



NEW FOREST
NATIONAL PARK

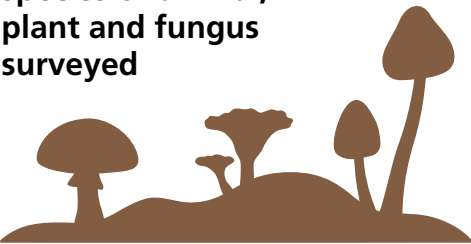


Annual Review 2025–2026

Impact at a glance

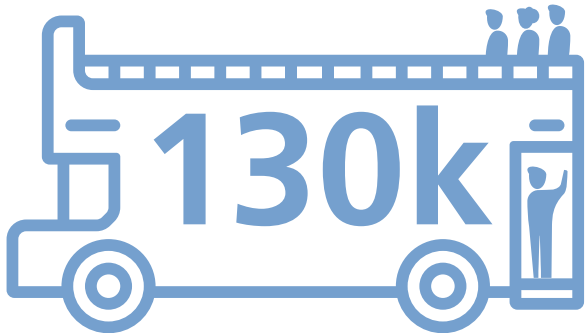
1,100

species of animal, plant and fungus surveyed



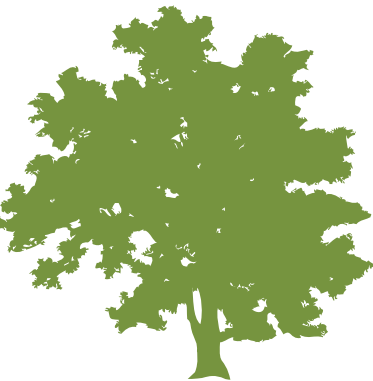
Archaeological advice given at planning and restoration projects

236



car miles saved on the New Forest Tour

130k



605

applications for works to protected trees



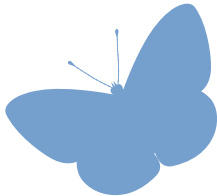
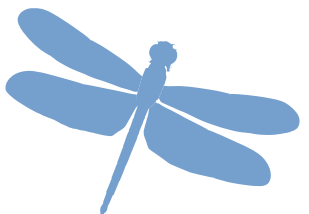
464,000

people engaged in the New Forest Awakening Festival

Land equivalent to

448

football pitches improved for nature through the Species Survival Fund



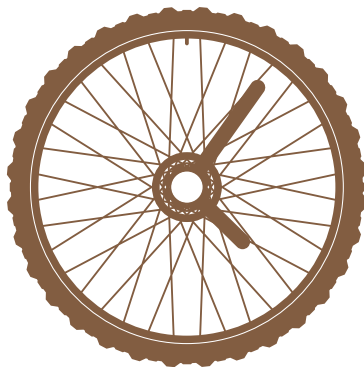
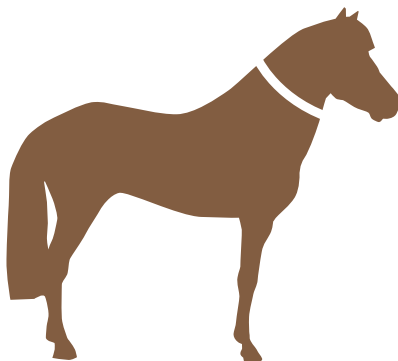
89%

of planning applications approved



700

Commoners supported



7,500

inclusive rides delivered by PEDALL cycling charity

4,500

volunteer hours given to caring for the New Forest



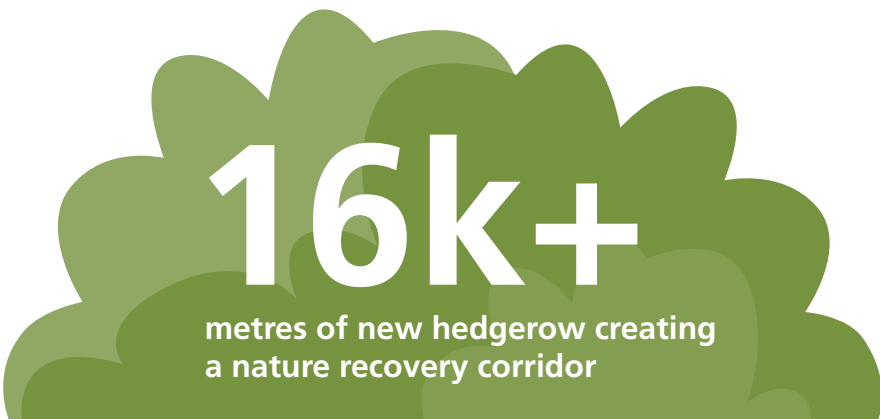
100

affordable homes in development



£25

generated by partner organisations for every £1 we contributed to projects



16k+

metres of new hedgerow creating a nature recovery corridor

£1m

farming grants to improve the natural environment



20,000

young people inspired to take action for climate and nature



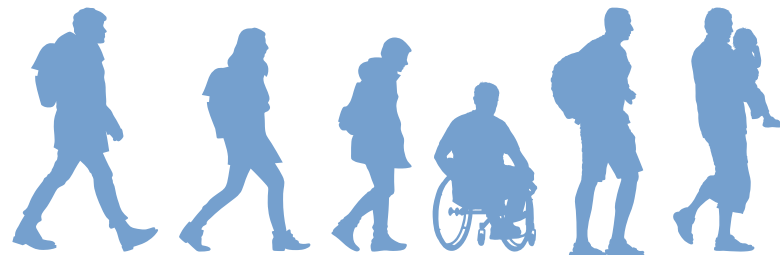
£2.5m

in Sustainable Communities Fund grants since 2006



26,000

walking app downloads





From the Chair and CEO

Over the past year we have reflected on more than 20 years of the National Park with a reaffirmed commitment to securing its future. The challenges facing the Forest – from pressures on biodiversity to the future of commoning, from climate change and water quality to local government reorganisation – require collaboration, long-term thinking and shared purpose.

Our role as a convener remains central, bringing organisations, communities and individuals together to support the Forest and turn challenges into opportunities.

Our National Park purposes and duty – which can be summarised as protect, enjoy, prosper – remain as relevant today as ever. Alongside them sits the strengthened national duty on all public bodies to further the purposes of National Parks. Together, these provide a clear framework for collective action and a reminder that caring for the New Forest is a shared responsibility.

This spirit of partnership can be seen across many areas of our work. Through the Youth for Climate and Nature programme, young people from within and beyond the Forest have helped shape conversations about the future of the landscape, building stronger connections with nature and ensuring new voices are heard. Preparations for the next National Park Partnership Plan continue this approach, bringing communities and partners together to define a shared vision for the years ahead.

This year we also made significant progress with our ‘Landscape Connections’ bid, part of a National Lottery Heritage Fund initiative supporting long-term projects in protected landscapes. We convened partners to explore how we can strengthen ecological, community and cultural connections across and beyond the National Park.

The New Forest is internationally recognised for its habitats and

species and remains one of the most important biodiversity hotspots in the UK and Europe. Protecting and restoring this landscape is both a national and global responsibility. During the year, the Species Survival Fund project came to an end, improving 320 hectares of precious habitats for hundreds of species across 31 sites.

We agreed local contributions to national protected landscape targets for habitat creation, peatland restoration and woodland expansion. These targets will guide future delivery towards Government ambitions for nature recovery, including ‘30by30’ and Biodiversity Net Gain, and will be embedded within the next Partnership Plan in 2027.

At the heart of the Forest’s landscape and ecology is the commoning system, which has shaped the internationally important habitats we see today. Securing the future of commoning remains a top

priority for all partners, and the development of the next scheme to support this unique grazing system will be vital to securing the long-term resilience of the Forest.

Through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, we have continued to support Commoners, farmers and land managers to deliver projects that benefit nature, climate and the local landscape. During the year alone, more than £200,000 was awarded to support 19 projects focused on nature recovery and sustainable land management.

As we look ahead, our commitment to the Forest remains firm and this moment of change is galvanising partners and communities to come together to be an even stronger “Team New Forest”. The New Forest has always depended on people coming together to care for it, from the communities who fought to protect it in the past to those shaping its future today. This includes our dedicated staff,

members, partner organisations and volunteers whose expertise, commitment and passion continue to make a vital contribution to the work of the Authority.

We go into the next year with ambition and determination to ensure the Forest remains a thriving, living and working landscape for generations to come.

Alison Barnes, CEO
Alison Barnes

Victoria Mander, Chair
Victoria Mander



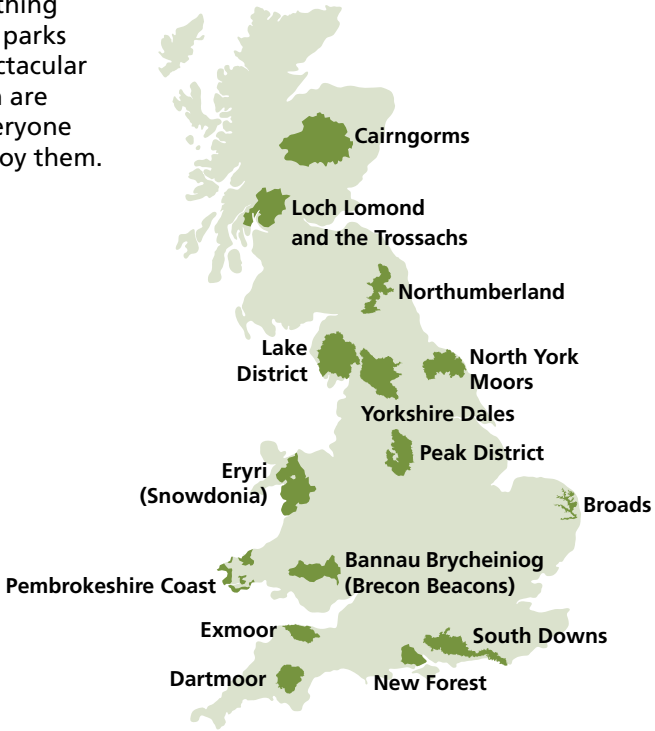
Alison Barnes (left), Victoria Mander (right)

About the New Forest National Park

There are 15 national parks in the UK. Known as Britain’s breathing spaces, national parks are areas of spectacular landscape which are protected so everyone can visit and enjoy them.



The UK’s 15 National Parks



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Our members

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.

Local authority appointees:

- Gordon Bailey
- Richard Clewer
- Zoe Clewer
- Barry Dunning (to Nov 2025)
- David Harrison
- Mel Kendal
- Keith Mans (NPA Deputy Chair)
- Caroline Rackham
- Joe Reilly
- Michael Thierry
- Derek Tipp
- Neville Penman (from Nov 2025)
- Malcolm Wade (from Jan 2025)

Secretary of State appointees:

- David Bence (to Sept 2025)
- Patrick Heneghan (to June 2025)
- Victoria Mander (NPA Chair)
- Ella Mason (from Sept 2025)
- George Meyrick
- Adarsh Parekh (from Sept 2025)
- Prof. Gavin Parker (to June 2025)
- Steve Trow
- James Wylor-Owen (from Sept 2025)

Parish appointees:

- Ann Sevier
- Mary Davies
- Brice Stratford
- John Adams (from Jan 2025)

Our mission

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’s also our duty to seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of the local communities within the National Park.



