

**NFNPA 726/25**

## **NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY – 16 OCTOBER 2025**

### **Youth Board progress through the YouCAN (Youth for Climate and Nature) scheme**

**Report by:** Hayley Quarrington, Youth Board member, Toby Pearce, Youth Board Member, Eva Wilcock, Youth Board Member

#### **1 Summary of the New Forest Youth Board**

- 1.1 In conjunction with the National Park Authority's Partnership Plan, the New Forest Youth Board (NFYB) supports the aims of an inclusive National Park by promoting diverse voices and nature connection with differing audiences, supporting a greater appreciation for the special qualities of the New Forest.
- 1.2 The NFYB formed in September 2024 with an aim to use the expertise, experience and viewpoints of each member to represent the voices of young people to shape and influence the future of the New Forest.
- 1.3 The NFYB was created through the Youth for Climate and Nature scheme, with support from a Task and Finish group of members and officers of the Authority. Members of the Education and Youth Team worked hard to help support the NFYB with aspects such as providing opportunities and contacts, whilst working alongside members of the NFYB to coordinate, collaborate and facilitate projects and tasks.
- 1.4 The initial intentions of the NFYB were to work across the New Forest with a range of partner organisations, stakeholders and the NFNPA to provide a diverse perspective, promote youth voice for future generations, and work on governance and policy matters. Areas of this work has been met, while some are ongoing and require longer preparations.

#### **2 The Past Year**

- 2.1 Over the past year, Youth Board members have completed over 650 hours of volunteer work. The NFYB have represented themselves at a variety of events, such as the New Forest Volunteer Fair where Board members opened the event with the NPA Chief Executive and Julian Lewis MP.
- 2.2 The NFYB have designed and launched a Young Person's Survey, with the goal of understanding how young people interact with and feel about the New Forest, and what issues matter most to them (See Annex 1). Overall, the results from this survey indicate that many young people are concerned for the future given climate issues, are keen to enter into green careers and would benefit from greater advertising of projects and events. (See Annex 1 for further results).



- 2.3 The NFYB have learned which aspects of the Board have worked well, and what is still to be tried and tested. They have found that the current structure of the Board has worked well. Having rolling positions, where the role of chair and scribe is extended to another after each meeting, and a semi-permanent coordinator has meant that 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 equity at its centre, so that no voice holds more weight than another.
- 2.4 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 many events and have received interest from multiple organisations to work together in the future. An invite to attend the New Forest Association meetings came from members attending the Biodiversity Conference.
- 2.5 The NFYB recently met for their second residential, held at RSPB Cameron's Cottage, where they discussed survey results and Board structure, appreciated a walk and talk by Clive Chatters, held a social media workshop with the Green Groups, and enjoyed the company of four Authority members around a campfire.

### **3 Engagement with Partner Organisations**

- 3.1 Partnership work is a key element of the New Forest Youth Board. Opportunities to represent the Board to other groups has begun to make the Board a known and recognised group within the New Forest. Through this, the Board hopes to increase engagement both from young people and partner organisations.
- 3.2 Dialogue with partner organisations has created opportunities for collaboration and increased youth engagement. The Board aim to use their communication channels with young people to improve youth engagement with a variety of partner organisations.
- 3.3 The Board hopes to maintain strong relationships with partners and stakeholders to increase youth voice status within the New Forest, on a variety of levels from Board representation to project feedback and policy review. It encourages a cooperative approach with hopes for continued action for youth voice involvement.

### **4. Next Steps of the Youth Board**

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 Over the next year, the NFYB intends to work on a variety of projects which include 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.



- 4.3 The NFYB intends to drive our passion for governance and policy by developing how we can work with the Authority and interact with its meetings. We plan to work alongside and take advice from youth groups in other UK National Parks who are further along in their journey.
- 4.4 The NFYB would like to extend an invitation to Members for a dedicated workshop in which we can discuss future collaboration and partnership. The Board would like to discuss how the NFYB and Members can mutually help each other to achieve respective and collective goals. Members can find out more by contacting our email address (see below) or joining one of our meetings.
- 4.5 The Youth Board would like to develop its ability to work with different groups and organisations and create a new role within the Board responsible for communications. Through this role, we aim to gain access to the Youth Board email address to contact partners and stakeholders directly during collaborative projects.
- 4.6 The Board is also aiming to better engage with young people through the creation of a social media site. This is something we wanted to do from day one but is also due to responses from our survey which repeatedly mentioned greater publicity and increased online advertising of Youth Board work. The NFYB is aware that this is one of the best ways to become known to young people. Preliminary discussions with the Authority have taken place to initiate tasks for this to progress which include creating a social media plan and members policy, creating a social media calendar for proposed posts, and attending training with the NPA Comms team.

## **Recommendation**

**Members are requested to note the report and indicate if they would like to attend a dedicated workshop to discuss working together.**

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