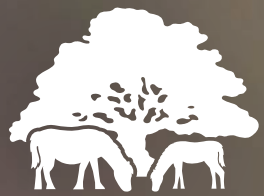


20 years

2005
2025

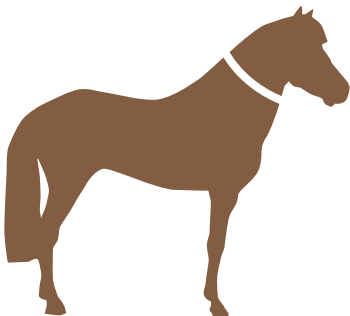
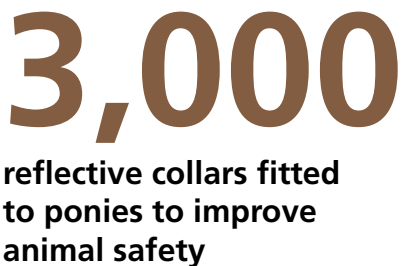
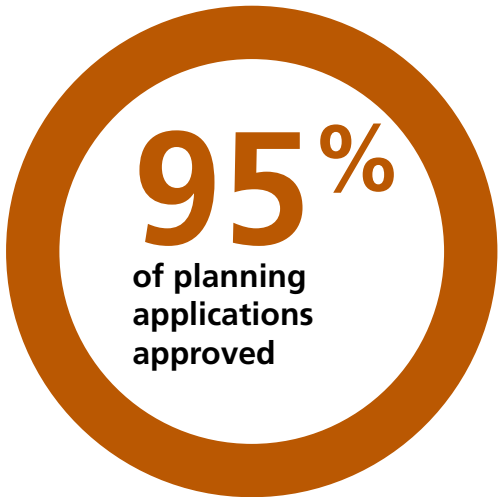
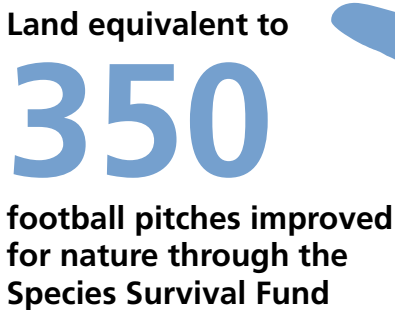
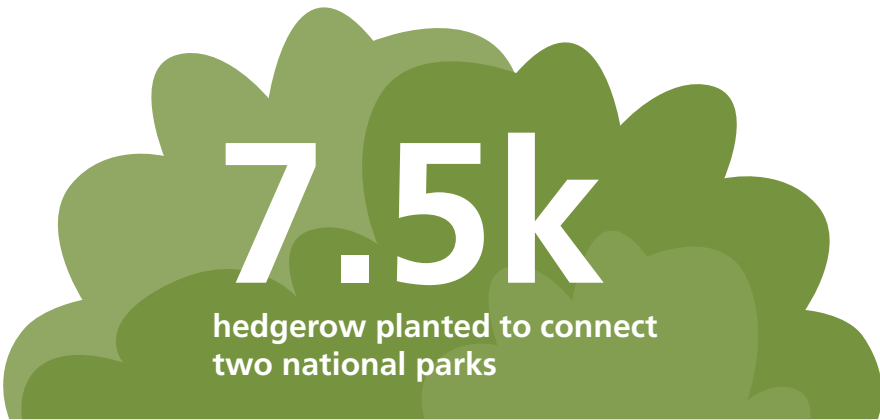
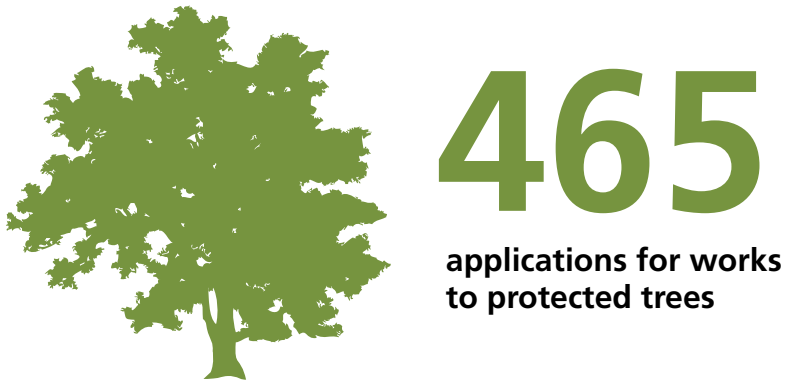
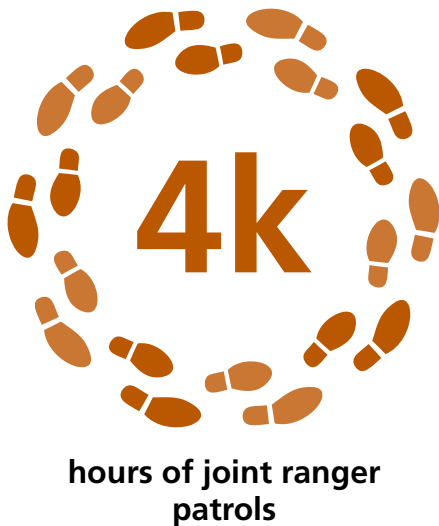
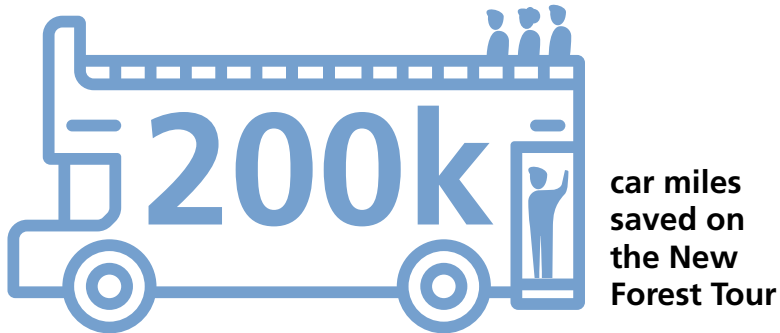
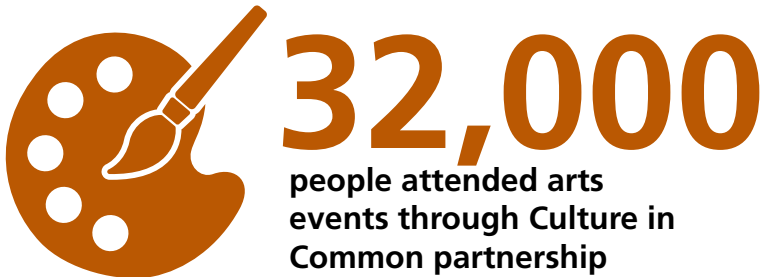


NEW FOREST
NATIONAL PARK



Annual Review
2024–2025

Stats at a glance





From the Chair and CEO

This year marks a significant milestone: the 20th anniversary of the designation of the New Forest as a National Park. It's a moment not only to reflect on how far we've come but also to reaffirm our shared commitment to the future of this extraordinary place.

It's an area of national and international importance... a working landscape home to significant and rare species and habitats, delivered by the ancient practice of commoning and an army of volunteers and specialists.

Like any coming-of-age journey, we've been prompted to look back at the moments that shaped our path, from the legislation that first created our National Park, to vital funding secured and partnerships formed. But we're also challenged to look forward – toward the pivotal decisions and collective actions we must take today to secure the Forest for future generations.

Urgent questions over funding, rising land and property prices, changes to policy and recreational pressures mean the future of the New Forest, its nature-rich environment and unique way of life – underpinned by the centuries-old practice of commoning – is under severe threat.

Loved by millions of people it's an important place for people to connect with nature and improve their health and wellbeing. Here we can show where environment, economy and health come together in a landscape and can work together to change threats into opportunities and solutions.

Over the hundreds of years that the New Forest has existed, one aspect has remained constant – those who cherish this special area will adapt and fight for its survival. This is where a strong Team New Forest comes in, which we are working tirelessly to convene and enable.

Over the past year, we have made strong progress in addressing some of the challenges facing the National Park, from biodiversity loss and climate change to pressures from development and recreation.

As you'll see in the pages of this Annual Review, we've been working alongside partners, landowners, volunteers, and local communities, continuing to deliver practical action through our Partnership Plan and on-the-ground initiatives that help to secure the Forest's rich landscapes, heritage and culture.

Our planning team continues to play a vital role in protecting and enhancing the Forest for future generations, working closely with applicants and communities to ensure high-quality, sustainable developments that respect and reflect our unique landscape.

Our Youth for Climate and Nature Scheme (YouCAN) is inspiring hundreds of young people to take action for the environment, both within our boundaries and in outlying towns and cities, while our education and outreach programmes have continued to grow. It's heartening to see the number of schoolchildren and young people we've connected to nature – enabling them to

learn about the National Park's wildlife, heritage, and sustainable practices.

We've facilitated hundreds of volunteering placements, including those for adults with additional needs and young people first stepping out into a 'green career'. This work highlights our focus on inclusivity, health and wellbeing, ensuring the National Park can be enjoyed and supported by a wide and diverse range of people.

Meanwhile, community-led conservation projects, supported by our Sustainable Communities Fund, ranger team and month-long Awakening Festival, are helping residents take positive action for nature on their doorsteps.

At a national level, policy has moved in our favour and strengthened the protections for National Parks. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 now requires all public bodies, utility companies and government departments to actively seek to further National Park purposes – not just consider them. This is an important recognition of the role landscapes such as the New Forest play in nature conservation, public enjoyment, and national identity.

Our Greenprint framework continues to guide conversations around what makes our area special and focus our collective actions across a wide geography. The New Forest is not only a haven for wildlife and heritage, but a vital contributor to the region's economy and public health. We are

doing all we can to showcase this value and ensure it's embedded in future planning and the vision for devolution.

Despite this progress, we face considerable challenges. The future of commoning, which is central to the Forest's ecology and character, remains uncertain. Many experienced commoners are retiring, and no successor subsidy scheme has yet been confirmed to replace the current Higher Level Stewardship agreement ending in 2027. We're working closely with partners and government to ensure the Environmental Land Management programme meets the Forest's specific needs.

Climate change also demands urgent action. We are already seeing the effects of warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers, which threaten our rare habitats and species. Building ecological resilience at scale requires resources, collaboration, and expert insight. This year, we've continued to play a central role in driving these discussions, making the case for investment and securing funding to help nature recovery through schemes including the Species Survival Fund, and Farming in Protected Landscapes grants.

