



Chief Executive's report

January 2024



Business Plan themes

Incorporating the five themes of the National Park Partnership Plan 2022-27, plus improvement goals and targets for our Authority under Re:New Organisation – Achieving Excellence.



Re:New Climate



Re:New Nature



Re:New People



Re:New Place



Re:New Partnership

Re:New Organisation – Achieving Excellence

Protect – First Purpose

To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area



Announcements and Legislation

‘Nature moment’ – Government announced in November (ahead of COP28) a new nature package to invest in our most precious landscapes and connect more people to nature. Included Government’s response to the Landscapes Review 2019.

Headlines:

- A new National Park
- 34 new landscape recovery projects
- Competition for a new national forest, 2 new Community Forests
- £2.5m funding to help more children get outdoors
- £10m across 10 National Parks and 34 National Landscapes (AONBS)
- £5m for rivers, lakes and water quality this FY
- Key role in 30x30
- Outcome targets expected from Environment Improvement Plan



Government reforms and 'duty to further'

Levelling Up & Regeneration Act 2023 = strengthened legal duty on relevant authorities when making decisions that could affect national parks:

- Previously all public bodies and utility companies had to '**have regard to**' national parks' statutory purposes
- New wording states, '...in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in any National Park in England a relevant authority must **seek to further the purposes...**'

Biodiversity net gain (BNG)

- Developers required to deliver a biodiversity net gain of 10% resulting in more or better-quality natural habitat than there was before development.

Planning

- Levelling Up and Regeneration Act – provisions on planning, nutrient pollution standards and protected landscapes.
- Revised National Planning Policy Framework 19 Dec 2023 – National Park wording unaltered and refers to National Parks Circular.
- 133 applications received (October to December).
- 148 applications were determined with an approval rate of 91%
- Planning tour for members in October.



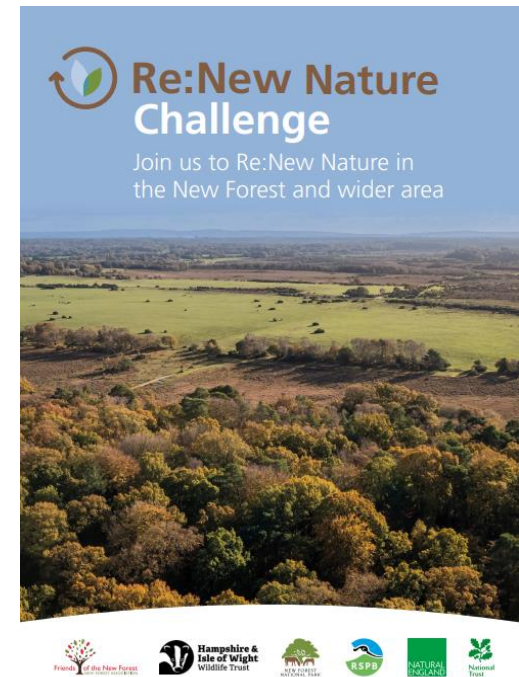
Minerals and Waste Strategy

- Public consultation on Proposed Submission Plan.
- This second formal consultation is an opportunity to have your say before it is passed on, along with any comments, to the Secretary of State and a planning Inspector.
- Eight-week consultation ends 5 March.



Local Nature Recovery Strategies

- All county councils required by Government to produce an LNRS.
- Will identify the places and habitats that are most beneficial for nature.
- Developers will be incentivised through BNG to choose to mitigate the impacts of their development by improving priority habitats earmarked in the LNRS.
- Hampshire County Council public survey runs until 10 March and workshops Feb/March.
- Will reflect our Re:New Nature Challenge.
- Also working with Wiltshire Council.
- Liaising with Dorset County Council.



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



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.

Northern Forest

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

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.

Eastern Waterside

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

The future of farming

2
 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.

Western Avon

Threading rivers, healthy floodplains, sustainable smallholdings.

Southern Coast

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

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

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

Fordingbridge

Ringwood

Lyndhurst

Southampton

Hythe

Brockenhurst

Lymington

Bournemouth



Trees

- Impacts of several named storms including Storm Henk, Isha and Jocelyn.
- 183 tree works applications issued October – December 2023.
- 12 recent Tree Protection Orders issued (many relate to the Foxlease site, Lyndhurst).
- Widespread media and online coverage about work with the landowner to retain the ancient but dead Kings Oak at Moyles Court as a wildlife habitat.
- National Tree Week online content proved popular.



