



Promotion and Guidance for Recreation on Ecologically Sensitive Sites



# Project Handbook



Reconciling the needs of recreation and conservation





# ***PROGRESS Project Handbook***

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# Acknowledgements

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**Handbook CD-ROM:** Please note that to access files on the Handbook CD-ROM you will require Adobe Acrobat Reader version 5.0 or above.

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## *Glossary*

FC – Forestry Commission  
ONF – Office National des Forêts  
CDT – Comité Départemental du Tourisme  
NF – New Forest  
EU – European Union  
AFFF – Association des Amis de la Forêt de Fontainebleau  
GNB – Ground Nesting Bird  
ODPM – Office of the Deputy Prime Minister  
TSE – Tourism South East  
GIS – Geographical Information System  
GPS – Global Positioning System  
RSPB – Royal Society for the Protection of Birds  
HQ – Head Quarters  
NFTA – New Forest Tourism Association  
PIP – Public Information Point  
B&B – Bed and Breakfast







# 1.0 Executive Summary





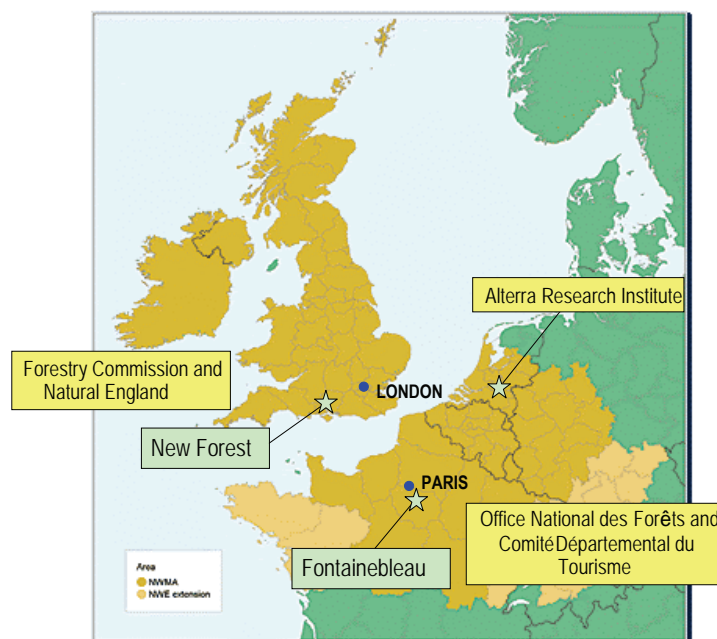
## 1.0 Executive Summary: The *PROGRESS* project at a glance

**When?** A four-year project running from Oct-2003 to Oct-2007

**Where?** The New Forest (England) and the Forest of Fontainebleau (France).

**Who?** The project involved a partnership of five organisations:

- **Forestry Commission (FC)** (lead partner and land manager of the New Forest);
- **Office National des Forêts (ONF)** (land manager of Fontainebleau forest);
- **Alterra** (providing computer based ecological and recreational models to aid decision making);
- **Natural England** (previously Countryside Agency, providing funding for extensive surveys and research);
- **Comité Départemental du Tourisme (CDT)** (Local tourism organisation responsible for promoting Fontainebleau Forest).



**Figure 1: Location of project partners in Europe**

In addition, the project worked with an international steering group of experts and local stakeholder groups.

**Why?** Both forests have seen a significant increase in visitor numbers over recent decades, which has had visible effects on both areas, their wildlife and ecology (e.g. erosion problems, disturbance of ground nesting birds, littering, increase risk of forest fire from BBQs).

**What?** The project aimed to reconcile the needs of conservation and recreation in both forests through both on-site actions (e.g. by channelling visitors to more robust sites), and communication and education actions (to increase user awareness, sense of ownership and responsibility). In addition, another aim was to develop partnerships with local tourism providers, in order to encourage sustainable forest management and recreation in the future.

## How?

- Combining ONF and FC expertise, knowledge and suggestions of local users and extensive surveys and studies, to create a clear picture of the problems to be tackled.
- Developing and implementing (in communication with local stakeholder groups) a series of community and on-site actions. Examples include modification of sites by improving existing trails and signage, creating and promoting new trails and sites to channel people to more robust areas and holding community workshops)
- Developing partnerships with local tourism providers, and promoting key environmental and conservation messages through them.

## Achievements

As a result of the project, a large number of pilot measures have been implemented, in both the New Forest and Fontainebleau. These include on-site works like improving signage, car parks, and stabilising trails; as well as creating new information points and special signs at sensitive sites, designed to channel visitors. More robust sites have been opened up, and visits to them encouraged through guide maps and easy access. Communication has been enhanced through community workshops, site surgeries, and public opinion surveys. In addition, codes of conduct and information packs have been produced.

PROGRESS has also given rise to several wider ranging initiatives. These include the development of a sustainability accreditation scheme for local tourism businesses and associations in Fontainebleau; and reconsideration of the suitability of the New Forest's whole car parking network. The project has also been brought to the attention of a wider audience of land managers and planners through international conferences and publications.

Although the results of many of the pilot programmes will not be seen for some years (e.g. work on reducing disturbance to ground nesting birds in the New Forest), results from the first post-implementation monitoring surveys of on-site actions are generally positive. They have allowed the FC and ONF to review their work, and adapt it to ensure sustainability in the future. Furthermore, communication materials - codes of conduct, NF visitor packs, and so on - have been well received; indeed, requiring in some cases, several reprints.

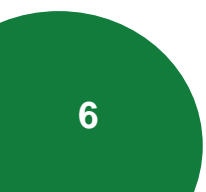
## Lessons Learnt

- In addition to email, phone and fax, the value of face-to-face meetings between partners should not be underestimated. They can save time and, in the long run, help prevent misunderstandings.
- The importance of establishing at the outset, in detail, precisely what is expected by, and of, each partner. For example: what kind of data, in which format, and quantity? Getting expectations right can help reduce uncertainties and conflicts (e.g. not having the correct data for modelling).
- The time required for stakeholder consultation is often underestimated and can require a degree of compromise.
- Marketing an event is key and schools need months of notice to plan trips.
- Utilisation of existing resources is important: for instance, publications, local events, and open days.
- The importance of allowing for, and being able to deal with, changes in budget, funding, status of organisations, legislation, etc.
- Work closely with local groups, tourism providers, and the general public. Keeping them informed, and allowing them to participate in the decision making process, is a key part of sustainable recreation management.



## 2.0 Introduction and Background



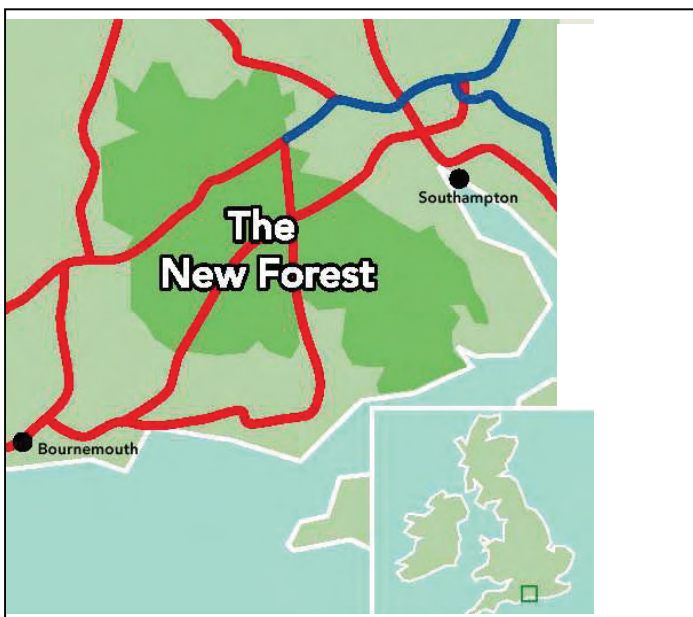


## 2.1 Introducing the New Forest and the Forest of Fontainebleau

The New Forest and the Forest of Fontainebleau represent two of Europe's most precious landscapes. Rich in ecological diversity and supporting a number of internationally rare species of wildlife, the two forests are also extremely popular destinations for millions of visitors every year.

The two forests have very different characters and offer their own particular charms, but in both cases the rise in visitor numbers and subsequent recreational activity is bringing the needs of conservation and recreation into conflict. It is the aim of the PROGRESS project to reconcile these different needs, securing in the process these two European treasures for generations to come.

### 2.1.1 Location and statistics



**Location:** South coast of England, 110 km south west of London

**Area:** New Forest National Park boundary = 57,086 ha  
Crown Lands = 25,100 ha

**Population:** 34,400 within the National Park Boundary

**Visitors:** Over 13.5 million per year.

**Transport links:** Easy access from M3 and M27 motorways. Mainline railway from London to Weymouth has 4 stops within the New Forest.



**Location:** Northern Central France, 65 km south east of central Paris

**Area:** 23,650 ha made up of three separate forests: Fontainebleau national forest, Trois Pignons, and Commanderie national forest

**Population:** 120,000 in the urban areas of Fontainebleau and Melun at the gateway to the forest

**Visitors:** 13 million per year

**Transport links:** Easy road access via the E15/A6 and N7. Mainline railway from Paris stops throughout Fontainebleau Forest.

Figure 2: Maps of the New Forest (Top) and Fontainebleau (Bottom) (from PROGRESS project "A tale of two forests")

### 2.1.2 History

Both forests have long and interesting histories stretching back to their establishment as royal hunting forests.



