

20 years

2005
2025



NEW FOREST
NATIONAL PARK

Chief Executive's report

July 2025



Business Plan themes

Incorporating the five themes of the National Park Partnership Plan 2022-27, plus improvement goals and targets for our Authority under Re:New Organisation – Achieving Excellence.



Re:New Climate



Re:New Nature



Re:New People



Re:New Place



Re:New Partnership

Re:New Organisation – Achieving Excellence

Protect – First Purpose

To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area



Species Survival Fund (SSF)

- £1.3m scheme to restore New Forest habitats and increase wildlife.
- Improving 250 hectares for nature over more than 20 sites – the equivalent of 350 football pitches.
- Six partners: NPA, Freshwater Habitats Trust; Amphibian and Reptile Conservation; Commoners Defence Association; Wildlife Trust, Wild New Forest.
- 180 of the targeted 250 hectares have been enhanced, improving key habitats across the New Forest.
- Visit in June from the Lottery Heritage Fund showcased the partnership, project sites and the value of nature improvements.



Future farming

- Defra visit - raised funding concerns for commoning and explored future Environmental Land Management (ELM) opportunities.
- 'PA2' study on supporting New Forest commons through Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs) has concluded. Will inform the work of the Forest Farming Group.
- Preparations underway for next round of Landscape Recovery funding expected later this year.



Targets and outcomes

Agreed local contributions to national protected landscape targets for habitat creation, peat restoration and woodland expansion.

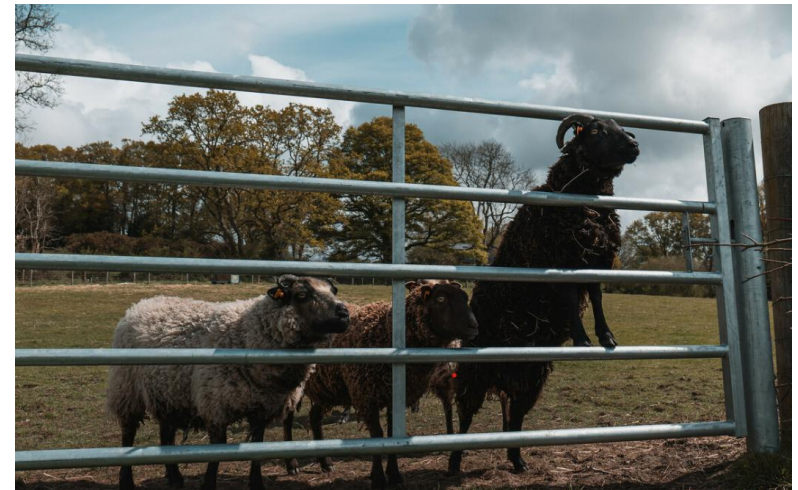
Targets will guide future delivery against Government's legally-binding target of '30 by 30' and Biodiversity Net Gain goals.

Will be embedded in the next Partnership Plan due in 2027.



Farming in Protected Landscapes

- Year Five of Farming In Protected Landscapes now started.
- Year Four = 18 new projects
- Total so far = 64 projects, over 6,000ha of habitats improved for nature.



Local Plan and Planning Policy

Local Plan Review:

- Direction of Travel consultation closed in March.
- Key evidence base studies (Habitats Regulation Assessment and Housing Needs Assessment)
- Initial draft Plan due for consideration by Authority in October. Six-week consultation November – mid December.
- Submitted responses to national planning consultations: proposals on Biodiversity Net Gain for small developments; national scheme of delegation for planning committees, welcoming the proposed exemption for national park authorities.
- Work continues with partners to deliver a strategic approach to mitigating recreational impacts from new development on protected sites.

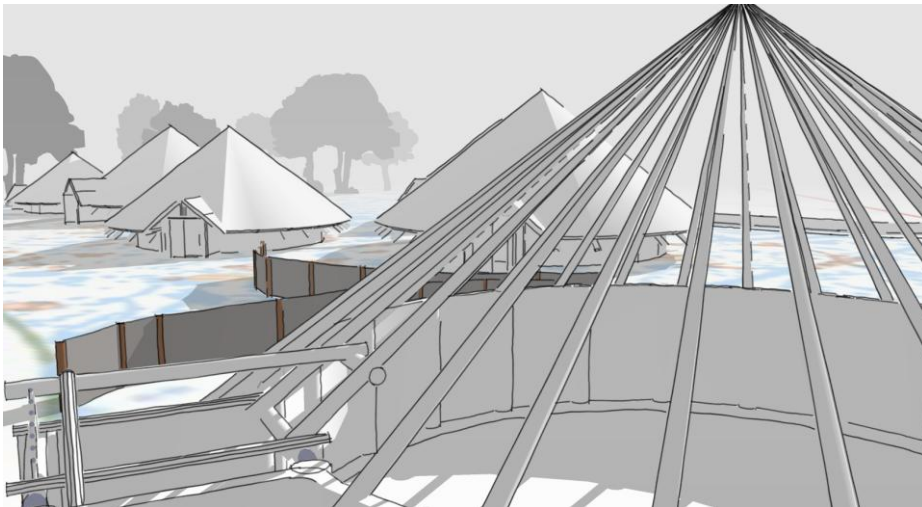
Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

Subject of a separate paper.



