

# New Forest Youth Board Annual Review



October 2025



New Forest Youth Board

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## Annual Review

This Annual Review aims to cover what the New Forest Youth Board is, what we have done over the last year, and what we hope to achieve moving forward.



*NFYB members at the first residential/meeting*

## Mission Statement

"We exist to represent the voices of young people to shape and influence the future of the New Forest."

# Terminology

**NFYB/The Board** - New Forest Youth Board

**Members** (capital M) - Authority Members

**NPA** - National Park Authority

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# Executive Summary

- **15 Youth Board members (capacity)**
- **18 total members over the last 12 months**
- **Over 700 hours of volunteer time by NFYB members**
- **Included two residentials, three online meetings and two in-person meetings, with many external meetings for sub-working groups for different projects.**
- **Represented the NFYB at eight different boards and committees, including the New Forest Consultative Panel, Southern Wiltshire Area Board and the New Forest Association.**
- **Contributed to three consultations, including the Local Plan.**
- **Attended and helped plan eight events, including New Forest Thrive, Urban Wild, the New Forest and Hampshire County Show, as well as opening and speaking at the New Forest National Park Volunteer Fair.**

## Section 1: Importance of youth voice

### 1.1 Youth voice in national parks

Youth voice refers to the ideas, opinions, actions and knowledge of young people as a collective. It involves centring their perspectives in a meaningful way when enacting decisions that affect them (Youth Sport Trust, n.d). Youth voice is of crucial importance in national parks because young people are the future stewards of these landscapes, facing the responsibility of managing national parks in a future shaped by the uncertainty of the climate crisis. Encouraging and promoting youth voice ensures that national parks remain relevant, inclusive and resilient.

Compared to other age groups, youth engagement in national parks is notably lower. Campaign for National Parks found that only 6% of visitors to national parks in the UK are aged 16 to 25. (Campaign for National Parks, n.d). Despite misconceptions that young people are often irresponsible or uninterested in the environment, studies have found that in general, young people are extremely concerned about climate issues and feel excluded in research and policymaking (Diffey *et al.*, 2022).

Effective empowerment, space to express themselves and the opportunity to work with older generations are ways in which youth voice can be harnessed as a valuable asset in national parks. In addition, opportunities for experience and career/personal development should be

supported to allow young people to enter into green careers (Gracey and Davidson, 2012). Young people want to be included as part of the solution, rather than as observers. Youth voice inclusion for national parks also helps young people to achieve a sense of belonging and connection to people and nature.

## 1.2 Youth voice in the New Forest National Park

Allowing space for young people to use their voices in settings where this is not standard practice is a way of gaining a greater diversity of opinions, viewpoints, perspectives and solutions that would otherwise be unheard. According to the 2021 census, people aged 16-24 made up 7.7% of the population of the New Forest (ONS, 2023). Inclusivity and representation of the demographic makeup of the New Forest is crucial in ensuring that the National Park is a place which people feel pride, collective ownership and a say in the future.

As future custodians of the New Forest, it is vital that young people's views and opinions are respected and considered, particularly considering the growing climatic, environmental and biodiversity issues which will be handed down to the next generation. Young people in green and blue spaces need to be enabled, empowered and encouraged to share their opinions and knowledge, and a space should be provided to do so.

*'Young people need meaningful involvement in local authority environmental policy' (Breese, 2023).*

## 1.3 The New Forest Youth Board as providing youth voice

The New Forest Youth Board (NFYB) is a group of 18-30 year old individuals with a passion for nature and a connection to the New Forest. The Board was created in the hopes of providing a means to promote youth voice within the National Park, through policy and governance, decision-making and representation with an opportunity to contribute positive change.

There are multiple ways in which the NFYB have begun to and hope to continue to provide a voice for young people in the New Forest. This includes projects such as our Young Person's survey to collect different perspectives from young people in and around the National Park. The Board provides interaction and collaboration with young people, through projects, workshops, conversation and events. We aim to create a space for young voices to feed into the work we do and provide insight through different means.

*'By providing better quality opportunities for engagement with young people, civic authorities would play their part in turning fatalism and pessimism amongst young people into hope and action – mainstreaming youth engagement in environmental issues and helping to restore some faith in democracy. In doing so, civic authorities also have the potential to ensure the inclusion of marginalised groups in the green transition.'* (Sloame et al, 2023).

## Section 2: Overview of the New Forest Youth Board

### 2.1 Place within the National Park Authority

The NFYB was created through the Youth for Climate and Nature (YouCAN) scheme, with the Board forming in September 2024. From the schemes launch in October 2023, the creation of the NFYB became a priority to establish a space for young voices to build a diverse range of views and perspectives into the National Park.

