

AM 732/26

**NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
AUTHORITY MEETING – 29 JANUARY 2026**

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK PARTNERSHIP PLAN REVIEW

Report by: Paul Walton, Head of Environment & Rural Economy & David Illsley, Interim Head of Planning and Place

Summary:

All National Park Authorities are required to have a Management Plan for their area to help guide the collective work of all those with responsibilities or an interest in the National Park. It is arguably the single most important document for the National Park, setting out the overall vision and approach in delivering the two national park purposes and duty. The New Forest National Park Management Plan – now known as the Partnership Plan – is due to be updated in 2027.

This report sets out the relevant background to the Partnership Plan review and a high-level overview of the approach to updating the Plan.

Recommendation

Members note the report and agree the review process for updating the New Forest National Park Partnership Plan 2022-2027.

1 Relevant background

1.1 Requirement to produce a management plan

- 1.1.1 The Environment Act 1995 requires all English National Park Authorities to prepare and publish a Management Plan for their geographic area, outlining the vision and strategy for conserving and enhancing its natural beauty, including wildlife and cultural heritage and promoting opportunities for public understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities. The Act prescribes that *“every national park authority shall review its national park management plan at intervals of not more than five years”* and submit the Plan to the Secretary of State.

1.2 Guidance on management plans

- 1.2.1 Guidance on management plans for Protected Landscapes in England was published by Defra in June 2025. This confirmed the need to review an existing plan every 5 years and in doing so the National Park Authority should:
- bring partners and communities together, build relationships and grow commitment
 - build consensus around a vision for the future and a strategy to get there

- coordinate and integrate other policies, plans and strategies, where these are relevant to the statutory purposes for which the Protected Landscape was designated
- establish a strategy around which joint action can happen

1.2.2 The guidance also requires the NPA to:

- produce a climate adaptation management plan by 2028, with the recommendation that this is done as part of the management plan review (see 2.4 below)
- align the monitoring of the Plans' targets and indicators with the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (PLTOF), which establishes a shared set of targets and indicators for all Protected Landscapes, linked to the Environmental Improvement Plan (which was updated in 2025)
- comply with the biodiversity duty set out in the Environment Act 2021
- identify the factors that are likely to drive change in the National Park, now and over the next 5 years
- formally consult on the management plan

1.2.3 The full details of the guidance can be found at [Management plans for Protected Landscapes in England - GOV.UK](#)

1.3 Duty to further

1.3.1 The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) amended the duty on relevant authorities in respect of their functions which affect land in National Parks and other Protected Landscapes in England. Relevant authorities must now “seek to further” the statutory purposes of Protected landscapes rather than the previous duty to “have regard to”.

1.3.2 Guidance for relevant authorities on seeking to further the purposes of Protected Landscapes, published in December 2024 highlights the need for relevant authorities to relate their functions to the Protected Landscape's management plan.

1.3.3 The full details of the guidance for relevant authorities can be found at [Guidance for relevant authorities on seeking to further the purposes of Protected Landscapes - GOV.UK](#)

1.4 Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework

1.4.1 A series of ambitious targets have been set nationally to promote the actions that will lead to positive change in England's Protected Landscapes, linked to the achieving 3 outcomes from the Environmental Improvement Plan (updated in December 2025):

- Goal 1 Thriving plants and wildlife
- Goal 7 Mitigating and adapting to climate change

- Goal 10 Enhancing beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment

1.4.2 Following consultation with Partnership Plan leaders panel the NFNPA agreed proposals to apportion the New Forest National Park contribution to these targets in June last year – RAPC 568/25. These targets and outcomes will form the basis of the of the next iteration of the Partnership Plan.

1.4.3 The full details of the Protected Landscape Targets and Outcomes Framework can be found at [Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework - GOV.UK](#)

1.4.4 Details of the apportioned targets for the New Forest National Park are on our website [Targets and outcomes - New Forest National Park Authority](#)

2 Review of the Partnership Plan

2.1 The first New Forest National Park Management Plan was published in 2010 and described a Vision for the New Forest National Park should look and function in 2030, with a strong emphasis on working in partnership. The objectives established in 2010 were followed through in the 2015- 2020 plan. The review of the plan in 2020 reflected recommendations from the Landscapes Review 2019, the Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan and emerging impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

2..2 The current Vision - for the New Forest to be a national beacon for a sustainable future, where nature and people flourish - is supported by the key themes:

