

**Portfolio holder decision – Portfolio holder for Planning and Economy – 24 March 2025**

**Work Programme for the Design and Implementation of Habitat Mitigation Projects – 2025/2027**

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>This report seeks approval for allocation of developer contribution funding of <b>£1,720,000</b> to support the Recreational Mitigation Programme for a two-year period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2027.</p> <p>The proposed two-year programme will comprise up to 16 'off-site' infrastructure projects, including a range of both delivery projects and "design only" projects.</p> <p>Delivery projects will include access and open space enhancements to existing and/or new public open space (i.e. greenspaces), and improvements to Public Right of Ways.</p> <p>'Design only' projects included in the programme for 2025/26 will be developed up to concept design, and subject to agreement these will likely form the basis of the delivery projects for 2026/27.</p> <p>The Recreational Mitigation Programme has been developed by the Council in response to the requirements of the 'Habitat Regulations' and is designed to mitigate the recreational impacts on the international designations of the New Forest and Solent and Southampton Water SPAs.</p>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Developer Contribution funding of £1,720,000 is allocated to fund the Recreational Mitigation Programme for a two-year period from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2027; and</b></li> <li><b>2. The project list in Appendix 1 Tables 1 and 2 are approved as the basis of the projects to be developed between 1st April 2025 and 31st March 2027.</b></li> </ol>

Reasons for recommendations	<p>Approval of this paper is recommended in order for the Council to comply with its statutory obligations under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations Habitat Regulations and in order to meet the key objectives of the <i>“Mitigation for Recreational Impacts on New Forest European Sites, Supplementary Planning Document Enabling the Delivery of Green Growth, Adopted 5 May 2021”</i>.</p> <p>The ‘Habitats Regulations’ require that appropriate mitigation measures are put in place to ensure that proposed residential development can take place without harmful impact on the integrity of protected sites within the plan area.</p> <p>If the proposed recreational mitigation programme is not provided, then there will likely be an objection from Natural England for future housing sites.</p>
Wards	All
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Derek Tipp – Planning and Economy
Strategic Director	James Carpenter – Strategic Director Place, Operations and Sustainability
Officer Contact	<p>Dean Brunton  Service Manager for Planning Policy,  Infrastructure and Delivery  Tel: 02380 28 5454  <a href="mailto:Dean.Brunton@NFDC.gov.uk">Dean.Brunton@NFDC.gov.uk</a></p>

## Introduction and background

1. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (‘Habitats Regulations’) require that appropriate mitigation measures are in place to ensure that proposed residential development can take place without harmful impact on the integrity of protected sites within the plan area, namely the New Forest and Solent and Southampton Water Special Projection Areas.

2. The Recreational Mitigation Programme is designed to ensure that appropriate mitigation measures are in place and consists of four main elements, namely:
  - Provision by Developers of new 'on-site' dedicated greenspaces within large development sites (Alternative Natural Recreational Greenspace – ANRG).
  - Improvements by NFDC of new and/or existing 'off-site' greenspaces and walking routes to support recreational mitigation.
  - Access and visitor management measures – provision of a ranger service.
  - Monitoring activities – to assess effectiveness of the recreational mitigation strategy.
3. This paper specifically seeks to allocate developer contribution funding for the delivery of 'off-site' infrastructure projects, comprising both delivery projects and "design only" projects (i.e. 2<sup>nd</sup> bullet item above).
4. The key objectives of the Recreational Mitigation Programme (the Programme) are set out in the "[Mitigation for Recreational Impacts on New Forest European Sites](#)", Supplementary Planning Document, Adopted 5 May 2021".
5. The Council's approach for mitigating the impacts of increased housing development on protected sites within the New Forest National Park has been agreed with Natural England. This approach is in accordance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations ('Habitats Regulations') and is as set out in the Supplementary Planning Document - 2021. However, as the Council embarks on the Local Plan review, officers will continue to engage with Natural England to ensure a coordinated approach.

### **Current Recreational Mitigation Programme – 2024/25**

6. In [March 2024](#) 11 delivery projects and 5 'design only' projects were approved as the programme of works for 2024/25.
7. A total budget of £850K was approved for delivery of the 2024/25 programme.
8. The majority of delivery projects are in progress and scheduled to be completed during 2025.
9. Project delays have occurred in the delivery of **Ri5 – Poulner Lakes, Ringwood** due to ongoing discussions regarding an area of land that is required to be transferred and is subject to the discussions by the Town Council and the landowner.

