

BUSINESS PLAN 2011-2015

Fourth quarter, 2014-15 Operational Plan

Protect

We will work to ensure that the qualities that make the National Park a unique and special place are strengthened and made more resilient, bringing benefits for both people and wildlife.

Protect Priority 1: Enhancing the Forest's landscapes and habitats

We will help to improve the large-scale landscapes and habitats that are characteristic of the New Forest, by:

- Prioritising the areas where action is most needed to ensure the integrity and quality of the landscape and biodiversity of the Park
- supporting Natural England and local landowners / occupiers in restoring and continuing to maintain the quality of locally, nationally and internationally important wildlife sites
- supporting the Forestry Commission, Verderers and Commoners in delivering long-term management of the Open Forest.

As measures of success, we will:

- Help to deliver at least two large-scale landscape or biodiversity enhancement projects that provide connection and resilience for the Forest
- Complete a Landscape and Biodiversity Action Plan for the National Park supported by a broad partnership to enable the delivery of specific actions
- agree a framework for identifying gaps in our knowledge about the historic and cultural landscape.

Action/Outcome	Owner	Progress	Risks and mitigation	RAG status
Carry out survey, consultation and landowner liaison in order to prioritise sites where habitat enhancements will make most impact for wildlife in the National Park. Produce maps, a list of proposed sites with landowners on board and of proposed works.	Julie Melin-Stubbs	21 of 30 sites identified in the Nature's Stepping Stones Project and agreements drawn up. All sites identified and landowners signed up in the Better Boundaries Project; 12 landowners across 3 landscape areas. 40 hectares of woodland identified for first year of Working Woodlands Project and landowners signed up for that year. Details have been submitted as part of the Our Past, Our Future HLF submission. The remaining sites will be identified over the four years of the OPOF scheme if the HLF bid is approved		
Host New Forest Catchment project; work in partnership to co-ordinate Catchment based water quality and biodiversity improvements of the Forest's freshwater habitats.	Ian Barker	Work to progress Living Waters bid as part of HLF Bid completed - Beaulieu Abbey Stream a key focus. River Basin Management Plan consultation response submitted on behalf of partnership. Partnership has seen successful in securing Environment Agency Catchment Partnership funding for 2015/16 period.		
Identify and secure partnership with two new communities in order to increase biodiversity engagement and habitat improvements through the Community Wildlife Plans project.	Angela Peters	Lymington and Pennington communities engaged with through contact with local people and the Town Council. Work is progressing on public green space at Priestlands Ponds and Woodside park, with a pond survey training event held for local residents and a Bioblitz planned. Practical conservation work parties with local volunteers have been carried out at Priestlands Ponds to improve the habitat through clearance of laurel and litter. Local schools starting to get engaged with the site.		

Action/Outcome	Owner	Progress	Risks and mitigation	RAG status
Deliver specific New Forest Higher Level Scheme agreement objectives, including bringing a minimum of 10 monuments into favourable condition, continuation of LIDAR data verification and completion of heathland bird surveys.	Lawrence Shaw/Ian Barker/Frank Green	10 monuments were improved during 14/15. Since January 2015 the LiDAR project has undertaken a number of surveys across the open forest. These have resulted in 1,286.3 hectares of survey and Lidar analysis undertaken. This work was a result of up to 41 volunteer survey days (307 volunteer hours) and covered just over half of the yearly target area. A list of proposed works of monument restorations has also been submitted to the HLS board. Bird surveys completed in Q3 according to HLS milestones. Q4 has seen further work to understand the results and facilitate presentation at HLS AGM		
Form and co-ordinate the Landscape Action Plan Group to take recommendations forward and instigate the following projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work closely with the electricity board to secure undergrounding of overhead electricity cables and undergrounding of these cables. • Raise awareness of dark night skies and associated advice and guidance on external lighting for residents. • Undertake a community based project using photography to assess changes to the landscape. 	Sarah Kelly	March meeting with National Grid and stakeholders to discuss potential undergrounding of high voltage pylons at Hale Purlieu. Also public consultation held at Hale Village Hall to which approximately 100 people attended.	The work on dark night skies and photography project will be carried forward into the next Operational Plan	
Develop tranquillity mapping and ground truthing with strategic partners; complete an agreed tranquillity map for the New Forest National Park.	Sarah Kelly / Nick Evans	The tranquillity mapping is now finalised and available on our website.		

