

Park Life

News from the New Forest National Park Authority

20 years
2005
2025



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Autumn/Winter 2025

Ponies at a New Forest Pond



Saving the New Forest's freshwaters

The New Forest is one of the best places for freshwater habitats in the UK – a habitat that's declining globally. In the heart of the National Park there's an abundance of pristine ponds, streams and wetlands, largely free of significant pollution. Yet the picture changes as you move downstream, where a combination of sewage and waste water spills, leaking septic tanks, land use practices, chemicals and road drainage all have a negative impact on water quality. A programme of restoring rivers and wetlands is included

in the New Forest National Park Partnership Plan, and the National Park Authority convenes a New Forest Water Catchment Partnership with Freshwater Habitats Trust to drive this forward. A partnership of landowners, government agencies, organisations and communities are:

- creating new ponds
- restoring natural water courses
- reducing non-native invasive plants in our rivers
- helping farmers reduce polluting run-off.

However, more needs to urgently be done to improve our water quality and to prioritise investment in our most treasured landscapes. Dr Naomi Ewald of Freshwater Habitats Trust said: 'The New Forest's diverse array of freshwater plants and animals are supported by a vibrant mosaic of habitats from ponds and bogs to rivers and streams, and mudflats and saltmarshes. 'Protecting these high-quality habitats won't just safeguard the Forest's biodiversity, it could also be the key to reversing the decline of freshwater wildlife across England and Wales. 'Building out from the Forest's biodiversity hotspots, we can create a network of healthy, unpolluted and interconnected freshwater habitats to allow species to spread across the landscape.' Paul Walton, the New Forest National Park Authority's Head of Environment and Rural Economy, said it's essential that national parks are taken into consideration in changes to water regulation which are currently being considered. He said: 'We and our partners

continue to demand faster, more concerted action and need determined focus on adequate resourcing from our water companies and regulators to achieve best water quality for the internationally important New Forest National Park. 'If our national parks are to retain their iconic status, reach their potential as havens for wildlife and support our nation's health and wellbeing then action is needed to ensure the highest water quality standards can be achieved.'

How we can all help improve our water quality

- 1) Keep any septic tanks in good order.
- 2) Use eco friendly cleaning products.
- 3) Only put flushable waste down the toilet.
- 4) Follow the New Forest Water Code:
 - Leave no trace – pick up dog mess and use local toilets
 - Use suitable facilities – to

- get rid of waste water
- Check, clean and dry – make sure any kit doesn't spread pests and diseases
 - Right activity, right place – for paddle sports and swimming
 - Stick to the pitch – wild camping isn't allowed
 - On the right track – keep dogs under control and stick to permitted paths.

Water facts

- The New Forest:
- supports 30% of England's threatened freshwater species
 - contains 75% of all the lowland bogs and valley mires found in north west Europe
 - supports 65% of the UK's wetland plants (around 300 species)
 - is home to over 30% of the UK's freshwater invertebrates (around 400 species).

A day in the life of an NPA archaeologist



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Discover fascinating coastal birds



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Things to do this autumn/winter



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Don't miss out on:

- Real-time updates on New Forest National Park news and alerts
- Tips for helping to keep the New Forest special and protecting wildlife Events and how to get involved and have your say
- Links to useful resources and emergency information when needed.

Scan the QR code!



Take part in our residents' survey

We want to hear from the people who know the New Forest National Park best: people who live and work here. What makes the New Forest special to you? What issues matter most for its future? Your views will help guide our priorities, services, projects and delivery in the years ahead. Add your voice and help keep the New Forest National Park thriving.

Take part at: nfnpsurvey2025.commonplace.is or scan the QR code



New Forest newsletter

Are you signed up to our free e-newsletter?

Get the latest National Park news straight to your inbox...

Head to www.newforestnpa.gov.uk and click 'newsletter sign up' on the home page, or scan the QR code



And... follow us on social media @newforestNPA

Businesses support safe driving on Forest roads

Companies with staff who drive in the New Forest are being encouraged to join New Forest Drive Safe to raise awareness among their employees of Forest animals on or close to roads.

Members of the newly launched group will be provided with advice and support to help make staff aware of the risks and what to do if they are involved in an accident with an animal.

Companies can join free of charge by filling in a form on the New Forest Commoners' Defence Association (CDA) website and once signed up will be listed on the page. New Forest CDA Chair Andrew Parry-Norton said: 'This is an initiative which we hope will highlight to everyone the importance of treating the Forest and Commoners' livestock respectfully.