At the same time, planning reform and financial pressures cast uncertainty over the landscape. And yet, in the face of these headwinds, there is much to be hopeful about. Our strength lies in the network we call Team New Forest: a community of volunteers, residents, businesses, landowners and partners who care deeply about this special place.

Their passion, knowledge and commitment remain our most powerful assets, which we must now harness; coming together to create further significant moments in time which we can look back on in another 20 years as being pivotal to the New Forest's future.

To everyone who has played a part in our journey so far: our staff, members, volunteers, partners and supporters – thank you.

This report tells the story of achievements and shared endeavour. We remain focused on achieving the best we can together, continuing to work for a thriving, resilient and inclusive New Forest, one that future generations can enjoy, and one we can all be proud to have protected.



Alison Barnes

Alison Barnes, CEO



David Bence

David Bence, Chair

The New Forest National Park was designated on 1 March 2005 – the first English national park to be created in the 21st century and the first in 50 years.

About the New Forest National Park Authority

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

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



The UK’s 15 National Parks



Contains Ordnance Survey data. Ordnance Survey 1000114703.
© Crown copyright and database right 2025 © National Parks UK 2025

Our members

National Park Authority members have overall responsibility for making decisions. They set policies and priorities, ensuring efficient and effective use of resources, and that money is well spent. It is their job to represent the interests of the National Park and to balance out any conflicting pressures.

Local authority appointees:

- Gordon Bailey
- Richard Clewer
- Zoe Clewer
- Barry Dunning (from August 2024)
- David Harrison
- Mel Kendal
- Keith Mans
- Neville Penman (to January 2025)
- Dan Poole (to August 2024)
- Caroline Rackham
- Joe Reilly
- Michael Thierry
- Derek Tipp

Secretary of State appointees:

- Patrick Heneghan
- Victoria Mander (NPA Deputy Chair)
- David Bence (NPA Chair)
- George Meyrick
- Prof. Gavin Parker
- Stephen Trow

Parish appointees:

- Ann Sevier
- Mary Davies
- Brice Stratford

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

Our mission

The New Forest National Park Authority has statutory purposes and socio-economic responsibilities as specified in the Environment Act of 1995:

- to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area
- to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park by the public.

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

We like to sum this up as:

Protect
Enjoy
Prosper

Our 22 members do not represent any particular political group. Driven by the National Park purposes and duty, they work with officers to establish and then deliver our work programme, with operational aspects delegated to officers.

- 12 are appointed by the four county, unitary, district and borough councils with land within the National Park
- Six are appointed by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- Four are selected from the town and parish councils within the National Park.

What makes the New Forest National Park special?

The New Forest National Park is a globally significant haven for wildlife, often described as an ark for nature. It contains the highest proportion of land protected for nature in any UK national park or local authority area, with 56% internationally designated as Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, or Ramsar Sites, and a further 5% as locally-important conservation areas.

Home to an extraordinary range of wildlife, the New Forest is a haven for:

- Over 15,000 insect species (two-thirds of the UK total)
- 44 mammal species, including 13 of the UK’s 18 bat species
- At least 12 reptile and amphibian species
- A third of all British wildflowers
- More than 70% of UK dragonfly species
- 46 rare plant species
- The UK’s highest concentration of rare breeding birds like the curlew and Dartford warbler
- 2,700 fungi species
- The highest concentration of ancient and veteran trees in Western Europe.

Beyond its biodiversity, the New Forest is a living, working landscape shaped by centuries of tradition, particularly its unique commoning system.

Its ‘special qualities’ include:

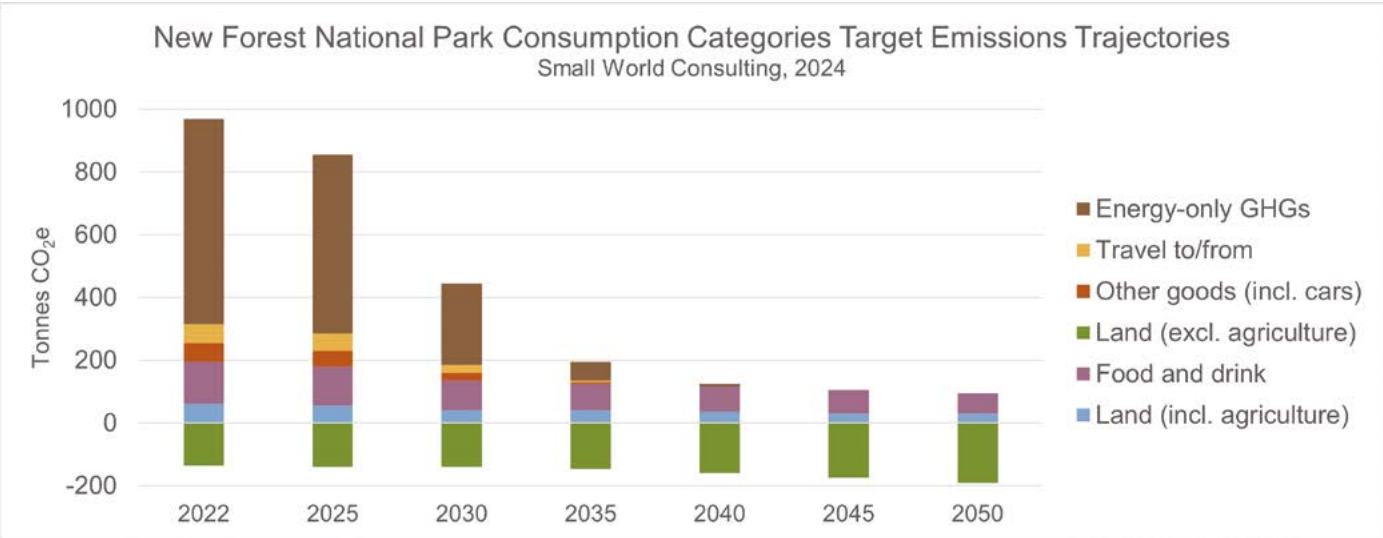


Images: Bucklers Hard | Thatched cottage in the New Forest | Fly agaric fungi | Sunset © Chris Fairhead | Young commoner © Barry Whitcher
Pigs © Peter Le Cointe | Cyclist in Beaulieu | Farm shop | Pony © Danniella Edgington

Climate

We’re committed to tackling the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss in the New Forest, while supporting local communities to take meaningful action.

Our efforts focus on safeguarding the Forest’s unique habitats and species – elements that have defined this landscape for centuries. At the same time, we’re working to ensure that future generations inherit a New Forest that is not only thriving but resilient in the face of a changing climate.



Crate of New Forest produce

Encouraging local action through the Climate and Nature pledge

1,760 people have now signed up to our New Forest Climate and Nature Challenge pledge – committing to at least four of these seven actions:

- Cutting waste, and reducing, reusing and recycling
- Reducing impacts of travel

- Following the New Forest code
- Eating seasonally, and with more plants
- Saving energy
- Helping wildlife
- Shopping locally.

Supporting Green Groups

Involving our communities is a key part of our mission to address climate change and support nature recovery. We continue to bring together an expanding network of local volunteer-led Green Groups, creating spaces to share knowledge, collaborate on events, and support grassroots action. These groups have co-organised a variety of initiatives, including climate cafés, eco fairs, repair cafés, workshops, and film screenings.

As well as supporting and promoting local green activities, we work alongside these groups to secure funding to help them deliver impactful community-led projects. We’re also developing themed workshops focusing on key priorities including sustainable transport, nature recovery and greener buildings.



A New Forest Green Group holding a recycling event



New walking and cycling proposals

As part of a partnership with Active Travel England across all English national parks, we worked on plans and projects to help set out the ambition for investment in walking and cycling for the next 10 years.

Using a £100,000 grant from the Active Travel England National Parks Capability Fund, we’ve commissioned an A35 safer crossings study for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders, an off-road cycle network wayfinding study to help people navigate more effectively, and a feasibility study on the best cycle route from Lyndhurst to Lymington.

The grant has also supported our work to help produce a new, draft Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for the New Forest area. This went to public consultation in September, attracting a large number of responses.

The Plan sets out priorities for enhancing active travel in the National Park, while ensuring that its special qualities are protected and where possible enhanced. It proposes an extensive network of cycle routes across the area (linked to the Waterside area which has its own LCWIP) together with walking zones for the main residential settlements.

It was prepared in partnership with Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council, the New Forest National Park Authority and Forestry England. The results are being analysed, with final approval expected by early 2026.

Top: Cycling in the Forest

Enhancing landscapes

National Grid’s Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI), which is celebrating 10 years of success, has helped restore landscapes, habitats and access in the New Forest.

LEI aims to enhance protected landscapes and reduce the visual impacts of existing National Grid electricity transmission lines within the National Park.

Work by local contractors and RSPB volunteers at Franchises Lodge continues to restore the nature reserve and has enabled ground nesting birds such as the woodlark and the nationally rare nightjar to make a welcome return.

Thanks to £300,000 of LEI funding, a two-mile section of the former Salisbury and Dorset Junction Railway line that was closed in 1964 will be transformed into a public footpath. Work has already started on surveys to deliver a wildlife-rich habitat corridor running through the parishes of Breamore and Fordingbridge, between South Charford and BURGATE CROSS.



A stretch of railway line will be transformed into a footpath thanks to LEI funding

Recharging in Nature with National Parks and BMW UK

The NPA and BMW UK launched a new twin electric vehicle (EV) charging point in the National Park, part of a nationwide partnership with UK National Parks to help locals and tourists make zero emission journeys.

The Recharge in Nature partnership is enhancing the EV charging network and in the New Forest the collaboration is also funding two apprentice rangers and supporting around 80 young people to better connect with nature and feel inspired to protect it.

Below: BMW EV New Forest Charging Point with I-r Kimberley Ragousis, corporate communications manager BMW group, Aynsley Clinton NFNPA, Sway Parish Cllr Mike Butler





Greener living through the Sustainable Communities Fund

Our Sustainable Communities Fund (SCF) has a renewed focus to improve opportunities for wildlife and habitats as well as reducing carbon emissions.

SCF is also connecting people to nature by supporting cultural and natural heritage projects that foster identity and a sense of place.

Highlights include recently approved funds of £2,000 for Hampshire Amphibian and Reptile Recording Network to produce a ‘first of its kind’ atlas showing the distribution of native species of amphibians and reptiles in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and provide a baseline for future recording.

