

# **A Partnership Plan for the New Forest National Park**

***- an update of the National Park Management Plan with  
actions for 2015-2020***

***Text approved by the National Park Authority,  
16<sup>th</sup> July 2015***



## **Produced jointly by**

Environment Agency  
Forestry Commission  
Hampshire County Council  
Natural England  
New Forest District Council

New Forest National Park Authority  
Test Valley Borough Council  
Wiltshire Council  
Verderers of the New Forest

# The New Forest National Park

Not to scale



 New Forest National Park boundary

# Organisations that have contributed to the Plan

The following organisations, in addition to the main partners listed on the front cover, have contributed ideas, comments or actions that have helped inform the Plan. Those leading on specific actions are shown by an asterisk\*.

<b>Age Concern Hampshire*</b> <i>(action LC4)</i>	<b>New Forest Access Forum</b>
<b>Action Hampshire*</b> <i>(actions LC5, EW10)</i>	<b>New Forest Association</b>
<b>Boldre Parish Council</b>	<b>New Forest Business Partnership*</b> <i>(action EW1)</i>
<b>British Cycling</b>	<b>New Forest Commoners Defence Association*</b> <i>(actions LM2, SQ1)</i>
<b>Christchurch and East Dorset Councils</b>	<b>New Forest Dog Owners Group*</b> <i>(action SQ1)</i>
<b>Country Land and Business Association</b>	<b>New Forest Equestrian Association</b>
<b>Community First New Forest*</b> <i>(action LC8)</i>	<b>New Forest Equine Forum</b>
<b>Cranborne Chase AONB</b>	<b>New Forest Land Advice Service*</b> <i>(actions LH1, LH3, LM1, LM2, LM4, LM5, LM8, LC2)</i>
<b>CTC Wessex Cycling</b>	<b>New Forest Produce Ltd.*</b> <i>(action EW5)</i>
<b>Dorset County Council</b>	<b>New Forest Transition*</b> <i>(action LC10)</i>
<b>Fawley Parish Council</b>	<b>Ninth Centenary Trust*</b> <i>(actions SQ4, SQ5)</i>
<b>Freshwater Habitats Trust*</b> <i>(actions LH6, LH7)</i>	<b>Parish and Town Councils</b>
<b>Godshill Parish Council</b>	<b>Redlynch Parish Council</b>
<b>Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust*</b> <i>(actions LH6, LH7, LH8, LH12, CC2, EP7, )</i>	<b>Ringwood Town Council</b>
<b>Hampshire Biological Information Centre</b>	<b>RSPB</b>
<b>Historic England*</b> <i>(actions LD5, LD6)</i>	<b>Solent Protection</b>
<b>Hyde Parish Council</b>	<b>SSE*</b> <i>(action ST3)</i>
<b>Meyrick Estate Management Ltd</b>	<b>Sway Parish Council</b>
<b>Minstead Parish Council*</b> <i>(action TT10)</i>	<b>The Friends of Brockenhurst</b>
<b>National Farmers Union*</b> <i>(action LM8)</i>	<b>UK Youth</b>
<b>National Grid*</b> <i>(action ST4)</i>	<b>Whiteparish Parish Council</b>
<b>National Trust*</b> <i>(actions LH4, LD6, SQ1, SQ4, LC9)</i>	<b>Woodgreen Parish Council</b>

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## Foreword: a Partnership Plan for the New Forest

It is now five years since the first National Park Management Plan was published in 2010. This update is therefore an opportunity to describe some of the changes that have occurred over that time and to suggest a number of actions for the next five years which we hope will be positive for the Forest and its communities.

It should be emphasised that this Plan is very much a partnership venture and has been produced jointly by many of the statutory organisations in the Forest. A number of other organisations have also contributed their own ideas and initiatives to give a broader picture of the range of projects taking place in the Forest. **It is therefore not about the work of the National Park Authority, or of any one organisation, but about what can be achieved by everyone for the Forest itself.**

At an early stage, through talking to local organisations, it was decided that this update should be a short and focused document, and should not attempt to re-write the current Management Plan. The vision, objectives and text of the original plan were produced only a few years ago and are all still fully relevant. They were agreed following extensive consultation and the direct involvement of the many organisations, communities and individuals with a strong interest in the Forest.

This document has therefore been produced as a supplement to the existing Management Plan, as a way of bringing it up to date and suggesting new actions to be taken forward over the next five years. These actions cover a wide range of topics, but the underlying theme is the conservation of the special qualities of the Forest, and taken as a whole they are designed to take a firm 'Forest first' approach.

Although the National Park faces many pressures in the years ahead, there is a great deal of positive work being undertaken across the Forest by many different people. We would certainly like this effort and dedication to the Forest to be reflected in this plan.

## **Consultation on the Partnership Plan**

This Plan has been produced by a steering group of the main statutory organisations in the National Park, together with the comments and advice of many other local groups and individuals.

A 'Call for Views' consultation on an initial draft took place between October and December 2014, and included four public drop-in events, meetings with individual organisations and information sent to some 250 local and national organisations and individuals.

79 responses were received during the consultation, comprising about 500 specific comments. These were taken into account when producing a revised draft, which was agreed for further consultation by the main partner organisations and the National Park Authority in February / March 2015.

A six week public consultation on the revised draft took place in May and June 2015. Again the consultation was widely advertised and included discussions with organisations such as the New Forest Consultative Panel, New Forest Access Forum and parish councils within the Park. Notification letters were sent to interested organisations and individuals, including all those who had responded to the initial consultation.

Comments from 34 organisations and individuals were received during this second consultation period, and helped to inform a final draft of the Plan.

The Partnership Plan was approved by the National Park Authority on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2015 and formally endorsed by the main partner organisations during .....

# 1. Introduction

## About National Park Management Plans

1.1 All National Parks are expected to have a Management Plan for their area, to help guide the work of those with responsibilities or an interest in the Park. Government guidance emphasises that the plan should be for the National Park as a place, and not specifically for the National Park Authority or any other particular organisation.

1.2 However, relevant authorities are required to take the two national park purposes into account in any work that may affect the area (Environment Act, 1995). The purposes are:

*to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park;*

*to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area by the public;*

National Park Authorities also have a duty, in taking forward the two purposes, to:

*seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park.*

The relationship between the purposes is commonly known as the Sandford Principle, which states that every effort should be made to reconcile any conflicts between the purposes, but that if such efforts fail the first purpose should take precedence.

1.3 The New Forest National Park Management Plan was agreed in 2010 following comprehensive public consultation over several years with all the local communities, interest groups and organisations in the Forest. The long-term vision and objectives and the descriptions of the various topics are still relevant, and in its final form the plan gained the support of most of the organisations and interests in the Forest. It has therefore not been changed.

## The purpose of the update

1.4 This update is designed to form a simple supplement to the 2010 National Park Management Plan. It should be read in conjunction with the full Plan, which contains much more background information about the New Forest and its special qualities. It can be viewed at [www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/managementplan](http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/managementplan). Like the 2010 Plan, this update uses the terms 'National Park', 'New Forest' and 'Forest' interchangeably to mean the whole of the area within the New Forest National Park.

1.5 The original Plan included a number of priority actions covering the period up to 2015, many of which have been completed or are underway. **The main purpose of the update is therefore to set out a series of new or updated actions for the**

**next five years.** In addition the preliminary chapters help to set the scene by including examples of some of the recent work undertaken in the Forest by a variety of organisations, communities and individuals, together with a summary of some of the more important changes affecting the National Park since the original Management Plan was published.

1.6 An important feature of this document is that it has been produced jointly by many of the statutory organisations in the National Park. They have agreed the text and proposed actions that their organisation can take forward.

1.7 It also includes work that a number of other local organisations are planning to undertake in the near future, and it is hoped that, over time, further Forest organisations and communities will suggest their own priorities to be added to the document.

**1.8 The update is therefore not about the work of the National Park Authority or any particular organisation, but is an attempt to bring together a broad range of actions which benefit the Forest and its communities.**

### **About the actions**

1.9 The actions proposed in this update are a selection of ideas for the period 2015-20. They are not meant to be seen as a comprehensive list of all the work likely to occur in the Forest, but instead focus mainly on new or recent initiatives designed to deliver the objectives in the 2010 Management Plan. The reasons for choosing these particular actions are described in section 4.6 below.

1.10 It should be emphasised that the majority of the actions have not yet been developed in any detail. They will require further discussion, refinement and support from the many interested organisations, communities, landowners and businesses of the Forest before they can be taken forward.

1.11 Lead organisations are included against the actions for reporting purposes and to show the main areas of responsibility. However most of the projects will require a number of organisations to work together in partnership, making the best use of resources and helping to achieve results more effectively.

1.12 Many of the actions have been suggested by the larger statutory or voluntary sector organisations in the National Park, but there are other initiatives, being planned by local groups or communities, which are also important for the Forest and fit in with the objectives of the Management Plan.

### **Reporting on progress and updating the actions**

1.13 There will be regular reports on progress on the actions produced each year, based on information from the lead organisations.



1.14 These will be used to update the actions, showing projects which have been completed, or adding new initiatives which may arise over time. For transparency the details of any changes, and the reasons for them, will be fully listed on the website.

## **2. Achievements over the last five years**

2.1 The 2010 Management Plan included a series of priority actions for the five year period up to 2015. The majority of these have been progressed or are now completed, while some will be taken forward through specific projects in this update (see also para. 4.1 below).

2.2 As a way of illustrating some of the major achievements over the last five years a few examples are given below. They show the importance of working in partnership to deliver projects for the benefit of the Forest, involving a wide range of local organisations, communities and businesses.

### ***Support for commoning and Open Forest habitats - the Verderers Higher Level Stewardship Scheme***

2.3 This is the largest agri-environment scheme in England, started in 2010 and amounting to £19m of funding over a 10 year period. It is overseen and managed by the Verderers of the New Forest, with support from other partners, and is designed to support the historic practice of commoning which maintains the unique landscape of the Forest, to fund projects to restore internationally important habitats and to maintain and protect historic sites.

