

RAPC 557/25

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

RESOURCES, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE MEETING – 3 MARCH 2025

DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2025/26

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

Summary:

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

As one of these delivery organisations, we have derived and extracted our specific actions and outcomes into our internal Authority 'Business Plan'. The full Business Plan, covering the same period up to 2027, was approved by the Authority in July 2023. Each year, we produce a more specific annual Work Programme which will be overseen and its progress monitored by the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee.

1 Development of the draft Work Programme 2025/26

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

- 1.3 Progress on the Work Programme will be monitored internally through the Strategic Leadership Team, Thematic Oversight Group(s) and by the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee.
- 1.4 Members are encouraged to contact officers prior to the meeting to discuss any more detailed queries on the draft or are of course free to raise them alongside more general points at the meeting itself.

Recommendation:

Subject to any amendments agreed at the meeting, recommend the Draft Work Programme 2025/26, as set out in Annex 1, for approval at the Authority Meeting on 27 March 2025.

Papers:

NFNPA/RAPC 557/25 – Cover Paper

NFNPA/RAPC 557/25 Annex 1 – Draft Work Programme 2025/26

Equality and Diversity Implications:

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

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Annex 1

Draft Annual Work Programme 2025/26

Re:New Climate - Net Zero with Nature

Draft Outcomes	Draft Actions / Priorities
A robust and consistent evidence base for climate action to deliver a Net Zero National Park by 2050. (Lead Officer, John Stride)	In development - Actions and priorities to be informed by initial findings of the Climate Change Assessment report (March 2025) and Race to Zero reporting feedback.
Enhanced engagement, with actions, on climate change amongst National Park residents and visitors. (Lead Officer, Hilary Makin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop key messages and communications plan to support direct land-use change as well as community-wide support for what is needed. • Build prospectus of actions that can be taken at an individual level to generate community support for climate related work. • Support the Green Groups Network with advice, funding and joint activities including one main joint sustainable living initiative. • Increase numbers signed up to the nature and climate emergencies pledge by 200.
Green finance opportunities and carbon codes helping to support the special qualities of the National Park. (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work jointly with National Parks Partnerships on providing up to date information on key green finance measures. • Promote the suite of green finance opportunities relevant to land managers within the National Park. (Measurable outcomes in development).
NFNPA involvement demonstrated in nature-based climate solutions implemented to reduce land-based carbon emissions and increase carbon sequestration. (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target Farming in Protected Landscape grants, advice and guidance to encourage progress towards key land-use changes that can support overall emissions reductions such as woodland, peat restoration, agroforestry, hedgerows and carbon-friendly farming practices. • With partners, develop a means of monitoring and promoting progress on land-use change targets.

Draft Outcomes	Draft Actions / Priorities
<p>New development incorporates sustainable construction standards and techniques and delivers a range of environmental benefits. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the implementation of our adopted Local Plan (2019) and the National Park Design Guide SPD (2022), both of which include guidance on sustainability. • Annual Building Design Awards held to recognise and celebrate the best green building projects in the National Park. • Review of National Park Local Plan, to have reached Regulation 18 Part 2 stage, to include the consideration of options to promote energy efficient development (consistent with national policy).
<p>Enhanced walking, cycling and sustainable transport in and around the National Park to reduce carbon emissions, improve experience and help manage recreation. (Lead Officer, Jim Mitchell)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete studies on priority improvements to on road and off-road cycling networks and seek funding to deliver. • Work with the bus operator and drivers to manage and promote the three New Forest Tour routes, maintaining satisfaction ratings of at least 4.5 out of 5 and overall financial viability. • Complete Landscape Enhancement Initiative funded walking route improvements at Copythorne Common (gate replacements), Tatchbury Mount (surfacing and drainage works) and Tom's Down (NPA signposts), and year 1 of Breamore Line project.

Re:New Nature - Nature Recovery

Draft Outcomes	Draft Actions / Priorities
<p>A coherent and joined-up nature recovery network, linking the National Park with neighbouring and regional National Landscapes. (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead the Re:New Nature Partnership in the delivery of the spatial plan for nature and a project portfolio for the New Forest. Including the development of a bid to the NHLF Landscape Connections programme. • Drive progress towards Re:New Nature targets through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Land advice to farmers and land managers ◦ Support for farm clusters ◦ Developing opportunities for private investment in the natural environment of the National Park. • Ensure the National Park's spatial plan for nature is supported by the development of Local Nature Recovery Strategies for Hampshire, Wiltshire and Dorset. <p>Develop bespoke interim targets and actions to maximise the contribution of the New Forest National Park to the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework.</p>
<p>A suite of projects implemented to enhance a minimum of 300ha of National Park habitats. (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage funded delivery programmes (FiPL, SSF, LEI) to enable the restoration and management of a range of National Park habitats. • As co-host of the New Forest Catchment Partnership, direct projects to improve the freshwater landscape with the Freshwater Habitats Trust, reporting annually on progress. • Establish how BNG have maximum impact on habitat creation in the National Park.
<p>Eligible development provides, as an absolute minimum, the mandated level of BNG set out in the Environment Act 2021. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)</p> <p>Nutrient neutrality achieved for all relevant development in the National Park. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)</p> <p>The recreational impacts arising from planned new development are fully mitigated, for both the New Forest and Solent designations. (Lead Officer, David Illsley)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local guidance published for the effective implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) in the National Park. • All planning applications proposing a net increase in dwellings or providing overnight accommodation within the affected Solent and River Avon catchments deliver 'nutrient neutrality' through on-site measures or off-site credits, with off-site credits purchased from schemes local to the National Park. • Working with neighbouring planning authorities and Natural England to adopt a strategic mitigation scheme for new development, focused on 'strategic access management and monitoring measures (SAMM)' within the New Forest's internationally designated sites. • Effectively manage temporary campsites within the National Park through the Article 4 Direction confirmed in January 2024, with future applications assessed against the updated planning guidance. All sites to comply with the requirements of the Habitat Regulations.

