

Recreation Management & Permissions

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Strategy



- Our forests are popular destinations but also a working environment and home to some of the country's rarest wildlife.
- We need to balance the needs and safety of our visitors, wildlife and land management
- We need to assess the individual and cumulative impacts of what people want to do alongside other planned activities and the needs of our daily visitors



We issue permits when

- Your event involves more than 25 people
- Activity prohibited under byelaws
- Competitive events
- Exclusive use
- Impact on the environment, our work, people
- Commercial activity - income generation
- Use of equipment or animals



We need to take account of

- Legal compliance - does it meet legislation - H&S, Environmental, safeguarding
- Does the activity meet/ compromise our objectives
- Can it help deliver our objectives
- Does it interfere with our core business, add costs
- Does it pose a risk to other users, displacement
- Impact on our assets - roads, buildings
- Impact on species and habitats that aren't specifically protected
- Who else needs to be aware
- Commercial activity - income generation



Ecology and Wildlife

Avoiding disturbance of very sensitive locations and protected habitats

Forestry Operations

avoiding areas and key times of the year when major forestry operations are taking place to ensure public safety.

Other planned events

with around 2000 permitted activities or events taking place each year, we work hard to avoid activities clashing or competing for limited parking space and facilities.

Civil engineering

Avoid clashing with maintenance works on forest infrastructure such as roads, bridges and car parks

Public pressure

Consideration must be given to managing events and activities in combination with existing visitor engagement to avoid over-use and damage to the landscape.

New Forest

Free roaming livestock - at certain times of the year and in specific locations priority is given to activities supporting this.



3000 applications per year in the New Forest alone

Year	District wide	Permits	Events	People	New Forest	Permits	Events	People
2018		1300	2800	84000		450	1300	42000
2019		1100	2600	81000		450	1400	48000
2020		650	1800	37000		300	1000	26000
2021		800	1600	41000		350	750	24000
2022		320	500	25000		140	250	20000



- National review of permissions
- New Forest Recreation Management Strategy Review
- Changes in interpretation of environmental law/ regulation



National review of permissions

- Our recreation offer has changed
- Demand has increased for a wider range of activities - more commercial operators
- Consistency across Forest Districts - approach/charges



FE National Charging Structure

- Many events will still be free
- Standard admin fee now £75 (+VAT if applicable)
- Permission charges -
 - Commercial activity: 20%
 - Partnership commercial activity: 10-15%
 - Community Group/activity: app fee only
 - Voluntary group: FOC
 - Option of site/staff time surcharge: variable



2017 Review of National Park RMS

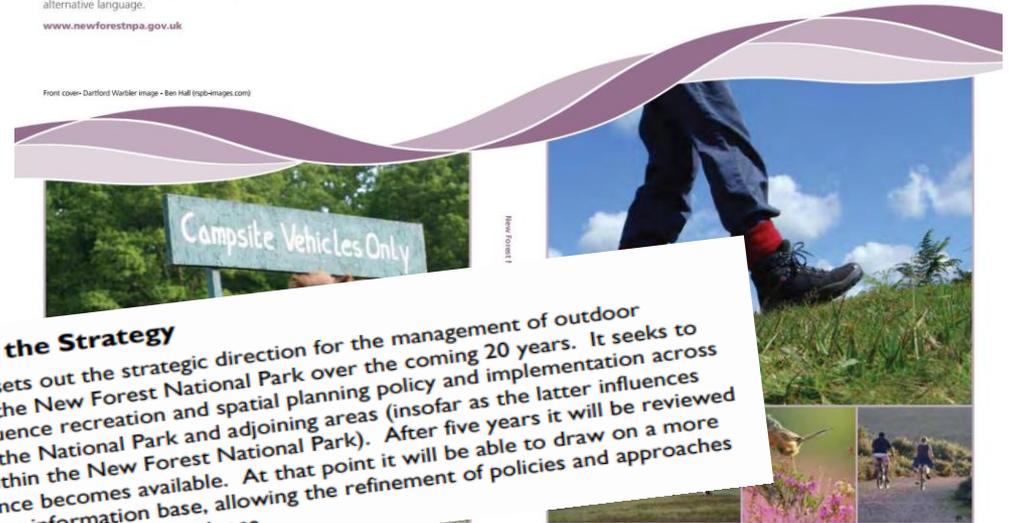
- Extensive public consultation - 1500 responses
- Lots of stakeholder interest
- 3 Themes emerge

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 alternative language.
 www.newforestnpa.gov.uk



New Forest National Park
 Recreation Management Strategy
 2010 - 2030

Front cover - Dartford Warbler image - Ben Hill (ngb-images.com)



Purpose of the Strategy

This Strategy sets out the strategic direction for the management of outdoor recreation in the New Forest National Park over the coming 20 years. It seeks to guide and influence recreation and spatial planning policy and implementation across the whole of the National Park and adjoining areas (insofar as the latter influences recreation within the New Forest National Park). After five years it will be reviewed as new evidence becomes available. At that point it will be able to draw on a more comprehensive information base, allowing the refinement of policies and approaches based on clear and emerging evidence.