Hampshire Hedge

- Led by The Countryside Charity (CPRE) Hampshire.
- Three-year project to plant a 14-mile network of hedges forming a green wildlife corridor across the county linking the South Downs and New Forest National Parks.
- Working with local schools and communities, creating hedge laying traineeships, encouraging volunteering, running training days, talks and events.
- Complements our support for hedgerow planting we have provided through both the Green and Blue Horizons project and the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.
- CPRE project leader Ellie Banks is one of our first intake of Apprentice Rangers.



Coastal project with EA and CET

- Project focused on the coastline from Lymington to Calshot.
- Engaging landowners on how climate change will impact their long-term decision-making.
- Is developing climate-related resources for use in the Fort Climate Centre at Countryside Education Trust, Beaulieu.
- Working in partnership with the Countryside Education Trust and using Environment Agency funding.
- Short-term project to March 2024.



Farming in Protected Landscapes

- Over 75% of the Year 3 budget of £650,000 committed on projects that deliver on the key themes of climate, nature, people and place.
- PA2 for new scheme development.
- Largest project supported to date - £106,000 over two years – was agreed by the Local Assessment Panel in October.
- The project supports a group of 46 landowners in the north of the National Park and SE Wiltshire.
- Addresses concerns of the impact of large deer numbers on woodland regeneration and crop management.



Local List and Conservation Areas

- 22 nominations from local communities and parish councils for assets to be added to the 'Local List'
- Recognises their particular character and positive contribution to the distinctiveness of the New Forest National Park.

Includes:

- Boldre: historic well, old corn mill workings.
- Hyde: the lychgate to the parish church, a millennium stone and a trig point.
- Woodlands: an Arts and Crafts country house
- South Gorley: a public air raid shelter.
- Review of the Forest North East Conservation Area Character Appraisal with Copythorne Parish Council and Netley Marsh Parish Council.



Enjoy – Second Purpose

To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.



New Forest Code and PSPOs

- 1,099 conversations by rangers with members of the public promoting the New Forest Code and responsible dog walking messages.
- 7,000 hours of joint patrols.
- a 50% drop in thefts from vehicles and 700 conversations about the Public Service Protection Order issues of lighting fires and feeding/petting of ponies.
- No fines needed to be issued as people complied with the educational approach.
- Hampshire Fire and Rescue recorded a 30% drop in reported outdoor fires over the summer.

New Forest Code **working in partnership**

2023
Highlights



Sharing the New Forest Code

1.7m+ 

impressions
(up from 1m last year)

350 

social media posts
(up from 250)

10

joint press releases

975,000 

people reached via newsletters and publications (up from 500,000 last year)

20

tourism information boards featuring the New Forest Code placed in key villages, towns and campsites

Community support

New Forest National Park Ambassadors

900 members

National Park volunteers gave over

300 days

of volunteering to support the Forest.

Forestry England volunteers gave over

1,000 hours

to supporting patrols and conservation projects across the Forest

Forestry England's team helped the commoning community manage the annual drifts for New Forest livestock with

110 car park and cycle route closures

180 signs to inform the public



Litter

Supported

40+

community litter picking events



Carried out litter picks on

80 kms

of Forest roads collecting over **100** bags of rubbish

A series of joint fly-tipping spot checks on vehicles carrying waste across the Forest resulted in

195

vehicles stopped. Action taken against **50** drivers

New powers - Public Space Protection Orders

Spoke directly to over

700 people

providing education on Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO) banning fires/BBQs and petting/feeding ponies.

Intervened in over

150

incidents of banned behaviour

Outdoor fires across the New Forest district down by

30%

in 2023 compared to 2021.



Patrols

7,000+


hours of ranger patrols

30

joint patrols with the emergency services

Dedicated wildlife patrols and monitoring sessions

96 for ground nesting birds 

35 during the deer rut 



Animal and road safety

11

joint "Operation Mountie" actions to improve animal safety on Forest roads

90

cars stopped on Forest roads

30


tickets issued for speeding and other offences

60

drivers given education

10

Responsible dog walking pop up events in New Forest car parks

50% 

drop in thefts from motor vehicles in Forest car parks following dedicated patrols.



