

## OUR FUTURE TOGETHER

### A Tourism and Visitor Management Strategy for New Forest District

*“This new Forest is a piece of property as much belonging to the public as the Custom House in London is. There is no man, however poor, who has not a right in it. Every man is owner of a part of the deer, the game and of the money that goes to the keepers.”*

William Cobbet, 1830.

#### FOREWORD

In the next millennium when everyone will have more leisure time, tourism will become the world's largest industry. No longer can it be regarded solely as a local, regional or even national issues, it is global. The implications of this for New Forest District are profound. On the one hand we need a prosperous tourism industry to sustain jobs and the local economy, on the other, environmental and social pressure from increased numbers of visitors could undermine the quality of life and the resources on which the industry itself depends.

In recognising tourism as such a dynamic and powerful activity, now more than ever, a long term plan is needed to guide its development. By its nature our strategy is focused on New Forest District, but to be successful it will also have to relate to a regional, national, European and world-wide stage, tourism will only ever be effectively managed through partnership at all levels, so we hope the strategy will also positively influence all decisions as and where they affect tourism in our District.

By nature, tourism is an extremely complex activity. This strategy document is therefore structured into five chapters that are as simple and concise as possible. Each chapter contains sections which start with a policy statement, followed by text and information explaining issues and proposing solutions, action is presented by key objectives.

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

##### Chapter 1

Tourism is a complex and emotive subject. In this strategy we explain our role as the District's tourism managers and identify what we believe needs to be achieved to start to make a real success of tourism on a long term basis.

Our aim is for New Forest District to become a tourism destination where the visitor, tourism industry, local community and environment are in complete harmony, and thus make a significant contribution to improving the quality of all life.

Until the Council established its tourism service a decade ago, no other organisation had taken an overview of tourism as a management issue. Since then a lot has been done to

establish the basic framework of services, activities and relationships that are needed for positive tourism management.

We have been committed to a sustainable approach to tourism for some time. Put simply, this is tourism that does not prejudice the future quality of life and the natural and cultural resources of the Destination.

There is no doubt that the New Forest, the Coast and Avon Valley must come first; without their unique quality there would be little tourism. One thing is clear – whatever we do, visitors will continue to come in their millions every year. We estimate tourism currently generates in excess of £100m each year and creates over 3000 local jobs. A prosperous tourism industry however, need not lead to more visitors. Effective and imaginative management might even reduce numbers but improve incomes. Successful tourism will be about being strategic and flexible in planning terms and co-ordinating action in its development. Most importantly it will be about adapting and evolving our approach to ensure that the needs and demands of the visitor, industry, community and environment are all kept in equilibrium.

In basic terms, our plan is to manage in partnership with all interests to communicate a sense of stewardship in all Visitors, welcome them and fulfil their expectations. Work in partnership with Industry to provide value for money, high quality, environmentally aware services and facilities. Empower the local Community, especially young people, and create ownership through involvement in tourism matters. Promote a better understanding of the environment and manage all tourism development in a way that where possible, it has a positive effect on its surroundings.

Components of Tourism & What the Strategy Aims to Achieve	
VISITORS ARE:	"OUR FUTURE TOGETHER" AIMS TO
Served by the tourism and visitor industry	Achieve the best quality of service, facility and value for money
Welcomed by the community	Involve the local community in all tourism matters
Recreated by the quality of environment	Protect and enhance the quality of the environment
Attracted by marketing	Target and regulate visitor flow through appropriate marketing to maximise income and jobs
Delivered by transportation	Integrate all tourism and transportation to reduce visitor dependence on the car
Managed by information	Research and ensure strategic information is correct and communicated to visitors
Benefited by well planned facilities and infrastructure	Provide the right experience in the right place

Good planning for tourism will lead to a change in the way visitors travel around the Destination, reducing the need to use cars by improving alternative transport

opportunities between settlements, visitor facilities and existing links with the outside world.

Walks, rides, cycle routes and public transport will be planned to create a safe and integrated network linking settlements and visitor sites throughout the District, attaching to neighbouring networks, to encourage local as well as visitor use away from the car. By channelling visitors to appropriate locations and settlements we will also seek to improve visitor spending, create more local jobs and help divert pressure away from more remote and sensitive areas.

The Council acknowledge the District already has tourism related development which was not initially planned. Proper planning and infrastructure, even when achieved are not infallible and circumstances change. The strategy will, therefore, be flexible and reviewed on a regular basis to take account of such changes.

A considerable amount has already been achieved in establishing the building blocks needed for effective destination management. The Council's family of print has become a benchmark in quality and effectiveness throughout the industry. Its visitor information service wins awards and continually receives plaudits from satisfied customers. The success and coherence of our marketing and media work with New Forest Tourism Association (NFTA) is the envy of many other UK destinations. This working partnership has also benefited tourism management; agreements on a white on brown signing strategy and the lead NFTA are taking in helping establish town and village tourism groups are just two examples.

However there is still much to be achieved. We must improve the generation and delivery of information and interpretation to all visitors. The community must become more involved in tourism matters. There must be even greater integration in the planning and transportation issues that surround positive tourism development. But perhaps most of all there needs to be a better understanding between all the interests that make up such a special and unique visitor destination, because it is only when everyone is working to a common plan that real success in local tourism will be achieved. We hope this strategy will be the catalyst to motivate everyone to that success.

## INTRODUCTION

### Chapter 2

“Our aim is for New Forest District to become a tourism destination where the visitor, tourism industry, local community and environment are in complete harmony, and thus make a significant contribution to improving the quality of life.”

Through the operation of its tourism service, the District Council has learnt a great deal about the nature of local tourism and what we believe are the key issues. We have prepared this strategy to tackle those questions and safeguard both tourism industry and the place in which it operates. Our broad aim is to provide a plan that ensures that all

tourism and visitor activity becomes environmentally sustainable, economically viable and ethically and socially fair for all on a long term basis.

The main theme of the strategy is management through partnership. It seeks to maximise local income and employment for tourism by providing a warm welcome and a high quality of planned facility and service for visitors to understand and adopt a sense of stewardship for the unique landscapes and way of life of the destination.

A well planned and prosperous tourism industry we believe, will be a major catalyst for revitalising the amenity of the whole District making it a better place to live and visit. In seeking to achieve all this, we will always apply “Forest First”; that is to put the needs of the special qualities of the District before all tourism activity, after all it is that on which all local tourism relies.

Much of what is included in this document is guided by the very positive feedback to both our 1994 public consultation exercise: “Living with the Enemy?” and the 1997 draft strategy consultation “Making New Friends”.

