



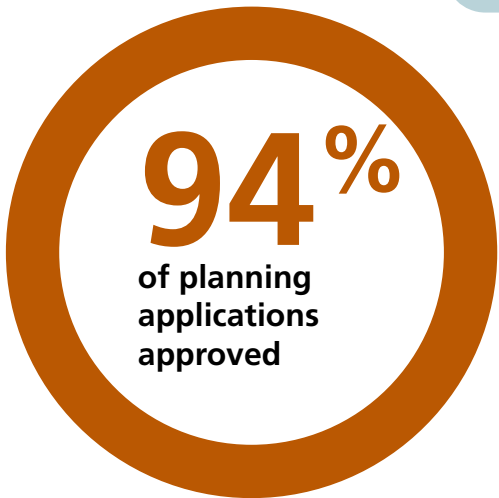
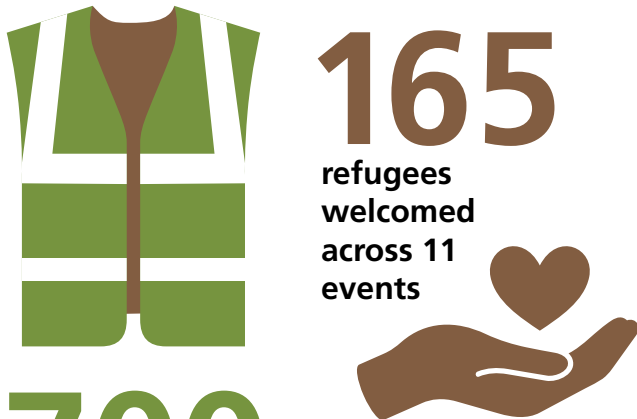
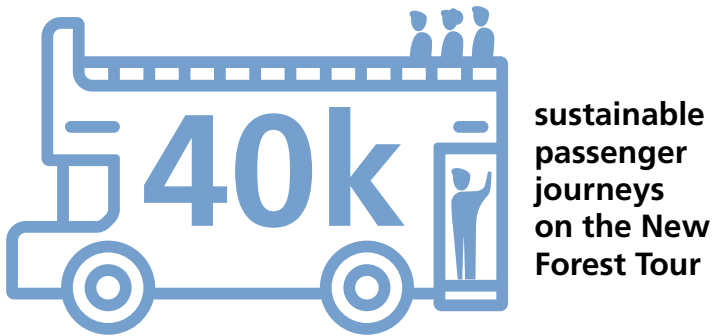
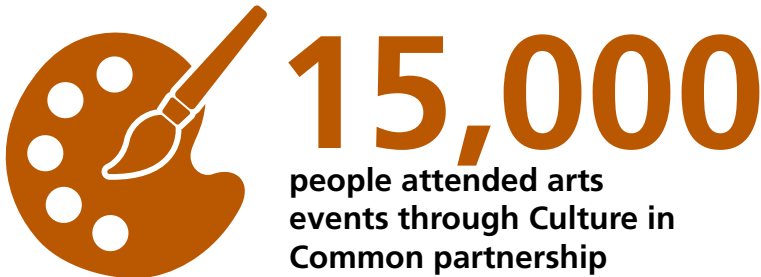
NEW FOREST
NATIONAL PARK

Protecting
together,
shaping
tomorrow



Annual Review
2023–2024

Stats at a glance





Chair and CEO statement

2023–24

Through these pages we present the many ways Re:New Forest, our shared five-year Partnership Plan launched in July 2022, is being delivered and showcases partnerships and projects under the five themes of Nature Recovery; Net Zero with Nature; Inclusive National Park; Thriving Forest and Team New Forest.

Since launching the plan we’ve brought key organisations together, looking at the issues facing and opportunities for the New Forest. And two years on we can see the ambitions of the Partnership Plan coming to life, working as a team to be greater than the sum of our parts we are harnessing the power of communities, partners, businesses and volunteers to respond and collaborate in tangible and meaningful ways for the good of the Forest.

The New Forest is internationally important for nature and supporting wildlife that is under pressure has been a major focus this year. At the New Forest Show in 2023, we launched the Re:New Nature Partnership, to focus and redouble our collective work to benefit the unique and special habitats and species of the Forest, an approach which is contributing important plans for action as part of the statutory Local Nature Recovery Strategies for Hampshire and Wiltshire.

We’re pulling together a portfolio of nature projects and looking to fund action across 9,240 hectares. In an early indication of the value of working together as a Re:New Nature Partnership, we were one of

20 locations to secure a £1.3 million Species Survival Fund from Defra and the National Lottery Heritage Fund at the turn of the year. This will see 250 hectares of land improved for nature across 25 sites – the equivalent of 350 football pitches.

Engagement of more people and future generations in understanding of and caring for the Forest remains an important priority. We marked another significant achievement with the success of our bid for a Youth for Climate and Nature scheme (YouCAN) scheme. Receiving a £1.2 million Climate Action Fund grant from The National Lottery Community Fund and a further £264,000 in match funding from partners, this is helping us make significant progress in achieving our Nature Recovery, Net Zero with Nature, and Inclusive National Park objectives. Together with our internships, apprentice ranger schemes and an Early Green Careers network, this demonstrates our commitment to connecting new and more diverse people with the National Park and its work – bringing green skills and jobs to young people and welcoming their voice at the table.

As we end the year, significant challenges remain in terms of both securing an Environmental Land Management Scheme for the Forest as we move towards full implementation of England’s agricultural policy post Brexit and finding resources to ensure the future of commoning and the land management needed to sustain the Forest. Funding has been secured to

carry out work to help find a successor to the Higher Level Stewardship scheme and we continue to ensure that officials, Ministers and decision-makers are aware of the precarious situation and uniqueness of the Forest.

2024 marks the 75th year of the 1949 Act that established the UK national parks and we continued our efforts with our colleagues across the national parks family to focus on what we need for their future and how our protected landscapes can support national objectives for climate, nature, people and places. The passage of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 has strengthened the previous legal duty placed on relevant bodies to ‘have regard’ to the statutory national park purposes in their work to a new legal duty to ‘seek to further’ the purposes. This is an important change that we in the New Forest have been advocating for many years and it should enable stronger alignment of the work of statutory bodies and others such as utilities with the objectives of our Partnership Plan, something that is crucial if we are to address climate, nature and health emergencies together. As one of only 10 national parks in England, we welcome this legislation that should help ensure our purposes are given appropriate weight in decision-making.

The health and well-being benefits of National Parks have been front of mind, especially since the pandemic. The importance of connecting with nature for health and well-being has been further evidenced through a study

undertaken by a consultant placement supported by NHS England, showing that the Forest accounts for at least £27m of avoided health care costs per annum – equivalent to 999 nurses’ starting salaries. Building on from a number of years working with a range of partners to ensure there are opportunities for physical and mental health and well-being available, we also launched the Green Health Hub, a website signposting people to find groups and activities with opportunities in the outdoors – without impacting sensitive habitats. This has also enabled the sharing of experiences and case studies of the benefits of the ‘natural health service’.

One such offer is inclusive cycling charity PEDALL hosted by the National Park Authority, which was awarded more than £380,000 from the National Lottery Community Fund this year to support its success in making cycling in the New Forest available to people of all ages and abilities.

There are so many more examples of partnership, creativity, action and determination to equip the Forest for a positive future in these pages; we’re engaging and advising communities through our planning service, inspiring people through cultural heritage and the arts and advising landowners on best practice in nature recovery. All our major Local Plan development schemes are up and running.

We were delighted to host our local MPs over the summer to tell them about the role we play to support

the Forest and its communities, enabling them to meet partners and visit projects in their respective constituencies.

As we go into the 2024-25 financial year, we’re continuing to build relationships and collaborations which will help meet the challenges ahead, drawing from threads of projects in the past, sharing ideas and resources to make aspirations a reality. We’re leveraging good partnerships and broadening our conversations to drive the change; for every £1 we contributed to joint projects over the past five years, a further £18 was generated by partner organisations.

The work we do seeks to address some of the biggest challenges of our time and, while there are many hurdles to overcome to secure the Forest for the future, we’re encouraged by what we’ve accomplished with our partners as a team for the New Forest this year and the possibilities going forward.

We welcomed a new Chair and Deputy Chair, David Bence and Victoria Mander, to the board in October, and we say a huge thanks to Prof. Gavin Parker and Patrick Heneghan who have steered the ship so expertly over the past few years.

Thanks as always must go to staff, members, partners, volunteers and the wider community. We couldn’t have achieved everything in the following pages without their efforts, passion and expertise.




Alison Barnes, CEO



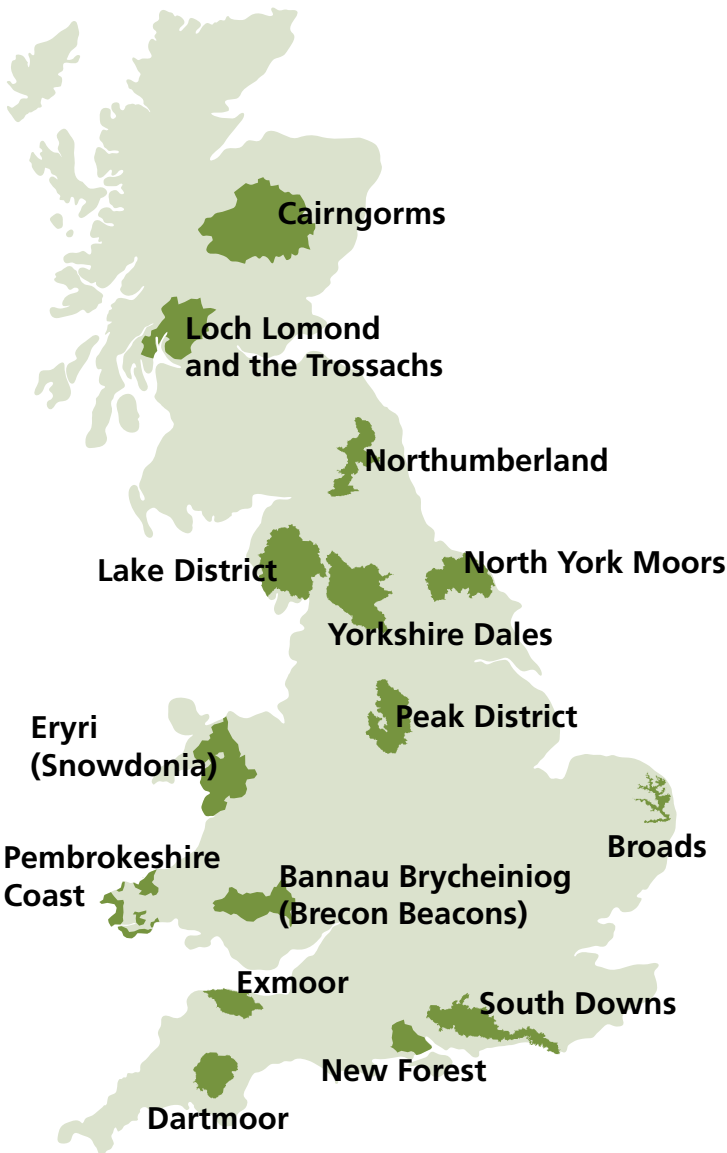

David Bence, Chair

About the New Forest National Park Authority

Our vision

The vision for the National Park in 20 years’ time is of an area which has a unique and immediately recognisable sense of place, where:

- tranquillity and a feeling of naturalness pervade large parts of the Park
- the mosaic of distinctive landscapes and habitats are all of the highest quality and a great variety of wildlife is able to flourish
- there is a strong sense and understanding of the heritage and living culture of the Forest
- all visitors can gain inspiration, health and well-being and enjoy the extensive areas of land with open access
- the far-reaching consequences of climate change are taken into account in all policies and future plans
- people live and work sustainably and contribute to the care of the Forest
- local, regional and national organisations recognise the value of the National Park and there is a shared understanding of its role within the wider area
- everyone contributes in appropriate ways to keeping the National Park a special place for present and future generations.



