

REVISED DRAFT OF THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN

1. PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 1.1 This report recommends a response to the consultation on the revised draft of the New Forest National Park Management Plan. The recommended response is to welcome and support the revised draft plan.
- 1.2 The draft revised New Forest National Park Management Plan can be seen on the National Park Authority's web-site at: www.newforestnpa.gov.uk

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 All National Parks are required to produce Management Plans. The central role of the Management Plan is to help guide and co-ordinate the work of all those with an interest in the National Park in delivering the National Park purposes of conservation and enhancement of natural beauty, and promoting the understanding and enjoyment of its special qualities; and the statutory duty of fostering the social and economic well-being of local communities.
- 2.2 The New Forest National Park Authority (NPA) produced a draft Management Plan last year for consultation. The general response was of widespread public concern about the general approach of the draft plan and of a number of specific policies. This Council (Cabinet of 5th November 2008) expressed very serious reservations about that draft plan, including concerns that:
 - the draft National Park Plan did not properly deal with the economic, social and community needs of the 34,000 people who live in the National Park;
 - the Priority Objectives were too focused on National Park purposes (and in particular on the first purpose of conservation) and gave inadequate weight to the duty to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities;
 - little if any account seemed to have been taken of the Sustainable Community Strategy for New Forest District, which applies to most of the National Park;
 - proper account had not been taken of the views put forward by the District Council representatives and by other participants from the local communities, in the earlier consultations and workshops held by the National Park Authority;
 - there was insufficient recognition of the need to work in partnership with other bodies, including the District Councils;
 - the plan should better reflect the need for the sustainable development of the local economy (including tourism) which contribute in their own right to the social and economic health of the area;
 - the sections on cross- boundary issues needed to be developed to show how the National Park proposes positively and realistically to respond to the consequences of the plans in the wider area; and how the plan will contribute towards resolving issues in the wider area, reflecting the need for constructive working with local authorities and other partners to achieve the best overall results for the National Park and the wider area;

- there was an inadequate response to the urgent need for affordable housing in the National Park;
 - the plan did not take realistic account of the development that the Government is proposing in adjacent areas of SE Dorset and southern Hampshire, and of the need to work with the relevant local authorities in providing to best meet the transport needs of the wider area;
 - the suggestions for possible road pricing were not properly justified;
 - the plan should refer to the Green Infrastructure strategy that is being developed by the PUSH (Partnership for Urban South Hampshire); and
 - the proposals to restrict recreational horsekeeping were not properly justified.
- 2.3 As well as making comments on the draft of the National Park Plan, Cabinet restated the aim that NFDC should continue to work with the National Park Authority with the aim of securing an outcome where both NFDC and the NPA will have compatible plans that can be mutually supported.

3. THE REVISED DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN

- 3.1 In response to the criticisms by many organisations and the public of the original draft National Park Plan, the NPA has engaged in substantial consultation processes in revising the plan, including holding meetings and working groups attended by members and officers from this authority and individual discussions with District Council officers.
- 3.2 The National Park Authority has substantially revised the draft National Park. The revised draft is now only a Management Plan, rather than trying to combine a Management Plan, a Core Strategy and Development Control policies all into a single document. The previous approach led to considerable confusion amongst both the public and organisations, and also influenced the tone and overall feel of the plan. A separate Core Strategy document is to be considered by the National Park Authority in December.
- 3.3 The revised Management Plan is a very different document from the one that concerned this Council last November. The revised plan contains:
- shorter introductory chapters and a more concise vision;
 - ten topics, all of which are of equal importance (described in more detail below), with an objective and priority actions for each topic;
 - extensive text revisions to make the document more positive and inclusive in tone and emphasise the importance of the work being undertaken by different organisations;
 - a “Working together” chapter, which includes a description of the roles of the key statutory organisations (including NFDC);
 - a list of the key partner organisations for each of the priority actions included under the topics.
- 3.4 With regard to the more contentious proposals in the previous version, the revised draft Management Plan now contains:
- **A different approach to transport**, focusing on education and information and current traffic management techniques. The reference to possible future road pricing and road closures has been removed.
 - **No policies on zoning**. There was a strong consensus from respondents that the New Forest is already sufficiently ‘zoned’ for management and planning purposes (e.g. SSSIs, Conservation Areas, Flood Risk Zones to name but a few) and that any further zoning would create confusion and a geographical hierarchy inappropriate to a National Park.

- **No policies on service villages.** Revised policies on the settlement hierarchy and affordable housing percentages will be included in the Core Strategy.
 - **A more positive approach to the economy,** catering for a wide range of business opportunities, not only those that make a contribution to the Park's purposes but also supporting those that do not conflict with them.
 - **No policies on recreational horse-keeping.** A revised policy (more closely aligned to the 'saved policies' of the New Forest District Local Plan) will be included in the Core Strategy.
 - **No policies on car park closures affecting dog walkers.** Instead the emphasis will be on encouraging and promoting responsible dog ownership.
- 3.5 The structure of the plan has been completely revised. It now includes:
- an **Introduction** setting out the statutory background and purposes of the Management Plan, a summary of the special qualities of the New Forest and a description of the major issues and pressures facing the area;
 - a **Vision for the New Forest** looking some 20 years ahead;
 - a chapter on **Working Together** emphasising the need for close working relationships with other organisations and communities to implement the plan;
 - **Taking Actions** the core of the Management Plan), divided into 10 topics, with objectives and priority actions:
 - 1 Conserving local distinctiveness
 - 2 Enhancing landscapes and habitats
 - 3 Encouraging sustainable land management
 - 4 Planning for climate change
 - 5 Safeguarding tranquillity
 - 6 Understanding the special qualities
 - 7 Enjoying the National Park
 - 8 Supporting local communities
 - 9 Fostering economic well-being
 - 10 Improving traffic and transport.
- 3.6 In your officers' view, the changes made are not just cosmetic changes but rather represent a very different approach in preparing the document that is very much to be welcomed, particularly regarding:
- Recognition of the need for the NPA to work with others; and
 - Recognition of the needs of the communities within the National Park and a much more balanced approach - rather than the previous over-emphasis on the first National Park purpose of conservation to the extent of not properly dealing with other issues.
- 3.7 The Council's Housing and Strategy Development Manager, Head of Communities and Employment, Employment and Tourism Manager and Coastal Projects Officer are respectively satisfied with the way in which the revised draft plan deals with affordable housing within the National Park, with community and economy/tourism issues, and with the Shoreline Management Plan but have made some detailed comments (included in Appendix 2 to this report).
- 3.8 The Council's Principal Engineer (Transport) considers that the revised draft addresses most of this Council's previous concerns, but still is concerned that the document makes no reference to the studies and conclusions of detailed studies led by Hampshire County Council into Lyndhurst's traffic problems (as elaborated on in Appendix 2 to this report).

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The revised draft New Forest National Park Management Plan sets an appropriate strategic way forward for the National Park, recognising the need to work with other parties – including New Forest District Council – to implement the Management Plan and work towards the vision outlined in the Management Plan.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS /CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS/EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Environmental implications are, as would be expected, central to the New Forest National Park Management Plan and are appropriately taken into account. The Management Plan (Objective 7) seeks to enable the involvement of under-represented groups who feel the National Park provides few opportunities for them or who feel excluded due to cost, lack of transport or other barriers.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None.

7. COMMENTS OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION PORTFOLIO HOLDER

- 7.1 The Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder is happy to endorse the recommendations in this report. In particular, greater recognition in the Management Plan of the need to work with partners is strongly welcomed.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 **Cabinet is recommended to agree that the New Forest National Park Authority be informed that New Forest District Council:**
- (i) welcomes the consultation on the revised draft New Forest National Park Management Plan;**
 - (ii) is pleased to see that the Council’s comments on the previous draft have been taken on board in revising the draft Management Plan;**
 - (iii) supports the approach of the revised draft Management Plan;**
 - (iv) draws the NPA’s attention to the detailed comment in Appendix 2 to this report;**
 - (v) looks forward to working with the National Park Authority in implementing the strategic objectives set out in the Management Plan through the detailed measures;**
 - (vi) hopes that the Council’s concerns will also have been resolved in the forthcoming revised draft “Core Strategy and Development Control policies” document, and looks forward to being consulted on that document.**

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Background Papers:

Published documents

APPENDIX 1: The Objectives for each topic in the revised draft Management Plan

[Note: Each Objective is accompanied by some context, description of issues, and Priority actions for the next 5 years.]

Objective 1: Conserving local distinctiveness

Working with partners, we will:

Conserve and enhance the wealth of individual characteristics that contribute to the local distinctiveness of the villages and landscapes of the New Forest, by:

- identifying and raising awareness about the full range of characteristics that contribute to local distinctiveness in the National Park
- supporting improvements to the character of selected settlements, working closely with local communities
- ensuring that the design of all new development takes into account local distinctiveness in the National Park
- protecting and encouraging the sensitive management of locally important sites and features.

Objective 2: Enhancing landscapes and habitats

Working with partners, we will:

Protect and enhance the large-scale cultural landscapes and semi-natural habitats of the New Forest, by:

- working towards a shared vision and agreed priorities for managing, enhancing or restoring the different landscapes and habitats of the National Park, involving local communities and land managers
- improving and sustaining the quality of internationally and nationally designated habitats where these are not currently in favourable condition
- encouraging integrated land management on the enclosed lands which enhances the landscape character, habitats and archaeological features of the area
- ensuring development proposals, both within and close to the National Park, take the important landscapes, habitats and the visual setting of the Park fully into account

Objective 3: Planning for climate change

Working with partners, we will:

Plan for the likely impacts of climate change on the special qualities of the New Forest and reduce the overall environmental footprint of the National Park by:

- **improving dialogue and understanding about climate change impacts**
- **raising public awareness about the environmental footprint of the area, and encouraging a change towards more sustainable lifestyles by organisations, communities, businesses and individuals**
- **conserving and where necessary restoring an extensive network of natural habitats both within and across the National Park boundary, to improve resilience and reduce fragmentation**
- **ensuring critical parts of the coastline (as identified in the Shoreline Management Plan) are protected from sea-level rise through environmentally acceptable coastal defences, while allowing the natural realignment of the coast where appropriate and seeking opportunities for the creation of new coastal habitats**
- **supporting local or community-based initiatives for improving energy efficiency, reducing waste, recycling, composting, food production, water conservation or producing renewable energy.**

Objective 4: Safeguarding tranquillity

Working with partners, we will:

Maintain and enhance the tranquillity of the National Park, by:

- **conserving the most tranquil and remote areas of the National Park and reduce fragmentation of these areas where possible**
- **reducing the impacts of noise, visual intrusion and inappropriate activity on tranquillity generally**
- **improving the quality of the 'dark skies' of the National Park.**

Objective 5: Understanding the special qualities

Working with partners, we will:

Achieve a shared understanding and appreciation of the special qualities of the National Park by local people, visitors and organisations, by:

- **raising awareness about the special qualities of the New Forest in a consistent and co-ordinated way**
- **promoting 'Caring for the Forest' messages, linked to the special qualities, incorporating them into a wide range of publications and other media**

- **developing sensitive and innovative forms of interpretation which add to the appreciation and enjoyment of the National Park, while minimising the need for additional signage**
- **supporting educational activities that are linked to the special qualities of the Forest for both academic purposes and enjoyment**
- **developing a co-ordinated and accessible system for holding technical information about the National Park, for use by land managers, organisations and local communities.**

Objective 6: Enjoying the National Park

Working with partners, we will:

Enhance people's enjoyment and quality of experience of the National Park, while safeguarding the special qualities of the area by:

- **improving understanding of the current and likely future recreational demand, and the impacts of recreation on the National Park's special qualities**
- **raising awareness about the sensitive environment and the working nature of the New Forest through direct contact with the public and working closely with user groups**
- **providing opportunities for safer access, including a more joined-up network of routes into and within the National Park**
- **ensuring new recreational facilities are designed and located to avoid impacts on the special qualities of the area, including the designated nature conservation sites and the most tranquil areas**
- **enabling the involvement of under-represented groups who feel the National Park provides few opportunities for them, or who feel excluded due to cost, lack of transport or other barriers**
- **encouraging a high standard of services and facilities for visitors within the National Park**
- **maintaining a clean and litter-free National Park.**

Objective 7: Supporting local communities

Working with partners, we will:

Strengthen the well-being, identity and sustainability of rural communities and the pride of local people in their area, by:

- **maintaining and improving the range of community facilities and services that provide for the needs of local people and contribute to the vitality of village life**
- **providing more affordable housing for local people with housing needs and addressing the particular housing requirements of commoners**

- supporting communities in developing proposals for their area and undertaking practical projects to improve the quality of village life and the local environment
- encouraging local communities to record, celebrate and promote interest in their local culture, traditions and heritage.

Objective 8: Developing a diverse economy

Working with partners, we will:

Develop a diverse and sustainable economy that contributes to the well-being of local communities, by:

- providing the conditions to encourage a wide variety of business opportunities and employment for local people throughout the National Park, where these do not compromise the special qualities of area
- giving particular encouragement to businesses that help to supply services for rural communities, promote local distinctiveness, maintain the land-based economy or contribute and use local produce or products
- supporting businesses to develop ways of reducing their environmental impact using sustainable technologies and practices
- supporting training and co-ordinated business advice relevant to the area
- strengthening the New Forest's role at the forefront of sustainable tourism
- developing stronger links with the business community and partnerships.

Objective 9: Encouraging sustainable land management

Working with partners, we will:

Encourage land management that sustains the special qualities of the National Park, by:

- supporting farming, commoning and forestry businesses that contribute to the local economy and help to maintain the landscapes of the National Park
- developing support schemes for commoners and farmers tailored to the needs of the New Forest
- taking forward the priority recommendations of the New Forest Commoning Review¹, including protecting land used regularly for back-up grazing land and supporting housing for commoners
- supporting diversification schemes that help to sustain the existing farming or commoning business

- providing co-ordinated land management advice relevant to the New Forest
- encouraging long-term plans to guide woodland management on privately owned land, including the restoration of ancient or indigenous woodland.

Objective 10: Improving traffic and transport

Working with partners, we will:

Reduce the impacts of traffic on the special qualities of the National Park and provide a range of sustainable transport alternatives within the Park, by:

- ensuring regional and national transport policies minimise impacts on the National Park and, where possible, achieve benefits for the area
- reducing the number of animal accidents on roads within the National Park
- creating a distinctive and different experience when travelling within the National Park which clearly indicates its special and protected status
- reducing the impacts of road traffic on the quality of life of local communities and the environmental quality of the National Park
- developing an integrated network of public and community transport, footpaths and cycle routes designed to meet the needs of both residents and visitors.

APPENDIX 2: Detailed comments on the draft Management Plan

Chapter 3: Working together

The section on the responsibilities of **New Forest District Council** (page 15) should also refer to: Housing Authority, Waste Collection Authority and Traffic Management Agency.

