

Natural England



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The New Forest Team

www.gov.uk/natural-england

Natural England's purpose



- Natural England is an adviser to the Government on the Natural Environment. We do this by providing practical advice, grounded in science and working with land owners and managers.
- The NERC Act **Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006** sets out Natural England's purpose: to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

The New Forest Designations



- The New Forest **National Park** 57,000 ha created in 2005.
- 29,000 ha **SSSI** designated in 1987 & re-designated SSSI in 1996.
- Designated a **Ramsar** Site under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance 1993
- Special Protection Area (**SPA**) and Special Area for Conservation (**SAC**) proposed by UK government in 1995.

Reasons for Notification



- The New Forest embraces the largest area of 'unsown' vegetation in lowland England and is one of the most intact networks of wetland habitats in western Europe. It includes the representation on a large scale of habitat formations formerly common but now fragmented and rare in lowland western Europe.
- The New Forest SAC is one of the most important sites for wildlife in the United Kingdom (UK), and is widely recognised as being of exceptional importance for nature conservation throughout Europe.

Why Restore?



- From the SAC conservation objectives:
- it is a duty of all statutory bodies to “To ensure that a site is maintained or restored”
- “By maintaining or restoring the supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely.”

History of habitat restoration in the New Forest



- 1997-2001 – LIFE 2 Project - rhododendron, path erosion, mire and heathland restoration, education & awareness
- 2002-2006 – LIFE 3 Project - functional catchments of mires, wet grasslands and rivers.
- 2006-2008 – Pathfinder Project - NPA, NE, FC, EA.
- 2008-2010 – Final 4,000 Project – NPA,FC,NE, EA.
- 2010-2020 – Higher Level Stewardship Scheme – NPA, FC, Verderers, funded by RDPE by NE.

- The New Forest is the largest site, not only in lowland England but in western Europe, where heathland, grassland, mire and pasture woodland habitats survive together in what is a functioning ecosystem based on a continuing practice of pastoralism.
- They occur as part of a network of wetland habitats which are totally dependent upon their local hydrological systems. This complex mosaic of wildlife habitats was formerly common in lowland Western Europe but now is rare and fragmented.
- There is no similar equivalent example of the series of mire systems in Europe. The woodlands include fine examples of rare habitats such as alder woodlands on floodplains and bog woodlands that survive within relatively pristine and unpolluted catchments.

The role of HLS



- The Verderers HLS Agreement was negotiated in 2010 to address a number of issues:
 - Degraded habitats, in particular wetlands.
 - To control invasive species.
 - To encourage the grazing by livestock of the open Forest, with an element of negotiated control over feeding and timing especially of cattle .
- NE remain involved as advisers, the Verderers manage the scheme and subcontract to the FC for specific restoration tasks, such as wetland restoration and non-native species control.

Further information



- www.newforestlife.org.uk
website hosted by the NFNPA

- www.hlsnewforest.org.uk

Verderers website with details of past and current restoration work and link to the New Forest Wetland management plan.

- www.naturalengland.org.uk
- www.gov.uk