Our mission – National Park purposes

The New Forest National Park Authority has statutory purposes and socio-economic responsibilities as specified in the Environment Act of 1995:

- to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area
- to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.

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.



Left: The UK's 15 National Parks
Contains Ordnance Survey data.
Ordnance Survey 1000114703
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© National Parks UK 2024

Our Authority board members 2023–24

National Park Authority members have overall responsibility for making decisions. They set policies and priorities, ensuring efficient and effective use of resources, and that money is well spent. It is their job to represent the interests of the National Park and to balance out any conflicting pressures.

Thanks to all members who have served over the last year. We were very sad to lose Stephen Tarling who died after a short illness in November. Stephen was a well-respected member of the board and he will be missed by the New Forest community.

Local authority appointees



David Harrison



Gordon Bailey
Chair of Planning Committee



Richard Clewer



Mel Kendal
Deputy Chair of Standards Committee (from October 2023)



Keith Mans



Neville Penman



Dan Poole



Caroline Rackham



Joe Reilly



Michael Thierry



Derek Tipp



Zoë Clewer

Secretary of State appointees



Patrick Heneghan
Chair of Resources, Audit and Performance Committee / Deputy Chair of the Authority (to Oct 2023)



Victoria Mander
Deputy Chair of the Authority (from Oct 2023)



David Bence
Chair of the Authority (from Oct 2023) / Deputy Chair of Resources, Audit and Performance Committee



George Meyrick



Prof. Gavin Parker
Chair of the Authority (to Oct 2023)



Stephen Trow
Deputy Chair of Planning Committee

Parish appointees



Ann Sevier
Chair of Standards Committee (from October 2023)



Mary Davies



Brice Stratford

Thanks also to the following members who served this financial year, leaving before March 2024:

Diane Andrews · Sue Bennison · George Bisson · Louise Parker-Jones
John Sanger · Richard Taylor

Our 22 members do not represent any particular political group. Driven by the National Park purposes and duty, they work with officers to establish and then deliver our work programme, with operational aspects delegated to officers.

- 12 are appointed by the county, district, and borough councils with land within the National Park
- six are appointed by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- four are selected from the parish councils within the National Park.

What makes the New Forest National Park special?

The National Park is a globally-important area for nature and is thought of as an ark for wildlife.

In the New Forest, 56% of the National Park is a Special Area of Conservation, Special Protection Area or Ramsar Site, and a further 5% is classified as non-statutory sites important for nature conservation – the highest proportion of land protected for nature in any local authority area or national park in the country.

It's home to an incredible variety of plants and animals. Many of these species

are as rare and magnificent as animals you might go to see on safari - just in miniature. They're often hard to see so most of us won't encounter them or appreciate what's beneath our feet.

They include:


- over 15,000 species of insect (two-thirds of the UK total)
- 44 species of mammal (including 13 of the 18 UK bat species)
- at least 12 species of reptile and amphibian
- a third of British wildflower species
- over 70% of British dragonfly species breed here

- 46 nationally and internationally rare plant species
- the UK hotspot for rare breeding birds such as curlew and Dartford warbler
- 2,700 species of fungi
- The highest concentration of ancient and veteran trees in western Europe.

The National Park's landscape is also a living and working Forest which stretches back centuries, with a strong sense of continuity, tradition and history.

It has many 'special qualities'– what makes it unique and recognisable and distinguishes it from all other places in the country:

- **Outstanding natural beauty.** The sights, sounds and smells of ancient woodland with veteran trees, heathland, bog, autumn colour and an unspoilt coastline with views of the Solent and the Isle of Wight.



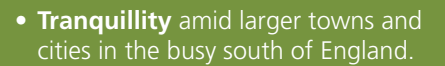
- **Extraordinary diversity of plants and animals** of international importance.



- **Tranquillity** amid larger towns and cities in the busy south of England.



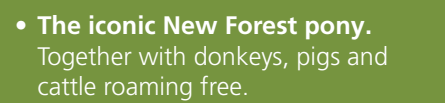
- **The iconic New Forest pony.** Together with donkeys, pigs and cattle roaming free.



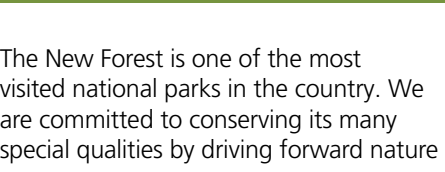
- **Strong and distinctive local communities** with real pride in and sense of identity with their local area.



- **A healthy environment.** Fresh air, clean water, local produce and a sense of 'wildness'.



- **Unique historic, cultural and archaeological heritage** from royal hunting ground to ship-building, salt-making and 500 years of military coastal defence.

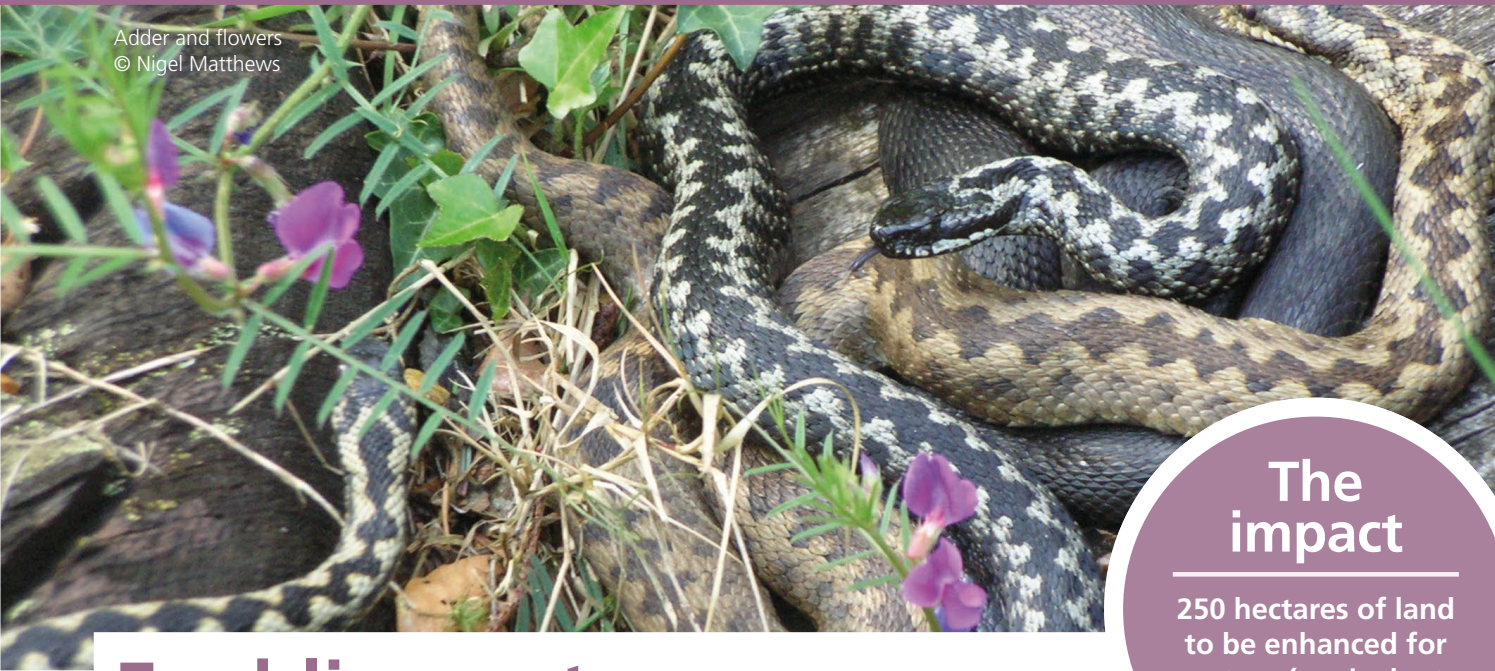


- **An historic commoning system** that maintains so much of what people know and love as 'the New Forest' forming the heart of a working landscape based on farming and forestry.

The New Forest is one of the most visited national parks in the country. We are committed to conserving its many special qualities by driving forward nature

recovery, its resilience in the face of climate change and its value for public health and well-being.

Images: Fly agaric fungi | Female common darter by Naomi Addleton | Pony flare by Nick Lucas | Lapwing by Marc Baldwin | Box of local produce | Hints of autumn by Nick Lucas | Highland cow by Chris Fairhead | Ponies in pound



Adder and flowers
© Nigel Matthews

The impact

250 hectares of land to be enhanced for nature (equivalent to 350 football pitches)

Enabling nature recovery and enhancing landscapes

We're working together at scale to expand, restore and connect natural habitats – enabling wildlife to thrive within and beyond the National Park boundary.

Building a Nature Partnership

Together with Forest partners, we launched a Re:New Nature Partnership – calling for people to work together to drive nature recovery in the New Forest and wider area.

The Re:New Nature Challenge looks at the opportunities and resources needed to put nature front and centre in the New Forest National Park, which is a globally-important site for nature and should be thought of as an ark for wildlife.

Alison Barnes, CEO of the New Forest National Park Authority, said: 'There's a huge amount of great work already being done to Re:New Nature in the New Forest, including improving wetlands and freshwater habitats, restoring heathlands and delivering grants and advice to farmers and landowners.

'The idea of the Re:New Nature Challenge is to ask people to redouble their efforts to work together in a more collaborative and co-ordinated way, aligning resources, harnessing

each other's work and, crucially, to attract funding from both the public and private sector so a shared ambition for nature recovery can be realised.'

We've been working with key nature conservation organisations to identify actions needed to encourage a programme of nature recovery in the New Forest and beyond. The group – RSPB, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, National Trust, Natural England and Friends of the New Forest under the leadership of Mike Clarke, Vice President of the RSPB and Life Member of Friends of the New Forest – set out a spatial approach, viewing the New Forest as five connected areas, each with its own landscape character.