2.4 To date the scheme has helped to fund a number of initiatives, including grazing payments for commoners, reflective collars for ponies, rhododendron control, wetland restoration projects and surveys of protected birds and other species.

For further information see <http://www.hlsnewforest.org.uk/>

### ***Farmland improvements by private landowners - the Bisterne Estate Better Boundaries Project***

2.5 Many landowners and managers have helped to improve the environment of the farmlands and private estates within the National Park, often aided by funding from Environmental Stewardship schemes and advice from the New Forest Land Advice Service.<sup>1</sup>

2.6 An example is the Better Boundaries project on the Bisterne Estate in 2012/13. Hallam Mills, the estate owner, with support from the New Forest Land Advice Service, has helped to create more than 600m of laid hedges, 1000m of new hedgerows and 1,600m of wildflower field margins, together with areas of woodland and tree planting. This has resulted in major enhancements to the farmed landscape of the estate, and has provided important habitat links between the New Forest and the Avon Valley.

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<sup>1</sup> The New Forest Land Advice Service was established in 2010 by the National Park Authority, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and Natural England. It offers free independent advice and training to farmers, commoners, equine owners and community groups.

## ***The involvement of local people - New Forest Remembers: untold stories of World War II***

2.7 New Forest Remembers has generated a great deal of local and national interest in World War II as it affected the New Forest. Beginning in 2011, more than 100 local volunteers have undertaken a major archaeological survey revealing a large number of forgotten military sites, while many hours of oral history have been captured on tape.

2.8 Local people have donated more than 1600 pages of photos and documents, which have been gathered together as an important World War II archive, available to all at <http://www.newforestww2.org>

## ***Communities influencing the character of their village - Sway Village Design Statement***

2.9 The Sway Village Design Statement was produced by a steering group of local people in consultation with the wider community. It is one of six Design Statements produced by parishes across the National Park.

2.10 Published in 2013, it describes the character and distinctive features of the village and sets out a number of guidelines relating to the design of any future development. It took into account comments from 200 people attending a local consultation event, together with more than 500 completed questionnaires from residents. It has been adopted by the National Park Authority and will be used in planning decisions relating to the area.

For further information see <http://www.sway-pc.gov.uk/16331>

## ***Local services for local people - Woodgreen Community Shop***

2.11 In the village of Woodgreen, local people established the Woodgreen Community Shop Association to save the last remaining village shop and post office in this north western corner of the National Park. The Association gained funding for the project from Hampshire County Council, the Village Retail Services Association, the New Forest RDPE (LEADER) Programme and the National Park Authority.

2.12 The new shop was built on a site within the village owned by the Parish Council and has been very successful in providing a wide range of services for local people and visitors alike, including a post office, local information point and an outlet for local produce.

For further information see <http://www.woodgreencommunityshop.org/>

## ***Sustainable transport - the New Forest Tour***

2.13 The New Forest Tour provides residents and visitors to the area with a car-free way of enjoying the special qualities of the National Park, travelling by open-top bus. Since 2010 the tour has carried more than 62,000 passengers, removing over one million car miles from Forest roads and has generated around £1.7 million for the local economy. There are currently three routes covering the majority of the National Park, linking towns, villages and visitor attractions.

2.14 The Tour has been developed in partnership by the New Forest National Park Authority, Hampshire County Council and GoSouthCoast. The steering group includes representatives from local tourism businesses who contribute to the cost of running the tour and benefit from the increased trade it brings.

For further information see <http://www.thenewforesttour.info/>

## ***New green spaces for people and wildlife - Maybush Copse***

2.15 Maybush Copse is an area of woodland that has developed naturally over many years in the centre of Landford. The local community wished to see it improved for both local people and wildlife, and in 2009 Wiltshire Council kindly transferred the land to Landford Parish Council. It is now managed by the Landford Environment Conservation Group with support from the parish council, National Park Authority and local volunteers.

2.16 Improvements include an all-weather gravel path, a new boundary hedgerow, and open glades within the woodland to encourage wildlife. The Copse is now well used by local people and also provides many opportunities for study, including moths, bats and wild plants.

## ***The rural economy and local culture - Beaulieu Road Pony Sales Yard improvements***

2.17 The Pony Sales Yard auctions at Beaulieu Road are important as the main outlet for commoners to sell their ponies and generate vital income for the commoning economy. Since 2011 the facilities have been improved by installing mains water and electricity, toilets, and a vehicle wash down area. In addition a new roof provides shelter for buyers, sellers and the visiting public. It is now one of the most up-to-date sales yards in the country and is fit for use by future generations of commoners. The work has also benefited nearby businesses and residents, providing them with mains water and power for the first time.

2.18 The improvements were led by the New Forest Livestock Society, which administers the sales yard, with additional funding provided by the Verderers, the New Forest RDPE (LEADER) Programme, the New Forest Trust, the New Forest Pony and Cattle Breeders Society, the National Park Authority and the Commoners Defence Association, as well as contributions from local property owners.

For further information see <http://www.nfls.org.uk/saleyard.htm>

## ***Support for rural businesses – The New Forest LEADER Programme***

2.19 The New Forest LEADER Programme is an EU and government funded scheme offering practical support to rural businesses and communities across the New Forest and surrounding area.

2.20 Overseen by a Local Action Group, with support from New Forest District Council and the New Forest National Park Authority, the 2008-2013 scheme allocated £1.4 million to 78 different projects. This included grants worth almost £800,000 to small New Forest businesses, together with community projects to improve village halls and shops. The majority of the funding helped to support the land-based farming, commoning and forestry businesses in the New Forest and surrounding area, with other rural businesses able to apply.

*For further information see*

<http://www.newforestleader.org.uk>

2.21 Additional projects which were suggested for this chapter during the initial consultation on the plan, but which have not been fully described due to lack of space, include:

The Western Escarpment Conservation Area Action Plan (Conservation Area Steering Group)

'Love the Forest' project (New Forest Trust)

Re-introduction of grazing at Studland Common, Barton Common and Ballard Water Meadow (New Forest Land Advice Service)

Enhancements to Redlynch Cemetery (Redlynch Parish Council)

### 3. Important recent changes affecting the National Park

3.1 The 2010 Management Plan describes many of the issues affecting the National Park, the majority of which are still relevant today. To bring this up to date a brief summary is given below of some of the more important changes affecting the National Park that have occurred since 2010. Where relevant these are cross-referenced to the actions which help to address them in the action plan section.

#### Changes in national policies and issues

3.2 **Biodiversity 2020** is a new national strategy for England's wildlife and natural resources and sets the ambitious target of halting the overall loss of England's biodiversity by 2020.<sup>2</sup> The most important priorities relevant to the New Forest include:

- Improving the condition of protected habitats, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- Increasing the extent of habitats, with bigger, less fragmented areas for wildlife
- Engaging more people in biodiversity issues and increasing awareness of its value
- Developing an ecosystem services approach<sup>3</sup> to land management, emphasising the benefits, or 'natural capital', the natural environment provides for human societies and economies.

*Relevant actions : LH1, LH2, LH3, LH4, LH6, LH14, LM3*

3.3 The **Water Framework Directive** became EU legislation in 2000 and requires member states to achieve 'good status' for rivers, lakes, coastal waters and ground water, in terms of both water quality and ecological value. At the local level this is being implemented through local catchment partnerships covering both the New Forest and the River Avon, involving a range of interested organisations. The New Forest partnership has produced a Water Environment Improvement Plan setting out the main issues affecting the area and is working on a number of practical projects with local stakeholders.

*Relevant actions: LH7, LH8*

3.4 A new **Forestry and Woodlands Policy Statement for England** was published by the Government in 2013 following controversy over proposals to sell off public forests. The Statement confirms that the public forest estate will remain in public ownership, managed by a new organisation developed from the existing

<sup>2</sup> Developing the ideas in the Government's Natural Environment White Paper (2011), which focuses on a landscape scale approach to conservation over the next 50 years.

<sup>3</sup> Giving greater value to the many 'services' or benefits which are provided by the natural environment and on which much economic activity and quality of life depends. Examples include flood alleviation, drinking water, crop pollination, human health and well-being and many others.

Forest Enterprise. Its remit will be to conserve the nation's forests while enhancing their social and economic value. The Statement also emphasises the importance of a renewed woodland culture, greater incentives for the management of privately owned woodlands and dealing with the diseases that affect trees and forestry.

3.5 The Forestry Commission and others recognise the increasing threat from **tree pests and diseases**, caused by a combination of global trade in plant material and changes in climate. This is of concern nationally and also has a particular relevance for the important woodlands and forestry Inclosures of the New Forest, although so far most of the major diseases have not reached this area.

3.6 Examples of the most recent threats in the UK (all fungal pathogens) include Chalara dieback of ash, Dothistroma needle blight affecting pines, Phytophthora alni on alder and Phytophthora ramorum living on larch, Douglas fir and a number of other tree species. For more detailed information on tree pests and diseases see: <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pestsanddiseases>

*Relevant actions: LM5, CC1*

3.7 **National planning policy** has been the subject of considerable change over the past few years. Although the Management Plan does not include local planning policies (which are covered separately in the Core Strategies or Local Plans for the National Park and surrounding planning areas), it does try to address some of the wider effects of development pressure.

3.8 The Government's National Planning Policy Framework (2012) seeks to simplify planning guidance into a single short document. It includes a strong emphasis on enabling new sustainable development, while acknowledging that in specific areas, such as National Parks, development will be more restricted to help safeguard their landscapes and natural beauty. However there is growing pressure for development, particularly in the towns, cities and other built up areas close to the New Forest. Outside the National Park a total of about 122,000 new dwellings are proposed in the main urban areas, including Southampton, Portsmouth, Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch and the Salisbury area over the period 2006-2026.

3.9 Since its publication the Government has also introduced a series of **changes to Permitted Development Rights**, which allow offices and agricultural buildings to be used for residential and other purposes without the need for planning permission. The Government recently agreed to exempt National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty from the conversion of agricultural buildings to residential use.