During creation of the NFYB, officers of the NPA and Authority Members worked on the project through a Task and Finish group. This included collating data and evidence of other youth voice groups to decide how we wanted the NFYB to fit within the Authority, creating the Terms of Reference paper, and formulating reasoning and agenda for the NFYB.

The NFYB fits with the National Park's Partnership plan, under Re:New People as being an inclusive national park, allowing fresh perspectives and inclusive audiences. The NFYB connects young people to nature and landscape by building a foundation for dynamic opportunities.

### 2.2 Operation of the New Forest Youth Board

The NFYB is a committee which offers individuals opportunities for youth representation on project planning, steering groups and local community groups. The Board promotes youth voice across the New Forest and plays a key role in shaping and influencing its care and future planning.

The NFYB works as an advisory group that enables youth voice to be heard and considered by decision-making groups on issues affecting the New Forest National Park. The Youth Board is a platform to empower young people living in and around the National Park to help lead action on climate and nature and have a positive impact on young people and their communities.

One way in which this is achieved is through the Board consulting on issues, work programmes, strategies, and other items that it agrees are relevant to the Board's aims or are brought to it by staff or Members, and partner organisations. The NFYB can request items to be brought to it and are regularly informed of relevant issues and developments by the NFNPA and partner organisations. The NFYB also works on specific projects which it agrees will further its development and the delivery of National Park partnerships, purposes and duties.

To help facilitate a wide range of youth voice within its work, the NFYB consults with other young people aged 11 to 30 years old, in accordance with the NPA Safeguarding Policy. The NFYB use a range of engagement methods, both in person and online, to reach a diverse audience.

## 2.3 Collaboration with partner organisations

The NFYB has worked with key YouCAN partners Theatre for Life, Countryside Education Trust, Parks Foundation and Southampton City National Park. This has been through a range of activities from workshops and training sessions to festivals and community events.

Along with working with the NPA for various events and activities, the Youth Board have also joined PedALL on a social bike ride for the NFYB, and at the Pass the PedALL event. As the Board progresses, we hope to continue partnership working.

# **Section 3: The past 12 months**

## 3.1 Overview of work so far

Youth Board members have completed approximately 700 hours of volunteer work to date since the Board launch in mid-September 2024.

The Board have held two residentials, two in-person and three online meetings, as well as many external and sub-working group meetings for different projects. The Youth Board have represented themselves at several committees, discussions and events (see section 3.3 for more detail).

## 3.2 Establishment of the New Forest Youth Board

When first established, the NFYB spent time at the residential and subsequent online and in-person meetings deciding on the Board set up and processes. They discussed the Board structure; ways the Board would operate and confirmed/edited the Terms of Reference previously created by the Task and Finish group.

The NFYB decided to not hold traditional roles within the Board but instead rotate them to allow for all members to gain experience if desired. These include Chair, Scribe and Youth Board Coordinator. The role of the coordinator is to act as a key communicator between members of the Board and the Education and Youth Team, to organise meeting schematics such as agenda creation and Chair briefings. The NFYB have found that the current structure of the Board has worked well. Having rolling positions and a semi-permanent coordinator has meant that a range of Board members have been able to take on various roles, allowing them to develop useful career skills and developing confidence. This has also facilitated a working environment with equality at its centre, so that no voice holds more weight than another.

The Board decided upon holding meetings every other month, alternating between online and in person, with most meetings being held after work hours or on weekends, to maximise attendance. Moving forward, the Youth Board plan to continue meeting every other month, as

well as working in smaller subgroups for specific projects suited to the interests of those members.

The NFYB has reached 14 of its capacity of 15 members, as stated in the Terms of Reference. The current recruitment process involves an expression of interest from the young person via email and a short video call with a current NFYB member and member of NFNPA staff. There is not current length of term in place, but this may be reviewed in the future.

In the past year, the Youth Board have learned which aspects of the Board have worked well, as well as what is still to try out. The NFYB would like to express its gratitude and appreciation to the consistent and ongoing support of the NPA staff which has allowed the Youth Board to run. They are great at facilitating the needs and wants of the Youth Board and helping to find and coordinate opportunities and contacts. We hope to main this strong working relationship as the Board grows and becomes more established within the New Forest.

### 3.3 Representation of the Youth Board

To date, there has been a focus on representing the Youth Board at various events, talking with partner organisations and writing and promoting the Young Person's survey. The focus on representation of the Board at these large events has been effective at making the NFYB a known presence in the local community.

The Board represented youth voice on eight different boards and committees, including the New Forest Consultative Panel, Southern Wiltshire Area Board and the New Forest Association. We also contributed to three consultations, including the Local Plan.

The NFYB attended and helped plan eight events, including New Forest Thrive, Urban Wild, the New Forest and Hampshire County Show, as well as opening and speaking at the New Forest National Park Volunteer Fair. We used these events to network, engage with young people, talk to partner organisations and gather information for our survey.