It is clear there is now an acceptance that what is good for tourism can also be good for the local quality of life and vice-versa. The two are inextricably linked and how we choose to manage this complex relationship will be a test of courage, foresight and cooperation. It is “Our Future Together”.

## THE DISTRICT AS A DESTINATION

The main attraction of the destination is without doubt the New Forest, but the Coast and the Avon Valley have considerable potential to benefit from added visitor spending. Unlocking the potential of the Avon Valley and Coast and their role in providing an alternative to the New Forest are key themes of the strategy.

Most tourism businesses are sited in and around the many small towns and villages of the district. We are therefore working with others to form town and village tourism groups, so the bigger destination picture can also be built up from the local perspective. Working individually, in 3 brand groups **The New Forest, the New Forest Coast and The Avon Valley** and altogether representing the whole destination area, we believe these groups can act as a catalyst for determining local tourism issues and solutions.

The groups meet regularly and their membership is drawn from New Forest Tourism Association, Town and Parish Councils, Chambers of Trade, community and other special interest groups. This structure naturally reaches out to our neighbouring authorities and we are also forging stronger links with Christchurch, Bournemouth, East Dorset, Salisbury, Test Valley, Winchester and Southampton Council tourism services as well as with Dorset, Wiltshire and Hampshire County Councils.

In making choices of destination areas, visitors do not necessarily recognise local authority boundaries so it is important that local management and marketing activities are

closely linked with those of neighbouring council tourism services and trade associations. In recognition of the visitor flows between New Forest District and Bournemouth/East Dorset, we have already established close working ties with Bournemouth Tourism and the other Dorset Local Authorities in marketing the overseas destination band; Dorset & The New Forest. In developing "Our Future Together" we will seek to establish closer working partnerships with all appropriate neighbouring and regional tourism interests.

## NATIONAL & REGIONAL TOURISM POLICIES

### **Policy:**

- **To lobby Central Government and all national and regional tourism organisations to ensure local tourism needs are reflected in their policies and actions.**

### National Policies

One of the historic problems for tourism in this country has been the lack of any national vision or strategy for its wider management and development. The industry has therefore grown in a haphazard and piecemeal way with no real vision or structure. Although individual documents have been published before, a comprehensive planning structure is badly needed, bringing all aspects of tourism together enabling the industry and especially local government to plan local development, deliver services and create partnerships within a national context.

The English Tourist Board's (ETB) recent Agenda 2000 initiative, to consult on and translate a wide range of ideas for exploiting the full potential of England's tourism industry into a concrete action plan is therefore very welcome. With a new Government committed to the complete overhaul of the Tourism Development Act, Agenda 2000 is an extremely useful step in the right direction.

In delivering English tourism there are broadly three main partners; the Government/ETB, the Local Authorities as destination managers and the Industry. At present there is duplication and confusion over who does what, and a number of gaps in product and service provision and co-ordination. The Agenda 2000 exercise may clear up some of these issues but until a collective agreement between all the main partners is achieved (a full review of the Tourism Development Act) it is likely these fundamental problems will remain. However we await the production of the ETB action plan, Action 2000, with interest.

In 1995 the then Department of the Environment and Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food published six objectives for sustainable development which have been incorporated into all aspects of our approach. Many of the themes published in the documents "Maintaining the Balance" "Success through Partnership" and "Breaking New Ground" are also taken up and included in this strategy as are relevant national planning policy guidance notes.

## Regional & Local Policies

At a regional level, Hampshire County Council's Structure Plan gives general guidance and policy on tourism and economic development. At a local level New Forest District Council's Local Plan contains detailed sections on tourism which provide the planning framework and policies for this strategy (see appendix 1).

New Forest Local Plan
<b>OBJECTIVE 21: TOURISM</b> To support a viable and prosperous tourist industry to the continued benefit of the local economy while ensuring that the interests of the environment, in particular the New Forest and the undeveloped coast, are safeguarded and protected.

Other important policies are those proposed in the New Forest Committee's "A Strategy for the New Forest", (see appendix 2) the New Forest Transportation Strategy, The Coastal Management Plan, NFDC's Local Agenda 21; "Greenprint" and "Crossing the Bridge", the Council's Corporate Plan. The policies and the objectives of this Tourism and Visitor Management Strategy are linked to all these and many other local policy documents, and provides the opportunity to formalise more such partnerships in the future.

## PARTNERSHIPS

### **Policy:**

- **To work in partnership with all agencies, organisations and individuals to promote the interests of tourism, particularly in maintaining an effective local tourism association.**

Managing tourism through partnership is at the core of our approach. To make tourism work for the whole district, to a greater or lesser extent everybody has a part to play, everyone is involved. Perhaps the Council's most important partnership is with New Forest Tourism Association (NFTA), the District's tourism trade organisation which Authority was instrumental in establishing in 1988. The Association represents all sectors of the local industry with a current membership of the top 250 tourism and visitor businesses in the District.

New Forest tourism
The local tourism trade association; it membership currently stands at over 250 and represents business from the following groups:
Hotels, Guest Houses and Inns
Bed & Breakfast and Farmhouses
Self Catering Houses, Cottages and Flats
Holiday Parks
Camping and Caravan sites
Pubs, Restaurants, Coffee and Tea Shops
Ferry, Bus and Transport Operators
Retailers and Service Providers

The value of our partnership with NFTA cannot be underestimated. The relationship enables the Council and the trade to act quickly and effectively and collectively in dealing with such issues as planning, transportation, marketing, training and quality standards etc as and when they arise.

Without the support of the local industry no strategy for tourism can be successful. It is the best way to provide a consistent quality of service and experience for the visitor, and a sense of purpose and co-ordination to the industry. Other important partnerships are with the New Forest Committee, Forestry Commission, Hampshire County Council, Southern Tourist Board, Town and Parish Councils and Chambers of Trade.

New Forest Committee
The body that co-ordinates the management of the New Forest Heritage Area. The Committee has an independent Chairman and comprises of representatives from each of the following organisations
Countryside Commission
English Nature
Forestry Commission
Hampshire County Council
New Forest District Council
Salisbury District Council
The Court Of Verderers
Wiltshire County Council (Observer)
The Country Landowners Association/National Farmers Union (Observers)

## FOUR CORNERSTONES

### Chapter 3.

The recent New Forest Sport and Recreation Study, suggests very many more local visitors (possibly accounting for up to 18 million visits per year) use the New Forest than was previously estimated by earlier surveys. This finding is important in influencing the recreation and access policies and actions required in the New Forest itself.