Funds of £2,000 have also been awarded to Woodgreen Community Shop Association towards installing more electricity generation solar panels on the roof of the existing community shop. The shop’s current solar panels (funded as part of a £25,000 grant from the New Forest National Park Authority in 2009) contribute 10% of energy use. The additional panels will provide around 30% of the total shop electricity consumption saving approximately £4,000 per year and helping to reduce carbon emissions.

At East Boldre Village Hall, £2,000 has enabled the purchase and installation of new audiovisual equipment so that the building is better able to support a wider range of community activities

such as talks, training sessions, fitness classes, plus film nights and local theatrical productions.

Funds of £1,800 have been awarded to the community interest company (CIC) Flourish in Nature to enable a greater number of people to take part in organised conservation tasks supporting the National Park landscape. The money will enable the use of the CIC’s welfare van so that people with additional needs can access the outdoors and get active and involved in the local community and countryside.

Above: Woodgreen village shop

The impact

200,000 car miles saved

The New Forest Tour

Around 35,000 journeys were made by people exploring the New Forest National Park on the New Forest Tour during the 11-week summer season – saving an estimated 200,000 private car miles and helping to protect the spectacular environment.

As well as promoting the special qualities of the New Forest, the open-top bus tour, a partnership with Morebus, also provides a boost to local businesses, contributing around £567,000 to the New Forest economy while stopping at local villages and visitor attractions.

Discounted tickets for residents continued to prove popular, with a 5% increase in sales during the 2024 season.



The New Forest Tour

Nature

Nature is in crisis, and only through the urgent collaboration of our expertise and resources can we ensure our habitats are more resilient, better managed, bigger and more joined up.

Ecosystems need to be restored and wildlife must be able to move through the landscape freely if it is to adapt to change. This means looking not just at the New Forest but across the wider landscape.

The impact

Land equivalent to 350 football pitches improved for nature



£1.3m scheme restoring New Forest habitats and increasing wildlife

Pollinating insects and sand lizards are some of the species which are benefitting from the Species Survival Fund project.

The £1.3m scheme, which ends in February 2026, is helping some of the rarer species in the New Forest by creating new and expanding existing habitats, and ensuring they’re more resilient to climate change.

Restoration work has seen three of the most threatened reptile species – sand lizard, smooth snake and adder – having their habitats boosted by one of the partners of the project, the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust (ARC).

Meanwhile, another partner, Freshwater Habitats Trust (FHT), has been creating new ponds and restoring old ones to improve the quality of freshwater habitats in and around the National Park.

On other sites, wildflower meadows are being sown and hedgerows created to allow pollinators to thrive.

Survey work recorded nearly 40 priority species that are classified as nationally rare or scarce.

Many are relatively familiar and widespread in the Forest, such as goshawk, raft spider and wood cricket but there were some surprising

discoveries, including a new species of fungus for Hampshire and a pond full of Hampshire purslane – a nationally rare aquatic plant almost wholly restricted to the New Forest.

Five partner organisations: ARC, FHT, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, New Forest Commoners’ Defence Association and Wild New Forest are working with landowners at 25 sites to enhance 250 hectares of land – the equivalent of 350 football pitches – for the project, which is funded by the Government’s Species Survival Fund.

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



Left: Adder Right: Goshawk

Supporting nature recovery through the planning system

Following the Environment Act 2021, development must legally ensure wildlife is left in a better state than it was before any development takes place, which requires a 10% improvement or ‘Biodiversity Net Gain’ (BNG).

The types of development subject to this requirement are defined by national government. To meet the BNG target, habitat improvements can be delivered directly on the applicant’s development site or, alternatively, BNG units can be purchased off-site to support the delivery of strategic enhancements.

The water quality of the internationally-designated habitats of the Solent and River Avon are also at risk of increased level of nutrients. Much of this comes from the environment, but wastewater from new development also has an impact. As a result, proposals for new homes and other forms of overnight accommodation in the National Park are legally required to demonstrate they are ‘nutrient neutral’.

In 2024-25 Kingwell (Aubrey) Limited launched the first BNG and Nitrate Mitigation Scheme in the New Forest. The Keyhaven Natural Capital Scheme

covers 605 acres near Milford on Sea and has been brought forward by the landowner working closely with the National Park Authority, New Forest District Council and the local Wildlife Trust. The project will restore farmland into natural habitats, connecting 1,000 acres of protected habitats in the Keyhaven area, including saltmarshes and reedbeds, and creating a major new wildlife reserve west of Pennington Marshes.

The Kingwell scheme at Keyhaven offers BNG and Nitrate Mitigation credits to developers. These support legal requirements to protect nature and water quality and, once complete, the scheme will generate around 440 BNG units and 3,950 nitrate credits, while supporting birds, pollinators, and improving the environment for future generations.

The impact

1,000 acres of habitats to be connected and restored

Aerial view of Keyhaven © Kingwell



Habitat Mitigation Scheme

For the last 15 years the National Park Authority has operated a recreation mitigation scheme. This secures financial contributions from new development (including new housing and other forms of overnight accommodation) to mitigate the recreational impacts on the protected sites of the New Forest and Solent coast.

It enables new development to come forward to meet local needs while protecting the integrity of these internationally important sites. Endorsed by Natural England, the package of mitigation measures is proportionate to the limited scale of new development within the National Park.

In 2024-25, habitat mitigation measures funded through new development included:

- Mitigation rangers: Developer contributions have been pooled to employ additional year-around rangers to increase interaction with visitors to the New Forest’s designated sites. This supplements a People and Wildlife Ranger funded by development within New Forest District.
- Communications and messaging: A key annual mitigation measure is promoting responsible recreation in the New Forest through targeted messaging via publications, the website, and social media.

Above: The Habitat Mitigation Scheme funds additional ranger resource in the National Park



Farming in Protected Landscapes grants

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) funding has been extended for another year of the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme, which is helping farmers, commoners, and landowners support nature recovery and sustainable farming in the New Forest.

As of March 2025, £850,000 in grants have improved the natural environment, cultural heritage and public access, and made farms more resilient and fit for the future.

The Defra national grant programme was originally launched in July 2021 as a three-year scheme to support the people who live and work in protected landscapes. The one-year extension means a further £225,084 of funding will be available in the New Forest.

Of the 96 projects that have been approved, 64 projects have been completed. Key highlights include work to save some of the Forest’s most precious assets. Mires, bogs, ponds, rivers and streams are a key reason why the area was designated a National Park.

Through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, funding for fencing, hedgerow planting and some ditch clearance around a small area of waterlogged soil near Bramshaw has helped ecologists begin to identify many rare species.

Work also continues to support a group of over 40 farmers, landowners and managers in the north of the National Park to reduce the impact of deer herds on agricultural production and woodland regeneration. It’s the largest single project funded by FiPL, using drone surveys to monitor the deer populations and their impact as well as training in best practices for deer management.

The impact

£850,000 in grants have improved the natural environment

Above: Commoners Andrew and Will Parry-Norton of Storm’s Farm © Steve Poole



Nature super-highway reaches halfway point

In January, CPRE Hampshire marked a significant milestone reaching the halfway point of the ambitious Hampshire Hedge project to create a nature recovery corridor connecting the New Forest and South Downs National Parks.

The project team was joined by local MPs, project partners, and funders at Hillier Gardens Arboretum for a ceremonial planting of whips, which will form part of the Hampshire Hedge. Since the 2023 launch of the Hampshire Hedge, 2,500 dedicated volunteers have braved all weather conditions to plant and restore 7.5 km of hedgerow with 37,500 young plants.

The impact

7.5 km of hedgerow planted for nature

Above: Hampshire Hedgerow partners and volunteers. © CPRE

New Forest Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) Scheme

The Verderers of the New Forest Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) Scheme continues to support initiatives around the Forest.

The scheme, which primarily supports habitats, wildlife and commoning, is in its 15th year having started in 2010, and brings in £2m a year to the New Forest.

It's managed by the Verderers of the New Forest in partnership with Forestry England and the New Forest National Park Authority, with support from the Commons' Defence Association and Natural England.

Some of the more recent HLS projects have included funding reflective collars for livestock and restoring wetland areas to increase their biodiversity and adapt to climate change.

Around 3,000 reflective collars were fitted to ponies, donkeys and cattle during the past year to increase their visibility to drivers and reduce the number of livestock involved in road accidents.



Wetland restoration projects included specialist species and habitat surveys on various sites, while monitoring was carried out using techniques such as water level loggers and timelapse cameras.

Six surveys of rare species were completed – six-spotted crane fly, Beaulieu dung beetle, brown diving beetle, New Forest mud beetle, Dartford Warbler and nightjar – to monitor their presence and activity in the Forest.

Meanwhile, Forestry England volunteers carried out riverfly surveys which help monitor the health of New Forest streams and overall water quality.

Funding from the HLS scheme enabled nearly 550 pupils from 11 schools to visit and learn about the special qualities of the New Forest, with feedback from the schools being extremely positive overall.

hlsnewforest.org.uk



New Forest Catchment Partnership

The New Forest's waterbodies are fragile and pristine, and some of the most important areas for wildlife in the UK and Europe.

Together with our partner Freshwater Habitats Trust, we jointly host the New Forest Catchment Partnership. This year the Partnership continued its collaborative efforts to improve water quality, enhance biodiversity, and build climate resilience across the New Forest's unique landscapes.

Working with farmers, landowners, community groups, and statutory bodies, the partnership delivered a range of nature-based solutions – from restoring wetland habitats and reducing diffuse pollution to supporting sustainable land management practices.

Through targeted projects and community engagement – including YouCAN (see P16) and Species Survival Fund (see P11), the partnership has played a vital role in protecting the health of local rivers, streams, and wetlands for the benefit of people and wildlife.



Above: New Forest wetlands © Chris Fairhead
Right: Banded demoiselle © Peter Le Cointe



New Forest Land Advice Service

Our New Forest Land Advice Service (NFLAS), run in partnership with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, provided support for the land-managing community in and around the New Forest and Avon Valley.

Our advisors help with land management advice and management plans for grasslands, heathlands, woodlands, watercourses, ponds and other environmental features.

NFLAS has helped farms reduce their adverse impact on the environment while enhancing overall productivity.

Holly Farm in Copythorne is a family farm supporting small-scale beef production. A 10,000-litre water storage tank, supplied through the New Forest Water Resilience Scheme, has significantly reduced the reliance on mains water, which is currently sourced from the dwindling resources of local chalk streams.

The tank is also preventing nitrate runoff from the guttering into the fields, in turn leading to a cleaner local water supply and healthier soils in surrounding fields.

People

People rely on nature and culture for their physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing. The future of the New Forest depends on new generations understanding, valuing, and actively caring for this internationally important landscape.