*Relevant actions: LH10, LH11, LD4, LD9, EP6  
Planning and development issues will be addressed more fully in the review of the Core Strategy for the National Park during 2015.*

## Economic trends

3.10 The general **economic climate** has gradually improved over the last few years as the UK begins to emerge from the financial and economic crisis of 2007/8. Within the National Park the local economy has shown surprising resilience during this period, with unemployment remaining at or below 1% of the workforce – considerably lower than the levels seen in Hampshire, the South East and the UK as whole.<sup>4</sup> In addition the Park continues to show strong business diversity, with about 2,300 different businesses spread across a wide range of sectors<sup>5</sup>, including local land-based industries and rural trades which make an important contribution to both the economy and local character of the area. The local business community is cautiously optimistic, with most small businesses predicting an increase in turnover over the next five years (from 2014), although only relatively few are planning to recruit additional staff in the near future.<sup>6</sup> At the same time spending reviews have affected the public sector in particular and many of the statutory organisations in the Forest have had to reduce some services and seek new sources of finance.

3.11 **Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)** have recently become the driving force in regional economic development. They are partnerships between businesses and local authorities that channel government economic funding and help set priorities for investment in roads, buildings and facilities to encourage economic growth within their area. Most of the National Park falls within the Enterprise M3 LEP area, which covers a large part of Surrey and Hampshire. It has a Rural Group which supports growth in the rural economy, together with the sustainable management of the countryside and the protection of nationally important landscapes. Organisations within the National Park are working with the Enterprise M3 LEP, the Swindon and Wiltshire LEP and other surrounding LEPs, to further economic opportunities where these help to achieve the overall objectives of the Park.

3.12 The lack of **effective broadband coverage** has been identified as one of the main issues for local businesses, and is also one of the priorities for the LEPs. The government target is to deliver superfast broadband to at least 90% of premises in the UK, with the aim to extend this to 95% by 2017. Hampshire County Council and Wiltshire Council are leading the delivery of this programme in the New Forest. Opportunities for further funding are being pursued, specifically to improve broadband speeds for the more remote rural communities.

*Relevant actions: LM1, LM2, LM4, LM5, LM8, EW1 to EW11*

3.13 **Traffic and transport** has been a major issue for communities within the National Park for a number of years, including signage, loss of rural character and damage to verges, as well as traffic speed and volumes. Figures show that although

<sup>4</sup> Hampshire County Council data

<sup>5</sup> Office for National Statistics

<sup>6</sup> New Forest Business Needs Survey, 2014 – draft report



there are relatively high volumes of traffic on many of the Forest roads, in most cases there has been relatively little increase during the last five years.<sup>7</sup> This reflects national trends, with the number of car journeys made over this period restricted by the economic recession and the consistently high cost of fuel.

3.14 However, national predictions suggest there may be a marked increase in road use nationally from 2015 onwards, with a possible 19% rise across the country as a whole up to 2025 (taking the medium prediction of several possible scenarios). This is based on the UK moving out of recession and the increasing fuel efficiency of new cars reducing the cost of car journeys.<sup>8</sup>

3.15 Hampshire County Council is the highway authority covering the majority of the National Park. Working with Wiltshire Council, Dorset County Council and Highways England, its strategic approach for the New Forest is to encourage through-traffic to use the main roads and long distance traffic to use the trunk roads and motorway. Actions will be taken to improve the amenity, appearance and rural character of local or minor routes, as far as possible discouraging through traffic and promoting sustainable transport alternatives.

<i>Relevant actions: TT1 to TT11</i>
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## **Recreation**

3.16 Promoting opportunities for **understanding and enjoying the special qualities** of the area is one of the statutory purposes of the National Park. The natural beauty of the landscape, extensive areas of open space, the coastline, villages and various visitor attractions together attract large numbers of local and staying visitors each year, and there are many opportunities for quiet recreation on foot, bicycle and horseback.

3.17 The New Forest is also home to around 35,000 local people and is a place of work for the commoning and farming community and many local businesses. More than half the area is designated for its internationally important wildlife habitats, which include many rare or vulnerable species. Recreation therefore has to be carefully managed so that a wide range of people can understand and enjoy the special qualities of the Forest responsibly, maintaining its wildlife interest and way of life. This remains an important and complex challenge, requiring continuing discussion with the many user groups, communities and other stakeholders who have an interest in the area.

3.18 A Recreation Management Strategy Steering Group has been established<sup>9</sup> to take a strategic approach to recreation management in the future. Its main task is: 'to agree an overall plan for where within and around the National Park people

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<sup>7</sup> Average traffic volumes from Hampshire County Council and Highways England.

<sup>8</sup> National Traffic Forecasts, Department of Transport, 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Comprising the Forestry Commission, Verderers, Natural England, New Forest District Council, National Park Authority and Hampshire County Council.

should be encouraged to go to enjoy outdoor recreation - and how this should be achieved. The aim would be to both improve the New Forest's recreational experience and enhance the other special qualities, including its rich wildlife, tranquility and commoning tradition; and to avoid inadvertently damaging the special qualities which people come to the New Forest to enjoy'.

3.19 Progress has been made in recent years to provide new or improved countryside areas or facilities which meet the recreational needs of people close to where they live, reducing the need to travel and taking some pressure off the most sensitive habitats in the heart of the Forest. These include visitor centres just outside the National Park at Blashford and Testwood Lakes, and a possible new Forest Park in the south of Test Valley, together with recreational facilities at Calshot and proposed new facilities at Lepe within the Park. Funding is available for Lepe Country Park over the next five years to make this into an important and high quality destination for visitors.

3.20 Work to identify further possible sites close to the National Park will continue, including the provision of green spaces close to the urban areas of Southampton and Portsmouth, working with the local authorities to the east of the National Park.<sup>10</sup>

3.21 The Marine and Coastal Access Act, 2009 sets out proposals to create a right of public access along the English coastline for the purpose of outdoor recreation on foot. Natural England is leading on the implementation of the work, with the target of completing the national project by 2020. In developing proposals within the National Park, Natural England will need to have detailed discussions with all the relevant local organisations and landowners.

3.22 There has always been support for responsible recreational and utility cycling in the National Park. However the increase in large-scale organised cycling events over the last few years has resulted in considerable public concern locally, and a new cycling code and a charter for organisers of cycle events have recently been produced. The effectiveness of the charter will be monitored to assess if there is a need for any further controls in the future.

3.23 However, it is hoped that improved event notification procedures and clear advice from the New Forest Public Events and Safety Advisory Group<sup>11</sup> will help to ensure that all kinds of major recreational events within the National Park in the future are well-managed, enjoyed by those involved and designed to reduce any impacts on the Park and its communities.

<i>Relevant actions: SQ1, EP3 to EP8</i>
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<sup>10</sup> A number of these local authorities form the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire, which is currently updating its strategy for providing green spaces in the area.

<sup>11</sup> Comprising the local authorities and emergency services in the area. The Group provides co-ordinated information and advice on public health and safety to event organisers, promotes best practice and fosters good working relationships. For more information see <http://www.newforest.gov.uk/article/15466/Public-Events-and-the-Safety-Advisory-Group>

## 4. Priority actions for 2015-2020

### Introducing the actions

4.1 The actions below are designed to update those in the 2010 Management Plan (which were for 2010-15), looking ahead over the next five years from 2015-20. Many of them help to carry forward actions in the original plan through more specific projects, while others replace those which have been completed, become out-of-date or have not been taken forward due to cost or limited resources (see 5.8 below). A more detailed account of work on the 2010-15 actions can be found at: [www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/managementplan](http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/managementplan).

4.2 The actions have been divided under the ten topics of the 2010 Plan, which contains more details of the context of each topic. The topics themselves are grouped into three sections – Protect, Enjoy and Prosper – which broadly reflect the two national park purposes and duty (see para 1.2).

4.3 Dividing the actions under different headings is largely for ease of reading: many are relevant to several topics and help to deliver more than one Management Plan objective. **The topics and the actions are not arranged in any particular order of priority.**

4.4 The aim has been to keep the actions reasonably brief and as self explanatory as possible, although some background information has been included where this seemed helpful. In a few places technical or New-Forest specific terms have been used and these are defined in the footnotes or the glossary (Annex 2).

### How the actions were chosen

4.5 The actions listed below are not meant to be a comprehensive list of all the work which may be undertaken in the National Park over the next five years, but are examples of some of the more important new initiatives being proposed by the statutory and other organisations in the Forest.

4.6 A total of 90 actions have been included, all of which are viewed as priorities for the next five years by the twenty or so local organisations that are leading on them. They were chosen because:

- They are directly relevant to the national park purposes and duty and to the objectives in the 2010 Management Plan (listed in Annex 1 and summarised at the top of each topic).
- In general they show newly proposed or recently started projects, rather than on-going work. Therefore they do not attempt to include important work which is already taking place and will continue – such as maintenance of the highways, the day to day management of the Open Forest, education work in local schools and many other examples.

- They are fairly precise and specific, and where possible can be completed within the next five years; they are therefore usually defined projects, rather than broader activities or policies.
- They are felt to be a priority by the organisation(s) concerned and resources are currently available or likely to be found to take them forward.

### **The status of the actions**

4.7 **Most of the actions included are still at an early stage of development**, but show the ideas or ambitions that different organisations have identified, and to which they are prepared to commit time and resources. How or where particular actions may be taken forward will depend on further more detailed discussions with local communities, land managers, businesses and organisations.

In a few cases projects may require a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) or take into account sustainability issues, as recommended in the HRA Screening Report and Sustainability Appraisal for the Plan as a whole (see website for more detail).

4.8 **Where targets are suggested these are meant to be aims over the five years from 2015-20** (unless indicated otherwise) and are not based directly on any specific proposals.

### **Resources and funding**

4.9 Since 2010 there have been continuing cuts to the core budgets of all the main statutory organisations in the Forest. They have therefore had to prioritise carefully to maintain their core functions and services, and also attempt to find resources for new work which will be of benefit to the landscapes, communities and businesses of the Forest.