Key themes at a glance – our agenda for action

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|  <p>Net Zero with Nature</p> <p>Challenges We're already seeing warmer wetter winters and hotter, drier summers, rising sea levels, an increasing frequency of extreme weather events and longer periods of higher fire risk.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a 'net zero with nature' programme with partners and communities to ensure the National Park is carbon neutral by 2050. • Promote and develop best practice in nature-based solutions to meet climate and nature goals. • Help communities to take action on the climate emergency. |  <p>Nature Recovery</p> <p>Challenges The New Forest has some of the most precious habitats in western Europe and they and many wildlife species are in decline.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce a local nature recovery plan to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. maintain, restore and expand habitats so that they are resilient and support thriving wildlife 2. mitigate recreational pressures 3. ensure recreation takes place in the most resilient areas. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harness the benefits we receive from nature in the New Forest ('natural capital') to generate increased investment and projects to enhance nature and the services it provides. • Help landowners, farmers and commoners move to the new Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) of subsidies which rewards working with nature. |  <p>An Inclusive National Park</p> <p>Challenges Green space is vital for our health and wellbeing. Yet in a recent survey only 58% of people within the 10% most deprived areas around the New Forest had recently visited the National Park.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop opportunities to deliver a 'Natural Health Service' within and beyond the National Park, through a programme of measures provided by communities, businesses and the health and environment sectors. • Foster a greater appreciation of the New Forest, its landscape and cultural heritage. • Help new and diverse audiences connect with nature, discover why the National Park is special and how to care for it, with a particular focus on young people. |  <p>Thriving Forest</p> <p>Challenges Around 35,000 people live here with 2,500 businesses and some of the highest house prices in Britain. It's a living, working Forest and we need to make sure we keep it that way.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect cultural heritage assets and support commoning and local produce to sustain the unique natural beauty of the landscape and culture of the New Forest for future generations. • Invest in green skills and jobs, creating a recognised reputation as a centre of excellence for a growing green economy. • Provide more affordable housing. |  <p>Team New Forest</p> <p>Challenges We can't do this on our own – it's only through the combined efforts of communities, businesses and partners that we can secure the future of the New Forest.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish new ways of engaging with our communities, hearing their ideas and encouraging grassroots action. • Ensure the New Forest is leading the environmental agenda by delivering exemplary projects and partnerships and showing how these can support and shape policy and sustainable decisions beyond our boundaries, both regionally and nationally. • Develop a data, evidence and insights capability to underpin our collective decisions and actions and use up to date technology to help us manage and communicate across the National Park more effectively. |
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- 2.3 The emphasis on partnership was strengthened with the creation of a Partnership Plan Leaders Panel drawn from the Plan's signatory organisations to oversee the implementation of the Partnership Plan, supported by an Officer group.
- 2.4 Previously it has taken around 18 months to review the Partnership Plan. The review of the current plan will be informed by the national guidance referred to above (1.2).
- 2.5 The requirement to produce a climate adaptation plan (1.2.2 above) has been addressed with the commissioning of a Climate Risks and Opportunities Assessment as part of the YouCAN project. This report will be published shortly and its findings shared with members and wider stakeholders. Arguably climate change is the single most important threat to the future of the National Park. There is an urgent need to ensure the measures that will be required to enable the landscape, its wildlife and communities to adapt to climate change are fully understood and the appropriate actions identified.
- 2.6 Progress has also been made on identifying the targets for the New Forest under the Protected Landscapes and Outcomes Framework.

3 Opportunities

- 3.1 The factors likely to drive change in the National Park were identified for the current Partnership Plan, including the recovery from the Covid pandemic, the climate and nature challenges and the impact on key areas such as agricultural policy and environmental legislation of leaving the European Union. Many of the issues identified remain relevant in 2026, along with matters such as a renewed emphasis on economic growth and the increased interest in enabling access to nature for health and wellbeing.
- 3.2 The next eighteen months will mark a period of significant change in local government and national planning policy, enabling us to align the Partnership Plan with the revised framework of local single-tier unitary councils and the Mayoral Combined County Authority for Hampshire. The changes will provide an early opportunity to consider how the new authorities will discharge their duty to seek to further the purposes of the National Park.
- 3.3 The anticipated provision of a general power of competence to National Park Authorities and the expected continuation of the capital funding programme will provide new opportunities for the Authority to deliver a positive future for the national park.

4 Partnership Plan timetable

- 4.1 Our aim is to have the new Partnership Plan published in the summer of 2027 with an indicative timetable as shown below:



- 4.2 Throughout this period there will be opportunities for members to be involved in the preparation of the Partnership Plan, with workshops on key themes and regular updates on progress.
- 4.3 Between January and April we will work with members of the Partnership Plan Officer group and Leaders Panel to review the progress of the current plan. We will also review the State of the Park Report to help inform the development of our targets, outcomes and indicators for the 2027-2032 period.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 Members are asked to endorse the approach set out above. In due course, a more detailed programme and timetable for the next stages will be shared with Members. In addition, all formal stages of the Plan preparation process will be reported to future Authority meetings for Members' consideration.

Recommendation:

Members note the report and agree the review process for updating the New Forest National Park Partnership Plan 2022-2027.

Papers:

RAPC 568/25 Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework

Equality and Diversity Implications:

There are no specific equality or diversity implications arising out of this report.

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