**Commoning in the New Forest**



**Denecourt and historical views of Fontainebleau** (@ aaff website [www.aaff.fr](http://www.aaff.fr))

The heathlands of both forests have been grazed by animals owned by local residents. Although this practice was gradually phased out in Fontainebleau, it continues in the New Forest under the “Charter of the Forest” (1877). This set aside land for commoners to practice their traditional rights, including those of pasture. The Forest Law that came into force under this Act is administered by the Verderers (a body which acts as custodians of the forest), who must be consulted over much FC activity. These differences in practice have been significant in shaping the two forests throughout the centuries. In the New Forest, grazing has enabled the maintenance of its now characteristic patchwork of woodland stands and open heathland. In Fontainebleau, the halting of grazing allowed large-scale reforestation and, today, woodland covers 80% of the forest.

Timber production has played a significant role in both forests and was the primary economic use of the New Forest in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, when timber was used to build Royal Navy war ships. In Fontainebleau, oak was planted from around 1720 for timber production, followed by pine a century later. These practices have transformed the appearance of the forests and remain economically important, albeit on a reduced scale.

### 2.1.3 Conservation

Both forests provide rich and varied habitats (see figures 3 and 4 overleaf). These are typified by the New Forest’s tapestry of heathlands, woodland stands, valley mires and wetlands; and Fontainebleau’s diverse geology, varied geography and the effects of three different micro-climate systems. In the New Forest, valley mires support ground nesting birds, such as snipe, curlew, lapwing, and redshank. In the nesting season, conservation issues arise due to disturbance of ground habitats by recreation users. In Fontainebleau, the sandy nature of the soil increases its vulnerability to erosion. For these and associated reasons, the two forests are granted a high level of environmental protection.

Both areas have been awarded the status of Natura 2000 sites under European Directives and contain Special Protection Zones (SPZ) and Special Conservation Zones (SCZ). These support rare, endangered, or vulnerable natural habitats and species of flora or fauna. The New Forest has also been declared a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and, more recently, a National Park. Fontainebleau forest has been designated a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and a “Forêt de protection”. It contains 6417



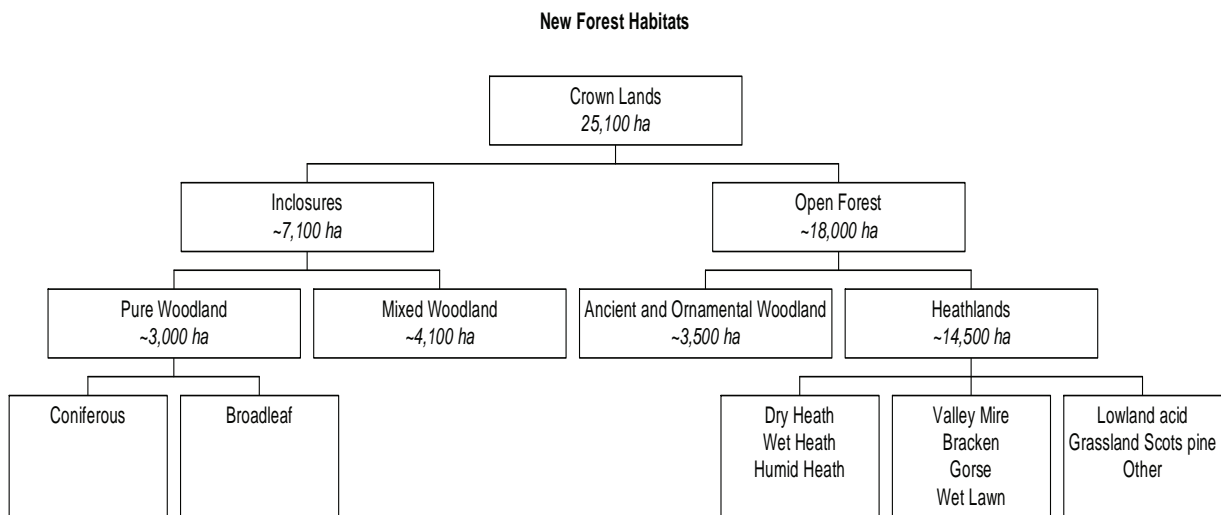
**Ground Nesting Birds in the New Forest** (clockwise from top left: Redshank, Curlew, Lapwing & Snipe)



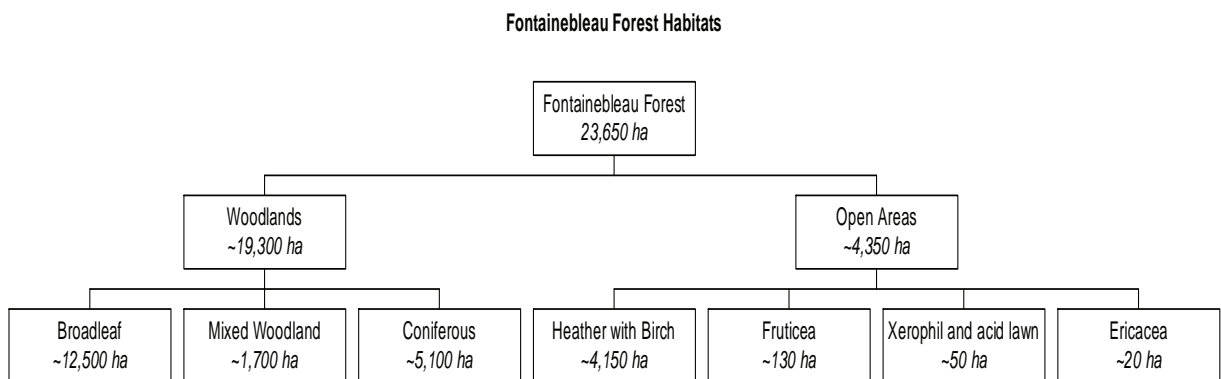


**A young man in the forest of Fontainebleau (Renoir 1886)**  
© Wikipedia

hectares of designated biological reserves, which have built upon a legacy from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was then that romantic landscape artists, led by Théodore Rousseau, campaigned for the creation of protected artistic reserves, to prevent foresters from planting or cutting down trees.



**Figure 3: Land/habitat classification in the New Forest**



**Figure 4 Land/habitat classification in Fontainebleau Forest**

### 2.1.4 Recreation

In both forests tourism was established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the New Forest, the first influx of visitors came from London following the construction of the railway line through the forest. In Fontainebleau, tourism took off when a series of hiking trails were way-marked by Denecourt, who was a former soldier in Napoleon’s army.

The 1970s saw huge increases in visitor numbers in both forests, with walking, dog-walking, horse riding, cycling, camping and picnicking being the most popular activities in the New Forest, and walking, cycling and rock climbing being the most popular in Fontainebleau. At this time, issues

arose, particularly in the New Forest, as a result of 'wild' camping and cars driving across the Open Forest. Subsequently car parks and campsites were introduced and roadside ditches were put in place to stop people driving across the Open Forest.



*Recreation in the New Forest*

Both forests remain popular for recreation and Fontainebleau has become one of Europe's most popular climbing destinations.



*Recreation in Fontainebleau Forest*

### 2.1.5 Key points

- The New Forest and forest of Fontainebleau are both exceptional landscapes of international importance supporting a diverse wealth of flora and fauna
- The New Forest and Fontainebleau have long histories dating back from their establishment as royal hunting reserves which have shaped the local landscape and rural practices
- Both forests have gone through eras of highly intensive timber production. This has had a lasting effect and remains an important part of land managers' work
- The management of the rapid expansion in recreation and leisure from the 1970s has had a lasting legacy
- Conflicts between recreation and conservation are now evident and solutions need to be found in order to preserve and protect the regions now and in the future

### 2.1.6 Further reading

- More detailed information on wildlife and habitats, history and conservation in each forest (**CD-ROM: \\\ Introduction the New Forest and Fontainebleau Forest**)
- New Forest SAC Management Plan and ONF Natura 2000 Management Plan (**CD-ROM: \\\ Introduction the New Forest and Fontainebleau Forest**)
- The PROGRESS website: <http://www.progress-eu.info/uk.htm>
- The FC PROGRESS project WebPage: <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/inf-d-6aqeua>
- The Fontainebleau Tourism Fontainebleau Forest WebPage: <http://www.fontainebleau-tourisme.com/pays-fontainebleau/foret-de-fontainebleau/foret.asp>

## 2.2 Why was PROGRESS needed?

It is recognised that both forests are of great importance as habitats and conservation areas. Close to major conurbations, they support lucrative tourism industries and have attracted a significant rise in visitor numbers over the last three decades. As a result, land managers have witnessed increasing stresses placed on the ecology and wildlife. Such effects have been visible, for example, in the erosion of the sandy ground covering the Fontainebleau massif, particularly at the popular visitor sites of Sables du Cul de Chien, the Gorges d'Aprémont and the Gorges de Franchard.



*Erosion in Fontainebleau*

In the New Forest, although the high concentration of visitors at popular sites does not lead to erosion on the scale seen in Fontainebleau, other issues do arise. Recreational use can seriously impact on wildlife habitats and populations, for example visitors - and more often their dogs - wandering off established trails and disturbing ground nesting birds.

The recreational demands of millions of people per year, visiting each forest, can clearly compromise conservation efforts. Moreover, visitor numbers are likely to continue to increase, as European governments and agencies encourage people to take up 'green' leisure pursuits to improve their health.



*Verge parking in the New Forest*

All the evidence underpins the essential role for sustainable recreation management. The question PROGRESS poses, and aims to answer, is how best to reconcile recreational needs with those of conservation. How, indeed, to achieve the balance between protecting and promoting the strong cultural heritage of the two forests, without unduly restricting the freedom of access visitors have previously enjoyed.