### 3.4 Partner and stakeholder engagement

The NFYB has worked with a variety of partner organisations in workshops, activities and educational sessions. The board has received interest from multiple organisations to work collaboratively in a variety of ways, such as through hosting guided walks and running workshops.

We have increased our partnership engagement as the year progressed. We accomplished this through event attendance (e.g. New Forest Show, Thrive Festival, Urban Wild on the Common) where the Board has been able to network with parish councillors, young commoners, local businesses, green organisations and education centres. This has allowed for further partner collaboration.

The NFYB has received an enthusiastic reception from partner organisations and other local groups. The Youth Board have represented themselves with energy and positivity at multiple

events and have received interest from multiple organisations to work together in the future.

### 3.5 Young Person's survey

During the summer, we published the Young Person's survey, aimed at young people in and around the New Forest, to give their feedback and opinions on things related to the national park. Topics included accessibility and transport, climate change impacts and nature restoration, affordability of national parks, and green careers. We felt it was also important to include a section to learn more about the individuals answering the survey, through their gender, ethnicity, age and location.

The survey was suggested in our first meeting, wanting to understand what young people in the area wanted so we could represent not just ourselves but the wider youth voice. We started working on the survey in April, with a dedicated in-person meeting containing a survey workshop. Here, we discussed and decided on the main topics and themes we wanted to ask, with a range of questions that needed to be condensed to fit into our short survey.

The survey linked was posted on the NPA social media pages, circulated to groups by Authority members, and shared in person via a QR code at various summer events. The survey was live from early July to the end of August. We had 40 submissions which has given a wide variation of responses.

The Young Person's Survey has led to decisions on which projects to work on throughout the next year. Analysis of the survey results has been conducted to understand how young people interact with the Forest, what matters to them and what issues they feel are most prevalent.

Over the next year, the NFYB intends to work on a variety of projects that arose from the survey results including investigating how interpretation signs for areas around the New Forest can be utilised to help deliver climate change messaging, work with schools to promote green careers and host a podcast to celebrate positive stories from the NFYB and other local initiatives.



## Quotes and pictures



**Toby Pearse** - “Being part of the New Forest Youth Board has enabled me to develop my understanding of the crucial matters which shape the National Park, while providing opportunities to engage with its wonderful, passionate community. As we enter our second year, we’re looking to continue to spread the message that young people have the passion, energy and togetherness to ensure the long-term success of the Forest. We have exciting projects and partnerships with Forest organisations building and I can’t wait to play my part in the Youth Board’s journey.”



**Eva Wilcock** - “The opportunity which joining the New Forest Youth Board has provided in being able to contribute towards positive change in an area which I love has been fantastic. It has been a fulfilling and rewarding experience to work with such a dedicated group of passionate, like-minded people and give back to a place which means so much to me.”





**Josie Burden** - “Being on the youth board has been an immense pleasure to be a part of. It has been an amazing opportunity for me to channel my love for nature, providing me with so many good memories, a lot of work experience and so many great friends. So far, we have come together on various projects overall making sure that the youth voice is heard where it may not have had the opportunity, in previous consults, meetings and boards within the new Forest. Also making sure the voices of those around us are heard through our recent survey, our walk and talks, as well as the members different networks and backgrounds. I hope to carry on being a part of the youth board where I feel it has helped me build my confidence, as well as a group to help voice the ideas and thoughts and from other young people who care for the forest”.





**Fran Nicholas** - “The Youth Board has been amazing for me to work on my soft skills. For example I have improved my leadership skills when I organised a bike ride with NPA partner Pedall and provided them with photos and a quote for social media. My confidence in public speaking improved when I opened the NPA Volunteer Fair with another member of the Youth Board and we were interviewed on the stage. The NPA ran a workshop for the Youth Board on leading guided walks and we went on to run one at Urban Wild in Southampton.

The Youth Board has also improved my skills in my aim to have a job in the green sector. I was able to attend The Biodiversity Conference for the New Forest where there were presentations from organisations and individuals across the Forest. I am looking forward to training from ARC about amphibians and reptiles”.





**Hayley Quarrington** - “Since joining the youth board last September, my confidence in myself and my ability has grown considerably. I have had opportunities to grow and accomplish tasks that I didn’t believe I could. From delivering presentations and workshops to leading a guided walk, I have achieved so much over the last year. Being a part of the youth board has been a rewarding and joyous experience”.

## Section 4: Looking to the future

### 4.1 Aims for the next 12 months

Over the next 12 months, we aim to become further established within the communities of the National Park, grow a stronger connection with young people through group collaboration, and improve our channels of communication.