(Picture: Amanda Norfolk @ Acornsandscapes Photography)

'Whatever size your business is, if you have drivers who travel through the Forest, I would strongly encourage you to join the scheme.'

Animal accidents are sadly common during the winter months, as many journeys are taken in darkness or during poor weather conditions.

New Forest National Park Authority (NPA) Deputy Chair

Victoria Mander said: 'The animals' grazing is vital in maintaining rare habitats and helping to create the incredible New Forest landscape. All individuals, organisations and businesses have a duty to look out for livestock and each other when driving on Forest roads.'

New Forest Drive Safe is led by the New Forest CDA in

partnership with the New Forest NPA, Forestry England and New Forest Roads Awareness, as part of the New Forest Animal Accidents Reduction Group.

Find out more about the initiative by searching for New Forest Drive Safe on the New Forest CDA website www.realnewforest.org

CALL 999

It's the law to report all accidents involving a pony, cow, donkey, dog, pig or sheep to the Police on 999 as soon as possible, and within 24 hours. Call the Verderers' office on 023 8028 2052 (Mon-Fri 9am-5pm) to report a sick, injured or distressed pony, cow, donkey, pig or sheep (not deer). Call Forestry England on 0300 067 4600 (24hrs) to report a sick, injured or distressed pony, cow, donkey, pig, sheep or deer.

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Have your say on Local Plan review

Residents, organisations and businesses are being asked for their views on the next stage of the New Forest National Park Local Plan review.

The Local Plan sets out the local planning policy framework for the National Park area, guiding decisions on planning applications. While the current one from 2019 remains largely fit-for-purpose, this partial and focused review reflects recent changes in national guidance, local priorities, insights gained from six years of applying the existing policies, and feedback received during earlier consultations.

The draft Local Plan will go to the next round of public consultation between 5 November and 19 December 2025.

It is important that the New Forest National Park is covered by an up-to-date Local Plan. The alternative of having no Plan would result in speculative proposals coming forward and less local control over where development in the National Park takes place. These are the key changes under consideration:

Vibrant communities:

There is a significant need for new homes for local people within the National Park, but there are challenges in meeting this need in an area with such a rich natural environment - over 55% of National Park land is internationally protected for nature.

The Government does not exempt National Parks from delivering new homes, and based on the Government's methodology for calculating housing need, the New Forest National Park has a need for around 260 new dwellings each year.

Development on this scale is incompatible with the landscape and nature conservation designations in the New Forest, but the revised Local Plan must consider where new development can be accommodated where appropriate. The draft Local Plan proposes around 50 net new dwellings each year and views are invited on this as part of the consultation.

The Local Plan review includes a proposed new 'settlement hierarchy' which increases the number of 'defined villages' to help deliver new housing and support the services and facilities in these communities. It aims to meet needs where possible through proposed new housing in Ashurst, Bartley, Lyndhurst, Sway, Landford and Redlynch, prioritising smaller homes, new affordable housing for local people through rural exception sites, and controls on the size of extensions and replacement houses.

It's proposed that a housing scheme which was planned for the former Fawley Power Station is deleted from the plan as it's no longer viable.

Vision and objectives:

The updated vision and strategic objectives are clearly aligned with the National Park Partnership Plan (our joint management plan for the place) as well as the New Forest's defined special qualities – those which set it apart from other parts of the country.

Climate change:

In response to the climate and nature emergencies, we've prepared a new standalone chapter on climate change. This will address the need for higher water efficiency

standards, including sustainable water management systems and will be informed by an updated flood risk assessment. Policies will encourage sustainable construction and support small-scale renewable energy schemes where they are consistent with National Park purposes (conserving and enhancing natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage, and promoting public understanding and enjoyment of these special qualities).

Natural environment:

The proposed local planning policies on the natural environment continue to protect the wealth of internationally, nationally and regionally important nature conservation designations in the New Forest. There are also opportunities to link to the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategies for Hampshire and Wiltshire. A strengthened approach to tranquillity and Biodiversity Net Gain will be included, with existing landscape character policies retained and enhanced.

Historic and built environment:

Following feedback from Historic England, policies relating to the historic and built environment have been updated to continue to help protect the New Forest's rich built heritage and support appropriately adapting historic buildings to the impacts of climate change.

Thriving local economy:

The draft revised local planning policies have been informed by an up-to-date assessment of employment needs within the National Park. These identified needs will be met through a

proposed allocation north of Fawley Waterside (part of the Solent Freeport), and the draft says further development would be supported if it meets certain criteria. Suggested revisions to the Local Plan will also strengthen support for the land-based economy, including commoning.