### 2.2.1 Key Conflicts between recreation and conservation

- **Erosion** caused as a result of recreational activity
- **Disturbance to wildlife** due to recreational activity in sensitive habitats
- **Trampling** of vegetation and widening of paths as a result of high visitor numbers
- **Litter** produced by visitors
- Increased danger of **forest fires**
- **Vandalism**, especially on the urban fringe of the two forests
- **Car parking on verges**

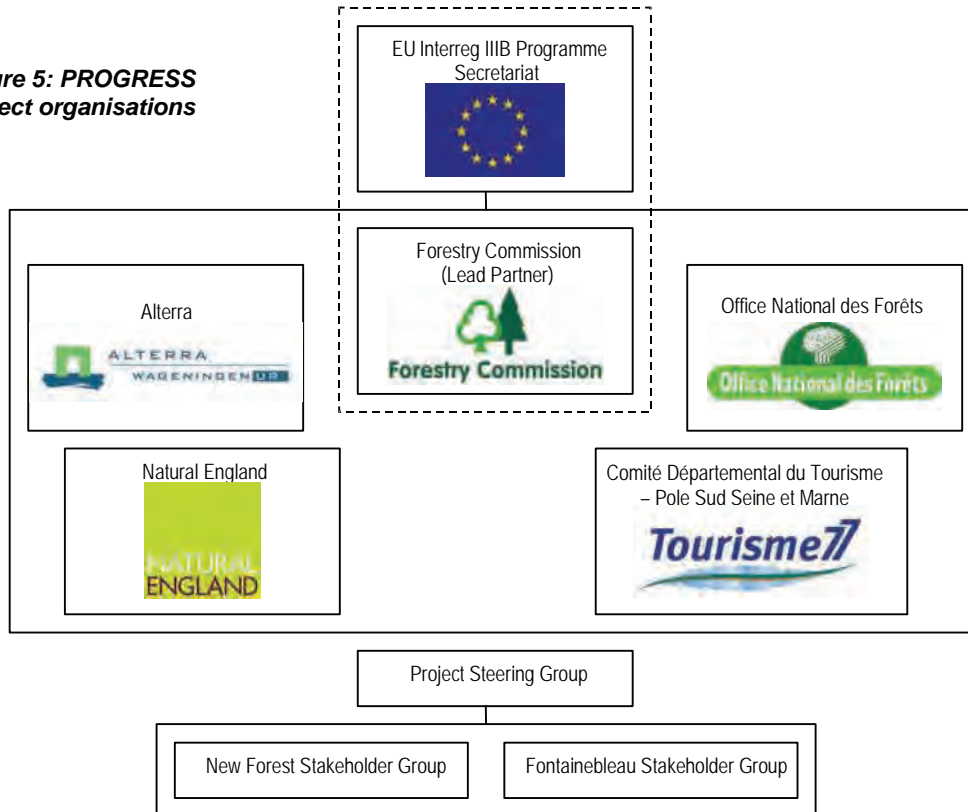
### 2.2.2 Further reading

- Studies into human and dog disturbance of GNBs, effects of recreational access on national parks, wildlife and implications for conservation. (**CD-ROM: \\Background Studies**)
- Surveys of bird numbers in the New Forest (**CD-ROM: \\SurveysNew Forest\\Bird**)
- Original EU funding PROGRESS bid document (**CD-ROM: \\PROGRESS documents\\Original EU Funding Bid Document**)

## 2.3 Who was involved in the project?

PROGRESS was a partnership project, jointly funded by the EU Interreg IIIB Programme and the partner organisations shown below. Figure 5 illustrates the relationships between the organisations. The project teams in each country were responsible for the implementation of the project's aims, objectives and actions, in their respective areas.

**Figure 5: PROGRESS project organisations**



In addition to these five partners, an international steering group and local stakeholder groups helped shape and direct the PROGRESS project.

The **steering group** was composed of 12 specialists representing six European nations. Their role was to advise the project management group and help review and guide the project's pilot actions. Meeting approximately every six months, this group also helped stimulate a broader international debate around the issues concerned.



**Steering group meeting**



**New Forest Stakeholders**

In contrast to this international group with a broad range of specialities, the local **stakeholder forums** established in the New Forest and Forest of Fontainebleau had a very specific interest in their own particular forest. These groups consisted of between 20-30 individuals representing a variety of interested parties, such as local businesses, recreational user groups and conservationists. These groups helped the respective land manager identify the conflicts between conservation and recreation arising within

the forests, locate the key ‘problem’ sites and compile a list of possible actions, eventually agreeing on a series of pilot actions to be undertaken.

### 2.3.1 Further reading

- Details and information about the PROGRESS partners and stakeholders (with links to their respective websites) (**CD-ROM:\Partners & Stakeholders**)

## 2.4 Project Management

The **Project Management Team** was based in the Forestry Commission’s office in the New Forest. As the lead partner, this group managed the day-to-day running of the project, was responsible for the project actions in the New Forest and co-ordinated the actions of the other project partners. Through the course of the project, this team underwent considerable changes in structure and personnel from that originally envisaged as illustrated in figure 6.

The project teams within ONF and CDT also underwent changes in personnel. Such changes are likely to be inevitable within a project spanning a number of years, and it is essential that these are taken into consideration during the planning stage of any project. The PROGRESS project was able to cope well with these changes, with existing staff taking on new roles and recruitment taking place where necessary.

The Project Management Team...	
...as conceived at the start of the project consisted of...	...as it consisted for the second half of the project...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Project Manager (part-time)</li> <li>▪ Project Co-ordinator (full-time)</li> <li>▪ Project Finance Manager (part-time)</li> <li>▪ Project Ranger (full-time)</li> <li>▪ Project Communications Manager (full-time)</li> <li>▪ Project Administration Officer (full-time)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Project Manager (part-time)</li> <li>▪ Project Co-ordinator (full-time)</li> <li>▪ Project Ranger (full-time)</li> <li>▪ Project Communications Manager (part-time)</li> </ul>

**Figure 6: The PROGRESS project management team**

A Project Co-ordinator and Assistant ran the project (in addition to their normal working duties) in ONF and Alterra. Within each of the partners, the project staff were supported by the organisation’s other staff, often facilitating the pilot actions on the ground and undertaking administrative duties.

Approximately every six months, Project Management meetings took place, between the project teams from each partner, in order to review the project’s progress and formulate future actions.

## 2.5 Project Finance

The PROGRESS project was jointly funded by the EU Interreg IIIB Programme and the partner organisations:

In the New Forest, funding came from; the EU (50%), the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) (16%), the FC (22%) and Natural England (12%). In Fontainebleau, in addition to EU funding, which accounted for 46% of the implementation costs, ONF also received funding from local co-financiers: Conseil Général de Seine-et-Marne (county council of Seine et Marne) (13%), Agence des Espaces de la Région d’Ile-de-France (Public Forests Agency for the Ile de France) (17%), ONF (22%) and The Man and Biosphere Reserve Association (2%).

## 2.6 Key Objectives of PROGRESS

The issues and conflicts that arise when the needs of conservation and recreation meet in one region are not particular to the New Forest or Fontainebleau. Therefore, from the outset, PROGRESS aimed to share its experience, knowledge and lessons learned, with the managers of sites across the North-West Europe zone facing similar difficulties.

In addition, it was hoped that the structure of the programme - a partnership between five different organisations from three countries - would help the process of sharing national experiences, and promote international co-operation between land managers and involved parties in the future.

The project's objectives can be grouped under four broad themes: Ecology; Communication; Sustainability; and Wider European Transnationality. However, whilst this helps the reviewing and assessment of the project's actions, the steps undertaken in order to achieve PROGRESS' aims cannot be viewed in isolation. Rather, they are interdependent with other activities and initiatives being carried out by different partners.

### 2.6.1 Overview of PROGRESS project objectives

#### Ecology

1. *To reduce the negative impacts of recreation by better understanding the issues to be resolved.*
2. *To reduce the negative impacts of recreation by implementing a strategy of positive incentives to change the way people use sites included in the project.*

#### Communication

1. *To enhance visitor/user appreciation of, and greater personal responsibility for, the conservation of natural resources and the specific needs of the two Natura 2000 sites (including targeting users' lack of knowledge).*
2. *To promote robust recreation facilities.*

#### Sustainability

1. *To evolve partnerships that secure sustainable recreation in Natura 2000 sites.*
2. *To explore mechanisms, which would integrate recreation strategies within wider regional and national planning frameworks.*
3. *To explore using leisure providers to promote key environmental messages.*

#### Wider European Transnationality

1. *To develop shared solutions to issues and promote findings to other managers of countryside recreation within and beyond the "NWE" zone.*
2. *To pool a range of transnational expertise to guide the development and resolution of issues and stimulate wider cross-country debate with other land managers, planners and stakeholders.*

### 2.6.2 Ecology

In some areas, the respective land managers were already aware of the actions which needed to be implemented to improve the ecological situation, but in others, where the recreational impacts on habitats and biodiversity were not well understood, there was a need for specific research and a deeper understanding. Therefore one of the main aims of the Forestry Commission and Office National des Forêts was, via extensive surveys, to obtain up-to-date knowledge of forest use (see methodology for details of surveys undertaken).

The FC and ONF agreed that their current recreational infrastructures were likely to be in need of modification in order to reconcile the needs of conservation and recreation now and in the future. However, in some areas it was felt that recreation might need to be diverted outside of the Natura 2000 boundaries in order to reduce pressure on sensitive habitats.

Whatever approach the land manager decided to take as a result of the surveys, models and stakeholder groups, the Forestry Commission and Office National des Forêts were committed to ensuring these implemented solutions would not be too restrictive. They still wanted to promote and facilitate recreation on these sites, whilst ensuring that it was suited to the ecological and conservation needs of each area.

### **2.6.3 Communication**

Prior to the start of the project, the FC and ONF had both identified a lack of understanding within the general public with regards to the conservation needs of each area. Communication therefore had a key role in the success of PROGRESS, as public perceptions and behaviours would need to change in order to ensure the long-term conservation of these areas.