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 four county, unitary, 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 town and parish councils within the National Park

Many thanks to all members who have served over the last year.

The New Forest was designated a National Park in 2005 to give this outstanding landscape the highest level of protection and to conserve it for the nation to enjoy for generations to come.

Find out about key moments and milestones across 20 years of the New Forest National Park

2005

The New Forest National Park comes into being – the first UK national park to be created in the 21st century and the first for 50 years.

2006

The National Park Authority takes on its full powers and responsibilities, including as the local planning authority for the National Park.

2007

Work begins with the Animal Accidents Reduction Group to reduce road deaths involving Commoners’ animals through awareness campaigns and improved signage.

2008

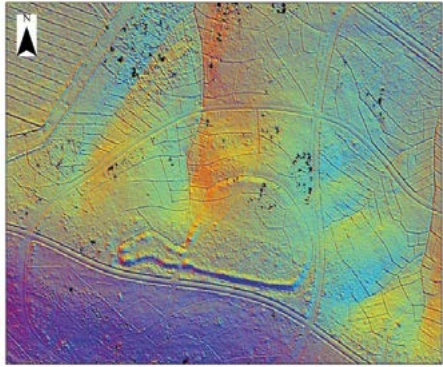
Five new Conservation Areas are designated across the National Park to protect the New Forest’s distinctive landscapes, settlements, and historic built heritage.

2010

The Verderers’ Higher Level Stewardship Scheme is launched supporting habitat restoration, commoning and education projects.

2011

A major LiDAR aerial survey begins, creating a detailed digital map of the landscape and recording around 3,500 heritage features. The first affordable housing scheme approved by the Authority is completed at Pilley.



LiDAR map of iron age hill fort



The Queen’s Jubilee at New Forest Show

2012

Queen Elizabeth II visits the New Forest Show during her Jubilee year and views exhibitions linked to the wartime heritage project. The National Park Design Guide is launched to help preserve the Forest’s special character in future developments.

2013

The £4.4 million ‘Our Past, Our Future’ scheme brings together 10 partner organisations to restore habitats, develop conservation skills, and inspire local communities.

2016

Major cycling and access improvements are completed, including new and resurfaced off-road routes linking communities such as Marchwood, Totton, Lyndhurst, and Ashurst.

2017

Green Halo Partnership is launched, bringing together businesses and organisations to protect the region’s ‘natural capital,’ including wildlife, clean water, and green spaces.

2018

We approach the RSPB to save a huge area of the New Forest for the nation, providing £200,000 towards the purchase of Franchises Lodge woodland, creating stronger wildlife connections between internationally important habitats in and around the Forest.

2019

A new Local Plan for 2016–2036 is adopted after four years of consultation, setting updated planning policies.

2020

The New Forest code is launched to encourage responsible visitor behaviour and protect wildlife.

2021

The Authority expands its local heritage list to nearly 2,400 assets. It’s a register of buildings, structures, sites and other features that are important to the character and history of the National Park but not nationally listed by Historic England.

The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme is launched, providing grants for environmental improvements. The first New Forest Awakening Festival is held – promoting climate action in local communities.

Our 18-month £800,000 Green and Blue Horizons partnership scheme brings together thousands of people to extend nature networks and create wildlife-rich corridors that link National Park habitats to neighbouring towns and cities.

2023

The £1.4 million YouCAN programme is launched to connect young people with nature through ranger schemes, volunteering, green careers, and climate-focused activities.

2024

The New Forest becomes the only UK national park to receive funding from the Species Survival Fund, restoring habitats across 31 sites. A Green Health Hub promoting outdoor wellbeing activities is also launched.

2025

The National Park celebrates its 20th anniversary, recognising the work of partners, communities, and volunteers in protecting the Forest.



Pilley affordable housing

Climate

The climate crisis is the most significant long-term threat to the extraordinary New Forest landscape and the people and wildlife that rely on it.

We’re working with partners and communities to combat the effects of the climate and nature emergencies and keep the New Forest beautiful and sustainable.

Assessing climate change risks and opportunities

Nearly 40% of the New Forest National Park is at very high or high risk of habitat loss or damage due to climate change according to a new report.

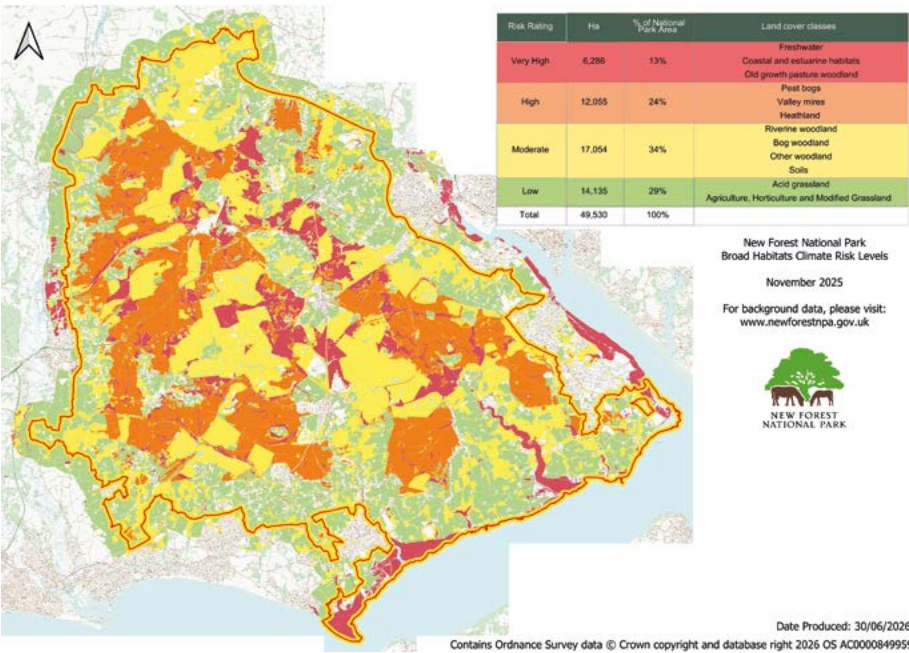
The climate change risks and opportunities assessment for the New Forest National Park improves our understanding of the potential impacts of climate change locally, with a focus on the natural environment and the special qualities that distinguish the New Forest from other parts of lowland England.

This baseline assessment will help to empower landowners, land managers, residents, and visitors to make choices and take action to mitigate the risks of climate change.

The report by scientific and local experts shows:

- freshwater and wetland habitats that are highly sensitive to changes in rainfall and temperature
- coastal habitats face being squeezed out as a result of sea-level rise, with increased sea temperatures also impacting marine wildlife
- unique ancient pasture woodlands featuring a high proportion of drought sensitive beech trees
- heathland habitats that are vulnerable to wildfire.

The report also shows that much can be done, at all scales, to increase the resilience of this unique landscape, its exceptional biodiversity, and cultural heritage for the long term. The study included input and guidance from a range of individuals and organisations, whose support has been greatly appreciated.



The report was commissioned through the NPA's YouCAN youth for climate and nature scheme – made possible by the National Lottery Community Fund.

NPA recognised for climate work

The NPA was recognised for its work in response to climate change and the challenge to reduce emissions.

We achieved an impressive 'B' rating for the second consecutive year of reporting under the United Nations Race to Zero initiative. This global campaign unites organisations, cities, and regions to halve emissions by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050.

The rating recognises us as a 'Climate Manager' – an organisation effectively managing its environmental impact and encouraging measures that will enable the landscape to respond to climate change, such as public engagement, sustainable farming support and planning policies.

In 2024, we joined all 15 UK national parks in signing up to the initiative, committing to take rigorous and immediate action on climate change. Each year, participating organisations submit data and evidence of their progress to an independent verifying body. Performance is assessed on a scale from F (Fail) to A (Climate Leader).

Carbon literacy training

Over 60 environment and community leaders and NPA staff have received accredited training about our changing climate.

The NPA has delivered specialised Carbon Literacy Training through the YouCAN scheme, accredited by The Carbon Literacy Project. Our staff have also received the same training funded through DEFRA.

The bespoke training provides a rounded understanding of the environment and changing climate, and how this impacts the New Forest specifically. This common understanding across partners supports is helping us work together more effectively on climate change.

BMW EV New Forest Charging Point



Boosting EV access across national parks

BMW UK and UK national parks celebrated the success of their three-year 'Recharge in Nature' partnership. Since 2022, BMW UK has invested £1 million in biodiversity and community projects, as well as funding the installation of 135 new EV charging sockets across the 15 national parks, including at Sway in the New Forest.

BMW has worked closely with UK national parks to ensure that these charging points are placed in high traffic areas or areas where infrastructure is lacking.



Supporting Green Groups

Engaging with local communities remains central to our work to address climate change and support nature recovery across the New Forest. We continue to support a growing network of local Green Groups, helping to connect communities, share knowledge and encourage grassroots action.

Together, these groups have delivered a wide range of initiatives, including climate cafés, eco fairs, repair cafés, workshops and film screenings.

We also help secure funding to help Green Groups deliver community-led projects, and this year provided a free social media video training workshop to the groups.

Above: The NPA provided free social media training to Green Groups alongside the Youth Board

Hale village hall



Sustainable Communities Fund supports projects for climate, nature and connection

Over 340 projects have received £2.5 million in grants from our Sustainable Communities Fund (SCF) since 2006.

The grants support work which either:

- Improves opportunities for wildlife and habitats
- Reduces carbon emissions
- Connects people to nature by supporting cultural and natural heritage projects that foster identity and a sense of place.

This year Hale Village Hall was able to install energy-efficient LED lighting and motion sensors to turn them off automatically thanks to a £2,000 SCF grant. The new lighting system in storage rooms and toilets will reduce energy use, lower running costs, and improve the hall's environmental sustainability.

Additional funding has also been secured from New Forest

District Council and other sources to install solar panels, battery storage, and replacement lighting in the main hall.

Hale Village Hall is widely used by Hale Parish Council, local schools, the Hale Local Food market, sports clubs, and a range of community groups.

African Activities received a grant of £10,000 for the second phase of its Nightjar Project in the New Forest (see P22).

During the first phase, the project gathered stories about the rare bird which comes to the New Forest from Africa each year, exploring migration, identity, and transformation. These were shared through a programme of paintings, sculpture, live performance and film presented across multiple sites.

The impact

£2.5 million in Sustainable Communities Fund grants since 2006

Inspiring local action through the Climate and Nature Pledge

Momentum continues to grow behind the New Forest Climate and Nature Challenge pledge, with 1,900 people now signed up. People commit to taking at least four actions which support a healthier environment and more sustainable communities:

- Cutting waste, and reducing, reusing and recycling
- Reducing impacts of travel
- Following the New Forest code
- Saving energy

- Eating seasonally, and with more plants
- Helping wildlife
- Shopping locally



Buying local produce supports a sustainable lifestyle

Supporting sustainable travel



Active travel plan approved

We're working to help more people make local journeys by foot, bike or scooter to boost wellbeing, increase fitness, save money and reduce impact on the environment.