We're committed to ensuring that people of all backgrounds, abilities, and socio-economic circumstances can enjoy and appreciate the National Park. That means breaking down barriers and supporting those who face challenges in accessing nature, so everyone can share in its benefits.

The impact

4,500 young people inspired to take action for climate and nature

The Youth for Climate and Nature (YouCAN) scheme reaches halfway point

The £1.4 million scheme was launched in October 2023 to empower young people between 11 and 25 to understand and lead climate action within their communities. Led by the NPA with six partners, YouCAN also supports green skills and jobs, and an outdoor learning programme for young people from all backgrounds to explore urban, rural, coastal and freshwater areas.

Across 85 different projects, nearly 1,700 young people aged 11-25 have been engaged in activities about climate and nature connection. A further 2,700 people aged 26+ also participated in those sessions. These included: Junior and Young Adult Ranger programmes, young adult volunteering sessions, internships and mentorships, litter picks, species surveys and Carbon Literacy Training.

Another highlight from the YouCAN scheme was the creation of a youth-led play, 'Bringing the Outside In', which explores themes of climate anxiety, air pollution and New Forest folklore, and will debut at the Mast Mayflower, Southampton, in July 2025.

'I like spending time with my friends and the sessions always make me really happy. It's also made me a lot more conscious about the environment, because I love coming here. I don't want to miss a single session.'

Bella, New Forest Junior Ranger

Junior Rangers

NPA Junior Rangers (aged 11-18) celebrated the first full year of the programme with an outdoor meet-up, hoodies and bronze certificates for those who have attended a range of sessions across the year and accomplished a breadth of skills in their junior ranger logbooks.

We're really proud of these young people who have been dedicated, overcome personal challenges and forged new relationships and confidence in nature and with each other.



Above: Junior Rangers receiving their certificates
Inset: Junior Rangers learning about the New Forest

Around 41 Junior Rangers registered, and 13 sessions were delivered throughout the year, including practical conservation tasks, hedge planting, bench building, and learning about coastal and freshwater habitats.

A further 63 young people took part across 12 bespoke Junior Ranger sessions, which were tailored to help groups and individuals build deeper nature connection and understanding.



Youth volunteering

Through YouCAN, the NPA has been able to provide volunteering opportunities across the Forest, alongside Freshwater Habitats Trust and partners, for young adults (aged 18-30), designed to fit around their work and education.

So far, these volunteers have amassed 445 hours in conservation tasks such as native hedgerow planting, habitat management and heathland restoration.

New Forest Youth Board

The New Forest Youth Board was launched in September 2024 with a residential stay at the Countryside Education Trust, where they took part in a Climate Fresk! Workshop and planned the future of the Board.

The New Forest Youth Board is made up of young adults between the ages of 18 and 30. They promote youth voice across the New Forest and play a key role in shaping and influencing the care and future planning of the New Forest.

So far Youth Board members have:

- Given over 150 voluntary hours.
- Represented young people at six board meetings, such as the New Forest Consultative Panel.
- Contributed to three consultations, including the Local Plan.
- Attended four events, including opening and speaking at the New Forest National Park Volunteer Fair.

'I've learnt so much about nature and wildlife from being here, it's been really helpful.'

Ellie, New Forest Junior Ranger



The Green Careers Network visit
St Giles Farm at Godshill

New Forest Green Careers Network

The New Forest Green Careers Network (formerly Early Careers Network) has continued to grow with funding from the YouCAN scheme. The NPA's education and youth team coordinate the Green Careers Network, which facilitates free training and networking opportunities throughout the year, in and around the New Forest area, for anyone in a green or blue career, educational course or volunteering role.

The group now has 62 members from 12 organisations and some independents. Sessions this year have included: Carbon Literacy Training, coastal birdwatching with Bird Aware Solent, and a commoning tour with the Commoner's Defence Association.

'There's not been a barrier of "you need a degree or a qualification, so you can't come in". I've been able to just work as hard as I want and get to where I want because YouCAN's provided that funding and those projects. They've taken a barrier down, the way I see it, so it's enabled me to get into volunteering, to get a passion for it and also, now that I'm here, there's paid experience in conservation on my CV which is a massive help for the future.'

Charlie, Intern at the Countryside Education Trust and former Young Adult Ranger at The Parks Foundation



Right: New Forest Youth Board

YouCAN was made possible thanks to National Lottery Players, through which £1.2 million was secured from a Climate Action Fund grant from The National Lottery Community Fund – the largest community funder in the UK – and a further £264,000 in match funding from partners.

The projects within the scheme span 300 square miles across the New Forest, Southampton and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, and are led by the New Forest National Park Authority in partnership with the Countryside Education Trust in Beaulieu; Freshwater Habitats Trust; The Parks Foundation in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole; Southampton National Park City project; Theatre for Life, and care and support charity Alabaré.





Supporting wellbeing

We welcomed two National Park NHS Wellbeing Fellows to the New Forest to help support the work of the Green Health Hub – a website that signposts people to wellbeing opportunities in the area.

Fellows Jennifer Wyllie and Laura Pridmore have directly engaged with more than 15 groups, organisations, and people including charities such as PEDALL New Forest inclusive cycling, local community and environmental groups, and the NHS.

New content and opportunities continue to be added to the Green Health Hub, and awareness of the Hub grows through the likes of community mental health teams, care navigators, and charities.

The Fellows themselves have conducted focus groups, led volunteer sessions, and launched a new Health and Heritage Group to help people meet others and learn about their local area.

Jennifer and Laura have also attended sessions and meetings with Hampshire County Council and had presentations accepted at events such as at the Royal College of Psychiatrists Congress.



Above: Fellows Jennifer and Laura at Pondhead



The impact

6,000 inclusive cycle rides delivered

PEDALL inclusive cycling

Our partner charity PEDALL inclusive cycling increased its riding sessions by 17%, with more than 6,000 rides delivered during the year, enabling people of all abilities to experience the National Park on various specialist cycles.

It supported over 40 organisations including schools, colleges, charities and residential care homes – with many new groups being involved. More riders are now joining sessions at PEDALL’s second base in Ashurst.

A fundraising and awareness event, ‘Pass the PEDALL’ was a great success. Regular riders, PEDALL volunteers, business and community supporters as well as Operations Manager, Gareth Jones completed a 12-hour cycle from dawn to dusk.

Above: PEDALL inclusive cycle charity

PEDALL manager Shelley Filby said: ‘The event had a wonderful atmosphere and was a true celebration of our project and the joy and wellbeing benefits it brings to the New Forest community. It raised £6,000 and we look forward to another Pass the PEDALL in summer 2025.’

This year PEDALL was supported by the National Lottery Community Fund, South Western Railway, DEFRA and other generous donors including the Hendy Foundation and J P Morgan.

pedall.org.uk



New Forest Walking Festival

The New Forest NPA’s annual Walking Festival returned in 2024 for its 12th year to offer a ‘behind the scenes’ look at the National Park with a focus on its wildlife, landscapes, and communities.

The Festival ran for a fortnight with 35 events put on by 11 partner organisations and local experts, welcoming more than 100 walkers.

New Forest NPA Access and Volunteering Officer Adam Vasey said: ‘The Walking Festival is a fantastic way to get out into the Forest and see what it has to offer.

‘There are lots of people working hard behind the scenes to keep the Forest special, and the Festival is a great way to meet them and discover more about the National Park.’



The impact

29,000 Walking App downloads

Improving access and rights of way

- The New Forest Walking App was downloaded nearly 29,000 times this year. The app encourages users into the outdoors for mental and physical health and wellbeing, using routes which don’t impact the environment.
- Major accessibility improvements have been made on the Knightwood Oak Trail, including 300 metres of accessible gravel surfacing, adding an accessible parking bay, new interpretation boards, and surface and drainage upgrades to the car park. The work by Forestry England was funded by the NPA through a £50,000 grant from Defra’s Access for All fund as part of our ongoing commitment to ensuring the National Park is accessible to all.
- 100 metres of paths have been surfaced at Copythorne Common along with four upgraded signposts and three gates.
- New footpath gates replaced two old stiles in Sway, thanks to funding from a legacy gift from former National Park member and Sway resident Stephen Tarling.

Above: Using the walking app



Access improvements at Copythorne Common



New gates replace old stiles at Sway



Walking Festival 2024



Welcoming refugees

NPA ranger Hayden continues to work with charities in neighbouring cities to support local refugee and asylum seeker communities in accessing and feeling welcome in green spaces, such as the National Park.

This year 89 people visited the New Forest across four events, including a ride with New Forest inclusive cycling charity PEDALL, two guided walks, and a celebration event with Minstead Study Centre and Hampshire County Council supported by New Forest District Council.

One participant said: ‘Today I am not filled with depression.’

Hayden said: ‘By continuing to support refugee access to the National Park, we foster opportunities for meaningful connection – both with others and with the natural environment – that help build confidence, resilience, and a sense of belonging. Ensuring these communities can fully engage with and benefit from the New Forest is essential in creating truly inclusive landscapes.’

After receiving the Europarc Alfred Toepfer Scholarship in 2023, Hayden conducted a study in Greece on how Europe’s Protected Areas engage with refugee and asylum seeker communities. The research aims to showcase best practices, identify access barriers, and offer practical tools for green professionals to improve inclusion.

Above: Hayden (front row, second from right) on a study trip in Greece



Connecting young people to nature

Our education and youth team helped more than 2,000 young people to connect with nature in the National Park through school and curriculum visits, and a further 1,600 young people through youth engagement and green careers outreach (including YouCAN). The team also facilitated training for 35 people at university, teacher and other professional levels.

Our core funded travel grant – designed to enable local rural and urban schools to access learning venues across the New Forest – has enabled almost 3,500 pupil-days of experience across 12 different providers. Schools were pleased to receive an uplift in this grant from £150 to £250 toward coach travel in the face of higher transport costs – often a barrier to getting children into nature.

Work experience

We continue to welcome work experience students to enable more young people to experience different forms of green careers. Seven students worked alongside several departments across the NPA including: heritage, ecology, rangers, planning, IT, and communications, as well as supporting our inclusive cycling charity partner, PEDALL.

Generation Green 2

As part of Generation Green 2, the New Forest National Park Authority worked with the Countryside Education Trust (CET) in Beaulieu, to provide funded visits for over 600 eligible young people

living in areas of social disadvantage to connect with the National Park.

The visits encouraged nature connection through coast and river experiences, opportunities to explore the special qualities of the New Forest and an evening under the stars with the NPA education and youth and ranger teams, as well as farm and woodland discovery with CET.