When the PROGRESS project was conceived it was noted that each organisation had relative strengths in certain areas of communication which could hopefully be shared for mutual benefit. For example, whilst the ONF had traditionally integrated with the local tourism industry to a greater degree, the FC was more experienced and had invested more in public engagement and developing stakeholder relationships.

### **2.6.4 Sustainability**

The tourism industries focused around the New Forest and Fontainebleau benefit from the conservation efforts of the respective land managers and involved parties. As the recreational demands on each area continue to grow, so too do the level of resources needed to sustain these Natura 2000 sites in a favourable condition. There is therefore, a need in both regions for the local tourism industries to become more integrated into the conservation networks.



**High visitor numbers at Bolderwood, New Forest**

Due to the way in which the Office National des Forêts receives a proportion of its funding from local businesses, it has a special interest in further developing its links to the local economy. The FC and ONF aim to establish a long-term recreational policy in partnership with conservation without curbing the local tourism economy. As part of this, it is hoped that the introduction of an accreditation scheme will promote sustainable practices within the forest and help develop local groups' and stakeholders' understanding of exactly what the FC and ONF are trying to do and why.

PROGRESS aims to ensure that the management procedures implemented to better reconcile recreation and conservation last far beyond the project's formal life of 2003-2007. The initiatives and methods developed through the PROGRESS project should have a long lasting effect, ensuring that these areas remain a valuable recreational and environmental resource.

### 2.6.5 Wider European Transnationality



*International Exchange Visit*

It is also hoped that the PROGRESS project will lead to closer working relationships between international organisations facing similar problems. The FC and ONF have made a formal commitment to share management experience of the New Forest and Fontainebleau forest.

PROGRESS is seen as a valuable first step in this partnership, from which lessons can be learned, not just by the two main partners, but also other land managers who may be looking to reconcile the needs of recreation and conservation.

### 2.6.6 Further reading

- Original EU funding PROGRESS bid document (**CD-ROM:\PROGRESS documents\Original EU Funding Bid Document**)
- The PROGRESS communications strategy (**CD-ROM:\PROGRESS documents**)
- The PROGRESS project leaflet (**CD-ROM:\PROGRESS documents**)
- The PROGRESS project website: <http://www.progress-eu.info/uk.htm>
- The FC PROGRESS project webpage: <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-6aqeua>
- The Fontainebleau Tourism Fontainebleau Forest webpage: <http://www.fontainebleau-tourisme.com/pays-fontainebleau/foret-de-fontainebleau/foret.asp>



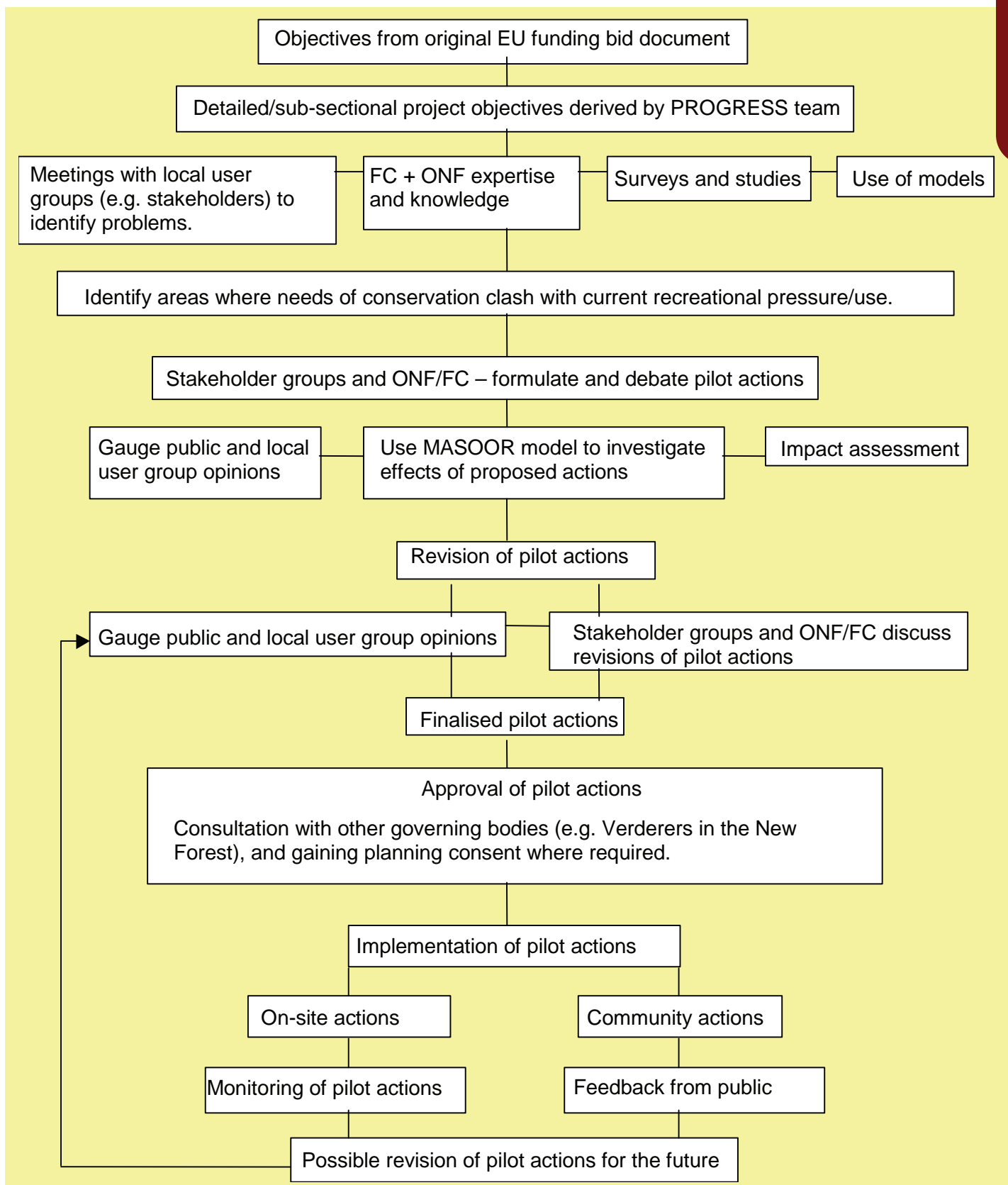


## 3.0 Methodology





### 3.1 Overview of PROGRESS Project Methodology



## 3.2 Details of PROGRESS project methodology

In order to fulfil its objectives and effectively reduce the negative impacts of recreation within the New Forest and Fontainebleau, the PROGRESS project team, first needed to gain a more up to date and complete understanding of recreation and conservation needs. In short, to update and, where possible, expand the existing knowledge and expertise of ONF and FC staff.

### 3.2.1 Identifying areas where needs of conservation clashed with current recreational pressure

It was intended that this would be achieved through the use of two computer-based models developed by Alterra (LARCH and MASOOR). Following the input of baseline ecological and recreational data, these would enable the impacts of recreation on different habitats and how different user groups interacted to be assessed. In addition, the models would allow proposed actions to be simulated, to view the possible impacts resulting from the prospective changes, thus providing the FC and ONF with a powerful decision making tool.

#### 3.2.1.1 Surveys and Studies

For the computer models to be able to simulate the effect a possible pilot action, or a change in visitor numbers, may have on the ecology and wildlife, an enormous amount of data was required. Therefore, extensive visitor surveys were carried out in the two forests. In the New Forest alone, over 3500 interviews were conducted at 70 sites. A further 2100 telephone interviews, with households in the local area, were carried out over a twelve month period. In Fontainebleau, 1700 interviews were held over eight days, between March and September. Cyclists and hikers answered questions regarding their recreational use of the forest (expected route, distance, time, etc) before they set off; and some of these visitors were given a GPS device that tracked their route.



*Surveying in the New Forest*

As well as these initial visitor surveys, many further studies and surveys were undertaken to analyse use by specific user groups, to gauge public opinions of proposed actions, and to monitor the effect of implemented actions (for a more detailed breakdown of surveys undertaken during the project see Figure 7, overleaf). Requiring a budget of €480,000 for surveys conducted in the two forests, this research constituted a significant cost to the project. However it was deemed to be an essential element in establishing a comprehensive knowledge base.

