

New Forest Biodiversity Forum

Green and Blue Horizons - Green Recovery Challenge Fund project

Paul Walton (New Forest National Park Authority)

From September 2021 to March 2023, the New Forest National Park Authority worked with four partners to deliver the Green and Blue Horizons project, an £800,000 scheme funded by the Green Recovery Challenge Fund. The partners were: Freshwater Habitats Trust, Countryside Education Trust, and the New Forest Commoners Defence Association.

The project incorporated four main themes:

- 1) Nature conservation and restoration, including ecosystem restoration and species recovery. Extending the network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), creating wildlife-rich corridors, and linking New Forest habitats to Bournemouth and Southampton.
- 2) Nature-based solutions, particularly for climate change mitigation and adaptation. Reducing land-based emissions by restoring habitats, working with farmers, landowners, and land managers to develop climate resilience.
- 3) Connecting people with nature. Developing volunteering and outreach programmes focusing on those with most to gain, who will become more connected with nature and gain new pathways to employment.
- 4) Jobs and skills. Creating and retaining jobs across several partners and developing a thriving volunteer workforce and green skills hub in the National Park.

The project was one of a number of successful funding applications made by the National Park Authority. However, the funding landscape is increasingly challenging, with competitive national funds often brought forward at short notice, accompanied by short deadlines. Closer collaboration, knowledge sharing, and the development of a project portfolio will enable the partners to be in the best position to respond to new funding opportunities as they emerge.