Archaeology team

- Planning advice for NPA and New Forest District Council
- Archaeological advice given to Forestry England
- Engagement with community groups and volunteers.
- Notable excavations near Fordingbridge and Calmore have revealed significant Iron Age and Romano-British occupation.
- Suggest greater historic settlement around the New Forest than previously thought.



Working with Town and Parish Councils

- Round of quadrant meetings with Town and Parish Councils
- Consultative Panel
- Character Appraisal review
- Copythorne Parish Design Statement.



Enjoy – Second Purpose

To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.



Awakening Festival

- Biggest Awakening Festival yet, running 130 events about the nature and climate emergencies
- 4,000 attendees; 1.4m people seeing information about the climate and nature emergencies online; 370,000 engaging with posts or events.
- Demonstrated a growing appetite for learning about and taking small actions for nature and climate in our communities.



YouCAN youth for climate and nature scheme

- Urban Wild festival from Southampton National Park City
- New Forest Thrive festival in Ringwood
- Youth Board questionnaire.



Education

- 23 schools benefiting so far from £200 travel grant supporting visits to the National Park
- 1,075 pupils engaged with through schools visits, residentials, curriculum sessions, ranger classroom visits.



Health and wellbeing

- Health Fellows Laura and Jennifer developing opportunities for people to benefit from nature and the National Park, through our Green Health Hub and face-to-face activities.
- They represented us at the recent Royal Society of Psychiatry UK Congress in Cardiff
- Outdoor Office Day celebrated.



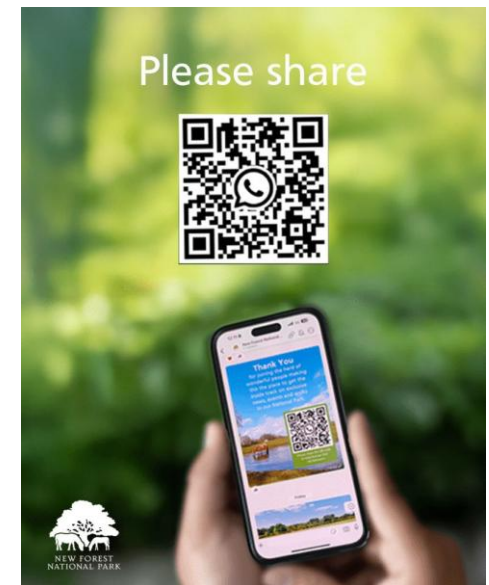
Ambassador scheme

- Originally started post-Covid for people to help protect the Forest through litter picking and sharing code messaging.
- Reboot this summer with nine volunteers helping the ranger team with outdoor engagement activities.



New Forest Code updates

- Pop-up events in surrounding communities and schools highlighting the code
- New WhatsApp broadcast channel – sharing breaking news, events, key messages on nature and climate.
- Visits survey running online throughout the summer.



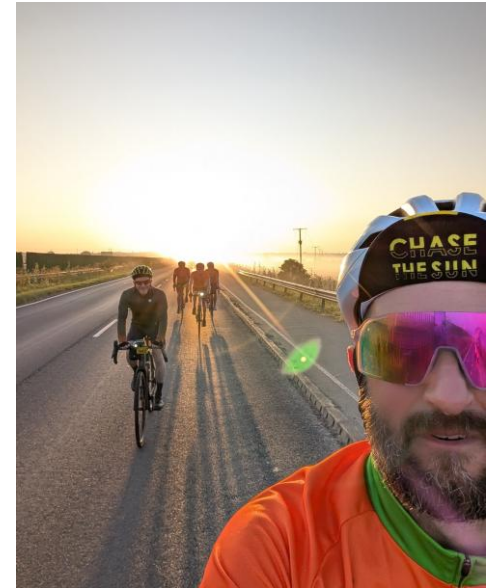
Access work

- Knightwood Oak accessible trail upgraded by Forestry England thanks to our funding of £50,000 grant from Defra's Access for All scheme
- Breamore Railway footpath – working with volunteers and Hampshire County Council to improve two-miles of former railway line with vegetation clearance, surfacing and tree works.