10. The "delivery only" project for **Ly1 – Bath Road, Lymington** was omitted from the programme since this project has now been included as one of the Council's strategic CIL infrastructure projects to be bought forward during 2025/26 and therefore funded separately.
11. The 'delivery only' project for **To13 – Bartley Water (Rushington PoS)** has not been significantly progressed due to delays in accessing the site and completing topographical survey works, and therefore will be progressed alongside the 2025/2027 programme.

### **Project screening workshop(s) held January 2025**

12. The Council maintain a long list of recreational mitigation projects to be considered for inclusion in future recreational programmes. Following the initial screening of each project (i.e. to define the scope, mitigation benefit, constraints, delivery risks and costs etc.), a series of officer workshops were held in January 2025 to finalise the short-list of projects to be included in the programme for 2025 to 2027.
13. Due to the uncertainties associated with project delivery, it is proposed that a two-year recreational mitigation programme should be adopted, to allow some flexibility in the scheduling of projects, with the intention being that the "Design-only" projects delivered during the 2025/26 programme will be included as delivery projects in the 2026/27 programme.
14. A 2-year programme is preferred over a 1 or 3 to allow time for the local plan to be prepared and to consider the implications of Local Government Review on the Council's work programme and commitments.
15. The list of up to 16 projects to be included in the two-year Recreational Mitigation Programme are detailed in Appendix 1 – Tables 1 and 2.

### **Proposed Recreational Mitigation Projects for 2025/26**

16. Appendix 1 – Table 1 details the proposed delivery projects and "design only" projects to be included in the recreational mitigation programme for 2025/26.

### **Proposed Recreational Mitigation Projects for 2026/27**

17. Appendix 1 – Table 2 details the proposed delivery projects and "design only" projects to be included in the recreational mitigation programme for 2026/27.

18. Design only projects included in the programme for 2025/26 will be developed as concept designs, and subject to agreement by NFDC and key stakeholders, selected "design only" projects will be included as delivery projects in the programme for 2026/27.

### **Corporate plan priorities**

19. The recommendations set out in this paper support all Corporate Plan objectives to a certain extent, either directly or indirectly. In particular:
  - Place Priority 1: Shaping our place now and for future generations.
  - Place Priority 2: Protecting our climate, coast, and natural world.

### **Options appraisal**

20. Approval of this paper is recommended for the Council to comply with its statutory and to meet the key objectives of its adopted Mitigation Strategy.

### **Consultation undertaken**

21. Where appropriate, Officers have liaised with town/parish councils regarding the proposed projects, as well as internal officers in the open spaces team, and officers from Hampshire County Council.

### **Monitoring the success of the schemes**

22. As part of the Local Plan review, officers will need to develop a new mitigation strategy based on the significant increase in housing identified by the government to be delivered.
23. As part of the work on the new strategy it will be important to review the success of the schemes to date. Whilst the People and Wildlife Ranger and monitoring counters have provided valuable information to date, officers are commissioning a bespoke monitoring report to understand how successful the strategy to date has been. The study is likely to be commissioned early in the new financial year and will be funded from the monitoring aspect of the mitigation contributions collected.

### **Financial and resource implications**

24. The capital programme as approved by the Council in February 2026 included an overall sum for CIL funded mitigation schemes for the years 2025/26 – 2027/28. This report now seeks to allocate that overall approved budget to the individual projects.

25. The Council is currently holding all the identified funds to deliver the recreational mitigation programme 2025/27, having collected them as developer contributions from various developments in and around the district. It is anticipated that the spend will remain an equal split over the two financial years with an annual spend on programme works of £860,000.

### **Legal implications**

26. None. Projects will be developed on NFDC owned land and/or on land owned/leased by local councils, or HCC Public Rights of Way.

### **Risk assessment**

27. Project delivery risks will be identified and managed/mitigated throughout the project delivery phase.

### **Environmental / Climate and nature implications**

28. Projects delivered as part of the recreational mitigation programme will improve/enhance the local environment and are designed to reduce harmful impacts on protected sites within the New Forest National Park, due to increased [housing] development.