07 Enjoying the National Park

Suggested wording of part of Objective 7 below to match with the terminology used in employment section

.....

- ensuring new recreational facilities are designed and located *so as not to have a significant impact* on the special qualities of the area, including the designated nature conservation sites and the most tranquil areas

.....

In the “priority actions” under Objective 7, there should be reference to the role of NFDC in respect of recreational use/access and relationship to the Recreational Management Strategy.

08 Community Facilities

There should be a reference in here to children’s play and formal outdoor recreation / pitches – even if it is just to acknowledge their importance / place in the scheme of things and to be part of the Recreation Management Strategy.

09 Fostering economic well being

The regional context

The data suggests we don’t have businesses of appropriate structure or able to generate sufficient income levels to sustain a flourishing economy for the residents of the area. So a suggested wording of the second paragraph is:

Bearing these factors in mind, and given the protected status of the National Park, the overall levels of new development within the Park will be relatively low. *It is important, however, to maintain sufficient business opportunities which are able to sustain a flourishing and locally relevant economy that supports the communities of the area and uses to advantage the strong image and recognised environmental quality of the New Forest in contributing to both the local and wider economy.*

Objective 9:

Given the low income levels in the economy as a whole, there is a priority to improve income levels. The second bullet point should be revised:

Working with partners, we will:

.....

- giving particular encouragement to businesses that help to supply services for rural communities, *sustain a local workforce, more closely match wage levels to cost of living in this area*, promote local distinctiveness, maintain the land-based economy or contribute and use local produce or products.

Priority actions for the next five years: There is a need to promote training and skills development – this should be an additional priority action

10 Improving traffic and transport

The document should include reference to the studies and conclusions of detailed studies lead by HCC into Lyndhurst's traffic problems and the trial bus lane that has delivered better bus timetable reliability on the 56 route. The investigation into Lyndhurst's traffic problems looked at the options including a number of proposals that have been progressed including:

- the extension of the "green filter" at the village centre traffic lights using large vehicle detection
- the queue detection on the A337 north of Lyndhurst linked M27 variable message signing.

The first paragraph under "The impacts of traffic" should include reference to human casualties as well as animal accidents.

In the section on "Sustainable transport", it is a bit misleading to refer to "a frequent scheduled bus service on some of the main through-routes across the Forest." For example, with regard to the 56 service,:

- frequency is roughly hourly during am peak on weekdays and Saturdays (30 minute frequency for the rest of daytime service)
- the last bus leaves Lymington at 17.40
- roughly 2 hourly on Sundays.

The X12 and X3 are better than 56 but basically even these offer 30 minute service at best.

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Revised draft

October 2009

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	<i>A summary of the Sustainability Appraisal and the Habitats Regulations Assessment Report will be included in the final plan</i>	
	<i>Illustrative maps to accompany the text will be available in the final plan and in the meantime can be viewed on the National Park Authority website</i>	

Foreword

Thank you for your interest in the New Forest National Park's Management Plan.

This important document will set out the **vision** for the New Forest for the next 20 years. It will look at the main **issues**, define **objectives** and show how they're going to be achieved by setting out priority **actions** for the next five years.

Please note that the detailed planning policies will follow in the 'Core Strategy' document later this year addressing the contentious issues raised during the consultation process. Likewise the 'Recreation Management Strategy' document will be submitted in early 2010.

This draft Management Plan is a blueprint for everyone in the Park. During the ongoing consultation process we have had over 10,000 responses from many people and stakeholder organisations, we are extremely grateful to all of them and appreciate that many have put in a lot of time whilst working full time or coping with other commitments.

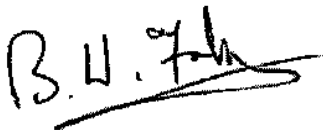
It's important to realise that the Plan's aims cannot be realised by the National Park Authority alone. It is only through working together with all the different interest groups in the Forest and surrounding area that we can protect and enhance this beautiful place.

Going forward, we see the National Park Authority as a champion for the New Forest area by coordinating and supporting all the different groups, working together for the benefit of all.

This is your plan and is still in its draft form allowing changes to be made if required following feedback from you over the next 3 weeks. We will, of course, present a professionally finished version incorporating any necessary changes once the document is accepted by our Members at the 10 December Authority meeting. This is your chance to have your say in how it will shape the Forest for the future.

Please send us your comments by 12 November 2009 to: New Forest National Park Authority, South Efford House, Milford Road, Lymington SO41 0JD, or email to nationalparkplan@newforestnpa.gov.uk.

We look forward to hearing from you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. W. Foley', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Barrie Foley
Interim Chief Executive

Chapter 1 Introduction to the New Forest National Park and the Management Plan

The designation and purposes of the National Park

National Parks are protected landscapes recognised to be of the highest national importance for the natural beauty of their landscapes, the value of their wildlife habitats and cultural heritage, and the opportunities they give for many people to enjoy these qualities. Most National Parks, and perhaps particularly the New Forest, are cultural and working landscapes, shaped over the centuries by the communities that live within them.

The New Forest National Park was established in 2005, one of nine in England and the first to be created in the South East. It covers 56,658 hectares (220 square miles) on the central south coast of England, making it the smallest national park in the UK, other than the Broads. It is home to more than 34,000 people.

National Parks have two statutory purposes and a duty that set out the main reasons for their designation and describe the overall focus for their management. All relevant organisations are required to take the two purposes into account in any work that may affect the area.¹

The two National Park purposes are:

to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the National Park; and

to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area by the public.

National Park Authorities also have a duty, in taking forward the Park purposes, to:

seek to foster the economic and social well-being of local communities within the National Park.

About the National Park Management Plan

What is the National Park Management Plan?

All National Park Authorities must produce a Management Plan for their area. The central role of the Plan is to guide and co-ordinate the work of all those with an interest in the Park in delivering the National Park purposes and duty.²

¹ Section 62 of the Environment Act, 1995.

² Environment Act, 1995 and National Park Management Plans – Guidance (Countryside Agency, 2005).

As with other Management Plans, this plan for the New Forest National Park is a strategic document which sets out the overall policy approach for the area, and attempts to tackle some of the major issues that affect the Park now, or are likely to influence it in the future. Above all it focuses attention on maintaining the New Forest as a special, distinctive and unique place for present and future generations.

It is a plan for the National Park as a place and a community, and not just for the National Park Authority or any particular organisation.³ It can only be taken forward through the support, commitment and action of all those who manage, use or live in the National Park, as well as the nearby authorities and regional decision-makers.

The Local Strategic Partnerships for the area will be particularly important in helping to deliver many aspects of the Plan. The Plan takes into account the priorities agreed by these Partnerships, as set out in their Sustainable Community Strategies, and the National Park Authority will continue to contribute directly to their work.

What the Plan is not

The Management Plan does not include planning or development management policies. These will be part of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy for the National Park, which will be produced by the National Park Authority as a separate document.

Nor does the Plan seek to replace any of the other strategies and plans relating to different aspects of the New Forest and published by a range of organisations. For example, the Sustainable Community Strategies, the economic strategies and the Local Transport Plans covering the National Park area remain key documents relating to the communities, economy and transport in the New Forest respectively. Rather, the Management Plan seeks to complement these documents, build on the ideas they contain and at the same time provide policies that focus clearly on maintaining the special qualities of the area.

The Plan, therefore, does not cover everything, and does not attempt to go into great detail on individual topics. It aims to set out an overall approach to managing the National Park, which can then guide more detailed policies and actions, developed through further discussion with relevant organisations and local communities.

Other plans for the National Park, currently being prepared by the National Park Authority, include a Recreation Management Strategy, Landscape Strategy, Biodiversity Action Plan and Cultural Heritage Strategy. Using this Management Plan as framework, and working with relevant partners, they will include more detailed policies and actions for their particular areas of interest.

³ Review of English National Park Authorities (Defra, 2002)

What the Plan contains

The introduction gives the statutory background to the National Park and explains the purpose of the Management Plan. It includes a summary of the special qualities of the New Forest and describes the major issues and pressures affecting the area.

The Vision for the National Park describes the overall ambition for how the National Park should look and function in 20 years time and beyond.

Working Together emphasises that it will be essential to develop close working relationships with the many organisations and communities in the area and the importance of developing strong partnerships to help implement this Plan.

The Taking Action chapter forms the core of the Management Plan. It is divided into 10 topics, each of which includes the context, issues and current work relevant to the topic, an objective setting out the overall approach to addressing the issues and a series of priority actions to take this work forward.

The objectives are strategic and aspirational. They are meant to provide broad guidelines rather than prescribe in detail all the work that may be needed, although some possibilities are given as examples in the background text. The objectives are designed to address the key issues over time and, in the long term, help achieve the vision for the National Park. They will be assessed every five years as part of the review of the Plan and will be revised or updated if necessary. Many of the objectives are interlinked and each topic should be read as part of the whole Plan rather than in isolation.

The actions are those relevant to the topic and planned over the next five years by a range of different organisations, providing a picture of some of the priority work currently in the pipeline. They are not intended as a comprehensive list, and much other relevant work will be undertaken during this time. A more detailed list of actions, showing lead organisations and partners, will be developed and updated regularly on the National Park Authority's website.

Please note that throughout the Plan the terms 'National Park', 'the Park' and 'the New Forest' are used interchangeably to mean the land within the National Park boundary.

How the Plan has been prepared

All aspects of the Management Plan have been produced by the joint effort and involvement of a great many people. Its preparation has included significant consultation with partner organisations, interest groups, communities and individuals within the New Forest and the wider region, together with the contributions of specialist officers and the members of the National Park Authority.

Consultation on the key issues for the area was carried out jointly with New Forest District Council and the New Forest Local Strategic Partnership through the 'Future Matters' consultation in 2006/2007. Building on this, more than 115 individuals from 71 local and regional organisations worked together to develop initial ideas for the Plan at the New Forest, New Chapter stakeholder events in 2007/2008.

The public consultation in 2008 on the draft National Park Plan (which combined the Management Plan and Local Development Framework Core Strategy) was widely publicised and over 2,000 copies of the Plan were distributed. The draft received extensive media attention and in total just under 10,000 responses were received. Following the end of the consultation period the Authority embarked on an extensive programme of further engagement to take forward work on revising the Plan. This included:

- working groups on five key topics, involving organisations directly involved in each area of work and resulting in a series of recommendations for changes to the Plan
- meetings with parish and town councils and ward councillors focusing on the issues that generated the most interest during the consultation on the draft National Park Plan
- meetings with many of the key organisations in the National Park to discuss proposed revisions
- a major public meeting in September 2009, attended by about 200 people, to discuss the final stages in the preparation of the Management Plan and Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

A Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating a Strategic Environmental Assessment) has been undertaken independently and this assessment of the policies in the Plan have been used to inform the final document. To meet the requirements of the Habitats Directive⁴ a Habitats Regulations Assessment has also been carried out to determine the impact of the policies on the European sites of nature conservation importance. These documents will be made available on the National Park Authority website, and a summary of the main conclusions will be included in the published Plan.

The special qualities of the New Forest

The special qualities of the New Forest are those qualities that define it, make it unique and immediately recognisable and, when taken together, distinguish it from all other parts of the country.

These qualities are fundamental to the two purposes of the National Park and are the underlying reason for its designation. Although particular features that we value about the New Forest today may alter over time, conserving the essence of the place, and ensuring its uniqueness can be experienced by future generations, is the central priority for the National Park and is at the heart of this Management Plan.

⁴ The Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC)

The special qualities of the New Forest, identified through public consultation in 2007⁵, are:

- **the New Forest's outstanding natural beauty**
- **an extraordinary diversity of plants and animals**
- **a unique historic cultural and archaeological heritage**
- **an historic commoning system**
- **the iconic New Forest pony**
- **tranquillity**
- **wonderful opportunities for quiet recreation, learning and discovery**
- **a healthy environment**
- **strong and distinctive local communities.**

Why do we need a Management Plan?

There are a number of major issues and trends that are likely to affect the National Park and its special qualities fundamentally over the next 20 years. One of the main purposes of this Plan is to set out policies and actions that can begin to address these issues.

Most of the pressures on the Forest will be driven by complex interactions between environmental, social and economic factors at a national and global level. Although many of these trends are by their nature difficult to predict accurately, the summary below suggests the broad changes that may occur in the medium term, based on issues already apparent locally or suggested by national forecasts.

Climate change is likely to alter the character of large parts of the National Park over the next 20 years and beyond, modifying landscapes, habitats and biodiversity, affecting local communities and influencing the way the Park is perceived and used.

The broad predictions that are relevant locally include:

- a rise in sea-levels affecting coastal habitats, property and access
- an increase in the number of hot, dry summers, with implications for wetland habitats, land management, the pattern of recreational use and fire risk
- an increase in extreme weather events, such as storms, flooding and heat waves, with impacts on the day to day lives of local people and businesses, and on the natural environment.

⁵ New Forest National Park Authority paper 191/07: A Statement of Special Qualities for the New Forest National Park Authority (June 2007).

Climate change does bring the opportunity to focus minds and resources on what is really valued and must be conserved in the National Park as it adapts to the changing environment, and also emphasises the importance of making lifestyles and business practices as sustainable and carbon-free as possible. The New Forest could reduce its environmental footprint, become more self-sufficient in food and energy and create robust and high quality natural habitats which are as climate-proof as possible.

Local distinctiveness is the sum of all the individual features of local landscapes and the built environment which create the particular character of different parts of the National Park. Although the New Forest as a whole is still clearly different in many ways from its surroundings, there has been a gradual and continuing loss of character, including:

- suburbanisation of the villages
- inappropriate scale and design of new buildings
- increase in signs and other infrastructure in the countryside
- decline in traditional rural crafts and land management.

These trends are likely to continue unless support is given to communities in championing local distinctiveness and organisations are encouraged to take forward clear policies to conserve local character. There are opportunities for very visible improvements across the National Park, for instance by agreeing highway signs and other road infrastructure appropriate to the area. At a local level community-based projects can enhance the character of particular settlements and better protection can be given to buildings of local interest.

Traditional land management has created the landscape of the New Forest over the last 1,000 years. It is already under threat from the uncertainties facing agriculture and commoning, including changes in the system of farm support and high property prices locally. Smaller holdings, which characterise the National Park, have always been marginal economically and many may cease to be viable in the near future. Traditional woodland management and modern forestry both need to develop new markets to remain competitive.

Trends over the next 20 years are likely to include:

- increasing competition from different land uses, including more intensive arable production (in response to global food shortages), bio-fuels and growing demand for natural resources
- a growing market for local produce
- long-term changes to commoning as a result of climate change and the lack of affordable housing and land
- the need to create revenue for the continued management of publicly owned land if central government funding is reduced in the future.

There are opportunities to address many of these issues through local policies and initiatives, such as continued support for local food production, provision of farm advice relevant to the National Park, better availability of housing for commoners and guidance on adapting land management to climate change.