### VISITORS

#### Policy:

- **To encourage all partners to welcome all visitors and provide them with a high quality experience and a better understanding of the needs of local people and the environment.**

All visitors are guests. As such they have the right to experience and enjoy the District. For visitors, local tourism should be an interesting, good value, satisfying and high quality experience. Host and visitor should be on equal terms. Through successful tourism, visitors gain an in-depth understanding and knowledge of the area, its special way of life and unique landscapes. Welcomed visitors are more likely to become involved and through their enjoyment, develop a sense of stewardship for the Destination.

The three general groups of visitor to the District are:

- **The day visitor**, who travels from outside the District from home or from a holiday elsewhere, returning the same day;
- **The local visitor**, who lives within the District but visits another part for leisure and recreation
- **The staying visitor**, who stays in the District for one night or more.

Number of Visits		
	Number of days visiting (million)	Spend per visitor per day (£)
Staying visitors in serviced accommodation	0.5	35.5
Staying visitors in self serviced accommodation	2.25	12.6
Day visitors	2.2	5.5
Local visitors	2.2	3.1

## INDUSTRY

### Policies:

- **To encourage the tourism and visitor industry to work together in providing excellent services and facilities for visitors which respect the needs of the community and environment both now and in the future.**

### **To retain a viable and prosperous tourism industry throughout the year.**

New Forest District Council's Economic Strategy suggests a prosperous local economy should not be incompatible with high environmental standards and quality of life and seeks to ensure that adequate job opportunities exist for local people. In this context it is essential that we make the best use of tourism, which we estimate earns the District well over £100 million every year. Research has also shown that it is not just the obvious businesses that can create new jobs from increased visitor spending.

The main issue for the industry is how to improve its performance while protecting the environmental quality of the District on which the industry depends. The majority of existing businesses have had to struggle to stay viable in recent years, because they need the right market economies of scale, infrastructure and market conditions in which to operate successfully in a highly competitive world.

Large scale development would be inappropriate in such an environmentally sensitive setting, our strategy is therefore directed at getting much more effective use made of what facilities we have already, particularly in the serviced accommodation sector. One of the destination's great advantages is that virtually all tourism businesses are locally owned, employing predominantly local people. This ensures the Industry is much more focused on local needs than might otherwise be the case.

Number of Bedspaces	
Hotels & Inns	2,706
Bed & Breakfast	1,417
Self Catering Cottages/Houses/Flats	661
Holiday Parks	5,500
Campsites	16,030
Total	26,314

Total Staying Visitors	
It is estimated that there were 2.9 million visitor nights spent in the District in 1996. these were made up in the following proportions:	
Hotels & Inns	16%
Bed & Breakfast	6%
Self Catering Cottages/Houses/Flats	9%

Holiday Parks	11%
Campsites	58%

Through our partnership with NFTA we have achieved a growing understanding of critical issues for the industry such as planning and transportation matters. We believe a visit to our District should be synonymous with quality. We want to get the quality and operation of the industry to work in harmony with its setting and use this to drive all tourism.

We have been working for some time with NFTA to promote environmental awareness and are currently establishing the New Forest Green Tourism programme to simulate improvements in the industry's environmental performance, promote good practice in planning development and create industry support for conservation activities that also help visitors develop a sense of stewardship for the District (see Operations Section).

## COMMUNITY

### **Policy:**

- **To involve the local community in its tourism activities and encourage partners to do likewise.**

The special character of the District is inextricably inked to the traditions and activities of the people who live and work here. Visitors who are given a warm welcome by the host community rarely create problems and are more likely to develop a respect for the place and its people.

Without the spending and jobs brought by tourism, the community would lose many of its services and small businesses. When visitors trade with local businesses they purchase supplies and services. Local businesses in turn purchase the supplies and services they need to operate and through successive rounds of purchases the initial direct spend of a visitor multiplies throughout the local and regional economy. In many cases visitor spending is what keeps businesses going.

Tourism also has a major part to play in supporting the skills and economic activities that are traditional to the District. The Green Tourism Kit will help the industry find ways of increasing this support by using employees, produce and services from the locality. Tourism also benefits the community by providing improved infrastructure, recreation and cultural facilities, increased local authority revenues and greater local awareness, all helping to foster a general sense of community pride in the District's natural and cultural heritage.

### **The Resident**

The interaction between local residents and visitors is very important. Visitors are guests in the local community but as the New Forest Sport and Recreation Study has shown, residents themselves make the vast majority of all visits to the District at anyone time. Residents must therefore start to take more personal responsibility in making a positive contribution to the situation than simply suggesting day and staying visitors create the

problems. Residents will therefore be important players in the town and village tourism groups.

### **The Business Community**

Most businesses in the District directly or indirectly derive some benefit from visitor expenditure. Many people in this group already recognise the value of visitors and are generally supportive of their needs. We want to continue developing this wider business support for tourism through the town and village tourism groups.

### **The Political Community**

Getting the needs of tourism incorporated into all relevant political decisions is crucial to the success of this strategy. We will continue to promote those needs to executive agencies and elected representatives at every opportunity.

### **The Commoning Community**

In the New Forest the small number of practising commoners are an essential component in maintaining its ancient traditions of free roaming animals. As a unique way of life, commoning is under threat. This simple fact has drastic implications for the future life cycle of the New Forest itself. Some commoners are turning to tourism to provide the essential extra income needed to keep the practice going. The commoning community can provide valuable resources for developing interpretative work such as the New Forest Encounter. We will continue to develop ideas on how tourism's support of commoning can be improved, especially for younger members of commoning families.

### **Town and Village Tourism Groups**

Perhaps the most effective way that any member of the community can have an input to local tourism will be through the town and village tourism groups. Working with our partners we are establishing groups in all the settlement areas listed in the Introduction (see The District as a Destination).

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### **Policy:**

- **To ensure that all tourism is managed in order to control its impact and where possible, achieve a positive effect on the environment.**

Without the unique quality of the New Forest, its Coastline and the Avon Valley there would be little to attract visitors. The need for sustainability is well documented; existing plans stress the landscape, cultural and nature conservation importance of the District and contain policies which aim to protect it.

There are many agencies involved in caring for the local environment, most notably English Nature, the Forestry Commission, Hampshire County Council, the District

Council and Parish Councils. There are also many land owners such as the National Trust and private estates. It is important that all these organisations and individuals work together to make a more positive environmental contribution to managing land that is used by visitors.

As Crown land managers, the Forestry Commission have produced a “Framework for Recreation” which picks up many of the themes contained in this tourism and visitor management strategy and the District Local Plan. It is hoped that all other local land owners will follow the lead taken by Forestry Commission and produce their own recreation plans which also link into the aims, policies and objectives of all other appropriate management strategies.