Action/Outcome	Owner	Progress	Risks and mitigation	RAG status
Develop and incorporate the ecosystem approach in relevant projects, including the Management Plan, green infrastructure plans and long term land use strategies.	Paul Walton	<p>Priorities for ecosystem services and GI plans included in the Draft Management Plan (LH10, LM3)</p> <p>Pilot project on ecosystem accounts continuing, due to report in June 15</p>		

Protect Priority 2: Achieving excellence in development and planning

We will seek the highest quality of new development within and around the National Park and minimise any impacts on its special qualities, by:

- Providing clear planning policies and a high quality planning service
- working closely with neighbouring authorities as they develop planning policies and proposals for their area
- adding to knowledge of all aspects of the National Park, including assessing and taking action to address any changes in its special qualities
- supporting the delivery of green infrastructure plans, both within and outside the National Park to reduce pressure on the most sensitive areas.

As measures of success, we will:

- Produce supplementary planning documents and guidance notes as an aid to residents and developers, covering design guidance, recreational horse keeping, boundary treatments and open space standards
- ensure all Core Strategies and other relevant planning policy documents adopted for neighbouring areas reflect the special qualities of the National Park
- establish condition indicators and a system of data collection to monitor the special qualities of the Park.

Action/Outcome	Owner	Progress	Risks and mitigation	RAG status
Commence review of the Authority's adopted Core Strategy (2010), taking into account recent changes in Government planning policy.	David Illsley	Initial scoping out for the review of the Authority's local planning policies has been completed and this work will progress over the summer of 2015, with members of the Authority's Planning Development Control Committee considering a paper on the Local Plan review in June 2015.		
Work with the other Hampshire minerals and waste authorities to prepare Oil & Gas Supplementary Planning Document (which will cover fracking).	Sarah Applegate	Preparation of the SPD has been awaiting the outcome of the Government's latest round of onshore oil and gas licensing bids. The draft SPD will be taken to the May NFNPA Planning Committee meeting with a view to undertaking public consultation during June and July 2015.		

Action/Outcome	Owner	Progress	Risks and mitigation	RAG status
Develop a green infrastructure plan for the National Park, linking with the plans of neighbouring local authorities and identifying joint projects and opportunities.	David Illsley	<p>Work has not progressed in Q4 on developing a green infrastructure within the Park due to other work pressures.</p> <p>The Authority continues to liaise with neighbouring planning authorities including NFDC, TVBC and Wiltshire Council as they develop and implement their relevant strategies, which include alternative green space provision. The Authority is also actively engaged in the preparation of a revised Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) Green Infrastructure Strategy which is being developed (in part) to reduce pressures on the adjacent National Park.</p>	<p>There remains a risk that if a National Park-specific Green Infrastructure Strategy is not developed there will be a gap in coverage in the National Park and our neighbouring authorities may perceive that green infrastructure is not a priority for the Authority.</p> <p>In terms of mitigation, as highlighted in Q3, a number of elements that would be covered by a National Park Green Infrastructure Strategy are already in place in the Park through the Management Plan, the Recreation Management Strategy and the continued use of developer contributions to support open space provision and ecological mitigation measures.</p>	
Launch a local design awards scheme to recognise and promote exemplary development in the National Park.	Steve Avery / Paul James	Members of the Authority's Planning Development Control Committee considered the proposed Building Design Awards in March 2015 and endorsed the main principles of the awards. The scheme will be formally launched in the summer of 2015 following further awareness raising with local communities and local planning agents.		

Action/Outcome	Owner	Progress	Risks and mitigation	RAG status
Complete the suite of on-line planning guidance notes to aid residents and developers with pre-application enquiries.	Steve Avery	These have been updated and are now included as part of the guidance on the 'Forms and Checklists' planning page of the NPA website		

Protect Priority 3: Conserving strong local distinctiveness and the character of the historic environment

We will support communities, businesses and residents in conserving the many features that contribute to the local distinctiveness of their area, by:

- Enabling local people to safeguard and promote the character of their area, including support for local traditional building and craft skills
- developing Forest-wide initiatives of interest to local communities, including those that record or celebrate features of value
- providing advice and resources for specific community-led projects that add to local distinctiveness
- continuing to improve our knowledge of the history and archaeology of the National Park, increasing public awareness of its importance.

As measures of success, we will:

- Support at least eight local communities in producing a Village Design Statement for their area
- help in the design and successful implementation of at least five projects to conserve local distinctiveness involving communities in the Park
- support 20 local businesses in developing skills in conservation building.