4.10 This has placed increasing importance on external funding and partnership work to deliver large-scale projects in the Forest. Local organisations, almost always working in partnership, have been very successful in bidding for government and EU funding in the past, and a number of the actions suggested below are also dependent on such funding. Therefore some of the actions and targets may need to be updated over time, as details of the available funding are finalised. Any changes will be clearly noted on the relevant web pages.

## Priorities for Protect

### Enhancing the Forest's landscapes and habitats

***To enhance the large scale landscapes and habitats that are characteristic of the New Forest, the actions over the next five years include:***

#### **Natural habitats of better quality and greater resilience**

*57% of the National Park is covered by Sites of Special Scientific Interest and in addition there are 380 sites of local importance for nature conservation.<sup>12</sup> Improving the condition of these sites and connecting them to the wider countryside will help to create a more robust and valuable network for wildlife.*

LH1 Improve the condition of locally important nature conservation sites<sup>13</sup>, working with site owners and prioritising the most vulnerable grassland, heathland and wetland habitats. The target is to enhance at least 30 local sites.

*Lead organisation: New Forest Land Advice Service*

LH2 Work with landowners and managers to maintain the national SSSI condition targets of 95% of SSSI<sup>14</sup> units in favourable or recovering condition, with 50% of these in favourable condition by 2020. Whilst these are national targets it will be the ambition of the delivery partners to aim higher locally, within the New Forest, to achieve 60% favourable condition by 2020.

*Lead organisations: Natural England and other partners*

LH3 Create links between habitats through a better network of hedgerows, woods, streams, road verges and field margins, working with private and public sector landowners. The target is to develop and complete at least one major landscape scale project within the Park by 2020.

*Lead organisation: New Forest Land Advice Service*

LH4 Seek opportunities for large-scale habitat restoration, including continuing the major restoration work at Foxbury<sup>15</sup> which will return the area to heathland and broad-leaved woodland, improve access for visitors and complement the open landscapes of the nearby Bramshaw commons.

*Lead organisations: National Trust, National Park Authority and other partners*

LH5 Continue to monitor coastal change to inform the conservation and creation of habitats, and help in the development of schemes to stabilise saltmarsh.

*Lead organisation: New Forest District Council*

LH6 Take forward a project to protect the grazed verges of the Open Forest from damage and erosion, both by parked cars and traffic overrun.

*Lead organisations: Verderers of the New Forest, National Park Authority and other partners*

<sup>12</sup> Figures from Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre.

<sup>13</sup> Refers to sites designated as SINC (Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation) or County Wildlife Sites. These do not have statutory protection, but are of great value locally.

<sup>14</sup> Sites of Special Scientific Interest (nationally important sites which are given statutory protection). They cover 57% of the land area of the National Park. Those areas which have habitats in good condition are termed 'favourable'.

<sup>15</sup> A large area of National Trust owned land near Wellow.

### **Improved condition of river catchments**

*37% of rivers within the Park currently have good water quality, while 63% are of moderate or poor quality.<sup>16</sup> The aim is to involve all agencies and local communities in improving water quality, wildlife and amenity value, looking at the river system as a whole.*

LH7 Promote an integrated approach to river catchment management<sup>17</sup> in the New Forest, including wildlife conservation, surface and ground water quality and flood prevention, working with all agencies, communities and landowners.

*Lead organisations: New Forest Catchment Partnership, National Park Authority, Freshwater Habitats Trust, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust*

LH8 Improve the water quality and ecological value of river catchments by carrying out practical enhancements to at least 43 km of rivers and 5 ponds, working with land managers.

*Lead organisations: New Forest Catchment Partnership, National Park Authority, Freshwater Habitats Trust, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust*

LH9 Expand the project to remove invasive non-native plants along river corridors, working with landowners to target at least 40 prioritised locations.

*Lead organisation: Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust*

### **Reduced impacts from new development**

*Future development may increase visitor pressure on the protected habitats of the Open Forest and coast. This can be helped by funding additional visitor management and by providing new or improved green spaces in less sensitive locations.*

LH10 Reduce the impacts of any new development which may have an effect on the internationally protected habitats and species of the National Park by access management, education and awareness-raising projects and the provision of new or improved areas for countryside recreation, all funded by developer contributions.

*Lead organisations: National Park Authority, New Forest District Council, Wiltshire Council, Test Valley Borough Council*

LH11 Develop a green infrastructure plan<sup>18</sup> for the National Park to help identify opportunities for an improved network of open spaces and attractive alternative locations for recreation, with benefits for health and well-being, linking with the green infrastructure strategies of neighbouring local authorities and identifying joint projects.

*Lead organisations: National Park Authority, neighbouring local authorities*

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<sup>16</sup> Environment Agency figures based on data from Water Framework Directive monitoring stations.

<sup>17</sup> Management of the whole river system: including the main river, its tributaries and other water bodies.

<sup>18</sup> See glossary.

### **Greater knowledge of wildlife and habitats**

*Although the wildlife of the New Forest has been much studied, there are still gaps in knowledge, especially of some of the rarer species and more fragmented habitats. A fuller understanding would help to inform management decisions and enable long term monitoring of trends.*

LH12 Carry out a targeted programme of surveys of protected or vulnerable species to assess population levels and inform conservation needs.

*Lead organisation: Forestry Commission*

LH13 Publish a comprehensive Ancient Woodland Inventory for the National Park, and promote to land managers as the basis for ancient woodland restoration projects.

*Lead organisation: Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust*

LH14 Establish clear methods for monitoring the status of wildlife and habitats, contributing to the Government's Biodiversity 2020 targets<sup>19</sup>, including the extent and condition of priority habitats and the number of local people engaged in wildlife issues.

*Lead organisation: National Park Authority*

### **Encouraging sustainable land management**

***To encourage farming, commoning and woodland management that sustains the special qualities of the Forest, the actions over the next five years include:***

#### **Better access to local advice and training**

*There has been great demand for land management training and advice since the New Forest Land Advice Service<sup>20</sup> was established. The continued availability of local advice and a greater number of training courses will help land managers to access funding and improve habitats and landscapes on private land. More strategically, ecosystem services mapping (see LM3) shows how different land uses and natural resources contribute to quality of life and benefit the local economy*

LM1 Provide New Forest-focused land management advice and supporting information, including Lidar and infra-red data<sup>21</sup> where appropriate. The target is to provide advice to 250 landowners, farmers, commoners and woodland managers over five years.

*Lead organisations: New Forest Land Advice Service*

LM2 Provide practical training on best practice for land management, aimed at farmers and commoners, with at least six courses arranged each year. The target is to enable training for 600 land managers and at least 30 new and young commoners.

*Lead organisations: New Forest Land Advice Service, New Forest Commoners Defence Association*

<sup>19</sup> See section 3.2 above.

<sup>20</sup> An independent advice service for land managers, established in 2010 by the National Park Authority, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and Natural England.

<sup>21</sup> Methods of aerial mapping which reveal archaeological features beneath vegetation cover.

- LM3 Promote the use of ecosystem services maps<sup>22</sup> of the National Park and surrounding area as an aid to sustainable land management and to show the value of the natural environment for social well-being and the economy.  
*Lead organisation: National Park Authority*

#### **Improved economic viability of land management**

*There are a number of opportunities to support commoning, woodland management, farming and other land-based businesses, and to generate income in new ways. Particular issues include high land values in the area, which affect the availability of back-up grazing for commoning, and the extent of privately owned woodland which it is currently not viable to manage.*

- LM4 Increase the availability of back-up land for commoning by enabling the use of land managed by public and voluntary sector organisations, and in addition seek to maintain the stock of existing back-up land. The target is to provide at least 20ha of additional back-up land.  
*Lead organisations: National Park Authority, New Forest Land Advice Service*

- LM5 Increase the economic viability and environmental value of woodlands by establishing 'management hubs' of nearby woodland owners<sup>23</sup> and expanding the markets for local timber products, working with the industry and neighbouring local authorities. The target is to improve the management of at least 2000 ha of woodland by 2020.  
*Lead organisation: New Forest Land Advice Service*

- LM6 Research potential new markets for the products of Open Forest management<sup>24</sup>, to aid the economic and environmental sustainability of these important habitats.  
*Lead organisation: Forestry Commission*

- LM7 Co-ordinate and promote the new Countryside Stewardship Scheme<sup>25</sup>, in particular encouraging uptake from farmers and landowners adjacent to the New Forest SSSI.  
*Lead organisation: Natural England*

- LM8 Support commoners and smaller farmers in adapting to changes in the Common Agricultural Policy, including events for land managers to raise awareness and help with the new on-line system for payments.  
*Lead organisations: National Farmers Union, New Forest Land Advice Service*

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<sup>22</sup> A way of showing how the natural environment contributes to quality of life and the economy, including flood alleviation, drinking water, crop pollination, human health and well-being and many others (see para 3.2 above). The maps include the National Park and the surrounding 20km.

<sup>23</sup> Working collaboratively helps to make the management of smaller woodlands more viable.

<sup>24</sup> Such as heather, bracken and wood products.

<sup>25</sup> A new government funding scheme, replacing the current Environmental Stewardship Schemes, but continuing to offer support to farmers and landowners for good environmental management.



## Conserving local distinctiveness

***To conserve the many features that contribute to local distinctiveness within the National Park, the actions over the next five years include:***

### **Better understanding of archaeology and the built environment**

*Improved knowledge of the archaeology, historic buildings and local character of the National Park would help to conserve features of interest and encourage greater interest and involvement from land and property owners and local people.*

LD1 Complete a comprehensive record of vernacular buildings<sup>26</sup> and structures, and work with owners to ensure their local importance and conservation value is recognised.

*Lead organisation: National Park Authority*

LD2 Bring together all available information on archaeology and identify gaps in knowledge, focusing on specific time periods or themes each year, including the Bronze Age, Roman period, historic industries and ancient route ways.

*Lead organisation: National Park Authority*

LD3 Develop a WWI project, involving local people in recording family memories and mapping wartime locations in the Forest, and developing an on-line archive of WWI material.