The New Forest Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) was approved this year to improve this 'active travel'.

Developed after a large number of responses to a consultation, the New Forest LCWIP set out priorities for enhancing active travel in the National Park, while ensuring that its special qualities are protected and, where possible, enhanced.

It proposed an extensive network of cycle routes across the area (linked to the Waterside area which has its own LCWIP) together with walking zones for the main residential settlements.

It was prepared in partnership with Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council, the New Forest National Park Authority and Forestry England, and supported by a grant from Active Travel England National Parks Capability Fund.

Above: Cycling in the New Forest

New Forest Tour boosts economy and cuts car use

More than 23,000 journeys were made by people exploring the National Park on the open-top New Forest Tour bus during the 10-week summer season - saving over 130,000 private car miles.

As well as encouraging sustainable transport and promoting the special qualities of the National Park, the New Forest Tour also provides a boost to local businesses, contributing around £389,000 to the local economy while stopping at local villages and attractions.

Discounted tickets for residents continued to prove popular, with a 6% increase in sales during the 2025 season.

The New Forest Tour is supported by us, in partnership with Morebus and Bluestar.

The New Forest Tour



The impact

More than 130,000 car miles saved

National Park Transport Summit



First Transport Summit shapes future of New Forest travel

The first New Forest National Park Transport Summit created a vision and actions for how people move around the National Park in ways that protect and enhance its special, working landscape.

Around 100 people from across local parishes, community groups, businesses, elected representatives and local organisations attended the event in November and were invited to share ideas on what is good about transport to and within the National Park and what they would like to see improved.

The sold-out Summit covered topics including active travel (such as walking, cycling, running), sustainable public transport and the relationship between travel and local businesses and attractions. It also discussed transport emissions, how to make walking and cycling between Lymington and Lyndhurst easier, and speed on New Forest roads.

The Summit was hosted by the NPA in partnership with Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council and Go New Forest. The event was supported by Active Travel England's National Park Capability Fund.

£100,000 grant supports safer and greener travel

As part of a partnership with Active Travel England across all English national parks, we received a grant for £100,000 and completed high-level feasibility studies for A35 safer crossings, off-road cycle network wayfinding plans, and the best cycle route between Brockenhurst and Lymington.

Nature

The New Forest is an ark for biodiversity. Climate change is likely to bring significant challenges in the coming decades, threatening the iconic habitats that make up the New Forest landscape we all love. We must work together with urgency to ensure it thrives into the future.



Pathways to nature recovery

The UK has committed to protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030 to support the global 30by30 target agreed at the UN Biodiversity Summit (COP15) in 2022.

Our UK commitment to this international target is enshrined within the Government's 2023 Environmental Improvement Plan, and national parks have a key role to play in meeting these commitments.

Published by Natural England in 2024 the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF) establishes ambitious targets for national parks and National Landscapes.

It recognises the crucial role these nationally important landscapes play in achieving positive change for nature, climate, people and place.

Meanwhile this year, County Councils and unitary authorities were required to publish Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) to identify locations to create, restore and enhance habitats, providing the best opportunities to deliver nature's recovery. The NPA provided key input into the Hampshire and Wiltshire LNRSs.

The targets, outcomes, LNRS data and understanding about climate change impacts will form the bedrock of the next version of our Partnership Plan which we'll be consulting on in early 2027.

Projects already contributing to these targets in 2025-26 included through the Farming in Protected Landscapes scheme, Higher Level Stewardship scheme and Species Survival Fund project.

Alongside all other Protected Landscapes in England, in July 2025 the NPA set out targets in three areas for the New Forest's contribution to the national PLTOF outcomes:

- Create or restore 4,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat by 2042
- Restore 20 hectares of peatland (deep peat) by 2050
- Increase woodland cover (new woodland) by 550 hectares by 2050.



Top: The centre of the New Forest is renowned for its pristine freshwater habitats © Nick Lucas
Above: Wiltshire and Swindon LNRS

Connecting two national parks: Hampshire Hedge exceeds 15km target

An ambitious three year effort to create a continuous hedge linking the New Forest and South Downs national parks has delivered beyond its original target.

Launched in 2023, the Hampshire Hedge project set out to establish a vital 'nature recovery corridor' connecting woodlands, meadows, nature reserves, and Sites of Special Scientific Interest across the county.

Led by the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) in Hampshire, the initiative brought together community groups, volunteers, and local landowners to restore ageing hedgerows and replace those long lost from the landscape.

Now complete, the project has delivered 16.2km of new hedgerow from Copythorne in the New Forest to Copton on the edge of the South Downs near Winchester, exceeding its 15km target. More than 300 volunteers contributed to the planting effort, helping to create what is now one of Hampshire's most significant grassroots contributions to nature recovery.

The impact

16km of new hedgerow creating a nature recovery corridor

Fresh hope for New Forest species in £1.3m nature project

The impact

land equivalent to 448 football pitches improved for nature



A major nature recovery project has given renewed hope for a whole host of species in the New Forest.

From dragonflies and ladybirds to eels and bats, thousands of wildlife, plants and other species stand to benefit from having their habitats restored and expanded to the edges of the Forest and beyond.

The £1.3million Species Survival Fund (SSF) project was a two-year collaborative scheme aiming to reverse species decline and build resilience among habitats across the National Park amid ongoing threats such as climate change.

Led by the New Forest National Park Authority, the SSF brought together five partner organisations to enhance nature covering 320 hectares – the equivalent of 448 football pitches – on 31 sites.

This ambitious partnership project saw experts restore wetlands, create wildflower meadows and reconnect fragmented landscapes to help pollinators, amphibians, reptiles, freshwater species and more to thrive.

The five partners in the project were Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARC), Freshwater Habitats Trust (FHT), Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust (HIWWT), New Forest Commoners Defence Association (NFCDA) and Wild New Forest (WNF) with additional support from the RSPB and the New Forest Biodiversity Forum.

The project has enhanced conditions for a wide range of species,

including great crested newt, European eel and raft spider, as well as many specialist wetland plants and invertebrates.

Engagement was a crucial element to the project, with partners attending more than 160 events involving nearly 28,000 people, while around 38,000 were reached overall through public events, youth groups and online activity.

As many as 225 new volunteers were recruited, along with more than 200 existing volunteers to take part in activities such as tree planting, wildflower seeding and scrubland clearing.

Project sites will continue to be monitored and restored in the coming years, and the hope is that more wildlife will flourish, local communities will stay involved and the Forest will remain a vital stronghold for nature well into the future.

By improving habitat quality and resilience at scale, the initiative supports England’s national biodiversity targets, such as the ambition to protect 30 per cent of land for nature by 2030.

The Fund was developed by Defra and its Arm’s-Length Bodies and was delivered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund in partnership with Natural England and the Environment Agency.

Above: A new pond created by Freshwater Habitats Trust for the Species Survival Fund project © Matt Roseveare



Top: Sweat bee on dandelion © Steve Laycock
Bottom: 13-spot Ladybird © Russell Wynn



Supporting nature recovery through the planning system



Aerial view of Keyhaven © Kingwell

Improving nature with Biodiversity Net Gain

The Environment Act 2021 introduced a legal requirement for most new developments to deliver at least a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), helping to ensure wildlife and habitats are left in a better condition after development takes place.

The types of development covered by BNG are set by national government. Developers can meet the legal requirement by improving habitats on-site as part of their scheme, by delivering off-site improvements on land they own, or by purchasing off-site biodiversity units to support wider habitat creation and nature recovery projects.

We continue to secure BNG from qualifying developments through our statutory planning functions. We’ve worked with the landowner and New Forest District Council to support the delivery of biodiversity units at the 240 hectare site managed by Kingwell on the edge of the New Forest National Park at Keyhaven. This provides local biodiversity units for developments in the National Park, with other BNG schemes also coming forward.

Nutrient Mitigation Fund

The National Park Authority is a member of the Partnership for

South Hampshire, which has secured over £15 million through the Government’s Nutrient Mitigation Fund to deliver solutions to enable new development to come forward in the Solent catchment. The funding has been used to support small-scale mitigation schemes (such as improved water efficiency measures in dwellings and septic tank upgrades) and also larger scale land acquisition. This includes a site in southern Test Valley, close to the northern boundary of the National Park, that’s due to deliver biodiversity units, nutrient credits and also provide alternative recreational greenspace to help protect the designated habitats of the New Forest.

Habitat Mitigation Scheme

We continue to operate our long-established recreation mitigation scheme, which helps address the recreational impacts arising from new development. Through the scheme, financial contributions are secured from new housing development and other forms of overnight accommodation to support a package of measures that protect the internationally designated habitats of the New Forest.

Supported by Natural England, the package of mitigation measures remains proportionate to the generally limited scale of

development within the National Park.

In 2025-26 developer contributions helped to fund:

- **Extra year-round ranger resource** to increase engagement with visitors, promote responsible recreation and help reduce pressures on sensitive habitats.
- **Communications and messaging** Campaigns delivered through publications, our website and social media channels encouraged responsible behaviour and increased awareness of the importance of protecting the New Forest’s special habitats and wildlife.

This year we have also partnered with Dorset Council, and Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council to deliver mitigation within the National Park as part of the package of measures to address the impacts of new development within the two Dorset authorities. This transferred funding from the Dorset authorities will be used to ‘scale up’ and supplement the measures we are already providing through our Habitat Mitigation Scheme.

Developer contributions

Through our statutory planning functions, we also secure financial contributions from new development to provide and enhance public open spaces, sport and recreation facilities where appropriate. These developer contributions are released to help to deliver high-quality green spaces which benefit new residents and existing communities.

In 2025-26 we agreed to release around £100,000 to Ashurst & Colbury Parish Council to enhance the recreation ground on Wharton’s Lane with an inclusive play area. This was funded by the new housing development located opposite the recreation ground.

Protecting internationally important freshwater habitats

The New Forest’s ponds, streams, and wetlands are among the most pristine and ecologically valuable freshwater habitats in the UK and Europe.

In partnership with Freshwater Habitats Trust, we co host the New Forest Catchment Partnership, which this year continued to deliver coordinated action to protect and enhance the Forest’s nationally important freshwater habitats.

Working with farmers, landowners, community groups, and statutory bodies, among other action this year the Partnership:

- Expanded freshwater habitats through the Species Survival Fund (see P12), creating or restoring 12 ponds and seven fen, stream, and wet woodland sites, and improving over 100 hectares of priority habitat.
- Reduced pollution pressures from agriculture, wastewater and storm overflows, and recreation, camping and equestrian activity. This included funding rainwater tanks for Commoners through the

Farming in Protected Landscapes grants.

- Built community understanding through more than 30 events, speaking to more than 1,300 people.
- Strengthened climate resilience by restoring natural river flow patterns, enhancing rare habitats such as mires and headwaters, and reinforcing the New Forest’s role as an Important Freshwater Area.

Rivers at Risk

In September we welcomed the Campaign for National Parks’ Rivers at Risk report which shines a light on the need to ensure national parks are properly protected by legislation.

It also highlighted water companies’ and regulators’ need to do more to comply with their duty to further the purposes of national parks.



Southern Damselfly © Naomi Addleton

If our national parks are to retain their iconic status, reach their potential as havens for wildlife and support our nation’s health and wellbeing, then action is needed to ensure the highest water quality standards can be achieved.