**Figure 7: A break down of surveys and studies conducted in Fontainebleau and the New Forest during the PROGRESS project**

Year	Fontainebleau	New Forest
2004	<p><b>Ecotone Visitor Surveys</b> – Surveys of pilot sites (pre-defined problem sites), creating a diagnostic of each site, followed by proposal of changes and suggestion of methods of implementation.</p>	<p><b>Visitor Survey</b> (Tourism South East) – Conducted throughout the year in car parks around the New Forest (3500 personal interviews, 2000 GPS tracks, 190,000 movements recorded over 70 sampling sites).</p> <p><b>Household telephone survey</b> (TSE) – (2150 responses).</p> <p><b>Dog Walkers survey</b> (England Marketing) September – Surveys of NFDog (Dog Owners Group) members and a random house postal survey (~627 NFDog and ~1276 postal survey responses).</p> <p><b>Horse Riders Survey</b> (England Marketing) September – Surveys of Horse Riding Association members and a random house postal survey (~267 Association and ~1276 postal survey responses).</p>
2005	<p><b>Trois Pignons Study</b> – Small scale study; observation of leisure areas to identify problems and to try to propose actions to establish sustainable recreation in the area. The actions from the study could then be taken, adapted and applied elsewhere with similar problems.</p> <p><b>Ecotone Surveys continued</b> – Surveys of pilot sites (3 parts), creating a diagnostic of each site, followed by proposal of changes and suggestion of methods of implementation.</p>	<p><b>Visitor Survey continued</b> (TSE) – a further 447 questionnaires and 500 GPS tracks collected.</p>
2006	<p><b>Mountain Bikers Study</b> – asking targeted qualitative detailed questions to randomly selected bikers and professionals in order to understand their use of the forest. To identify the impact of biking on the forest e.g. in terms of erosion and to try to propose solutions (323 respondents).</p> <p><b>Public Opinion Survey</b> – at Apremont, Bas Breau and Franchard to gain an understanding of the general public's impressions of the pilot actions.</p> <p><b>Athlane Study</b> – to identify potential for public involvement in sustainable management (by giving/paying money e.g. car park fees etc) and to see how ONF can work better with other tourism bodies and local businesses.</p>	<p><b>Closed Car Park Survey</b> (GeoData) April – to ascertain user displacement when annually closed car parks are closed (permanent pre-PROGRESS policy of FC) to be used in impact assessment when considering seasonal closures of other car parks.</p> <p><b>Off-road cycling Survey</b> (GeoData) Aug and Sept – questionnaire and observation of cycle routes and tracks (including GPS) to identify use of NF by cyclists (including cycling off the official paths and routes). Questionnaires also in campsites and cycle hire shops. (~950 surveys).</p> <p><b>GNB Birds Survey</b> – multiple surveys at 8 locations to ascertain GNB numbers (using set methodology).</p> <p><b>Public Perception Survey</b> (autumn) – to gauge public knowledge of conservation, find out attitudes to conservation (is it important?, would car park closures be acceptable?)</p>
2007	<p><b>Pilot Action Monitoring Survey</b> (April/May) – site-specific survey to gauge public reaction to actions and monitor behaviour in car parks serving the seven pilot action sites. (~950 respondents, ~ 500 GPS tracks) (GPS tracks – only in Apremont, Franchard and Trois Pignons).</p>	<p><b>Pilot Action Monitoring Survey</b> (GeoData) March-June – questionnaires in car parks where pilot actions undertaken to gauge public reception of these and to monitor if behaviour has changed (~770 questionnaires, ~ 300 GPS tracks). Also observations made of use of sites where car parks had been closed seasonally to protect ground nesting birds.</p> <p><b>GNB Bird Survey</b> Apr – Jun – particularly at pilot action sites to ascertain GNB numbers (using set methodology).</p>

### 3.2.1.2 Use of Alterra Models

Once all the data sets from these surveys had been collected, they were analysed within the computer models created by Alterra. The Forestry Commission and Office National des Forêts also supplied Alterra with ecological data regarding landscape, habitat, vegetation and wildlife populations, together with map data such as formal hiking and cycling trails, informal trails and maps of breeding bird species. This produced an environment within the models, over which the recreational data could be laid. The two different models – MASOOR (visitor model) and LARCH (ecological model), together simulate a given environment and predict and measure what effect certain changes (such as building a new trail) will have on that environment. MASOOR simulates the dispersal of visitors from fixed entry points, such as car parks, into protected areas. LARCH, can determine the potential habitat for a species and also the area requirement for a suitable population (based on species characteristics, the ecological quality of habitat and the configuration of habitat).

Detailed ecological and vegetation data was fed into the LARCH model (together with specific information regarding the population numbers of the ground nesting birds in the NF simulation). The MASOOR model used the results of the visitor surveys, including GPS data covering the routes taken by recreational visitors around the two forests, to show the land managers how many people visited each site and what they did whilst they were there.



**Example modelling output in the New Forest** (from L to R: 1. expected number of people using tracks (MASOOR output) validated by GPS tracks collected in surveys, and 'disturbance zones' to show areas of significant disturbance (yellow); 2. areas of disturbance overlaid GNB habitat zones (Dark Green - good habitats to Light Green - poor habitats); 3. showing the effect of closing a car park in the area (shows a reduction in disturbance in the area of good habitat – see red circle).

Running LARCH and MASOOR together showed the impact that recreation was having on different habitats and also how different groups interacted. Subsequently, the land manager was able to see what effect a pilot action may have on ecology and wildlife (e.g. a car park closure), by running the MASOOR model again under the new scenario and analysing the difference between the two. (For more details on individual models, see the handbook **CD-ROM: \Surveys**).

### 3.2.2 Formulating pilot action proposals

Having collected information on the recreational issues affecting each forest, through surveying, modelling results, ONF/FC expertise, and meetings with local user groups, the next step was to decide what actions to take in order to limit the effects of recreation.

The land manager's role was to facilitate these actions rather than formulate them. The local stakeholder groups, with advice from the project partners and steering group, were asked to devise a series of pilot actions which could be implemented by the FC and ONF.

These proposed pilot actions were then presented to the public (through site-surgeries, surveys etc.) At the same time, the PROGRESS team used the Alterra models and its own methods of impact assessment to look at the possible implications and feasibility of the proposed actions. This information was presented to stakeholders and used to make revisions of initial proposals.

The revised pilot actions were presented to the public and discussed by the stakeholder groups in order to produce finalised pilot action proposals.

These finalised pilot action proposals were then approved through each forest's system (e.g. gaining planning consent, consultation with other governing bodies such as Natural England or the Verderers in the New Forest).

Approved pilot actions were then implemented.

In both the New Forest and Fontainebleau it took several months to negotiate the actions to be implemented (e.g. in Fontainebleau, it took over a year of negotiating for a local stakeholder group to agree to a road closure). In the New Forest, negotiations and plans were complicated by the presence of strict planning laws and regulations administered by the Verderers' court. For example, the Forestry Commission had to consult this body for approval before it was able to install any new information boards or alter walking and cycle paths.

### **3.2.3 Monitoring of Pilot Actions**

In relation to communication actions, where it is often difficult to quantify results, it was felt that feedback from the public about events, reception of leaflets, wideness of distribution and number of reprints provides an indication of their success.

In terms of ecological on-site actions, post-implementation surveys of recreational use in the areas could (in comparison with pre-pilot action use) help to monitor the impact of pilot actions. These could then provide useful information about their success and could lead to revision of pilot actions in order to improve them to make them effective and sustainable in the future (see page 20 for details of monitoring surveys undertaken).

## **3.3 Problems encountered**

To achieve the objectives of PROGRESS the project teams had to overcome some difficult challenges.

For example, problems occurred when ONF and the FC passed on to Alterra their data from the visitor surveys for modelling. Difficulties arose due to insufficient data, incorrect data format, incorrect data type etc. for modelling. With hindsight, this was mainly because of a lack of understanding between the Forestry Commission, Alterra and Office National des Forêts as to what was expected in terms of data collection and format, and what each partner was expected to produce.

The biggest problem encountered was that input data (from the FC and ONF) for MASOOR and LARCH often included digital mistakes, which created problems when running the models. For example, paths didn't connect in the input data, although they did on the ground, and as a result MASOOR assumed these paths were dead ends. In addition, legends on vegetation maps were sometimes unclear, meaning that Alterra and external specialists had to fine tune habitat classifications through on-the-ground observations.

The FC and ONF expected a 'user friendly' system from the very start of the project, which did not require a high degree of end user systems knowledge. However, as MASOOR was in a developmental stage, initially models could only be used by specialists. It's subsequent development, which was itself an objective of the project, meant that, as the project progressed, the models became easier to use. Now that many development problems have been overcome through the project, future projects can take advantage of the initial struggle and use this user-friendly tool.

The difference in partner expectations posed a challenge both to the individual partners, and to the project as a whole. The models were supposed to not only inform the FC and ONF as to how and where increased visitor pressure was clashing with conservation needs, but also form a key element of the decision making process, for each site, in overcoming this conflict.

Differences in the working culture of the partners, together with the level of experience and resources available, not only contributed to the misunderstandings and differing expectations, but also dictated how each partner overcame the challenge.

For example, a planner within the Forestry Commission, with extensive GIS experience, was able to work with Alterra, eventually producing a working model for the New Forest. This successfully demonstrated a number of key sites where conservation needs were being put under pressure from recreational use. The model was then able to illustrate, to local stakeholders, the options available and the likely outcomes of a chosen action. The Forestry Commission were therefore able to use these models as both a research and decision making tool, but lags in the process did unfortunately mean that implementation of the New Forest pilot actions were delayed. In Fontainebleau however, the resources of time, money and experience, which were needed to produce a similar working model, were not available. In addition, the models were designed to look at the disturbance to wildlife and as ONF were mainly focusing on reducing erosion problems, they decided early on to move on with the project without the models.

Another problem was that the staff managing the project in all partner organisations changed throughout the 4 years of the project. This led to discontinuity and often automatically meant a new vision for the project and this therefore affected subsequent actions.

### 3.4 Lessons Learned

The problems encountered with the LARCH and MASOOR models, were a major challenge to all three partners. However, each managed to work through these problems, learning from the experience:

- All three partners agree that there were misunderstandings at the start of the modelling process, which contributed to the delays and problems encountered. The partners also agree that an ***open and honest discussion*** at the start of any future project would be beneficial. This discussion would need to establish, as exactly as possible, what each partner's expectations are:
  - a) What their role will be. Their work objectives. The timeframe for delivering these.
  - b) What each of the partners will deliver, and when.

These discussions need to deal with a fairly high degree of ***detail***, even though it will be difficult at the start of a project: hence the need for additional regular review meetings as issues arise. For example, knowing who was going to provide what information and when would not be enough. Each partner must know exactly in which format any information required by another partner needs to be collected, and subsequently presented.

- Having a good understanding of each others ***strengths, weaknesses and capabilities*** will also help a partnership project to run smoothly and efficiently
- An understanding of each partners' other commitments is also important, as this may well affect a partner's ability to produce extra work or deliver to *ad hoc* deadlines

Both the Forestry Commission and Office National des Forêts were surprised at the ***length of time taken to negotiate*** pilot actions with their respective stakeholder groups.