At a launch reception at the NPA stand at the New Forest Show, the group called for wider partnerships, inviting landowners, land managers, communities and investors to develop projects and ideas, and secure resources together.

newforestnpa.gov.uk/renewnature

Species Survival Fund

£1.3m scheme to restore New Forest habitats and increase wildlife

Together with five partners, we celebrated an award from the Species Survival Fund to help halt species decline and restore habitats in the New Forest.

The funding will see partner organisations and landowners working

together to enhance 250 hectares of land for nature across 25 sites – the equivalent of 350 football pitches.

Improving habitats and re-establishing links between them will help charismatic species such as pine marten, great crested newt, pollinating insects and reptiles such as adder and smooth snake thrive and create the conditions for a host of other species to flourish.

Among the partners, 14 jobs will be created or retained, five interns will develop green skills with the aim of going on to work in the environment sector and 50 new volunteers will be recruited.

The Fund, a partnership between Defra and The National Lottery Heritage Fund, has allocated £1.04 million to the scheme which, with additional funding from the partners, represents a total investment into the New Forest of £1.3 million.

The partners are:

- Freshwater Habitats Trust
- Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust
- Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
- New Forest Commoners Defence Association
- Wild New Forest.

Historic New Forest King Oak saved

The NPA saved an historic oak tree from being felled to ground level thanks to careful management which will keep it in the New Forest landscape for many more years.

Our tree team provided arboricultural advice to the landowner to keep the remaining structure of the King Oak, which has been a prominent feature by the road at Moyles Court near Ringwood for more than 600 years.

It was sadly declared dead in 2023. James Palmer, tree officer at the NPA said: ‘Being in such a busy public space, the tree needed further pruning to safely retain what we see today.

‘We have been pleased to help retain a portion of the King Oak, which will remain an important cultural landmark and help support hundreds of other plant and animal species for many years to come.’

Ancient trees, with their gnarls, holes and cracks, are an important part of a forest’s ecosystem, providing vital habitats for birds, bats, insects and lichens. They’re also culturally important, adding to the character of an area, and often providing historical landmarks.



The King Oak at Moyles Court



The NPA tree team with contractors at the King Oak

Our tree service – preserving protected trees

The New Forest has one of the highest concentrations of ancient trees in western Europe, and our role in the NPA is to protect the special and important trees that contribute to the character of the National Park.

The Tree Team has processed more than 600 applications to work on protected trees. Two new Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) have been made to protect groups of important trees in communities which may have otherwise been removed or damaged. We have also successfully

negotiated the amendment or withdrawal of numerous tree work applications where trees could have been removed or damaged. Review continues of some older TPOs in partnership with New Forest District Council where the orders cross administrative boundaries. Approximately 200 responses have been provided to the Planning Team giving arboricultural advice, and several of these continue for major development sites. Communication and education with the general public plays a huge role for the team with hundreds of face to face meetings, emails and telephone calls around our statutory function or providing general advice.

Key environmental scheme supports habitats, wildlife and commoning

The Verderers of the New Forest Higher Level Stewardship Scheme continued to support vital projects in the New Forest, following last year’s announcement that funding would be extended by a further five years.

At £2m each year, it’s one of the largest environmental land management schemes in England and is an exemplar of working in partnership at landscape scale. Natural England provides technical advice and support to the scheme that is managed by the Verderers of the New Forest in partnership with Forestry England and the New Forest National Park Authority, with support from the Commoners Defence Association.

The HLS scheme helps the New Forest by:

- Conserving wildlife
- Supporting the system of commoning that provides essential management of New Forest habitats
- Improving and restoring extensive heathlands, species-rich grasslands, and ancient pasture woodlands
- Restoring streams and mires which were artificially straightened or drained
- Identifying and protecting historic sites
- Helping young people to understand and care for the New Forest
- Restoring verges which are protected habitats in their own right
- Monitoring important species.

Find out more: hlsnewforest.org.uk



Cattle grazing in the New Forest

New nature super-highway reaches major milestone

Volunteers in the New Forest achieved a major milestone in connecting the New Forest and South Downs National Parks with a giant 14-mile hedge.

The Hampshire Hedge project is creating a nature super-highway through central Hampshire. Working with the NPA, together with community groups and landowners, the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) is improving existing hedgerows by replacing lost or poorly-managed sections.

It links woodlands, meadows, local nature reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), starting at Copythorne, on the edge of the New Forest, with Compton, near Winchester, and on the edge of the South Downs.

The ‘Hampshire Hedgeometer’ shows volunteers in March 2024 reaching the half-way mark of the first year’s target of planting three miles (5km) of new

hedgerows. Around 25,000 whips (seedling trees) went into the ground during the winter.

CPRE’s Hedgerow Project Officer Ellie Banks said the work will help fragmented wildlife habitats: ‘The dense new growth at the base of the improved hedgerow will form a natural barrier to provide food and shelter for birds and animals.

‘The section is a great example of how the Hampshire Hedge can connect

existing habitats across a landscape, aiding nature recovery and the ability of local wildlife to migrate.’

The project hopes not only to enhance the quality of the landscape, but also to raise awareness of the importance of hedgerows for wildlife, climate, and sustainable farming. The campaign aims to increase the UK hedgerows network by 40% by 2050.

cprehampshire.org.uk



Volunteers from the Hampshire Hedge project planting



Banded demoiselle © Peter LeCointe

Inspiring action for climate and nature

We’re working hard to tackle the effects of the climate and nature emergencies in the New Forest, and helping communities take action.

As set out in our Partnership Plan, we’re providing leadership to reduce carbon emissions and increase carbon sequestration, working towards the National Park being ‘Net Zero with Nature’ by 2050. Net Zero is achieved when the amount of Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) emitted by human activities on a global scale are equal to that being removed by the natural environment.

Our work focuses on protecting the habitats and species of the New Forest that make it unique and that have been part of the landscape here for centuries.

We also want to ensure future generations can enjoy a New Forest which is robust and resilient to the changing environment.

With partners, we’re enhancing these special habitats by making them bigger, better and more joined up. An ongoing programme of work includes restoring open habitats by removing non-native conifer plantations and reverting them back to valuable heathland and grazing. Pasture woodlands are also being restored – their ancient oak and beech trees intrinsic to the character of the Forest, as well as supporting rare insects and fungi.

We know that the landscape can do more to absorb greenhouse gas emissions. Restoring the New Forest’s wetlands and peatlands is a huge opportunity and one that partners have been doing successfully for a number of years.

Other enhancements across the National Park this year include creating more ponds, planting hedgerows, restoring verges and supporting soil health on farmland.



Fungus in the New Forest



Pigs © Peter LeCointe

Youth For Climate and Nature (YouCAN)

We received £1.4 million to connect young people to nature and help communities across the region tackle climate change.

The Youth for Climate and Nature scheme (YouCAN) secured a £1.2 million Climate Action Fund grant from The National Lottery Community Fund – the largest community funder in the UK – and a further £264,000 in match funding from partners.

Aimed at 11- to 25-year-olds, the scheme strengthens young people’s connection to nature, and deepens their understanding of what drives environmental behaviour change. It will enable them to develop nature-focused campaigns in their local communities spanning an area of 300 square miles across the New Forest, Southampton, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, covering a mix of urban, rural, coastal and freshwater habitats.



A junior ranger day, funded by YouCAN

We are working alongside the Countryside Education Trust in Beaulieu; Freshwater Habitats Trust; The Parks Foundation in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole; Southampton National Park City project; Theatre for Life, and care and support charity Alabaré to deliver the scheme over three years, which started in October 2023.

The impact

£1.4m investment to connect young people to nature

Encouraging local action through the Climate and Nature pledge

1,555 people have now signed up to our New Forest Climate and Nature Challenge pledge – committing to at least four of these seven actions:

- Cutting waste, and reducing, reusing and recycling
- Reducing impacts of travel
- Following the New Forest code
- Eating seasonally, and with more plants
- Saving energy
- Helping wildlife
- Shopping locally.

Successful Awakening Festival

Led by the New Forest National Park Authority, and supported by 52 partners and organisations, the fourth New Forest Awakening Festival around climate and nature ran throughout the whole of March.

The impact

1.5 million had the chance to see nature and climate messages

More than 3,000 people attended 92 events including walks, talks, theatre, arts and crafts, a local produce roadshow, growing advice, climate-themed events, litter picks, behind the scenes tours, and early green careers advice.

The Festival is about increasing people’s understanding of the special qualities of the New Forest, the issues it faces and how we can all help respond to the nature and climate crises.

Throughout the 2024 Festival, messages reached more than 1.5 million people through social and traditional media channels. 240,000 people attended events, viewed videos, commented, liked or shared social media posts – 40,000 more than last year’s Festival.

Supporting Green Groups

Working with our communities is crucial in tackling climate and nature recovery.

We regularly convene a growing number of local ‘Green Groups’ – sharing information and expertise, working together on events, climate cafés, eco fairs, repair cafés, workshops and film screenings. We also join up on projects, give talks, help to promote local community green activities and find funding for their green initiatives.



Awakening Festival litter pick at Calshot



Artist impression of the proposed dwellings at Ashurst © Thrive Architects

Protecting the built environment

Managing New Development

Our planning service is a crucial tool in our work to protect and enhance the Forest for future generations. We aim to set the highest bar for development, working within the Government's National Planning Policy Framework. We deal with some 1,000 planning applications a year, the vast majority of which are approved – 94% in 2023–24.

Many of the planning applications we receive are for smaller-scale developments, typically home extensions and new outbuildings. However, larger schemes do come forward in the National Park and the planning consents for two major housing schemes in Sway and Ashurst were issued following completion of legal agreements, delivering much-needed new affordable housing.

In all cases we work closely with applicants and local agents to achieve high-quality schemes, with many potential issues successfully resolved at pre-application stage. Our Local Plan sets out where new development can take place, ensuring it's sustainable, and conserves and enhances the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the New Forest. Our policies also support a prosperous local economy and ensure that any new development is focused on the needs of local people.

Planning Enforcement

Our enforcement team ensures the integrity of the planning system is maintained and that the National Park is protected from inappropriate development.

Over the last year we've received 205 new enforcement cases and resolved 213 cases using a variety of tools. One of those tools is a Planning

The impact

94% of planning applications approved

Contravention Notice (PCN), and the Authority has issued 23 PCNs in the last year to obtain information about activities on the land where a breach may be happening.

Most cases (96%) are resolved through negotiation and receiving retrospective applications. In those cases when unauthorised development is harmful to the environment or community, and appropriate remedial action can't be agreed then we have taken formal enforcement action. This has occurred on eight occasions with cases resulting in an Enforcement Notice.

The most typical issues raised with us and investigated in the last 12 months include changes of use of land and buildings for various purposes; residential use of buildings; residential caravans; inappropriate fencing; inappropriate tracks and unauthorised storage.

We are grateful for the help of members of the public and local councils who alert us to potential breaches of planning control which we then investigate. We also selectively monitor new development to check compliance with plans, conditions and legal agreements as well as active and dormant minerals and waste sites within the National Park.

The impact

419 planning enforcement cases processed or resolved

Celebrating New Forest heritage through our Local List

We're continuing to expand our 'Local List', helping to further protect and celebrate special buildings and other heritage features in the National Park.