### **Equalities implications**

29. Projects delivered as part of the recreational mitigation programme will improve access and accessibility to greenspaces and/or Public Rights of Way.

### **Crime and disorder implications**

30. None.

### **Data protection/ Information governance/ ICT implications**

31. None.

### **New Forest National Park/ Cranborne Chase National Landscape implications**

32. The recreational mitigation programme has been developed to mitigate the impacts of new residential development on the New Forest and Solent and Southampton SPA areas, therefore by providing these schemes will have a positive impact on the New Forest National Park. Where enhanced walking routes are provided adjacent to the SPA and National Landscape areas, this will help promote positive habits for users alongside appropriate signage.

## **Portfolio holder endorsement**

33. I have agreed to the recommendations of this report.

Signed: Cllr Derek Tipp

Dated: 24 March 2025

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1 – Recreational Mitigation Programme 2025/27 – Project list.

### **Background Papers:**

*Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ('Habitats Regulations').*

*Mitigation for Recreational Impacts on New Forest European Sites, Supplementary Planning Document Enabling the Delivery of Green Growth, Adopted 5 May 2021.*

Date on which notice given of this Decision – 24 March 2025

Last date for call in – 31 March 2025

## Appendix 1 – Recreational Mitigation Programme 2025/27 – Project list

Table 1 - Recreational Mitigation Programme - 2025/26

No	Ref	Local council	Project title	Estimated Budget
<b>Delivery Projects</b>				
1	Br2	Bransgore	Bransgore Recreation Ground - Access and Open Space Enhancements	£200,000
2	Ho4	Hordle	Dudley Avenue Recreational Ground - Access and Open Space Enhancement	£200,000
3	Hd6	Hythe	Hythe and Dibden - Beechwood Way - walking route improvements	£150,000
4	Ly9	Lymington	Alexandra Road - Footpath extension and improvements to SANG	£100,000
5	NM13	New Milton	Fawcett's Field - Footpath extension and improvements to Gore Road ANRG	£150,000
<b>'Design Only' Projects</b>				
6	Ri6	Ringwood	North Ringwood - walking route improvements	£10,000
7	To15	Totton	East Totton open space (off Hawkers Close behind Testwood School pitches) - Access and Open Space Enhancements	£10,000
8	HD7	Hythe	Southern Hythe - Access and Open Space Enhancements	£10,000
9	Ly15	Lymington	North of Pennington - walking route improvements	£10,000
10	Ri9	Ringwood	North Poulner – The Mount - Access and Open Space Enhancements	£10,000
			Sub-total	£850,000

Table 2 - Recreational Mitigation Programme - 2026/27

No	Ref	Local council	Project title	Estimated Budget
<b>Delivery Projects</b>				
1	Ri6	Ringwood	North Ringwood - walking route improvements	£150,000
2	Ms4	MoS	Sturt Pond - Phase 1 - walking route improvements	£150,000
3	Ri8	Ringwood	Ringwood FP55 bridge replacement/improvement- Avon Valley Path - walking route improvements	£70,000
4	To15	Totton	East Totton open space (off Hawkers Close behind Testwood School pitches) - Access and Open Space Enhancements	£200,000
5	HD7	Hythe	Southern Hythe - Forest Front - Access and Open Space Enhancements	£200,000
6	Ly15	Lymington	North of Pennington - walking route improvements	£100,000



			Sub-total	£870,000
			Total (Table 1 and 2)	<b>£1,720,000</b>

**Alternative delivery projects - to be considered for inclusion in 2026/27 programme in place of a project listed above**

<b>No</b>	<b>Ref</b>	<b>Local council</b>	<b>Project title</b>	<b>Estimated Budget</b>
<b>Delivery Projects (TBC)</b>				
7	To13	Totton	Bartley Water - Access and Open Space Enhancement (Rushington POS)	£150,000
8	Ri9	Ringwood	North Poulner – The Mount - Access and Open Space Enhancements	£150,000
			Total	£300,000

**Notes:**

1. Not all the projects listed can be funded under the 2026/27 programme. At least 2No. Projects will need to be deferred.
2. Further "design only" projects will be identified during 2026/27.