In these negotiations the FC and ONF found that they had to use a degree of **compromise** to get approval for some pilot actions. For instance, ONF offered to carry out maintenance work on a number of car parks, in order to get stakeholder agreement on a trial road closure.

A variety of different sources were needed for funding to achieve PROGRESS ecological objectives. For example, in the New Forest, the Countryside Agency (now Natural England) funded the majority of the survey costs. These had a vital role to play in the development of a strong knowledge base. If, however, funding had been withdrawn when the department became part of Natural England, it would have posed a huge problem. For any future project, therefore, it would be wise to bear in mind potential **risks** and consider procedures for overcoming them. Risks within a partner's control and outside it need to be considered. Examples include:

- changes to the budget
- changes to an organisation's status (e.g. English Nature and Countryside Agency to Natural England)
- a change in context, such as the formation of a National Park – this may well have knock on consequences for a partner's role and the administration of a region.

Finally, a great deal of project work and co-ordination was carried out through electronic communication, but the value - and associated costs – of **regular face-to-face meetings** should not be underestimated. This became even more apparent throughout PROGRESS when problems did arise.

### 3.5 Key Points

- Remember to account for the possibility of lengthy negotiations in timescales; they usually take longer than expected.
- When dealing with stakeholder groups, expect a degree of compromise to be required.
- Bear in mind potential risks: such as changes to budget, funding, organisations' status, context like National Park formation. Consider solutions for overcoming these.
- Don't under estimate the value (and associated costs) of regular face-to-face meetings.

### 3.6 Further reading

- Further information on Alterra models (**CD-ROM: \\The Models**)
- Survey reports (visitor, recreation and specific studies) for each forest (**CD-ROM: \\Surveys**)





## 4.0 Key Actions





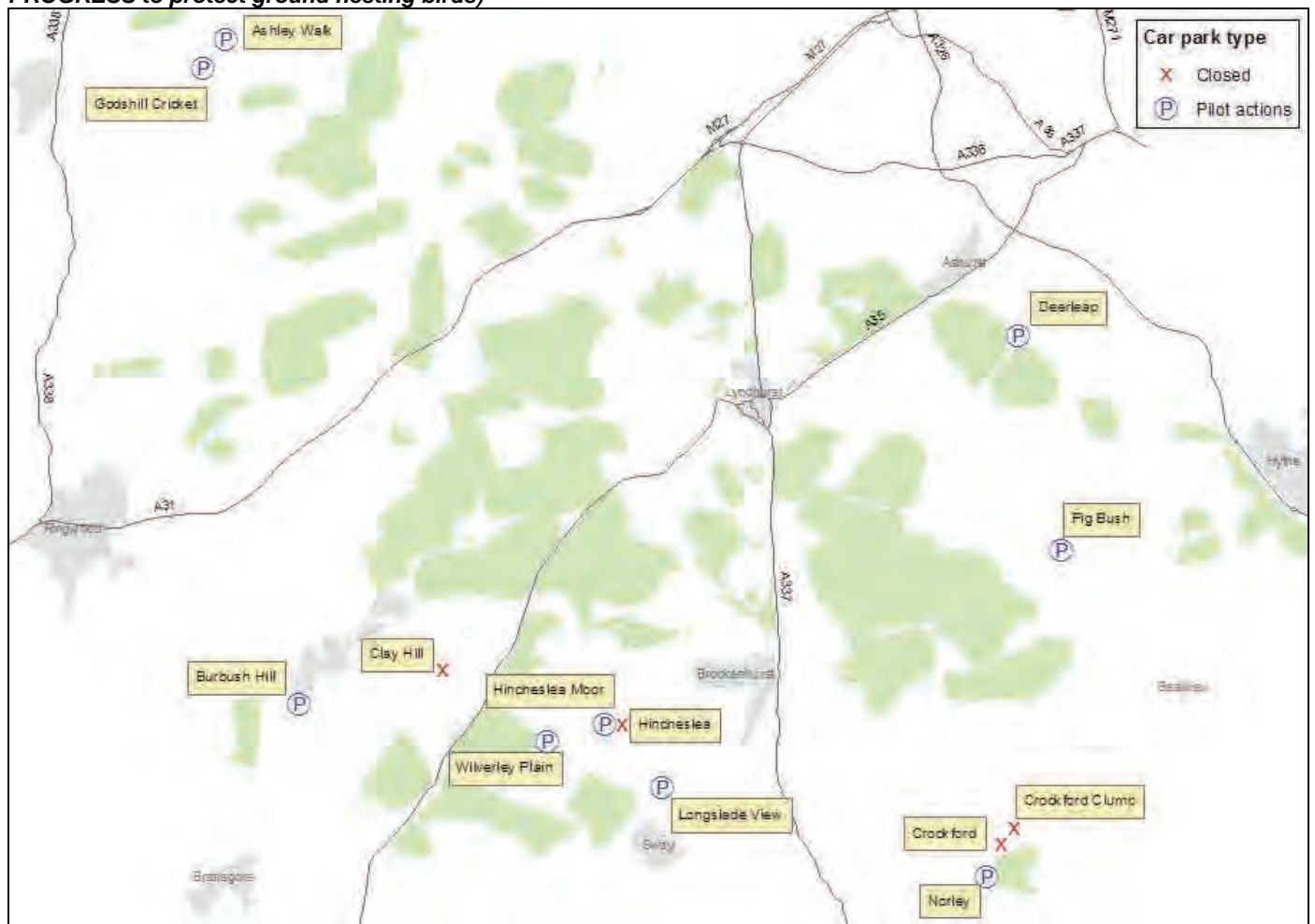
## 4.1 Ecology

### 4.1.1 PROGRESS Actions

The Forestry Commission and Office National des Forêts carried out several different actions in order to mitigate the impact of recreation within the New Forest and Forest of Fontainebleau. A brief sample of the works is shown below, with a more detailed look at some particular actions outlined in the subsequent **case study** boxes.

#### 4.1.1.1 The New Forest

**Location of major pilot action sites in the New Forest (including locations of car parks closed seasonally through PROGRESS to protect ground nesting birds)**



Actions implemented by the Forestry Commission included:

- Trial seasonal closure (March-June) of four Forestry Commission car parks to limit recreational access to ground nesting bird breeding sites. It was originally proposed that the programme of trial closures would be more extensive, including some year round. However, negotiations with stakeholders led to these proposals being scaled back. Whilst there was a general consensus that trial closures of car parks was a good idea, year round closures were a step too far for some. Delays to the pilot work, caused by extended negotiations and meetings, had the benefit of providing more time to attract media attention to the plans, through promotion and press coverage.
- Permanent closure of a number of lay-bys, so limiting access to sensitive sites.

- Discouragement of road side parking, which increases the risk of road traffic accidents involving pedestrians, as well as commoners' stock.
- Preventing the public from parking in front of access barriers used by the emergency services.
- Selecting three large inclosures as robust sites capable of carrying increased visitor numbers – thereby relieving pressure on the sensitive Open Forest. Work undertaken to improve these sites and promote their use included; making the inclosure look more appealing by thinning vegetation, creating new entrances, installing new picnic areas, fitting special gate latches for disabled users and horse riders, and increasing parking.
- Plans are currently being reviewed to upgrade seven existing car parks at robust locations capable of carrying increased visitor numbers.
- Placing information boards in and around car parks located close to sensitive ground nesting bird breeding grounds to encourage the public to stay out of these areas and limit the disturbance.



**Easy Access latch**

It is important to note that, it was never the intention to discourage recreational use, but to encourage visitors to respect the wildlife and ecology. For example, by walking along a different route, or adapting their route at the same site.



**Ground Nesting Bird Sign**



**Public Information Point**

## Case Study 1: Wilverley Plain and Inclosure

### *Managing the impact of recreation within the New Forest*

#### **Introducing the site...**

Wilverley Plain is a very popular site, registering in the 2004/5 Visitor Survey's highest 'level of use' bracket. The plain itself is a large open grassy area, set within the Open Forest, which often attracts large numbers of ponies as it provides good grazing. This, and the far reaching views, make the site very popular, particularly with families and groups wanting to picnic or barbecue in a safe open area

Wilverley Inclosure is a large area of woodland located adjacent to the plain. One waymarked walking route of approximately 2 miles – the Wilverley Wander – runs through the inclosure, together with a cycle track which follows roughly the same route.

Both the plain and inclosure are well catered for with large car parks, a toilet block, and barbecue facilities.

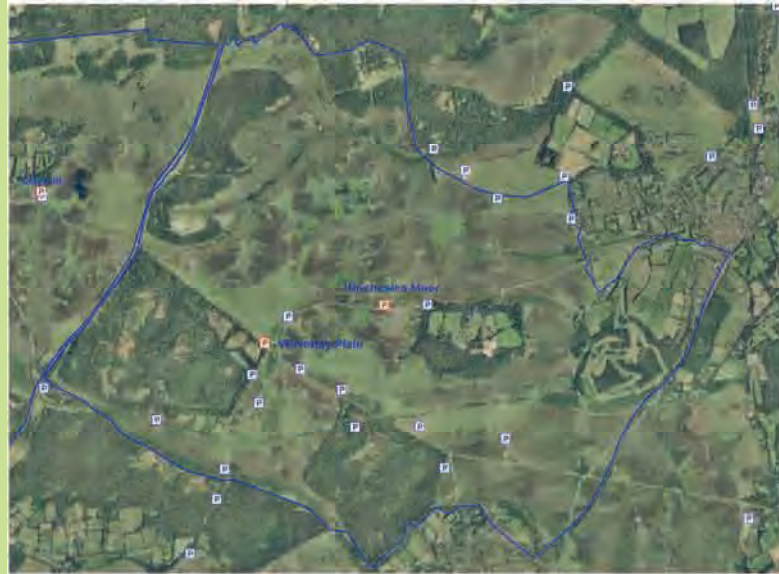
#### **Site Issues...**

The various surveys and Alterra models highlighted Wilverley Plain as one of the primary sites where the needs of recreation and conservation conflicted. Bordering the plain are some very favourable habitat conditions for the New Forest's ground nesting bird populations. The high numbers of visitors, especially those walking dogs, meant that these breeding grounds were particularly under threat. Added to wildlife disturbance, the relatively high number of picnics and barbecues on the Open Forest here, cause problems with litter, increase the risk of forest fires, and encourage ponies to scavenge for food and congregate near visitors, roads and traffic.