Generation Green 2 is a 12-month national project that aims to connect more than 25,000 underserved young people living in England to nature and rural life by taking them on inspiring experiences in beautiful, protected places.

This project was delivered by the Access Unlimited (AU) Partnership, a unique coalition of not-for-profit youth organisations, school residential outdoor providers, and organisations managing protected landscapes which includes the YHA (England & Wales), The Outward Bound Trust, Field Studies Council, Girlguiding, Scouts, National Parks England, and the National Landscapes Association. Nine National Park Authorities and eight National Landscapes are involved in course delivery. Funding for Generation Green 2 was provided by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) as part of its ongoing support of access to nature.

The impact

3,500 pupil days enabled in the Forest through travel grants

A school visit as part of Generation Green

‘We were so impressed with communication and paperwork before the visit. On the day the children gained so much knowledge which reinforced their classroom learning. NPA staff knowledge, passion and enthusiasm was valued!’

Durweston Primary School

‘The pupils gained motivation to revisit and understand it is different from a play park!’

Mudeford Junior School

‘Thank you so much for the trip today. The kids and adults had a great time and really loved how the NPA team was so knowledgeable and friendly.’

Leesland School, Gosport



School children learning about the New Forest

Successful internships

Our former National Park Interns Josh Dawes and Hayley Quarrington both secured jobs within the New Forest National Park Authority since completing their internships last year.

Josh has joined our planning team. Hayley is now an administrative assistant, she has also become a member of the New Forest Youth Board and the National Parks UK Youth Voice group.

Josh and Hayley both completed 12-month internships with the NPA, starting in 2023, under the New to Nature Scheme, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and organised by Groundwork UK.

Josh said: ‘My favourite thing about being a planning officer is the chance to get to visit all corners of the National

Park on site visits, getting to know everywhere really well, communicating with residents and seeing that they have the same appreciation for the natural environment as I do.

‘After spending some time with the Authority, I realised all the different work opportunities that could actually be helping nature in the background. Who knew planning was actually all about protecting the landscape and environment?’

Hayley said: ‘It wasn’t until I started working at the NPA that I learnt a green career doesn’t have to mean spending all your time outside, it can mean working in an organisation that contributes towards conserving and preserving the environment. So as an admin assistant or intern, I have a green career. A planning officer, IT technician or communications assistant can all be green careers, which is awesome!’



Hayley Quarrington (NPA) and Secretary of State Steve Reed



Former intern Josh Dawes is now an NPA planning officer



Apprentice rangers

Since 2016, the New Forest National Park Authority has supported 14 apprentice rangers, with teams across the New Forest including the NPA, Forestry England, the National Trust, Hampshire County Council, RSPB, the Countryside Education Trust and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust.

Through these 12-16 month paid schemes, apprentices gain experience of different ranger work at each organisation, including conservation tasks, wildlife surveys, public engagement, as well as learning at Sparsholt College and Kingston Maurward College.

Former apprentice rangers have gone on to work at South Downs National Park Authority, Forestry England, the Countryside Education Trust, and Lulworth Estate. Some have remained at the NPA, like Hayden Bridgeman, who is now the North Area Ranger, and James Masser, who is now our Volunteer and Accessibility Co-ordinator.

Current apprentice rangers, Abi Sharp and Shona Tambllyn-Blake, have been gaining practical experience and developing skills thanks to funding through BMW UK’s support of Recharge in Nature. They are due to finish the scheme in July 2025.

Shona said: ‘I have learnt an incredible amount about how the Forest works and what each organisation contributes to it. I can now use chainsaws, brushcutters and many hand and power tools. I’ve learnt about Forest maintenance in lots of different ways, from invasive species control to fixing and installing fencing, gates and styles.

‘My favourite moments so far are stalking with the keepers and being part of a stone curlew survey, but I’ve loved every minute of every placement.

‘The scheme has opened so many doors for me, and I’ve met so many great people. Anyone looking to get into a green career just needs to go for it! They won’t regret it, ever.’

Above: Apprentice ranger Shona Tambllyn-Blake



The impact

More than 1,530 volunteer hours given to caring for the New Forest

Volunteer at Copythorne Common © Steve Poole

Volunteering

Our incredible volunteers are key to supporting the vital work we do in the New Forest.

This year, 99 volunteers gave their time across 43 volunteer days, totalling more than 1,530 hours to help care for the Forest, its wildlife and habitats.

Thanks to the ongoing partnership between Flourish in Nature CIC and the National Park Authority, over 30 supported volunteer placements have been created for adults with additional needs.

From invasive rhododendron clearance and conservation tasks on heathland and in woodland, to work on paths, access, and supporting ranger events, volunteers play an important role as part of Team New Forest.



Volunteers at Tatchbury Mount

Volunteer Fair

The biggest New Forest Volunteer Fair yet welcomed 56 exhibitors and stallholders in January, ranging from local charities to national institutions.

More than 450 would-be volunteers passed through the Fair's doors, eager to find the next opportunity for them and to learn more from the 20 planned talks on the day.

Members of the New Forest Youth Board officially opened the Fair alongside MP Sir Julian Lewis and New Forest National Park Authority CEO Alison Barnes.

New Forest Youth Board member Fran Nicholas said: 'Youth volunteering has been great for me. It's been amazing to carry out practical conservation with like-minded individuals who are a similar age to me. I feel that I've been making a difference for the local environment and wildlife while also enjoying the social element.'

New Forest Youth Board members Toby Pearse and Fran Nicholas opening the 2025 Volunteer Fair alongside MP Sir Julian Lewis and NFNPA Chief Executive Alison Barnes



An Inclusive Forest Through the Arts

We're creating new, inspiring, and accessible creative opportunities that help more people connect with the New Forest – its landscapes, communities, and stories.

Culture in Common

The NPA is a consortium member of Culture in Common, an Arts Council England funded programme which aims to reach people who have less access or engagement with arts and culture. It also looks to provide more opportunities for residents to access a variety of events, workshops, professional performances and creative clubs within easy reach of home.

This year saw Culture in Common step up its delivery of events to New Forest residents.

- 32,000 audiences or participants attended events and activities across the New Forest.
- 95 events were held in areas of least engagement in arts and culture.
- Five community engagement sessions were held across the district to gather residents' input on future creative activities.

- 96% of visitors rated their experience of events as 'excellent' or 'very good'.
- 82% of visitors said they were 'more likely' or 'much more likely' to attend another cultural event in the future.

In 2024-25, Culture in Common has been working to combine nature and the environment with artistic projects, to inspire and engage local communities.

'Forest of Calm' garden design captured the beauty of the National Park and was co-created with home-educated young people from the New Forest and The Beardy Gardener (Leigh Johnstone), winning gold at the BBC Gardener's World Spring Fair, Beaulieu. Monthly Creative Walkshops invited participants to explore creative skills such as photography, sketching, watercolours, and creative writing while discovering different parts of the National Park.

Audiences at the New Forest Show experienced 'WILD', Motionhouse's

The impact

32,000 people attended arts events through Culture in Common partnership

gravity-defying dance performance about our relationship with animals and the natural environment.

The New Forest Song Cycle, led by Countryside Education Trust, co-created songs in five Primary Schools inspired by the Forest.

Assembled Moments Youth Theatre created 'Future First' a climate hope drama for Play on Words Literature Festival.

'Life's a Beach', a new dance commission by Joli Vyann, was inspired by interviewing locals on the beaches at Lepe and Calshot.

Culture in Common also partnered with Historic England to offer traditional Roma craft workshops alongside the first Archaeological Dig of a Gypsy encampment at Thorney Hill, featured in BBC's Digging for Britain.

cultureincommon.co.uk

Artist in Residence programme

Since 2021 we have partnered with SPUD – an inclusive arts education charity based in Sway, to deliver the New Forest National Park Artist in Residence Programme, supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England.

Artists from all backgrounds and artistic disciplines are encouraged to apply, and the programme is designed to enable artists to form creative relationships with the communities within the Forest. The month-long residencies give artists a chance to explore the special qualities of the landscape and showcase their creative works to audiences in an exhibition at the SPUD gallery six months later.

In May 2024 Alex Julian's exhibition 'Grand Designs' delved into constructs of home and temporality through building den structures. At the same time, Alex mentored artist Ben

Adamson who exhibited his immersive work 'Moments of Degradation'.

Alex said: 'There's no question that this time in the Forest will stay with me forever. Apart from the many inspiring people I've met, the opportunity to find tranquillity, breathable air, and a space for my imagination to roam has been incalculable. I've barely scratched the surface of what the New Forest has to offer.'

Artist Jasper Rouwen arrived at SPUD in May 2024 to begin his residency

and took to exploring the Forest by bicycle. His exhibition 'Friends are Forever' debuted in October 2024 and questioned the boundaries, intersections and juxtapositions he encountered on his travels.

Sound artists Em Burrows and Jeremy Segal spent October 2024 recording sound bites from New Forest communities which ranged from spoken historical encounters to acoustic folk songs.

Em Burrows	Alex Julian	Jasper Rouwen

Place

The New Forest is a unique, living and working landscape. We’re working to keep it thriving by safeguarding its built and natural environment, preserving its rich cultural heritage, encouraging sustainable tourism, championing local produce, supporting access to affordable homes, and increasing green skills and jobs.

Affordable housing has been allocated at the site of the former Lyndhurst Park Hotel © Hoburne Development



Protecting the National Park through our planning service

Our role as the local planning authority helps us to protect and enhance the National Park and to ensure the New Forest remains a living, working landscape.

Our planning policies are key in conserving and enhancing the special qualities that make the New Forest the place it is, including the distinctive New Forest character of our villages and landscapes, as well as meeting the needs of the 34,500 residents and over 2,000 businesses that operate within the National Park.

We deal with over 600 planning applications a year, the vast majority of which are approved – 95% in 2024-25, as well as many other types of applications and pre-application enquiries. The approval rate reflects our close work with applicants and agents to achieve high-quality schemes, with many potential issues successfully resolved at either the pre-application stage or through negotiations with applicants during the application itself.

The Government’s National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), updated in December 2024, reiterates that England’s 10 National Parks have the highest status of protection in relation to

landscape and scenic beauty; and that the scale and extent of development in National Parks should be limited. The focus of new housing development within the New Forest National Park is therefore on small-scale schemes designed to meet local housing need.

Affordable housing

As set out in our Local Plan, providing new affordable housing for local people in identified housing need is a key policy objective, as the New Forest housing market makes it difficult for many local people to stay in the area.

