

20 years

2005
2025



NEW FOREST
NATIONAL PARK

Chief Executive's report

March 2025



Business Plan themes

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



Re:New Climate



Re:New Nature



Re:New People



Re:New Place



Re:New Partnership

Re:New Organisation – Achieving Excellence

20th Anniversary of the New Forest National Park



20th anniversary activities so far include:

- ITVX/Meridian piece showcasing our work with RSPB, CDA, PedALL and volunteers.
- Website blog and timeline
- Hampshire Hedge reaching its half-way milestone
- Volunteer Fair
- Public and staff hedge and tree planting to help create a mini Forest at New Park, Brockenhurst (right).



Protect – First Purpose

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



Local Plan review

‘Call for sites’ consultation and six-week consultation on first stage of the review were held from 4 February to 18 March.

Well-attended quadrant drop-in sessions at Bramshaw, Hyde, Brockenhurst and Lyndhurst.

Presentations to Youth Board, Consultative Panel and Access Forum.



Government Planning Reforms

Proposals for a new approach to how housing and infrastructure development can meet its environmental obligations and contribute to nature recovery.

Our response was that the proposed reforms must:

- maintain the legal protection afforded to designated sites
- take forward the existing strategic mitigation schemes.



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government



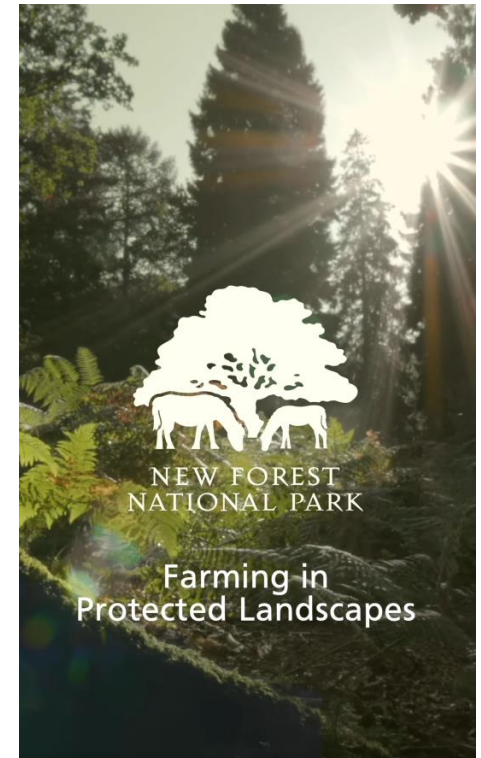
Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

PLANNING REFORM WORKING PAPER
DEVELOPMENT AND NATURE RECOVERY

The Government is committed to getting Britain building again. This paper forms part of a series of working papers on different aspects of planning reform, designed to inform further policy development in collaboration with the wider sector.

Farming in Protected Landscapes

- Farming In Protected Landscapes - extension confirmed for a further year with £225,000 allocated to the New Forest.
- £850,000 in grants already given to farmers, commoners and landowners to benefit nature since the scheme started in 2021.
- Series of case study films launched to promote the benefits of the scheme.



Future farming

HLS AGM – marked achievements: volunteering, school visits, species surveys and wetland restoration plan.

A study on future funding options for commoning called 'PA2' has been commissioned by the Future Farming Group and is due to report in March/April.

Defra officials to visit in May - an opportunity to make the case for a bespoke New Forest grant programme.



Species Survival Fund (SSF)

- £1.3m scheme to restore New Forest habitats and increase wildlife.
- Improving 250 hectares for nature over more than 20 sites – the equivalent of 350 football pitches.
- Six partners (NPA, Freshwater Habitats Trust; Amphibian and Reptile Conservation; Commoners Defence Association; Wildlife Trust, Wild New Forest).
- Meadows have been created, hedgerows planted, fens restored, heathland extended, and invasive species removed from woodland.
- Successful events include at the New Forest Reptile Centre delivered by Amphibian and Reptile Conservation.



Rare raft spider at a SSF site.
Credit Russell Wynn

New Forest Biodiversity Forum Conference

- 2-day conference led by Wild New Forest attended by 100 delegates each day
- Presentations from over 20 speakers including updates on our £1.3m Species Survival Fund project and Net Zero with Nature work

**SPECIES
SURVIVAL
FUND**



Funded by
UK Government

Heritage
Fund



Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS)

- NPA is a supporting authority to Local Nature Recovery Strategies for Wiltshire and Hampshire.
- Wiltshire LNRS consultation is 4 March – 16 April
- Hampshire LNRS consultation is due to launch soon.
- After the consultation and any amendments both strategies will be brought to a future Authority meeting for sign-off.



Woodlark survey

Record numbers of woodlark have been found in the New Forest, up by more than 50% in five years.