Over 80 different stakeholders and many more individuals have contributed to the preparation of this Strategy. Their help, advice and commitment have been invaluable. This has included input from the New Forest Access Forum; the Stakeholders Advisory Group; an informal Members Advisory Group; preliminary consultations with a wide range of recreation providers and users; and active participation through a series of workshops supporting the preparation of both the first National Park Management Plan for the New Forest and this Strategy.



- Consultation summer 2018
- 7 Strategic Objectives
- 25 Draft actions proposed
- Over 1000 responded
- High level of support

- 22 Plain English actions drafted
- What will be done
- RMS statutory organisations signed off.



- RMS 22 Strategic actions -
reference to permissions

2.4. Manage organised activities and larger events to minimise negative impacts on wildlife, the working Forest and on local people.

Landowners of open Forest and other protected areas will review and update their permissions and licensing systems:

- the way these are administered
- the rationale for judging what is and isn't allowed
- charges that may be applicable
- how they publicise the need for event organisers to register events in advance
- information provided to minimise the risk of unintended consequences.

Safety Advisory Groups will continue to advise, share best practice and where possible control public events (e.g. in villages and on the roads) to limit any negative impacts. We will continue to encourage full compliance with the Cycle Event Organisers' Charter.

A charter will be established to clarify what is expected of commercial dog walkers within the New Forest.



Category	HRA 2015-2020	Changes brought in
Running Events Inc. Charity Events	6 events up to 40 participants 15 events 40 - 500 3 events 500 - 1000 1 <u>events</u> over 1000 (separate HRA) No other restrictions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changed all running routes to be on robust tracks - the vast majority being the cycle network • Developed Code of Practice with NF Runners – shared good practice with other Forest running clubs who have all adopted the CoD. • Developed event protocols with regard to parking marshals and car park usage • Restricted participant numbers to stop the increase in scale of the events. (<u>in</u> the 40-500 cat – changed to max. 350 participants) • Controlled event organisers with limiting catering vans and no music • Training runs to remain on robust tracks within inclosures, avoiding <u>Wilverley Plain</u> and <u>Holmhill Bog</u> and using alternative areas to relieve pressure on one area • Encourage parking off the forest - <u>i.e.</u> Brockenhurst College, otherwise use of Camping in the Forest sites as a start/finish point
Horse riding events	9 events. Includes Point to Point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive planning of routes. Have changed all routes/events to be on robust tracks • Improved staff awareness of HRA compliance
Military training	No HRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train within our land management, Ecology and Wildlife responsibilities • Permit conditions tightened to <u>include</u>: reduce number of campsites, training runs on robust tracks in inclosures, no vehicles on open forest, Cadet training to keep to DofE route map, etc
HSAR DOGs and & HANTSAR	No HRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved communication to receive accurate participant numbers attending training days • Avoid using the forest between middle of March and end of July.



DofE	No HRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wild campsites no longer permitted • Robust route map created • Notification system developed • Strict guidance for coaches and minibuses to use appropriately sized car parks • Extensive communication to schools, education and youth groups promoting Caring for the Forest messages, keeping to the robust routes and education about GNB • Now have accurate data to show over 7000 students participated in a DofE expedition • Very few complaints from ground staff - a significant difference from 2018 and before
Scouts	<u>4 night</u> hikes and 10 day hikes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DofE changes/website page awareness to Scout Leaders • All hikes to go through internal sign-off, use robust routes
Fungi	No HRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooking of picked fungi has been stopped for all forays
Student filming	No HRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced student filming on the forest to now only permit for specific NF reasons
Cycle Events	No HRA for cycle events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with event organisers to understand local sensitivities and improve communication about events (road events) • Improved signage by reducing the volume of signs and location of them • Stopped the use of our car parks for refreshment stations
Small commercial operators, <u>i.e.</u> exercise classes, gun-dog training	No HRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved engagement and acceptance of controls around their activity.
Photography	No HRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New 'small scale' Photography permit created to improve education and engagement within this business sector
Driving through Incl.	No HRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with DTI permit holders and rationale for having a permit. Reduction in permit holders for this category.

- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

The **Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017** (as amended) (commonly abbreviated to the Habitats Regulations) require public (or competent) authorities to assess the impact of plans or projects on the network of internationally important protected areas that comprise Special Protection Areas (**SPAs**), Special Areas of Conservation (**SACs**) and Ramsar sites (or **European sites**). This requirement is delivered via a Habitats Regulations Assessment (**HRA**) which comprises a series of mandatory tests.

- The legal tests are strict

- New 5 year Habitats Regulations Assessment period 2021-26
- Changes to the interpretation of the Habs regs due to recent case law.
- In combination effect
- Increased monitoring of impact



- Forestry England - competent authority
- Forestry England - legal duties
- The Sandford Principle
- What's outside the generic HRA Framework?



- Challenge in avoiding or mitigating impact
- Need a robust and transparent protocol
- Principle challenge - The “In combination effect”
- Existing non permitted use and displacement



- Effective, reliable, timely
- Monitoring compliance with protocol
- Feedback and make changes if required
- The precautionary principle



Mitigation Measures

Time of year	Limits on numbers
Time of day	Specific monitoring
Use of 'robust tracks'	Activity specific mitigation
Event management	Ad hoc arrangements



Mitigation example - Filming and Photography visits

Filming and Photography (excluding drones)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All year • Restricted during bank holiday weekends and any other dates when visitor numbers are likely to peak - strict controls approved by Wildlife Manager 	Yes -see Event Management Table	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicle use limited to robust tracks and verge parking restricted. • Limits on heavy equipment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific measures relating to access with heavy equipment. 	Increased risk of disturbance to breeding birds in particular during spring and summer months. Risk level in spring/summer will be higher if participants wander away from existing tracks.
Filming - Drone use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • September to February incl. • February - only where FE can survey for nesting birds • Other months maybe required - strict controls approved by Wildlife Manager 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific measures required to minimise disturbance to birds, with flights restricted to 20 minutes duration at any one location per hour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific measures to minimise disturbance to birds 	Increased risk of disturbance to breeding birds in particular during spring and summer months. Risk level in spring/summer will be higher if participants wander away from existing tracks.