Traffic and transport:

The traffic issues affecting the National Park largely stem from development outside National Park boundaries, rather than the small scale of new development within it. Proposed revised policies

include reference to the latest Local Transport Plans from Hampshire and Wiltshire, which promote sustainable transport and reduce dependency on cars. There's also added focus on walking and cycling, as well as electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

Next steps

You can give your views online, and paper copies will be available from Lymington Town Hall.

Public drop-in sessions will be held during the consultation period for you to speak to the NPA planning team and find out more about the proposals.

This will be followed by a final period of consultation on a revised version of the Plan in summer 2026.

The draft Plan, supporting evidence base studies and representations will then be submitted to the Government for independent examination in 2027.

Look out for details on our website, email newsletter, social media channels and local press.

Help inform the New Forest National Park Local Plan. Add your voice from 5 November at nfnpalocalplan.commonplace.is.

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Bringing to life the Forest's past

Meet New Forest National Park archaeologist Hilde van de Heul

Q: How important is heritage in the New Forest?

Heritage is at the heart of what makes the New Forest special – layers of human activity are woven into the landscapes, from prehistoric burial mounds to medieval hunting grounds, military training sites to centuries-old commoning practices. Heritage shapes the way the Forest looks, feels, and functions today. Protecting it and sharing it with the community means keeping the Forest's story alive for future generations.

Q: What does a day as a New Forest archaeologist look like, and what might surprise people?

No two days are ever quite the same. One day I could be out in the Forest surveying features before forestry work and the next I could be giving planning advice to ensure new developments don't damage important archaeological sites. People can be surprised that a large part of my job is about prevention. I help ensure heritage is considered before groundworks start, whether that's for new housing, path repair work, or woodland management. What I do is as much about protecting sites as it is about discovering them.

I work with a huge variety of people to do this, from

landowners, Commoners, and foresters to volunteers and other specialists.

Q: How did you become an archaeologist?

I wanted to become an archaeologist for as long as I can remember, and I still have the bits of clay pipe and pottery I found in the garden as a child.

I studied the subject at university and got a fieldwork job at a commercial archaeology company, which was a great way to hone my digging skills.

You don't need a degree to become an archaeologist though, and some of the best I know came into it through other paths such as agency



Hilde led NPA volunteers to support a recent excavation at Buckler's Hard



placements and volunteering.

I've found archaeology an immensely rewarding career and would encourage anyone to give it a go. Passion for the subject really does go a long way!

Q: What have been some highlights of your job?

My favourite part of the job is working with our amazing volunteers. Together we've cleared damaging vegetation on countless Bronze Age barrows across the Forest, which has been tough but satisfying work.

Working with our volunteers

and supporting partners to uncover one of the shipbuilding slipways at Buckler's Hard recently was an absolute joy, and I'm looking forward to more results being shared soon.

Q: How can people protect and engage with the heritage around them?

You can start by noticing it – a low hump in the grass, a bank in the woods, or a scattering of flint on a path could all be clues to the past – while heritage trails, local history groups, or our online resources, are great ways to learn more.

The golden rule is to leave things as you find them to help look after sites. So, avoid climbing on earthworks or removing finds from the ground – even small amounts of damage can add up over time.

You should report anything unusual you spot to the National Park Authority archaeology team – it could be an important new discovery.

Perhaps most importantly, share what you learn. The more people value heritage, the better protected it will be.



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Mon 27th	Wells	£23.50
Mon 27th	Guildford	£22.00
Wed 29th	London - British Museum	£29.50
Wed 29th	Oxford	£24.00

November 2025

Tue 4th	London - Portrait Gallery	£28.00
Wed 5th	Dorchester & Weymouth	£18.50
Wed 12th	REME Museum - Chippenham	£29.50
Tue 18th	Clark's Village Xmas Shopping	£23.50
Wed 19th	Otter Nurseries at Christmas	£23.00
Tue 25th	Battersea Power Station - London	£27.00
Fri 28th	Craft4Crafters Festive Show	£24.50
Sun 30th	London - Covent Garden	£27.50

PRICES INDICATED ARE FOR ADULTS.
Concessions may apply for Seniors/Children/NT Members
Entrance fees/fares are usually included in price

January 2026

Mon 5th	Warner Super Value - 3* Heythrop Park Hotel	£349
Sun 25th	Warner - 4* Norton Grange Holiday Village	£199