National planning policy encourages all planning authorities to publish a Local List. Whereas around two per cent of buildings in the National Park are Grade I, II* or II listed by the government in recognition of their national significance, there are many more which are currently included on our Local List. In 2022 we launched a campaign asking the public to nominate buildings and other heritage assets, such as archaeological sites, monuments, landscapes, streetscapes (post-box, streetlight, signage) or public works of art that add character to their location.

This year we received more than 60 nominations which were assessed by a Local Listing Review Panel and the New Forest National Park Authority Planning Committee. As a result, 33 new assets were approved and added to the Local List and the relevant county's Historic Environment Record.

These include:

- An unusual 1861 iron grave marker in St Marys churchyard, Boldre
- Two sets of iron hatches at the former Heywood Mill
- A trig pillar to the south east of Ashley Walk illuminated target in Frogham
- A WWII air raid shelter in South Gorley
- Woodlands House Residential Care Home in Netley Marsh.

We are still assessing and inviting Local List nominations.

Celebrating outstanding design

Amazing architecture was recognised in the 2024 Building Design Awards which celebrate quality design and the best new developments across the National Park.

Best Residential Scheme 2024 was awarded to Chestnut Plantation at Tatchbury Mount, which replaced a 1950s bungalow with a sustainable and modern, open-plan new home.

The Clay Retreat at Norleywood was **Highly Commended** in this category. This inspired design for a replacement home used traditional materials which complement each other and enhance the New Forest's South East Conservation Area.

The Clay Retreat also won the **Best Green Building** category. The single storey home has particularly high energy efficiency standards which go above and beyond current building regulations.

Highly Commended in the Best Green Building category was Chestnut Plantation. The judges were impressed by its solar panels, air source heat pump and woodland management plan for the surrounding land to improve biodiversity.

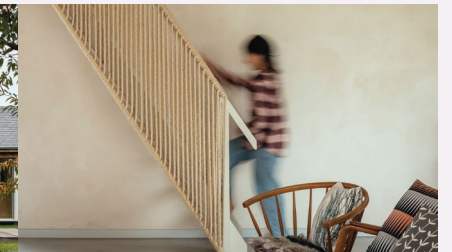
Best Non-Residential Building was awarded to The Living Room at spudWORKS in Sway. Now a space for dementia care community use, it's built on the base of a Victorian water tower, with a new Douglas fir timber frame and locally-made cedar shingles.



Building Design Awards winners with Chair of NPA Planning Committee Gordon Bailey (back row, centre).



The Clay Retreat © Jim Stephenson



The Clay Retreat interior © Jim Stephenson



The Living Room at spudWORKS © Paul Close Photography



Interior of the Living Room at spudWORKS © Paul Close Photography



Chestnut Plantation © Brotherton-Lock Photography



Chestnut Plantation interior © Brotherton-Lock Photography

Archaeology: uncovering and protecting our past

Our archaeology and heritage team not only cares for the National Park but provides services to Forestry England and New Forest District Council.

This year, the team has given advice on:

- 59 planning applications within the National Park
- 70 planning applications from outside the National Park, as part of our service level agreement with New Forest District Council
- 54 requests from Forestry England ahead of forestry works
- 25 requests ahead of Higher Level Stewardship scheme works.

Expanding knowledge

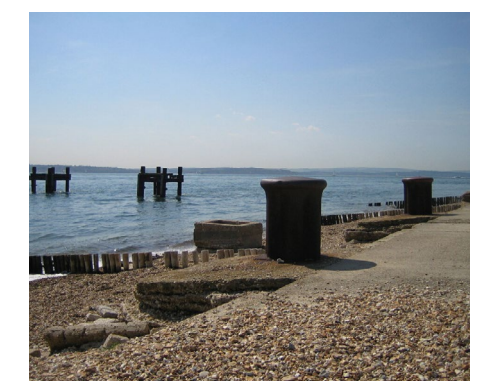
The archaeology and heritage team works in partnership with the New Forest Heritage Centre to run and manage the New Forest Knowledge website.

As well as providing access to a wealth of information about the heritage of the New Forest area, it has been set up as a community portal where individuals and groups of all abilities and interests can add their own research, articles and photographs to expand our New Forest cultural heritage story.

During this year the site had nearly 97,000 visits and continues to grow in content and functionality. Thousands of records are now accessible – from

excavation and survey reports to 3D models, historic maps and oral histories.

nfknowledge.org



D Day remains at Lepe

Managing recreational impacts

More than half the New Forest National Park is designated as being of international importance for nature conservation – the highest proportion of any national park in the UK. We’re helping to reduce the effects of recreational impacts through a number of measures.

Protecting rare ground nesting birds

We continue to work closely with partners such as Forestry England, Hampshire County Council, New Forest Dog Owners Group, the National Trust and Bird Aware Solent to educate people about endangered ground nesting birds and how the New Forest is critical to their survival.

The main message shared on social media is to #StayOnTheTracks and keep dogs under close control, using a lead where necessary. This message had



Rangers meeting the public

over 126,000 impressions and 5,300 engagements across our channels.

NPA rangers also supported Forestry England rangers and keepers patrolling sensitive breeding areas, signposted by amber and red signs. By speaking directly to Forest users, we aim to help them understand the importance of how we can all help protecting the special qualities of the Forest, such as ground nesting birds.

A ranger also attended a World Curlew Day charity event in Beaulieu headlined by singer-songwriter David Gray.



Ground nesting bird sign

Habitat mitigation

We have a well-established recreation mitigation scheme in place, securing financial contributions from new development (including new housing and other forms of overnight accommodation) to mitigate the recreational impacts on the internationally-protected sites of the New Forest and Solent coast.

Endorsed by Natural England, the package of mitigation measures is proportionate to the limited scale of new development within the National Park.

In 2023-24, habitat mitigation measures funded through new development included:

- **Communications work:** including promoting key messages through tourism businesses, social media channels, publications and our website.
- **Mitigation rangers:** One year-round mitigation ranger operated in 2023-24 and one seasonal ranger was employed for the spring/summer season in 2023. This additional resource on the ground enabled key messages were delivered face-to-face at sites across the National Park.
- **Rights of way signs:** Funding improvements to the alternative walking route in Landford and Hamptworth, to attract users to a site outside the designated nature conservation areas.



Animal accident car sticker and hotline cards

Animal accidents campaign

The number of road traffic accidents involving commoners’ livestock rose from 82 in 2022 to 92 in 2023. Pony deaths dropped from 32 to 27 within the same timeframe, however the number of cattle, pigs and sheep which lost their lives increased.

The most disappointing figure for commoners and the Forest organisations working to reduce these accidents is the amount of hit and runs. A total of 18 drivers failed to report an incident to the police despite it being a legal requirement to do so within 24 hours.

Every animal killed or injured on Forest roads is an emotional and financial loss to its owner and the National Park. Therefore, the joint campaign message to drivers continues to be to pass animals wide and slow and be prepared to stop.

Social media was an important tool in raising awareness of the #PassWideAndSlow message. This year social media posts had nearly 392,000 impressions with over 25,000 engagements.

Together with Forest organisations we’re encouraging people to carry a hotline card with essential phone numbers to call if an animal is killed or injured. People can also help raise awareness by displaying a new animal safety car window sticker made from eco-friendly materials. The NPA has invested £8,000 towards both of these in a three-year campaign, with the Love the Forest scheme from the New Forest Trust charity contributing a further £2,000.

As part of the Animal Accident Reduction Group, we continued to be involved with the ongoing success of Operation Mountie, led by New Forest Roads Awareness and Hampshire Constabulary with Forestry England.



New Forest Ponies © Adobe/Nick Brundle

Protecting habitats through pop-up campsite guidelines

Following the Government’s introduction of new nationwide permitted development rights for temporary campsites in July 2023 (up to 50 pitches over 60 days per calendar year) we confirmed new planning controls for temporary campsites to protect local communities and the environment of the New Forest.

The New Forest National Park has seen a significant increase in the number of pop-up campsites since lockdown. It also has more than three times the number of camping and touring caravan bed spaces per square kilometre than the average of all other English national parks.

Planning authorities can make an ‘Article 4 Direction’ which means proposals can’t be carried out under national permitted development rights and instead require a planning application. In ecologically-sensitive areas such as national parks, this allows the proposal to be considered in more detail and, where appropriate, suitable planning conditions to be attached.

We updated our earlier Article 4 Direction in October 2023 with immediate effect, meaning certain ‘pop-up’ campsites within the New Forest National Park boundary still need to apply for planning permission to operate. We have also agreed a new planning guidance note to help applicants when applying for planning permission for temporary camping uses caught by the Article 4 Direction.



A temporary camp site in the New Forest

Sharing the New Forest code

The New Forest is a unique place with rare wildlife and free-roaming animals. The New Forest code was designed so that everyone can help protect the animals and plants by following nine simple steps:

- Keep your distance from the animals – don't feed or touch them
- Take home litter and dog waste
- No fires, stoves or barbecues
- Keep dogs under control. Don't let dogs approach or chase any animals
- Park only in car parks
- No wild camping
- Stick to the permitted cycle tracks
- Drive with care – animals on the road!
- Help wildlife by keeping to the main tracks.



The launch of two public space protection orders

The impact

19,000 interactions with the public

Our ranger team

NPA rangers had more than 19,000 face-to-face interactions with the public. Our ranger team's core focus is on welcoming people to the New Forest while ensuring they are enjoying it responsibly and that engagement focuses on the main themes of the New Forest code. As well as patrols and engagement sessions with the mobile information units – both in the New Forest and at local events –

rangers also provide literature and signs including the code to local businesses, accommodation providers and community groups.

With the introduction of the Public Space Protection Orders in July 2023, several NPA rangers became Authorised Officers, able to issue Fixed Penalty Notices should it become necessary after first engaging, explaining and educating anyone in breach of the Orders.

We would also like to say a special thank you to Claire Sherwood who left the NPA this year after 13 years as a ranger and 17 years working for the Authority.

Public Space Protection Orders

Two new Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) for the New Forest to reduce wild fires and to protect animals and people came into effect in July 2023. The use of BBQs and fires in the Forest and feeding and petting ponies or donkeys are all banned, with those failing to comply liable to a fixed penalty fine or prosecution. Over the first three months of the new PSPOs being introduced, National Park and Forestry England rangers used the new powers to intervene in 152 incidents involving over 700 people. More than 120 of the incidents involved petting and feeding ponies or donkeys. The evidence so far suggests the PSPOs (and the associated signage) are having the desired effect in deterring and addressing anti-social behaviour in the Forest.



NPA ranger team December 2023 with Claire Sherwood second from right. © Marcus Langelier



Operation Mountie

The New Forest code: working in partnership

The New Forest NPA works on joint initiatives with other Forest organisations throughout the year.

Here's an infographic showing the work this year to protect the National Park alongside our partners Forestry England, New Forest District Council, Hampshire Constabulary, Hampshire & IOW Fire and Rescue Service, New Forest Roads Awareness, Verderers, Go New Forest and our volunteers.