The recent woodlark study through the Higher Level Stewardships scheme show just how important it is to

#StayOnTheTracks

during the ground-nesting bird breeding season (February – September).



Enjoy – Second Purpose

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



Education

This financial year has seen:

- School and curriculum visits – over 2,000 young people
- Youth engagement and green careers outreach - 1,647 young people
- University level and teacher and other professional level training – 35
- 3,500 students from rural and urban schools benefited from our travel grants to connect with nature in the National Park



YouCAN youth for climate and nature scheme

Youth volunteering at RSPB Franchises Lodge saw a dozen young people clearing rhododendron (top) and undertaking spawn surveys.

Youth Board members clocked up 250 hours of training and volunteering time since their inaugural meeting in September.

YouCAN youth for climate and nature scheme partners attended University of Southampton's Science and Engineering Day (right).

Young content creators scheme launched.



Volunteering update

Annual Volunteer Fair saw 450 people attend. 30 new applications for NPA volunteering alone. Launched by Sir Julian Lewis MP and Youth Board members Fran Nicholas and Toby Pearce.

Volunteers helped with Freshwater Habitat Trust's projects clearing rhododendron and removing scrub; restoring Copythorne Common Site of Special Scientific Interest for nature; a series of litter picks at Calshot.

First Youth Volunteering Residential hosted at RSPB's Cameron's Cottage.



Awakening Festival

- Over 100 activities, talks and walks throughout March for our Awakening Festival, many sold out.
- Reaches hundreds of thousands of people to learn about how the Forest and its communities can respond to the climate and nature emergencies.

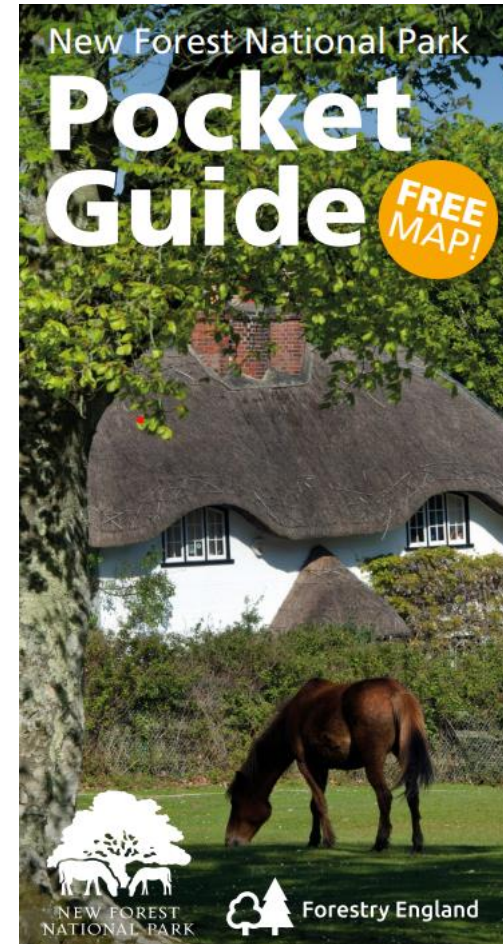
Events included:

- a documentary and panel discussion with Greener Brockenhurst about transforming food production attended by over 100 people.
- Ranger walks with themes
- a litter pick with Freshwater Habitats Trust.



Preparing for the visitor season

- 250k Pocket Guides
- Reprint of New Forest Code signs, posters and flyers.
- Liaising with tourism businesses to notify their guests about PSPOs.
- New coastal birds leaflet being produced in collaboration with Milford Conservation Volunteers
- Responsible dog walking campaign and updated leaflet
- Ground-nesting bird campaign under way
- Stepping up awareness campaign to prevent feeding/petting ponies.



Stephen Tarling legacy

With a generous legacy from former National Park Authority member Stephen Tarling, we are replacing two difficult stiles with new gates on a walking route in Sway Village.



Prosper – Our Duty

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



New Forest Marque updates



Marque events series under way starting with the two-day Everton Nurseries roadshow.

New Forest Marque Inspired collective of artists and craftspeople showing latest Forest-inspired pieces at Forest Arts Centre, New Milton, until 2 April.

The Local Produce Guide is being prepared.



Skills development

Supporting a New Forest Skills Action Plan being developed by New Forest District Council.

First draft highlighted the need and opportunities for training and development programmes that focus on carbon reduction strategies, nature-based solutions and sustainable land management practices.

GreenPrint study into green skills and jobs with University of Southampton running from April to July.



Re:New Place
Thriving Forest



New Forest
DISTRICT COUNCIL

New Forest Skills Action Plan



GREENPRINT

New Forest Land Advice Service

Nearly 100 commoners attended specialist talk on managing cattle on the New Forest.

