

AM 674/24

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 21 MARCH 2024

DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

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

Summary:

In 2022/23 the new Partnership Plan for the National Park was approved and adopted by all partners ([About the Partnership Plan - New Forest National Park Authority \(newforestnpa.gov.uk\)](https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk)). The plan is for the whole of the National Park and sets out all the relevant outcomes to be delivered by 2027 by all the key organisations within the area.

As one of these delivery organisations, we have derived and extracted our specific actions and outcomes into our internal Authority 'Business Plan'. The full Business Plan, covering the same period up to 2027, was approved by the Authority last July. Each year, we will then produce a more specific annual Work Programme which will be overseen and its progress monitored by the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee.

A draft of this report was considered by the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee on 4 March 2024 and is recommended for approval.

1 Development of the draft Work Programme 2024/25

- 1.1 This draft Work Programme, **Annex 1**, is wholly derived from the actions and activities set out in the Business Plan 2023-27. As usual, we have asked staff and managers to not include items which could be classed as standard or business-as-usual work and to focus on the specific outcomes of highest importance / key delivery and with measurable actions for this year.
- 1.2 The Programme aims to be challenging but achievable – we have asked staff to think carefully about what they can achieve this year, within the resources they currently have, and in the knowledge of the inevitable few unexpected challenges that will come up too. In this regard, the Programme will need to be flexible over the twelve months, to respond to changing government or other outside priorities and influences, as it will to potentially new legislation / metrics.
- 1.3 Progress on the Work Programme will be monitored internally through the Strategic Leadership Team, staff-led Programme Steering Groups and by the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee.

- 1.4 Members are encouraged to contact officers prior to the meeting to discuss any more detailed queries on the draft or are of course free to raise them alongside more general points at the meeting itself.

2 Proposed Targets and Outcomes Framework

- 2.1 On 31 January the government released their [Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/protected-landscapes-targets-and-outcomes-framework). This was described as setting “the ambition for how we expect Protected Landscapes to achieve three outcomes from our [Environmental Improvement Plan \(EIP\) 2023](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/environmental-improvement-plan-2023)” and covers a total of ten targets for all the 44 English Protected Landscapes (10 National Parks and 34 National Landscapes, formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), namely:

Thriving plants and wildlife

- Target 1 - Restore or create more than 250,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitats within Protected Landscapes, outside protected sites by 2042 (from a 2022 baseline).
- Target 2 - Bring 80% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes into favourable condition by 2042.
- Target 3 - For 60% of SSSIs within Protected Landscapes assessed as having ‘actions on track’ to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.
- Target 4 - Continuing favourable management of all existing priority habitat already in favourable condition outside of SSSIs (from a 2022 baseline) and increasing to include all newly restored or created habitat through agri-environment schemes by 2042.
- Target 5 - Ensuring at least 65% to 80% of land managers adopt nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030.

Outcome Progress Indicators:

- extent of wildlife rich habitat created or restored, outside of protected sites.
- percentage of SSSIs in favourable condition.
- percentage of SSSIs assessed as having ‘actions on track’ to achieve favourable condition.
- extent of priority habitat, outside of protected sites, in favourable management through agri-environment schemes.
- percentage of land managers adopting nature-friendly farming on a percentage of their land.

Mitigating and adapting to climate change

- Target 6 - Reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in Protected Landscapes to net zero by 2050 relative to 1990 levels.
- Target 7 - Restore approximately 130,000 hectares of peat in Protected Landscapes by 2050.
- Target 8 - Increase tree canopy and woodland cover (combined) by 3% of total land area in Protected Landscapes by 2050 (from 2022 baseline).

Outcome Progress Indicators:

- level of greenhouse gas emissions.
- extent of peat under restoration.
- extent of tree canopy and woodland cover.

Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment

- Target 9 - Improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes all using existing metrics in our Access for All programme.
- Target 10 - Decrease the number of nationally designated heritage assets at risk in Protected Landscapes.

Outcome Progress Indicators:

- improve and promote accessibility to and engagement with Protected Landscapes for all using existing metrics in our Access for All programme:
 - metres of accessible path as a percentage of total path
 - number of accessible toilets and rest stops
 - number of disability accessible parking spaces
 - number of accessible gates and gaps
 - number of visits and volunteer days facilitated by new equipment
 - number of schools engaged (primary and secondary) both inside and outside the Protected Landscape boundary
 - number of volunteer days
 - number of accessible or easy access routes for which wayfinding has been created or improved
 - policies in place to ensure Protected Landscapes are taking positive action to widen the diversity of their staff, boards and volunteers.
- number and percentage of nationally designated heritage assets in Protected Landscapes to be deemed at risk. To separately cover the categories of:
 - scheduled monuments
 - registered parks and gardens
 - registered battlefields
 - listed buildings (grade I or II*)
 - protected wreck sites.