Economic growth within the Park and in the surrounding areas brings both pressures and opportunities. Easy access from the larger towns and conurbations nearby has already contributed to a high recreational demand and there is major pressure on the road network from visitor and through traffic. There is also a continued demand for new development within and immediately adjacent to the Park, and the need for careful design to avoid impacts on the rural character of the area, its visual setting and the conservation of its rich historic and natural heritage.

Trends over the next 20 years are likely to include:

- major housing growth in South Hampshire and South East Dorset, with the likelihood of further increased traffic and recreational pressure
- economic development in and around Bournemouth and Southampton, including the expansion of both airports
- continued pressure for new development within and adjacent to the Park
- a growth in businesses using 'environmentally friendly' technologies and practices, and a more sustainable approach to transport and building design
- an increasing interest in high value sustainable tourism
- an increase in home-working and the use of new information technologies.

Close working with neighbouring authorities is needed to mitigate the impacts of development and to find ways for the National Park to benefit positively from the buoyant economy of the region. The development of new 'greener' technologies, the very strong identity of the New Forest and the interest of local communities in seeking new ways of living and working all give the potential for the National Park to become an example of sustainable development in action at the local level.

Society and social expectations can change rapidly over a few decades. Many people have already been attracted to live in the New Forest because of the quality of its environment and the easy access provided to the towns and cities of the region. Property prices remain very high and affordable housing for local people is a major issue. Both residents and those living in the surrounding communities have clear, and sometimes varying, expectations of what the Park should provide for their enjoyment and recreation.

Over the next 20 years trends are likely to include:

- an increasing proportion of retired or older people
- continuing threats to rural services and facilities and the sustainability of smaller communities
- increasing recreational use of the National Park by different groups with different needs
- continued reliance on the private car as the main mode of transport and consequently increased congestion and general pressure on the road network
- increasing costs of fossil-fuel based energy, affecting residents and businesses.

Local policies can help to influence the provision of local services, housing, food production and energy sources, which will all help to create more sustainable communities. Communities can be supported in making local decisions for their area, and in taking forward local initiatives. The National Park does have the potential to meet many of the recreational needs of its communities, but this will need careful consideration and positive management of recreation both within and outside the Park. A more innovative approach and substantial funding is likely to be needed in the longer term to tackle transport issues and provide viable sustainable transport options.

European, national and regional policies have a major influence on many aspects of the National Park. The most important of these over the next 20 years are likely to include:

- economic development within the adjacent regions and sub-regions
- transport policies and proposals
- European environmental legislation and agricultural policies
- national climate change and sustainability policies and targets.

It will be essential to develop stronger relationships with the relevant bodies and influence decisions made at the national, regional and sub-regional level. This will be helped by a better understanding of the special qualities of the National Park and of the positive contribution these can make to the quality of life, rural economy and sustainability of the region.

Chapter 2 Vision for the National Park

The Vision for the National Park in 20 years time is of an area which has a **unique and immediately recognisable sense of place, where:**

- **tranquillity and a feeling of naturalness pervade large parts of the Park**
- **the mosaic of distinctive landscapes and habitats are all of the highest quality and a great variety of wildlife is able to flourish**
- **there is a strong sense and understanding of the heritage and living culture of the Forest**
- **all visitors can gain inspiration, enjoyment, health and well-being**
- **the far reaching consequences of climate change are taken into account in all policies and future plans**
- **people live and work sustainably and contribute to the care of the Forest**
- **local, regional and national organisations recognise the value of the National Park and there is a shared understanding of its role within the wider area**
- **everyone contributes in appropriate ways to keeping the National Park a special place for present and future generations.**

Chapter 3 Working Together

The National Park Authority cannot take forward the objectives and actions in this Plan on its own and in many cases other organisations will be primarily responsible for the areas of work included. The success of the Management Plan will therefore depend on close and co-operative working between the many organisations that administer, manage and influence the National Park, as well as the full involvement of local communities, businesses and residents.

Working with others across the boundary and in the wider region

The National Park covers a relatively small geographical area and therefore the importance of cross-boundary partnership work is critical to its functioning. The land use of the surrounding areas provides its visual and landscape setting, including links to Southampton Water. The continuity of appropriate land management across the boundary is essential for the survival of the New Forest commoning system, and to the integrity of the National Park's internationally important habitats and diversity of wildlife. Many communities outside the boundary remain very much involved in the economic and social life of the National Park and derive much of their cultural identity from being part of the New Forest.

The National Park has been established because of its national importance. It must develop a clear, positive and valued role in the region and in the country as a whole, based on its local distinctiveness, rural economy, landscape and conservation value and its contribution to people's quality of life. Closer relationships need to be developed with surrounding authorities, businesses and communities, and with regional and national decision-makers, in order to raise awareness about the benefits of the National Park and guide those policies and actions that may affect it. Working with other protected landscapes will help to develop regional and national initiatives of benefit to the New Forest and allow good practice to be shared. It will be particularly important to encourage supportive land use policies in the surrounding areas and ensure development proposals do not have an adverse impact on the New Forest.

The approach will be to work with all relevant organisations, business interests and communities outside the National Park to:

- create a shared understanding of the positive role the National Park can play in the region
- work jointly on cross-boundary initiatives, including green infrastructure plans, transport, access and conservation projects
- support regional and sub-regional policies and actions that complement the national park purposes and duty, and seek to influence proposals that may have an impact on the Park.

Partnership work with the key organisations in the National Park

There are a number of key organisations involved in the day-to-day administration and management of the National Park. Many are statutory agencies with specific responsibilities, such as the county, unitary, district or borough councils, Natural England, the Verderers, the Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency; others have important interests in land management across the Park, such as the National Trust, the Wildlife Trusts and private landowners. The importance of parish and town councils is fully recognised and discussed in the following section.

All are aware of the importance of the New Forest and have been working to conserve the area and support its economy and communities over many years. A great deal of practical work that will help deliver national park purposes is already underway.

Regular liaison is needed between all the key organisations involved in directly managing the National Park to ensure effective co-ordination. Working relationships can be cemented further through jointly managed partnership projects. In the past such projects have proved effective in gaining external funding, focusing local resources and achieving major enhancements to the special qualities of the New Forest.

The approach will be to work with the key partner organisations within the National Park to:

- continue to strengthen day-to-day working relationships
- develop jointly owned partnership projects to deliver National Park purposes
- work towards a shared and accessible system for holding and sharing technical information about the National Park.

Working with local organisations and communities

Local organisations and interests have always been deeply involved in Forest matters and in influencing decisions about the management of the area. The parish and town councils have an essential role to play in representing the interests of their local communities and in developing local initiatives to enhance their area. Regular liaison with local councils is needed, together with support for community-based initiatives and the implementation of parish and town plans.

The main strategic 'grass-roots' forums within the National Park are the New Forest Consultative Panel, the New Forest Association of Local Councils and the Solent Forum, while groups with a more specific remit include the Open Forest Advisory Committee, New Forest Access Forum, New Forest Association, Commoners Defence Association, New Forest Dog Owners Group, Forest Design Plan forum, New Forest Equine Forum, New Forest Business Partnership, New Forest Tourism Association and many others.

It is essential that the existing strategic forums are maintained and that a closer working relationship with local organisations and interests is developed through regular liaison and involvement in local projects. Groups currently under-represented in New Forest affairs should be given the opportunity to be part of the decision-making process, especially those, like young people, who will be inheriting the National Park of the future.

The approach will be to:

- continue to seek advice from the range of New Forest organisations through the existing strategic forums
- develop closer working relationships and regular liaison with parish and town councils and forums representing specific interests
- work with local organisations and communities on joint initiatives that will help further the purposes or duty of the national park.

Roles and responsibilities of key organisations

The following gives a brief description of the main organisations with statutory or important land management responsibilities within the National Park. There are a large number of other organisations and individuals who have contributed to the plan or are involved in work relevant to it. Many are included as key partners accompanying the actions in Chapter 4 and a more comprehensive (although not complete) list can be found in Appendix 2.

The Environment Agency is responsible for protecting and improving the environment for people and wildlife, and reducing the risk of flooding. Its work includes protecting the environment against risks such as pollution and over use of water. It has produced a number of strategies to address water quality and management in the New Forest area. The Environment Agency has been a key partner in implementing the LIFE projects to improve and enhance local biodiversity and is helping to develop coastal policies.

The Forestry Commission promotes sustainable forestry and woodland management in England, including the provision of management advice, overseeing woodland grant schemes and felling licences and promoting the use of timber and wood-fuel. The Commission directly manages 18% of England's woods and forests. In the New Forest it is responsible for the management of the Crown Lands (covering about 50% of the National Park) for conservation, recreation and the rural economy. It has produced a Crown Lands Management Plan, is implementing long-term Forest Design Plans for the Inclosure woodlands, and has been involved in many of the large-scale landscape and habitat enhancement projects in the Forest.

Hampshire County Council is responsible for a wide range of public services, including education, social care, transport and waste management. It is the highway authority, including public rights of way, for a large part of the National Park. It is also involved in countryside management of land within the National Park, provides environmental education facilities in the Forest, supports the rural economy and helps conserve the natural and built environment. It has been involved as the lead organisation in several large-scale enhancement projects in the New Forest.

The National Park Authority has a particular interest in conserving the special qualities of the area, improving their understanding and enjoyment, and in supporting the social and economic well-being of local communities. It acts as the champion for the purposes of the National Park and aims to take these forward in partnership with the many organisations involved. It manages a Sustainable Development Fund to support community or business enterprises and offers a range of technical and funding advice. It is the planning authority for the area.

The National Trust manages important sites within the National Park, actively supports sustainable commoning and farming and has a strong interest in conserving the natural habitats and landscapes of the area.

Natural England is responsible for protecting and enhancing England's natural environment. In particular, it works to ensure sustainable management of designated nature conservation sites, reduce the decline of biodiversity, conserve and enhance the landscape and promote access to the countryside. It has produced a detailed management plan for the New Forest Special Area of Conservation, promotes green infrastructure and sets up and manages Higher Level Stewardship agreements. It also has a strong involvement in conserving coastal habitats and manages nature reserves within the National Park.

New Forest District Council is responsible for planning policies for much of the area surrounding the National Park. It provides a range of community services, promotes the local economy and manages tourism within its area, which includes the majority of the National Park. It has produced economic and tourism strategies and a New Forest Landscape Character Assessment which identifies and describes the different landscapes within the National Park. It is the lead partner in producing the North Solent Shoreline Management Plan which will set out detailed policies for coastal defence.

New Forest District Local Strategic Partnership brings together the main organisations providing services within the district, including healthcare, education, emergency services and the environment. It has produced a Sustainable Community Strategy to address community priorities within the area.

Parish and town councils provide and manage a wide range of services at a community level, including community facilities and open space. They comment on planning applications and are instrumental in raising awareness about the character of their areas and developing local projects. Many are producing parish or town plans, through local steering groups, setting out the priorities and improvements proposed by the community. Most of the parishes and towns within the National Park are represented by the New Forest Association of Local Councils.

Private land managers, including the major landed estates, manage about 50% of the land area of the National Park. Many have a long-term interest in the landscapes, habitats and heritage of their areas and have combined farming and estate management with the conservation and promotion of local distinctiveness. The interests of land managers are represented by the National Farmers Union and the Country Land and Business Association.

Test Valley Borough Council provides a range of community services, promotes the local economy and manages tourism within its area, a small part of which is within the National Park. It is the planning authority for the area of the borough outside the Park boundary.

The Wildlife Trusts, comprising the Trusts for Wiltshire and Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, manage important nature reserves within the National Park. They have a strong interest in conserving and raising public awareness about the habitats and wildlife of the area and run programmes of events for children and adults.

Wiltshire Council is a new unitary authority that has superseded the county council and the various district councils (including Salisbury). It is responsible for a wide range of public services including education, social care, transport and waste management. It is the highway authority, including public rights of way, for the Wiltshire part of the National Park, and the South Wiltshire Area Board helps address community priorities within this area.

The Verderers of the New Forest regulate the agricultural use of the Open Forest, safeguard commoner's rights and help to control recreational development on the Crown Lands. They have a strong interest in conserving the amenity value and tranquillity of the landscape and in promoting housing for commoners. They manage the Countryside Stewardship Scheme which supports the grazing of commoners' stock on the Open Forest.

Chapter 4 Taking Action

01 Conserving local distinctiveness

The different villages and landscapes in the National Park all have a distinctive character, although they are also all recognisably part of the New Forest, linked by its particular history, economy and culture. The New Forest Landscape Character Assessment (New Forest District Council, 2000) describes 21 different character areas in the Park based on variations in the natural environment, settlement pattern and land uses. A Landscape Strategy for the National Park⁶ will extend this work and consider in more detail ways to conserve and enhance local landscapes. The history and cultural identity of the Forest communities is also a key part of local distinctiveness in its widest sense, and is discussed under the 'Supporting local communities' section of this plan.

Cumulative impacts on the landscape

Small-scale changes to the local landscape take place almost constantly in response to shifting values, fashions, availability of products and the spread of new technology. Although change is inevitable it can be at the expense of those features that give the New Forest its particular character. Over time these can cause a real impact on the way the area looks and feels, often reducing the recognisable differences between different parts of the Forest and gradually diminishing the rural character of the area as a whole.

Examples of changes contributing to the loss of local character include:

- increasing suburbanisation of villages, with traditional building features replaced, changes in boundary treatments, greater use of hard surfacing and lighting, and inappropriate scale and design of new buildings
- a general increase in signage and other infrastructure in the countryside
- loss of important trees, hedgerows and features of the historic environment of local value
- decline in the traditional management of meadows, hedgerows, rivers and woodlands
- encroachment of Open Forest land.

Most small-scale changes in the landscape by their nature do not require planning permission. Success in retaining local distinctiveness will therefore depend largely on the interest and involvement of local people and statutory agencies.

Local distinctiveness

Many communities and major landowners within the National Park already have a strong sense of what defines their area and are looking for support in helping to conserve its particular character. Information and practical advice, sources of funding and promoting local distinctiveness through key members of the community would all aid this process, together with clear advice on relevant planning policies.

⁶ To be produced by the National Park Authority and partner organisations in 2010.

The aim should be to raise awareness about local distinctiveness, encourage ownership and pride among land and property owners and support them in the good management of features of local importance. Support will also be given to parishes wishing to produce village design statements and include local distinctiveness in parish plans. There are opportunities for larger scale 'whole village' improvements developed with the local community, some of which are already underway.

Planning policies do have an important role to play in helping to ensure local character is retained in new development and in resisting inappropriate development. There are 18 Conservation Areas within the Park that help to conserve the built environment of particular settlements, and a large number of listed buildings that are recognised to be of national importance. Clear local policies are also needed to guide development that may affect sites of local importance for nature conservation, non-scheduled archaeological sites, historic gardens, and buildings of local historic and architectural value, since by definition these do not receive statutory protection.

It will also be essential to work closely with service suppliers (such as water, electricity and telecommunications companies) and with the highway authorities, to ensure the maintenance and design of infrastructure takes into account the distinctive character of the National Park.