Action/Outcome	Owner	Progress	Risks and mitigation	RAG status
Support requests from Parish Councils for the production and adoption of two further Village Design Statements during 2014-15 to help conserve local distinctiveness.	Lisa Crouch / Nick Evans	The Hordle VDS was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document by the National Park Authority in January 2015. 7 parishes have now completed a VDS within the Park and had them formally adopted by the Authority.	One VDS was completed and adopted this year. This action is dependent on local communities initiating the process, and currently no further parishes have expressed an interest producing a VDS.	
Support the Western Escarpment Conservation Area Action Plan by working with parish councils to identify specific problems of parking on verges within the Conservation Area and notify the necessary authorities and agree the most appropriate solutions.	Lisa Crouch	The Authority continues to support the Western Escarpment Conservation Area Steering Group. During Q4 of 2014-15 this has included organising and holding a Verge Protection Meeting in March and April with external bodies such as the Forestry Commission, National Trust, Natural England and Hants County Council. The Steering Group met in April and was attended by the NPA. The next meeting is due in July.		
Identify and prioritise sites and structures of archaeological significance within the National Park to create a list of recommended works that will inform future conservation requirements.	Frank Green	The Heritage mapping carried out under HLS Scheme has continued with 9 of the 10 sites scheduled for conservation work completed this year. The submission for the heritage element of the Our Past Our Future project has been completed.		

Action/Outcome	Owner	Progress	Risks and mitigation	RAG status
Develop and facilitate activities to commemorate WWI, including a volunteer mapping project of wartime locations and associated interpretation	Frank Green / Jim Mitchell / Gareth Owen	The WWII project's Interactive Portal has been modified to accept WWI material and went live in April. Work continues to return and add OS mapping and archaeological overlay data. Local community groups have now been invited to register their group on the site to start adding their local WWI information and findings. Plans are now in development for a temporary exhibition at the New Forest Centre for early 2016 and/or a traveling display/exhibition. Groups have also been invited to attend a New Forest History and Heritage weekend planned for July 2015.	Additional costs have been quoted by Imaginet for the return of the mapping and the overlay data. A number of issues have been caused by the new format of OS mapping data. Unfortunately the new Tile Cached OS Base mapping is currently not compatible with the Portal. This will affect its implementation to the Portal and alternative options may be needed.	
Secure improved understanding of the role of the New Forest during World War II by delivering a project legacy of onsite and online interpretation and education resources.	Gareth Owen	The Interactive Portal is still returning a high visitor rate with approximately 1000 new visitors to the site monthly. New information is still being added by project staff and the public via new article and comments added to existing articles. Volunteers (Oral History Team) have now completed the transcription of all the oral histories and are now working to check through these prior to their upload to the portal. This work has totalled 57 hours of volunteers this year. All project interpretation panels have now been installed at Ibsley (3 panels), Ashley Walk (1 panel), RAF Beaulieu (1 panel) and Beaulieu village (1 panel) these are in addition to the already installed panels at Needs Ore and Lymington ALGs.		

Protect Priority 4: Encouraging environmentally sustainable land management

We will work with land managers and private estates to encourage environmentally friendly farming, commoning and woodland management, by:

- Developing the New Forest Higher Level Stewardship Scheme and other initiatives that will enhance the landscape of the National Park and support the commoning community
- offering support, advice and training to local landowners, commoners and private land managers in the National Park and adjoining areas through the New Forest Land Advice Service.

As measures of success, we will:

- deliver good quality land management advice to at least 100 land managers on their holdings
- have a better understanding of the land management related training needs of land managers in the New Forest

Action/Outcome	Owner	Progress	Risks and mitigation	RAG status
Carry out comprehensive consultation with landowners, farmers and commoners to inform focused delivery of training needs to establish sustainable land management skills.	Julie Melin-Stubbs	This work was completed in the previous quarter.		
Work with partners to develop Rockford Farm as a best practice commoners holding including development of management plan	Paul Walton	Fencing contract completed. Management plan still in development Progress slowed as lease agreement has taken longer than expected.	A meeting of the stakeholders will identify next steps	
Engage with key stakeholders and policy makers, working with the other National Parks, as a champion for the New Forest in national discussions which affect rural development and agricultural policy.	Paul Walton	NFNPA invited to meetings with the Cabinet Office to examine the potential of using publicly owned telecoms infrastructure (reg rail network) to improve broadband provision in the Park. CEO promoted the work of the NFNPA at the World Parks Congress in Australia in December.		