Carrying capacity is fundamental to good environmental management and sustainable development in visitor destinations. Establishing the level of carrying capacities can be difficult, but they are essential in effective planning for tourism and recreation that is environmentally sustainable.

Carrying capacities
The environmental carrying capacity is the level of visiting beyond which unacceptable environmental impacts and physical wear will occur.
The visitor carrying capacity is the level of visiting beyond which visitor satisfaction drops unacceptably
The community carrying capacity is the level of visiting beyond which the local quality of life drops unacceptably.

Carrying capacities can vary over time and be affected by factors such as visitor behaviour patterns, facility design and management, the character of the environment, access and transportation arrangements as well as the changing attitudes of the host community. As previously emphasised, if the tourism product declines in quality and value, this will result in a decline in the local tourism and visitor economy.

**Remote Areas**

Some areas of the District are valued for being wild and remote and should remain so. If the New Forest is to retain its integrity its needs must come first, before all visitor considerations. Areas of the forest have been identified as having a particular integrity. We would like to see a “Forest First” zoning principle applied to manage there areas. We believe these areas should remain free of all visitor infrastructures and, adjacent car parks and vehicular access should be removed. The zones surrounding the “Forest First” areas would, where appropriate, provide for walking, cycling, riding and access for people with

disabilities, all other forms of traffic being removed where possible. The areas outside of the two levels of zone would be subject to the appropriate provision of car parks and vehicular access.

The New Forest Committee's Sport & Recreation Sub Committee is currently developing policies and action to implement this approach. The Forestry Commission document "A Framework for Recreation" is an important part of this process. It is possible other parts of the District's environment would benefit from similar arrangements. In managing tourism in the District we will assess the opportunities and capacity of each site/area to absorb visitors. By further focusing on towns and villages and their communities, it will be possible to build up a detailed idea of where tourism development can take place throughout the district (see Planning).

## MAKING IT ALL WORK

### Chapter 4

In the previous chapters we have outlined the nature of local tourism. The following chapter describes the key areas of work that make up the ongoing contribution of New Forest District Council's tourism service and its partners in helping to deliver successful tourism management throughout the Destination.

## RESEARCH

### **Policy:**

- **To maintain an effective programme of research to inform all tourism management and development decisions.**

Recent research has provided a lot of information and data about local tourism which has given us much of the raw material necessary for our strategy. However, there are still many things to understand and it is important that a comprehensive programme of research is developed. It is essential that we work with partners to improve understanding of the economic, physical and social impact of all visitors in the countryside, coast and towns throughout the year. Tourism is an emotive subject and historically misunderstood by many. Research is crucial in helping to inform action that is appropriate and fair for all.

The Council's tourism and visitor research programme provides the baseline facts to inform decision making for development and marketing as well as ongoing management. In order to monitor and manage tourism, it is essential to know how to make the most of opportunities and minimise problems in a systematic and comprehensive manner. We are currently working with Bournemouth University's International Tourism Centre to develop a destination research model to do just this.

In seeking to achieve a regular collection of data we must be realistic and recognise our resources do simply not allow us to do all the necessary research. We therefore have to

rely on surveys undertaken by our partners that often do not use the same fields and structures. We will continue to promote the collection of appropriate information with all our partners especially the Forestry Commission, New Forest Tourist Association, and the New Forest Committee to improve the effectiveness of all tourism and visitor research.

**Objectives:**

- 1. To maintain the annual collection of information for the Council's tourism and visitor research programme.*
- 2. To have devised a comprehensive destination research programme including appropriate data collection by partners by September 1999.*
- 3. To continue work with partners especially the new Forest Committee to establish a comprehensive annual programme of environmental research and assessment of visitor and recreation activities throughout the District by September 1999.*

INFORMATION

**Policies:**

- **To provide consistent, well communicated information services for the benefit of all visitors and local people throughout the year that convey the special nature of the District and contribute to effective visitor management.**
- **To provide a strategic network of staffed Visitor Information Centres as the main points of contact with visitors and local people.**
- **To provide in partnership with other agencies, unmanned Visitor Information Points at agreed locations throughout the District to provide 24 hour information and support the main provision of staffed Visitor Information Centres.**

An effective network of visitor information provision is an essential part of tourism and visitor management. The Council operates one all year and two seasonally staffed Visitor Information Centres (VICs), supported by Visitor Information Points (VIPs) in larger settlements of the District. The aim of the service is to provide 24 hour information to local people and visitors enabling them to enjoy a high quality experience during their visit or excursion.

The service also seeks to gain everybody's understanding and support for the conservation of the Destination and its heritage. The staffed information service gives us the opportunity to get our messages across personally and provide a warm welcome at the same time.

We constantly strive to improve the high quality and effectiveness of the Council's visitor information network. We have recently renewed and increased the number of our VIPs and the quality of the information they provide 24 hours a day. We have also updated the services' computer network, to utilise the latest advances in electronic

information management. This will allow us to develop a commissionable pre-visit booking service for accommodation and excursions and improve our use of the Internet.

TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRES			
<i>Visitor per year</i>			
<i>Lyndhurst</i>	<i>Open all year</i>	<i>350,000</i>	<i>NFDC funded and managed</i>
<i>Ringwood</i>	<i>Easter – Sept</i>	<i>70,000</i>	<i>NFDC funded and managed</i>
<i>Lymington</i>	<i>Easter – Sept</i>	<i>70,000</i>	<i>NFDC funded and managed</i>
<i>Fordingbridge</i>	<i>Easter- Sept</i>	<i>21,000</i>	<i>Parish/commercial funded, STB managed</i>

To stimulate out of season business and spread the benefits of tourism throughout the year, we now want to operate all our staffed Visitor Information Centres all year round. All our staffed centres are used by local and staying visitors to buy bus and coach, day and season tickets. The current seasonal closing of our centres at Lymington and Ringwood therefore limits our ability to promote year round take up of public transport to visitors and local people, especially senior citizens.

Having recently reviewed our visitor Information Centre network we do not want to add to it except to investigate the opportunities for interceptor information provision and to extend satellite provision via local shops and businesses. To channel visitors on arrival to help reduce the length of car journeys and promote alternative methods of transport, we will therefore work with partners to provide point of entry information and investigate the possibility of a new gateway VIC. We are also concerned that the temporary VIC building at Ringwood is nearing the end of its life, and we therefore need to find a replacement, permanent building within the town centre area.