Project opportunities that have been offered to the NFYB include working with Cllr Hannah Phillips on social media and content creation, designing innovative green roof wheelie bin storage with Ringwood Repair Café, and joining an inclusive panel discussion at the Transport Summit on the topic of sustainable transport and active travel.

At the annual residential in September 2025, the NFYB discussed and realign values, directed their workflow and further embedded the Board in the New Forest community through

networking with the New Forest Members and various green groups. Below we have set out our intentions for future NFYB work.

#### 4.1.1 Continuing to work with Members

We aim to work with other youth voice groups in the area and across the national park's family, to create greater connections between the parks, and discuss best practice. There is a lot we can learn from each other, and by communicating more, we can share work we've done and disclose how we achieved it.

A goal for the next year is to host a joint workshop/session with the NPA Authority members to discover future ways of collaborative working and gain knowledge and expertise on a variety of topics from the Members.

#### 4.1.2 Representation and engagement at events

The NFYB hopes to have a presence at the NPA Transport Summit, with the possibility of attending as part of an inclusive panel discussion or presenting the Young Person's survey data on transport and access. With this, the NFYB can host a stand at the Summit as a way of establishing our presence and networking with local community representatives and transport professionals.

#### 4.1.3 Using survey results to direct next actions

Members of the Board are using the survey results to continue to work with community groups and partner organisations with greater focus on the needs of young people in the Forest. The Board also aim to plan and host their own events. In the long-term, the Board aims to become a respected voice of youth representation that is invited to and valued in decision-making spaces within the New Forest.

The Young Person's Survey has led to decisions on which projects to work on throughout the next year. Analysis of the survey results has been conducted to understand how young people interact with the Forest, what matters to them and what issues they feel are most prevalent.

#### 4.1.4 Expand communication channels

The NFYB aim to expand their current communication channels to include their own online social media account and email address to reach the demographic they wish to get their message across to. We aim to work with the NPA comms team to create a social media plan, policy and members guide to fulfil the requirements of the NPA under their scheme.

#### 4.1.5 Increased role in governance

The NFYB wish to consult of the NPA Partnership Plan, which aims to be in place by 2027. Doing this will add diverse perspective and allow for the NFYB to be committed in governance and policy reviews. The Board plans to write to CEO Alison Barnes to explain their

reasoning as to why they wish to be a part of this process. Another focus leading on from this is establishing the how the NFYB and the New Forest National Park Authority governance interacts. The Board would also like to work towards having a Youth Board member co-opted onto an Authority Board to provide youth representation.

## **Section 5: Partner and stakeholder engagement**

### 5.1 Future collaboration

We desire more collaboration and inclusion with groups, committees and organisations in the area. We would like a space to learn and grow as a Board, and continued support for inclusion and awareness spreading, which has been gratefully received over the 12+ months from the NPA.

To continue to establish the NFYB as an identity throughout the National Park, we would like to continue working with NPA partners and stakeholders, community groups and local clubs to continue to spread the message of youth voice importance and become a fixed point of contact for youth perspective.

We would like to work in collaboration with Members on a range of projects/events to strengthen our relationship and for Members to show support for the Youth Board and encourage wider working.

# Thank you

Thank you to the Education and Youth Team – Claire Pearce, Katie Barrow and Helen Robinson for their continued work, help and support throughout the last year and prior when they put the Youth Board into the YouCAN funding request. Thank you also to Alison Barnes, Jim Mitchell, Josh Taylor, Kieran Graves, Sarah Bolton, Brice Stratford, Mary Davies, Ann Sevier, Joe Reilly and other NPA staff and members who have continued to support us, from the creation of the Board to our 1-year anniversary.

Thank you to the Members who came to chat at our recent residential: Mary Davies, Zoe Clewer, Richard Clewer and Adarsh Parekh. And thank you to the Green Groups members that attend, Gill Hickman (Pennington Community Allotment), Lucy Bramley (Greener Burley) and Rae Frederick (Ringwood Repair Café).

And a special thank you to Izzie Compton and Skylar Lin for their integral knowledge and support through the start of the Youth Board. Another special thank you to Fiona Wynne for the YouCAN funding scheme which allowed for the formation of the Youth Board.

Thank you to the YouCAN partners for their support – Freshwater Habitats Trust, Southampton National Park City, Theatre for Life, The Parks Foundation, The Countryside Education Trust and Alabaré. Thank you to the National Lottery Community Fund.

New Forest Youth Board (current members):

Hayley Quarrington, Toby Pearse, Eva Wilcock, Toby Cowell, Fran Nicholas, Josie Burden, Joshua Dawes, Suzi Egleston, Charlotte Gresham, Lily Purtak, Grace Compton, Honor Burgess, Rachel Rattray and Abi Tebb.

## Thank you for reading















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