More than 60 affordable homes are under construction at various development sites within the National Park, including the former Lyndhurst Park Hotel site, Whartons Lane in Ashurst and Church Lane in Sway. Planning permission has also been granted for 10 affordable dwellings for local people in housing need in Copythorne. The new affordable housing delivered on these sites will enable people in housing need with a local connection to stay in the area.

Supporting local communities on design guidelines

We continued to work closely with communities across the National Park, supporting town and parish councils develop local planning policies and design guidance.

Neighbourhood plans, introduced by the Government in 2011, empower local communities to shape future development in their areas through locally-led planning policies.

We’ve helped several councils prepare neighbourhood plans (including Wellow, Ringwood, Lymington and Pennington, and Totton and Eling) by offering access to evidence, technical expertise, and specialist planning advice.

The draft Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan went to local referendum in July 2024, and was formally adopted (or ‘made’) by the New Forest National Park Authority and New Forest District Council after 83% of local voters supported the plan.

In the same month, the draft Wellow Neighbourhood Plan received strong support from the community within the parish with a 91% approval rate and was subsequently formally adopted by the National Park Authority and Test Valley Borough Council.

We also worked alongside Ashurst and Colbury Parish Council as it updated its existing Village Design Statement. Following six weeks of public consultation it was formally adopted by the NPA to inform decisions made on planning applications submitted within the parish.



Ringwood © Nick Lucas



Aerial view of Lyndhurst

Local Plan review

The New Forest National Park Local Plan sets out where new development can take place in line with the principles of sustainable development and the need to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the New Forest.

It includes a set of local planning policies based on evidence, national guidelines, and input from those who live and work in the area. These local planning policies are the primary consideration against which applications are assessed against.

In February we launched the first stage in the review of these local planning policies through a six-week public consultation and public drop-in sessions. We invited public feedback on the planning policy areas identified as being ‘in scope’ for review, including supporting appropriate renewable energy proposals that don’t conflict with the statutory National Park purposes; conserving and enhancing the relative tranquillity of significant parts of the New Forest National Park; and considering the scope for new residential development to meet local needs.

Following this public consultation, a draft revised Local Plan is being prepared. In late 2025, communities, residents, landowners, parish councils, businesses, developers and interest groups in the New Forest National Park will all be invited to comment on the revised draft. The revised Local Plan will be submitted to the Government for independent examination in late 2026.

Planning enforcement

Our enforcement team ensures the integrity of the planning system is maintained and that the National Park is protected from inappropriate development.

In 2024-25 the Planning Enforcement team received 210 new cases and resolved 189 cases.

In April 2024 we welcomed new Government planning enforcement rules which help further protect the New Forest National Park’s natural and built environment.

These include unlimited fines for those who don’t comply with enforcement notices, and a longer period in which Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) can take enforcement action against some unauthorised development – with the previous four-year limit for certain developments now extended to 10 years.

LPAs can now also issue temporary ‘stop notices’ on certain work, which are effective for up to 56 days rather than 28.

The Authority has issued eight Planning Contravention Notices (PCN) this year to obtain information about activities on the land where a breach may be happening.

Where a breach has been identified, most cases (75%) have been resolved through negotiation and receiving retrospective applications. In those cases when unauthorised development is harmful to the environment or community, and appropriate remedial action can’t be agreed, we have taken formal enforcement action.

This has happened on seven occasions with cases resulting in either a Breach of Condition or an Enforcement Notice. The most typical issues raised with us and investigated in the last 12 months include breaches of planning conditions, changes of use of land and buildings for various purposes; erection of domestic outbuildings; residential use of buildings; the stationing of residential caravans; inappropriate fencing; inappropriate tracks and unauthorised storage.

We are grateful for the help of members of the public and local parish and town councils who alert us to potential breaches of planning control which we then investigate. We also continue to selectively monitor new development to check compliance with plans, conditions and legal agreements as well as active and dormant minerals and waste sites within the National Park.

Reducing animal accidents

The total number of commoners’ livestock killed or injured on Forest roads dropped to its lowest level since records began.

In 2024, 52 animals were killed or injured, including 22 ponies killed compared with 27 the previous year, and the total number of animal road traffic accidents also fell, to 94.

While the reduction in accidents is welcomed, every animal killed or injured on New Forest roads is an emotional and financial loss to its owner and to the National Park as the animals help to create the rare habitats through their conservation grazing. The joint campaign message to drivers on Forest roads remains to pass animals wide and slow and be prepared to stop.

The New Forest Animal Accidents Reduction Group also marked three years of Operation Mountie, a multi-agency initiative to reduce animal accidents on Forest roads through educating drivers who are caught speeding. We continue to support these sessions which are led by New Forest Roads Awareness and Hampshire Constabulary, with Forestry England.

Social media was also an important tool in raising awareness of the #PassWideAndSlow message. This year social media posts had over 657,000 impressions and 35,000 engagements on NPA channels alone.



The NPA encourages responsible dog walking



Pony on frosty road

The impact

13,000 ranger interactions with the public

Protecting endangered birds

The New Forest is an important stronghold for unusual ground nesting birds and is designated as a Special Protection Area in part because of the breeding populations of three species – woodlark, nightjar and Dartford warbler.

During the last year conservationists recorded the highest ever numbers of woodlark. Around 100 Forestry England and Hampshire Ornithological Society volunteers surveyed 300 square kilometres of the New Forest and counted 260 breeding pairs, a big increase from the 167 recorded in the same survey in 2019. This makes the New Forest one of the UK’s most important locations for this species with around 10% of the population estimated to be found here.

We continued to work closely with partners such as Forestry England, Hampshire County Council, New Forest Dog Owners Group, the National Trust, New Forest District Council and Bird Aware Solent to educate people about the

endangered ground nesting birds and how the New Forest is critical to their survival.

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

We also used social media as a key tool to encourage Forest users to #StayOnTheTracks and to keep dogs under close control, using a lead where necessary. These posts received over 166,000 impressions and 6,500 engagements across our NPA channels.



Woodlark © Steve Laycock

Encouraging responsible dog walking

Our visits survey last year showed that 41% of people were out and about in the Forest to walk their dog.

We promote responsible dog walking through the New Forest dog walking code and engage with dog owners and walkers year-round. This is part of a multi-agency approach with Forestry England, New Forest Dog Owners Group and Hampshire Constabulary.

Our ranger team regularly takes part in dog-focused events and engagement activities to highlight the importance of keeping dogs under close control

particularly near ground nesting bird sites and along the coast. It also shares key messages about the need to pick up after pets to help protect the National Park’s sensitive habitats.

Professional dog walkers and dog walking businesses operating within the National Park are also encouraged to sign up to the New Forest Professional Dog Walkers’ Charter. This voluntary code shows their commitment to responsible dog walking practices. The Charter continues to grow and now has 94 members.

New Forest code – working in partnership

The 220 square miles of the National Park sees an estimated 15 million visitor days each year.

We collaborate with other Forest organisations on joint initiatives to share and promote the New Forest code, which outlines nine simple ways for people to enjoy the area responsibly.

The infographic shows the work this year to protect the National Park alongside our partners Forestry England, New Forest District Council, Hampshire Constabulary, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Services, New Forest Roads Awareness, Verderers, Go New Forest, the Commoners Defence Association and our volunteers including:

- Almost 4,000 hours of ranger patrols
- #NewForestCode seen over 3.8m times on social media
- Intervened in 200 incidents of pony petting/feeding or use of BBQs

- 35 joint patrols with emergency services
- Over 8,000 hours of volunteering to support conservation projects
- Over 20 community litter picking events supported
- 130 drivers stopped for speeding on Forest roads
- Spot checks on 140 vehicles carrying waste to reduce fly tipping.

The impact

4,000 hours of joint ranger patrols



Protecting the Forest through Public Spaces Protection Orders

Two Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) to prevent the use of BBQs and fires on the open Forest and petting and feeding New Forest ponies and donkeys were introduced in 2023.

Several NPA and Forestry England rangers, as well as Agisters, are 'Authorised Officers' able to issue £100 Fixed Penalty Notices should it be necessary after first engaging, explaining and educating anyone in

breach of the Orders, a sum which can rise to £1,000 following a successful prosecution. Since the introduction of the PSPOs there have been 442 reported incidents where these protective powers were used to intervene and prevent or stop banned behaviours. A total of 2,334 people were engaged with during these incidents. Two PSPO fines have been issued, both relating to the ban on BBQs, campfires and other cooking equipment.

Our ranger team

Our rangers are the eyes and ears of the Forest and at the forefront of the ongoing pressures it faces.

The team continued to spread awareness of the New Forest code and Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) in the National Park, and their importance for the special nature that call the Forest home.

This year the rangers spent nearly 1,500 hours interacting with members of the public in the New Forest and spoke with nearly 13,000 people through patrols and engagement events. These include habitat management, supporting school and youth group visits, leading volunteer tasks and litter picks, running educational walks and more.

The NPA rangers also provide literature and signs, including the New Forest code, to local businesses, accommodation providers and community groups.

Below: NPA ranger Naomi Addleton with the mobile information unit



PSPO sign at a New Forest car park



Archaeology – uncovering and preserving New Forest heritage

Our archaeology and heritage team not only cares for the National Park but also provides services to Forestry England and New Forest District Council.

This year, the team has given advice on:

- 60 planning applications within the National Park
- 84 planning applications from outside the National Park, as part of our service level agreement with New Forest District Council
- 55 requests from Forestry England ahead of forestry works
- 30 requests ahead of Higher Level Stewardship scheme works.

Our archaeologists also led a volunteer group supporting the community-run Chapel Stores, where volunteers tidied up the headstones in the adjacent graveyard. The Chapel Stores team digitally recorded the inscriptions on the gravestones, revealing text that was not previously visible.

In September, the team provided support for an archaeological excavation at Thorney Hill. This site includes a compound established in the 1920s, following a policy change that prevented Gypsies and Travellers from camping on the open Forest. The excavation offered new insights into this lesser-known chapter of New Forest history and was featured in Channel 4's Digging for Britain.

Above: Thorney Hill – Romany History archaeological dig

Curating historical records

Working with the New Forest Heritage Centre, our archaeology and heritage team continues to manage and develop the New Forest Knowledge website – a collaborative community platform dedicated to exploring and sharing the area's rich cultural heritage. The site invites individuals and community groups of all backgrounds to contribute their own research, articles, and photographs, helping to build a more complete and diverse picture of New Forest history.

Over the past year, the website had more than 119,000 visits, reflecting its growing role as a key resource for heritage engagement. Its expanding archive now includes thousands of records, ranging from excavation and survey reports to 3D models, historic maps, and oral histories. As the site's content and functionality continue to grow, it remains an important tool for learning, discovery, and public participation in heritage.