The report underlines what our research and practical work has shown: we need to prioritise protecting the highest quality places for freshwater. It also highlights the urgency and relevance of the Catchment Partnership’s work to investigate and call for the benefits of upgrading small sewage treatment plants, which typically serve our national parks.

Grants to boost farming with nature

Grants of over £1 million have supported local projects to enhance the natural environment, conserve cultural heritage, improve public access, and strengthen the long-term resilience and sustainability of local farms over the past five years.

The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme launched nationally in 2021 as an initial three-year scheme to support those living and working within protected landscapes.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) confirmed a further three-year extension to the FiPL programme, continuing support for farmers, Commoners and landowners delivering nature recovery and

sustainable land management across the New Forest.

The extension will provide an estimated additional £675,000 for projects in the New Forest between 2026 and 2029.

Since the programme began, 121 applications have been considered, and 83 projects completed to date. Funded initiatives have helped protect some of the New Forest’s most valuable habitats, including mires, bogs, ponds, rivers and streams, which are central to the area’s National Park designation.

Through the FiPL programme, funding has supported a range of initiatives, including water storage tanks, native hedgerow planting, stock-proof fencing, and machinery to promote sustainable farming practices.

During the 2025-26 year, FiPL awarded £200,463 across 19 projects, benefiting 162 farmers, Commoners and land managers.



Farmer Crispin Sampson received a grant this year for cattle fencing

The impact

£1 million funds to improve nature

New Forest Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) Scheme



The Verderers of the New Forest Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) Scheme is one of the largest environmental improvement schemes in England.

It helps to restore and protect the internationally-important habitats of the New Forest while supporting the ancient practice of commoning, archaeology and heritage conservation, plus education work.

The scheme is managed by the Verderers in partnership with Forestry England and the New Forest National Park Authority, with support from the New Forest Commoners’ Defence Association and Natural England.

It is now in its 16th year, having been launched in 2010.

HLS is funding the restoration of ancient and ornamental oak and beech woodlands by removing conifer trees and other non-native plants while non-native rhododendron has been removed from sites including Hawkhill, Acres Down and Turf Hill.

Species-rich grasslands, like at Anderwood Lawn and Balmer Lawn, which were encroached by scrub and invasive species have now been restored.

New Forest verges – a designated feature of the New Forest’s Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) – have been restored to protect these areas from vehicle damage.

A key part of the scheme is its support for commoning and New Forest Commoners.

Financial support through the Verderers’ Grazing Scheme helps Commoners continue this essential practice and sustain the cultural heritage of the Forest, while reflective collars for ponies are supplied to Commoners to reduce the number of animal accidents by making them more visible in the dark.

Since it began, the scheme has brought more than £25 million of environmental investment into the New Forest and has been extended through to 2028.

Work is now underway through the Forest Farming Group to develop future land management funding that will continue to support nature recovery, commoning and the long-term protection of the New Forest landscape beyond the current HLS agreement.

Sam Loades, Julie Prior and Rhys Morgan of the New Forest Land Advice Service



Promoting sustainable land management

We continue to help farmers and land managers across the New Forest and Avon Valley restore nature, access funding and build resilient businesses through the New Forest Land Advice Service (NFLAS), delivered in partnership with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.

Our expert advisors provide independent guidance, tailored support and management plans covering grasslands, heathlands, woodlands, watercourses, ponds and other environments. The work helps increase biodiversity, improve habitat condition and promote sustainable land management across farms and estates.

This year, NFLAS helped deliver 19 sustainable farming and nature projects by securing Farming in Protected Landscapes funding (see P14) and supporting applicants throughout the process. The result is healthier habitats, reduced environmental impacts and stronger, more sustainable rural businesses.

Above: Ponies in the light. © Amanda Norfolk @ Acornsandscapes

People

We play an important role in supporting wellbeing, learning, and connection through access to nature, heritage, and culture. Inspiring future generations to understand, value, and care for this special landscape is essential to its long-term future.

We’re committed to making the National Park more welcoming, accessible, and inclusive for everyone. By reducing barriers and creating opportunities for people from all backgrounds to connect with the New Forest, we can help more communities experience the benefits of nature and build lasting connections with the landscape.

Youth for Climate and Nature (YouCAN) scheme

More than 34,000 people have joined in climate and nature projects or events thanks to the Youth for Climate and Nature (YouCAN) scheme.

Of these, 20,000 were young people aged 11 to 30 who have been empowered to understand and lead climate action within their communities, had their voices heard on the biggest stages and grasped opportunities to develop green skills and careers.

The £1.4 million scheme led by the NPA with six partners stretching from Bournemouth to Southampton began in October 2023 and ends in August 2026.

Social media posts including #YouCAN gained more than 1,344,000 impressions and 41,000 engagements on NPA channels.

Bringing the Outside In

Nearly 2,000 people saw performances of ‘Bringing the Outside In’, a groundbreaking youth-led theatre show about climate change. The play debuted at Mast Mayflower Southampton in summer 2025 and toured Hampshire in early 2026.

Drawing on New Forest folklore and the nearby urban landscapes of Southampton, Bringing the Outside In explores issues of air pollution and climate anxiety.

The production by Southampton community arts organisation Theatre for Life was shaped by young people throughout. Around 150 young people were involved in developing the play and five creatives aged 18 to 25 took part in the production, including actors, the lighting designer, and stage manager.

Supporting young creatives

Our New Forest Young Content Creators scheme is helping to break down barriers for young people in and around the National Park to talk about climate and nature.

Young creatives aged 16-30 applied for funds of up to £150 each to support them in producing digital, climate and nature-focused content on topics that they are passionate about.

20 New Forest Young Content Creators have successfully applied for the scheme. So far, the content they

made has reached over 73,000 social media impressions and had more than 3,000 engagements.

New Forest Young Content Creator Omkar Dherange said: ‘For international postgraduates and early-career creatives like me, schemes like this can be genuinely career-shaping. They help build confidence, professional portfolios, and credibility while encouraging responsible, values-led content creation.’



Bringing the Outside In. Above: Young Content Creator Omkar Dherange



African Activities at the New Forest Thrive festival



Interspecies democracy council meeting



NPA staff and partners at the New Forest Thrive festival.



Bringing communities together with nature themed festivals

Hundreds of people were brought together across Southampton and Ringwood through Urban Wild and New Forest Thrive festivals, made possible by the YouCAN scheme.

Dozens of organisations and community groups took part in Southampton’s first city-wide nature-focused Urban Wild festival, led by Southampton National Park City with support from the New Forest National Park Authority.

The week-long festival encouraged families and people of all ages to connect with nature on their doorsteps, through creative, intergenerational, and sustainably themed attractions.

The festival was made up of 36 individually organised events with nearly 60 organisations and performers taking part on the final day – Urban Wild on the Common.

Around 800 people attended this family-friendly event on Southampton Common with hundreds more visiting events throughout May half term, helping them learn more about green spaces and enjoy things happening in their community.

The calendar of events included an ‘Interspecies Democracy’ council meeting and a Grow Your Own event at Aldermoor Community Farm.

The theatrical Interspecies Democracy meeting in Southampton City Council’s chamber gave a ‘voice’ to plants and animals represented by people, while inspiring everyone to think differently about how humans relate to other species.

More than 500 people attended the first New Forest Thrive festival in Ringwood to celebrate people, wildlife, and the future.

New Forest Thrive took place at Carvers Recreation Ground in July, led by the New Forest National Park Authority (NPA) in partnership with Ringwood Town Council.

New Forest Youth Board members attended to speak to people of all ages and lead a mobile ‘video booth’ to capture experiences across the event’s four zones – Creative, Discovery, Chill Out, and Sustainable Transport.

Both Urban Wild and New Forest Thrive will return in spring and summer 2026.

Above: Urban Wild festival

YouCAN was made possible thanks to National Lottery Players, through which £1.2 million was secured from a 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.

The projects within the scheme span 300 square miles across the New Forest, Southampton and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, and are led by the New Forest National Park Authority in partnership with 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.



Connecting young people to nature



More than 3,000 young people connected with nature in the National Park through school and curriculum visits and a further 1,400 young people through youth engagement and green careers outreach.

Our education and youth team facilitated training for 45 people at university, teacher and other professional levels as well as providing 63 days of work experience to 15 young people.

A teacher at Durweston Primary School said: ‘On the day the children gained so much knowledge which reinforced their classroom learning. The NPA staff’s knowledge, passion and enthusiasm was valued.’

Travel grants

Our travel grants enabled the equivalent of 2,000 days of learning outside the classroom to local schools eager to enrich their school curriculum and connect pupils with their local national park.

With transport costs often a barrier to getting young people into nature, schools were pleased to receive an uplift in this grant from £150 to £200 towards coach travel. This reduced the costs of coach travel passed onto parents by an average of £4.32. The fund was over-subscribed this year.

Above: Junior rangers learn about safer driving in the New Forest in partnership with Hampshire Police

Education and youth team recognised

Our education and youth team was named as a finalist in the School Travel Awards in November 2025.

They were nominated in the Education/Learning Team of the Year category, recognising outstanding commitment to enriching young people’s learning experiences through innovative, curriculum-linked programmes that inspire and engage students across diverse subjects and age groups.

Junior Rangers

Young people were supported to connect with nature outside of education settings through the Youth for Climate and Nature (YouCAN) scheme funded through the National Lottery Community Fund (see P16/17).

Since the start of the YouCAN scheme in September 2023, around 50 Junior Rangers aged 11 to 18 registered and took part in 32 sessions, including practical conservation tasks, hedge planting, bench building, and learning about coastal and freshwater habitats, as well as reducing animal accidents on roads. 12 Junior Rangers achieved their silver award and are working towards achieving the first gold awards in summer 2026.

A junior ranger, working towards her gold award said: ‘Talking about

nature while being in nature is much better than being stuck in a classroom or schoolyard.’

A further 138 young people took part across 15 bespoke junior ranger programmes – a scheme for organised groups, including young carers, young people outside of fulltime mainstream education, or home educated.

New Forest Youth Board

The team continues to support the New Forest Youth Board to attend events, meetings, and consultations promoting young people’s views. The Board has since given over 1,000 voluntary hours and continue to play a key role in shaping and influencing the care and future planning of the National Park with young people at its heart. One member also successfully applied for our YouCAN internship role working within our education and youth team.

Youth volunteering

Nearly 450 hours of practical volunteering has been undertaken by 18 to 30 year olds thanks to opportunities designed to fit around work and education.

The education and youth team has also coordinated the New Forest Green Careers Network which has 83 members who work, volunteer or study in the environment sector, and provided workshops and training sessions.



School visit to Bolderwood

Volunteering: Vital action for New Forest nature and people

Our dedicated volunteers play a vital role in supporting the important work we do across the New Forest.

175 people volunteered with the NPA this year protecting and enhancing the New Forest for wildlife and people, giving their time across 952 volunteer days totalling 4,491 volunteer hours.

Tasks included clearing invasive species and restoring heathland; access work improving paths; supporting rangers at events and taking part in archaeological work.