*Lead organisation: National Park Authority*

LD4 Design and take forward a project to assess changes in the local distinctiveness of settlements over time, with the involvement of communities.

*Lead organisation: National Park Authority*

### **Improvements to local distinctiveness through practical projects**

*There are about 620 listed buildings and over 200 scheduled monuments in the National Park. The number assessed to be 'at risk' is relatively small, but varies each year. The targets given aim to achieve an overall improvement in condition over the five year period. A pilot project is also proposed to restore some of the traditional boundaries of villages adjacent to the Open Forest, working with local communities.*

LD5 Work with property owners to encourage the renovation and active use of historic buildings where these are 'at risk'. The target is to improve the condition of 20 historic buildings by 2020.

*Lead organisations: National Park Authority, Historic England*

LD6 Actively manage the scheduled and unscheduled ancient monuments on the Crown Lands and Open Forest<sup>27</sup> to bring them into good condition. The target is to improve the condition of at least 10 sites on the Crown Lands each year.

*Lead organisations: Forestry Commission, National Trust, Hampshire County Council, Historic England, National Park Authority*

LD7 Maintain the character of Forest edge settlements by working with, initially, two local communities to protect traditional boundaries and other features,

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<sup>26</sup> Traditional buildings characteristic of the local area.

<sup>27</sup> See glossary.

and prevent encroachments on Forest land.

*Lead organisations: Forestry Commission, Verderers of the New Forest*

- LD8 Deliver a range of projects to enhance the Western Escarpment Conservation Area<sup>28</sup>, including recommendations for the design of new highway infrastructure and addressing damage to verges, and evaluating success for use in other Conservation Areas.

*Lead organisations: Western Escarpment Conservation Area Steering Group, National Park Authority*

### **Local guidelines for future development**

*A number of villages have completed Village Design Statements and others may be considering Neighbourhood Plans. Advice and support is available for parishes thinking about producing their own local development policies or design guidelines.*

- LD9 Support communities wishing to produce Village Design Statements or Neighbourhood Plans, including policies that take into account the local distinctiveness of their area.

*Lead organisations: National Park Authority, Wiltshire Council, New Forest District Council, Test Valley Borough Council*

## **Planning for climate change**

***To plan for the likely impacts of a changing climate, the actions over the next five years include:***

### **Planning for changes to the natural environment**

*There are concerns about the spread of plant diseases, changes to the coastline and potential drying of wetland habitats, all of which may be partly due to changes in the climate. The proposals seek to address some of these issues and also develop an agreed plan for dealing with a wide range of long-term climate impacts.*

- CC1 Raise awareness about the increased risk of tree diseases and pests, and agree a strategy to sustain the woodlands of the New Forest in the long-term; including a public seminar in 2015 and other discussion / consultation events.

*Lead organisation: Forestry Commission*

- CC2 Research the effects of coastal change on winter bird roosts, and breeding sites for gulls and terns, and recommend key sites to safeguard in the future.<sup>29</sup>

*Lead organisation: Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust*

- CC3 Maintain the New Forest's important function as a carbon sink<sup>30</sup> by protecting and restoring natural habitats, including wetland and mires.

*Lead organisation: Natural England*

<sup>28</sup> This large Conservation Area includes a number of Forest edge settlements in the parishes and towns of Hale, Woodgreen, Godshell, Hyde, Ellingham, Harbridge and Ibsley, Fordingbridge and Ringwood. The steering group comprises representatives from the local councils of these areas and aims to agree practical local projects to maintain the character of the Conservation Area.

<sup>29</sup> Part of a Solent-wide project co-ordinated by the Solent Forum.

<sup>30</sup> The absorption and holding of CO<sub>2</sub> in soils or vegetation.

CC4 Produce and promote a climate change adaptation plan for the National Park, identifying likely future climate-related impacts and suggesting ways of adapting to them.

*Lead organisation: National Park Authority*

### **Improved management of flood risk**

*Recent storm and flood events have affected a number of communities locally. Further funding is needed to protect the most vulnerable areas, while support is being made available to help communities prepare for any future extreme weather events.*

CC5 Support communities wishing to prepare Emergency Response Plans, or establish Flood Action Groups, to plan ahead for future flood or other extreme weather events.

*Lead organisations: Hampshire County Council, Wiltshire Council, New Forest District Council, Test Valley Borough Council, Environment Agency*

CC6 Seek further support and funding for identified flood relief, coastal defence and beach management works designed to reduce flooding and coastal erosion in the future.

*Lead organisations: New Forest District Council, Environment Agency, Hampshire County Council, Verderers of the New Forest (where common rights allow stock to graze)*

## **Safeguarding tranquillity**

***To help maintain and enhance the tranquillity of the National Park, the actions over the next five years include:***

### **Effective monitoring of the overall tranquillity of the National Park**

*Mapping of the tranquil areas of the National Park was last carried out in 1996, while the later national mapping by the Council for the Protection of Rural England produced uncertain results when applied locally. New mapping specifically for the Park is in progress, using updated criteria to provide a baseline for future monitoring.*

ST1 Ensure the updated tranquillity mapping for the National Park is available in the necessary mapping formats and encourage its use by those involved in managing or administering the Forest.

*Lead organisation: National Park Authority*

ST2 Agree ways to maintain and enhance the tranquil areas of the National Park over time, including ways to reduce disturbance from low-flying aircraft, working with interested groups and local communities.

*Lead organisation: National Park Authority*

### **Reducing visual intrusion**

*There are currently several funding opportunities available for reducing the visual effects of power cables on the local landscape, involving the energy suppliers SSE and the National Grid.*

- ST3 Progress the undergrounding of low voltage cables in appropriate locations, prioritising the most visually sensitive areas.  
*Lead organisations: SSE, National Park Authority*
- ST4 Seek national funding for protected landscapes to underground high voltage cables and remove pylons, focusing on the pylons in the north of the Forest and close to the Waterside.  
*Lead organisations: National Grid, National Park Authority*
- ST5 Carry out an assessment of the visual impacts of communications, services, and other infrastructure on the open landscapes of the Forest and seek ways to reduce those impacts where possible.  
*Lead organisations: Verderers of the New Forest, National Park Authority*

## Priorities for Enjoy

### Understanding the special qualities

***To further people's understanding of the special qualities of the New Forest, the actions over the next five years include:***

#### **Better public awareness of New Forest issues**

*There have already been a number of successful campaigns promoting messages about the New Forest to visitors and local people, involving many local organisations and the various ranger services. These will continue, using a variety of ways to encourage people to understand, value and care for the Forest.*

- SQ1 Promote public awareness campaigns on specific New Forest issues, with initiatives targeted at both visitors and local people. The aim is to achieve, year on year, fewer road traffic animal deaths, less disturbance of ground nesting birds, greater protection of fungi, reduced dog fouling and litter and lower incidence of feeding ponies.

*Lead organisations: National Park Authority, Forestry Commission, National Trust, Verderers of the New Forest, New Forest District Council, Commoners Defence Association, New Forest Dog Owners Group and others*

#### **Greater involvement of local volunteers**

*There is a great deal of interest in various aspects of volunteering in the New Forest, with more than 20 organisations offering volunteer opportunities relating to conservation and understanding of the area. The proposals give just a few examples of the support available.*

- SQ2 Support and help co-ordinate the work of volunteer groups and networks, enabling them to become an integral part of delivering specific projects in the National Park, including (as examples) mapping of local heritage features, archaeological field work and removal of invasive plant species. The target is to involve as many local people as possible, with a combined total of at least 5000 volunteer days over five years.

*Lead organisation: New Forest Landscape Partnership*

SQ3 Fully support the New Forest Volunteer Ranger Service through the provision of staff resources, funding and training.

The service will aim to deliver about 1,400 volunteer days annually.

*Lead organisation: Forestry Commission*

### **Easier access to information and education about the Forest**

*There are a variety of ways to help people find out more about the National Park, including bringing together existing studies and research in one place through an on-line information centre and developing a Forest-specific curriculum for local schools. Innovative use of new media, such as mobile phone apps, can be used to help visitors learn about the National Park while reducing the need for on-site signage.*

SQ4 Further develop targeted, effective and suitable interpretation that helps tell the story of the New Forest to a wide variety of audiences, using, for example, exhibitions, self-led trails and new media.

*Lead organisations: National Park Authority, Forestry Commission, National Trust, New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust, Hampshire County Council*

SQ5 Establish an E-cademy on-line centre for research and studies related to the New Forest, enabling access to a wide range material held by different organisations and academic institutions.

*Lead organisation: New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust*

SQ6 Organise a regular New Forest Wildlife Forum event bringing together the many wildlife organisations and researchers to exchange ideas and publicise projects.

*Lead organisation: National Park Authority*

SQ7 Support educational activities and programmes that encourage learning about the National Park, from Forest School activities for pre-school children to Countryside Management courses for university students, including expanding the New Forest Curriculum<sup>31</sup> for local schools and colleges and annual conferences for teachers and secondary school pupils.

*Lead organisations: National Park Authority, Hampshire County Council*

SQ8 Improve understanding of commoning traditions by restoring the historic features of the Verderers Hall and enabling free public access.

*Lead organisations : Forestry Commission and partners*

## **Enjoying the special qualities of the National Park**

***To add to people's experience and enjoyment of the National Park, while safeguarding its special qualities, the actions over the next five years include:***

### **Greater community involvement in access and open space improvements**

*Many local communities have got involved in improving the open spaces and rights of way within their area, with the help of local volunteers. Advice and funding is available for interested local groups.*

<sup>31</sup> A major new resource for educators showing how the complex landscape and special qualities of the Forest can contribute to life-long learning across the curriculum – see [newforestcurriculum.org.uk](http://newforestcurriculum.org.uk).

EP1 Improve specific areas of open space for people and wildlife in parishes within and around the National Park, working with interested local communities. The target is to work on projects with at least ten communities and local groups.

*Lead organisation: National Park Authority*

EP2 Work with individual communities to design and fund at least five projects annually to help improve local rights of way or access to countryside recreation.