Research needs

There are currently still considerable gaps in knowledge of locally important sites and features. Further research is needed to provide a full picture of, for example, sites of archaeological and nature conservation value, buildings of local interest and land-mark trees of significance to local communities.

Objective 1

Working with partners, we will:

Conserve and enhance the wealth of individual characteristics that contribute to the local distinctiveness of the villages and landscapes of the New Forest, by:

- **identifying and raising awareness about the full range of characteristics that contribute to local distinctiveness in the National Park**
- **supporting improvements to the character of selected settlements, working closely with local communities**
- **ensuring that the design of all new development takes into account local distinctiveness in the National Park**
- **protecting and encouraging the sensitive management of locally important sites and features.**

Priority actions for the next five years

Publish and promote a basic checklist of key characteristics which helps to define local distinctiveness in different parts of the National Park, for use and refinement by local communities.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, New Forest District Council, Wiltshire Council, Hampshire County Council, Test Valley Borough Council, parish and town councils.

Work with local communities to identify buildings of local historical or architectural importance across the National Park.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, parish and town councils, parish plan steering groups, local amenity groups.

Design and implement schemes to promote pride in, and appropriate management of, Sites of Nature Conservation Importance, County Wildlife Sites and locally important historic features and buildings by land managers and owners.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, the Wildlife Trusts, Hampshire County Council, Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre, Natural England, National Trust, parish and town councils, Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society, local historical societies, land managers.

Develop a National Park-wide design guide for the built environment, including highways and verges, for use by organisations, developers and local communities.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, New Forest District Council, Test Valley Borough Council, Hampshire County Council, Wiltshire Council, Highways Agency, Natural England, Forestry Commission, land managers.

Produce and implement a strategy for conserving and raising awareness about the ancient and veteran trees of the New Forest.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, Forestry Commission, New Forest District Council, Wildlife Trusts, Natural England, Woodland Trust, parish and town councils, local communities.

Monitor, discourage and, where necessary, enforce against illegal encroachments on the Open Forest.

Key partners: Forestry Commission, Verderers of the New Forest, New Forest National Park Authority, National Trust, Hampshire County Council.

02 Enhancing landscapes and habitats

The New Forest is one of the last remaining extensive areas of unspoilt countryside and semi-natural habitat in lowland Europe. It is a cultural landscape, shaped over many thousands of years through the close relationship between the natural soils and vegetation and the history and culture of its people.

Cultural landscapes and habitats

The habitats and landscapes of the Forest have survived remarkably intact, due largely to the protection of the area as a Royal Forest, the continuity of commoning and the influence of the large landed estates within and around the Forest. The commoning system, and especially the grazing of ponies and cattle, remains critical in shaping and maintaining the landscapes of the Open Forest. The lack of any intensive agriculture over large parts of the area has allowed a long 'time depth' to develop revealing, in places, many thousands of years of continuous history. This is apparent in the richness of the archaeological sites and features of the Forest: there are 214 Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the National Park, comprising 10% of all the scheduled monuments in the south east region, together with many important currently unscheduled sites.

The heart of the Forest, with its mosaic of ancient pasture woodland, lowland heath, lawns and wetlands, is recognised to be one of the most important sites for nature conservation in Europe. It is home to many species of plants and animals that are rare nationally and some that are only found in the New Forest⁷. The coastline also provides a diversity of natural habitats and supports major populations of wintering waders and wildfowl. In total 56% of the National Park is protected by international nature conservation legislation.

Nevertheless the landscapes and habitats of the National Park are under pressure. In some cases landscape quality and habitat condition has been eroded, or areas fragmented, over time, mainly due to changes in land uses or land management practices. There is continuing pressure from built development within the Park and major new development is proposed in the surrounding areas. In addition climate change is likely to have far-reaching impacts on the characteristic landscapes of the Forest during the current century.

A biodiversity action plan, landscape strategy and cultural heritage strategy are being produced by the National Park Authority and partner organisations and will set out more detailed objectives and actions for the future.

⁷ Such as the wild gladiolus and New Forest cicada.

Landscape and habitat quality

Over the past decade initiatives such as the LIFE projects⁸, the Forest Design Plans, the Special Area of Conservation Management Plan⁹ and the Verderers Countryside Stewardship Scheme have involved a wide range of organisations in restoring or maintaining habitats at the landscape scale. The focus has been largely on the Open Forest and Inclosure woodlands. Elsewhere there are opportunities to work more closely with private landowners to develop whole-farm or estate management plans and long-term woodland plans that deliver conservation benefits, through, for instance, the government's Higher Level Stewardship scheme and woodland grant schemes. These are already being taken forward on some estates.

Enhancing the coastal habitats and landscapes will be a particular challenge due to coastal change and sea-level rise. The Shoreline Management Plan for the North Solent, the Solent European Marine Sites Management Scheme and existing partnerships, such as the Solent Forum, will be important in guiding more detailed policies and coastal management projects. The approach should be to integrate the management of the coastline and maritime environment, support existing economic and recreational uses where these do not have an impact on protected habitats and seek opportunities to allow new habitats to develop in appropriate locations, working with landowners and land managers.

Plans are also now in place to enable favourable or recovering condition for a high proportion of the nationally and internationally designated habitats by 2010, although currently less than 11,000 hectares (about one third of all Sites of Special Scientific Interest by area) is in favourable condition. Continuing work and sources of funding will be needed in the future to maintain the quality of this primary wildlife resource.

In addition further resources are needed to gradually improve the condition of other landscapes and habitats of high visual and conservation value across the whole of the National Park, to re-connect areas that have become fragmented over time and ensure ecosystems can function as naturally as possible. This will be particularly important to help buffer against the impacts of climate change.

The Landscape Strategy for the National Park will suggest the future direction for the various landscapes of the Forest, involving private and public land managers, local communities and statutory agencies, and will prioritise areas where enhancement or restoration is needed. There may be particular opportunities, over time, to extend the area of typical Open Forest habitats, for instance by continuing the process of de-fencing Inclosure woodlands where appropriate, reinstating grazing where it formerly occurred and restoring links between fragmented areas of pasture woodland.

⁸ The LIFE projects (1997-2006) were large-scale projects, funded through the European Union, to restore the habitats of the New Forest Special Area of Conservation.

⁹ The New Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Management Plan, English Nature 2001.

The long-term future of the landscapes and habitats of the National Park must be taken into account in enhancement projects. This should ensure that they can be managed sustainably, provide clear economic and social benefits where possible and are designed with the likely impacts of climate change in mind.

Development pressure

The expansion of housing and economic growth in South Hampshire and South East Dorset could lead to an estimated 12% increase (an additional 1.6 million visitor days) in people using the National Park for recreation by 2026¹⁰, together with the likelihood of a substantial growth in traffic. In addition there is continued pressure for development in areas immediately adjacent to the National Park and within the Park boundary, which may directly affect the landscapes and quality of the built environment of the area, both through visual impacts and loss of special character.

Close working with the surrounding authorities and developers will be essential to ensure that future development proposals fully take into account, and do not compromise, the special qualities and landscape setting of the Park. This should include taking a strategic approach and designing practical mitigation measures to manage recreational pressure on international sites of nature conservation importance. Green infrastructure strategies should be developed to provide for alternative open space, countryside areas and habitats close to major new development, both improving access for local people and helping to mitigate impacts on the National Park. In addition the Recreation Management Strategy for the National Park will include measures for managing recreational pressure within the Park boundary.

Planning policies should ensure that the design and scale of new development in the Park is appropriate to its context, contributes positively to the wider landscapes and habitats of the Forest and where appropriate includes improvements to local open space for amenity and recreation.

Objective 2

Working with partners, we will:

Protect and enhance the large-scale cultural landscapes and semi-natural habitats of the New Forest, by:

- **working towards a shared vision and agreed priorities for managing, enhancing or restoring the different landscapes and habitats of the National Park, involving local communities and land managers**
- **improving and sustaining the quality of internationally and nationally designated habitats where these are not currently in favourable condition**

¹⁰ Changing patterns of visitor numbers within the New Forest National Park (Footprint Ecology, 2008)

- **encouraging integrated land management on the enclosed lands which enhances the landscape character, habitats and archaeological features of the area**
- **ensuring development proposals, both within and close to the National Park, take the important landscapes, habitats and the visual setting of the Park fully into account**
- **supporting the production of green infrastructure plans, including areas for countryside recreation close to new development outside the National Park, and seeking improvements to open space within the Park.**

Priority actions for the next five years

Carry out detailed research to clarify and monitor the cumulative impacts of development (including additional visitor pressure) on a range of important habitats and key species.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, Natural England, New Forest District Council, Hampshire County Council, Forestry Commission, Wiltshire Council.

Agree and implement a range of strategies to include:

- Landscape Strategy
- Biodiversity Action Plan
- Cultural Heritage Strategy
- Recreation Management Strategy

A more comprehensive list of actions will be included within these strategies.

Identify priority sites / areas for landscape and habitat enhancement and seek funding opportunities, working with relevant land managers.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, Forestry Commission, Natural England, Verderers of the New Forest, Commoners Defence Association, Environment Agency, Hampshire County Council, Wildlife Trusts, , National Trust, land managers, local communities.

Implement a SSSI¹¹ restoration programme within the National Park.

Key partners: Natural England, Forestry Commission, New Forest National Park Authority, Environment Agency, SSSI owners and managers.

Develop green infrastructure plans for relevant areas outside the National Park.

Key partners: Partnership for Urban South Hampshire, South East Dorset local authorities, Wiltshire Council, New Forest National Park Authority, Natural England, New Forest District Council, Test Valley Borough Council.

Collate information to allow the future monitoring of biodiversity, landscapes and the historic environment.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, Hampshire County Council, Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre, Wiltshire Council, Forestry Commission, Wildlife Trusts, Natural England.

¹¹ Site of Special Scientific Interest.

03 Encouraging sustainable land management

Commoning, farming, forestry and woodland management have been essential to the rural economy and have helped shape the landscape of the New Forest through historic times. In particular, the distinctive pastoral economy of the area, including common grazing, has allowed many of the characteristic New Forest habitats and landscapes to develop and be maintained into the 21st century.

Commoning and farming

The Open Forest is maintained primarily by the grazing of commoners' stock. In recent years the Verderers Countryside Stewardship Scheme and other forms of support have encouraged an increase in practising commoners and the numbers of stock depastured, but there are nevertheless concerns about the longer term viability of commoning.

These concerns relate particularly to the high cost of suitable housing and land and the need for part-time employment in other aspects of the local economy. Replacement schemes will be sought to succeed Countryside Stewardship before this ends in 2013, and there will be continued support for the current Commoners Dwelling Scheme, which helps commoning families to remain living and working in the area.

There are still strong cultural and economic links between farming and commoning, although this has declined in recent years, including the seasonal movement of stock and the sharing of labour and equipment. Commoning also has close links with forestry, woodland management and the general on-going management of the Open Forest habitats (including cutting, burning and bracken control), all of which can provide flexible employment and a source of additional income. Promoting understanding of the importance of commoning to the New Forest, and the issue it faces, will be vital in ensuring its long-term survival.

Farming on the enclosed lands, as elsewhere in the country, has been influenced by European policies and agricultural subsidies. The introduction of a new national system of farm payments, including conservation-related support schemes, has the potential to bring benefits to the National Park and the farming community, provided these are adequately funded and can be tailored to address the particular circumstances of the New Forest. At present they have less relevance for the smaller holdings that are already facing the greatest risk economically. The National Park has a very high proportion (80%) of holdings of less than 20 hectares (49 acres). The National Park Authority, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust and Natural England are establishing a new advice service to provide a range of support, training and grants for all land managers in the National Park.

Mainstream farming is important in underpinning a strong land-based economy and maintaining the agricultural use of large areas of the National Park. Improved dialogue with the landed estates and farms would help to clarify their needs, develop supportive planning policies to ensure the viability of the farm enterprise and encourage a whole-farm or cross-farm approach that contributes to the landscapes and habitats of the Forest. There are opportunities to encourage local initiatives such as joint marketing and the production of premium New Forest products.

Farm diversification is an important way for farmers to adapt to changing markets and economic forces while continuing to sustain the farm business. Support will be given to diversification schemes, through advice and planning policies, where this maintains or enhances the landscape, provides local employment in rural businesses, supplies local produce or encourages greater public access to the countryside.

Forestry and woodland management

Forestry has become an important feature of the New Forest over the past 150 years, providing local employment and training and enabling much of the timber to be transported and processed locally. It will be important for the industry to adapt to changing markets for forestry products, including wood fuel, and continue to champion sustainable production in the local context.

Native broad-leaved woodland is an important wildlife habitat and a valued part of the local landscape. The Forestry Commission's Forest Design Plans will, over time, increase the proportion of broad-leaved woodland in the Inclosures, and the woodland grant scheme supports private landowners in reinstating or creating new areas of native woodland. Long-term management plans for privately owned woodland should be encouraged where these are not already in place.

Sustainably managed hardwoods are also an important resource used by local forestry enterprises. Some businesses are taking advantage of the strong image of the Forest to market high quality products, such as timber-framed buildings. New markets and skills could be developed, linked with relevant training and based on sensitive management of the woodland resource. Examples include specialist high quality goods aimed at the tourism market, local furniture design, rural craft industries and wood fuel products that contribute to the local production of renewable energy.

Nearly 10,000 hectares (24,700 acres) of ancient woodland remain within the Open Forest and on private estates, forming an extremely important historic, amenity and wildlife resource and containing one of the largest concentrations of ancient trees in Europe. Opportunities should be sought to restore and reconnect the fragmented pasture woodlands and revive coppice management elsewhere.

Responding to climate change

Consistent land management advice will be needed as economic and environmental circumstances change. In particular advice must include appropriate ways of tackling climate change issues, including the implications for crops and tree species, water conservation and storage, farming practices and forestry operations. Encouragement should be given to land management practices that help maximise the carbon holding capacity of the area, by, for example, maintaining unploughed habitats and where appropriate increasing the area of native trees and woodlands. The challenge will be to find solutions that are both economically viable and ensure that land management continues to contribute to the special qualities of the New Forest.

Objective 3

Working with partners, we will:

Encourage land management that sustains the special qualities of the National Park, by:

- **supporting farming, commoning and forestry businesses that contribute to the local economy and help to maintain the landscapes of the National Park**
- **developing support schemes for commoners and farmers tailored to the needs of the New Forest**
- **taking forward the priority recommendations of the New Forest Commoning Review¹², including protecting land used regularly for back-up grazing land and supporting housing for commoners**
- **supporting diversification schemes that help to sustain the existing farming or commoning business**
- **providing co-ordinated land management advice relevant to the New Forest**
- **encouraging long-term plans to guide woodland management on privately owned land, including the restoration of ancient or indigenous woodland.**

Priority actions for the next five years

Pursue options for support schemes relevant to the Open Forest, including a Higher Level Stewardship Scheme, to supersede the Verderers Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, New Forest Commoners Defence Association, Verderers of the New Forest, Forestry Commission

¹² The New Forest Commoning Review was produced by the New Forest Commoners Defence Association, the Verderers of the New Forest and the National Park Authority in 2007.