February 2026

Mon 2nd	3* Cosy Break at The Queens Hotel	£265
Mon 2nd	Warner - 3* Bembridge Coast Hotel	£315
Fri 6th	Super Value at The 3* Headland!	£219
Sun 8th	Sidmouth - 4* Victoria Hotel	£519
Tue 10th	Paris - Full Board 4* Floating Hotel!	£575
Fri 13th	4* Belgrave Sands Valentines Special	£265
Sat 14th	Birmingham International Military Tattoo	£175
Sun 15th	Birmingham International Military Tattoo	£165
Mon 16th	Winter Warmer at The Rosemundy Hotel	£375
Mon 16th	Torquay Fun Break at the Babbacombe Hotel	£255
Mon 16th	Paris - Full Board 4* Floating Hotel!	£575
Mon 23rd	Warner - 4* Norton Grange Holiday Village	£199

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A lifetime in the Forest

For as long as he can remember, Commoner Clive Maton has been at the heartbeat of the New Forest. Through raising livestock, adapting to the seasons as well as constant change and new pressures, he has been entwined with the Forest for the past eight decades.

'My family has always been into farming and my dad bought me my first calf when I was eight,' recalls the 84-year-old. 'I've always been interested in and had animals. Farming has been in the family for generations.'

Raised within a three-mile radius of where he still lives today near Ashurst, the Forest has always been home for Clive.

His father and grandfather were small-scale Commoners, but it was Clive who threw himself into the life wholeheartedly, turning out ponies in the 1960s, cattle in



Clive Maton, and above right, in a pony pound

the late 70s, and steadily building up a herd which at one time was around 200

strong. Clive's passion for Commoning has been passed

down the family, with the next generations now taking on the baton. His two sons are both agisters for the Verderers and his two daughters are also Commoners, while his grandson builds the pony pounds dotted around the Forest for the drifts.

The family's ties extend beyond grazing stock. For decades, Clive ran a contracting firm, fencing for the Forestry Commission (now Forestry England), planting, scrub-cutting and even putting up the infrastructure for the New Forest Show.

'It was hard work, but it kept us going.'

Clive hasn't just worked the land, he's represented it. Over the years, he served many decades on the New Forest Commoners' Defence Association, the Pony Breeding and Cattle Society and a decade as a Board member of the New Forest National Park Authority from its earliest days back in 2005. Amid changing times, Clive



Pigs in the New Forest, by Peter LeCointe

Pannage season in the New Forest

Pannage is an ancient right that allows New Forest Commoners to release their pigs each autumn to feed on fallen nuts and fruit.

Acorns, while harmless to pigs, are poisonous to ponies and cattle so it is a vital part of the Forest's ecosystem.

Pannage dates vary each year but it usually begins in mid to late September and can run into the turn of the year.

If you do come across the pigs, do not feed or touch them – admire from a distance – and keep a close eye out for them and other livestock while driving.

admits New Forest Commoners now face a hard road ahead to keep the practice going.

'Young people can't afford land or houses locally so it's increasingly difficult to start out. It's only going to get harder to common,' he said. Still, he admits, there are moments that keep him going. 'Foaling time is my favourite time of year. New life on the Forest is always something special. And Beaulieu Road sales yard will always be close to my heart. 'I started handling ponies

there at 16 and only gave it up when I couldn't walk as well any more at 74. I've seen a lot of changes, but it still brings everyone together.' For all the challenges the Forest faces, Clive is inevitably drawn back to the very essence of commoning, which, put simply is the bond between people, animals and landscape. 'I wouldn't want my time again. We have had better times, but I'll keep going as long as I can,' he says. 'It's a passion for the Forest, that's what keeps me going.'



Picture: Amanda Norfolk @ Acornsandscapes

Commoning through the ages

The secret to the survival of the New Forest landscape has been its fierce defence by Commoners over centuries.

Challenges have come from all directions, and while areas of the Forest have been lost to development, the fact so much remains bears powerful testimony to the Commoners and their willingness to speak up for this special place.

Many believe the New Forest of today simply would not exist had it not been for its robust defence by Commoners through the ages. Fast forward to today and the

New Forest Commoners' Defence Association is leading a campaign to ensure Commoners are granted protective minority status.

Should this be awarded, it will ensure Commoners have a greater say in everything that goes on in the Forest, while helping to safeguard the tradition for years to come.

Medieval origins

1079 – The New Forest is created as a royal hunting ground by William the Conqueror. Locals retain certain customary rights of grazing, fuel and timber, which

form the basis of commoning. 12th–13th centuries – Common rights are formally recognised and recorded, particularly during the reigns of Henry II and later monarchs.