Some highlights include:

- 7,000+ hours of ranger patrols
- New PSPO powers used to intervene in 150 incidents
- #NewForestCode seen over 1.7m times on social media
- 3,000+ hours of volunteering to support conservation projects
- 30 joint patrols with the emergency services

- Outdoor fires reduced by 30%
- Thefts from cars in Forest car parks reduced by 50%
- Litter cleared from over 80km of Forest roadsides
- Over 40 community litter picking events supported
- 90 drivers stopped for speeding on Forest roads
- Spot checks on 196 vehicles carrying waste.

Thank you to everyone who helps to care for the Forest year-round!

The impact

7,000+ hours of joint ranger patrols



John Allison and volunteer Fabi from the charity New Forest for Ukraine

Making the code accessible

This year we made it easier for all to help care for the New Forest National Park by translating the New Forest code into a further 10 languages: Arabic, Chinese, Gujarati, Hindi, Pashto, Polish, Punjabi, Romanian, Ukrainian and Urdu.

John Allison from volunteer group New Forest for Ukraine, which organises local aid collections for Ukraine said: 'What a fantastic initiative. Most Ukrainian children understand our language, but most parents are on a steep learning curve. Presenting the code in their home language is both valuable and respectful. Thank you.'

One of the key objectives of Re:New Forest is an inclusive National Park, to encourage people of all backgrounds, abilities and socio-economic groups to value the National Park as an important part of their lives and want to care for it. Making the New Forest code available in different languages will help to achieve this aim.

Prof Gavin Parker, New Forest National Park Authority member, said: 'We want to welcome people of all backgrounds to the Forest and ensure they can find out how special it is and what they can do to help care for it.'

'By making the New Forest code available in various languages, barriers to different communities are broken down.'

The New Forest code is available to download in a range of formats, including the translated versions, on the NPA website.



Volunteers laying hedges

Enjoying the National Park

We’re helping to protect this internationally-important landscape through promoting responsible visits and encouraging people to enjoy and respect the New Forest’s special qualities

Encouraging volunteering

The vital work we do in the National Park is supported by our incredible volunteers who give their time selflessly in various roles.

Over the last year, 72 volunteers have taken part in more than 200 volunteer days, giving a total of 1,254 hours to help care for the Forest.

Tasks to improve access and paths took place over the summer months, while winter tasks focused on improving habitats for wildlife.

We’ve worked in partnership with the CPRE to help link the New Forest National Park to the South Downs National Park with a nature recovery corridor of hedgerow (see page 11). We’ve also partnered with Lymington Hospital to support a new well-being walking route.

Volunteering boost for National Park organisations

A new wave of volunteers signed up to help a wide range of organisations thanks to the New Forest National Park Volunteer Fair in January.

Charities and public sector bodies have seen an increase in people wanting to

help thanks to the Fair, where more than 40 exhibitors welcomed over 600 people.

The Fair was officially opened by Sir Julian Lewis MP with CEO of the New Forest National Park Authority Alison Barnes, and New Forest Awards 2023 Young Environmental Champion winner, Jamie Ward.

This year’s Fair focused on young people and included workshops for 13 to 30-year-olds run by the NPA’s education and youth team, as part of the Youth for Climate and Nature (YouCAN) scheme (see page 13).

The sessions considered how volunteering can support young people into green careers and included talks from Jamie Ward, Dominik Reynolds who has volunteered in the New Forest for 15 years, and Arun Curson who won Young Environmental Champion in 2022.

Opening the Fair, Jamie said: ‘I think it’s very important that young people care for the New Forest and all the wildlife that is in it. Young people are the future of the Forest and will be hopefully preserving it for many years to come.’



New Forest National Park Authority Chief Executive Alison Barnes; Young Environmental Champion Jamie Ward; Sir Julian Lewis MP open our New Forest Volunteer Fair

The impact

1,254 volunteer hours

Promoting responsible dog ownership

Our rangers have been promoting the New Forest dog walking code and engaging with dog owners in the New Forest all year round throughout the National Park.

A multi-agency team including the NPA, Forestry England, New Forest Dog Owners Group and local police have held monthly dog owner engagement events. These have provided a great opportunity to discuss key messages in the code and explain why keeping dogs within sight and on main tracks, as well as picking up after our pets, plays such an important role in helping to protect our rare New Forest wildlife and habitats from damage, disturbance, pollution and predation.

The Professional Dog Walkers Charter is a voluntary code that commercial dog walking businesses can sign up for to show their commitment to operating

their business activity and responsibilities to the unique nature of the New Forest. Support for the Charter continues to grow and there are currently 82 businesses signed up. This year the Charter has been reviewed to ensure it is still promoting best practice for the industry. Through working closely with Dorset Dogs team – part of Dorset’s Urban Heath Partnership, the revised version offers other protected landscape managers a format which can easily be adopted to work with their own guidelines for dog owners. Dorset Dogs has been consulting with land managers and dog walking businesses in its area about adopting the Charter, and our rangers have been asked to speak with other mitigation schemes such as Thames Basin Heaths with a view to it being adopted further afield.

Top right: The NPA promotes responsible dog walking in the National Park



Welcoming refugees

We’ve worked with 165 people across 11 events including walks and art sessions and continue to work with charities in neighbouring cities to provide safe spaces for the refugee community to enjoy green spaces and feel a welcomed part of society.

Our ranger Hayden was awarded a Europarc scholarship, securing funding to study in other protected areas looking at how protected landscapes can do more to welcome refugee communities into the outdoors. (Report and findings to follow).

‘I feel like I have come home’ – participant
‘It’s so calming, I feel free like the ponies’ – participant
‘They are different people as soon as they step off the train, you see them relax’ – group leader

The impact

165 refugees welcomed across 11 events

Survey results: Enjoying the New Forest

844 responses were received to the annual ‘Enjoying the New Forest’ survey (in partnership with Go New Forest and Forestry England) aimed at better understanding behaviour and impacts on the New Forest from visits by people who live inside or outside of the National Park boundary.

Results include:

- 85% have an awareness of the New Forest code.
- 18% said they have a disability or long-term illness.
- 31% of visits included at least one dog.
- 5% of visits arrived via sustainable transport, such as foot, bike, train, bus, or ferry, and 18% used sustainable transport once within the National Park.
- 95% find the New Forest accessible.
- 94% find the New Forest welcoming.
- Most visits were for walking and/or exercising dogs, or relaxing.

Above: Welcoming refugees to the National Park

Supporting well-being

We’ve helped hundreds of people access and enjoy the New Forest’s beautiful landscapes – connecting them to nature and green spaces to boost mental and physical health and well-being.

A young person enjoying a trip to the New Forest through social prescribing

New Green Health Hub

We’ve launched The Green Health Hub – an online directory for activities in the New Forest and surrounding area for well-being in the great outdoors.

The Hub signposts people to opportunities in areas including walking, cycling, arts, gardening and volunteering. It also shares inspirational stories from people who have benefitted from being out in the New Forest National Park.

It’s a Green Halo Partnership project managed by the NPA on behalf of the organisations and groups represented on the health hub, collectively known as the Green Health Network.



Installing a wooden sign on a walking route



Social Prescribing

Healthcare professionals are increasingly helping to connect people to the benefits of nature in the New Forest through ‘green social prescribing’.

This rapidly developing idea in healthcare provision approaches health and well-being in a holistic way, considering all the factors in a person’s life and not just trying to address a physical or mental health problem on its own.

Joanna Sheppard, a social prescriber for New Forest Primary Care Network, introduced a young person to a well-being session in the New Forest, led by the NPA’s education and youth staff.

She said: ‘The 23-year-old had been struggling with his mental health and not really going out and doing very much.

‘We walked a loop through the heathlands and down to a pond, and back up through trees near a deer viewing platform.

‘Once we got into the tall trees, he felt very calm and restful. We noticed he became more talkative as well. Overall, it was such a positive experience for him.’

Improving access and rights of way

- Footpath surface improvements, 500m of bridleway improvements, four new gates, new footpath signage, scrub and gorse clearance have improved access at the Cadland Estate through the National Grid’s Landscape Enhancement Initiative.
- 38 new signs have been installed along two promoted walking routes at Hale and Woodgreen and Franchises Wood.
- We continue to promote our New Forest walks app, with 40 guided walks, information and digital signage. The app encourages people to walk off designated land, on paths closer to their homes.

This year, nearly 34,000 people downloaded the app, and 13,000 viewed a route map.



Using the New Forest walks app

Walking and Cycling Festival

Hundreds of people took part in expert-guided walks and cycle rides across the National Park in the 11th New Forest Walking and Cycling Festival. Around 500 people joined 40 events across two weeks, from hidden heritage, wildlife wanders and arts walks. The Festival was also a great opportunity for those who wanted to explore the Forest on two wheels. Qualified guides led rides across the National Park’s designated cycle trails.

NPA Access and Volunteering Officer Adam Vasey said: ‘The Festival aims to encourage everyone to get out and enjoy the special qualities of the National Park, with many walks available on accessible tracks. This means that strong and confident wheelchair users and helpers, and off-road mobility scooters may find these routes within their abilities.’



PEDALL Inclusive Cycling

PEDALL Inclusive Cycling

PEDALL, a partnership between the New Forest National Park Authority and charity Friends of PEDALL, helped greater numbers of people with additional needs access the New Forest National Park.

An extensive specialist fleet of cycles, many of which are power-assisted, enables PEDALL to support a wide range of physical needs. Guided rides, now offered from two bases in Burley and Ashurst, continue to grow in popularity. Other highlights include:

- A record number of more than 5,000 riding slots were delivered this year, during 450 cycling sessions.
- More than 50 free bike safety checks and repairs took place at the weekly Ashurst Hub drop-in sessions.
- Staff worked with local colleges to support students with Special Educational Needs, delivering a bicycle maintenance skills course over six sessions, and continue to offer this initiative in 2024.
- PEDALL worked with more than 30 organisations, including schools, colleges, charities and residential care homes during the year.
- Following Covid restrictions, PEDALL welcomed more residents from care homes for the elderly, and stronger relationships with dementia support groups across the New Forest and Hampshire.
- More than 900 rides were offered at the New Forest Show on a short Forest track, targetting new audiences.
- Community outreach events at Southampton Sports Centre and Slades Farm Park were attended.
- As well as nearly £300,000 in support from the National Lottery Community Fund, PEDALL received funding from South Western Railway, Peter Harrison Foundation and Defra, alongside other generous donations from the community.
- More than 60 volunteers took accredited bike mechanics training, safeguarding and outdoor first aid training.
- Volunteers supported over 942 slots, giving over 5,600 hours of volunteering time.

Local businesses are asked to please support PEDALL through event sponsorship and donations.

pedall.org.uk

The impact

5,000+ inclusive riding hours delivered by PEDALL

Promoting Healthy Walks

The New Forest Healthy Walks programme, which we support alongside New Forest District Council and Community First New Forest, continues to encourage people of all ages to join regular, short walks in their own communities. Healthy Walks are fun, free, supportive and led by trained volunteers. Over 5,400 walking hours were recorded in 2023-24 as part of the project, with over 2,455 hours of volunteer time, equating to over £32,000 of equivalent economic value. The walks help boost health and well-being in local, natural spaces, and participants also benefit from the social aspect of the walks.