*Lead organisation: National Park Authority*

### **Safer, more enjoyable and responsible use of routes within the National Park**

*The aim is to make the roads and agreed off road tracks safer, more enjoyable and, where possible, better connected for non-car users (see also actions under 'Improving traffic and transport' below), including people with disabilities.*

EP3 Improve the safety and connectivity of routes used by pedestrians, horse-riders and cyclists to travel between settlements and places of interest, including an awareness-raising campaign to encourage mutual respect and the responsible shared use of the network of roads and agreed tracks by all.

*Lead organisations: National Park Authority, Hampshire County Council, Forestry Commission*

EP4 Establish a volunteer-led organisation to give people with disabilities the opportunity to experience cycling in the National Park, using specially adapted bikes.<sup>32</sup>

*Lead organisation: New Forest National Park Authority*

EP5 Through the New Forest Public Events and Safety Advisory Group<sup>33</sup>, monitor the effectiveness of the charter for cycle event organisers to assess if there is a need for any further controls in the future, and work with all event organisers to improve the running of any large-scale events within the National Park, reducing impacts on the Park and its communities, while ensuring they can be enjoyed by all those involved.

*Lead organisations: New Forest District Council, Hampshire County Council, National Park Authority, Hampshire Constabulary*

### **High quality countryside facilities for visitors which also reduce pressure on sensitive habitats**

*High quality countryside facilities close to centres of population, or near the boundary of the National Park, may provide attractive alternatives for visitors and help to reduce pressure on the more sensitive habitats in the centre of the Forest. Moors Valley Country Park, to the west of the National Park, already attracts more than 800,000 visitors each year.*

EP6 Develop a new 'Forest Park' in the southern Test Valley to provide opportunities for outdoor recreation close to communities in Romsey, Eastleigh and Southampton, helping to reduce pressure on the sensitive habitats of the National Park.

*Lead organisations: Test Valley Borough Council, Forestry Commission*

<sup>32</sup> The project will involve trained supervisors and use agreed cycle routes in the Park.

<sup>33</sup> See footnote to paragraph 3.23 above.

- EP7 Develop the facilities at Blashford Lakes nature reserve to create an important centre for visitors near the western edge of the National Park.  
*Lead organisation: Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust*
- EP8 Redevelop the visitor facilities at Lepe to provide a flagship country park, incorporating sustainable design and creating an innovative centre for interpretation relating to the coast and Forest.  
*Lead organisation: Hampshire County Council*

## Priorities for Prosper

### Supporting local communities

***To help strengthen the well-being, identity and sustainability of local communities, the actions over the next five years include:***

#### **Community involvement in local heritage and wildlife conservation**

*Support, funding and advice is available for local communities wishing to record and help conserve various aspects of the history and natural environment of their area. There has already been considerable interest in the Community Wildlife Plans project, with plans now produced for several parishes, including Milford-on-Sea, Landford, Wellow and Marchwood.*

- LC1 Work with communities to identify heritage features of importance to them, and help them record and celebrate these to a wider audience; initially involving eight local communities.

*Lead organisation: National Park Authority*

- LC2 Continue to support the Community Wildlife Plans initiative<sup>34</sup>, helping eight local communities to deliver their action plans, including practical environmental improvements.

*Lead organisation: New Forest Land Advice Service*

#### **Improved local facilities and services**

*There has been a gradual loss of local services in many of the more rural areas of the National Park, particularly village shops and post offices. The proposed actions aim to improve this situation where there is a particular local need. This includes advice and funding for shops and community facilities, a network of locally-based Village Agents and seeking more affordable housing for local people.*

- LC3 Provide best practice advice and potential funding support for village shops, community buildings and other community facilities, including organising an annual Hampshire village shops conference to share information and encourage collaborative working.

*Lead organisation: Hampshire County Council*

<sup>34</sup> A project helping local people to record and map the wildlife and habitats of interest in their area.

- LC4 Expand the Village Agents programme within the New Forest, enabling older residents to gain advice on transport, home maintenance and financial matters from volunteers within the community.  
*Lead organisations: Age Concern Hampshire, Hampshire County Council*
- LC5 Identify possible sites for affordable housing, including suitable publicly owned land, and agree new schemes designed for local people which are of high quality and sustainability, and are in keeping with the character of the area.  
*Lead organisations: New Forest District Council, National Park Authority, Action Hampshire, registered housing providers*
- LC6 Use the Forestry Commission's housing stock in ways which benefit the special qualities of the area, by including lettings to practising commoners and those involved in local land-based businesses or organisations.  
*Lead organisation: Forestry Commission*
- LC7 Reduce fly-tipping by monitoring the main hotspots on council land in order to tackle known offenders, and improving awareness of the best means for households to dispose of unwanted bulky waste.  
*Lead organisations: New Forest District Council*

### **More healthy and sustainable lifestyles**

*Health and well-being have become important national issues in recent years and the National Park offers many opportunities to help improve the situation locally, involving work by a number of organisations. Actively encouraging more sustainable lifestyles is one aspect of this, including practical support for community-led projects such as local food production.*

- LC8 Actively involve local communities in a variety of initiatives to improve health, mental health and well-being, including the New Forest Health Walks programme, dementia awareness training and projects to encourage a more active younger generation.  
*Lead organisations: New Forest District Council, Hampshire County Council, Wiltshire Council, National Park Authority, Community First New Forest*
- LC9 Help young people to become more involved in the National Park by removing barriers and providing new opportunities, including developing at least three 'wildplay' sites<sup>35</sup> enabling direct experiences of the natural environment, and encouraging confidence and skills through the Mosaic Youth Project.<sup>36</sup>  
*Lead organisations: National Trust, National Park Authority*
- LC10 Support a range of local initiatives that encourage more sustainable lifestyles and economies, including energy conservation, local food production and sustainable transport. The target is to support at least 50 community projects over five years.  
*Lead organisations: National Park Authority, New Forest Transition*

<sup>35</sup> Areas which are suitable for young people to experience nature in a safe environment, located outside the Open Forest within easy reach of nearby centres of population.

<sup>36</sup> The Mosaic Youth Project is a national initiative to enable 16-25 year olds to become more positively involved in National Parks, helping to develop confidence, leadership skills and knowledge of the natural environment.



## Fostering economic well-being

***To encourage a diverse and sustainable local economy that benefits the communities of the area, the actions over the next five years include:***

### **Support for investment, marketing and distribution**

*Various funding opportunities are available to help businesses, derived from EU funding (such as the new LEADER programme) or from national government, through the recently established Local Enterprise Partnerships. The proposals aim to ensure that these result in investment in local businesses in and around the National Park. In addition projects such as the Fair Booking initiative and the New Forest Marque seek to promote the New Forest as a brand and bring benefits to the tourism and local produce sectors. The statutory organisations will continue to work closely with the New Forest Business Partnership, which represents many of the business interests in the Park.*

EW1 Continue to promote the Brand New Forest campaign encouraging greater use of local businesses by local people, including a pilot Fair Booking initiative, establishing a locally based visitor accommodation booking system.

*Lead organisations: New Forest District Council, New Forest Business Partnership*

EW2 Deliver the Rural Development LEADER Programme<sup>37</sup> for the New Forest, funding the growth and creation of jobs in rural businesses and supporting local services.

*Lead organisations: New Forest Local Action Group, New Forest District Council*

EW3 Work closely with the relevant Local Enterprise Partnerships<sup>38</sup> to identify initiatives that both support a sustainable local economy within the Park and help deliver the LEPs wider economic objectives.

*Lead organisations: Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council, New Forest Local Action Group, National Park Authority*

EW4 Encourage private sector investment in forestry and land management by providing a range of business opportunities for work on the Crown Lands, suitable for companies of different sizes and expertise.

*Lead organisation: Forestry Commission*

EW5 Promote the New Forest Marque<sup>39</sup> as the recognised symbol of local produce and help to support and develop new and existing local produce businesses. The target is to achieve 160 businesses as Marque members by 2020.

*Lead organisations: New Forest Produce Ltd, National Park Authority*

EW6 Provide practical means of connecting local producers with outlets, such as hotels, shops and pubs, through the European funded 'DEAL' project, providing supply chain software and a centre enabling the easy distribution of products.

*Lead organisation: New Forest District Council*

<sup>37</sup> An EU funding programme, forming part of the government's Rural Development Programme, which enables investment in rural businesses in a particular area to meet local needs.

<sup>38</sup> See section 3.11 above.

<sup>39</sup> A system of accreditation and promotion for local producers and retailers, showing that their products have a strong connection to the New Forest. There are currently about 120 members.

### **Improved broadband coverage**

*Superfast broadband is a vital requirement for many businesses, particularly in the more rural areas. A national programme is being co-ordinated in the area by Hampshire County Council and Wiltshire Council, but more funding is being sought from the Rural Community Broadband fund to cover the more remote areas of the National Park.*

EW7 Help rural businesses and communities to function more efficiently by supporting the national programmes to deliver superfast broadband to 95% of premises, and seek additional funding to provide a more complete coverage throughout the National Park.

*Lead organisations: Hampshire County Council, Wiltshire Council, National Park Authority, New Forest District Council*

### **Access to local advice and training**

*Practical advice and training is being made available for people wishing to establish rural businesses or social enterprises, or for those already involved in the local economy. They include training in rural skills and sustainable tourism (see also 'Encouraging sustainable land management' above).*

EW8 Support a range of skills training related to the local area, including providing apprenticeships in environmental conservation, training at least 125 people in traditional building skills.

*Lead organisations: National Park Authority and other partners*

EW9 Arrange training for at least 100 tourism businesses and staff to help make their business more sustainable, and to better promote the special qualities of the Park to visitors.

*Lead organisation: National Park Authority*

EW10 Actively encourage the development of social enterprises within rural communities, providing practical support, advice and guidance on funding.

*Lead organisations: Hampshire County Council, Action Hampshire*

EW11 Increase interest and demand for courses in rural and land-based skills through improved marketing and promotion.

