

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY (NPA) - RECREATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY TOWARDS A SPATIAL VISION

1. RECOMMENDATION

That members:

- Note the findings from the 2018 Future Forest consultation on Recreational Management.
- Endorse the Strategic Actions that have been compiled by the RMS Steering Group.
- Note the intention of New Forest National Park to undertake further investigation into the feasibility of a Local Development Order.

2. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of the report is to inform members of the findings from the 2018 Future Forest consultation on recreation management and the Strategic Actions that have been compiled by the Recreational Management Strategy Steering group and to seek endorsement of the Strategic Actions. The report further informs members of the intention of the National Park Authority to investigate the feasibility of a Local Development Order to manage the location of future car parks. This matter was considered by the National Park Authority at the Authority meeting of the 11 July 2019. A copy of the report that was considered is appended to this report as **Appendix 1**. The recommendations set out in the report were agreed.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The New Forest is one of the most visited National Parks in England and has the highest proportion of designated land of international value for nature conservation in the country. With further housing growth planned close to the National Park, by both this Council and Test Valley a new and updated suite of focused actions is needed for the New Forest National Park Recreation Management Strategy 2010-2030. Across the National Park and beyond the aim is to achieve a net gain for the working and natural landscape and for the recreational experience, by:
- protecting the spectacular, yet fragile, wildlife-rich landscape that people come to see;
 - managing recreation for local people and our visitors.
- 3.2 Following an initial 'call for views' consultation in 2017, 25 draft proposed recreation management actions were put out for public consultation.
- 3.3 Both of the consultations were joint consultations on behalf of the Forestry Commission, the Verderers, Natural England, New Forest District Council, Hampshire County Council and the National Park Authority (NPA) all of whom have a remit for managing recreation in the National Park and are represented on the Recreation Management Strategy (RMS) Steering Group.

3.4 The results of the second consultation are summarised and are now attached in full at **Annex 1**.

4. PROPOSED RECREATION MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

4.1 The 2018 draft actions have now been fully reviewed and updated by the RMS Steering Group in light of the public consultation and to provide greater clarity about what the actions will mean in practice. This includes updating the section on where recreation facilities should be provided to reflect the proposal that the New Forest National Park Authority has to use a Local Development Order to help define and manage the spatial aspect of managing recreation through the location of car parks across the Forest.

4.2 These new actions, together with the explanations of 'what will be done' are attached as **Annex 2**.

4.3 Each of the organisations on the RMS Steering Group has been asked to endorse these actions.

4.4 The most significant strategic actions are also likely to feature in the update to the Partnership Plan which is now being reviewed. These might include, for example:

- Managing the distribution and type of recreation facilities to protect the Forest, improve people's enjoyment and use resources effectively (4.2)
- Developing a coordinated approach among planning authorities in and around the New Forest to mitigate the impacts of new housing on protected areas – and use developer contributions to support work that protects the Forest (5.2).

4.5 Members will be aware that following a successful bid for Government funding, six local planning authorities (including NFDC) have commissioned a significant piece of research by Footprint Ecology; to gather evidence regarding recreational disturbance arising from planned new development and how this should be mitigated. This data is being collected through a combination of activities including face-to-face questionnaire, telephone interviews and on-site surveys (including car park monitoring). Initial results suggest that the completed research will be especially helpful in progressing both the above Strategic Actions.

5. DEVELOPING A SPATIAL PLAN SUPPORTED BY A LOCAL DEVELOPMENT ORDER

5.1 Of the 'tools' available for managing recreation, influencing access through the provision of car parks is arguably the most powerful. This is recognised in the current RMS 2010-2030 which already includes a specific action (5.6.3) to manage car parking in the National Park and the associated impacts on the most sensitive areas, by enabling "*land owners to manage the size, capacity and location of car parks for the benefit of the Forest and users*".

5.2 Within the updated strategic actions (**Annex 2**), there is a clear ambition to develop a spatial plan for where recreation should take place and to establish procedures to facilitate desirable changes. In support of this approach, the National Park Authority proposes to explore the feasibility of producing a Local Development Order (LDO) as a tool to facilitate changes to the distribution and capacity of car parking on the open Forest and adjacent commons.

- 5.3 The overriding objective of the LDO would be to direct visitors to the more sustainable and resilient locations and away from the most sensitive areas. There would be no net increase in overall parking spaces, which is consistent with the recognition in the current RMS 2010-2030 that at peak times *“the New Forest’s capacity has been reached and it would be undesirable and damaging to provide for any increase”* (section 4.2).
- 5.4 The use of a LDO has been discussed with the RMS Steering Group organisations indicate a broad level of support for investigating the feasibility of an LDO to manage changes to car parking provision. However this is a matter for the New Forest National Park planning authority to investigate and take forward rather than a matter for the Steering Group. It is however noted that changes to individual car parks is likely to be of significant interest to a wide range of stakeholders and interests, so it is important from the outset to establish clear criteria to inform future decisions.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no additional financial implications arising from the Strategic Actions.

7. CRIME & DISORDER, ENVIRONMENTAL, DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no crime and disorder, environmental or data protection issues arising directly from this report.

8. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no equality or diversity implications arising directly from this report.

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Background Papers:

Published Documents