Draft Outcomes	Draft Actions / Priorities
Deliver communications campaign with partners so more people understand and engage with New Forest nature. (Lead Officer Hilary Makin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop toolkit about New Forest habitats and species.• Promote the outcomes of the Species Survival Fund project, working with partners.• Signpost opportunities for activities, walks, talks and citizen science projects.

Re:New People - An Inclusive National Park

Draft Outcomes	Draft Actions / Priorities
<p>Work with health providers, communities and businesses to enable people to benefit from improved mental and physical health through engagement with the special qualities of the National Park. (Lead Officer, Jim Mitchell)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver guided inclusive cycling through the PEDALL initiative, offering 4,500 riding slots for people with additional needs/barriers to accessing National Park and engaging five new organisations per year. • Support a wider programme of health and wellbeing initiatives including walking, volunteering and cultural activity for health, signposting through the Green Health Hub.
<p>Deliver engagement activities for different audiences, making the National Park inclusive to all and enabling diverse voices in its future. (Lead Officer, Jim Mitchell)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver our elements of the Youth for Climate and Nature project. • Facilitate the New Forest Youth Board to become an established voice for young people in decision making via six meetings per year and presence at a range of other events and forums. • Deliver two month-long National Park artist in residency programmes with charity SPUD. • Support the Culture in Common programme.
<p>Volunteer action from individuals, communities and businesses to tackle the nature and climate emergency and care for the National Park. (Lead Officer, Jim Mitchell)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver 20+ volunteering days directly to restore habitats and enhance nature, and 20+ volunteer days to improve access to and understanding of the special qualities, involving a minimum of 100 volunteers. • Adults with additional needs are supported to attend at least two volunteer sessions a month. • Run the 2025 volunteer fair (attended by 40+ volunteering organisations and 500+ prospective volunteers) and signpost local opportunities online.
<p>Assist communities and local organisations to shape cultural heritage projects and services that protect heritage, foster identity and enhance sense of place. (Lead Officer, David Illsley)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Listing Project: continue working with local communities to identify locally important assets within the National Park to add to the 'local list'. • Review of the three identified Conservation Area Character Appraisals undertaken, working with the relevant town and parish councils. • Deliver archaeological services via Planning, advice and guidance to further the sustainable management, protection, public understanding, access to, and enjoyment of the cultural heritage of the National Park. • Continue to meet our commitments under the New Forest Higher Level Stewardship Scheme.

Re:New Place - Thriving Forest

Draft Outcomes	Draft Actions / Priorities
Development and delivery of high-quality, bespoke curriculum linked education for schools and colleges. (Lead Officer, Jim Mitchell)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people have improved understanding of the National Park and the climate and nature emergency so that they can take positive action in response. • Teach sessions in and about the National Park, in schools and colleges and through youth activities, providing meaningful connection to nature, meeting curriculum aims where appropriate and addressing social and mental wellbeing needs.
People have more awareness of, and opportunity to develop, green skills and careers. (Lead Officer, Jim Mitchell)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek funding and partnership opportunities to continue to employ two staff in paid entry level roles (apprentices, interns etc). • Support a total of five weeks of high-quality work experience opportunities for 14 years+. • Promote green careers awareness via multiagency presence at local school and college careers fairs (6+ events) and through hosing the Green Careers Network (4 training events, including a two day residential conference) • Work with New Forest District Council on the New Forest Skills Action Plan – outcomes to be identified.
Improved understanding of the New Forest's special qualities by local people and visitors. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver 10,000+ ranger engagements throughout the National Park, through patrols, with mobile information units, at events and in local communities. • Develop clear evaluation and monitoring metrics for the impact of face-to-face (e.g. ranger) interactions.
Provide more affordable housing for local communities and retain the existing stock of affordable and occupancy-restricted housing. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify more opportunities for rural exception sites; liaising with local communities / landowners / Homes England / Hampshire Homes Hub on site finding. • Planning monitoring and enforcement to ensure no net loss of existing stock of affordable and occupancy-restricted dwellings to open market housing.
Economic activity benefitting from, and contributing to, National Park purposes and the Greenprint for South Hampshire. (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and expand the Green Halo Partnership and host the annual Green Halo Conference. • Work with New Forest Produce Ltd to reinforce the value of the New Forest Marque to primary producers, including commoners. • Develop a suite of projects to accompany the Green Links study for the Waterside. • Commission three studies, like the Waterside Green Links one, for other areas of the National Park.