Develop a land management advisory service for the National Park and surrounding area.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, Natural England, Wildlife Trusts, Verderers of the New Forest, Forestry Commission.

Continue to support the implementation of the Commoners Dwelling Scheme to provide affordable housing suitable for commoners.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, Forestry Commission, National Trust.

Produce a socio-economic study of the forestry and woodland management sector.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, Forestry Commission.

Promote the opportunities of RDPE (LEADER) ¹³ funding to develop and support land-based businesses.

Key partners: New Forest District Council, New Forest National Park Authority, New Forest Local Action Group.

Identify and develop new markets for wood products, including wood-fuel.

Key partners: Forestry Commission, New Forest Trust, National Park Authority, New Forest District Council, land managers.

¹³ The Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) is a national funding scheme, which incorporates European LEADER funding for local project areas, including the New Forest.

04 Planning for climate change

Climate change is likely to be the biggest single factor influencing all aspects of the National Park over the next 20 years and beyond. It will almost certainly have profound effects on the physical appearance of the National Park, and on its communities, economy, natural habitats, land management and recreational use, over the course of this century. While the scientific community is still debating the rate at which global change may occur, there is very strong agreement that climate change is happening and is a direct consequence of emissions of greenhouse gases linked to human activities.¹⁴

Climate change issues are relevant to many of the topics included in this Management Plan and further policies and actions are included throughout the document.

Climate change impacts

At the regional or local level it is difficult to predict the precise impacts of climate change. However a number of locally relevant studies have been carried out through the National Oceanography Centre, Environment Agency, Climate South East, the MONARCH and BRANCH projects¹⁵ and others.

Based on current predictions it seems very probable that over the next 50 years the National Park will have to adapt to:

- realignment of the coast due to sea-level rise, including increased coastal flooding with threats to property and protected habitats
- effects on the day to day lives and health of local communities and the running of businesses due to an increase in extreme weather events (such as droughts, heat waves and flooding)
- major changes to local landscapes and habitats, including impacts on wetlands, local extinctions of some species and the spread of others, and increasing fire risk
- changes in land management, including alterations to pastoral farming practices, the introduction of new crops and the likelihood of new plant and animal diseases
- impacts on recreation and tourism, including a potential increase in visitors due to warmer summers in the UK.

Adaptation to climate change is a key consideration for the National Park. This will mean finding appropriate ways to begin to adjust to likely changes now, based on the best available evidence. The National Park Authority has a particular interest in finding ways to safeguard the underlying qualities that make the area special, while accepting that many individual features and aspects of the New Forest will inevitably change in the longer term.

¹⁴ UK Climate Projections: Briefing report (Met. Office Hadley Centre, 2009)

¹⁵ Case studies and modelling predicting changes in habitats and wildlife species, including some relating specifically to the New Forest.

It will also be critical for all relevant statutory bodies locally to work together to identify any further research needed, to raise awareness of the full range of issues amongst communities, land managers and businesses and to support them in preparing for impacts as far as possible. The latter should include emergency planning in the event of any major incidents, such as the risk of wildfires or the spread of animal diseases.

To allow the adaptation of the natural habitats, landscapes and wildlife of the Forest, the approach should be to create extensive areas of connected habitat wherever possible. This will help the natural environment to withstand changes in climate and extreme weather and allow easier movement of wildlife species within and beyond the area.

In particular, better links are needed between the Open Forest habitats and those of the enclosed lands, seeking opportunities to reduce barriers formed by intensively managed land and working with adjacent authorities to create a 'migration network' across the wider area. This should, in part, be addressed by the green infrastructure plans being produced by a number of surrounding authorities and partnerships. Retaining the water holding capacity of the natural habitats of the Forest, together with the careful regulation of water abstraction, will also aid farming during periods of drought. Other issues for farming and forestry are included under the section 'Encouraging sustainable land management'.

The Shoreline Management Plan for the North Solent is currently being produced by New Forest District Council, with the help of the National Park Authority, the Environment Agency, Natural England and other partners. The Plan will bring together research on coastal processes, issues of importance to local people and conservation considerations. It will set out policies for coastal defence over the next 100 years.

The Shoreline Management Plan is subject to further consultation, but at this stage within the National Park it is likely to propose continued protection for the main coastal settlements, and other areas where defences are essential, and will enable landowners to maintain their own existing defences. Where possible, opportunities will be sought to create new habitats through managed retreat, while elsewhere natural coastal change may be the preferred approach. The National Park Authority supports the emerging Shoreline Management Plan and its broad proposals are reflected within the objective below.

Mitigating climate change

Climate change is clearly a global issue and solutions must involve international government commitments. Nevertheless individuals, local communities, businesses and the public sector can also play a significant role in reducing the severity of climate impacts by adopting more sustainable ways of living and working.

Many organisations are currently involved in improving various aspects of sustainability through the provision of services and advice across the National Park. There are further opportunities to promote energy and water conservation, support sustainable transport initiatives, improve water quality and reduce pollution. The possibility of extending recycling services and encouraging waste minimisation and reduced packaging should also be investigated.

Planning policies can help to ensure sustainable design and construction of new buildings, including waste water and water conservation systems, and support appropriate (and viable) schemes to generate renewable energy, or other sustainability projects, at a local level. Promoting the use of wood-fuels for heat and energy production is particularly relevant in the New Forest. The larger local organisations can make a significant contribution to reducing the carbon or environmental footprint of the area through the introduction of practices to reduce waste and non-renewable energy consumption, guided by environmental audits.

There are already successful initiatives in place that have created a strong local food and craft products market, based on the brand of the New Forest. These should be continued and extended, reducing 'product miles' and creating high quality, sustainably produced food and goods for both local people and visitors.

In many ways local communities are the leaders in raising awareness about more sustainable lifestyles, through practical initiatives and changes in behaviour. New Forest Transition, for example, is part of a growing national network of people who are finding local solutions to the issues of peak oil¹⁶ and climate change. Many New Forest communities are now involved in organising and taking forward practical projects in their area.

Objective 4

Working with partners, we will:

Plan for the likely impacts of climate change on the special qualities of the New Forest and reduce the overall environmental footprint¹⁷ of the National Park, by:

- **improving dialogue and understanding about climate change impacts**

¹⁶ Peak oil is the point in time when global oil production is at its maximum and then will begin to decline (with additional economic and environmental costs). The assumption is that peak oil will occur within the next few years.

¹⁷ The 'environmental' or 'ecological' footprint goes further than carbon-footprinting by measuring the overall environmental costs of human activity, including not only the energy consumed, but also the food imported, natural resources used and the amount of waste and pollution created. The Stockholm Environmental Institute has published initial comparative figures for local authority areas throughout Britain (The Ecological Footprint of the New Forest, Stockholm Environment Institute, 2006). The South East Plan (2009) states that a sustained programme of action is needed to reduce the South East's ecological footprint by 2026.

- **raising public awareness about the environmental footprint of the area, and encouraging a change towards more sustainable lifestyles by organisations, communities, businesses and individuals**
- **conserving and where necessary restoring an extensive network of natural habitats both within and across the National Park boundary, to improve resilience and reduce fragmentation**
- **ensuring critical parts of the coastline (as identified in the Shoreline Management Plan) are protected from sea-level rise through environmentally acceptable coastal defences, while allowing the natural realignment of the coast where appropriate and seeking opportunities for the creation of new coastal habitats**
- **supporting local or community-based initiatives for improving energy efficiency, reducing waste, recycling, composting, food production, water conservation or producing renewable energy.**

Priority actions for the next five years

Develop and promote a climate change adaptation strategy for the National Park, involving local organisations and communities.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, New Forest District Council, Wiltshire Council, Test Valley Borough Council, Forestry Commission, National Trust, Wildlife Trusts, Natural England, Environment Agency, parish and town councils, major private landowners.

Produce and promote guidance for built development to encourage the highest standards of sustainability, including the use of new technologies to reduce the environmental footprint.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, New Forest District Council.

Agree criteria for measuring and monitoring the overall environmental footprint of the area and develop realistic targets with all stakeholders to reduce the footprint of the National Park.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, Hampshire Local Area Agreement Partnership.

Identify and undertake further research needed to clarify the local impacts of climate change.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, Hampshire County Council, Environment Agency, Wiltshire Council, Test Valley Borough Council.

Provide project development support, funding and technical advice for local initiatives to address climate change.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, New Forest Transition, New Forest District Council, Wiltshire Council, Test Valley Borough Council, local communities and businesses.

Identify opportunities to reconnect areas of natural habitat as part of a Biodiversity Action Plan for the National Park.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, Forestry Commission, Natural England, Hampshire County Council, Wildlife Trusts, Environment Agency, land managers, local communities

05 Safeguarding tranquillity

Nearly everyone who visits the National Park recognises and appreciates that tranquillity is a central part of their experience, both as an intrinsic quality of the landscape and as a benefit to their individual well-being. A recent consultation (Special Qualities, 2007) showed that 93% of people perceived tranquillity to be either an important or very important quality of the New Forest. Conserving this quality, as far as possible, is especially important in the context of the increasingly busy and built up south of England, and within a National Park used and enjoyed by people in many different ways.

Tranquillity mapping

Although tranquillity is to some extent a subjective perception, there are accepted methods for mapping levels of tranquillity in a more objective way. These are based largely on measures of noise, especially traffic noise and human activity, and visual intrusion.

The most recent New Forest-specific tranquil areas mapping was undertaken in 1996.¹⁸ The areas of greatest tranquillity identified on these maps are almost identical to those shown in the traffic noise contour map of the National Park (2009) and the CPRE's¹⁹ national tranquillity mapping of 2006²⁰. The 1996 study is therefore used in this Plan to define the most tranquil areas in the Forest.

The most tranquil areas are also the most remote parts of the Forest. They have few public roads, low levels of traffic noise, little intensive recreation or recreational facilities, no settlements and few visible modern structures. They cover about 11,500ha (20% of the National Park) and are highly valued by both local people and visitors. Many are relatively small and fragmented, although more extensive areas occur south of Beaulieu to the coast, and between the A31 and B3078 in the north west of the Park.

Traffic noise

The greatest influence by far on tranquillity throughout the National Park is the main road network. Traffic noise travels long distances across the generally open landscape and there are additional visual impacts from moving traffic and car lights. The A31 is a strategic regional route, bisecting the National Park from east to west, and has particularly wide ranging effects on large parts of the Park.

¹⁸ Tranquil Areas Study (ASH Consulting Group, 1996).

¹⁹ Campaign for the Protection of Rural England.

²⁰ Although the methodology for the 2006 mapping has been criticised for failing to highlight the influence of the A31, this is corrected when the factors that affect tranquillity adversely are shown separately. The areas of highest tranquillity then coincide almost entirely with the 1996 map.

Mitigation of the impacts of the A31 trunk road may include a variety of measures, such as road and landscape design, the creation of land-bridges and natural screening. Such large-scale environmental improvements are desirable in the future, but are only likely if part of a major road improvement scheme, which is not being considered by the Highways Agency at present. Quiet road surfacing and careful management of natural screening are more immediate possibilities. These could also be effective in reducing noise from other routes with high traffic volumes, in combination with reduced speed limits and the regulation of heavy commercial vehicles where appropriate.

Two regional airports at Southampton and Bournemouth are located close to the National Park, to the east and west respectively. Plans for the expansion of both these over the next 20 years is predicted to approximately double the number of aircraft movements in the area by 2030 (compared to 2005 figures), amounting to a combined total of approximately 146,000 flights per annum. It is likely that this will affect the tranquillity of the Park, although the scale of the impact will partly depend on future flight paths and the extent of the reduction in aircraft noise levels due to improvements in technology.

Low level aircraft training by the Ministry of Defence (mainly helicopters) takes place on an irregular basis, largely in the north of the National Park. This is currently unregulated and unpredictable and is a particular issue for commoners' stock, horse riders and those visiting the area.

Continued joint working and liaison with Bournemouth and Southampton airports is needed to influence the proposals for these facilities and where possible reduce the impacts of low level commercial aircraft and leisure flights on the Park. Further work is also needed with the MoD to find ways of regulating training flights and providing advance warning of likely disturbance.

Light pollution and dark skies

Light pollution and the loss of dark skies is a particular issue, both in the National Park and more generally across Southern England as a whole. The conurbations of Bournemouth and Southampton create a permanent night-time glow on the skyline to both the east and west of the National Park. Even in the most rural areas there has been a gradual erosion of natural darkness through the combined effects of street lighting, illuminated advertising, lighting of conservatories, floodlighting and individual security lights. Lighting can also affect conservation interests, by disrupting the natural behaviour of nocturnal species.

There are considerable opportunities to promote a reduction in lighting in general, linked to energy saving and a reduction in the carbon footprint of the area. This could involve parish councils and amenity groups in influencing their local communities, while planning controls and practical guidance can help raise awareness of the issues and ensure new lighting minimises light spillage. Working with highway authorities and surrounding local authorities on projects to encourage a reduction in urban lighting will also be essential if there are to be long-term improvements to the dark skies of the New Forest.

Visual intrusion

Although there are still areas within the National Park that are tranquil and remote, regional 'intrusion' mapping shows that disturbance (noise and visual) in the New Forest as a whole has increased dramatically since the 1960s²¹. This has been due particularly to the impacts of development adjacent to the eastern and south western boundaries of the National Park, and the increase in road traffic.

Visual impacts include the heavy industry along the Waterside, which can be seen from higher ground across much of the south eastern part of the Forest, the growing demand for telecommunications masts and the likelihood of pressure for other infrastructure within and around the National Park, which may affect its visual setting in the future.

The screening of intrusive structures and industrial areas should be improved where possible, and opportunities sought to reduce the overall numbers of pylons and overhead cables and ensure the best possible design and location of telecommunications infrastructure. Work has already been carried out to place about 10km. of overhead cables underground in parts of the National Park. The re-routing of major electricity pylons will be sought in the longer term, although due to the high costs involved this is only likely to occur when there is an essential operational need to do so.

Liaison with surrounding authorities will be needed to ensure visual impacts on the Park are taken into account in the design of any development proposals in their areas, including consideration of the additional visual, noise and light pollution that may be generated by associated infrastructure.

Objective 5

Working with partners, we will:

Maintain and enhance the tranquillity of the National Park, by:

- **conserving the most tranquil and remote areas of the National Park and reduce fragmentation of these areas where possible**
- **reducing the impacts of noise, visual intrusion and inappropriate activity on tranquillity generally**
- **improving the quality of the 'dark skies' of the National Park.**

²¹ CPRE Intrusion Maps, 1960s-2007

Priority actions for the next five years

Produce revised and updated tranquillity mapping of the National Park and an action plan to reduce fragmentation of tranquil and remote areas.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council, Forestry Commission, Verderers of the New Forest

Agree and implement priority routes for quiet road surfacing and natural screening in the National Park.