Walking in the New Forest

An inclusive Forest through the arts

We’re helping more people connect to the New Forest through new, inspiring and accessible creative opportunities.

Artists in Residence

Our Artists in Residence Programme, in partnership with Sway-based charity SPUD, is an opportunity for artists of any discipline to work with and comment on a chosen area, idea, or community within or engaging with the National Park. It’s supported using public funding by Arts Council England.

The residencies are designed to enable artists to form a creative partnership between people – both inside and outside the New Forest – the arts, and the special qualities of the landscape itself, showcasing this to new audiences.

In May 2023, Beccy McCray exhibited ‘Common Ground’ which aimed to amplify the collective wisdom and community knowledge of local land stewards from commoners, ecologists, and conservation

volunteers, to artists, Travellers, rangers and ramblers.

Her works included sculptures made from natural materials in various states of decay, which were returned to their natural environments afterwards.

Melanie Rose also took up residence during this time and exhibited ‘Shadowing’ in October 2023. Melanie explored changes to the landscape and history of the Forest through painting. By researching the history and traditions of the New Forest, she aimed to open a dialogue about what is happening today in this beautiful national park.

In a first for the programme, artist Alex Julyan took on a mentorship role during her residence in October 2023, giving guidance to Ben Adamson. Both will exhibit in 2024.



Culture in Common

The NPA is a consortium member of Culture in Common, part of Arts Council England’s Creative People and Places programme. The programme aims to provide more opportunities for residents to access professional performances and creative activities within easy reach of home.

This year saw Culture in Common step up its delivery of events to New Forest residents.

- 15,000 audiences or participants attended events and activities across the New Forest.
- 91 events were held in areas of least engagement in arts and culture.
- Three creative and training workshop sessions were provided free to empower local people to learn new event management skills.
- 82% of visitors rated their experience of events as ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’.
- 77% of visitors stated they were more likely or much more likely to attend another cultural event in the future.

Appreciation of our special environment was woven into many aspects of the 2023 Culture in Common programme.

Community Summer Picnics Together gave children in Hyde, Breamore, Woodgreen and Sandleheath the chance to collaborate with local artists to understand more about their natural environment.

Storytelling has been a consistent theme with the launch of two Story Quest booklets in Blackfield and New Milton.

Participants on Photo Walkshops also got the chance to learn how to capture the New Forest’s natural landscapes and wildlife. The walks which ran from Beaulieu and Calshot were guided by professional photographer Paul Gonella and accompanied by our Access Officer Adam Vasey. They provided the opportunity to learn new skills, meet new people and study and appreciate the stunning varied landscape of the National Park.

Lyngo Theatre’s performance for under-fives in Fordingbridge celebrated the beauty of the changing seasons and Totton’s Lantern Parade was themed to ‘Winged Creatures of the Forest’.

cultureincommon.co.uk

Connecting young people to nature

We’re creating green pathways and nature connection opportunities for children and young people from all backgrounds – encouraging them to enjoy the natural world and protect it for future generations.



Our Education and Youth team welcomed 922 young people through school trips into the Forest, where the students learnt more about different landscapes and habitats both inland and on the coast, as well as the New Forest’s special qualities.

‘Students gained a better understanding of the “life” of some familiar woodland animals, and the environment around us. They were able to make links between new knowledge and content already covered in class.’

Foxhills Infant school

‘For many of them, a chance to get out of their “bubble” was invaluable. To see them interacting socially with pupils they might not do so in school was also good.’

Testwood school



The NPA welcomed 922 school children to the Forest

Junior rangers learn about pony branding



Sharing ranger skills

We introduced a New Forest Junior Ranger programme this year, working with a passionate group of young people to explore many different aspects of the National Park.

49 people aged 11–18 took part in practical tasks across five sessions and explored lots of the responsibilities that being a New Forest ranger involves. The ongoing Junior Ranger programme is held in various locations, so young people can experience new places, discover the amazing qualities of the National Park and increase their connection to nature.

They also learnt about commoning, the coastal environment, and sustainable practices for nature recovery and climate action.

‘The children had an enjoyable day, can talk about habitats and creatures with more confidence and developed more of a bond as a class as a result.’

Broad Chalke CofE primary school

‘The opportunities to pause and discuss other things on our walk, such as the footprints, were really valuable and made sure that we really took every advantage to engage the children. The hands-on sessions were creative, varied and really good fun.’

Foxhills Infant school

Opportunities for free play within nature offer countless benefits to children, and we held a Wild Play event at Bartley park in Totton in the spring.

Rangers provided several nature-themed activities such as plant pot making and seed planting; nature trail; bird beak feeding game; plasticine insects; colouring and a mud kitchen.



Mud kitchen

The impact

15,000 audiences or participants attended events and activities across the New Forest



Lyngo Theatre’s performance for under-fives

Building better communities

We recognise the need for sustainably located development within the National Park to support the social and economic well-being of our communities.



The Waterside and the Solent Freeport

As well as new housing, there are several development proposals likely to come forward for the Waterside area. These include proposals to improve the A326, new commercial development at Marchwood Military Port, the expansion of the Port of Southampton at Dibden Bay, a new hydrogen plant at Fawley Refinery and the development of the former Fawley Power Station.

We have sought to engage in the Solent Freeport proposals with the aim of ensuring the Freeport delivers environmental ambitions alongside economic drivers (the Government has confirmed that Freeport designation does not change the planning protections afforded to national parks, including the New Forest).

In late 2023, we commissioned ARUP consultants to help shape the vision for the Waterside area, connecting the unique landscape of the New Forest and bringing the National Park to Southampton Water across the A326. This resulted in ‘the Green Links Feasibility Study’ which imagines a series of green links that reconnect habitats, facilitate grazing animals, join up local communities and reflect positive landscape management guidance. The study will support the National Park Authority in responding to consultations for new development and future highway improvements in the Waterside area.

Working with local communities on planning policy and design guidance

We’ve worked alongside communities in the National Park as they produce local design guidance and planning policies to guide new development.

Our role is to support town and parish councils who have chosen to prepare neighbourhood plans, through sharing evidence and specialist planning advice. Neighbourhood plans were introduced by the Government in 2011 to enable local communities to prepare planning policies and guidelines for new development in their areas.

The Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan was subject to a final period of public consultation in August – September 2023 and then submitted for independent examination in November 2023. The appointed Examiner reviewed all the representations made and published their final report in February 2024. This recommended that subject to a series of recommended modifications

the plan could proceed to local referendum. The Examiner commended the work of Ringwood Town Council and partners in preparing the plan and concluded that it sets out a positive vision for the future development of the parish of Ringwood – around half of which lies within the National Park. The local referendum will take place on 4 July 2024.

The draft Wellow Neighbourhood Plan has been going through the same preparation process. The National Park Authority has worked jointly with Test Valley Borough Council to support the parish council in its work, as the Wellow Common, Rockingham and Canada Common areas of the parish are within the National Park for planning purposes. The independent examination of the draft Wellow Neighbourhood Plan took place between January – March 2024 and the final Examiner’s Report was received in early April 2024. The Plan will now proceed to local referendum in July 2024. The plan identified two development sites and also includes a range of policies that seek to conserve the natural and built environment of the parish.



Ringwood © Nick Lucas

Supporting farmers and commoners

We help farmers and commoners by providing grants, training and advice.

New Forest Land Advice Service

We run the New Forest Land Advice Service (NFLAS) in partnership with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.

Our advisers assist farmers and commoners with applications for land management grants, claims for Basic Payment Scheme and Countryside Stewardship payments along with guidance on compliance with legislation and arranging training courses. The NFLAS supported the creation of the Southern Coastal Farm Cluster, with 15 holdings signed up in December. Cluster groups allow landowners and farmers to achieve wider landscape-scale environmental benefits by working together. NFLAS is working with each holding to progress the interests of the group.

Farming in Protected Landscapes

The third year of our Farming in Protected Landscapes grant programme has supported 24 projects, seen 30 schemes completed and 28,556

hectares of land (equivalent to nearly 40,000 football pitches) supported to drive improvements for nature.

The programme, developed nationally by Defra, supports farmers and land managers in carrying out projects that support the natural environment, mitigate the impacts of climate change, provide public access opportunities or support nature-friendly, sustainable farm businesses. NFLAS advisors help applicants develop projects which are assessed by a Local Assessment Panel, a voluntary body drawn from communities in the National Park. The programme will run until March 2025.

Projects include:

- Increasing biodiversity at St.Giles Farm at Godshill as well as practising biodynamic agriculture, a form of organic farming which treats the land as a self-contained organism and maintains a natural capacity. The landscape has been enhanced through planting hedgerows and trees and building pasture fences.
- Supporting a group of landowners and managers in the north of the National Park to manage deer effectively to reduce the impact of deer herds on agricultural production and woodland regeneration. The grant has helped develop an assessment of the impact of deer in the project area, supported the use of drone surveys to monitor deer populations and training in best practice for deer management. Over 40 farmers are working together on the project, which is the largest single project supported by the programme to date.



Top: Farming in Protected Landscapes funded hedges planted at St Giles Farm
Above: Sheep at St Giles Farm

Commoning – a vital practice shaping today’s landscape

Commoning and the right to turn out animals to roam the landscape is crucial for the survival of the New Forest as we know it today. The ponies and cattle shape the landscape – it’s their grazing which helps create the habitats and enables plants, fungi, insects, birds and animals to thrive here, some of which are found almost nowhere else in the UK. The animals’ owners are ordinary people with an extraordinary commitment to the New Forest – around 700 commoners who have ancient rights attached to their land or property.



Commoner and ponies



NFLAS gives advice to farmers and landowners

Growing green careers

We’re supporting and inspiring young people to follow green careers, offering ways to develop and grow green skills, and opening doors to opportunities across the environment sector.

The impact:

- Two apprentices
- Two paid internships
- 17 work experience students hosted
- 730 young people engaged through careers fairs, universities and other targeted events
- One Early Green Careers Group

The NPA offers young people ways to develop practical conservation skills



Our apprentice rangers

Apprentice rangers Abi Sharp and Shona Tamblyn-Blake joined the team in February to spend time with six ranger teams across the New Forest including the NPA, Forestry England, Countryside Education Trust, Hampshire County Council, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, and the RSPB.

Through a placement with each partner organisation, they will continue to gain experience in a variety of ranger work, from public engagement and events to site maintenance, practical habitat management and species surveys. The current scheme runs until July 2025.

Apprentices also work towards the Countryside Worker Standard qualification through Sparsholt College.

Abi said: ‘The apprenticeship is a unique and great opportunity for anyone wanting to learn new skills and gain experience in conservation. Everyone I have worked with has been extremely friendly, helpful and supportive.’