2.2 We see the next steps for integrating this framework as:

- Define the targets specific to our National Park

These ten targets are set for all National Landscapes and we need to be clear what our specific targets are. This process will be done collaboratively amongst defra and the landscape bodies. Achievement of the targets will require input locally from all the Partnership Plan delivery organisations.

- Establish a clear pathway for their achievement, with appropriate monitoring and reporting framework(s)

Each of the targets has different timescales for their achievement and these will need to be embedded in our Partnership Plan(s), State of the Park reporting, Business Plan(s) and Annual Reviews.

- Consider and adopt a suite of other local key performance indicators

Whilst these specific, high-level indicators are being set for us through defra, we should not lose sight of other metrics to measure our performance across the wide range of outcomes we deliver. We should review our other local performance indicators to ensure they are still fit for purpose, balance with these new targets and continue to highlight our impact as an organisation and that of the wider Team New Forest partnership.

2.3 Officers will engage with defra and the other Protected Landscapes over the coming months and report back to the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee at regular intervals.

Recommendation:

Subject to any amendments agreed at the meeting, approve the Draft Work Programme 2024/25, as set out in Annex 1.

Papers:

NFNPA AM 674/24 – Cover Paper

NFNPA AM 674/24 Annex 1 – Proposed Work Programme 2024/25

Equality and Diversity Implications:

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

Contact:

Nigel Stone

Head of Resources (CFO)

01590 646655, nigel.stone@newforestnpa.gov.uk

Proposed Annual Work Programme 2024/25

Re:New Climate - Net Zero with Nature

Climate change, along with biodiversity loss, is the greatest long-term challenge of the present day. The impact of climate change on the New Forest is likely to be wide reaching and the National Park Authority declared a climate and nature emergency in January 2020. The National Park Partnership Plan aims to contribute towards achieving net zero carbon emissions 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.

Draft Outcomes	Draft Actions / Priorities
<p>A robust and consistent evidence base for climate action to deliver a net zero National Park by 2050. (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain Partnership Plan Leadership Group endorsement of the net-zero pathway. Agree a framework to address evidence gaps regarding the carbon storage and sequestration rates of the National Park's habitats. • Take forward the agreed actions of National Parks UK in relation to net zero. • Develop a means of tracking progress towards net zero goal by December 2024. • Build an understanding of climate risks the National Park faces and the adaptations necessary to manage those risks.
<p>Enhanced engagement, with actions, on climate change amongst National Park residents and visitors. (Lead Officer, Hilary Makin)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop key messages and communications plan to support direct land-use change as well as community-wide support for what is needed. • Build prospectus of actions that can be taken at an individual level to generate community support for climate related work. • Support the Green Groups Network with advice, funding and joint activities including one main joint sustainable living initiative. • Increase numbers signed up to the nature and climate emergencies pledge by 200.
<p>Green finance opportunities and carbon codes helping to support the special qualities of the National Park. (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce a prospectus of external funding opportunities including grant support and green finance initiatives. • New Forest Land Advice Service to promote green finance opportunities to land managers. • Develop potential nature-based solutions that can support New Forest priorities, such as backup grazing land.
<p>Nature-based climate solutions implemented to reduce land-based carbon emissions and increase carbon sequestration. (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target Farming in Protected Landscape grants, advice and guidance to encourage progress towards key land-use changes that can support overall emissions reductions such as woodland, peat restoration, agroforestry, hedgerows and carbon-friendly farming practices. • With partners, develop a means of monitoring and promoting 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) and the National Park Design Guide SPD (2022), both of which include guidance on sustainability. • Annual Building Design Awards held to recognise and celebrate the best green building projects in the National Park. • Review of National Park Local Plan, to have reached Regulation 18 stage, to include the consideration of options to promote energy efficient development (consistent with national policy).

<p>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)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• With partners, seek funding for and carry out feasibility and design studies on priority improvements to on road and off-road cycling networks (including Homsley Straight Mile, key routes from LCWIP, wayfinding on off-road network).• 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.• Deliver Access for All improvements on promoted routes and key links including the Knightwood Oak trail, Dilton Farm bridleway and submit a Landscape Enhancement Initiative application for improvements on the Breamore Line path.
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Re:New Nature - Nature Recovery

Nature Recovery is at the forefront of the Government's agenda for National Parks. The National Park Partnership Plan aims to achieve an outcome where habitats are more resilient, restored, expanded, connected and maintained to enable wildlife to thrive, both within and beyond the National Park.