Key partners: Highways Agency, Hampshire County Council, Wiltshire Council; New Forest National Park Authority, land managers.

Agree a long-term strategy for reducing the impacts of the A31 on tranquillity and the physical severance of the Park.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, Highways Agency, Natural England, Hampshire County Council, Dorset County Council, New Forest District Council, Christchurch Borough Council, East Dorset District Council, Forestry Commission, Verderers of the New Forest.

Continue to develop joint working with the local airport authorities and improve liaison with the MoD to reduce the impacts of aircraft noise.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, Forestry Commission, Bournemouth Airport, Southampton Airport, Ministry of Defence, Christchurch Borough Council.

Develop a phased programme for under-grounding or re-routing overhead cables that have a visual impact on the landscape.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, relevant statutory undertakers

Develop projects with local authorities to reduce the impacts of current artificial lighting in areas within and surrounding the National Park.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, local authorities within and near to the National Park

06 Understanding the special qualities

Fostering greater understanding of the special qualities of the National Park will enable people to enjoy the area more fully and help increase respect and a sense of responsibility for the New Forest. Understanding underpins the good management of the area by local organisations and is essential in developing the interest of new generations and inspiring them to protect the National Park into the future.

Communicating the special qualities

A great deal of work has been undertaken to identify and agree the qualities which help define the area and create a clearly recognisable sense of place. These are summarised in the section on special qualities in the introduction to this plan. The special qualities can be used by organisations across the National Park to emphasise the importance of maintaining the distinctiveness and environmental quality of the whole area, building on the work already undertaken by New Forest District Council, the Forestry Commission and others.

People will best appreciate and respect the special qualities by witnessing and experiencing them first hand. Encouraging direct contact with the things that make the National Park unique and providing opportunities for personal learning within the Forest itself are therefore vital.

The Internet is an increasingly important source of information for both local people and prospective visitors. Strong emphasis on the special qualities and environment of the National Park will play a part in influencing the expectations and activities of those who choose the area as a holiday destination. Local visitors and residents (who make up about 44% of all visits made to the National Park)²² are, in general, less likely to seek out sources of visitor information and may already know the area well. Information therefore also needs to be incorporated in a range of materials aimed at local audiences.

Information and interpretation

There are many sources of information and interpretation about the New Forest including leaflets, books, films, websites, events, walks and talks and local folklore. These help to enrich the experience of the National Park by visitors and local people alike.

The focus has largely been on the Open Forest and main places of interest, so it will be important to ensure that information about the National Park as a whole is readily and widely accessible through a range of different outlets, including visitor information centres, campsites, local shops, accommodation providers and visitor attractions. Wherever possible information should promote a 'Caring for the Forest'²³ approach, clearly linked to the special qualities. The New Forest Centre, in Lyndhurst, acts as a central source for a wealth of more detailed information about the National Park.

²² A Survey of Recreational Visits to the New Forest National Park (Tourism South East, 2005)

²³ 'Caring for the Forest' is a simple National Park-wide code of conduct aimed at all those using or visiting the area.

A co-ordinated and consistent approach to interpretation, involving all the main partners, will help people gain more from their visit, while ensuring information is consistent and the techniques and materials used are appropriate to the National Park.

Whilst carefully designed and located on-site signage has a role, the main emphasis should be on more remote or innovative interpretation and especially on improved contact with rangers and other trained staff. There are opportunities to better co-ordinate the work of the existing ranger services and further develop a joint events programme, building on work already undertaken by the National Park Authority and the Forestry Commission. The many local tourism businesses also have an important role to play in communicating information about the National Park and its special qualities directly to visitors.

Learning outside the classroom

Learning outside the classroom is of particular importance for children and young people in the area, many of whom, through schools, colleges and the various outdoor education providers, use the National Park as a unique educational resource. The positive experiences gained in studying aspects of the Forest are, in many cases, likely to remain with young people and may lead to an interest in the environment and the wish to conserve the New Forest in later life.

83 schools are located in the National Park or within about 4km of the boundary, including those in Test Valley, Totton and the Waterside parishes, the southern coastal towns, Ringwood and Fordingbridge. The colleges at Brockenhurst and Totton offer a range of courses for students aged from 14 to 19 and provide Lifelong Learning opportunities for adults. There are also seven Children's Centres whose aim is to improve opportunities for all children up to the age of five years.

Good co-ordination now exists between the 16 outdoor education providers on the New Forest Educators' Forum. However cost is sometimes a barrier to schools and other organisations in accessing their services. Further resources and support are needed to enable a wide range of young people to learn first-hand about the Forest within the Forest itself.

Learning about the National Park extends beyond the formal education sphere to include holiday activities, youth clubs, events and on-site interpretation. To this end, there is a need for a greater focus on providing outreach and other staff to engage with and enthuse a variety of different groups about the special qualities of the area.

Data and information

Local organisations and individuals hold a great deal of unpublished technical information about the New Forest. A shared and easily accessed means of data exchange is critical to enable research and monitoring and to ensure that land management, development or new infrastructure does not have an impact on the qualities that create the character and distinctiveness of the Forest.

Objective 6

Working with partners, we will:

Achieve a shared understanding and appreciation of the special qualities of the National Park by local people, visitors and organisations, by:

- **raising awareness about the special qualities of the New Forest in a consistent and co-ordinated way**
- **promoting 'Caring for the Forest' messages, linked to the special qualities, incorporating them into a wide range of publications and other media**
- **developing sensitive and innovative forms of interpretation which add to the appreciation and enjoyment of the National Park, while minimising the need for additional signage**
- **supporting educational activities that are linked to the special qualities of the Forest for both academic purposes and enjoyment**
- **developing a co-ordinated and accessible system for holding technical information about the National Park, for use by land managers, organisations and local communities.**

Priority actions for the next five years

Publicise key messages about the special qualities of the National Park through the publications and websites of partner organisations, incorporating 'Caring for the Forest' behavioural messages.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, all major organisations with an interest in the National Park.

Develop the targeted public awareness campaigns about issues such as litter, feeding of ponies, disturbance of ground nesting birds and animal accidents.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, New Forest District Council, Forestry Commission, Hampshire County Council, RSPB, Highways Agency, Natural England, Verderers of the New Forest, Commoners Defence Association, New Forest Young Commoners.

Develop and expand high quality, innovative and partnership interpretation projects in the Forest, for example 'where to go and what to do and see' information, virtual and web-based interpretation, guided interpretation and events, and ranger-led activities.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, Forestry Commission, RSPB, New Forest District Council, Hampshire County Council, Wildlife Trusts, National Trust, Commoners Defence Association, New Forest Young Commoners.

Develop ideas for co-ordinating the ranger services within the National Park, drawing on and expanding the existing services.

Key partners: Forestry Commission, New Forest National Park Authority, National Trust, Hampshire County Council, Wildlife Trusts, National Park Ranger Forum.

Develop and promote the New Forest Centre as a primary source of information and data about the National Park.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, Ninth Centenary Trust.

Develop educational programmes and supporting resources that link the special qualities of the New Forest with school and college curricula.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, New Forest Educators Forum, Natural England.

07 Enjoying the National Park

Promoting opportunities to enjoy the special qualities of the New Forest is fundamental to the purposes of the National Park. Recreation brings many benefits to people, including improved health and well-being, and the National Park provides an easily accessible and rewarding opportunity that people from all backgrounds and abilities can enjoy.

The context for everyone should be a natural and built environment of consistently high quality, with a range of visitor services and accommodation in the villages, well-designed and maintained facilities, open space and street design that reflects the local distinctiveness of the area, and a landscape that is free from litter and fly-tipping. The adjacent towns, including Ringwood, Lymington, Fordingbridge and New Milton, also have a particular role as centres for accommodation and visitor information and in providing a greater range of services and cultural facilities.

A popular place

In the New Forest the most popular destinations for informal outdoor recreation are the open landscapes in the heart of the Forest, where the main activities are walking, dog walking, enjoying the scenery, cycling and picnicking. On the coast, sites such as Lepe Country Park and Calshot are also popular, especially during the main holiday periods. The major attractions, including the National Motor Museum, Paulton's Park, and the villages of Lyndhurst, Brockenhurst, Beaulieu and Burley, appeal to people throughout the year.

There are a number of formal recreation facilities within the National Park, some of which are located on the Open Forest, used mainly by local people. These include sports pitches (predominantly for cricket) in most parishes, nine golf courses, and facilities for specialist interests such as polo and archery. Many specific groups come to the National Park to participate in organised events, such as orienteering, scouting and guide activities, charity events and school field trips. Large indoor leisure facilities are located in the Park at Calshot and nearby in Lymington, Ringwood and Totton.

The Solent is one of the major recreational yachting locations in the UK and attracts people from all over southern England. A proportion of these are catered for within the National Park, with a number of public and private moorings on the Beaulieu River, at Keyhaven and Calshot, and purpose built marinas close to the Park at Lymington and Hythe.

Access

More than 50% of the National Park is openly accessible and there are over 300km of rights of way across the enclosed landscape. The New Forest represents a significant proportion of the total accessible natural green space available for the enjoyment of people in the south east region.

Whilst the provision for access is generally excellent, some areas, especially in the south of the National Park and along parts of the coast, are less well served by footpaths and other rights of way. In addition the major roads, such as the A36, A326 and A31, form barriers to safe access for both nearby communities and visitors within the Park. The New Forest Access Forum has contributed to the Countryside Access Plan for the New Forest and South West Hampshire which, together with the Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Wiltshire²⁴, highlights access issues in more detail.

There are important opportunities to improve access into and within the National Park, with particular emphasis on non-car transport and the health benefits this can bring. Initiatives could include developing safe crossing points on main roads, giving greater priority to non-car users and promoting walks and activities for health and well-being.

A more joined up network of the existing routes, integrated where possible with public transport, would enhance the sustainable enjoyment of the Park and provide an alternative means of access from adjacent areas. A coastal access path is currently being discussed as part of a national government initiative. The location and design of all routes will need to be carefully considered, as noted under 'managing impacts' below.

Inclusiveness

Although recent survey work²⁵ appears to indicate a high level of visitor satisfaction, further clarification is needed from a wider spectrum of groups and individuals, including those who may currently feel excluded from enjoying the National Park. Workshops involving young people have shown that they find the Park difficult to access and feel there are few facilities and activities designed specifically for their needs. Other groups with particular requirements, such as people with disabilities, those from different cultural backgrounds or those living in surrounding communities, may lack knowledge or feel unsure about visiting the New Forest for various reasons.

Basic practical information, and in some cases specific outreach work, may be helpful for those who are interested in the National Park, but may not be fully aware of the opportunities available to them.

Managing impacts

One of the greatest challenges for the National Park is to enable people to continue to enjoy the Forest in different ways, while ensuring this does not affect the enjoyment or work of others and maintains those very qualities that attract people to the area.

²⁴ These plans have been produced by Hampshire County Council and Wiltshire County Council respectively.

²⁵ A Survey of Recreational Visits to the New Forest National Park (Tourism South East, 2005) noted that 79% of staying and day visitors were satisfied with their visit.

Since the 1950s the increasing numbers of people attracted to the Forest, combined with a growing recognition of its nature conservation and landscape value, has led to various measures to reduce pressure on the most sensitive areas in the heart of the National Park.

Perhaps most important was the creation of the present system of car parks and campsites on the Crown Lands, introduced in the 1960s and 1970s to avoid unrestricted access by vehicles onto the Open Forest. Most now recognise this to have been a positive step in managing recreation for the overall benefit of the Forest.

The National Park currently receives an estimated 13.5 million visitor days each year²⁶ and preliminary work suggests that this could increase by about 12% (or an additional 1.6 million visits each year) by 2026²⁷, as a result of major development proposals for the surrounding areas. A Recreation Management Strategy for the National Park is being produced to help ensure the National Park can be enjoyed by local people and visitors while minimising any potential adverse impacts. It should be referred to for more detail on the issues, opportunities and management of recreation.

The impacts of recreation are difficult to evaluate and further research is needed to clarify more precisely both the beneficial and negative effects of current and future recreational use of the area. However, an essential part of managing recreation will be to develop closer relationships with the different user groups and improve direct contact with members of the public through the various ranger services. This will help to establish a shared understanding of the issues and the needs of users, guide work on Park-wide codes of conduct and good practice guidelines, and raise awareness amongst visitors about the special qualities and environmental importance of the New Forest.

Careful consideration should be given to the location and design of any new recreational facilities, ensuring these do not have an adverse impact on the special qualities of the New Forest, including designated national and international sites, protected species and the most tranquil and remote areas. The approach should be to improve the quality of experience of those already visiting the area, while not increasing overall visitor pressure.

The National Park Authority will work closely with the nearby authorities that are producing green infrastructure strategies. The aim will be to provide or improve countryside areas for recreation close to new development and agree other strategic and practical measures to mitigate the impacts of recreational pressure on the National Park (see also the section 'Enhancing landscapes and habitats').

²⁶ A Survey of Recreational Visits to the New Forest National Park (Tourism South East, 2005)

²⁷ Changing Patterns of Visitor Numbers within the New Forest National Park, with particular reference to the New Forest SPA (Footprint Ecology, 2008)

Objective 7

Working with partners, we will:

Enhance people's enjoyment and quality of experience of the National Park, while safeguarding the special qualities of the area by:

- **improving understanding of the current and likely future recreational demand, and the impacts of recreation on the National Park's special qualities**
- **raising awareness about the sensitive environment and the working nature of the New Forest through direct contact with the public and working closely with user groups**
- **providing opportunities for safer access, including a more joined-up network of routes into and within the National Park**
- **ensuring new recreational facilities are designed and located to avoid impacts on the special qualities of the area, including the designated nature conservation sites and the most tranquil areas**
- **enabling the involvement of under-represented groups who feel the National Park provides few opportunities for them, or who feel excluded due to cost, lack of transport or other barriers**
- **encouraging a high standard of services and facilities for visitors within the National Park**
- **maintaining a clean and litter-free National Park.**

Priority actions for the next five years

Agree and implement a Recreation Management Strategy for the National Park.
Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, New Forest Access Forum, Forestry Commission, user groups, parish and town councils, Natural England, National Trust, Hampshire County Council, Verderers of the New Forest, Wildlife Trusts, RSPB.

The Recreation Management Strategy will contain a more comprehensive list of actions.

Take forward the implementation of the New Forest and South West Hampshire Countryside Access Plan and the Wiltshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan, including identifying a network of connected routes.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, Hampshire County Council, Wiltshire Council, Forestry Commission, Verderers of the New Forest, New Forest Access Forum, Natural England.

Develop a programme of outreach work with young people and other under-represented groups to clarify their interests and needs and develop specific projects to help make the Park more relevant to them.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, Forestry Commission, New Forest District Council, New Forest Educators Forum, Natural England, Wildlife Trusts, youth groups and schools.