Shona said: ‘I’ve learnt so much in such a short space of time through this apprenticeship and met so many kind, interesting and knowledgeable people. It’s been such a fantastic opportunity and opened so many doors to jobs I never imagined.’

Work experience

We continue to welcome work experience students to enable more young people to try out different green careers. We offer opportunities to take part in a variety of activities alongside different teams across the organisation.

- We received 66 work experience/ placement enquiries this year.
- We hosted seven local year 10 students (April-July), and two year 12 students (April-May).
- Four year 12 students from Sparsholt College took part in conservation activities supported mainly by the ranger team.
- A further three year 12 students joined the communications team for journalism/photography related work experience, while one graduate joined the planning team.

‘During my work placement I have learnt more about the amazing work that is being done to maintain the Forest that I have grown up in and the challenges they face. The team were all supportive of me and made me feel at home straight away despite the short amount of time I had with them.’

Year 12 journalism student

‘Since I have always been fascinated by nature, being able to work with the NPA has been a perfect experience to assist me in welcoming me to the world of work as well as the area I would like to work in. I had lots of great opportunities with plenty of hands on experience, overall letting me find out what work here would be like.’

Year 12 photography student



Exploring opportunities to engage young people

New Forest NPA interns Hayley Quarrington and Joshua Dawes



‘My time as an intern has been the best professional experience of my life so far!’

Joshua Dawes

New to Nature internships

Two National Park interns – Joshua Dawes and Hayley Quarrington – joined the NPA this year, thanks to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

These 12-month full-time paid posts give young people experience across the breadth of our organisation as well as help us learn and improve how we support young professionals.

The ‘New to Nature’ scheme is hosted by Groundwork UK and funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. We’re proud to become part of a growing body of professional practice committed to improving equality, diversity and inclusion across the environmental sector.

Joshua said: ‘My time as an intern has been the best professional experience of my life so far!’

‘Being an intern with the NPA has given me so many opportunities to grow my skills and interests within the environmental sector, whilst also being able to follow some of my own interests too. One of the best aspects

‘The experiences I have been lucky to have on this internship have empowered me and given me confidence in myself and the career path I wish to take’

Hayley Quarrington

of the internship was that I was able to work with so many people and teams, learning so many different things about so many different topics and careers.

‘My favourite things I took part in were all of the different conservation and habitat management activities run by so many organisations within the National Park, which help to maintain the incredible landscape and ecosystems within the New Forest.

‘I have made many useful connections which have led me onto a great career path as a planning officer with the NPA, and I couldn’t have done it without everything I have learnt from my internship over the last year.’

Hayley said: ‘I am grateful to have been given the opportunity to be an intern with the New Forest NPA. The experiences I have been lucky to have on this internship have empowered me and given me confidence in myself and the career path I wish to take.

‘I have been able to work with many different teams and organisations across the National Park, and there is a real sense of family and partnership. Everyone cares about what they do and the outcomes of their work on the Forest.

‘I’m looking forward to continuing my journey of working in the environmental sector and hope to have a meaningful impact on the work I do.’

Early Green Careers Network

The New Forest Early Green Careers Network (EGCN) has continued to grow this year. It was launched in January 2023 to give people at the start of their green career in the Forest, and surrounding areas, the benefit of a support network of others with similar shared experiences.

The group now has 42 members from 17 organisations and some independents (students, volunteers or those changing careers). Some are in their first green career or volunteering role, others in their first career. Sessions this year have included: traditional woodland

management by Forestry England’s New Forestry Professionals Network, advice on recruitment and interviews from a HR professional, and a biodynamic farming tour by the New Forest Land Advice Service.

Some of the EGCN hosted an online seminar during the Awakening Festival about green careers and the advice they would give to those starting out or looking to move to the sector.

The talk was attended by 30 people and had speakers from the NPA, Freshwater Habitats Trust and the Countryside Education Trust – all of which are part of the EGCN themselves.

The New Forest Early Green Careers Group



The NPA also has its own Early Careers Branch, where people within the organisation can meet and socialise as well as benefit from talks and advice from more senior colleagues.

Supporting a prosperous and sustainable economy

Greener living through the Sustainable Communities Fund

Schools, youth groups and communities have benefited from grants from our Sustainable Development Fund to help climate and nature and protect the New Forest’s precious landscape.

Highlights include:

£10,000 for Brockenhurst Primary School to install a bird hide so children can experience nature up close. Set within the Forest School, it supports play, learning and developing confidence and self-esteem.

£8,500 for Sway Village Hall to move to solar electricity, low energy lighting and replace old and inefficient stage lighting. The energy-saving measures saw the hall’s electricity bill plummet by 40% and reduced carbon emissions.

£8,000 for ArtfulScribe to set up a writer in residence programme with The Countryside Education Trust, Beaulieu. The writer will work on site over a year and help visitors and local people to discover why the Forest is special.

£4,984 for Youth Options to deliver a series of six-week outdoor learning courses for up to 10 children to explore habitats and take part in woodwork, nature art, gardening, estate management and maintenance tasks. Each child works towards a National Outdoor Learning Award – accreditation they may not be able to access in a traditional classroom.

13 microgrants of £150 to six schools, two scout and guide groups, three village halls, a church and volunteer group. Funds enabled new wildflower areas, bird feeders, insect homes, swift boxes and rainwater recycling.



Bug hotels © shutterstock



New Forest Award winners at the New Forest Show

Championing local heroes

We ran our 10th New Forest National Park Awards with the CLA, celebrating the wonderful people who support the New Forest’s environment and rural economy, and help keep it a living, working landscape. The winners were recognised at a special ceremony at the New Forest and Hampshire County Show.

Alison Barnes, CEO of the New Forest NPA said: ‘It’s great to be able to reward people who are helping to safeguard the National Park as a living, working Forest. Every year the standard of entries is extremely impressive, and it’s heartening to know that so many people are working hard to ensure the New Forest is protected and enhanced.’

- **Young Farmer/Commoner:** Ben Mansbridge from Longdown
- **Best Supporter of Local Produce:** Daisy Meadow Dairy, Botley

- **Rural Diversification:** Popell Barns Mobile Farm, Botley
- **Sustainability Champion:** Hockey’s Farm Shop, South Gorley
- **Farming and Nature Champion:** Richard Stiles from Titchfield
- **Young Environmental Champion:** Jamie Ward from Lymington

This year’s Highly Commended were:

- **Young Farmer/Commoner:** Emma Hunt from Romsey
- **Best Supporter of Local Produce:** New Forest Fruit Company Ltd, and Pilley Community Shop
- **Sustainability Champion:** New Forest Collection
- **Young Environmental Champion:** Anna Cooper
- **Farming and Nature Champion:** Daniel Burden

Supporting Brilliance in Business

We support local enterprise through the New Forest Business Partnership’s Brilliance in Business Awards and sponsor the Best Environmental Contribution to the National Park category.

The award recognises businesses that understand their responsibility to drive environmental improvements within

their industry, creating a greener, more sustainable product or service.

This year’s winner was sustainable merchandise company Vida Promotions Ltd. Also nominated were New Forest Collection of country house hotels and restaurants, as well as boutique sustainability consultancy True Horizon.

New community shop

A new shop and Post Office opened at Chapel Stores, East Boldre. We supported this community facility through:

- Planning and archaeological input
- A £10,000 Sustainable Communities Fund grant towards sustainable energy infrastructure
- A Local Information Point (LIP).

It’s now established as a community-owned and non-profit business selling local produce and offering a social space in the former historic chapel. This more central hub replaces the former LIP for the area which was located at New Forest Activities.



New Forest Tour

Despite a very rainy summer season, the New Forest Tour buses continued to prove popular, with more than 40,000 journeys made by customers over the 11-week season. Average daily passenger numbers were down just 2% on 2022.

Thanks to the continued support of local businesses and organisations, the Tour promotes the special qualities of this protected landscape and enables car-free days out.

The discounted residents’ scheme, accessed by an app, was extended to include people living in the Wiltshire part of the National Park.



Passengers enjoying views from the open-top Tour

Promoting True Local Produce



The New Forest Marque is a network of producers, farmers and suppliers with the New Forest at the heart of their offering. The New

Forest National Park Authority supports the Marque in championing businesses involved in producing, processing and distributing local produce, therefore supporting the National Park landscape.

Marque members are varied – providing food and drink, hospitality and retail, arts and crafts, plus tree and education services – but they have a shared goal in supporting each other, the local community and the wider New Forest. Food and drink bearing the distinctive blue logo is authentic produce that has been grown, reared, brewed, produced or processed in the New Forest; and the Marque, a not-for-profit organisation, focuses on communicating the importance of buying locally and eating seasonally.

New Forest Marque Chair Dan Parsons said: ‘This has been my fifth year in the role as Chair, and by far the most

successful yet for the Marque. Last year I spoke of mixed fortunes – some recent successes, tempered with a couple of significant headwinds. This year, I can proudly say I see nothing but success. We’ve achieved everything we set out to do.’

Highlights this year include:

- The Marque ran or supported several key events from roadshows to county shows, from exhibitions to regular social and networking opportunities.
- November saw the launch of an exciting new category for local artists and craftspeople. New Forest Marque Inspired is open to people who live in the New Forest, predominantly trade locally, and create authentic and original arts or crafts inspired by the beauty of the New Forest. Generously supported by Arts Council England funding, Inspired allows potters, painters, jewellers, photographers and other creatives who can’t source their base materials in the New Forest to benefit from Marque membership.
- The Marque’s Producer Roadshows at Everton Nurseries continue to go from strength to strength with a hugely

successful weekend in March and another in October, with 17 stalls on each day and almost 2,000 attendees.

- Seasonal local produce boxes were sold via the website and delivered to New Forest residents, with regular deliveries in March, June, September and early December.
- The Marque again sponsored the Food and Drink Award at the New Forest Business Partnership Brilliance in Business Awards.
- As a result of its notable increased activity, Marque membership has grown to more than 170.



Marque member Hollyhock Flock

Building Team New Forest

Our shared Team New Forest is growing ever stronger. We’re working with partners, communities and businesses to leverage the best opportunities for the future of the Forest.



Model of sand lizard at New Forest Show

Sharing nature stories at the New Forest Show

More than 3,000 people visited our stand at the New Forest Show – where they enjoyed an immersive experience including the sights, sounds and even smells of the Forest.

A nature tunnel featured giant models of New Forest wildlife, with information about why the National Park is one of the best places for nature in Europe. The nature experience was rounded off with New Forest sounds and New Forest woodland scents.

We also shared #OurNatureStory – a campaign to bring together people’s stories about spending time in the outdoors – to build a picture of how people connect with nature, and what makes it special to them.

The result was a heart-warming compilation of poems, words, films, pictures, photos and memories, all capturing special moments in nature.

Prof. Gavin Parker, New Forest National Park Authority member, said: ‘It’s well-documented how being in the outdoors has a positive

effect on our physical, mental and emotional well-being. Through stories, rather than through facts and figures, people are likely to be inspired to take action for the environment. Stories are everywhere – they feature in most conversations, and according to research by Stanford University “Stories are remembered up to 22 times more than facts alone”.’