From white on brown road signs, visitor information centres, visitor information points, publications and marketing to the internet and information technology, the co-ordination of all efforts to communicate information consistently and effectively to all visitors however they travel is one of the strategy's most important tasks. More importantly, if key messages can be communicated at source before visitors leave home we can also seek to influence a shift towards alternative travel arrangements to cars. The provision of the alternative modes of visitor travel is one of the principle aims of the New Forest Transport Strategy (see Transportation).

**Objectives:**

1. *To improve the quality and services provided by the council's Visitor Information Service and review annually.*
2. *To provide all year opening at all the Council's Visitor Information Centres by April 2000.*
3. *to maintain and improve the Council's network of Visitor Information Points by establishing new sites in Brockenhurst and Beaulieu by March 1999.*

4. *To investigate the provision of a new gateway Visitor Information Centre at a main point of entry to New Forest District and determine by May 1999.*
5. *To secure the provision of a replacement and permanent VIC in Ringwood within the needs of the town centre as a whole by March 1999.*

## SIGNING

### **Policy:**

- **To recognise that good tourism sign posting and routing is an essential part of effective management and will in partnership with the Highway Authority and other interested parties actively encourage, establish and maintain a comprehensive tourism and visitor signing system throughout the District without compromising the conservation of the New Forest.**

Visitors need well defined routes and points of access to find their way around and enjoy our District. In conjunction with the Highway Authority, NFTA, and others, we will actively encourage good tourism and visitor traffic management and sign posting. The deregulation of white on brown visitor signs has provided an opportunity to review their use in our Destination.

We have developed a joint White on Brown Tourism Signing Strategy with NFTA, which has the support of Hampshire County Council and the New Forest Committee. The main aim of the signing strategy is to limit the potential proliferation of white on brown signs which would undermine the quality of the New Forest Heritage Area.

The White on Brown Strategy will be to establish Entry Information Points at strategic points of entry in association with existing car parks where visitor information applicable to the whole destination will be available. Settlements would each have centrally located Visitor Information Points adjacent to car parks providing leaflet dispensers and information about facilities/tourist attractions within the particular town or village. Or the provision of white on brown signs on each entry road into a town or village which incorporate symbols representing the visitor facilities available in that settlement.

It is believed that this approach would make most individual white on brown signs unnecessary. Some smaller settlements will be clustered together using one leaflet only. We are working with the trade to produce the leaflets and dispensing system to support this process.

Villages with information points will be signed with single information i directional signs. Smaller settlements will only need signs close to the centre of the village and not as a means of directing traffic to them from major roads. Finally, white on brown symbols incorporated into ordinary road signs for hard to find establishments and those businesses which are not adequately served by the above arrangements.

Visitor Information Points currently exist in Lyndhurst (2), Burley, Ringwood, Fordingbridge, Hythe, New Milton and Lymington (2). The Brockenhurst VIP will be

resited at the station in a programme which will also site a new VIP in Beaulieu by Easter 1999. It is hoped to attach paid for leaflet dispensers for the relevant Town and Village guide leaflet to each VIP when funds allow.

**Objective:**

- 1. To limit proliferation of White on Brown tourism Signs and to work within the framework and policies of "A Strategy for the New Forest" and the New Forest Transportation Strategy, to establish a comprehensive white on brown tourism signing system throughout the District by April 1999.*

INTERPRETATION

**Policy:**

- **To work with partners to enable the messages in all interpretative and educational activities are consistent and reflect the Council's policies.**

As already outlined, if visitors adopt a sense of stewardship during their visit then they are far more likely to behave in an appropriate manner. Interpretation and Education play an important part in developing this process.

We work in partnership with many interests to create the appropriate delivery and consistency of interpretation for visitors and local people. The most important are with the New Forest Committee, Ninth Centenary Trust, the Forestry Commission and New Forest Tourism Association. The role of the industry and the community as a whole can be greatly improved to help explain the special nature and needs of the Destination's landscape and cultural heritage. There is much unknown heritage and culture to be uncovered in every settlement area throughout the District.

We will continue to develop the New Forest Encounter, where local people who have spent their working life in the forest, introduce visitors to its beauties and secrets. By doing this we not only create local jobs and enjoyment for visitors, but also make sure that there is a better understanding of how special the District is and why we all need to look after it. This is of great benefit when working with journalists and broadcasters. By influencing how they report on the Destination, we can encourage them to include the messages we, and our partners, are working hard to establish. Similar interpretative opportunities can be developed throughout the District and we will investigate through the town and village tourism groups how the idea can develop into action. Interpretative work in the education sector also contributes to getting our messages across to future generations. We will therefore work to improve our student and education service in partnership with the New Forest Committee and Ninth Centenary Trust to ensure a consistency in all educational activity.

One way we plan to do this is by building on local artist and author Simon Chadwick's "New Forest Friends" children's storybook characters. The Council will investigate and make proposals for a "New Forest Friends" merchandising strategy that supports

interpretation and education activities and at the same time promotes an improvement in visitor behaviour and stewardship.

### ***Objectives***

- 1. To work with partners, especially the New Forest Committee and the Ninth Centenary Trust to improve the content and consistency of all interpretation and education services and agree a framework by March 1999.*
- 2. To investigate and make proposals for a "New Forest Friends" merchandising strategy by January 1999.*

## QUALITY STANDARDS

### **Polices:**

- To support the efforts of all national agencies to develop a national scheme for the compulsory registration, classification and quality grading of all sectors of the tourism industry and ensure its use in all activities.**
- To works with all interests to improve Quality Standards in all sectors of the local tourism industry.**

Creating customer confidence is one of the most important elements of tourism. In a special place such as the New Forest District, customer expectations are quite rightly high.

The proposed introduction of registration for all visitor businesses, accompanied by a nationally agreed scheme of classification and grading, which harmonises all existing grading schemes in a way that is understood by customers will benefit the industry greatly. There is still uncertainty whether any new system will also include an effective method of dealing with complaints. At a local level it is essential there is a system to deal effectively with all customer complaints so we will continue to lobby Government and the English Tourist Board to reach a satisfactory solution to help bring this about.

### ***Objective***

- 1. To lobby Government and the English Tourist Board to introduce appropriate arrangements to deal with customer complaints and include in all New Forest District Council/New forest Tourism Association activities by April 2000.*

## TRAINING

### **Policy:**

- To work with all interests to establish excellent levels of training in all sectors of the tourism industry in order to support the drive towards a quality destination.**

The quality standards issue is further compounded by the limited and somewhat confusing training opportunities throughout the nation's tourism industry. Within the District, NFTA have started to address this situation by organising training in partnership with the Southern Tourist Board through the Welcome Host programme especially for smaller operators such as B&B businesses.