Responsible dog walking

- Our successful charter for commercial dog walking businesses being considered by organisations in other areas.
- Over 80 New Forest-area businesses signed up.
- Working with Dorset Dogs/Urban Heath Partnership to ensure consistency across the area.
- Supported NFDog group and 12 partners on the New Forest Dogs Forum.
- Joint events with police and Forest partners to engage with dog owners



Green Health Hub

- Website of green social prescribing opportunities in and around the National Park.
- Directory of activities developed with partners.
- Includes case studies and stories about the benefits to physical and mental health of connecting with nature.
- www.greenhealthhub.org.uk



The Green Health Hub



[Activities](#) [Groups](#) [Stories](#) [About Us](#)

Join in, feel good



The Green Health Hub

Welcome to the Green Health Hub, your directory for activities in the New Forest and surrounding area for wellbeing in the great outdoors.

This Hub will signpost you to opportunities for you, or people you know, or are working with, sharing a range of different options to consider and then hopefully try out!

Simply click on the **activities** or **groups** pages to get started. If you are interested in hearing more about why nature is great for our wellbeing, or to hear about people who have done this before - **check out Stories**

We will be growing the site with new opportunities - so if you know of an opportunity or have a story to tell then head to the **About Us** page to get in touch.

Walking and Cycling Festival 2023

- 14 to 29 October 2023.
- Expert-guided walks and cycle rides for all interests and abilities, such as wildlife, heritage, arts, and culture.
- Theme of accessibility.
- Over 400 people took part.



Volunteering

**Volunteer Fair, Brockenhurst Village Hall,
Sunday 28 January.**



NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK
**VOLUNTEER
FAIR**
Get Involved!
Sun 28 Jan 2024, 10:30am-4pm. FREE ENTRY
Brockenhurst Village Hall
Highwood Rd, Brockenhurst SO42 7RY
newforestnpa.gov.uk/volunteerfair

The poster features a green background with a white leaf graphic in the top left corner. The text is in white. On the right side, there is a photograph of two people working in a forest, with the New Forest National Park logo overlaid on it. The logo consists of a stylized tree and the text 'NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK'. There is also a white leaf graphic in the bottom right corner.

Volunteering

1,254 volunteer hours over 200
volunteer days with 72 people
during 2023.



YouCAN scheme

Youth for Climate and Nature (YouCAN)

- £1.4 million scheme including £1.2 million from National Lottery Community Fund.
- 11- to 25-year-olds drive community action to tackle the nature and climate emergencies.
- Supports 15 jobs.
- Three-year scheme led by the NPA with six regional partners (Bournemouth to Southampton).

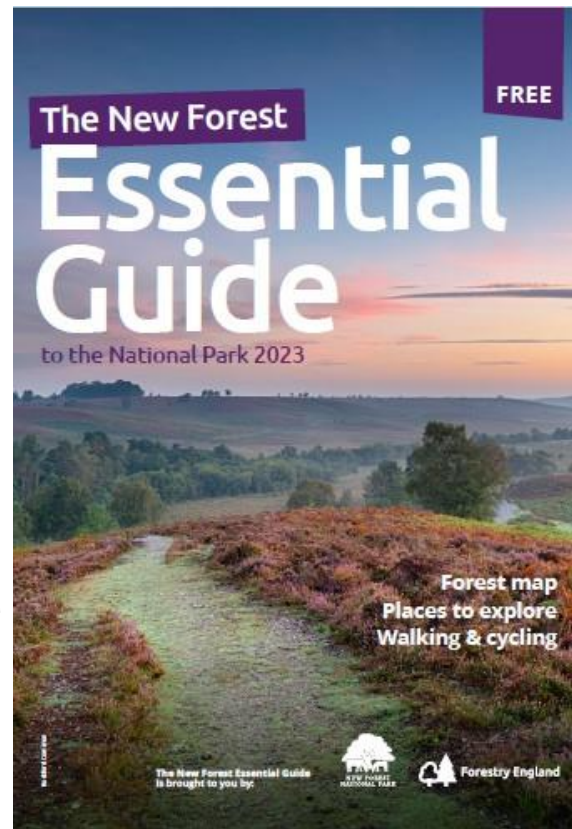


Visitor publications

Produced jointly with Forestry England.

Pocket Guide leaflet – distribution 250,000 to tourist and community outlets and at events. Includes map, New Forest Code, sustainable transport.