Early Modern Period

1698 – The New Forest Act passes, tightening Crown control while reaffirming Commoners' grazing rights.

18th century – Commoning becomes central to the local economy, with ponies, cattle, pigs, and donkeys turned out on the Forest. Rights are inherited or tied to property.

19th Century

1851 – The Deer Removal Act removes deer from the forest, lessening Crown hunting priorities and strengthening the importance of commoning.

1877 – The New Forest Act establishes the Verderers' Court with elected representation of Commoners, securing their rights against encroachment.

20th Century

1949 – The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act designates the New Forest as a conservation priority.

1964 – Further New Forest

legislation strengthens protection of common rights.

1971 – The New Forest Acts continue to adapt governance, supporting Commoners' livelihoods.

21st Century

2005 – The New Forest becomes a National Park, with commoning formally recognised as integral to its ecology and cultural heritage.

Today – Around 700 Commoners actively turn out roughly 8,000 animals. Grazing by Commoners' stock is central to maintaining the Forest's biodiversity and landscape character.

A world capital for wildlife



The New Forest National Park is home to many rare habitats and species. Over half the National Park is internationally-protected for nature

Over **1,000** ponds, plus rivers, streams and wetlands makes it one of the best **Important Freshwater Areas** in Britain



The most extensive area of **lowland heath** remaining in Europe



13/18 species of UK bats



UK stronghold for rare breeding birds including **Dartford warbler, hawfinch, woodlark,** and **lesser-spotted woodpecker**



An estimated **20,000** species of animal, plant, and fungus, approximately one-third of the UK total



75% of the **boggy valley mires** left in north western Europe

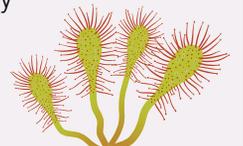


The New Forest coast is home to **breeding seals and stingrays**



The New Forest is internationally important for **lichens**

46 nationally and internationally rare plant species (and for many it may be their most important remaining place in Britain)



5,000 New Forest ponies – the ‘architects of the Forest’ creating the habitats through their grazing



All six native UK reptiles



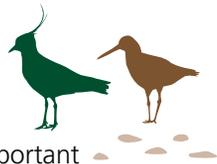
Nearly **3,000** species of fungi, with new species being identified every year



Not just Forest – a rare mix of **heathland, bogs, freshwater and coastal habitats**



26 miles of internationally-important coastal habitats



1/3 of British wildflowers

75% of the UK's dragonfly and damselfly species



1,000 ancient trees – the highest concentration in western Europe



The Species Survival Fund project is a collaborative scheme led by the New Forest National Park Authority and five partner organisations to halt species decline and expand habitats in the New Forest

newforestnpa.gov.uk

SPECIES SURVIVAL FUND

Funded by UK Government Heritage Fund

A coastal haven for wintering birds

As the temperature drops and the days grow shorter, the coastline of the New Forest National Park becomes a bustling winter home for thousands of birds.

The 26 miles between Milford-on-Sea and Calshot provide a vital coastal refuge thanks to its diverse habitats – including mudflats, saltmarsh, shingle beaches, lagoons, and estuaries.

These areas provide rich feeding grounds full of shellfish, worms and eelgrass: essential food to help birds recover from long migrations and build up energy for the return journey in spring.

Who's here?

Brent geese

Around 25,000 of these small, dark geese fly from arctic Siberia to feed and rest here, making up between 10% and 13% of the world's population, and about 30% of the whole UK population.



Brent geese



Lapwing by Steve Laycock



Wigeon by Steve Laycock



Golden plover by Steve Laycock

Curlew, snipe, and lapwing

Some of our ground-nesting birds head to the coast in winter for a holiday, leaving their breeding sites on the New Forest's heathlands behind.

Black-tailed godwit

Often seen in large flocks at places like Lymington-Keyhaven Nature Reserve and

Mount Lake and Sturt Pond where they feed at low tide.

Wigeon

Colourful ducks that arrive in big numbers from Iceland, Scandinavia and Russia to feed in the marshes.

Golden plover

Feeds and rests out on the marshes, but good numbers (200-300) sometimes

can be seen on wet farmland fields and often west of Keyhaven Harbour or in flight.

Our coastal wintering birds are vulnerable

The twice-daily tidal cycle and the fact that many birds can't feed when it's dark means that the feeding time-slots are restricted.

Birds are particularly wary of dogs that stray from well-used paths – an off-lead dog on the foreshore can create mass panic, lost feeding or roosting time and a waste of flying energy searching for somewhere safe to land.