Draft Outcomes	• Draft Actions / Priorities
Supporting sustainable land management and securing the future of Commoning. (Lead Officer Paul Walton)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the Forest Farming Group (FFG) in the co-creation of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) a bespoke environmental scheme that sustains Commoning and the viability of open forest grazing ii) a means of supporting Commoners to maintain viable grazing herds during the transition period to a new scheme. • Evolve the New Forest Land Advice Service into a Park wide land advisors convening function.
Improved management and oversight of land use change in the National Park. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to support partnership work to deter and address encroachments (e.g. through the Encroachment Working Party). • Develop a data base / map of land use change in the National Park.
<p>Reduce recreational impacts on the most vulnerable sites for the benefit of residents, businesses, Commoning and wildlife. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)</p> <p>Deliver joint campaigns to raise awareness of recreational issues, caring for the Forest and enforcement. (Lead Officer, Hilary Makin)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a spatial plan for where recreation should be encouraged across the New Forest and surrounding areas and establish procedures to facilitate desirable changes. • Facilitate action (including online campaigns, signage, printed materials and face-to-face engagement), working directly and through working groups and liaison with organisations. Support enforcement of the two PSPOs covering the Open Forest areas. • New Forest Code and individual campaigns about caring for the Forest demonstrate joint messaging and deliver a marked reduction in recreation management issues.

Re:New Partnership - Team New Forest

Draft Outcomes	Draft Actions / Priorities
Partnership Plan Leaders Panel drives cross-organisational performance, working together on 'big ticket' issues and projects and to ensure alignment of resources. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the new Partnership Plan Leaders' Panel and the officers' group to encourage genuine partnership working and sharing ideas. • Secure shared commitment to achieve the ambitions over the five-year timespan of the Partnership Plan.
Provide mechanisms for feedback, input and activation from a wide range of communities. (Lead Officer, Hilary Makin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a series of regular opportunities for feedback with communities and stakeholders, engaging 6,000+ people/year. • Deliver successful events including New Forest Awakening Festival; Walking Festival; Green Halo Conference. • Launch new and bolster existing communications channels to reduce vulnerability of reliance on social media platforms.
A suite of data and evidence sources is collated to inform the New Forest National Park's contribution to the Protected Landscapes Target and Outcomes Framework. (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions to be inserted on the apportioned targets, once agreed, here (likely July/August). • Support the New Forest Biodiversity Forum to develop a strategic approach to collecting biodiversity data and evidence.
A submission for a 'Dark Sky'-type accreditation status for the National Park is made by 2027. (Lead Officer, Paul Walton)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with local partners and stakeholders to secure commitments to fund, gather and then submit data / evidence to support a 'Dark Sky'-type accreditation status for the National Park.

Re:New Organisation - Achieving Excellence

Draft Outcomes	Draft Actions / Priorities
Achieve 'Organisational Net Zero' by 2030 or earlier. (Lead Officer, Nigel Stone)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update the Authority's Carbon Reduction Plan (originally published in February 2022), through development of agreed base data and specific actions to achieve the overall targeted reductions. • Maintain fit for purpose and sustainable carbon reduction practices in place throughout the organisation and its supply chain.
Newly updated People Plan implementation successfully continued. (Lead Officer, Nigel Stone)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the People Plan 2025-27 Action Plan. • Continued focus throughout this year on equality, diversity and inclusion and leadership of the climate and nature emergency. • Review and update HR policies and procedures, considering new home and flexible working practices and in light of the likely move to new offices in late 2026.
Succession planning further developed, empowering the next generation of managers and leaders from across the organisation. (Lead Officer, Nigel Stone)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully review performance management, and implement any findings, with clear direction / priorities from the Business Plan and feeding into the work of the Strategic Leadership Team. • Review staff resourcing and structures in light of Partnership Plan and Business Plan priorities, staffing changes and any funding announcements. • Staff and Member learning and development opportunities identified and actioned.
New NPA office facilities defined and secured. (Lead Officer, Steve Avery)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to define / refine our requirements, both in terms of office space and additional features within a new 'hub'. • Confirm site(s). • Ensure the location and design supports partnership working, sustainable travel and green skills & jobs. • Secure funding for build / renovation and occupation.
New website and microsites (Green Halo, HLS, Green Health Hub) delivered.(Lead Officer, Hilary Makin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Websites to meet improved accessibility and sustainability standards. • Staff and partners trained on new sites.