Essential Guide magazine – distribution 100,000 in Forestry England car parks and outlets. More detailed look at special qualities of the New Forest, ranger interviews, Code messaging, Marque, Tour, Love the Forest, walking and cycling.



Arts programme update

- Artists in residence project sponsored by Arts Council England for three years and in partnership with creative charity SPUD at Sway.
- Artist Beccy McCray's exhibition in October.
- Engagement programme over October half term outside the New Forest Heritage Centre in Lyndhurst by artist Alex Julyan.
- SpudOPEN Digital dreaming exhibition (right).



Prosper – Our Duty

Working in partnership with other organisations it is also the Authority's duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of the local communities within the National Park.



Green Careers Week

- Our two interns (right) attended a careers fair at The Arnewood School.
- Early Green Careers Network.
- Two apprentice ranger vacancies advertised.
- Interviews with NPA staff about what a green career means to them. Social posts recorded 76,000 impressions with 4,600 video views and 2,700 engagements (likes, comments, shares).



Green Links Study

- Green Links Study commissioned by the NPA to help shape the vision for the Waterside area and A326 corridor.
- Exploring practical ideas to reconnect and expand New Forest habitats, extend areas of grazing and provide accessible, nature-rich green space within the Waterside communities.
- Once complete the study will be shared with members and stakeholders.



Brilliance in Business Awards

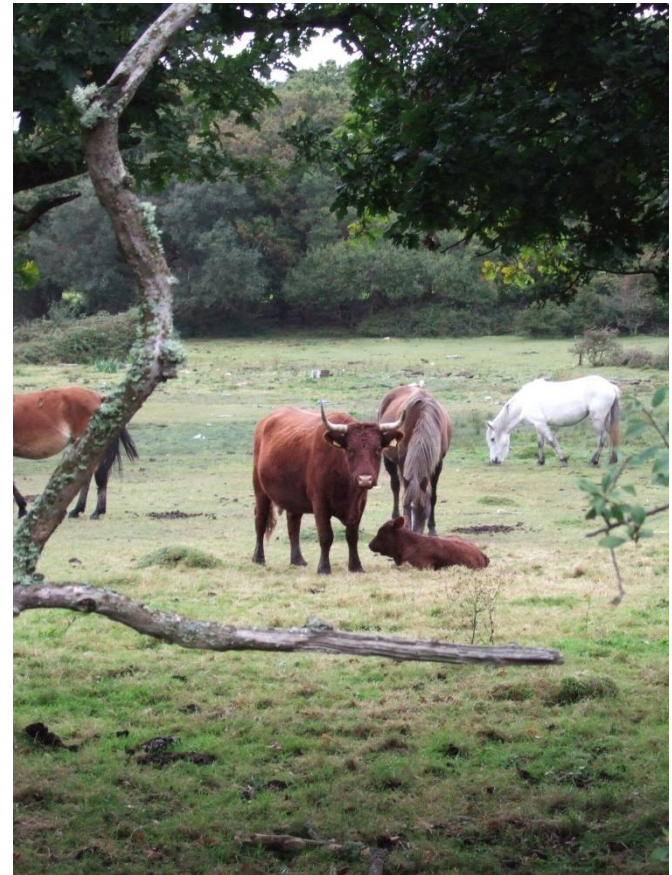
The New Forest National Park Authority Award for Sustainable Business of the Year.

Winner: sustainable merchandise company
Vida Promotions with the award collected
by Gillian Siddall Keartland



Commoning

- Critical time for commoning due to agricultural reform.
- Forest Farming Group secured a grant from the Rural Payments Agency to support a feasibility study on options of a new environmental support scheme to follow the Verderers Higher Level Stewardship Scheme.
- Helped the Commoners Defence Association organise a visit to the New Forest by the National Farmers Union (NFU) Vice President David Exwood and Director of Policy Andrew Clarke.



Affordable Housing

- Full planning permission issued for 23 affordable houses as part of the Church Lane, Sway development.
- Planning permission due to be issued for 31 affordable homes as part of the Whartons Lane, Ashurst, development.
- Working to resolve access agreements for an affordable housing site in Burley.