Working closely with organisations including Forestry England; Hampshire County Council; Freshwater Habitats Trust; the RSPB and many more, volunteers help us look after special habitats, landscapes and heritage sites while developing green skills, supporting communities, and boosting health and wellbeing.

More than 70 volunteer placements for adults with additional needs accessing nature took place thanks to an ongoing partnership with Flourish in Nature CIC.

Ambassadors

New Forest Ambassadors provided 39 days of volunteer support for NPA ranger and education teams, joining guided walks, patrols, school visits and events like the Volunteer Fair and New Forest Thrive festival.

Volunteer Fair offers roles for all

2026 began with one of the National Park’s busiest Volunteer Fairs welcoming nearly 750 would-be volunteers and 54 exhibitors and stallholders.

Organisations at the Fair included the Countryside Education Trust, Culture in Common, and Litter Pickers of the New Forest with opportunities to suit all, from active tasks to low-activity and home-based roles.

The impact

4,500 volunteer hours given to caring for the New Forest



Volunteers at the former Breamore Railway Line

The Volunteer Fair was opened by PEDALL – New Forest Inclusive Cycling manager Shelley Filby, alongside New Forest National Park Authority CEO Alison Barnes and New Forest East MP Sir Julian Lewis with New Forest Youth Board members present on the NPA stand.

Building volunteer connections

The New Forest Volunteer Collective event launched following feedback at various Volunteer Fairs bringing together dozens of organisations using volunteers across the National Park and surrounding area.

In partnership with Community First, the event celebrated successes, shared knowledge, and built connections through workshops and talks, creating a sense of community in the voluntary sector and an opportunity to network.

Uncovering hidden heritage

30 people volunteered their time across 50 volunteer days bringing improvements to the former Breamore Railway Line through clearance tasks unearthing 11 culverts, improving path access, and training in wildlife surveying.



Heather seeding to create a wildflower meadow for the Species Survival Fund project © Matt Roseveare



New Routes to Nature –

the initiative supporting volunteering in the New Forest – has been made possible with The National Lottery Heritage Fund, thanks to National Lottery players.



Successful New Forest Walking Festival

More than 350 people joined expert-led guided walks for the 13th annual New Forest Walking Festival, celebrating the National Park in its 20th anniversary year.

The 2025 Festival took place between 18 October and 2 November showcasing the New Forest's stunning autumn landscapes, colours, and wildlife, and highlighting the wellbeing benefits of nature connection and activities.

Dozens of organisations hosted events with around a third of the fortnight's 47 walks sold out or having registrations closed, with numerous others close to being full.

Highlights of the 2025 Walking Festival included a heritage walk on the former Breamore Railway Line with the project leaders working on improvements, a series of ranger-led walks, a Young Commoner-led session,

and multiple fungi identification events.

Accessible and family-friendly sessions with Halloween, folklore, and woodland themes also proved popular.



Left: New Forest Walking Festival 2025 Middle: Fly agaric © Adobe Stock Right: NPA ranger Jim leads a walk

Improving access and rights of way

- The New Forest Walking App was downloaded almost 26,000 times this year, helping more people enjoy the outdoors while supporting their physical and mental wellbeing. The app promotes carefully selected walking routes that encourage responsible access and help protect the surrounding environment.
- Sections of the King Charles III England Coast Path in the New Forest have been determined, with work to establish these planned.
- A Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) project restoring heritage features, improving nature, and enhancing public access at the former Breamore Railway Line is entering its second year with all scoping now completed and future works to include beginning path and tree safety work.

Access for All fund

Accessibility improvements have been made across the National Park thanks to DEFRA's Access for All

fund, as part of the NPA's ongoing commitment to ensuring the National Park is accessible to all.

These include:

- Funding upgrades to the Blackwater Arboretum Accessible Walk. This funding was targeted on arboretum fencing, waymarking and surfacing works which will protect the trees and improve the trails to enable this highly popular and accessible trail to keep welcoming visitors.
- Access improvements along the Lepe Loop which include replacing a 12m boardwalk, a 3m wooden bridge and a 4m ditch crossing. Muddy sections totalling 200m in length will be resurfaced with clean stone enabling better access along this path during the autumn and winter.
- The entrance and garden paths at SPUDworks were upgraded and the outdoor space refurbished as part of accessibility improvements.



King Charles III England Coast Path

PEDALL inclusive cycling

Our partner charity PEDALL New Forest Inclusive Cycling delivered more than 7,500 inclusive rides – up 26% – during the year, enabling people of all abilities to experience the National Park through a fleet of specialist cycles, boosting health and wellbeing through exercise and a fun, sociable environment.

The project has involved 49 organisations and supported partners at events, including the New Forest Thrive festival in Ringwood.

Riders at Pass the PEDALL 2025



The second 'Pass the PEDALL' fundraising and awareness event successfully raised £10,000 for the project thanks to regular riders, volunteers, businesses, and the community more than doubled a collective target of pedalling 1,407km in 12 hours.

A series of five case studies have captured the impact PEDALL has for families, support networks, couples, and volunteers capturing rider's voices and the sense of pride,

companionship, and opportunity the project provides.

One parent said: 'I'm her mum and her carer, but with PEDALL, we can be buddies.'

pedall.org.uk



The impact

7,500 inclusive rides delivered

PEDALL inclusive cycling



Supporting wellbeing

National Park NHS Wellbeing Fellows, Laura Pridmore and Jennifer Wyllie presented at the Royal College of Psychiatrists International Congress in Wales, connecting with NPA colleagues at Bannau Brycheiniog National Park. Their presentations built on findings from focus groups, volunteer sessions, and a Health and Heritage group piloted by the pair in Lyndhurst.

Registered Public Health Practitioner and Public Health Development Manager for NHS England Phil Godfrey joined us on placement, leading work to refresh the Green Health Hub website and network of social prescribing opportunities.

greenhealth.org.uk

Connect and Learn

The Green Health Hub's first Connect and Learn event brought more than 30 health professionals and activity groups together supporting health and wellbeing across the New Forest.

The event offered networking opportunities, workshopped ways to embed best practices in green social prescribing pathways and guided the refresh of the new Green Health Hub website.



The Green Health Hub



NHS fellows Laura Pridmore (left) and Jennifer Wyllie (right)



Phil Godfrey at the Green Health Hub Connect and Learn event

Connecting people to the Forest through the Arts

Welcoming diverse artists

Since 2021 we've worked in partnership with SPUD, an inclusive arts charity based in Sway, to deliver the New Forest National Park Artist in Residence Programme, supported by National Lottery funding through Arts Council England.

Each month-long residency allows artists to immerse themselves in the landscape and develop new work, which is later exhibited in the SPUD gallery.

Sound artist duo Em Burrows and Jeremy Segal presented their installation 'New Forest Collage Radio'. The immersive work explored place, inclusivity and connection through sounds recorded across the New Forest.

Artist Isabella Martin explored time in both the natural world and in local communities through her exhibition 'Time in Common'.

British artists Boredomresearch combined science, animation and technology in their residency. They explored the impact of tree loss, gathering perspectives from residents, NPA rangers and conservationists.

Writer In Residence

Our first Writer in Residence, Yarrow Townsend, worked with young people through creative writing sessions and environmental activities including coppicing and charcoal making. She also contributed to events across the Forest, including the Urban Wild festival in Southampton and ArtfulScribe's Women In Science event.

The Writer in Residence programme was led by the NFNPA, in partnership with ArtfulScribe and the Countryside Education Trust, and funded by the NPA's Sustainable Communities Fund.

The Nightjar project

The Nightjar Project explores themes of movement, identity, homeland and land stewardship through the migration of the nightjar bird between West Africa and the New Forest. Led by local organisations African Activities, SPUD, Folio and the NPA, the project combines art, storytelling, sound and environmental practice to connect communities across both regions.

It began in spring 2025, and is planned to run for at least two years. Ghanaian born artist, musician and community leader Kwame Bakoji-Hume led storytelling and drumming workshops with local communities, culminating in an exhibition at the SPUD gallery in April 2025.

The exhibition featured a large sculptural nightjar that has since toured locations across the region.



Kwame and The Nightjar Project

The Nightjar Project continues to spread its wings through events, and the development of a dedicated Youth Board, helping to inspire new connections.



Culture in Common

The NPA supports arts programme Culture in Common as a consortium member and by providing partner funding.

This year, Culture in Common delivered 126 events, reaching more than 26,000 people. Funding supported work with schools, young people, community groups and underrepresented residents, using arts and culture to strengthen connections with nature, heritage and place.

Highlights included It Takes

A Forest, created with Young Commoners, celebrating the people who support Commoning through drone photography by Sam Stewart. River of Hope, delivered with Activate Dorset, explored young people's views on the environment and climate change. Creative Clubs included hedge laying, photography and traditional forest crafts with the Gypsy Romany and Traveller community. Projects with local communities also included litter picks and repair cafés with Greener Brockenhurst.

cultureincommon.co.uk

Above: Culture in Common – It Takes A Forest © Sam Stewart

Place

We're working to ensure the New Forest continues to thrive as a living and working landscape. By protecting its natural beauty and cultural heritage, supporting sustainable communities and businesses, enabling responsible tourism, championing local produce and expanding affordable housing opportunities, we're helping to secure a resilient future for the National Park.

Protecting the national park through our planning service

As the sole planning authority for the National Park area, we play a central role in safeguarding and enhancing the special qualities of the National Park, helping to ensure the New Forest continues to thrive as a living, working landscape.

Our planning policies help conserve the area's unique character – from its villages and historic settlements to its landscapes and habitats – while also responding to the needs of the 34,500 people and more than 2,000 businesses based within the National Park.

Each year we determine around 500 full planning applications, alongside a wide range of pre-application enquiries and other routes to planning consent. In 2025-26, 89% of planning applications were approved. This high approval rate reflects the positive and collaborative approach taken with applicants and agents, with many issues addressed early through pre-application advice or resolved through discussion during the application process to help secure high-quality outcomes.

We responded to a Government consultation on proposed reforms to national planning policy set out in the revised draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The draft revised Framework – which is due to come into effect in 2026 – reaffirms that England's 10 National Parks benefit from the highest level of protection for landscape and scenic beauty. It also recognises that our 10 National Parks are living-working areas, emphasising that small-scale development should meet local needs and be carefully managed.



Within the New Forest National Park, this means new housing development continues to focus on small-scale schemes that meet identified local needs, including the delivery of new affordable housing tied to people with a local connection to the New Forest.

Through the process of Local Government Reorganisation in Hampshire we're committed to working closely with the new unitary authorities when they take on their full powers in 2028, as well as the new Mayoral Authority for Hampshire.

While the local government structures are due to change in Hampshire, the boundary of the New Forest National Park is unaffected and we will continue as the sole planning authority for the New Forest National Park, with our planning responsibilities and core functions unaffected by reorganisation.

Major planning applications proposals in the 2025-26 year included:

- **Ashurst Hospital redevelopment** – a significant mixed-use redevelopment proposal on the former hospital site,

The impact

89% of planning applications were approved

including care home housing, extended healthcare facilities and associated infrastructure.