*Lead organisations: Hampshire County Council and education providers*

### **Improving traffic and transport**

***To reduce the impacts of traffic on the Forest and promote sustainable transport alternatives, the actions over the next five years include:***

#### **Appropriate use of the road network**

*The volume and speed of traffic on Forest roads has been a continuing issue for local people. These proposals aim to help reduce traffic pressure and HGV use on the minor roads as far as possible, including investigating the possibility of a 'Quiet Lanes' network and encouraging through-traffic to use the major routes.*

TT1 Investigate measures aimed at reducing HGV through-traffic by encouraging the use of more appropriate roads, including a web-based route planning system that identifies preferred routes.

*Lead organisations: Hampshire County Council, Wiltshire Council*

TT2 Review speed limits for the minor roads in Wiltshire that lie within the National Park, considering suitability and enforceability, in order to reduce traffic speed.

*Lead organisation: Wiltshire Council, National Park Authority*

TT3 Work with Highways England to help minimise delays and improve the reliability of journey times on the A31 and M27, in order to reduce the use of other routes through the Forest by long distance traffic.

*Lead organisation: Hampshire County Council*

TT4 Develop a 'Quiet Lanes' network in appropriate locations, initially as a limited pilot project, to help maintain the rural character of minor roads and enable their safe use by pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders, as well as motorists.

*Lead organisation: Hampshire County Council*

### **Improved highway design and maintenance**

*Highway infrastructure, such as signs, kerbing and crossings, have an important effect on the character of the National Park. There are opportunities to reduce visual and ecological impacts while still ensuring highway safety, using designs and ways of working that take into account the special qualities and character of the area.*

TT5 Reduce unnecessary sign clutter within the National Park, particularly targeting the minor road network.

*Lead organisations: Hampshire County Council, Wiltshire Council*

TT6 Publish design guidelines for highway infrastructure to ensure that new works to the road network respect local distinctiveness and avoid suburbanisation, including the appropriate design and location of signs, kerbing, footways and other elements, taking into account the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and other non-motorised users

*Lead organisation: Hampshire County Council*

TT7 Produce and implement a maintenance plan and specification for highway operations, setting out agreed standards within the National Park, taking into account the sensitivity of its protected landscapes and habitats.

*Lead organisation: Hampshire County Council*

### **More opportunities for sustainable travel**

*Currently about 80% of visitors access the National Park by car, but the success of the New Forest Tour (open top bus), which now links the Park with nearby towns, indicates an interest in using other methods of transport where these are easily available. It is hoped that improved public bus services for both visitors and local people will help to reduce private car use in the future.*

TT8 Improve opportunities to use a range of sustainable transport options, including the New Forest Tour<sup>40</sup>, Beach Bus, other seasonal bus services, rail links, walking and cycling, and investigate the possibility of Park and Ride. The target is to achieve a 5% reduction in the number of visits by car by 2020.

*Lead organisation: National Park Authority*

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<sup>40</sup> See Chapter 2 above.

TT9 Rebrand and promote existing local bus routes into and across the National Park, adding a New Forest theme, providing user-friendly information and enabling commercially viable services for residents. To include routes between Lymington and Southampton, Bournemouth and Salisbury and Southampton and Salisbury.

*Lead organisations: National Park Authority, Wiltshire Council, Hampshire County Council, bus service operators*

TT10 Explore the funding and feasibility options, such as the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership, for adjacent to carriageway cycle routes on fenced roads between main settlements to improve safe access for commuting and leisure cycling, including a link between Lymington and Cadnam.<sup>41</sup>

*Lead organisations: Minstead Parish Council, National Park Authority, Hampshire County Council*

TT11 Undertake an 'active travel' programme, encouraging walking and cycling to reduce car use and improve health through a series of guided walks, cycle skills training and other initiatives, aimed at people of all ages and abilities.

*Lead organisation: National Park Authority*

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<sup>41</sup> Any specific proposals which may arise from this action would be subject to all the necessary consultations and consents involving Natural England, the Verderers, the National Park Authority, local communities and others.

## Annex 1 Strategic objectives for the National Park

(taken from the 2010 Management Plan)

- **Enhancing landscapes and habitats** – protect and enhance the large scale cultural landscapes and semi-natural habitats of the New Forest
- **Conserving local distinctiveness** – conserve and enhance the wealth of individual characteristics that contribute to the local distinctiveness of the villages and landscapes of the New Forest
- **Encouraging sustainable land management** – encourage land management that sustains the special qualities of the National Park
- **Planning for climate change** – plan for the likely impacts of climate change on the special qualities of the New Forest and reduce the overall environmental footprint of the National Park]
- **Safeguarding tranquillity** – maintain and enhance the tranquillity of the National Park
- **Understanding the special qualities** – achieve a shared understanding and appreciation of the special qualities of the National park by local people, visitors and organisations
- **Enjoying the National Park** – enhance people’s enjoyment and quality of experience of the National Park, while safeguarding the special qualities of the area
- **Supporting local communities** – strengthen the well-being, identity and sustainability of rural communities, and the pride of local people in their area
- **Fostering economic well-being** – develop a diverse and sustainable economy that contributes to the well-being of local communities
- **Improving traffic and transport** – reduce the impacts of traffic on the special qualities of the National Park and provide a range of sustainable transport alternatives within the Park

## **Annex 2      Glossary of terms**

### **Agri-environment schemes**

Various government programmes which provide funding for farmers and landowners to encourage land management which has environmental benefits

### **Affordable Housing**

Housing that is available for people with a local connection who cannot afford to rent or buy houses on the open market. It includes rented housing, shared ownership and other subsidised schemes usually developed by housing associations or local councils.

### **Ancient Woodland**

A general term used for woodlands which have had a continuous history since at least 1600, and probably much earlier. They are of very high nature conservation and cultural heritage value.

### **Back-up grazing / back-up land**

Enclosed pasture land which forms an integral part of the commoning economy. Generally it is located close to a commoner's holding and has a variety of uses, including overwintering stock, making hay or silage, tending sick animals and finishing ponies for riding.

### **Commoning**

The traditional practice of common rights on the Crown Lands and other commons of the Forest. Commoning has to a large extent created the characteristic landscapes and habitats of the area, as well as many of its cultural traditions. In recent times the most important activity has been the grazing of ponies and cattle on the Open Forest.

### **Crown Lands**

The land owned by the Crown vested in the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Crown Land in the New Forest is managed on behalf of the Secretary of State by Forest Enterprise (part of the Forestry Commission), overseen locally by the Deputy Surveyor.

### **Ecosystem Services**

The many 'services' or benefits which are provided by the natural environment and on which much economic activity and quality of life depends. Examples include flood alleviation, drinking water, crop pollination and human health and well-being. See also 'Natural Capital' below.

### **Green Infrastructure**

A planned or managed network of open spaces, including areas such as parks and gardens, countryside areas and amenity open space, designed to improve the quality of life and provide for the needs of nearby communities.

### **Inclosures**

Areas of planted woodland enclosed from the Open Forest through various Acts of Parliament. All were originally fenced to exclude grazing animals and allow timber production. The older Inclosures of oak and beech now have a high nature conservation value.

**Listed building**

A building recognised to be of national historic importance, designated and protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990.

**Natural capital**

The stock of natural resources which enables the supply of goods or services used by human society. Natural capital requires the preservation of healthy ecosystems if these services, such as water supply, flood alleviation and fertile soils, are to be maintained in the long-term.

**Neighbourhood Plans**

Plans produced by a local parish or town council to guide the amount and location of new development in their area. Once agreed, following a local inquiry and referendum, Neighbourhood Plans form part of the planning policies used by the local planning authority.

**Open Forest**

The unenclosed Crown Lands and adjacent commons which are subject to common rights, including open heathland, mires, grassland and ancient pasture woodland.

**Permitted Development Rights**

The right to carry out relatively minor development without the need for planning permission, as allowed under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, and later amendments. In some designated areas, including national parks and conservation areas, these rights are more restricted.

**Scheduled Ancient Monument**

A designated archaeological site, building or structure of national importance that is protected from destruction or change under the provisions of the 1979 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act.

**Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)**

Non-statutory sites of local importance for nature conservation, identified by local authorities and given some level of protection by local planning policies. This term is used in Hampshire; the equivalent sites in Wiltshire are County Wildlife Sites.

**Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)**

Nationally important sites for nature conservation designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended).

**Village Design Statements**

Village Design Statements (VDS) are documents prepared by local communities to help conserve the distinctive character of their village. They include guidelines to influence the design of any new development in their area, adding local detail to existing planning guidance.

### **Annex 3     The roles of lead organisations**

**Action Hampshire** (Community Action Hampshire) works to support community groups, charities and social enterprises in the area. It is involved in rural affordable housing issues and employs housing enablers to work with local communities.

**Age Concern Hampshire** is an independent charity working across the county to promote independent living to over-50s. It provides information and advice as well as activities, wellbeing and care to many thousands of local people each year.

**Community First New Forest** is a charity that seeks to improve the quality of life for people and communities living in New Forest District and surrounding districts. It supports voluntary and community groups, local volunteers and vulnerable groups and provides services such as community transport, home support and a volunteer centre.

**English Heritage - see Historic England below.**

**The Environment Agency** works to create better places for people and wildlife, and support sustainable development. It is responsible for managing the risk of flooding from main rivers and the sea, conserving water resources, safeguarding water quality and biodiversity and regulating industry and waste.

**Freshwater Habitats Trust** is the national charity dedicated to protecting the wildlife of freshwaters: ponds, rivers, streams and lakes. It gives advice, carries out research, lobbies policy makers and restores and creates wetland habitats to ensure that freshwater wildlife and habitats have a secure future.

**The Forestry Commission** promotes sustainable forestry and woodland management in England, including the provision of management advice, overseeing woodland grant schemes and felling licences and promoting the use of timber and wood-fuel. Forest Enterprise is responsible for the management of the public forest estate, which in the New Forest includes the Crown Lands, covering about 50% of the National Park.