Erosion, though not a major problem, is an issue at the Wilverley site, due to frequent verge parking close to the plain and inclosure.

The Alterra models also located other optimum habitats for curlew, lapwing, redshank and snipe just to the east of Wilverley Plain at Longslade Bottom and Longslade View. These sites were

**Wilverley Plain and Inclosure**



also coming under significant pressure from recreational users. The models suggested that these habitats would benefit from car park closures. Due to their proximity, the Wilverley car parks were well placed to absorb any visitors displaced by the closure of the Longslade car parks.

All of these issues were presented to the stakeholder forum, where possible solutions were discussed.

#### **Objectives for the PROGRESS team...**

*Whilst the plain was therefore shown to be a site coming under increasing recreational pressure, the neighbouring inclosure was identified as a robust site, with the capacity for much more recreational use.*

*The PROGRESS team therefore wanted to encourage the responsible recreational use of the inclosure, relieving pressure on the more sensitive Wilverley Plain and Open Forest around the Longslade car parks.*

#### **How would this be achieved?**

By making the inclosure more inviting:

- Thin the trees along the edge of the inclosure next to the plain car park.
- Remove the encroaching western hemlock on the far side of walking track (some of the felled timber left to provide informal seating).

- Install a new entrance into the inclosure adjacent to the plain car park.
- Move the public information point (PIP) to the new entrance
- Fit easy access latches on the gates, providing better access for horse riders and the disabled.
- Open up the rides within the inclosures
- Install new 'rustic' style picnic benches just inside the inclosure and four other traditional fixed benches with BBQ plates. Maintain the BBQ site with a view to moving it inside the inclosure.
- Move the cycle route waymarkers outside of the inclosure fence, to make them more visible.

Discourage the recreational use of Wilverley Plain and the surrounding Open Forest:

- Interpretation boards placed at Wilverley Plain car park, and the Longslade car parks, requesting visitors not to enter into the sensitive habitats.
- Remove the picnic benches from the plain
- Close lay-bys located near to Wilverley Plain, which give good access to optimum ground nesting bird habitats.

*New 'easy access' catches fitted to gates*



*Ground nesting bird interpretation boards, installed at Wilverley Plain car park. Below the 'ground-nesting birds' boards, the aerial photograph, shows the location of the sensitive habitats: this is aimed at encouraging walkers (especially dog walkers) to stay out of these areas and stick to the main paths.*



*Interpretation boards installed at Wilverley Plain car park*

**The PROGRESS Project**

**VULNERABLE GROUND-NESTING BIRDS**

**HELP TO AVOID DISTURBANCE TO NESTS KEEP YOURSELF (AND YOUR DOG) TO MAIN TRACKS**

<p><b>CURLEW</b></p> <p><b>Recognition</b> Our largest breeding wader. Very long, deeply curved down bill and long legs</p> <p><b>Call and Flight</b> Distinctive "Coo-ree". Marks territory in Spring with an undulating display accompanied by a burbling trill.</p> <p><b>Nests</b> In the open on mounds or tussocks</p> <p><b>Found</b> In boggy, grassy open heathland</p>	<p><b>LAPWING</b></p> <p><b>Recognition</b> Broad, rounded, black and white wings, dark green back, black breast and white underneath</p> <p><b>Call and Flight</b> Alternative name is "Pee-Wit" based on its wheezy drawn-out call. Courtship flight is a tumbling aerobic display, with stiff flight feathers making a humming sound.</p> <p><b>Nests</b> Nests in scrapes formed on bare ground which are then lined with grasses.</p> <p><b>Found</b> In recently burned or short grass areas. Need access to wet grassland or bog to feed chicks.</p>	<p><b>REDSHANK</b></p> <p><b>Recognition</b> In Spring adult has a dark brown breast and streaked flanks. Medium length tail with orange-red base, and longish red legs</p> <p><b>Call and Flight</b> Alert is a ringing "tee-tee". In Spring this is followed by a "tut-tut" call accompanied by its display flight.</p> <p><b>Nests</b> In freshwater marshes and low moorland sites</p> <p><b>Found</b> In the wettest areas</p>	<p><b>SNIPE</b></p> <p><b>Recognition</b> Medium-sized stocky wader with very long, straight bill and short legs. Dark brown body delicately barred and streaked with pale brown and straw-coloured stripes.</p> <p><b>Call and Flight</b> Undulating display flight. On downward path makes a whirring sound "drumming". Has a "chip-ee, chip-ee" alarm call and makes a loud "accap" when disturbed.</p> <p><b>Nests</b> On the ground, usually concealed by vegetation</p> <p><b>Found</b> On bogs and wet lawns</p>
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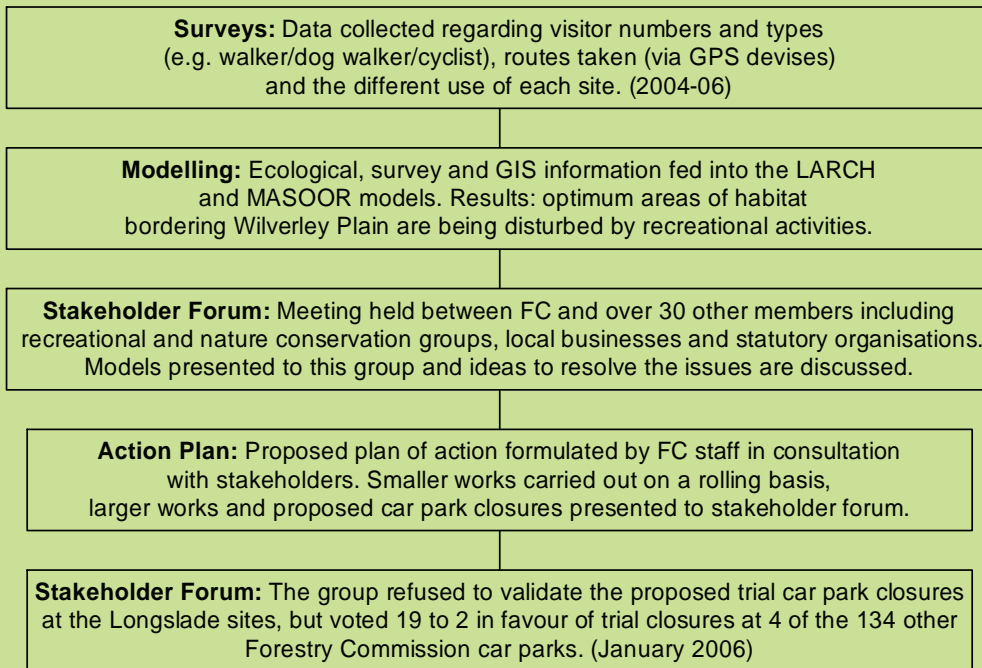
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PROGRESS Project

Forestry Commission



**The PROGRESS project at work at Wilverley**



**Results...**

The feedback collected from snap surveys, conducted in the two car parks at Wilverley, suggests that the public has broadly welcomed the changes made already; and feels that the future plans for further development of the inclosure will also encourage more visitors to make use of this robust area.

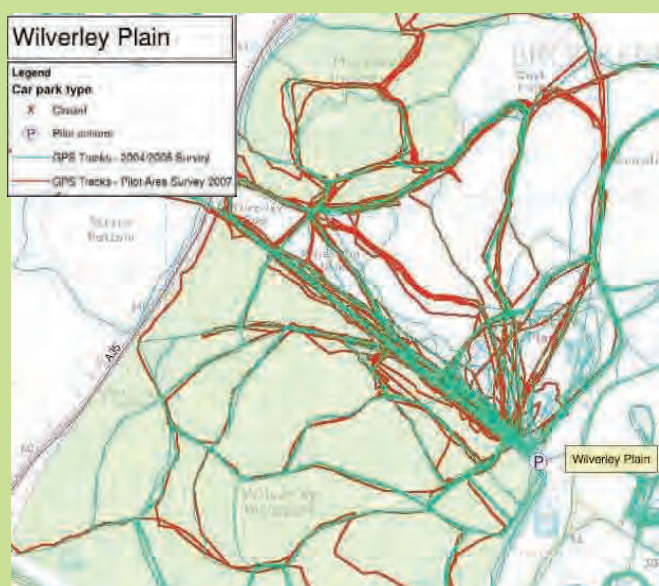
Results of a comparison between GPS tracks from the original 2004/5 visitor survey and from the early monitoring survey 2007 (see right) do not appear to show any significant difference from one to the other.

This is a little disappointing, however, it is probably too early to be able to say whether or not these project actions have made a significant impact on visitor behaviour at Wilverley Plain and Inclosure. If visitors have successfully been channelled into the inclosure, away from the Open Forest and fringes of the plain, then we would expect to see a marked decrease in the level of disturbance to the Ground Nesting Bird (GNB) populations and a subsequent rise in their numbers (see section 5.0 for results of 2007 bird surveys).

The PROGRESS team has secured joint funding from the Forestry Commission and other government statutory bodies for a further five years of monitoring after the project finishes in October 2007.