When arriving on our shores, birds will often weigh 50% less than when they set off on their migration to the Solent and need time to recover. During their first weeks here, they need to be completely undisturbed to feed and rest, otherwise they are in chronic danger of starvation.

We can help make a difference by keeping our distance, staying on the main

tracks in winter, and causing minimal disturbance. It's vital that the birds are in tip-top condition so they can cope with bad winter weather and stay strong enough to travel and lay eggs in the spring back in their habitual breeding grounds in Arctic Siberia.

Organisations across the Forest work together to protect endangered species by creating quiet zones around the most sensitive nesting and wintering bird locations.

Ground nesting coastal birds need exactly the same protection as rare forest-dwelling ground nesting birds. Rangers from local organisations volunteer to spend time along the coast, helping visitors to learn more about and protect our nesting and wintering birds.

Volunteers are often on hand to direct visitors to new signs in the Hurst Spit Nature Reserve area.

www.birdaware.org/solent/

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A taste of tradition in the Forest

The ponies, cattle, pigs and occasional sheep that roam the heathlands and woodlands of the New Forest are an integral part of what make the New Forest landscape so unique.

It may seem like a fairytale scene where people and animals coexist peacefully but delve deeper and you will discover that this harmony is the result of centuries of careful land and livestock management through the ancient tradition of commoning.

The grazing animals feed on a variety of plant life, drink from the rivers and streams and interact with the world around them in an organic way.

Native and heritage breeds grow at a natural pace and aren't intensively farmed.

This leads to lower stress, a smaller carbon footprint, and higher-welfare meat that's richly flavoured and nutritionally superior to its supermarket counterparts.

Local meat production doesn't just benefit the farmers.

Farm-shops, butchers, restaurants and hotels form part of the business network connected to the heritage of the landscape.

The New Forest Marque local



David West of Sway Butchers



Cattle in the New Forest

produce scheme champions this connection and being a Marque member means being part of the story that keeps the New Forest ecology – both animal and human – alive. Sway Butchers is one such business. Serving the Forest community for nearly 50 years, its thoughtfully curated shop offers high-quality, traceable meat with friendly, knowledgeable service. It was named Best Supporter of Local Produce in the New Forest National Park Awards

this year. Owners David and Nicola West said: 'We support many small non-intensive farms that specialise in grass-fed native breeds and are run by families that care about animal welfare and the environment. 'We believe it is very important that these small-scale farms survive, to maintain the diversity of the local economy and, of course, cut down food miles.' Sway Butchers is a proud New Forest Marque member.

Welcome to the newest Marque members

- Heart of the Forest Honey: Beekeeping by Burt and Cynthia
- OE Agricultural: Small holding and farm machinery
- The Travellers Rest: Newly refurbished public house near Hythe
- Rockbourne Honey: Family beekeeper producing honey

Welcome to the newest Marque Inspired members

- Concordia's World: New Forest inspired souzoures and alterations
- Crank Pots: Pottery, steds and classes in Lychley Marsh
- Jojoen Sands Photography: Forest based portrait photographer
- Forest Heart Photography: Forest, nature and wildlife photography by Fresa
- Painted New Forest: New Forest ghost tours and storytelling

launch Flavours of the New Forest, a seasonal dining event showcasing the best of locally and ethically produced food. Supporting local producers has never been more important.

While the New Forest's grazing traditions have prevailed for over a thousand years, they now face mounting pressures.

Rising costs, an ageing Commoner population, and lack of viable back-up land are all real threats, but everyone can play a part in its survival.

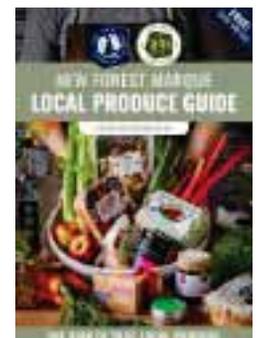
How you can help

Buy local: Visit New Forest Marque farm shops and butchers

Eat local: Choose cafés and restaurants that serve New Forest-sourced produce

Eat seasonally: Try autumn pannage pork or winter venison

Support the story: Share what you learn and spread the word about commoning and local food.



Take a look at our Local Produce Guide for information about the New Forest Marque and full listings of all our members.