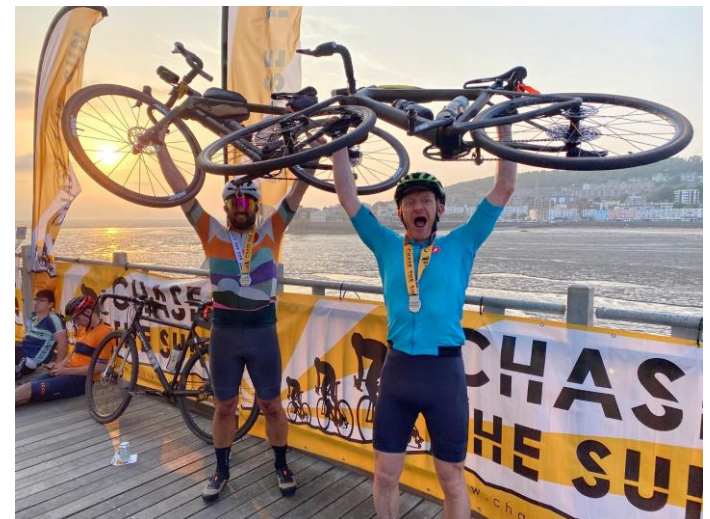


PedALL

- Chase the Sun fundraiser
- Number of participants up 24% compared to this period last year.



Pedalling forward with the
New Forest Youth Board



Prosper – Our Duty

Working in partnership with other organisations it is also the Authority's duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of the local communities within the National Park.



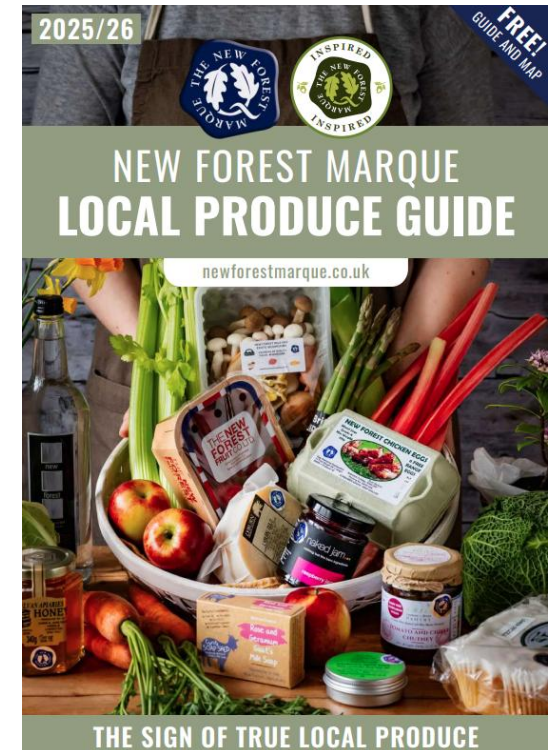
New Forest Tour

- New Forest Tour launched on 5 July and operates until 14 September
- Three routes across the National Park: coast (blue); red (north and west); green (central and east)
- 35,000 people enjoyed the Tour last year, saving 220,000 car miles and helping to protect the Forest environment.



New Forest Marque updates

- New local produce guide
- Summer events – including New Forest Show, Elingham Show, Food Festival at Hinton Admiral
- Flavours of the New Forest dining event at Stanwell House, 25 September
- Inspired arts and crafts members taking part in Hampshire Open Studios in August.



Excellence



Partnership Plan leaders panel

- March meeting focused on water quality and visiting wetland restoration schemes.
- July meeting and summer tour at the Verderers' Hall, Matley Ridge, and Crabb Hat Pound.

Discussed landscape-scale management, grazing for nature, recreation management, future of commoning, financial issues and opportunities.



Defra Minister and MPs meetings

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



Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Nature Mary Creagh with NFNPA CEO Alison Barnes and New Forest East MP Sir Julian Lewis

Defra visits

- Protected Landscapes Team: enabling them to learn more about the National Park, how we are implementing our partnership plan and facing into current challenges.
- Met partner organisations, tried out PedALL inclusive cycling in Ashurst, met with commoners and Verderers as we work together to secure a future scheme.
- Also hosted Defra food, drink and quality partnerships scheme.



Partner meetings

- Heart of England Forest visited us in April
- National Parks England meeting, South Downs
- National Parks UK meeting, Peak District
- Regenerate South Conference (right)
- Environmental NGOs meeting (below left).
- Southampton University MoU partnership event (below right).



Landscape Connections

Supports long-term projects to boost nature recovery and connect more people to our most treasured landscapes.

Around 20 projects will be invested in over 10 years up to £10m to work with local communities, organisations, landowners and farmers to put entire landscapes and habitats into recovery.

Funding is open to those who care for or can partner with National Parks and National Landscapes.

Workshops held during March and April with partner organisations and staff to prepare the content for an application.



National Landscapes Conference

- Ministerial address from Mary Creagh MP
- CEO Alison on Question Time discussion panel
- Ranger Hayden presented on nature equity as keynote speaker
- Field study tour of the New Forest for delegates.



20th anniversary

- New Forest Show stand highlighting our YouCAN scheme
- 20th anniversary reception on our stand
- National Park Awards with the CLA with a new commoners' award to mark our 20th anniversary.
- Staff discovery days.

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