Develop promotional and practical initiatives linking recreation and health.

Key partners: Forestry Commission, New Forest National Park Authority, Natural England, Primary Care Trusts, health centres and surgeries.

Agree the priorities for further research on recreational use and impacts.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, Forestry Commission, Natural England.

Build on existing campaigns and practical initiatives to reduce litter and fly tipping.

Key partners: Forestry Commission, New Forest District Council, New Forest National Park Authority, local communities, Environment Agency.

08 Supporting local communities

The majority of the population within the National Park live in dispersed and small rural communities. Most have limited services within the village and residents depend heavily on car use to access shops, schools, healthcare and other facilities. About one third of residents live in the four main villages of Brockenhurst, Lyndhurst, Sway and Ashurst. These villages, together with the adjacent towns of Ringwood, Lymington and Fordingbridge, have a long tradition as local centres of cultural and economic life in the New Forest. They each have a distinctive character and provide a range of services, social activities and cultural events essential for residents, visitors and the surrounding rural communities.

Community services and facilities

Community facilities and key services are essential in providing a focus for community life and sustaining the New Forest villages. The smaller settlements are particularly at risk of losing or suffering from reduced services, although most still have a pub and village hall. The greatest concerns (from the Future Matters consultation²⁸) are:

- (a) the general decline in village shops and post offices, which act as a hub for social life
- (b) the loss of local hospitals
- (c) the lack of a local policing
- (d) the lack of practical public and community transport services.

Many parishes are also concerned about the cost of maintaining existing facilities, such as village halls, and ensuring they are suitable for a wider range of uses. Funding is required for upgrading, energy saving and improved amenities.

The National Park Authority, while not the primary authority concerned with community facilities and services, will work closely with other partners, particularly the local authorities, Community First and Local Strategic Partnerships (which include the police, healthcare trusts and highways authorities). The aim will be to retain and improve existing services where possible, through promotion, support for the community and voluntary sector, appropriate planning policies, direct funding and influencing wider regional and national policies affecting the provision of services.

Local organisations, including Hampshire County Council, the National Park Authority and others, are already involved in helping communities with practical enterprises, such as community-based shops, improvements to village halls, farmers markets, outlets for local produce and business advice. It will be important to form closer links with the community and voluntary sector working at the local level, and to help villages with other initiatives that promote existing services or provide new facilities where needed.

²⁸ Future Matters was a public consultation on key issues for the area undertaken in 2006 by New Forest District Council, the National Park Authority and the New Forest District Local Strategic Partnership.

Affordable housing

Affordable housing for people with a strong local connection is a particular issue, especially affecting younger people who wish to remain involved in local employment. The gap between house prices and local earnings has widened considerably over the last 10 years and the average detached house in New Forest District now costs about £330,000 (May 2009 figures). Although there is currently some slow down in the market, house prices are still well beyond the reach of the majority of local residents, and renting or shared ownership are the only affordable options for many people.

Affordable housing comes forward either as part of mixed open market and affordable housing schemes in the larger villages, or as 'affordable only' exceptions sites in rural areas, where housing development would not normally be permitted. In addition a number of major land managers, including some of the private estates, retain houses for those employed locally and in some cases have worked proactively to provide new housing for commoners. A commoners dwelling scheme helps practising commoners to build suitable holdings on exceptions sites, and ensures these properties remain tied to commoning use in the future.

The success of schemes, particularly on exceptions sites, depends on the joint working of number of parties, including the housing authorities (New Forest District Council, Wiltshire Council and Test Valley Borough Council), planning authority (National Park Authority), housing associations, landowners and parish or town councils. The rural housing enablers in Wiltshire and Hampshire have an important role in facilitating this liaison process, while HARAH (the Hampshire Alliance for Rural Affordable Housing) works at a more strategic level in to make housing delivery more effective across that county.

Greater priority should be given to ensuring that more high quality small-scale affordable housing schemes for local people are delivered in future, within the overall National Park housing requirement of about 220 new houses by 2026. There are also further opportunities to work with landowners to provide affordable private rented accommodation for local people.

Local culture and community involvement

The make up of communities of the New Forest has changed rapidly in response to a combination of social and economic trends. There is less focus on the traditional rural way of life and many residents do not have direct connections with the local area. It is important that the wealth of local knowledge, skills and traditions currently held by local people, and which contribute in large part to local culture and distinctiveness, can be recorded and transferred to future generations and new residents. A number of parishes, voluntary organisations and individuals have already undertaken such projects, with funding help from the Heritage Lottery and National Park Authority, including a 'Living Register' of language and traditions.

Despite demographic changes local communities do still have a strong sense of local identity, and are keenly protective of the special character of their own area and of the New Forest as a whole. The parish plan process and village design statements have been important in bringing communities together, getting people involved in decision-making and producing local actions plans.

New Forest District Council has helped to facilitate the production of parish and town plans within the District, including most of the National Park, and has been working with other key organisations to establish mechanisms that will help implement the plans effectively. Village Design Statements are being pursued by some parishes in liaison with the National Park Authority. Further encouragement should be given to events and initiatives that strengthen local culture, help improve local quality of life, enhance the village environment and may give rise to the traditions of the future.

Accessing money for community projects is often complex, with a plethora of changing funding sources. Hampshire County Council, the National Park Authority, New Forest District Council, Wiltshire Council and Community First, New Forest provide funding and advice, while many local organisations can offer technical help to communities in taking projects forward. It will be important to continue to provide this support, improve liaison with local communities and ensure the relevant organisations are brought together to implement community projects.

Objective 8

Working with partners, we will:

Strengthen the well-being, identity and sustainability of rural communities and the pride of local people in their area, by:

- **maintaining and improving the range of community facilities and services that provide for the needs of local people and contribute to the vitality of village life**
- **providing more affordable housing for local people with housing needs and addressing the particular housing requirements of commoners**
- **supporting communities in developing proposals for their area and undertaking practical projects to improve the quality of village life and the local environment**
- **encouraging local communities to record, celebrate and promote interest in their local culture, traditions and heritage.**

Priority actions for the next five years

Work with land owners and land managers to encourage more affordable private rented accommodation for local people, including commoners and others involved in the local rural economy.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, Forestry Commission, National Trust, private land managers, New Forest District Council, Wiltshire Council, Test Valley Borough Council, Community Action Hampshire, HARAHA (Hampshire Alliance for Rural Affordable Housing).

Provide continued support and advice for the parish plan process, and develop a system for the efficient implementation of action plans.

Key partners: New Forest District Council, Test Valley Borough Council, Wiltshire Council, Hampshire County Council, New Forest National Park Authority, parish plan steering groups, parish and town councils.

Review the planning criteria used to identify suitable exceptions sites for affordable housing, and the delivery mechanism for such schemes, to help increase the number of schemes implemented.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, New Forest District Council, Test Valley Borough Council, Wiltshire Council, HARAHA, housing associations, rural housing enablers.

Improve direct liaison with communities and with local community/voluntary sector groups, including supporting specific local projects relevant to the purposes and duty of the National Park.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, parish and town councils, parish plan steering groups.

Champion the particular needs of local rural communities amongst regional and national decision makers concerned with providing services.

Key partners: Local Strategic Partnerships, New Forest District Council, Test Valley Borough Council, Wiltshire Council, Hampshire County Council, New Forest National Park Authority, parish and town councils.

09 Fostering economic well-being

A healthy local economy is essential in maintaining the life and vibrancy of the National Park, providing local employment and sustaining its rural communities. Flexibility is needed to respond to changes in the wider economy and the advent of new technologies, while not compromising the special qualities and essentially rural character of the area. There is the opportunity to develop a more robust and sustainable economy by promoting its local distinctiveness, strongly supporting the use of New Forest goods and services and developing premium products for the wider economy.

Local employment

Employment within the area²⁹ has been consistently higher than the average for South East England in recent years. Many residents commute to jobs in Southampton, Bournemouth and the towns adjacent to the National Park, and while this is likely to continue there are also opportunities to support more locally based high-value businesses. These include encouraging home working, providing smarter working centres³⁰, improving broad-band access and supplying advice and funding help, particularly for new businesses.

The main villages provide a range of services and employment for local people. It will be important to work with the local community and business interests to maintain a broad economic base, while ensuring that any new development is appropriate in scale and respects the particular character and needs of the different villages. High quality design and careful location will be a priority.

Support should be given to retaining existing employment uses and businesses that provide local services (such as shops and pubs) in villages throughout the National Park. New local businesses that add to the diversity of village life and enable the more rural communities to remain sustainable should also be encouraged, promoting home-working and the conversion and extension of existing buildings where appropriate.

It will be important to ensure that business development does not harm the special qualities of the National Park, and particular encouragement should be given to businesses with a low environmental impact or that are able to use more sustainable technologies and practices. Grant aid for sustainability projects is available from the National Park's Sustainable Development Fund and RDPE (LEADER)³¹ funding for the Park and wider area.

The tourism industry

The tourism industry makes a major contribution to the local economy, comprising about 600 businesses in New Forest District, many of which are based in, or benefit from, the National Park.

²⁹ Figures relate to New Forest District, which includes the majority of the National Park.

³⁰ Drop-in centres with the latest technology for use by local businesses.

³¹ The Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) is a national funding scheme, which incorporates European LEADER funding for local project areas, including the New Forest.

A great deal of work has been undertaken to promote sustainable tourism in the New Forest, bringing together the interests of visitors, the tourism industry, local communities and the environment. The approach has been to encourage higher value tourism and a greater visitor contribution to the local economy and the management of the National Park. It will also be important to ensure the New Forest remains a competitive holiday destination.

There is still a need to raise the profile of tourism businesses as examples of good environmental practice and be bolder in developing the image of the National Park as a 'green tourism' destination focusing on the special qualities of the area. Community tourism initiatives can help to involve local people in developing tourism opportunities appropriate to their particular area.

Land-based businesses

The land-based economy and traditional rural businesses still provide many local jobs and are of primary importance in maintaining the special character and cultural identity of the National Park. Specific issues and policies for land management and land-based businesses are discussed under the section 'Encouraging sustainable land management'.

Many existing producers and entirely new businesses related to the rural economy have benefited from the growing importance of the local produce market, and there is increasing recognition of the New Forest Marque as a local brand. Long-term commitment and support will be needed to establish the local produce, small rural industries and rural skills sector as a viable and continuing part of the local economy – including providing training opportunities, enabling planning policies, funding help for new businesses and on-going support for the marketing and promotion of existing businesses.

The regional context

Within the context of the surrounding sub-region, the National Park is very close to the major economic growth areas of Southampton and Bournemouth, while the larger towns adjacent to the Park, such as Ringwood and Lymington, will continue to provide local job opportunities and services. The working population within the New Forest area is lower than the average for Hampshire as a whole and is predicted to decline further over the next few decades.³²

Bearing these factors in mind, and given the protected status of the National Park, the relatively modest levels of new development within the Park in recent years is likely to continue. There are, however, sufficient business opportunities to maintain a flourishing and locally relevant economy that supports the communities of the area, and uses to advantage the strong image and recognised environmental quality of the New Forest in contributing to both the local and wider economy.

³² 'Long term population and housing projections' (Hampshire County Council, 2006).

Objective 9

Working with partners, we will:

Develop a diverse and sustainable economy that contributes to the well-being of local communities, by:

- **providing the conditions to encourage a wide variety of business opportunities and employment for local people throughout the National Park, where these do not compromise the special qualities of area**
- **giving particular encouragement to businesses that help to supply services for rural communities, promote local distinctiveness, maintain the land-based economy or contribute and use local produce or products**
- **supporting businesses to develop ways of reducing their environmental impact using sustainable technologies and practices**
- **supporting training and co-ordinated business advice relevant to the area**
- **strengthening the New Forest's role at the forefront of sustainable tourism**
- **developing stronger links with the business community and partnerships.**

Priority actions for the next five years

Produce an overall economic strategy for New Forest District, including the National Park.

Key partners: New Forest District Council, New Forest National Park Authority, New Forest Business Partnership, Federation of Small Businesses, Hampshire County Council, New Forest Tourism Association.

Promote a 'first stop' service providing local business advice and funding information, involving the range of existing advice services.

Key partners: New Forest District Council, Business Link, New Forest National Park Authority, New Forest Business Partnership, Federation of Small Businesses, New Forest Tourism Association, Hampshire County Council.

Provide funding, advice and enabling planning policies to encourage local producers, including those involved in the New Forest Marque, focusing on promotion and marketing, joint processing, distribution and outlets.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, New Forest Produce Ltd., New Forest District Council, New Forest Producers Markets, Business Link.

Seek continued government support for the Sustainable Development Fund to provide grants enabling greater sustainability among local businesses and organisations.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority.

Develop ways for the tourism industry to contribute to land management in the New Forest.

Key partners: New Forest Tourism Association, New Forest Trust, Forestry Commission, New Forest District Council, New Forest National Park Authority.

Develop a suite of incentives to encourage businesses to become more sustainable (such as efficient use of resources, environmental audits and sustainable business awards).

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, New Forest District Council, New Forest Business Partnership, Federation of Small Businesses, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Sustainable Business Partnership, New Forest Tourism Association.

Produce an updated sustainable tourism strategy for the New Forest.

Key partners: New Forest District Council, New Forest Tourism Association, New Forest National Park Authority, Wiltshire Council, Test Valley Borough Council.

Provide improved standards and access to broad-band services across the area.

Key partners: eHampshire Partnership (comprising local authorities, business interests, broad-band providers).

10 Improving traffic and transport

The National Park has a comprehensive road network, essential to allow people to go about their daily business. In the more rural areas the use of private vehicles is the only practical method of transport for residents and this is likely to remain the case for the foreseeable future.

The impacts of traffic

Despite the need for an effective and well maintained road system, traffic within the Forest is a major issue for many residents and visitors. This can affect the quality of life of local communities, the quiet enjoyment of the National Park, the welfare of stock and the integrity of the Forest's landscape and habitats. It is also a local contributor to climate change. Matters of particular concern include: the levels of traffic generally, congestion in a number of the larger villages, failure to observe speed limits, the numbers of animal accidents and Heavy Commercial Vehicle (HCV) use of minor roads.

Various measures have been introduced to limit traffic impacts within the New Forest, including HCV weight restrictions across large parts of the area, a 40mph zone on unfenced roads, reduced speed limits in villages and proposals to reduce congestion in Lyndhurst. Work is also on-going to influence the routes taken by freight traffic and tourism coach operators. A partnership of all the relevant local organisations has been involved in campaigns to raise awareness about dangers to commoner stock. While this has led to a recent reduction in the number of accidents involving animals, the levels still remain unacceptably high.

The rate of traffic growth and levels of congestion have continued to grow over the last decade both locally and nationally. The government predict that traffic volumes will increase by a further 31% by 2025³³, together with a 28% increase in congestion. In addition the proposed development of 110,000 new dwellings in South Hampshire and South East Dorset by 2026 will result in further demands on the local road network.