Available now in New Forest stores and online: www.newforestmarque.co.uk/directory/

Since joining the New Forest Marque sourcing and networking with local farmers and producers has proved much simpler, meaning its local supply chain is continually expanding. Local chefs are getting creative with local meats from seasonal wild New Forest venison to pannage pork, and further afield demand for New Forest produce is growing. The Marque recently partnered with Stanwell House Hotel in Lymington to



From *Gentle As Moss On Stone* by boredomresearch

The New Forest Artists in Residence

Exploring the emotional and ecological connections between people and place is the focus of the latest New Forest Artists in Residence. Artist duo boredomresearch (Vicky Isley and Paul Smith) begin a month-long residency exploring the emotional and ecological impact of tree loss in October.

Known for blending ecology with storytelling and following their acclaimed short film *Gentle as Moss on Stone*, the pair will explore connections between land, culture and memory. The Artist in Residence scheme is a partnership

between the New Forest National Park Authority and Sway-based arts charity SPUD.

Meanwhile Artist in Residence Isabella Martin presents *Time in Common* at SPUD (until 1 November), an exhibition developed during her May residency. Using a blend of print, sculpture, film and sound, Isabella reimagines how we might live by New Forest time. What would a New Forest clock look like? What could we learn from adapting to the rhythms of the Forest? Free entry at SpudWORKS, Sway, SO41 6BA. www.spud.org.uk

New Forest Youth Board celebrates one year of championing young people's voices in the National Park

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 its care and future planning.

So far they have:

- Given over 650 voluntary hours.
- Represented young people on eight different boards and committees, including the New Forest Consultative Panel, Southern Wiltshire Area Board and the New Forest Association.
- Contributed to three consultations, including the Local Plan.
- Attended and helped plan eight events, including New Forest Thrive, Urban Wild, the New Forest and Hampshire County Show, as well as opening and speaking at the



The New Forest National Park Authority Youth Board

New Forest National Park Volunteer Fair.

The Youth Board was launched through the Youth for Climate and Nature (YouCAN) scheme in September 2024.

New Forest Youth Board member, Toby Pearce said: 'Being part of the New Forest Youth Board has enabled me to develop my understanding

of the crucial matters which shape the National Park, while providing opportunities to engage with its wonderful, passionate community.

'As we enter our second year, we're looking to continue to spread the message that young people have the passion, energy and togetherness to ensure the

long-term success of the Forest.

'We have exciting projects and partnerships with Forest organisations building and I can't wait to play my part in the Youth Board's journey.'

Find out more about the New Forest Youth Board at: www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/youth-board



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Seasonal Forest events

New Forest Walking Festival

18 October to 2 November 2025. Various locations.

The New Forest Walking Festival returns to celebrate the special qualities of the National Park in its 20th anniversary year.

Go behind-the-scenes with expert-guided walks on wildlife, heritage, Commoning, arts and more. Find out why the New Forest is internationally important for nature and how you can look after it.

With family-friendly half-term walks; longer, more challenging rambles; and plenty of accessible routes, there's something for everyone.

Last year, the Festival saw hundreds of walkers across 35 events run by NPA staff and volunteers, as well as 11 partner organisations and local experts.

New Forest National Park Authority lead access and volunteering officer, Adam Vasey said: 'The Walking Festival is the perfect way to explore the New Forest. You might find a new favourite spot or learn something new about the rare and exciting wildlife and habitats we have here, as well as its rich culture and history. Walking in nature is also great for our physical and mental wellbeing.

'There are lots of people who work and volunteer to keep the New Forest special so it's a great chance to meet some of them and hear why they are so passionate about what they do, especially during the 20th anniversary of the National Park.'

Find the full events timetable and book tickets at www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/walkingfestival

You can find and download walking and accessible routes through the NPA website year-round at: www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/todo/walking

The routes are also available through the New Forest National Park Walks app, which was downloaded nearly



A Walking Festival guided walk with an NPA ranger

29,000 times last year. The app features GPS navigation to keep you on the right track even without phone signal, and a checklist so you can tick off all the walks you have completed.

Please remember to follow the New Forest code when out enjoying the National Park.

Volunteering for all

Sun 25 January 2026. Brockenhurst Village Hall.

Save the date! The area's largest volunteering event, the New Forest National Park Volunteer Fair, is back – with more than 40 local groups offering hundreds of roles for all ages and abilities. Entry is free.

10.30am – 4pm.

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/volunteerfair

New Forest Awakening Festival

Throughout March 2026.

Various locations.

Forest organisations are inviting people to join in with



A volunteer at Copythorne Common (picture: Steve Poole)

the New Forest Awakening Festival. It's a collective response to the climate and nature emergencies in the New Forest and celebrates its sixth year in 2026.

Hundreds of people took part in more than 100 events in 2025, while messages about the climate and nature emergencies reached more than one and a half million people.