- **Brockenhurst Park** – a proposal for a new dwelling within the historic parkland setting that required the highest standard of design and a landscape-led approach.
- **A326 proposal** – a major package of transport improvements planned for the A326 corridor on the edge (and partly within) the National Park. We will be responsible for determining the elements of the planning application that fall within the National Park, with Hampshire County Council determining the elements that lie outside the National Park boundary.
- **Paultons Park Lodges:** In January 2026 we issued an Environmental Impact Assessment 'scoping opinion' on the emerging proposals for 122 units of holiday accommodation and associated facilities at Paultons Park. Our response highlighted the topics that should be included in an Environmental Statement to support any future planning application submitted to the Authority.

Above: Buildings on the site of the former Lyndhurst Park Hotel © Arc Architecture

Reviewing our Local Plan

The Local Plan is a key planning document which sets out how development within the New Forest National Park will be managed over the coming years. It guides planning decisions on where homes, employment space and community facilities may be located, while ensuring that the New Forest’s unique landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage are protected and enhanced. The Local Plan plays a vital role in balancing the identified needs of people who live and work here with the special qualities that make the New Forest such a distinctive place.

It includes a set of local planning policies for the National Park area based on evidence, national guidelines and input from those who live and work in the area, as well as statutory bodies such as Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency. These policies are the primary consideration against which planning applications submitted within the boundary of the New Forest National Park are assessed against.

In November-December 2025 we asked statutory consultees, residents, organisations, local stakeholder groups and businesses to share their views on the second stage of

the review of these local planning policies (following an initial public consultation in February 2025). The six-week consultation included six public drop-in sessions (in-person and online) which were attended by 1,000 people. We outlined draft planning policies on key issues such as meeting local housing needs, climate change, nature recovery, transport and supporting thriving local communities. More than 600 people responded to this stage of the consultation.

The next phase of the consultation will take place in late summer 2026, building on feedback received from this year’s consultation. The revised Local Plan is then due to be submitted to the Government for independent examination in late 2026, with the examination by a Government-appointed Planning Inspector itself taking place in 2027.

This year we also responded to the New Forest District Council’s Local Plan consultation, which covers much of the land surrounding the National Park along the Avon Valley, the Waterside and the southern coastal communities around New Milton and Lymington. The National Park Authority is a consultee on the District Council’s Local Plan Review.

Affordable homes for community wellbeing

Providing affordable housing for local people remains a key priority as outlined in our adopted Local Plan. House prices and housing costs within the New Forest continue to make it challenging for many residents to live and work locally, so our planning policies focus on supporting schemes that meet identified local housing needs. This supports the wellbeing of local communities and also helps to sustain local services, such as local schools.

Development of nearly 100 affordable homes within the National Park is well underway on the consented housing development sites at:

- The former Lyndhurst Park Hotel (9 affordable homes)
- Whartons Lane in Ashurst (62 affordable)
- Church Lane in Sway (23 affordable)

Building will also soon start on 10 affordable homes at New Inn Road, Bartley.



Church Lane, Sway. © ARC Architecture



Houses at Lymington © Adobe Stock

Working with local communities on planning policy and design guidance

We continued to work in close partnership with communities across the National Park, helping town and parish councils to prepare local planning policies and design guidance which reflect their distinct local character and priorities.

Neighbourhood planning, introduced by Government in 2011, gives communities a direct role in shaping how their areas evolve by enabling them to prepare locally-led planning policies that guide future development.

The draft Lymington and Pennington Neighbourhood Plan went to local referendum in January 2026 and was formally adopted by the New Forest National Park Authority and New Forest District Council after 92.5% of local voters supported the Plan.

We also worked alongside Copythorne Parish Council as it prepared its first Parish Design Statement. Following six weeks of public consultation it was formally adopted in July 2025 by the NPA to inform design decisions made on planning applications submitted within the parish.

The impact

nearly 100 affordable homes in development

Celebrating good design in the National Park

The 2025 Building Design Awards highlighted an impressive range of high-quality development across the New Forest, demonstrating how thoughtful, well-considered design can enhance cultural heritage, promote sustainability and contribute to people’s wellbeing.



Best Conservation Project – Rose Cottage, Frogham

This Grade II listed thatched cottage, built more than 200 years ago from clay cob, had fallen into severe disrepair. Working closely with the National Park Authority’s heritage conservation team, the new owner used traditional techniques and materials to sympathetically restore the building. The cottage was finished in a limewash matched to its historic colour. Judges praised the project as ‘an exemplary celebration of the New Forest vernacular’.

Managing unauthorised development

Our enforcement team plays a key role in protecting the special character of the New Forest National Park by investigating and addressing unauthorised development and ensuring compliance with planning legislation.

This year the team received 196 new cases and resolved 211 cases. Most issues were successfully addressed through negotiation, with around 43% of cases resolved through compliance measures or retrospective planning applications.

Where development caused unacceptable harm and could not be resolved through negotiation, formal enforcement action

was taken. During the year, we issued 11 Planning Contravention Notices to gather information and served 5 formal notices, including Breach of Condition Notices and Enforcement Notices.

The most common issues investigated included breaches of planning conditions, unauthorised changes of use, residential use of land and buildings, stationed caravans, domestic outbuildings, boundary treatments and the creation of tracks.

Our enforcement work is supported by local communities, parish and town councils, and proactive monitoring of development across the National Park. Together, these efforts help ensure that the New Forest remains a well-managed, protected landscape.

Above: Rose Cottage after restoration © Lori Butler

Best Green Project – Paultons Park Solar Canopies

Paultons Park theme park installed four solar car ports above part of its parking area. The canopies support more than 1,000 solar panels covering 173 spaces and have generated 770,000 kWh annually – with 82% used on site. In the early phase of the scheme they had already saved 68 tonnes of CO2 – the equivalent of planting 4,000 trees. Judges praised the blend of contemporary design with practical sustainability, and the innovative reuse of brownfield land for renewable energy production.



Above: Solar Car Ports at Paultons Park © Paultons Park

8 Moorlands Close after renovation © architects Studio BAD



Best Residential Building – 8 Moorlands Close, Brockenhurst

The 1970s chalet bungalow has been carefully extended for modern, energy-efficient living. Improvements include triple glazing, insulation upgrades, solar panels, battery storage, and an air source heat pump. Judges commended the retrofit approach, which retained and reused existing structures wherever possible.

Best Non-Residential Building – Brockenhurst College Foundation and Independence Hub

Brockenhurst College created an accessible specialist learning hub using energy-efficient Structurally Insulated Panels. Featuring sensory gardens, wildflower meadows, solar panels, and heat pumps, the building was praised for balancing practicality with sensitivity to its New Forest setting.



Foundation and Independence Hub at Brockenhurst College © Harry Palmer

Archaeology – revealing and protecting New Forest heritage

Two important ancient settlements have been discovered on the edge of the National Park with support from NPA archaeologists.

Our archaeology team cares for heritage sites in the National Park and surrounding areas, providing services to Forestry England and New Forest District Council. We have supported several significant excavations in the wider New Forest district, ensuring archaeological heritage is considered and preserved before housing developments go ahead.

Notable digs include:

- An archaeological excavation near Fordingbridge that unearthed a previously unknown rural settlement with evidence of at least 15 roundhouses spanning a period around 2,000 years ago.

The site illustrates a long-lived Iron Age rural settlement evolving economically during the Romano British period and possibly becoming a local production centre, with finds suggesting cereal processing, metalworking, and textile and pottery production.

- An archaeological excavation to the north of Calmore near Totton that uncovered a previously unknown small rural settlement, suggested to be from around 2,000 years ago in the Iron Age to early Romano British period.

Archaeological dig at Buckler's Hard slipway



Finds here include evidence of ditches, pits, and at least five roundhouses suggesting a rural community with a domestic and small-scale industrial activity.

In the past year, the NPA team has advised on:

- 53 planning applications within the National Park
- 71 planning applications outside the National Park as part of our service level agreement with New Forest District Council
- 73 requests from Forestry England
- 39 requests ahead of Higher Level Stewardship scheme works.

Working with partners at historical sites

Supporting Buckler's Hard Shipyard Trust and the University of Southampton, NPA staff and 24

volunteers across 201 volunteer hours took part in a three-week archaeological excavation of a historical slipway at Buckler's Hard, unearthing timbers and various finds later displayed in an exhibition at the site's museum. A further excavation is anticipated in summer 2026.

New Forest National Park Authority Volunteer and Accessibility Co-ordinator James Masser said: 'The dig was a fantastic opportunity for our volunteers to engage with the history of Buckler's Hard and the New Forest, and to learn from an amazing team of archaeologists.'

Funded by Forestry England, NPA staff and volunteers cleared vegetation including gorse from Bronze Age barrows near Dibden, protecting the Scheduled Monuments from damage through growth and burrowing wildlife.

The impact

Archaeological advice given at 236 planning and restoration projects

Our tree service – preserving protected trees

The tree team plays a vital role in protecting the National Park's most significant trees, helping to conserve the landscapes, habitats and distinctive character that make the New Forest so special.

There has been a 30% increase in tree work applications over the past year with a total of 605 applications or notification to fell or prune protected trees.

We've offered advice on 130 development management consultations where development may have an impact on trees.

This year we've also made four new Tree Preservation Orders to protect individual trees, groups or woodlands where the potential loss of these important trees would have had a detrimental impact on the local environment, and we have continued to review older TPOs where necessary.



The impact

605 applications for work to save protected trees

Championing local producers and makers



The New Forest Marque – the New Forest's local produce accreditation scheme, gained its highest number of members at the close of 2025 at 190. This included a flurry of local artists and craftspeople joining the 'Inspired' category which has grown into a thriving community of creatives – all inspired by the beauty of the landscape.

The Marque had a strong presence in the Local Produce Area at the New Forest Show in 2025 and for the first time benefited from a dedicated New Forest Marque Inspired marquee, which hosted 16 arts and crafts stalls. This was followed by a successful artist exhibition as part of Hampshire Open Studios hosted by the New Forest Heritage Centre.

In autumn 2025 the Marque collaborated with Stanwell House Hotel in Lymington to put on a bespoke dining experience – 'Flavours of the Forest' – showcasing the finest ingredients from Marque producers in a curated menu for one special evening. More than a tasting experience, diners had the opportunity to listen to members deliver passionate talks about life as food producers in the New Forest. The evening was a sell-out with over 50 diners in attendance.



Serving up a local produce breakfast at the Countryside Education Trust

Spring 2026 saw the Marque deliver another dining initiative called 'The Great New Forest Marque Breakfast'. This collaborative two-week event encouraged hospitality venues to host their own Marque breakfasts using New Forest Marque ingredients. Hundreds of dishes using a variety of local suppliers were served across the Forest.

Charlie Marchant, Centre Assistant at the Countryside Education Trust which hosted its own on-site breakfast said: 'Talking to diners about local produce

and where it comes from was great. It really added value and helped spread awareness of the New Forest Marque.'

Spring 2026 marked the third consecutive year of collaboration with the New Forest Heritage Centre in Lyndhurst to hold a Marque themed exhibition. 'From Myth to Maker' showcased creative work from a selection of members who find inspiration in New Forest Folklore, resulting in a vibrant display of paintings, costumes, sculptures and more.



