link between the policy facing Partnership and the projects happening “on the ground”.

2.6 A key part of the practitioner’s forum will be the development of a landowner’s group to bring together those with a specific interest in delivering nature outcomes on their land. A possible structure for the Re:New Nature Partnership is in Appendix 2.

3 Potential benefits of a Re:New Nature Partnership

3.1 It is envisaged that a Re:New Nature Partnership will:

- Provide a unified voice on the need for a nature network, functioning at a landscape scale.
- Activate partners in developing landscape scale projects.
- Agree joint campaigns and advocacy opportunities to Re:New Nature.
- Lead, commission and contribute to future joint Re:New Nature work programmes and reviews.
- Encourage joint working on key issues such as an understanding of the institutional funding landscape that could be applied to the New Forest / the suitability of private investment for nature recovery.

4 Re:New Nature Partnership - next steps

4.1 The work of the Wildlife Roundtable will be highlighted at the New Forest Show where a Re:New Nature Challenge will be formally launched along with the introduction of the spatial approach to nature recovery. We aim to encourage a wide range of stakeholders to engage with the Re:New Nature programme and to seek support for the Re:New Nature Partnership approach from the signatories to the Partnership Plan. Subject to the response of potential partners the Re:New Nature Partnership will be formally launched in the autumn of this year.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Authority:

1. pursuant to the approved Partnership Plan, take forward the development of the Re:New Nature Partnership as set out in report AM 655/23, to include a partnership forum and practitioner's forum in accordance with Appendix 2 to the report;
2. delegate authority to the Chief Executive and the Head of Environment and Rural Economy to take all action as necessary in this regard, including drafting Terms of Reference for the Re:New Nature Partnership, determining its membership, convening meetings of the partnership forum and the practitioner's forum, appointing a chair of the partnership forum, and ensuring the NPA is represented appropriately at meetings; and
3. endorse the introduction of the spatial approach to nature recovery in the New Forest National Park.

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Papers: **AM 655/23 – cover paper**
Annex 1 – Core and Four spatial approach graphic
Annex 2 – Possible structure of Re:New Nature Partnership

Annex 1 - Spatial Approach to nature recovery

Re:New Nature
Join us to Re:New Nature in the New Forest and wider area

1 Making space for people and nature
Expanding habitats to be more connected and resilient and providing quality nature-rich green spaces near to where people live.

Northern Forest
Habitat highways, sustainable farming, carbon rich soils, veteran trees.

2 The future of farming
Harnessing current shifts in policy and economics for the benefit of the Forest's wildlife and way of life.

Core
Ancient woodland, clean waters, mosaic of connected and recovering habitat, sustainable grazing.

3 Coastal resilience
Working with natural processes to safeguard and expand opportunities for coastal wildlife.

Southern Coast
Resilient future-proof coastlines, connecting sea to forest, habitat recovery, farming with wildlife.

4 River valleys
Using valleys to connect the core habitats of the Forest with those of the coast and adjoining countryside.

Western Avon
Threading rivers, healthy floodplains, sustainable smallholdings.

Eastern Waterside
Urban greening for people and nature, hedgerow highways, blended and extended habitats, coastal rebuilding for resilience.

Summary:
The New Forest can be viewed as the core of heavily protected habitats with four surrounding areas, each with its own landscape character. We have identified four nature recovery themes that will be critical to the future of the Forest.

Locations marked on the map: Southampton, Hythe, Lyndhurst, Brockenhurst, Lymington, Bournemouth, Ringwood, Fordingbridge.

Annex 2 Possible structure of Re:New Nature Partnership