For 2026 there'll once again be events, talks, guides and workshops showing what local organisations and community groups are doing to tackle the twin crises, and how we can all help.

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/awakening

New Forest Marque Autumn Market

Sat 25 – Sun 26

October 2025. Everton Nurseries.

Come and meet a host of

New Forest Marque members at an autumn market at Everton Nurseries near Lymington. You can browse and buy delicious food and drink, as well as handmade products and gifts from Marque Inspired art and craft members. It's the perfect

opportunity to support small, local businesses and artists while indulging in produce that has been grown, reared, caught or produced right here in

the Forest. The market area will be located at the back of Everton Nurseries - which will be open as normal for all your gardening needs. Camellia's Cafe will also be open for tea, cakes and other refreshments.

10am – 4pm

Eats n Treats

Sun 16 November 2025 Brockenhurst College

Join local produce scheme the New Forest Marque in partnership with Go New Forest for Eats 'n' Treats. Expect the finest offerings of New Forest artisan food and drink to try and buy, unique local arts and crafts, activities for kids, live music, how-to demonstrations and a pop-up food court and bar. More than 50 local producers will be at the event, offering a lovely day out, fun for the



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

Breamore Railway Line improvements open morning

Fri 17 October 2025 Woodgreen Village Hall

The NPA is helping to deliver nature and heritage improvements to the Breamore Railway Line, in partnership with Hampshire County Council (HCC) and New Forest District Council (NFDC) supported by £300,000 National Park funding from the National Grid.

This is an opportunity to learn about heritage restoration and wildlife plans as well as how to get involved.

Come along to share your memories and thoughts on the project. Drop in anytime between 9.30am and 12.30pm. Tea, coffee, and cake provided.

family, and perfect for finding that special Christmas gift! 11am – 4pm

found at www.cultureincommon.co.uk

Acting Up returns for a Third Season!

28 October 2025 – 28 March 2026. Various locations

The rural touring programme led by our partner Culture In Common brings theatre, music, storytelling and children's performances to local venues including Lyndhurst, the Waterside, Thorney Hill and Woodgreen. From tales of friendship to sabotage and musical journeys through opera, swing and jazz rock, the programme has been chosen by the community for the community.

Information and tickets can be

Play on Words festival – for lovers of words 22 October – 3 November 2025. Various locations

A host of events are on offer, from creative walks, quizzes and workshops for budding storytellers to get involved, to author readings, open mics and showcases for those that prefer to read and listen.

Play on Words is led by the community, for people living in and visiting the New Forest. The festival helps people to engage with books, literature and writing, as well as support local authors to share their works.

Information and tickets at www.playonwords.org.uk/



A young visitor to a 2025 Awakening Festival event'



Three of the most eye-catching discoveries uncovered at project sites around the fringes of the New Forest National Park: L-R Small red damselfly, meadow grasshopper and Blunthorn nomad bee
 Pictures: Russ Wynn, Wild New Forest

Secret wonders of the New Forest

The New Forest is a haven for wildlife and home to a remarkable range of rare and fascinating species. From bug-eating sundew plants and elusive pine martens to colourful damselflies and nationally scarce fungi, this ancient landscape supports a rich and varied ecosystem. Thanks to the New Forest National Park Authority-led Species Survival

Fund project, a coalition of five conservation partners is working to protect, restore and expand habitats across the Forest. The £1.3m scheme aims to halt species decline while creating a brighter future for some of the Forest's most special plants and animals. The partners with the NPA are Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Freshwater

Habitats Trust, New Forest Commoners' Defence Association, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and Wild New Forest. They are supported by the RSPB and the New Forest Biodiversity Forum. Surveys conducted by Wild New Forest last winter recorded 860 species, including 370 animals, 265 plants and 225 fungi.

Priority species that are nationally rare included goshawk, raft spider and wood cricket, while a new species of fungus for Hampshire was discovered, as was a new pine marten hotspot and a pond full of Hampshire purslane – a nationally rare aquatic plant that is almost wholly restricted to the Forest. The surveys help guide the work being undertaken by the

partners, ranging from planting hedgerows and seeding wildflower meadows, to creating ponds and clearing scrubland to maintain open heathland habitats. Visit newforestnpa.gov.uk for more information about the Species Survival Fund project and follow @newforestnpa on Facebook and Instagram for project updates.

This project is funded by the Government's Species Survival Fund. The fund was developed by Defra and its Arm's-Length Bodies. It is being delivered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund in partnership with Natural England and the Environment Agency.



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