Draft Outcomes	Draft Actions / Priorities
<p>A coherent and 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"> • Lead the Re:New Nature Partnership in the delivery of the spatial plan for nature and a project portfolio for the New Forest. • Drive progress towards Re:New 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. • Develop bespoke interim targets and actions to maximise the contribution of the New Forest National Park to the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework.
<p>A suite of projects implemented to enhance a minimum of 300ha of National Park habitats. (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage funded delivery programmes (FiPL, SSF, LEI) to enable the restoration and management of a range of National Park habitats. • As co-host of the New Forest Catchment Partnership, direct projects to improve the freshwater landscape with the Freshwater Habitats Trust, reporting annually on progress.
<p>Eligible development provides, as an absolute minimum, the mandated level of BNG set out in the Environment Act 2021. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)</p> <p>Nutrient neutrality achieved for all relevant development in the National Park. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)</p> <p>The recreational impacts arising from planned new development are fully mitigated, for both the New Forest and Solent designations. (Lead Officer, David Illsley)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local guidance published for the effective implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) in the National Park. • All planning applications proposing a net increase in dwellings or providing overnight accommodation within the affected Solent and River Avon catchments deliver ‘nutrient neutrality’ through on-site measures or off-site credits. • Adoption of a strategic mitigation scheme for new development, focused on ‘strategic access management and monitoring measures (SAMM)’ within the New Forest’s designated sites. • Effectively manage temporary campsites within the National Park through the Article 4 Direction confirmed in January 2024, with future applications assessed against the updated planning guidance. All sites to comply with the requirements of the Habitat Regulations.

Re:New People - An Inclusive National Park

The Government's national landscapes review highlights the opportunities for protected landscapes to deliver for everyone, so that the benefits for health and wellbeing are available to all parts of society. Linked to the second statutory purpose, the National Park Partnership Plan sets out a vision that 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.

Draft Outcomes	Draft Actions / Priorities
<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 inclusive cycling through the PEDALL initiative, offering 4,000 riding slots and engaging five new organisations per year. • Support a wider programme of health and wellbeing initiatives including walking, volunteering and cultural activity for health, signposting through the Green Health Hub.
<p>Deliver 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"> • Deliver our elements of the Youth for Climate and Nature project. • Deliver a programme of over 20 inclusive visits by under-served groups. • Deliver two month-long National Park artist in residency programmes with charity SPUD. • Support the Culture in Common programme. • Special qualities of the New Forest promoted in person, online and through the media through Behind the Scenes campaign, reaching 500,000.
<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 20+ volunteering days directly to restore habitats and enhance nature, and 20+ volunteer days to improve access to and understanding of the special qualities, involving a minimum of 100 volunteers. • Run the 2025 volunteer fair (attended by 40+ volunteering organisations and 500+ prospective volunteers) and signpost local opportunities online.
<p>Assist communities and local organisations to shape cultural heritage projects and services that protect heritage, foster identity and enhance sense of place. (Lead Officer, David Illsley)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Listing Project: continue working with local communities to identify locally important assets within the National Park to add to the 'local list'. • Review of the three identified Conservation Area Character Appraisals undertaken. • Deliver archaeology service to protect cultural heritage, enhance understanding, and meet our commitments under the New Forest Higher Level Stewardship Scheme.

Re:New Place - Thriving Forest

The National Park Authority has a statutory duty to foster the socio-economic well-being of local communities within the National Park in taking forward the two purposes. The National Park Partnership Plan aims sustain a living, working Forest through its rich cultural heritage and natural beauty and support for commoning. There is a vibrant local produce market, access to affordable homes, sustainable tourism and high-value businesses and employees are attracted.