Mitigation example - Walking events

<p>Walking Events and Geocaching/ Letterboxing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> September to February incl. February - only where FE can survey for nesting birds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> required to stick to the network of more robust tracks, as shown in Map 10. 	<p>Yes -see Event <u>Mangt</u> Table</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking events includes geocaching and letterboxing. No more than 250 geocache containers and 500 letterbox containers across the Forest at any one time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For geocaching and letterboxing: containers must not include any food items, must not be put up in trees, must be put near to tracks and car parks and all locations to be agreed with Forestry England prior to installation. 	<p>Specific measures relating to geocaching and letterboxing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> containers must not include any food items must not be put up in trees, must be put near to tracks and car parks, locations agreed with Forestry England prior to installation, Geocaching - no more than 250 containers at any one time to be out on Forest. Letterboxing - no more than 500 containers at any one time to be out on Forest. 	<p>While use confined to tracks, issues from damage to track sides and damage to tracks themselves (if in sensitive habitat). Issues with event management relating to spectators, toilet facilities, gathering points etc. Spring and summer risks higher due to increased risk of disturbance to breeding birds. Compaction issues, grazing issues and public perception issues throughout year.</p>
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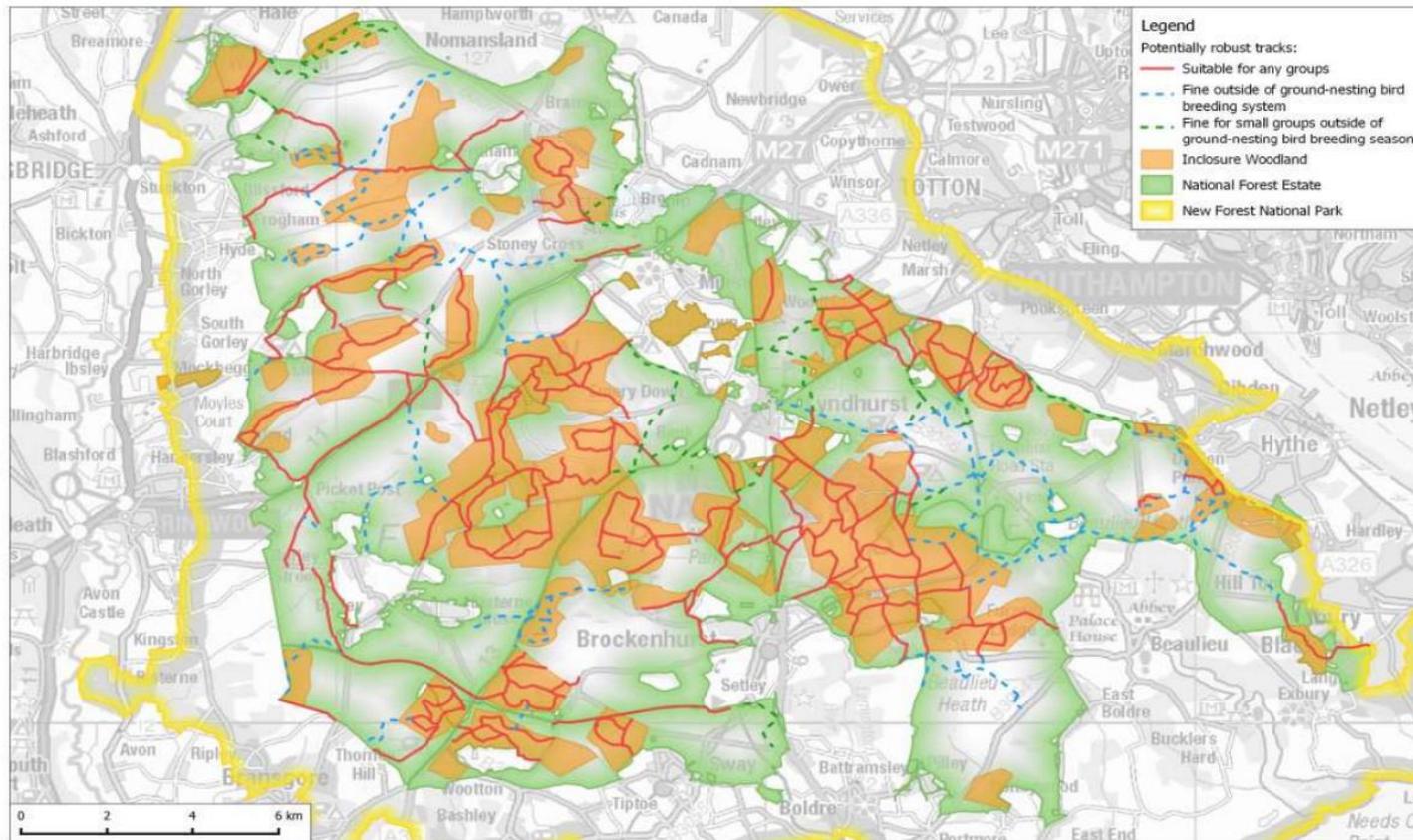
	Under 50 people	50-150 people	150-1000 people
Location(s) including routes clearly defined and agreed with Forestry England as part of permission		✓	✓
Temporary signage directing parking, routes and other key information		✓	✓
Temporary signage letting public know of event taking place, in position at least 1 week before event		✓	✓
Stewards managing car-parking and moving on any cars parking on verges, blocking gateways etc. with parking only in car parks as agreed with Forestry England (see Appendix 2).		✓	✓
Litter clear-up on same day as event, including check of all routes and other areas used	✓	✓	✓
Provision of litter bins (temporary) removed on same day as event		✓	✓
Stewards/marshalls managing participants along set routes, to ensure participants are in the pre-agreed areas/course		✓	✓
Temporary toilets provided (if none already at location and event more than 3 hours), removed within 1 day of end of event		✓	✓
Shuttle bus or other means to limit car use			✓
Public address system allowed (no amplified music and limited announcements)		✓	✓
Information to participants in advance on sensitivities and reason for particular requirements, agreed with Forestry England in advance		✓	✓
Restrictions on infrastructure, e.g. gazebos, rows of seating etc.	No infrastructure, such as gazebos allowed.	Small gazebo permitted on hardstanding/gravelled car-park areas only	Small gazebo permitted on hardstanding/gravelled car-park areas only
No petrol generators or naked flames	✓	✓	✓
No catering (cooking of food on-site)	✓	✓	✓

Mitigation - size of event



Mitigation - location of event

Map 10: More robust areas and tracks



All the money we make from permissions charging is reinvested into caring for the nation's forests.

Forestry England generates approximately 85-90% of its turnover from its own trading activity meaning the government only contributes 10-15% of the funds we need to operate.