By working with NFTA we will seek to create a much greater access to and take up of staff training for all tourism businesses by developing relationships with Hampshire Training & Enterprise Council, other organisations and local educational establishments. We will also continue our work on visitor related training development with Brockenhurst and Totton Colleges providing greater opportunities for members of local communities, especially young people, to enter the industry. There is also a role for NFTA in raising the local profile of careers in tourism and visitor industry and creating more availability of in house training programmes for existing staff.

***Objective:***

- 1. To work with the Southern Tourist Board, Hampshire Training and Enterprise Council, Brockenhurst and Totton Colleges, NFTA and other organisations to agree a framework for a comprehensive training programme for the local tourism industry by June 1999.*

**OPERATIONS**

**Policy:**

- To work with all interests to improve the environmental performance of all sectors of the tourism and visitor industry through the adoption of agreed standards and methods.**

We have persuaded the majority of the local industry that taking a green approach to their business will not only save money, improve efficiency and support the environment – it will also give them a key selling point to potential customers, especially those that are targeted by our joint marketing activities.

Under the umbrella of the Council's Local Agenda 21; "Greenprint" we have initiated a number of different interservice projects that will build into a practical work book and guide to provide opportunities for the industry to improve its environmental performance. By building on the framework established by the Rural Development Commission's Green Audit Kit we will produce a New Forest version which focuses on the special needs of visitors, local businesses and their operational environment.

The New Forest Green Tourism Kit will suggest Practical solutions on energy conservation, health promotion, environmental standards and ideas on how businesses can create their own green areas on site. Programmes for recycling and composting

waste materials will be developed along with ideas on how packaging for local produce could become reusable. There will also be a section on alternative transport to the car for visitor activities and ideas on developing interpretation projects and environmental training throughout the local visitor industry.

**Objective:**

- 1. To publish the New Forest Green Tourism Kit and assist NFTA in encouraging all its members to sign up to its principles by January 2000.*

MARKETING

**Policies:**

- **That all marketing activities convey the special nature of the District and contribute to effective management by regulating and attracting target audiences in appropriate numbers to the right place at the right time.**
- **To develop an all year destination, especially for serviced accommodation, increase length of stay and spend per capita, thereby increasing full time employment and consistency of income.**
- **To undertake all marketing activity in partnership with New Forest Tourism Association and all other interested parties.**
- **To develop and improve the range and quality of all the Council's published tourism material.**

We recognise that, appealing as a visit to the New Forest is, gone are the days when it sold itself. If we are to sustain a viable and prosperous tourism industry in the increasingly competitive world of tourism, we must have an effective marketing programme. The District is a destination which has an unchanging value rather than one driven by fashionable themes in the marketplace. We must therefore endeavour to control the marketplace rather than let it control us. The industry must market to stay in business, but do it in a way that is best for the long term interests of all and not the short term economic gains of a few.

Marketing is an essential aspect of good management as it helps to regulate and attract the right type and number of visitors to the right place at the right time especially during the Spring, Autumn and Winter, and influence them to behave in an appropriate manner during their visit before they leave home. By targeting those people we know are interested in the area and who will spend the most within the District, we can also increase the economic benefits per visit. The promotion of appropriate towns and villages will help reduce pressure on sensitive areas, bringing people to places where they can spend money at the same time. The properly planned operation of commercial attractions can have a similar function in diverting visitor pressure in economically beneficial ways.

Why people travel – to visit friends and relatives, for relaxation, recreation, business or special interests – is only part of the picture. How visitors make travel decisions is also important. The various sources of information and advice – guide books, brochures, friends and relatives, organisations and special interest groups and especially stories in the media, all affect visitor perception and choice of destination. The Council and its partners have done much to present a special and unique quality branding to all its tourism actions. The New Forest graphic device and NFTA’s acorn and oak leaf symbol are becoming synonymous with quality along with key messages included in all joint marketing activity. Emphasis is placed on selling the Destination’s unique environmental and cultural qualities. By stressing this special nature in all our activities, we try to create a feeling of respect and stewardship before visitors arrive. We are selective in our external marketing partnerships and only work with those media tour operators, travel companies and neighbouring local authorities who understand our position and are sympathetic to our goals. The strength of our relationship with NFTA enables us to act in a united and cohesive manner to protect and develop this approach.

For the last five years we have operated a joint “Little Acorns” Marketing Programme in partnership with New Forest Tourism Association. As a result, attendance and occupancy levels have been maintained and in some cases improved. Nevertheless, there is spare capacity before full efficiency is achieved. In the short term, our aim is to increase bed occupancy, which is crucial for serviced accommodation where it is low – particularly in mid week.

The “Little Acorns” marketing programme therefore also supports the important role of business tourism in improving serviced accommodation occupancy, especially midweek and generating return holiday visits from delegates. Whilst we have been extremely successful in improving occupancy and attendance from our domestic markets, limited economics of scale and resources have made it virtually impossible to break into the huge potential of overseas visitors. In recognising this and the undoubted circulation of visitors (especially overseas) between the New Forest and East Dorset, the Council has joined with all Dorset’s destinations to market the “Dorset and New Forest” holiday brand overseas.

New Forest Bed Occupancy By Sector 1997												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Hotels												
%	34	47	54	49	61	60	65	74	68	58	46	42
Bed & Breakfast												
%	10	18	25	34	46	47	62	69	49	42	20	11
Self Catering Cottages & Flats												
%	39	43	59	60	77	89	88	94	83	75	45	44
Holiday Parks - Touring Pitches												
%	4	7	4	26	32	41	64	73	32	40	11	17

Throughout our work we place major emphasis on producing our own printed material. We publish over a million pieces of print a year in a wide range of leaflets, brochures,

maps and guide books to support our marketing efforts, all with the same consistency of quality and message and contributing to overall visitor management aims and actions.