Left: The work of Graham Limburn at the Folklore Exhibition Right: New Forest Marque Inspired tent at the New Forest Show

Our ranger team – sharing key messages

Our rangers are a key part of Team New Forest supporting work across the National Park and sharing knowledge about the area’s special landscapes, communities, and important nature and habitats.

The NPA team continues to improve people’s understanding of how we can all help look after wildlife and heritage by following the New Forest code and raising awareness of Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) protecting against the impacts of BBQs, fires, and petting livestock.

From supporting volunteers and school or youth group visits to undertaking patrols, joining partner organisations, and leading guided sessions at events, our team spent nearly 2,000 hours interacting with members of the public this year, speaking to more than 18,000 people at 240 locations about caring for the Forest.



Above: NPA ranger Naomi litter picking © Amanda Norfolk. Top right: Ponies in the road © Amanda Norfolk @Acornsandscapes



The impact
18,000 ranger interactions with the public

Reducing animal accidents

New Forest organisations involved in the Animal Accidents Reduction Group – a campaign group which aims to reduce the number of accidents in the Forest – renewed calls for motorists to drive with care as accident numbers increased.

2025 saw a rise in animal accidents involving New Forest Commoners’ livestock such as ponies, cattle and donkeys, with 108 reported accidents and 47 animals killed. This was compared with 97 accidents and 37 deaths the year before.

It follows the lowest deaths on record in 2024 and is the highest number of animals killed or destroyed, as a result of a road accident, since 2020. However, the overall trend since 1991 has been clearly downwards.

Companies with staff who drive in the New Forest were also

encouraged to join a New Forest Drive Safe campaign to raise awareness among their employees of Forest ponies, cattle and other animals on or close to roads.

More than 50 organisations have signed up to the joint initiative led by the CDA and supported by us. Organisations including Hampshire and Isle of Wight Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and Beaulieu Estate are listed on the CDA website and receive seasonal advice to help make staff aware of the risks of driving near livestock and what to do if they are involved in an incident with an animal.

Social media was also an important tool in raising awareness of the #PassWideAndSlow message. This year social media posts had over 570,000 impressions and 20,000 engagements on NPA channels.

Changing behaviour through Public Spaces Protection Orders

We continued to support two Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) introduced in 2023 to prevent using BBQs and fires on the open Forest and petting and feeding New Forest ponies and donkeys. Fixed penalty notices of £100 can be given for breach of the Orders, a sum which can rise to £1,000 following a successful prosecution.

Since the orders were introduced, ‘Authorised Officers’ – including NPA and Forestry England rangers, as well as Agisters – have recorded 2,399 reports of

behaviour that breached the rules. This has resulted in engagement with more than 2,000 people to explain the risks and encourage safer behaviour in the Forest.

Our social media posts relating to the PSPOs gained 11,000 impressions and 3,900 engagements. Responses to our ‘Enjoying the New Forest’ visits survey showed 91% of respondents were aware of the fines for petting or feeding ponies and donkeys. 94% were aware of the fine for fires and BBQs.

A consultation was held gathering views on the possible extension of the PSPOs for another three years beyond summer 2026 and the PSPO extension was confirmed.



PSPO sign in New Forest



Dogs on a New Forest Walking Festival walk

Supporting responsible dog walking

Rangers have been involved in monthly dog-related partnership events, dog owner focused pop-ups and both days of the Dogstival event at Burley where they spoke with 430 dog owners.

We continue to liaise with the New Forest Dog Owners Group with NPA rangers featuring in a webinar programme with a talk on their work and the New Forest code.

This year we also hosted two Dogs Forum meetings with local organisations, charities, and other bodies with an interest in dogs in the Forest, sharing messaging from our dog walking code.

Our New Forest Professional Dog Walkers’ Charter now has more than 100 businesses signed up and continues to grow. This shows their commitment to responsible dog walking practices in the New Forest.



Protecting rare birds

We continued to encourage the public to protect rare ground nesting birds in the New Forest by staying on the main Forest tracks and keeping dogs under close control.

Surveys carried out by Hampshire Ornithological Society and Forestry England show that, while public support has helped improve the outlook for some ground nesting bird species in recent years, others remain under considerable pressure.

Curlews are in decline and now at critically low levels. They have been affected by a mix of pressures including changing weather patterns, disturbance and predation.

Nightjars which travel all the way from Africa to nest in the Forest have also seen their numbers in the Forest decline by around 18%.

Conversely, Dartford warblers, small birds that nest in gorse or close to the ground, are doing well, with high numbers recorded in recent years.

Woodlarks, which favour heathland areas especially where trees have recently been felled, have also been found in record numbers in the New Forest. This is thought to be partly due to Forestry England’s restoration of large areas of the Forest to heathland over the past 15 years.

NPA rangers regularly support Forestry England rangers and keepers patrolling sensitive breeding areas, marked by orange and red signs, and helping to educate the public on the importance of protecting these special birds.

We also used social media as a key tool to encourage Forest users to #StayOnTheTracks and to keep dogs under close control, using a lead where necessary. These posts received over 118,000 impressions and 3,800 engagements across our NPA channels.

Above: Ground nesting bird sign at Wilverley © Forestry England



New Forest code

Partnerships

By working together, sharing expertise, and combining resources, we can achieve far greater impact collectively than through individual action alone.

Communities, businesses, land managers, organisations, and stakeholders all play a vital role in protecting and enhancing this unique place, within the National Park and across the wider region.

Vital action in caring for the National Park

Communities and organisations have been taking action to ensure the National Park thrives into the future.

The ‘ReNew Forest National Park Partnership Plan’ is a plan for the place, guiding and coordinating the work of all those with an interest and influence in the National Park in helping to care for it.

It outlines the key drivers and challenges facing the National Park and sets out how these will be addressed collectively under the five themes of: climate, nature, people, place and partnerships.

The current plan runs until 2027. Priorities and progress are discussed quarterly, guided by a Partnership Plan Leaders’ panel of senior representatives of the main organisations in the New Forest.

Improving access to green careers

The University of Southampton is working with us and the Greenprint initiative to examine the role of ‘Sustainability in local productivity and employment’.

Greenprint is a place-based initiative across the UK’s central south that seeks to collaboratively lead a green agenda for a sustainable future.

It brings together local authorities, universities, businesses and third sector organisations to respond effectively to climate, environmental and socio-economic challenges.

A report ‘Improving visibility and access to green careers in Hampshire and the Solent’ investigates how green skills and green jobs are understood by those working in education, policy and industry in the Hampshire and Solent region.

It aims to better understand the role of careers advisors and related training and education professionals to help support implementation of Local Skills Improvement Plans and Regional Skills Strategies.

Challenges and barriers to entry into green careers were identified, particularly for young people and those from under-represented

groups who lack access to important information, advice and guidance.

A key finding was the need for much clearer definitions and categorisation of green skills matched with a poor level of training and education to reflect the scope of green skills and training requirements. This is critical to reflect the breadth of job opportunities which require green skills in the Hampshire and Solent Region.

The findings have been captured in four key themes that address the problems the research team and participants identified:

Theme 1: Strengthening education and industry partnerships for green skills development

Theme 2: Using policy levers for equitable green job pathways

Theme 3: Bridging the information gap: strengthening green careers guidance

Theme 4: Expanding access to green careers.

Find out more at newforestnpa.gov.uk/greenprint

Supporting sustainable businesses

We support local enterprise through sponsoring the Sustainable Business category at the New Forest Business Partnership Brilliance in Business Awards.

This award recognises organisations that demonstrate a strong commitment to environmental responsibility, driving positive change within their industry through greener, more sustainable products, services and business practices.

This year’s winner was MeadowSweet Posies, a British-grown flower subscription service, with sustainability at its heart and a cutting garden in the New Forest. The award recognised the company’s sustainable and nature-friendly growing methods and continued efforts to minimise its carbon footprint.

Also shortlisted were Green Hill Farm Holiday Village, and Naked Jam.



Sophie Townsend from MeadowSweet posies receiving award

Championing local heroes

We held the 12th New Forest National Park Awards in partnership with the CLA, recognising the individuals, businesses and organisations that help care for the New Forest’s special landscape and support its rural economy. The winners were celebrated at a special ceremony during the New Forest and Hampshire County Show.

Alison Barnes, CEO of the NPA said: ‘It takes not just one person or organisation, but a whole “Team New Forest” to ensure the long-term survival of the National Park. The standard of nominees this year was particularly impressive, so our winners really are best in class.’

This year’s winners were:

Young Farmer: Lewis Potter from Calmore

Best Supporter of Local Produce: Sway Butchers

Sustainability Champion: Ringwood Repair Café

Young Environmental Champion: Rhys Leighton from West Wellow

Farming and Nature Champion: Ben Dolbear from Beaulieu

Commoning Champion: Andrew Parry-Norton from Cadnam

This year’s Highly Commended were:

Young Farmer: Gemma Hobbs from Boldre

Best Supporter of Local Produce: New Forest Hamper Company, Sway

Sustainability Champion: Lucy Bramley from Burley

Young Environmental Champion: Kamron Flaxman who helps at Hoburne Bashley

Farming and Nature Champion: Matt Phillips from the Beaulieu Estate

Commoning Champion: Clive Maton from Marchwood

Commoning – sustaining the landscape we see today

Commoning and the ancient right to turn animals out on the New Forest remains fundamental to the National Park’s unique landscape and wildlife.

Grazing by Commoners’ ponies and cattle plays a vital role in maintaining the mosaic of habitats found here, creating the conditions for rare plants, fungi, insects, birds and other wildlife to flourish – including species found in very few other places in the UK.

The practice of commoning in the New Forest dates back more than 1,000 years but its future remains uncertain amid growing challenges including changes to agricultural support schemes and recreational pressures.

Around 700 Commoners continue the ancient tradition, each with ancient rights linked to land or property in the Forest.

We support New Forest Commoners through a range of initiatives, including:

- Grants through the Farming in Protected Landscapes scheme (see P14).
- Training and guidance provided by the New Forest Land Advice Service including specific workshops tailored to managing and handling ponies, cattle and pigs.

- The Commoners’ Dwelling Scheme, which allows eligible Commoners to build homes within the New Forest area outside villages while continuing to practise commoning.
- Coordinating the Forest Farming Group, which champions a tailored system of payments recognising the public benefits delivered through commoning and helping ensure future Environmental Land Management schemes reflect the Forest’s unique needs.
- Working to safeguard land for back-up grazing, recognising increasing pressure from competing land uses such as housing.
- Communications support for the New Forest Commoners’ Defence Association, promoting the Association’s work and highlighting the importance of commoning to the Forest through social media, website and newsletters.
- Partnership working with organisations across the Forest on projects like the £1.3million Species Survival Fund to help address issues affecting Commoners, their livestock and the wider landscape.

New Forest Awakening Festival

Thousands of people took part in this year’s New Forest Awakening Festival, a month long celebration of nature, climate action, and community collaboration. Led by the New Forest National Park Authority and supported by a wide network of partners, the Festival has now firmly established itself as a key annual event each March, inspiring collective action in response to the climate and nature emergencies.