Another talk on cattle and third event on ponies and pigs to follow.

Organised by Rhys Morgan from the New Forest Land Advice Service.

Funded by the Verderers of the New Forest HLS scheme.



Sustainable travel



Active
Travel
England

Active Travel England National Parks
Capability fund:

- A35 safer crossings study
- Off-road cycle network wayfinding study
- Feasibility study on the route from Lyndhurst to Lymington (Route 120 in the draft LCWIP)

Green Groups sustainable transport
proposal:

- improve bus service provision
- consider an integrated transport network map to help residents and visitors plan their travel car-free.



Affordable housing

Nominations have been received and approved from people with local connections for all of the First Homes at the site of the former Lyndhurst Park Hotel.

Work progressing on development sites at Whartons Lane, Ashurst and Church Lane, Sway which will provide more than 50 further affordable homes for local people in housing need.



Excellence



Resources and Budget Discussions

- Task and Finish Group continued their work
- Indicative Defra Grant – difficult news on revenue, with possibility of capital
- Farming in Protected Landscapes Scheme extension
- Continued uncertainty on future scheme to support commoning
- Work programme 25/26 prepared
- Discussion with partners on how to deliver for New Forest and its communities into the future

Devolution

- Joined discussions about devolution
- Seeking to ensure that the National Park's purposes and duty are reflected in proposals.
- Full discussion in separate paper to this meeting.



Landscape Connections

Supports long-term projects to boost nature recovery and connect more people to our most treasured landscapes.

Around 20 projects will be invested in over 10 years up to £10m to work with local communities, organisations, landowners and farmers to put entire landscapes and habitats into recovery.

Funding is open to those who care for or can partner with National Parks and National Landscapes.

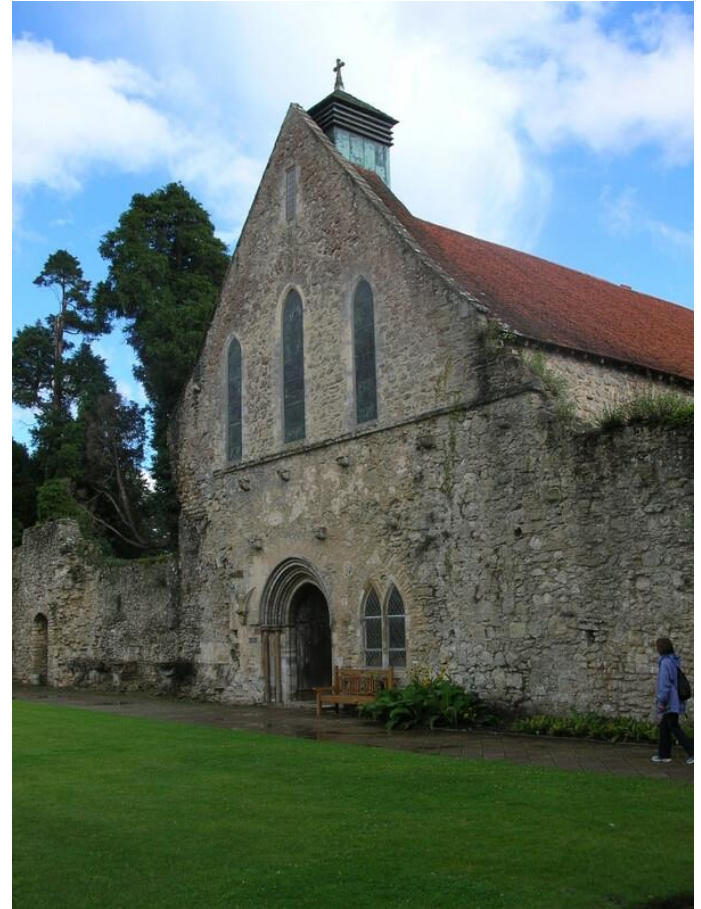
Workshops being held during March and April with a range of partner organisations and staff contributions to help prepare the content for an application.



Photo credit: National Lottery Heritage Fund

Digital planning project

- In conjunction with New Forest District Council.
- Datasets now published on our website:
 - Conservation Areas
 - Listed Buildings
 - Article 4 Directions.
- Tree Protection Orders will be available by end March when funding ends.



Remembering Paul Brockman BEM

- A former social worker.
- Provided woodland management and nature conservation courses to schools, young people, families and adults.
- Transforming woodlands and young people's lives.
- Received British Empire Medal in 2021 for services to woodland management and conservation.
- Pictured right helping at our Family Tree Planting event in 2023.





Paul Brockman

BEM, provider of social Forestry programmes
woodland management tutor, former social worker