A wide range of tools, and a flexible approach, will be needed to tackle traffic impacts now and in the future, and to encourage all those driving in the Forest to do so with respect for other users, commoners stock and wildlife. The National Park Authority will work with the highway authorities and Highways Agency, focusing on public education and information, as well as supporting the use of various tried and tested traffic and demand management measures (such as speed and weight restrictions, road narrowing and traffic routing) where required and looking at the possibility of changes to road classification.

³³ In terms of distances travelled, compared to 2003 figures.

Carefully designed signage and infrastructure, natural road edge design and verge maintenance and avoidance of lighting (except where needed for safety) can all help to reinforce the special nature of the National Park. Any other major initiatives proposed in the future should be examined carefully, with the involvement of local communities, to ensure there are clear benefits for quality of life and the environment of the New Forest.

Sustainable transport

Improved, practical and better integrated means of sustainable transport are needed to help cater for those without access to a car and to replace at least a proportion of car journeys. The railway network, although limited, is well-used, and there is a frequent scheduled bus service on some of the main through-routes across the Forest. However many rural communities have little or no access to public transport alternatives and there is very limited funding for new initiatives.

The solution may lie in greater support for local community transport projects serving specific communities and an innovative approach to small-scale public transport linking the main villages, surrounding towns and visitor attractions (suitable for both local people and visitors). Travel Plans for schools, workplaces and visitor attractions will also help to reduce private car use and should be further encouraged.

The New Forest Tour (an open top bus) has proved popular amongst visitors during the summer, linking Lyndhurst, Brockenhurst, Lymington and Beaulieu. There may be scope to expand the current service, along with measures to make the existing public transport system more appealing to visitors.

The network of public rights of way and cycle routes varies across the National Park. Some areas are well-served, but there are gaps in the footpath system, particularly in southern parts of the National Park and along some sections of the coast. The New Forest District: Proposed Strategic Cycle Routes was produced in 2005, indicating the existing strategic network and where gaps could be joined up to form a more comprehensive cycling network. Several schemes have been implemented to date, including the Ashurst to Lyndhurst cycle route, reinstatement to bridges at Longslade Bottom and rights of way improvements across Keyhaven Marshes.

There are further possibilities for improving path and cycle links within and between villages or to areas of local employment, and over time to produce a more joined up network of routes into and around the Forest (see also the section on 'Enjoying the National Park').

The New Forest Transport Strategy (2003) sets out a series of objectives and targets for transport in the area, and forms the basis for the New Forest section of the Hampshire County Council Local Transport Plan 2006-2011. The policy approach below aims to reflect and build on these objectives.

Objective 10

Working with partners, we will:

Reduce the impacts of traffic on the special qualities of the National Park and provide a range of sustainable transport alternatives within the Park, by:

- **ensuring regional and national transport policies minimise impacts on the National Park and, where possible, achieve benefits for the area**
- **reducing the number of animal accidents on roads within the National Park**
- **creating a distinctive and different experience when travelling within the National Park which clearly indicates its special and protected status**
- **reducing the impacts of road traffic on the quality of life of local communities and the environmental quality of the National Park**
- **developing an integrated network of public and community transport, footpaths and cycle routes designed to meet the needs of both residents and visitors.**

Priority actions for the next five years

Manage vehicle speed on unfenced roads, maintain stock fencing on main roads and build on existing awareness-raising campaigns to reduce animal accidents.

Key partners: Verderers of the New Forest, New Forest National Park Authority, Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council, Commoners Defence Association, Young Commoners Group, Hampshire Constabulary, Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service, Forestry Commission.

Review the effectiveness of freight routing strategies and weight restrictions and agree action where necessary to further reduce the impacts of heavy commercial vehicles on these routes.

Key partners: Hampshire County Council, Wiltshire County Council, Highways Agency, New Forest District Council, New Forest National Park Authority, Dorset County Council, Hampshire Constabulary.

Carry out research to clarify the traffic implications for the National Park of major development planned for South Hampshire and South East Dorset.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, Wiltshire Council, Hampshire County Council, Dorset County Council.

Provide on-going support for the New Forest Tour and develop options for improving access by recreational bus services to other parts of the National Park.

Key partners: New Forest National Park Authority, New Forest District Council, New Forest Tourism Association, bus operators, Hampshire County Council, Wiltshire Council.

Develop and promote a more integrated sustainable transport network, including walking and cycling.

Key partners: Hampshire County Council, Wiltshire Council, New Forest National Park Authority, bus and rail operators, New Forest District Council, Dorset County Council, Natural England, New Forest Access Forum.

Implement measures to reduce the traffic pollution levels in the Lyndhurst Air Quality Management Area.

Key partners: New Forest District Council, Hampshire County Council, New Forest National Park Authority.

Chapter 5 Monitoring and Review

The Management Plan includes more than 60 priority actions to be taken forward over the next five years as a core part of its implementation. In discussion with the organisations involved, these will be incorporated into a more detailed on-going action plan with details of lead organisations and main partners. The action plan will be updated regularly on the National Park Authority website.

A State of the Park report will be produced describing the overall condition of the National Park, with measurable indicators and targets relating to the objectives in the Management Plan. These will need to be developed with local organisations and practical means agreed for gathering baseline information and regularly monitoring the indicators. Over time the indicators will give a broad picture of changes in the condition of the special qualities of the Forest and show if the objectives and actions are being effective. The State of the Park report will be publicly available and reviewed every five years.

The State of the Park report will help to inform the review of the Management Plan by showing progress made and therefore indicating any changes needed to the objectives. The Management Plan as a whole will be reviewed every five years, involving wide public consultation.

Appendix 1 Glossary of terms

Adjacent commons

Commons in a variety of ownerships outside the Crown Lands, but included within the Perambulation by the New Forest Act, 1964.

Affordable Housing

Housing that is available for people with a local connection who cannot afford to rent or buy houses generally available on the open market. It encompasses social rented housing; shared ownership and other subsidised schemes, and may be provided by housing associations, local councils or private landowners.

Ancient and Ornamental (A&O) Woodlands

A local term applied to pasture woodlands within the Crown Lands that are grazed by deer and commoners stock. They are ancient in origin (they have been woodlands continuously since 1600, and probably much earlier) and are of very high nature conservation and cultural heritage value.

Ancient Woodland

A general term used for woodlands which have had a continuous history since at least 1600, and probably much earlier. They are of very high nature conservation and cultural heritage value.

Back-up grazing / back-up land

Enclosed pasture land which forms an integral part of the commoning economy. Generally it is located close to a commoner's holding. Its uses include overwintering of stock, raising store cattle, making hay or silage, tending sick animals and young stock, finishing ponies for riding, and preparing stock for market.

Commons

Defined areas of land which are subject to rights of common. The present Perambulation of the New Forest (New Forest Act, 1964) includes both common land owned by the Crown and public bodies and privately owned commons and manorial wastes. There are also a few registered commons outside the Perambulation (such as Whiteparish and Pennington Commons).

Commoners of the New Forest

Those people eligible to use rights of common. In the New Forest this is based on the occupation of specific land to which common rights are attached. Practising commoners are those who exercise their rights and pay marking fees to the Verderers.

Common rights

The New Forest Atlas of Common Rights was prepared under the 1949 New Forest Act, using the register of New Forest Claims published in 1858. The 1964 New Forest Act extended the Perambulation to include the adjacent commons. A further Atlas of Rights was prepared defining land to which rights are attached in added areas. There are six different rights of common in the New Forest. Common of pasture (the right to turn out ponies, horses, cattle and donkeys) and common of mast (the right to turn out pigs in the pannage season in autumn to feed on acorns and beech nuts) are the most used today.

Conservation Areas

Conservation Areas are established under Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which imposes a duty on local planning authorities to designate as conservation areas, any "areas of architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve".

Crown Lands

The land owned by the Crown vested in the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Crown Land in the New Forest is managed on behalf of the Secretary of State by Forest Enterprise (part of the Forestry Commission), overseen locally by the Deputy Surveyor.

Depastured stock

Commoners' stock which are turned out to graze on the Open Forest.

Enclosed land

Fenced land from which the commoners' stock are excluded, both in Crown and private ownership. The enclosed lands includes the landed estates and other agricultural land surrounding, and within, the Open Forest.

Forest lawns

Grassland which is enriched by nutrients, either due to flooding from streams, woodland debris or grazing animals. The lawns are important for the grazing of stock and frequently have a rich and distinctive flora.

Improved grassland

Grassland which has been agriculturally improved by re-seeding or the addition of fertilisers and herbicides. It provides richer grazing land, but usually lacks a diversity of wildflowers and other wildlife.

Inclosure woodland

Those areas of the Crown Land fenced to exclude commoners' stock, for the purposes of growing timber.

Interpretation

Interpretation includes the full range of activities that help to raise public awareness and enhance understanding of cultural and natural heritage sites. This may involve publications, public events, on-site and directly related off-site installations, educational programmes and community activities.

Listed building

A building recognised to be of national historic importance, designated and protected under Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990.

Open Forest

The unenclosed Crown Lands and adjacent commons which are subject to common rights.

Perambulation

The historic term for the boundary of the area governed by Forest law. It is now the area within the cattle grids over which commoners' stock are able to roam freely. It is defined in the New Forest Act 1964 and encompasses Crown Land, adjacent commons and certain areas of road verge and unenclosed land outside the Open Forest.

Ramsar site

A wetland of international importance, especially for wildfowl, designated under the Ramsar Convention on Wetland of International Importance.

Scheduled Ancient Monument

A designated archaeological site, building or structure of national importance that is protected from destruction or change under the provisions of the 1979 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act.

Semi-natural habitats

Habitats such as ancient woodland, heathland and meadows, which are rich in wildlife and appear 'natural', but have been created to a greater or lesser extent by the influence of long-term human management. This applies to virtually all habitats in the UK.

Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)

Non-statutory sites of local importance for nature conservation, identified by county councils and wildlife trusts and given some level of protection by local planning policies. This term is used in Hampshire; the equivalent sites in Wiltshire are County Wildlife Sites

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Nationally important sites for nature conservation designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

South Hampshire sub-region

The urban areas encompassing the Waterside, southern Test Valley, Southampton, Eastleigh and other settlements west to Portsmouth, represented by the PUSH authorities (Partnership for Urban South Hampshire).

Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

Areas designated under the EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (The Habitats Directive) 1992 as being of European importance for habitats and species. The largest is the New Forest SAC, covering 29,000 hectares in the core of the Forest.

Special Protection Area (SPA)

Areas of European importance for birds, designated under the EC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds 1979 (the Wild Birds Directive).

Unimproved Grassland

Grassland which has not been agriculturally improved by re-seeding or the addition of fertilisers or herbicides. It is usually rich in wildflowers and other species of wildlife.

Appendix 2 List of organisations that have contributed to the Management Plan or are involved in work relevant to the Plan's objectives

Ashurst and Colbury Parish Council

Beaulieu Estate and Beaulieu Enterprises Ltd

Beaulieu Parish Council

Borough of Poole Council

Bournemouth Airport

Bournemouth Borough Council

Bramshaw Parish Council

Bransgore Parish Council

Breamore Parish Council

British Driving Society

British Horse Society

Brockenhurst College

Brockenhurst Parish Council

Burley Parish Council

Business Link

Campaign for National Parks

Campaign to Protect Rural England

Camping and Caravanning Club

Caravan Club

Christchurch Borough Council

Community Action Hampshire

Community First, New Forest

Copythorne Parish Council

Country Land & Business Association

Countryside Education Trust

Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Denny Lodge Parish Council

Dorset County Council

eHampshire Partnership

East Boldre Parish Council
East Dorset District Council
Ellingham, Harbridge & Ibsley Parish Council
English Heritage
Environment Agency
Exbury & Lepe Parish Council
Fawley Parish Council
Federation of Small Businesses
Fordingbridge Society
Fordingbridge Town Council
Forest Uprising Group
Forestry Commission
Fortune Centre of Riding Therapy
Friends of Brockenhurst
Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust
Godshill Parish Council
Government Office for the South East
Hale Parish Council
Hampshire Alliance for Rural Affordable Housing
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Sustainable Business Partnership
Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust
Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre
Hampshire Constabulary
Hampshire Council for Voluntary Youth Services
Hampshire County Council
Hampshire County Federation of Women's Institutes
Hampshire Field Club and Archaeological Society
Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service
Hampshire Local Area Agreement Partnership
Hampshire Ornithological Society
Highways Agency
Hordle Parish Council

Hyde Parish Council
Hythe and Dibden Parish Council
Institute of Chartered Foresters
Landford Parish Council
Local individuals and experts
Local Members of Parliament
Local political parties
Lymington & Pennington Town Council
Lymington Society
Lyndhurst Chamber of Trade
Lyndhurst Parish Council
Marchwood Parish Council
Melchet Park and Plaitford Parish Council
Milford-on-Sea Parish Council
Ministry Of Defence
Minstead Parish Council
National Farmers Union
National Grid
National Trust
Natural England
Netley Marsh Parish Council
Newforce
New Forest Consultative Panel
New Forest Access for All
New Forest Access Forum
New Forest Association
New Forest Association of Local Councils
New Forest Business Partnership
New Forest Centre
New Forest Commoners Defence Association
New Forest District Council
New Forest District Local Strategic Partnership

New Forest Dog Owners Group
New Forest Educators Forum
New Forest Equestrian Association
New Forest Equine Forum
New Forest Friends of the Earth
New Forest Local Action Group
New Forest Hunts Branch of the Pony Club
New Forest Mountain Bike Club
New Forest Pony Breeding & Cattle Society
New Forest Produce Ltd.
New Forest Producers Markets
New Forest Tourism Association
New Forest Transition
New Forest Trust
New Forest Young Commoners
New Milton Town Council
Ninth Centenary Trust
One Voice
Open Forest Advisory Committee
Open Spaces Society
Parish and town plan steering groups
Partnership for Urban South Hampshire
Primary Care Trusts
Private landowners and land managers
Ramblers Association
Redlynch Parish Council
Ringwood & Fordingbridge Footpath Society
Ringwood and District Natural History Society
Ringwood Town Council
Romsey Extra Parish Council
Royal Forestry Society
RSPB

RSPCA
Solent Forum
Solent Protection Society
Sopley Parish Council
South East England Development Agency
South East Regional Assembly
South West Regional Assembly
Southampton Airport
Southampton City Council
Southern Water
Southern Wiltshire Area Board
Sway Parish Council
Test Valley Borough Council
Test Valley Local Strategic Partnership
Totton and Eling Town Council
Verderers of the New Forest
Wellow Parish Council
Wessex Water
Whiteparish District Council
Wiltshire County Council
Wiltshire Local Strategic Partnership
Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
Woodgreen Parish Council
Woodland Trust



Please contact the Policy and Plans Team at (nationalparkplan@newforestnpa.gov.uk or 01590 646600) if you would like a copy of this document in large print, Braille or any alternative language or format.