More than 122 events were delivered throughout the month by New Forest organisations,

businesses, charities, and local green groups. Over 5,000 people joined a diverse programme that included guided walks, expert talks, arts and crafts sessions, a local produce roadshow, climate focused workshops, film screenings, volunteer days, repair cafés, litter picks, recycling events, commoning walks and farm tours.

More than 464,000 people attended events, commented, shared or liked social media posts demonstrating strong and growing public interest in protecting the Forest for future generations.

Excellence

Through innovation, collaboration, and a shared commitment to high standards, we continue to strengthen the way we protect and enhance the landscape, support local communities, and deliver meaningful outcomes for people, nature, and place.

Give to gain – marking International Women’s Day

Give to gain was the theme of an online ‘fireside chat’ to mark International Women’s Day in March for people in the environment sector.

The session considered ‘In the 75th year of protected landscapes what can women’s leadership teach us about what we need for the next 75 years?’. There were contributions from women leaders from a range of organisations and all agreed about the benefits of giving and receiving mentorship.

Plans are underway for an in-person conference in the New Forest in November 2026 on the Give to Gain theme. The Friday conference will be women-only, with everyone invited for the Saturday session.

Calling on support from Vodafone

The UK’s 15 national parks work with leading global brands and national partners through National Parks Partnerships.

Our partners provide vital support to the national parks family and help drive positive change for people, nature, and climate.

New corporate partnerships this year have included a three-year partnership with Vodafone initially focusing on the rollout of AI-powered habitat mapping across all 15 national parks.

Join the herd!

The NPA celebrated its 20th anniversary year with the launch of a new official WhatsApp Channel.

Subscribers receive the latest news on conservation projects, visitor information, seasonal weather alerts, public consultations and exclusive behind-the-scenes news and information delivered directly to their mobile.



Website window into the National Park

A new National Park Authority website has been launched providing a window into the New Forest.

Storytelling through improved maps, new video and photography ensures the site is engaging.

It’s also more user-friendly, with content and services easier to find and new sections on climate risks, a youth opportunities finder and showing partners’ progress on actions to look after the Forest.

New Forest code alerts can be added across all pages to push

out messages about caring for the Forest including wildfire warnings.

Measures have been introduced to reduce pressure on NPA teams with efficiencies such as a postcode finder to tell planning applicants if they’re in the National Park.

The website includes measures to improve accessibility with AI helping to produce documents in different formats plus summaries. The site has also been designed to be more sustainable through design and hosting.

newforestnpa.gov.uk

Championing the New Forest at national level

At the invitation of New Forest East MP Sir Julian Lewis, National Park CEO Alison Barnes met with Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Nature Mary Creagh.

She briefed them on the transitions at play at this time and asked them to help us support a positive future for the New Forest, its landscapes, unique cultural heritage and internationally important nature.

A team from Defra was welcomed to the New Forest to discuss funding concerns for commoning and explore future Environmental



Land Management (ELM) scheme opportunities.

They also met Commoners and Verderers as we work together to secure a future scheme.

Above: Minister Mary Creagh with Alison Barnes CEO and Sir Julian Lewis MP



Sir Julian Lewis visits Buckler's Hard

Welcoming MPs

We welcomed New Forest MPs on separate visits during the year, showcasing the unique landscape in their constituency, its communities and the challenges and opportunities facing the area.

The Rt. Hon. Sir Julian Lewis MP visited Buckler’s Hard to learn about the archaeological dig at the historic shipyard slipway, once used to build warships for Nelson’s navy. At the Countryside Education Trust in Beaulieu, he heard how Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) funding is supporting sustainable land management, habitat restoration and improvements to water quality in the Forest’s internationally important freshwater habitats.

Caroline Nokes MP visited Forest Front in the Waterside area to see

projects supported by the Species Survival Fund, focused on balancing sustainable economic growth with nature recovery and landscape protection. She also explored inclusive cycling initiatives at the PEDALL Hub in Ashurst and discussed challenges facing commoning and post-Brexit agricultural support schemes.

The Rt. Hon. Sir Desmond Swayne MP visited landscape-scale nature recovery projects, including the creation of a wildlife corridor along a former railway line at Breamore. At Bisterne Estate, discussions focused on habitat resilience and Species Survival Fund projects benefiting reptiles and amphibians, including the smooth snake.

Supporting communities and conservation

We bought three properties on the Foxlease Park estate in Lyndhurst, creating new opportunities for housing, conservation and community collaboration. Two homes will be modernised for rental, generating income to support National Park work, while a third building could provide a base for conservation staff and volunteers.

The purchase also supports the long-term sustainability of Foxie’s Future CIO, the charity that secured the historic Foxlease Activity Centre in 2024 following a successful £4m fundraising campaign.

The the two neighbours share values around protecting the National Park, supporting communities and expanding outdoor learning and volunteering opportunities for local, national and international visitors.

Below: The cottages bought by the New Forest NPA at Foxlease, Lyndhurst



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 six different sessions for staff to learn more about:

- Local heritage
- Freshwater habitats
- Local land estate management
- IT and cyber security
- Practical scrub clearing
- Bee keeping

Above: Staff on a heritage discovery day

Financial Information

The Authority's core revenue grant from Defra was £3,019,000 for the 2025–26 financial year, with an additional capital grant of £1,393,000.

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 £25 from partner organisations.

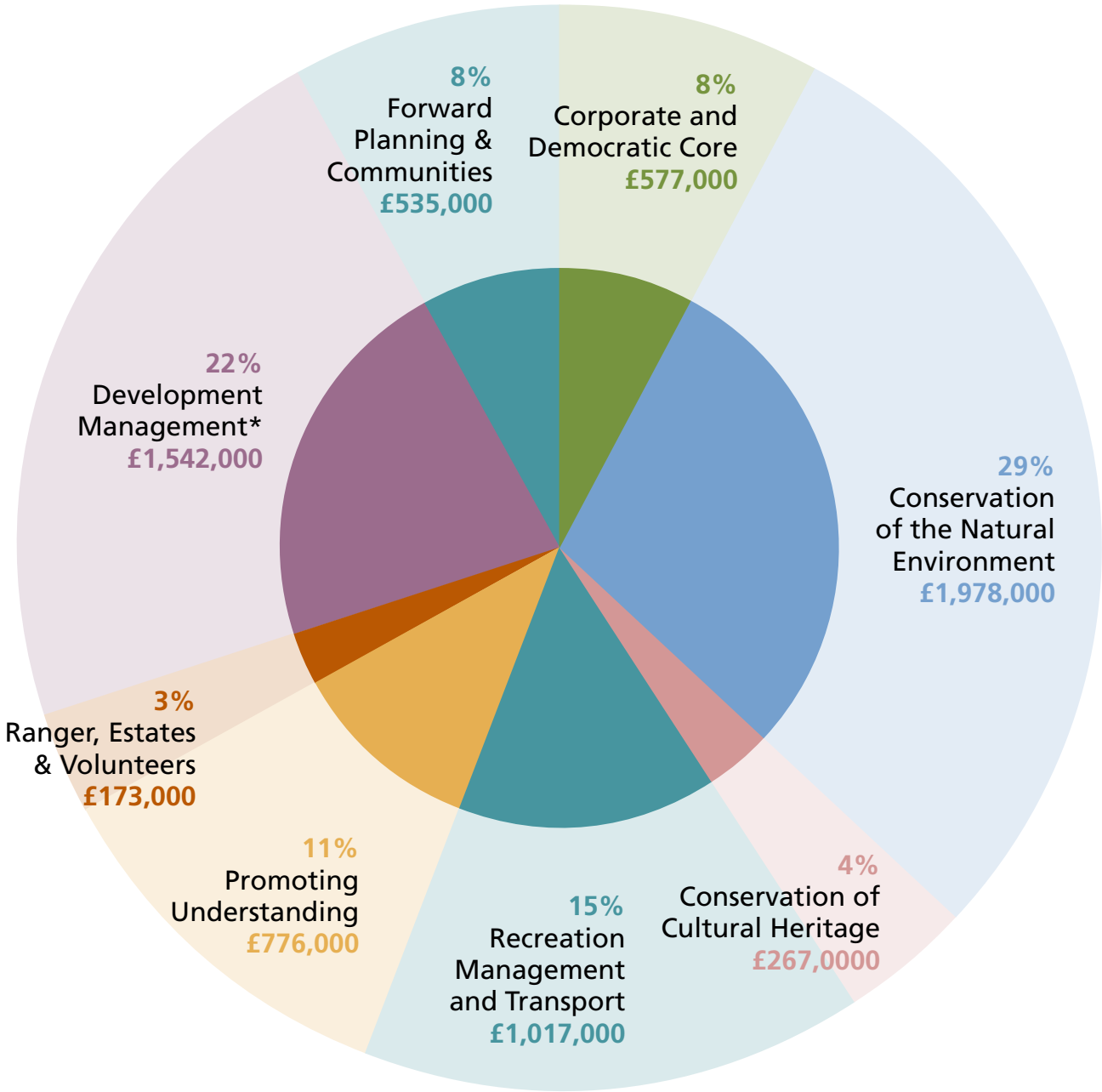
We received around:

- £4,412,000** from Defra
- £519,000** in statutory fees for planning and related applications
- £214,000** for shared services with other local authorities (rangers, archaeology, comms and administration)
- £172,000** interest on our investments
- £153,000** in other income generated (such as talks, guided walks, New Forest Tour advertising and charging for expert advice)

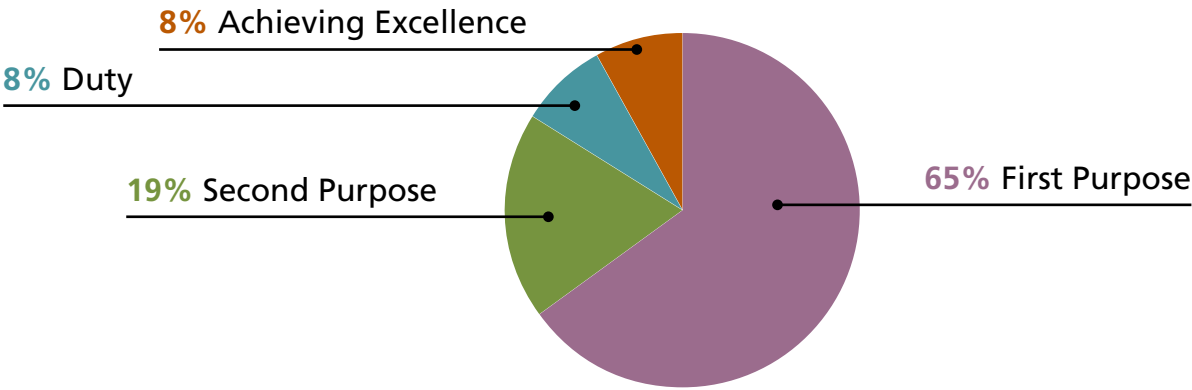
Significant external funding totalling £1.9m was secured for the Forest, including:

- £760,000** Species Survival Fund
- £460,000** YouCAN
- £296,000** Farming in Protected Landscapes
- £169,000** PEDALL Inclusive Cycling Charity
- £111,000** New Routes to Nature
- £92,000** Higher Level Stewardship Scheme
- Plus many more smaller projects...

2025-26 Gross Expenditure



2025–2026 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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