

New Forest National Park: a case study

Credit: Andrew Bell – New Forest National Park



National Parks like Local Authorities, the Police and the Fire and Rescue services are signatories to the Mapping Services Agreement and are therefore eligible to use the NLPG in their day-to-day business. National Parks are independent organisations that operate in a local government framework and are funded by central government.

Founded in 2005 the New Forest National Park covers 571 square kilometres of South West Hampshire and South East Wiltshire. The Park Authority is responsible for a range of functions in its work to conserve and enhance the New Forest and to promote understanding and enjoyment of the things that make it special. As well as its nature conservation and visitor information responsibilities, services include education, recreation and archaeology. Since 2006 the Park Authority has had responsibility for planning within the Park boundaries.

The Park area overlaps three different local authorities, New Forest District Council, Test Valley Borough Council and the new Wiltshire unitary authority created in June 2009. The Park is also within easy reach of three other authorities, Southampton, Bournemouth and Christchurch, which have sizeable urban populations.

Most planning authorities have a responsibility for street naming and numbering and are also the returning authorities for the NLPG, however this is not the case with National Parks. This represents a fundamental disconnect which is partially remedied in this case by the adoption of the NLPG, a modern planning system and a corporate web based GIS which have all been in place since day one. The adoption of the NLPG came through a recommendation by New Forest District Council which ceded its responsibility for planning within the Park's boundaries when it was set up.

The Park Authority takes a daily feed of the NLPG from the national hub which enables it to deal with most planning applications. Being a National Park, with tight planning controls, the number of new

properties is quite small. When planning applications are received for new properties the Park Authority has to liaise with the relevant Local Authority in order to obtain a new address and UPRN.

The NLPG is used as the central gazetteer across the authority. In addition to the 30 users of the planning system it is used by the 14 specialist GIS users who support a wide range of authority activities. The whole organisation amounting to 70 permanent staff use the web based GIS system. The NLPG also underpins the Authority's contacts management system. This is a system built in house which uses browser based web forms. It includes any organisation or individual that the Park Authority has a relationship with including suppliers, contractors, consultants and the various different groups which the authority manages. Because each contact takes its address from the NLPG, the system is at once authoritative, unlikely to include duplicate records and is easily maintained.

The NLPG is also the gazetteer used by the 'maps online' part of the Authority's public facing website and contains interactive maps of the New Forest National Park and the surrounding area. The site provides visitors, residents and businesses with easily accessible, up-to-date information about the National Park and facilities provided within it.

Elsewhere the NLPG is also used for distribution of the Park Authority's 'Park Life' publication which is now sent to over 85,500 addresses both in and around the Park. Before the NLPG was used delivery was patchy and complaints were received from residents who were not receiving the publication.

"The NLPG is used right across the organisation and is embedded in all of our systems. It provides us with a consistent source of addresses for every application area but most people remain completely unaware of its presence, and it's importance in enabling the efficient provision of information to them," said Andrew Bell, the Park Authority's GIS Officer.

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Key benefits

- Single address gazetteer used by all systems
- Enabled smooth transition of planning responsibilities from Local Authorities
- Enables simple consistent property based search
- Very little input required by the Park Authority

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