Since 2018, when the analytics were updated, the site has had almost 270,000 unique visitors across 199 countries.

nfknowledge.org

The impact

465 applications for works to protected trees

Our tree service – preserving protected trees

The tree team's role in the NPA is to protect the special and important trees in our communities that contribute to the character of the National Park.

This year we registered 465 applications for works to trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) or growing within Conservation Areas. These vary from minor pruning or repairing storm damage to pollarding or felling. We successfully negotiated on numerous applications to help improve our tree cover where unnecessary or inappropriate works have been requested.

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

Consultation and negotiation have been offered on up to 200 Development Management applications to ensure the most appropriate and sustainable relationship with trees and buildings.

The NPA's senior tree officer Nik Gruber said: 'Meeting and advising tree owners on the best way to look after their trees is one of the most important and enjoyable parts of the job.'



Ponies under a beech tree at Emery Down © Chris Balcombe



Supporting local produce

The New Forest Marque celebrated its 20th anniversary this year at the New Forest Show, announcing a record number of members at almost 180.

Member businesses range from award-winning cheese and chutney makers to strawberries and soap.

The distinctive Marque logo is awarded to produce which has been grown, reared, caught, brewed, produced or processed within the New Forest. Hotels, farm shops, cafés and B&Bs can also become members when they sell or serve Marque produce.

The New Forest Marque is supported by the New Forest National Park Authority as local produce is a key part of the NPA's goal of supporting the Forest economy and helping to tackle climate change.

New Forest Marque Chair Dan Parsons said: 'Our passionate producers are linked to the landscape and traditions which make the New Forest so special. By buying local you're not only supporting the economy

of New Forest communities but also the environment by shopping sustainably. The Marque is a guarantee that at least 25% of a product's ingredients come from the Forest so there are very few miles involved.'

This year also marked the one-year anniversary of New Forest Marque Inspired – introduced to include local artists and craftspeople who take their inspiration from the New Forest.

Another new venture for the Marque was two successful exhibitions in partnership with the New Forest Heritage Centre. Beekeeping was the theme for the showcase in spring 2024, and the other 'Crafted by the Forest' exhibited in spring 2025. It focused on craft producers who source their natural materials directly from the Forest, highlighting the connection between traditional practices and the landscape.

In 2024, the Marque started partnering with Brockenhurst College, providing local food, drink and craft for their young learners who



are studying Studio Photography, to enrich their skills and broaden their portfolios. This collaborative partnership continues into 2025.

New Forest Marque bi-annual Roadshows have continued to be popular, and this year saw the addition of new events to the Marque calendar including the New Forest Food Festival at Hinton Admiral and Stockbridge Market.

With the help of a grant from the Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme, in autumn 2024 the Marque was able to partner with local landowners and butchers to offer seasonal wild New Forest venison via their online shop. Deer have no natural predators and their grazing negatively impacts farmers and the biodiversity of the New Forest. Therefore wild New Forest venison as a sustainable food choice is something that the Marque will continue to promote.

Left: Marque Inspired exhibition
Right: Jars of New Forest Marque produce



Julia Smales © Steve Poole

Behind the Scenes of the National Park

To mark the 75th anniversary of UK national parks, we launched a campaign to take people 'behind the scenes' to reveal the Forest's secrets.

The campaign took people on a deep dive into the mysteries of the rare habitats and wildlife that live in the New Forest. We spoke to experts and volunteers working in the background to ensure the Forest survives for future generations, illustrated with incredible images by international photographer Steve Poole.

The six-month campaign was launched at the New Forest Show with a

reception and Behind the Scenes exhibition.

More than 2,600 people visited our stand, engaging with displays and stories about nature conservation in the National Park. The Heart of the Forest area – where our stand was located with other Forest organisations – was recognised for its contribution to the event, winning the prestigious President's Cup.

The Behind the Scenes campaign reached 950,000 people on NPA social media channels, with 57,000 engagements.

Partnerships

The success of the New Forest depends on strong collaboration across communities, businesses, and organisations – both within and beyond its boundaries. By sharing knowledge, resources, and ideas, we can deliver more together than we ever could alone.

Fostering strong, inclusive networks and effective ways of working as a ‘Team New Forest’ is essential to meet future challenges and ensure lasting impact for the National Park.

Partners working together to deliver for the New Forest

The New Forest National Park Partnership Plan 2022 – 2027 was adopted following public consultation and sets out a series of shared priorities for the New Forest National Park over five years.

It’s a plan for the place, rather than an individual organisation, recognising the fact that a wide range of bodies contribute towards conserving and enhancing what makes the New Forest a special place.

It focuses on a vision of a New Forest moving towards net zero, with wildlife habitats restored, thriving local communities, and more people caring for the Forest and benefiting from connecting with nature.

It looks at five key themes – climate, nature, people, place and partnership – and was developed thanks to input from hundreds of people.

The five themes

1. Re:New Climate

Net Zero with nature – delivering nature-based climate solutions through local partnerships

2. Re:New Nature

Nature recovery – creating a network of restored and expanded habitats enabling wildlife to thrive.

3. Re:New People

An inclusive National Park – pride in the New Forest and a connection with nature for all.

4. Re:New Place

Thriving Forest – sustaining a living, working landscape with commoning at its heart.

5. Re:New Partnership

Team New Forest – communities, organisations and businesses working together and all contributing, being greater than the sum of our parts.

Convening key partners

The New Forest National Park Leaders’ Panel brings together key partners from across the area – including the National Park Authority, Hampshire County Council, Wiltshire Council, New Forest District Council, Test Valley Borough Council, Forestry England, Natural England and the Verderers of the New Forest. The panel is made up of senior representatives of these bodies and meets quarterly to consider the key issues facing the New Forest.

During 2024-25 this has included a focus on the water environment of the New Forest, with the panel attending a site visit arranged by Southern Water and the Environment Agency to hear more about the work underway to improve the wastewater treatment works in the National Park.

In spring 2025 the panel visited one of the successful wetland restoration projects in the New Forest to see the benefits delivered for water quality, nature recovery, addressing the impacts of climate change and supporting commoning through the restoration scheme near Brockenhurst led by Forestry England and Natural England.

Partnership Plan Leaders Panel



Top: A family at the community hedge planting event at New Park
Bottom: A young visitor to the community hedge planting event

The impact

More than 1.4 million people had the chance to see climate and nature messages

Successful Awakening Festival

A record number of people took part in this year’s New Forest Awakening Festival – a month-long celebration of nature, climate action, and community.

Led by the New Forest National Park Authority in collaboration with a wide range of partners, the Festival has become an annual event each March, raising awareness of the nature and climate emergencies and how we can respond together.

More than 130 events were held throughout the month thanks to dozens of New Forest organisations, businesses and charities – including local ‘green groups’. More than 4,000 people enjoyed various walks, talks, arts and crafts, a local produce roadshow, growing advice, climate-themed workshops, film screenings, volunteer days, repair cafés, litter picks, and behind the scenes tours.

Overall, messages about the climate and nature emergencies in the New Forest reached more than 1.4 million people

through social and traditional media, while more than 370,000 engaged directly with posts or events – by attending, commenting, sharing, or liking content online.

Community tree planting

One of the highlights of the Awakening Festival was a community tree planting event at New Park, Brockenhurst. More than 200 people – including 84 children – came to the special event run by the New Forest Agricultural Show Society, the New Forest National Park Authority and the Hampshire Forest Partnership.

Nearly 400 metres of native trees were planted to enhance the local landscape, leave a lasting legacy, and create essential habitats for different wildlife. The event was held on the 20th anniversary weekend of the New Forest being designated a national park.



Commoning – a vital practice shaping today’s landscape

Commoning and the right to turn out animals to roam the landscape is crucial for the survival of the New Forest as we know it today. The ponies and cattle shape the landscape – it’s their grazing which helps create the habitats and enables plants, fungi, insects, birds and animals to thrive here, some of which are found almost nowhere else in the UK.

Commoning in the New Forest stretches back over 1,000 years but is now facing threats to its future, including changes in agricultural support and the challenges of managing free roaming livestock in a lived-in landscape.

The animals’ owners are ordinary people with an extraordinary commitment to the New Forest – around 700 commoners who have ancient rights attached to their land or property.

We help support commoners by:

- Offering grants through the Farming in Protected Landscapes scheme (see P13).
- Providing training and advice through the New Forest Land Advice Service (see P14).
- The Commoners Dwelling Scheme – enabling eligible commoners to build homes in the New Forest area outside of villages while maintaining their right to practice commoning.
- Convening the Forest Farming Group which promotes the need for a bespoke scheme of payments for public ‘goods’ or benefits to be put in place, ensuring the future Environmental Land Management programme meets the Forest’s specific needs.
- Seeking to maintain the supply of land available for back up grazing, recognising that it’s under pressure from higher value land uses, including housing. The importance of grazing land is a key consideration in the revision of the Local Plan (see P25).

Above: Commoner Ben Mansbridge

Championing local heroes

We ran our 11th New Forest National Park Awards with the CLA, celebrating the wonderful people who support the New Forest’s environment and rural economy, and help keep it a living, working landscape. The winners were recognised at a special ceremony at the New Forest and Hampshire County Show.

Alison Barnes, CEO of the New Forest National Park Authority, said: ‘In The 75th year of UK’s national parks we need to focus on what we need for their future, and how our protected landscapes can support national objectives for climate, nature, people and places.

‘It’s heartening to know that such an impressive array of people are working day in, day out to ensure the New Forest is protected and enhanced.’

New Forest Award winners 2024 at the New Forest Show



Greenprint: Progress through partnership

The Greenprint initiative, focused across the central south region, continued to provide a strong, strategic framework for driving environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

This joint initiative – led by the New Forest National Park Authority, Partnership for South Hampshire, University of Southampton and University of Portsmouth – aims to strengthen cross-sector partnerships to support green growth, in response to the ongoing climate and nature emergencies.

Throughout the year, the Greenprint framework has supported a review of activity across the local authorities in the region. This followed workshops to identify shared interest and opportunities across the Greenprint

‘framework’: five priority areas crucial to our efforts to delivering a world-class environment and a world-class sustainable economy.

Preparation also began on a Greenprint study into green skills and jobs, set to run in summer 2025 and supported by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The study will assess the region’s understanding of green skills, jobs and careers, and make recommendations to support the delivery of partnership initiatives in the central south.