**Objectives:**

- 1. To manage the “Little Acorns” joint marketing programme in partnership with New Forest Tourism Association and review annually.*
- 2. to improve average serviced accommodation occupancy 5 percentage points by the end of 1999.*
- 3. To secure additional resources and support for the Council’s marketing activities through new partnerships, sponsorship and other forms of appropriate revenue raising activities and double the size of the fund by the end of 2000*

PLANNING

**Policies:**

- **To guide all tourism development within the policies of the Hampshire County Structure Plan, the New Forest District Local Plan and to work within the framework of “A strategy for the New Forest”.**
- **To recognise the needs of all tourism businesses to adapt to change within the constraints of the District.**
- **To resist the loss of existing serviced accommodation especially Hotels.**
- **To discourage proposals for new time share and self catering accommodation, except for small scale proposals which relate to the diversification of existing businesses and the re-use of redundant buildings.**
- **To promote tourism’s role in the regeneration of local settlements, especially Ringwood, Fordingbridge Hythe and Totton.**
- **To promote good practice in the best use of existing and redundant buildings for tourism and visitor purposes.**
- **To work with partners especially Town and Parish Councils to improve the quality of the visitor environment in settlements.**

Tourism activities and development should always respect the scale, nature and character of the place in which they are sited. Proposals for development should be tempered by the suitability and capacity of the site and the surrounding area to absorb visitors. In our towns and countryside, tourism can assist conservation by bringing sympathetic new uses to existing and redundant buildings.

The New Forest District Local Plan (see appendix 1) provides the policies that guide all local tourism development. Protecting existing Hotel bedstock is an important feature of the Local Plan. It recognises the pivotal role of the serviced accommodation sector as income generator and job provider, and accordingly gives this sector the greatest flexibility. There is a continued need to create a far more detailed idea of where tourism development can take place, directing pressures away from particularly sensitive areas to those more able to absorb growth without damage. By integrating this with local

transportation strategies, an infrastructure and planning framework will emerge which can guide all future tourism development in detail.

The main towns and villages in the New Forest are already visitor honeypots but could benefit from improvement to their visitor environment. However, in the rest of the District, particularly Ringwood, Fordingbridge, Totton and Hythe visitor numbers are particularly low. We are already working with partners especially through the Town and Village groups to define exactly what can be done to improve numbers in such locations. Visitors need to have a reason to visit, each place needs a special selling point. This means not only quality or unique retailing and services but visitor attractions; commercial and amenity. We will actively seek local stakeholders to develop these ideas.

The main problem in achieving appropriate tourism development has tended to be the gap between planning applicant's aspirations and the Council's planning policies. In recent years the gulf between the Industry and the Local Planning Authority has closed considerably through the existence of our partnership with NFTA. We will continue to develop our liaison role in tourism related planning matters to improve mutual understanding between the Industry and The Planning Authority and thus reduce the cost of wasted applications by the Industry and the fighting of appeals by the Authority. We will also continue to advise and assist the local planning framework to guide all tourism development throughout the Destination in the future.

***Objectives:***

- 1. To provide research and advice to help the Local Planning Authority produce a detailed planning framework to guide all development of the District's tourism infrastructure by January 2000.*
- 2. To establish a close liaison between the Local Planning Authority and the visitor industry especially NFTA on all tourism related development ideas and planning applications and create an agreed system by January 1999.*

**TRANSPORTATION**

**Policies:**

- **To ensure that all tourism activity and development in the District has regard to the appropriate Highway Authority Transportation Strategy.**
- **To recognise that within the District there are potentially perfect Car Free areas and where appropriate all tourism activity should utilise alternative modes of transport especially walking and cycling.**
- **To work with partners to establish coach, rail and air links to the District from target UK markets and ports of entry.**
- **To work with Hampshire County Council/New Forest Tourism Association and other partners to establish public transport links between all settlements and visitor attractions in the District.**

National traffic levels are predicted to rise considerably within the next twenty years. This is without doubt the biggest threat to the District as an area of international importance for wildlife, a place to live and as a tourism destination. The way local people and visitors gain access to and get around the District for leisure purposes and their effect on the road network is one of the very basic issues for local tourism management.

The Destination is a special place. Peace, tranquillity and the slow pace and way of life are its core values. The strategy for transport must therefore be to slow down traffic and eliminate it wherever possible. If this can be done, not only will the community and environment benefit, but the Destination will be perceived as more attractive, especially to staying visitors attracted by our marketing.

A lot of work has already been done over the last thirty years by various agencies, especially the Forestry Commission, to physically regulate visitors and access within the Crown Lands. It is now time for these regulations and those of other agencies to be increased if the integrity of the whole District and its values as a unique destination is to survive in the future. The hardening of access measures will have a knock on effect throughout the District and beyond, however it is crucial that these are linked with proposals for zoning recreational activities, visitor routing systems and proposals for integrated visitor transport.

The mode of visitor transport, how visitors get to and around the District, is therefore a major issue. There are many ideas on options of what could be done. As over 90% of visits are made by private car, park and ride sounds an attractive concept, but within the District it is hard to see how this could work because of the size of car parks needed and the lack of public bus services and connections.

However, with a mainline rail network linking three of the main visitor catchment/generators (Dorset, Hampshire and London/Home Counties) a lot more visitor use must be made of the train and this will be encouraged. We will continue to work with South West Trains, Wilts and Dorset Buses and other local transport operators to improve visitor use of public transport in an attempt to reduce car use by all groups of visitor. Many national and local coach companies operate tours of the District, and we will work to create designated coach routes and parking facilities that only use appropriate roads/destinations and contribute to the aim of the tourism and visitor management strategy.

We already promote car free holidays and we will find ways to include the New Forest Encounter idea in the process. We are currently working with partners to create a network of cycle routes and long-distance walks to create further alternatives to car use and improve visitor management. We will also continue to work with Hampshire, Wiltshire and Dorset County Councils, the New Forest Committee, and New Forest Tourism Association to ensure that all tourism and visitor activity is properly linked to the appropriate Transportation Strategy.

The New Forest Transportation Strategy will provide a comprehensive plan to manage through traffic and local transportation activities. There are a wide range of measures available, relying on incentives and disincentives to drivers and other travellers. These include restrictions to vehicle access but improved public and alternative transport opportunities. The locations of existing walks, rides, cycle ways, car parks, campsites and other visitor facilities will be re-planned where possible to minimise traffic within the forest whilst also providing for increased visitor capacity in other appropriate locations such as the Avon Valley and Coast.

The area covered by the New Forest Transportation Strategy is the New Forest Heritage Area and Avon Valley. The towns of Lymington and New Milton lie outside the designated strategy area and will be subject to a separate Coastal Towns Transportation Strategy. Totton, Hythe and the Waterside lie within the area covered by Southampton Area Transportation Strategy and there will also be links with Wiltshire and Dorset Council's proposals for our western and northern borders.

The visitor transport needs of all these communities and the transport needs of the New Forest do overlap and impinge upon each other, This wider "area of influence" will need to be considered when evolving strategic tourism and visitor transportation initiatives. Tourism can be the catalyst and incentive to create a far better integration of all transport throughout the District and beyond. Consultation with neighbouring Highway Authorities will play an important role in this.