Draft Outcomes	Draft Actions / Priorities
<p>Development and delivery of high-quality, bespoke curriculum linked education for schools and colleges. (Lead Officer, Jim Mitchell)</p>	<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.
<p>People have more awareness of, and opportunity to develop, green skills and careers. (Lead Officer, Jim Mitchell)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ at least two staff in paid entry level roles (apprentices, interns etc), providing appropriate additional support to them and their line managers. Research sustainable funding for these roles. • Support a total of five weeks of high-quality work experience opportunities for 14 years+. • Promote green careers awareness via multiagency presence at local school and college careers fairs.
<p>Improved understanding of the New Forest's special qualities by local people and visitors. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver 10,000+ ranger engagements throughout the National Park, through patrols, with mobile information units, at events and in local communities. • Develop clear evaluation and monitoring metrics for the impact of face-to-face (e.g. ranger) interactions. • Ensure the National Park is embedded in emerging cultural heritage strategies from Hampshire, Solent LEP and NFDC.
<p>Provide more affordable housing for local communities and retain the existing stock of affordable and occupancy-restricted housing. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify more opportunities for rural exception sites; liaising with local communities / landowners / 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.
<p>Economic activity benefitting from, and contributing to, National Park purposes and the Greenprint for South Hampshire. (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)</p>	<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. • Work with the Solent Freeport, Solent LEP and New Forest Business Partnership, to develop the Authority's contribution to a green skills and training hub. • Seek investment for National Park purposes from the Rural Shared Prosperity Fund.

<p>Supporting sustainable land management and securing the future of Commoning. (Lead Officer Paul Walton)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Forest Farming Group (FFG) in the co-creation of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ i) a bespoke environmental scheme that sustains Commoning and the viability of open forest grazing. ○ ii) a means of supporting Commoners to maintain viable grazing herds during the transition period to a new scheme. • Seek the resources needed to maintain and expand the New Forest Land Advice Service at the end of the FiPL grant programme in March 2025.
<p>Improved management and oversight of land use change in the National Park. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support partnership work to deter and address encroachments (e.g. through the Encroachment Working Party). • Develop a data base / map of land use change in the National Park.
<p>Reduce recreational impacts on the most vulnerable sites for the benefit of residents, businesses, Commoning and wildlife. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)</p>	<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. • New Forest Code and individual campaigns about caring for the Forest demonstrate joint messaging and deliver a marked reduction in recreation management issues.

Re:New Partnership - Team New Forest

The successful delivery of the statutory National Park purposes relies heavily on partnership working and this is fundamental to the Authority's work in and around the New Forest. The National Park Partnership Plan sets out a desired outcome that 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. The National Park Authority plays a key role in this in helping to co-ordinate and, where appropriate, lead the work of partners.

Draft Outcomes	Draft Actions / Priorities
<p>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)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the new Partnership Plan Leaders' Panel and the officers' group to encourage genuine partnership working and sharing ideas. • Secure shared commitment to achieve the ambitions over the five-year timespan of the Partnership Plan.
<p>Provide mechanisms for feedback, input and activation from a wide range of communities. (Lead Officer, Hilary Makin)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a series of regular opportunities for feedback with communities and stakeholders, engaging 6,000+ people/year. • New Forest Awakening Festival and New Forest nature and climate emergency campaign with partners generates engagement of 100,000.
<p>A suite of data and evidence sources is collated, analysed and published to inform NPA and partner organisation decision-making. (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)</p>	<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 Steering Groups). • Support the New Forest Biodiversity Forum to develop a strategic approach to collecting biodiversity data and evidence.
<p>Data gathered to support an application for International Dark Sky Reserve status for the National Park in 2025/26. (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the CPRE to prepare a submission for Dark Sky accreditation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Collect light reading data over two years. ○ Seek commitment from stakeholders to maintain dark sky status.

Re:New Organisation - Achieving Excellence

Through the Achieving Excellence theme of our work, we measure progress on objectives designed to achieve the highest quality of service, support 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
<p>Achieve 'Organisational Net Zero' by 2030 or earlier. (Lead Officer, Nigel Stone)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the Authority's Carbon Reduction Plan (published in February 2022), through development of agreed base data and 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.
<p>People Plan implementation successfully continued. (Lead Officer, Nigel Stone)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the review of People Plan. • Continued focus throughout this year on equality, diversity and inclusion and leadership of the climate and nature emergency. • Review and update HR policies and procedures considering new home and flexible working practices.
<p>Succession planning further developed, empowering the next generation of managers and leaders from across the organisation. (Lead Officer, Nigel Stone)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enact the six 'Programme Steering Groups' within the Authority (one for each theme), with clear direction / priorities from the Business Plan and feeding into the Strategic Leadership Team. • Review staff resourcing and/or structures in light of Partnership Plan and Business Plan priorities and actions. • Any specific staff learning and development opportunities identified and actioned.
<p>New NPA office facilities defined and secured. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly define our requirements, both in terms of office space and additional features within a new 'hub'. • Ensure the location and design supports partnership working, sustainable travel and green skills & jobs. • Identify and select suitable sites for consideration. • Secure funding for build / renovation and occupation.