This year’s winners were:

- **Young Farmer/Commoner:** Christian Newman from Totton
- **Best Supporter of Local Produce:** Cottage Lodge Hotel, Brockenhurst
- **Sustainability Champion:** Rebecca Gabzdyl of East Boldre Community Stores
- **Young Environmental Champion:** Gemma Hobbs from Boldre

This year’s Highly Commended were:

- **Young Farmer/Commoner:** Peter Fogarty from Lepe
- **Best Supporter of Local Produce:** The Farmers Butcher, Bramshaw
- **Sustainability Champion:** Green Hill Farm Holiday Village, Landford, and Kat Wilcox and Wendy Collyer, co-chairs of Eco Sway



Supporting Brilliance in Business

We support local enterprise through the New Forest Business Partnership’s Brilliance in Business Awards, sponsoring the Sustainable Business of the Year category.

The award recognises businesses that understand their responsibility to drive environmental improvements within their industry, creating a greener, more sustainable product or service.

This year’s winner was New Forest Escapes which promotes sustainable holidays through its collection of guest accommodation. Also shortlisted were Chewton Glen Hotel and Spa, and New Forest Aromatics.

Above: New Forest Escapes at the Brilliance in Business Awards.
© New Forest Escapes

Green Halo Conference

The Green Halo Partnership unites organisations across sectors with a shared mission: to place nature at the heart of how we live, work, and prosper.

In June, the Green Halo Partnership Conference brought together more than 100 delegates to explore the vital role nature plays in supporting our health and wellbeing, particularly in the context of the ongoing climate, nature, and health crises.

Attendees were inspired by thought-provoking speakers and insightful case studies, as well as outdoor opportunities connecting them to nature and the beauty of the New Forest National Park.

greenhalo.org.uk



Duke of Gloucester visit

HRH The Duke of Gloucester discovers National Park’s built environment

His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester visited the New Forest National Park to see its award-winning built environment and learn about the NPA’s work in conserving heritage and promoting high-quality, sustainable design.

The Duke toured spudWORKS in Sway, including The Living Room – an innovative, energy-efficient art therapy space which recently won an NPA Building Design Award. During the visit in October he also viewed artists’ studios and met local leaders and representatives from National Park organisations.

His visit highlighted successful developments showcasing the National Park’s collaborative approach to design and planning. He also learnt about the NPA’s Local List initiative and its role in protecting local character.

The visit included a stop at East Boldre Community Stores, a community-run shop in a converted chapel, which has been supporting local since February 2024.

Our staff

Our values

Our values help shape our culture and reflect our principles, standards and ways of working, they can be summarised as PACT:

Purpose

We are dedicated to our work

Achievement

We innovate, inspire and deliver success

Care

We strive to be sustainable in all we do

Teamwork

We work together with openness, integrity and respect

Staff discovery days

All staff are invited to join our ‘discovery days’ each year – a half day out of the office to discover more about the National Park, learn about what other Authority staff do, and enhance our working relationships.

This year our discovery days included six different sessions for staff to learn more about:

- A farm tour and the New Forest Marque local produce scheme
- Our planning function
- Trails for all abilities using electric bikes
- Cyber security
- Commoning
- Wellbeing in nature

Staff tree planting event

As part of our 20th anniversary celebrations, NPA staff joined a tree planting event in February, contributing to the creation of a mini Forest at New Park, Brockenhurst.

In collaboration with the New Forest Agricultural Show Society and the Hampshire Forest Partnership, the project uses a mix of native species to create a rich, diverse habitat.

Once established, the forest will serve as an educational, wellbeing-focused space for the community – leaving a lasting legacy for the next 20 years and beyond.



Staff tree planting event

Financial Information

The Authority's core revenue grant from Defra was £3,502,000 for the 2024–25 financial year, with an additional capital grant of £250,000.

We have continued to seek cost efficiencies wherever possible and sought ways to increase effectiveness in the work we do. We continue to generate substantial external partnership funding to further services and delivery. On average, over the last five years, every £1 we contribute to joint projects generates a further £18 from partner organisations.

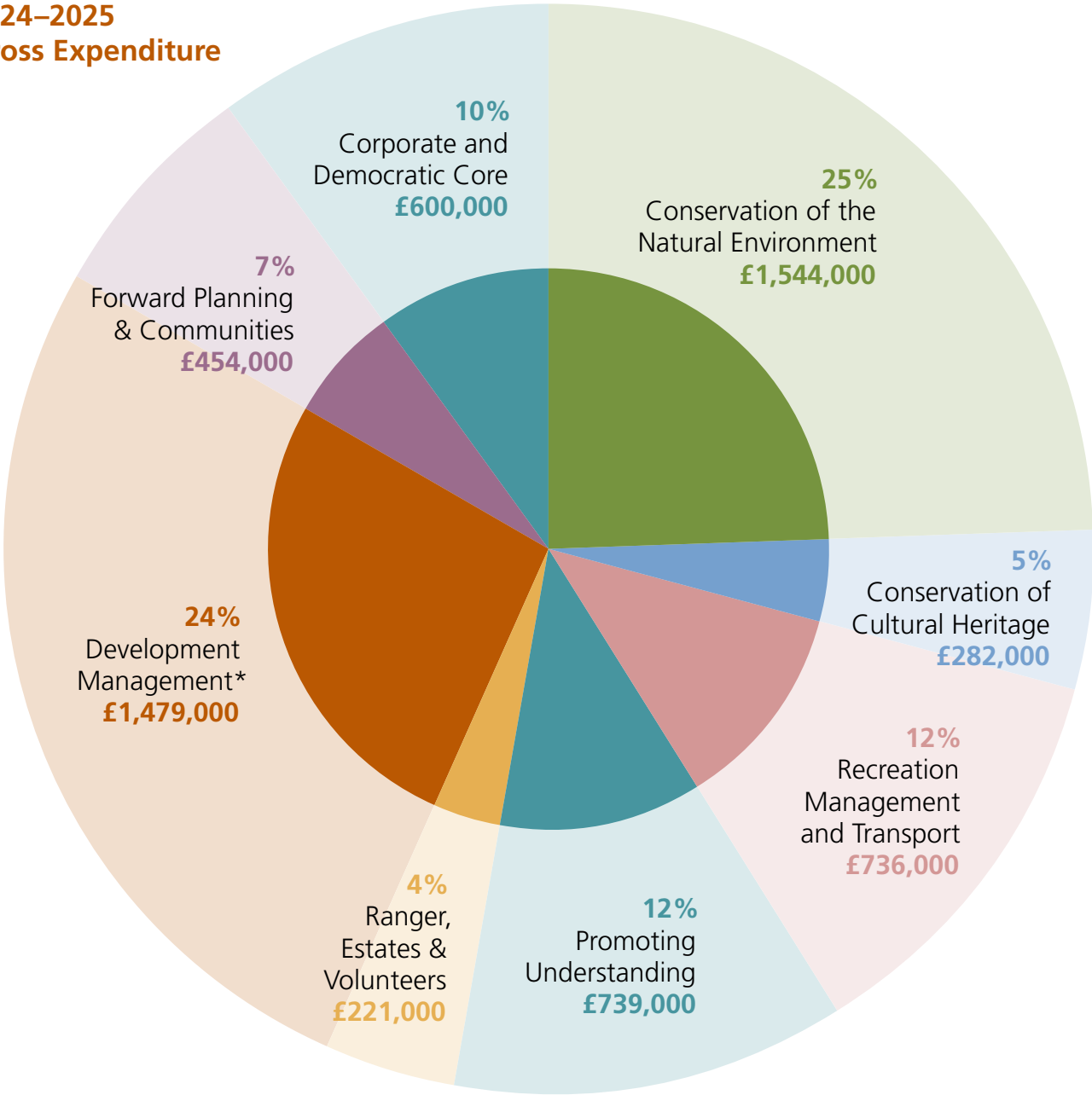
We received around:

- £3,752,000** from DEFRA
- £365,000** in statutory fees for planning and related applications
- £244,000** for shared services with other local authorities (rangers, archaeology, comms and administration)
- £186,000** interest on our investments
- £49,000** in other income generated (such as talks, guided walks, New Forest Tour advertising and charging for expert advice)

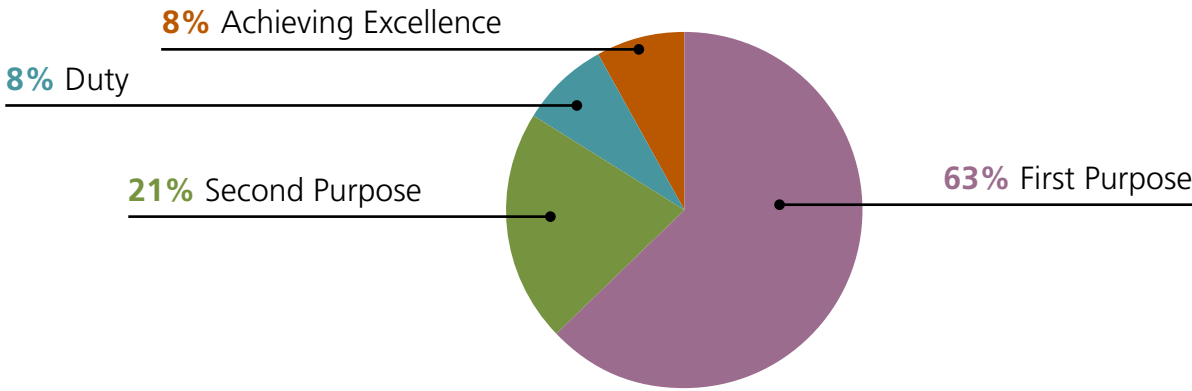
Significant external funding totalling £1.7m was secured for the Forest, including:

- £404,000** YouCAN
- £322,000** Farming in Protected Landscapes
- £263,000** Species Survival Fund
- £174,000** Pedall Inclusive Cycling Charity
- £131,000** Higher Level Stewardship Scheme
- £100,000** Digital Planning Improvement Fund
- £100,000** Active Travel England
- £94,000** Access for All
- £72,000** Generation Green
- Plus many more smaller projects...

2024–2025
Gross Expenditure



2024–2025 Budget



*Also includes enforcement and the tree service

Contact us

We welcome your views and comments about this Annual Review or any other aspect of our performance or services. For regular updates, please sign up to our email newsletter at newforestnpa.gov.uk

Write to us at:

New Forest National Park Authority
Lymington Town Hall
Avenue Road
Lymington
Hampshire SO41 9ZG

Call

01590 646600

This document is available in other formats such as large print, Braille, or any alternative language.

Email

enquiries@newforestnpa.gov.uk

Join us @newforestnpa on