***Objectives:***

- 1. To work with HCC/NFTA and tour operators to improve the management of local coach and car routing and parking arrangements and establish an integrated visitor routing system for the whole District by January 1999.*
- 2. to work with HCC to provide transportation information and associated ticketing services through the Council's Visitor Information services by April 1999.*
- 3. to work with HCC, the Forestry Commission and others to investigate the use of car park and other transportation charging mechanisms for visitors and establish an agreed strategy by January 1999.*
- 4. to work with HCC , the Forest Commission and others to establish a comprehensive District wide on road and off road cycling network by March 1999.*

## APPENDIX 1: DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN TOURISM POLICIES

### Chapter 5

**The New Forest District Local Plan, Prepared by New Forest District Council, provides detailed planning policies to guide and control the use of land, against which applications for planning permission will be determined.**

Although not yet adopted as a statutory local plan, it provides the most up-to-date expression of the Local Planning Authority's planning policies for tourism within the New Forest District.

When finally adopted, the District Local Plan will replace the current local plans – Forest and Downlands Villages Local Plan, the Avon Valley Local Plan, The coastal Towns Local Plan and the New Forest District East Local Plan. A brief summary of the New Forest District Local Plan tourism policies is as follows:

#### **The New Forest**

##### **In the New Forest the tourism policies of the New Forest District Local Plan:-**

- only allow new hotels or guest houses through the change of use of existing buildings in Lyndhurst, Ashurst, Brockenhurst, Bransgore and Sway;
- allow minor extensions to existing hotel and guest houses to help maintain an existing business;
- seek to retain the existing stock of hotel and guest house accommodation;
- allow small scale bed and breakfast accommodation to be provided in private dwellings;
- do not allow new holiday parks, or caravan and camping sites, but allow up-grading of facilities on existing holiday parks, and more limited up-grading on existing caravan and camping sites;
- do not allow the establishment of new visitor attractions, but allow minor enhancements to be made to existing facilities providing they do not significantly increase the visitor capacity.

#### **The Countryside**

##### **In the countryside outside the New Forest the tourism policies the New Forest District Local Plan:-**

- allow the change of use of existing buildings in the countryside to hotel, guest house, and bed and breakfast accommodation;
- seek to retain the existing stock of hotel and guest house accommodation;
- do not allow new holiday parks, caravan or camping sites, except for the relocation of an existing site from within the New Forest;

- encourage the relocation of pitches from sensitive areas in holiday parks, caravan and camping sites;
- so not allow extensions or an increase in pitches on holiday parks, caravan and camping sites, but allow up-grading of facilities on existing holiday parks and caravan sites, and more limited up-grading of camping sites;
- allow new visitor attractions through the change of use or conversion of an existing building;
- allow limited extensions or alterations to existing visitor attractions.

### **Towns & Villages**

#### **In the main towns and villages outside the New Forest the tourism policies of the New Forest District Local Plan:-**

- allow the development of new hotels, guest houses and other tourist accommodation;
- allow new visitor attractions and the extension of existing facilities.

## APPENDIX 2: A STRATEGY FOR THE NEW FOREST

**A Strategy For The New Forest, was published by the new Forest Committee in April 1996 and sets out a policy framework to ensure that the New Forest remains a special area. It represents the commitment of all the members of the New Forest Committee to achieve what is best for the forest and draws on local opinion resulting from public consultation carried out in 1995. the Strategy contains a range of strategic objectives and recommended actions which are grouped under four main themes:**

### Working Together

The New Forest Committee is an independent non-statutory body set up to co-ordinate the work of the various Central and Local Government organisations with responsibilities for the management of the Forest. We are committed to working together for the protection and long term conservation and enhancement of the New Forest. Working Together identifies a range of actions to maintain and improve the close co-ordination of work in the Forest.

### Conserving The Forest

Ask a resident or visitor to the New Forest what makes the area unique, and you may receive a wide range of replies. The character of the Forest stirs people in different ways, but all will agree it is a very special place. We believe that the traditional character of the New Forest is the sum of many elements including landscape, history, archaeological remains, sense of place, cultural associations, traditional practices such as farming, forestry and commoning, environmental quality, wildlife communities and species and the built environment. Conserving The Forest identifies a range of actions to conserve and enhance the traditional character of the New Forest.

### Living In The Forest

The traditional character of the area is inextricably linked with the activities and traditions of the people who live here. The New Forest heritage Area boundary reflects this relationship and has been drawn up to include essential grazing land which is used in association with the common lands of the New Forest. In particular, farming, forestry, and commoning are three key tools for managing the New Forest landscape. Tourism is also vital to the economy of the New Forest. It is important to harness the elements of these activities which can bring most benefit to the Forest.

Living In The Forest identifies a range of actions to maintain and develop activities which both support the local economy and conserve and enhance the Forest's traditional character.

## Enjoying The Forest

Millions of people come to enjoy the New Forest each year. As a recreational resource it provides a wonderful variety of attractions, facilities and experiences. The New Forest is more intensively visited than five of the National Parks and the huge numbers of visitors bring with them pressures on the road system, wildlife and traditional management activities of the Forest. We believe that a policy of meeting all recreational demand would not be in keeping with the priority that must be given to the conservation of the Forest.

Traffic levels are continually rising, with large volumes of traffic crossing the Forest each day. During peak holiday times traffic congestion in the New Forest is intense, and there is growing concern about the effects of traffic on Forest residents, wildlife, air pollution and noise levels, and Commoners' livestock.

Enjoying The Forest identifies a framework for recreation and transportation which balances these needs with the conservation of the traditional character of the New Forest, so that future generations may also be able to enjoy the special qualities of the New Forest.

**The strategy identifies three strategic objectives and three recommendations specifically relating to tourism:**

**Strategic Objective SO4.5i**

To foster the concept that the New Forest is a special place devoted to conservation and quiet enjoyment.

**Strategic Objective SO4.5ii**

To ensure that tourism remains an important but not dominant component of the New Forest economy and makes a positive contribution to the conservation of the New Forest.

**Strategic Objective SO4.5iii**

To ensure that the marketing and management of tourism reflects the objectives of the strategy for recreation.

**Recommended Action:**

RA4.5a Identify good practice in sustainable tourism and foster partnership in its development through liaison with commercial interests and the local community.

RA4.5b Undertake environmental studies of major campsites and self-catering accommodation provision within the New Forest.

RA4.5c Ensure that a New Forest Tourism and Visitor Strategy is prepared, within the framework of A Strategy for the New Forest.