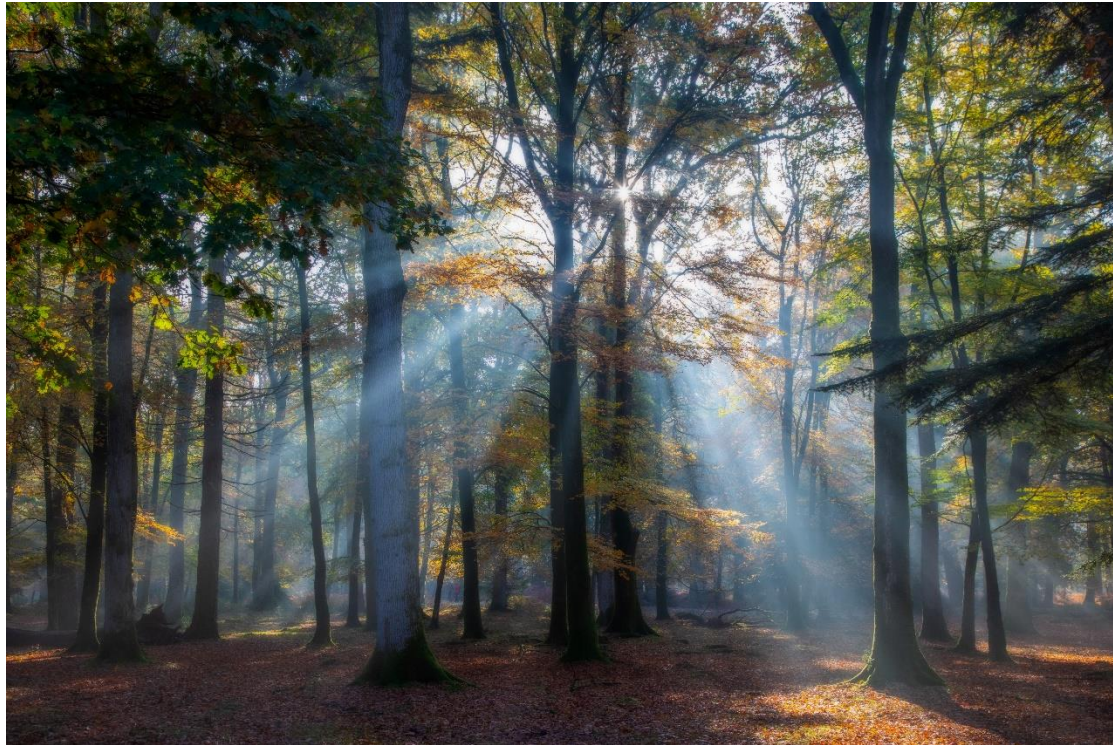


New Forest Tour

- 271 resident's tickets sold – significant increase compared to the first year (2022) and now includes the Wiltshire area of the National Park.
- 40,686 passenger journeys over 11 weeks. 2% decrease compared to 2022 which was across 12 weeks.
- Facebook impressions up 182% compared to last year and engagement up 75%.
- 2024 season – 20th anniversary. Operating dates 29 June – 15 September.



Excellence



Defra annual review

Meeting held in December with Sion McGeever, Deputy Director, and four of his senior team:

- Updated them on our performance and finances over the last year.
- Set out our key risks in the short and medium term, as set out on our Corporate Risk Register, e.g. core funding, future of commoning, cyber security.
- Reiterated the case for a one-off grant to fund our facilities post 2026.



New Forest Voices

- Key part of the Inclusive National Park theme of our Partnership Plan.
- Three themes – understanding, experiences and ways of working.

Recent work:

- revising our equality, diversity and inclusion policy.
- Learning and engaging youth through YouCaN.
- developing a staff engagement and training programme.



Partnership Plan Leaders Panel

- Nine statutory partners met 15 December.
- Discussion on the strengthened 'duty to seek to further the National Park purposes'.
- Partnership Plan approach provides a way to demonstrate how New Forest partners are working together and pooling resources.
- Leaders' Panel model shared with Defra as useful practice as it prepares further guidance.



Volunteer Fair this Sunday 28 January

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK

VOLUNTEER FAIR

Get Involved!

Sun 28 Jan 2024, 10:30am-4pm. **FREE ENTRY**

Brockenhurst Village Hall

Highwood Rd, Brockenhurst SO42 7RY

newforestnpa.gov.uk/volunteerfair



Remembering Stephen Tarling

