

## **NFAF 33/3**

### **Item 7: Department for Transport Funded Programmes**

#### **Sustainable Transport Solutions for England Two Newest National Parks**

##### **Introduction**

In July 2012, Hampshire County Council and its seven project partners were awarded £3.81 million from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) to deliver the 'Sustainable transport solutions for England's two National Parks' (2NP) programme.

The programme seeks to reduce the negative effects of car-borne visitor travel on the natural, economic and social environment in the South Downs and New Forest National Parks and, at the same time, support the local tourism economy. This is being achieved by encouraging visitors to the two parks to leave their cars at home where possible, and to travel by alternative means including buses, trains and bicycles.

##### **Programme objectives**

Although the two National Parks are located in one of the country's most densely populated areas and in close proximity of some large conurbations including Portsmouth, Southampton and Greater London, the vast majority of visitors arrive by car (between 71% and 96% depending on whether visitors are staying in the parks or are on day visits).

The resulting influx of cars, particularly during school holidays and at weekends, pose a major challenge to the protection of the environment and the quality of life in the two National Parks, and the associated congestion, noise and pollution threaten many of the special qualities that draw both residents and visitors to the two National Parks in the first place.

The 2NP programme seeks to address this problem by targeting those visitors who currently drive to and within the parks, encouraging them to travel by more sustainable means. In order to provide attractive and viable alternatives to car travel and enable visitors to enjoy a car-free stay in the National Parks, the programme applies a holistic approach that targets all stages of the journey and focusses on four key themes.

The programme aims to:

- Improve key public transport gateways into the two National Parks (Theme 1)
- Make it easy to reach key attractions within the two National Parks (Theme 2)
- Promote sustainable travel packages to visitors before they arrive and while they are in the National Parks (Theme 3)

- Manage all traffic effectively within the Parks, so that it does not detract from visitors' experience (Theme 4)

The 2NP programme will achieve these objectives by using the full toolkit of measures which best practice has shown to be most effective in getting more people travelling by foot, bike and public transport. The programme comprises over 100 individual schemes that will deliver the following key elements

- Improvement of infrastructure and services, e.g. cycle routes, railway stations, bus services,
- to ensure the sustainable travel network is in place and fit for purpose.
- Active engagement of key destinations, e.g. visitor travel plans, to help visitor attractions
- advocate and enable sustainable travel.
- Enabling activities, e.g. bike hire points, joint ticketing, guided walks, to ensure people can
- access the equipment and have the skills and confidence they need to try a new mode.
- Better information provision, e.g. maps, timetables and websites, so people can easily access
- the information they need to plan their journey.
- Travel awareness campaigns, e.g. marketing and promotional activities, to raise awareness of
- the travel options available and incentivise their use.
- By implementing these measures, the 2NP programme aims to increase the number of visitors arriving in the two National Parks by sustainable modes by 740,000, save 11,000 tonnes of carbon and support the local tourism industry and related jobs

### **Delivery highlights for 13/14**

- Support for an additional New Forest Tour route, the Blue Route serving the coast and south west of the New Forest. 2013 performance of the New Forest Tour has been strong, with passenger journey numbers 50% up on 2012 figures.

More info at [www.thenewforesttour.info](http://www.thenewforesttour.info)

- Launch of the Beach Bus, a shuttle bus service operating during the school summer holidays between 27 July and 1 September. The service links Hythe with Lymington via attractions such as Lepe Country Park, Exbury Gardens and Bucklers Hard. The service has been well received, generating over 1000 passenger journeys in each of its first four weeks of operation.

More info at [www.thebeachbus.info](http://www.thebeachbus.info)

- Introduction of the New Forest Travel Concierge at Brockenhurst Rail Station. Travel Concierge service will be on hand to greet visitors at Brockenhurst train station, guide them onto car-free journeys and make recommendations about the best places to visit.

The two friendly seasonal staff run a pedal powered mobile unit full of information on the New Forest Tour, Beach Bus and other buses, trains, Twizy electric cars, cycling and walking routes, as well as visitor attractions

More info [here](#)

- Improvements to the Bucklers Hard to Beaulieu cycling and walking route, and improvements to the byway network on the Hamptworth Estate.
- Delivery of a Travel Awareness Campaign designed to raise awareness of sustainable transport options. The campaign is far reaching, and includes photography, video, work with websites such as Tripadvisor, and with numerous tourism businesses and transport providers across the New Forest.

The full LSTF bid document can be downloaded from the National Park Authority [website](#).

### **New Forest Family Cycling Experiences**

At the end of January, the Department for Transport (DfT) launched a new £17m grant fund to support cycling in national parks. Following a focused period of stakeholder engagement and consultation, an application from the New Forest National Park Authority was submitted on 30 April entitled 'New Forest Family Cycling Experiences'.

On 12 August the Prime Minister announced that the bid had been approved, with a £3.57M allocation of funding to support its implementation. The New Forest was one of four successful national parks, the others being the Peak District, Dartmoor and the South Downs. Several other bids covering other national parks were submitted and not approved.

The DfT investment is expected to create more than 30 new jobs and generate income for local businesses as well as improve cycling facilities and management for residents and visitors. The proposed projects will promote active family lifestyles, respect the sensitive character of the New Forest and replace an estimated 127,000 car journeys with bike trips every year.

The proposed programme includes:

- Support for a private sector led family cycling centre adjacent to Brockenhurst rail station with bike hire, servicing, showers, lockers, courses, and visitor information

- A network of mobile bike docking stations, where people can hire a bike and drop it back at a number of locations around the National Park
- A network of pedal buses linking communities and attractions, where up to eight passengers can help the driver power the 'bus' to the next stop
- A new grant fund to help tourism businesses and communities provide high-quality facilities for cyclists
- Improvements to signage on existing cycle routes, mainly around the edge of the National Park and which are away from the Crown lands managed by the Forestry Commission.

The approved application also responds to the DfT's request for innovation and creativity, and has the support of key stakeholders including the Forestry Commission, Hampshire County Council, Wiltshire Council, New Forest Tourism Association, South West Trains, New Forest District Council and the New Forest Access Forum.

Importantly, measures set out in the bid need to be deliverable by March 2015. This has been a significant factor in shaping the bid content.

A programme governance structure, together with a delivery team is currently being established, in order to ensure that the programme is delivered within budget over the next 18 months.

The full 'Family Cycling Experiences' bid document can be downloaded from the National Park Authority [website](#).