**Hampshire County Council** is responsible for a wide range of public services, including education, social care and transport, and co-ordinates research and information on social and economic issues. It is the highway authority, including public rights of way, for a large part of the National Park, and is the Lead Local Flood Authority with responsibilities for managing flood risk from local sources. It is also involved in the countryside management of land within the National Park and runs a number of environmental education facilities in the Forest.

**Historic England** is the new public body offering expert advice on heritage issues and promoting the wider conservation of the historic environment. It will have an important part to play, along with other partners, in delivering Heritage 2020 - which sets out the strategic priorities for the historic environment for 2015-2020 (co-ordinated by the Historic Environment Forum). English Heritage, as a new independent charity, will be licensed by Historic England to oversee the National Heritage Collection of historic properties.

**The National Park Authority** has a particular interest in conserving the special qualities of the area, improving their understanding and enjoyment, and in supporting



the social and economic well-being of local communities. It acts as the champion for the purposes of the National Park and aims to take these forward in partnership with the many organisations involved. It manages a Local Communities Fund to support community or business enterprises and offers a range of technical and funding advice. It is the planning authority for the area.

**The National Trust** manages important sites within the National Park, actively supports sustainable commoning and farming and has a strong interest in conserving the natural habitats and landscapes of the area.

**Natural England** is responsible for protecting and enhancing England's natural environment. In particular, it works to ensure the good management of national and international nature conservation sites, reverse the decline of biodiversity, conserve the landscape and promote access to the countryside.

**The New Forest Catchment Partnership** comprises a number of organisations, including the Environment Agency, National Park Authority, Freshwater Habitats Trust and the Hampshire and Isle of White Wildlife Trust, which are working with communities and landowners to improve the water quality of the New Forest river system.

**The New Forest Commoners Defence Association** was founded in 1909 to help address the pressures on commoning and protect common rights. It supports the right of commoners to turn out their stock on the Open Forest and promotes the commoners interests in the day-to-day management of the Forest, as well as in the wider political arena.

**New Forest District Council** provides a range of community services and supports social well-being and the local economy within its area, which includes the majority of the National Park. It encourages sustainable tourism and is also the housing authority, waste collection authority, coastal defence authority and traffic management agency for the area. It is responsible for planning policies for much of the area surrounding the National Park.

**The New Forest Land Advice Service** was established in 2010 by the National Park Authority, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and Natural England. It offers free independent advice and training to farmers, commoners, equine owners and community groups.

**The New Forest Landscape Partnership** is a partnership of ten Forest organisations working to develop a Heritage Lottery Fund bid for the New Forest and, if the bid is successful, jointly deliver a wide range of projects. These include initiatives to restore lost landscapes, develop Forest skills and promote wider understanding about the heritage of the Forest.

**The New Forest Local Action Group** oversees the EU funded New Forest LEADER programme, which provides grants to encourage growth in rural businesses and services. The Group comprises representatives of land based businesses, the public sector and voluntary / community organisations.

**The New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust** is a registered charity which owns and manages the New Forest Centre in Lyndhurst. The Centre is a focus for education and information about the National Park and is supported by the National Park Authority. It comprises the New Forest Museum, reference library and shop,

together with the adjoining Visitor Information Centre run by New Forest District Council.

**New Forest Produce Ltd** is a company established in 2004 to oversee the operation of the New Forest Marque, an accreditation scheme which promotes local producers and retailers whose products have a direct connection to the New Forest.

**New Forest Transition** is part of the national Transition Network which aims to help communities move away from dependency on diminishing supplies of fossil fuels and undertake local projects which will make them more self sufficient and sustainable. In the New Forest initiatives include encouraging local food production, reducing energy use in schools and showcasing local homes with sustainability features.

**SSE** is one of the major energy suppliers in the UK and is responsible for electricity distribution and infrastructure in the area.

**Test Valley Borough Council** provides a range of community services, promotes the local economy and manages tourism within its area, a small part of which is within the National Park. It is the planning authority for the area of the borough outside the Park boundary.

**The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust** manages important nature reserves within the National Park and is involved in many projects relating to biodiversity and land management. It has a strong interest in conserving and raising public awareness about the habitats and wildlife of the area and runs programmes of events for children and adults.

**The Verderers of the New Forest**, acting through the Court of Verderers, is a statutory body reconstituted under the 1877 New Forest Act, for the governance and protection of the New Forest within the perambulation. Various New Forest Acts give the Verderers powers to protect and administer the New Forest's unique agricultural commoning practices, to conserve its traditional landscape, wildlife and aesthetic character, including its fauna and flora, peacefulness, natural beauty and cultural heritage; and the powers to limit development and other uses. The Verderers are the New Forest's primary line of defence against misuse of the Crown Lands.

**The Western Escarpment Conservation Area Steering Group** comprises representatives from the parish and town councils of Hale, Woodgreen, Godshill, Hyde, Ellingham, Harbridge and Ibsley, Fordingbridge and Ringwood. The forum was established to discuss and take forward actions to help conserve the distinctive character of the Conservation Area.

**Wiltshire Council** is responsible for a wide range of public services including education, social care, transport and waste management. It is the highway authority, including public rights of way, for the Wiltshire part of the National Park, and the Southern Wiltshire Area Board helps address community priorities within this area.

## **Annex 4     The special qualities of the New Forest**

The special qualities of the New Forest described below were published in the 2010 Management Plan and are included here for completeness. They were agreed through public consultation in 2007.

**The New Forest's outstanding natural beauty:** the sights, sounds and smells of ancient woodland with large veteran trees, heathland, bog, autumn colour and an unspoilt coastline, with views of the Solent and Isle of Wight.

The National Park encompasses a wide variety of different landscapes, from the woodlands and rolling heathland in the centre of the Forest, to the flat and wild coastline and the farmed landscape of small fields, hedgerows and narrow lanes. Together these form an extensive area of unspoilt and ancient countryside, with hidden villages and hamlets, which has largely been lost from other parts of lowland Britain.

**An extraordinary diversity of plants and animals** and habitats of national and international importance.

The mosaic of lowland heath, mire, ancient pasture woodland and Forest lawns that forms the Open Forest is unique in Britain and Europe. In addition the Solent coastline comprises extensive areas of mudflats, salt marsh and shingle, backed in places by low cliffs, supporting large populations of wintering wildfowl and waders. The inter-connectedness and scale of these habitats allows many rare or restricted species of plants, birds, animals and insects to thrive, as well as the commoner species that are in many cases declining elsewhere in the country. In total 56% of the National Park is designated for its national or international nature conservation value - a far higher proportion than any other English National Park.

**A unique historic cultural and archaeological heritage**, from royal hunting ground, to ship-building, salt making, the two world wars and 500 years of military coastal defence.

The cultural landscape of the New Forest has developed continuously from prehistoric times to the present. A wealth of features have survived to indicate this long use by human society, including more than 340 Bronze Age barrows, a number of fine Iron Age hill forts and many Roman pottery production sites. Throughout the area there are numerous remnants of medieval and later buildings, enclosures and other earthworks associated with the royal forest. The main rivers supported a boat and shipbuilding industry and the coastal salt workings were among the most important in the country during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The National Park has 214 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, constituting almost 10% of all scheduled monuments in the south east region, together with many important unscheduled sites.

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

Although common rights were once widespread in Britain and Europe, they have been lost in many areas due to the enclosure of common land and the disafforestation of former royal forests. The New Forest remains one of the few extensive lowland commons where rights are still widely practised and a strong

commoning culture continues. Over the centuries commoning has largely been responsible for shaping the distinctive landscapes and habitats of the Open Forest. There were six traditional rights of common, several of which are still practised today: the right of mast allows the turning out of pigs to feed on the acorn crop, while common pasture allows the grazing of ponies, cattle and donkeys.

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

The grazing of ponies and cattle has always been central to the pastoral economy of the New Forest. The animals are free to roam over the Open Forest, across the unfenced roads and along many of the verges within the Perambulation. Approximately 9,000 ponies, cattle, donkeys, pigs and sheep are currently depastured on the Forest as a whole. They are one of the most obvious and distinctive features of the area, and for many visitors they are undoubtedly a very important part of their experience of the New Forest.

**Tranquillity** in the midst of the busy, built up south of England.

The tranquillity and sense of remoteness that can still be found in many parts of the National Park is a quality of importance to many people. The relative peace and naturalness, combined with the open and unfenced landscape of much of the area, gives a sense of space and freedom. This contrasts with the increasingly built up and intensively managed landscape of southern England and provides a means of release from the pressures of modern life.

**Wonderful opportunities for quiet recreation, learning and discovery** in one of the last extensive gentle landscapes in the south including unmatched open access on foot and horseback.

The gently rolling countryside of much of the National Park represents a traditional English lowland landscape that feels familiar and safe, and is accessible to many people. There is open access on foot or horseback to more than 30,000 hectares (116 square miles) in the centre of the National Park, and an extensive network of footpaths, bridleways and cycle paths across the rest of the area. There are many opportunities for quiet recreation and the exploration of the landscape, while a range of visitor facilities and organised events make it easy for people to learn more about different aspects of the New Forest.

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

Quality of life within the National Park is underpinned by the overall environmental quality of the area. The coastal location and prevailing south westerly winds means that air pollution is generally low, and water quality in the New Forest rivers and streams, and on the coastal beaches, is also good. The variety of food and other products produced and sold locally continues to increase, giving the opportunity for people to live healthily and sustainably and at the same time support the local economy.

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

The New Forest communities have a strong cultural identity, with a wealth of local traditions and a thriving commoning community. Many local people have a strong

sense of New Forest history and are deeply committed to the protection of the area. Local dialect, unique place names, rural skills and traditional events still continue, while new village events created by local people may become the traditions of the future. Community life is constantly evolving and adapting to modern ways of living and working. Many communities are involved in work to help shape the future of their local area and in initiatives to make their villages or towns more socially and economically sustainable. Local businesses continue to thrive, often providing services or products for residents and visitors, or taking advantage of the recognised image and distinctiveness of the New Forest.