Our Nature Story post



Greenprint conference supports green growth in the Solent

More than 100 business, community, local authority and education leaders from across the South attended the inaugural Greenprint Conference to contribute their support for the region to become a centre for green skills and create a world class environment and economy.

The ground-breaking collaboration across all sectors in July 2023 was hosted by the University of Southampton and explored the challenges and opportunities for developing green skills in the region, with expert speakers, a panel discussion and workshop sessions.

Delegates were welcomed by Vice President of the University of Southampton, Professor Mark Spearing and Councillor Seán Woodward, Leader of Fareham Borough Council and Chair of Partnership for South Hampshire.

The Greenprint and conference are born out of the Green Halo Partnership. Set up in 2016, the Partnership brings together all sectors to focus on valuing nature and its benefits to ensure it flourishes as an integral part of how we live and work.



Welcoming MPs

We hosted MPs on separate visits to view NPA projects in their constituencies, meet partners and discuss current issues affecting the National Park.

Sir Julian Lewis, MP for New Forest East, heard about joint work on campaigns to protect the Forest through the New Forest code, and visited the PEDALL inclusive cycling community hub at Ashurst.

He also learnt about proposed new housing developments in the area, opportunities for well-being in the National Park, and grants for sustainable farming as part of the Government’s Farming in Protected Landscapes programme.

Sir Julian said: ‘The more one learns about the way in which the precious New Forest is managed, the more one appreciates how complex it is and how much we owe to the people who farm it, nurture it, manage it and protect it.

‘I’m extremely grateful to everyone who organised and participated in a profoundly educational experience.’



Sir Julian Lewis MP and Lady Fiona Lewis, with PEDALL Project Manager Shelley Filby

Caroline Nokes, MP for Romsey and Southampton North, heard about recreation management, latest planning developments, and policies around temporary campsites and short-term visitor accommodation.

She visited Lyburn Farm at Landford, and Franchises Lodge RSPB nature reserve, learning about the challenges and opportunities for farmers and landowners to the north of the Forest.

Caroline Nokes said: ‘It’s been great to see what the National Park has been doing to promote nature conservation, sustainable farming and the health benefits of access to nature.

‘There are clearly real challenges around funding, and I will be certainly taking this message to Defra. The New Forest National Park is the most amazing place for nature, and we need to do all we can together for it to thrive.’



Sir Desmond Swayne MP (second right) at Hurst Castle

Sir Desmond Swayne, MP for New Forest West, visited Keyhaven and Hurst Castle to hear more about the challenges facing the coastal environment and communities of the New Forest National Park.

At Hurst Castle Sir Desmond saw the section of a wall on the east wing which collapsed in 2021 after the sea exposed and undercut its foundations, while at Keyhaven he heard more about how the NPA is supporting local farmers and landowners with advice and grants to encourage sustainable farming practices.

It was also a chance to see some local bird life and talk about opportunities to extend important wildlife habitats for coastal species and access around the Lymington Keyhaven nature reserve.

Sir Desmond Swayne said: ‘The New Forest National Park faces a number of complex and wide-ranging issues – such as those I’ve heard about today – but there’s clearly positive local partnership in action to develop future options to manage these. There are opportunities to make a real impact for the benefit of communities by working together to secure the future of the New Forest’s important landscapes, habitats and heritage.’



MP Caroline Nokes watches Andrew Parry Norton and his herd at Franchises Lodge

Our staff

Our values

Our values help shape our culture and reflect our principles, standards and ways of working, they can be summarised as PACT:

Purpose

We are dedicated to our work

Achievement

We innovate, inspire and deliver success

Care

We strive to be sustainable in all we do

Teamwork

We work together with openness, integrity and respect

Staff discovery days

All staff are invited to join our ‘discovery days’ each year – a half day out of the office to discover more about the National Park, learn about what other Authority staff do, and enhance our working relationships.

This year our discovery days included five different sessions for staff to learn more about:

- Bee keeping and the New Forest Marque local produce scheme
- Trees and planning
- Nature recovery
- Trails for all abilities using electric bikes
- Litter picking on the coast.

Mental health and well-being

We continued to provide mental health and well-being support, through a dedicated area on our intranet, providing access to resources and tips for well-being. Our well-being group meets regularly to discuss and implement initiatives and activities to help enhance the well-being of our staff.



NPA staff on a beekeeping Discovery Day

Financial Information

The Authority's core grant from Defra was maintained at £3,252,000 for the 2023-24 financial year.

We have continued to seek cost efficiencies wherever possible and sought ways to increase effectiveness in the work we do. We continue to generate substantial external partnership funding to further services and delivery. On average, over the last five years, every £1 we contribute to joint projects generates a further £18 from partner organisations.

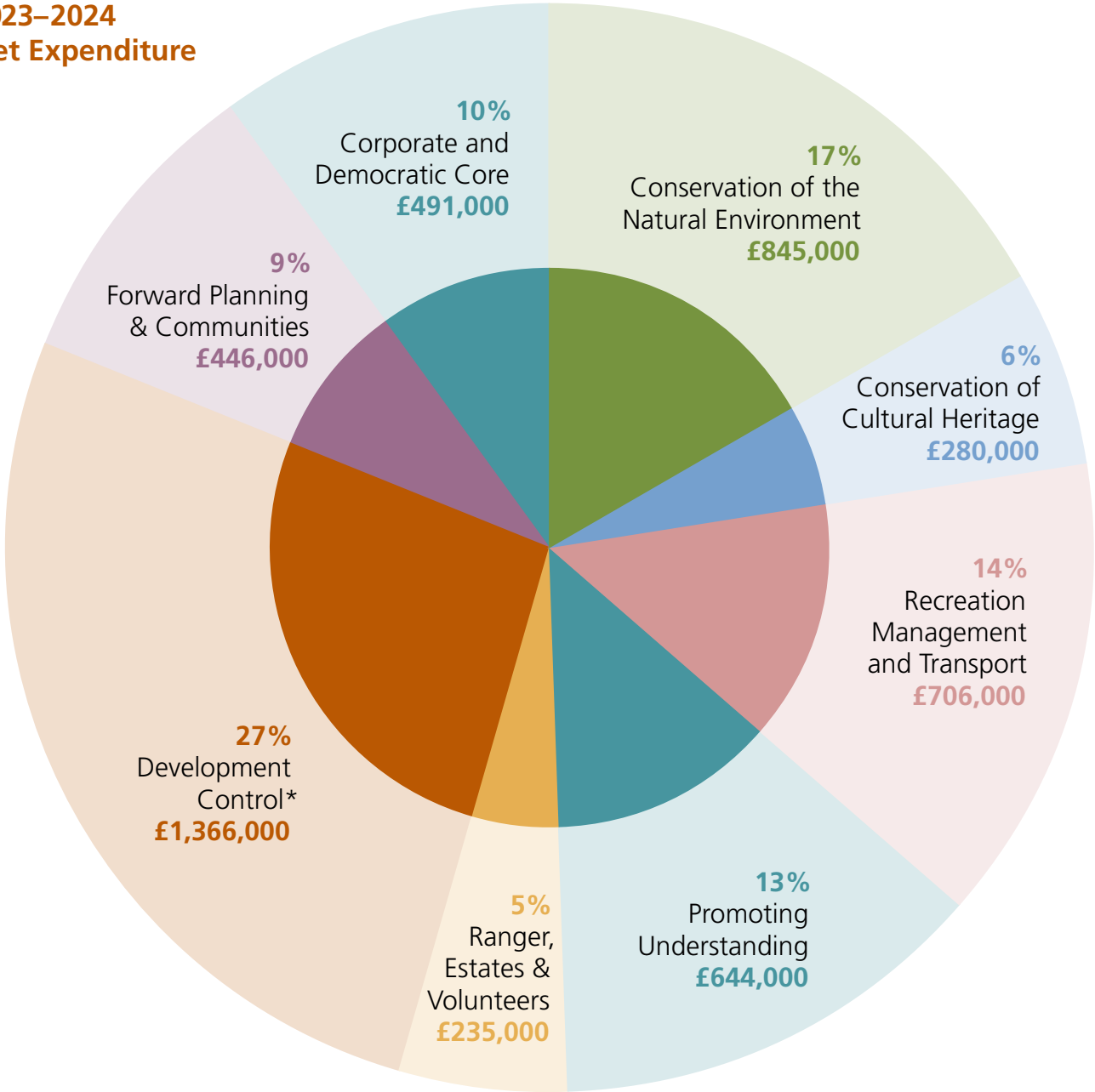
We received around:

- £3,252m** from DEFRA
- £323,000** in statutory fees for planning and related applications
- £257,000** for shared services with other local authorities (rangers, archaeology, comms and administration)
- £132,000** interest on our investments
- £38,000** in other income generated (such as talks, guided walks, New Forest Tour advertising and charging for expert advice)

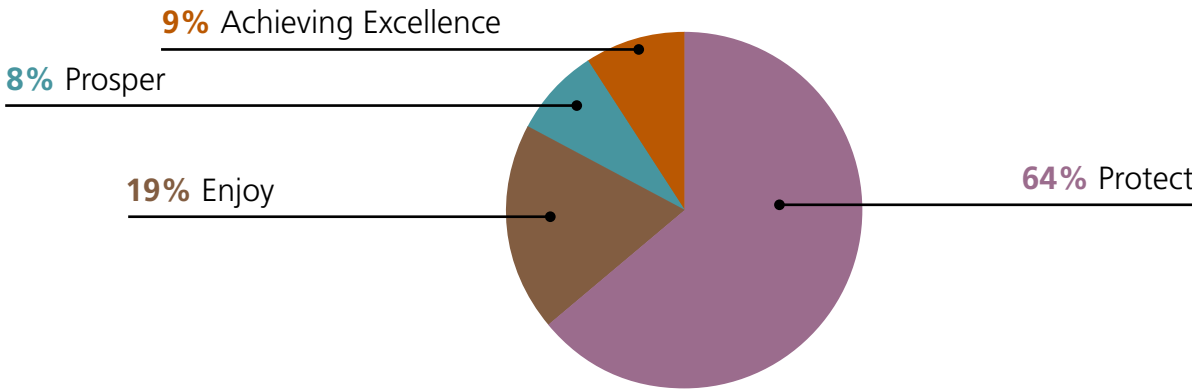
Significant external funding totalling £1.18m was secured for the Forest, including:

- £318,000** Farming in Protected Landscapes
- £189,000** YouCAN
- £134,000** PEDALL Inclusive Cycling Charity
- £128,000** Higher Level Stewardship Scheme
- £99,000** National Grid Landscape Enhancement Initiative
- £55,000** New Forest Land Advice Service
- £32,000** New2Nature Project
- Plus many more smaller projects...

2023–2024 Net Expenditure



2023–2024 Budget



*Also includes enforcement and the tree service

Contact us

We welcome your views and comments about this Annual Review or any other aspect of our performance or services. For regular updates, please sign up to our email newsletter at newforestnpa.gov.uk

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