This should provide enough reliable and accurate data to fully assess the impact of PROGRESS, not just on this site but around the New Forest.

Whilst the effects of the works carried out at Wilverley are yet to be fully realised, we can confidently say that the inclosure's value as a robust recreational resource has definitely increased. Improved access, waymarking and information boards have all helped enhance visitor experience to the site. Opening up the entrance, rides, and paths within the inclosure, have made the site more attractive and inviting which, together with the planned improvements to the BBQ, is expected to help encourage more and more visitors into the inclosure.



## Case Study 2: Watchmoor Wood

### *Diverting the pressure of recreational needs outside the Natura 2000 boundary.*

#### ***The need for a different approach...***

The Alterra models did not always suggest that closing car parks, and therefore access to ground nesters' habitats, would result in less disturbance. On one occasion the models showed that by closing a car park, the Forestry Commission would simply move the problem of disturbance from one area to another (see Case Study 3). The PROGRESS team therefore had to explore other ways of diverting the pressure of recreational visitors away from the sensitive Natura 2000 site.

Channelling visitors towards recreational sites outside the Natura 2000 boundary was another strategy for reconciling the needs of recreation and conservation. This was the aim in encouraging off-road cyclists to use Watchmoor Wood, thus reducing pressure on the New Forest.

#### ***Introducing the site...***

Covering one hectare, Watchmoor Wood is situated ten miles north of Bournemouth, just outside the western edge of the Natura 2000 boundary.

It borders a much larger site called Moors Valley Country Park and Forest. Jointly managed by the Forestry Commission, and owned by East Dorset District Council, this 750 acre recreational site hosts a visitor centre, restaurant, steam railway, Tree Top Trail, Play Trail, Go Ape! high wire adventure course, and walking and cycling trails.

The addition of 'Watchmoor Wood Bike Park' means that the Forestry Commission can help provide a huge variety of recreational activities, on the New Forest's doorstep.

#### ***Objectives for the PROGRESS team...***

*Through the development of the Watchmoor Wood Bike Park, the Forestry Commission set out to create, and then promote, a more robust recreational facility. The aim was to lessen the impact on the more fragile ecological fabric of the New Forest Natura 2000 site.*

*A complementary objective was the development of closer links with local organisations. The PROGRESS team looked to secure volunteer help in implementing the scheme, through local cycle groups as well as their own pool of volunteers.*

***Forestry Commission staff and volunteers during the construction of the trackway***



***Northshore trail section at Watchmoor Wood Bike Park***



## How was this achieved?

### *Establishing a new robust recreational facility*

The Forestry Commission approached a local user group with a view to establishing a formal off-road track on the Watchmoor wood site.

Mountain bike group decided to build an extreme 'North Shore' trail network, suitable for experienced riders capable of dealing with a high degree of difficulty. They were responsible for the design.

Forestry Commission supplied raw materials and civil engineering expertise to ensure that the trail was built to a satisfactory standard meeting all the relevant regulations.

Trail completed with the help of local mountain bike groups (with representatives on the New Forest stakeholder forum), Forestry Commission volunteers and staff.

Press release issued and articles published by the PROGRESS team drawing attention to the site and encouraging its use. Plans to complete an easier 'novice' course and cycle link to the neighbouring Moors Valley Country Park and Forest are also mentioned.

## Results...

The project actions, related to the Watchmoor Wood Bike Park, have successfully established a robust recreational facility outside the New Forest Natura 2000 site.

Statistical analysis of how well used the site is, and how much recreational pressure has been diverted away from the New Forest's more sensitive habitats, would require further surveys. However, we can confidently say that the bike park provides a useful alternative location for recreation, with minimal impact on conservation parameters.

The bike park has met with an enthusiastic response from local mountain bike groups. This was forecast by the high level of support for the programme, and ample volunteers to carry out the work.

A further benefit of this action has been the improvement in the FC's working relationship with recreational users, with whom it had previously come into conflict over use of the Open Forest.

Establishing the bike park, enabled the project team to reach a committed user group with the PROGRESS message of "conserve, protect, enjoy". Informing and educating the public groups involved in building this trail, meant that more potential users of the New Forest's cycle network now understand their rights and responsibilities - and the area's conservation needs.



Images of the completed trails at Watchmoor Wood (source: Watchmoor Bike Trail review at the following website [http://www.haizeak.co.uk/?page\\_id=6](http://www.haizeak.co.uk/?page_id=6))

## Case Study 3: Pig Bush

### *Managing the impact of recreation within the New Forest – a different approach*

#### **Introducing the site...**

Pig Bush car park, and the surrounding area of Furzy Brow, were recognised in the New Forest 2004 visitor surveys as having 'high' visitor pressure throughout the year. It was found to be mainly used by locals, particularly dog walkers. In addition, it is featured in several walking guides which is a possible reason for its high visitor numbers.

The car park itself has a capacity for 50 cars and provides easy access from the B3056. The surrounding area of Furzy Brow (which is also served by the Culverley Car Park) consists mainly of heathland, adjacent to Ancient and Ornamental Woodland, which is part of a wider expanse of heathland. Some 12km<sup>2</sup> of this area has been identified as optimum habitat for ground nesting birds (GNB). It is served by four car parks - Pig Bush, Culverley, Shatterford and Yew Tree Heath.

#### **Site Issues...**

In addition to the high visitor pressure identified by the surveys in the Fruzy Brow area, particularly at Pig Bush, GPS tracking data suggested that lack of more formal marked routes had meant that people, unsure where to walk, were creating their own informal routes that criss-crossed and dissected the habitat.

As this could pose disturbance to this optimal habitat, work at the site to rectify this was considered a priority.

#### **Objectives for the PROGRESS team...**

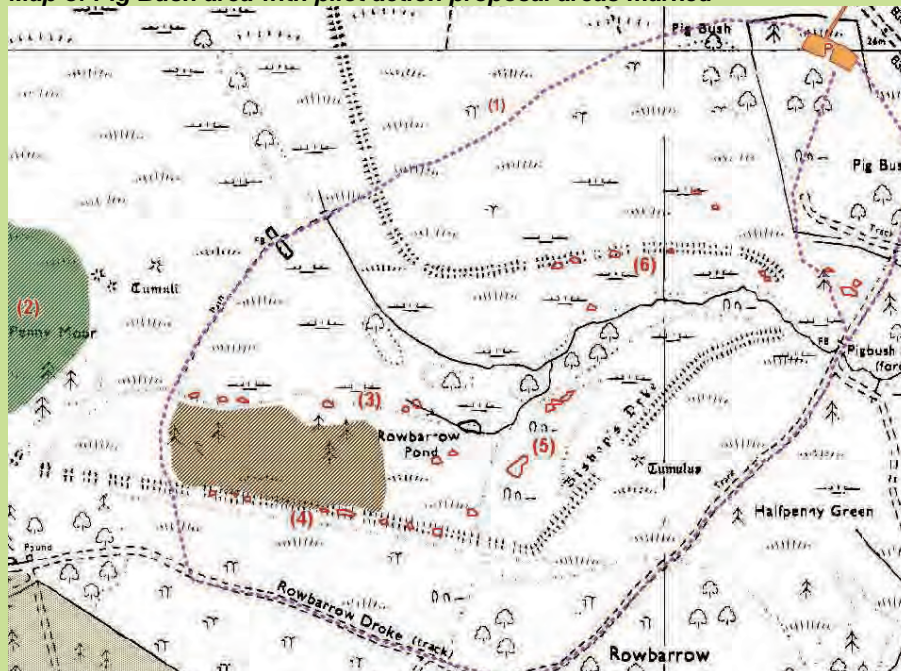
*To reduce the levels of disturbance across the Furzy Brow optimal habitat area for GNBs. This builds on habitat restoration undertaken as part of the Life III project.*

#### **How would this be achieved?**

In the first instance the PROGRESS team considered closing the Pig Bush and Culverley car parks in an attempt to completely cut off access to the sensitive habitat. However, when this scenario was run through the Alterra models, they suggested that such closures would simply move the problem to nearby car parks such as Shatterford and Yew Tree Heath, which also allow access to optimum habitats.

As a result of these model simulations (in addition to opposition from local stakeholders who disliked the idea of closing such a popular site), the PROGRESS team decided to take a different approach and proposed the following changes to the Pig Bush site (see map for location within the site):

**Map of Pig Bush area with pilot action proposal areas marked**



(1) Proposed a circular route (~3km) for walkers (purple line) clearly way-marked with posts in order to create a more formally defined route and to encourage people to circumnavigate the habitat rather than cutting across it.

(2-6) Clearance of seedlings, mature trees and scrub that have encroached into the heathland area to make the habitat even more favourable for birds.

In addition, small footbridges across the river would be removed to discourage people from cutting across the sensitive habitat.

When the proposals were presented to the New Forest Verderers, the majority of the proposals were accepted. However, the Verderers would not allow the proposed way marking and signage along the intended circular route. Instead, the PROGRESS team had to adapt the plan, and put up maps detailing the circular walk and GNB information boards in Pig Bush car park. These were installed throughout the nesting season (March-June).

### Results...

Comparing the GPS tracks from the original 2004/5 visitor survey with those from the monitoring survey (2007) at Pig Bush (see below) suggest that there is little variation in user behaviour at the site. At first glance, it does seem that users in 2007 have tended to stick to the circular walk indicated on information boards in the car park, rather than cutting across the area, as before. This may indicate the beginnings of a change in user behaviour. However, for reasons which render the tracks less comparable, it cannot be stated for sure: Firstly, data on the number of tracks collected in

2007 was much lower than that of 2004/5. Secondly, the weather conditions were much wetter during the 2007 surveys, and people may have been discouraged from cutting across the area, which would have been extremely muddy.

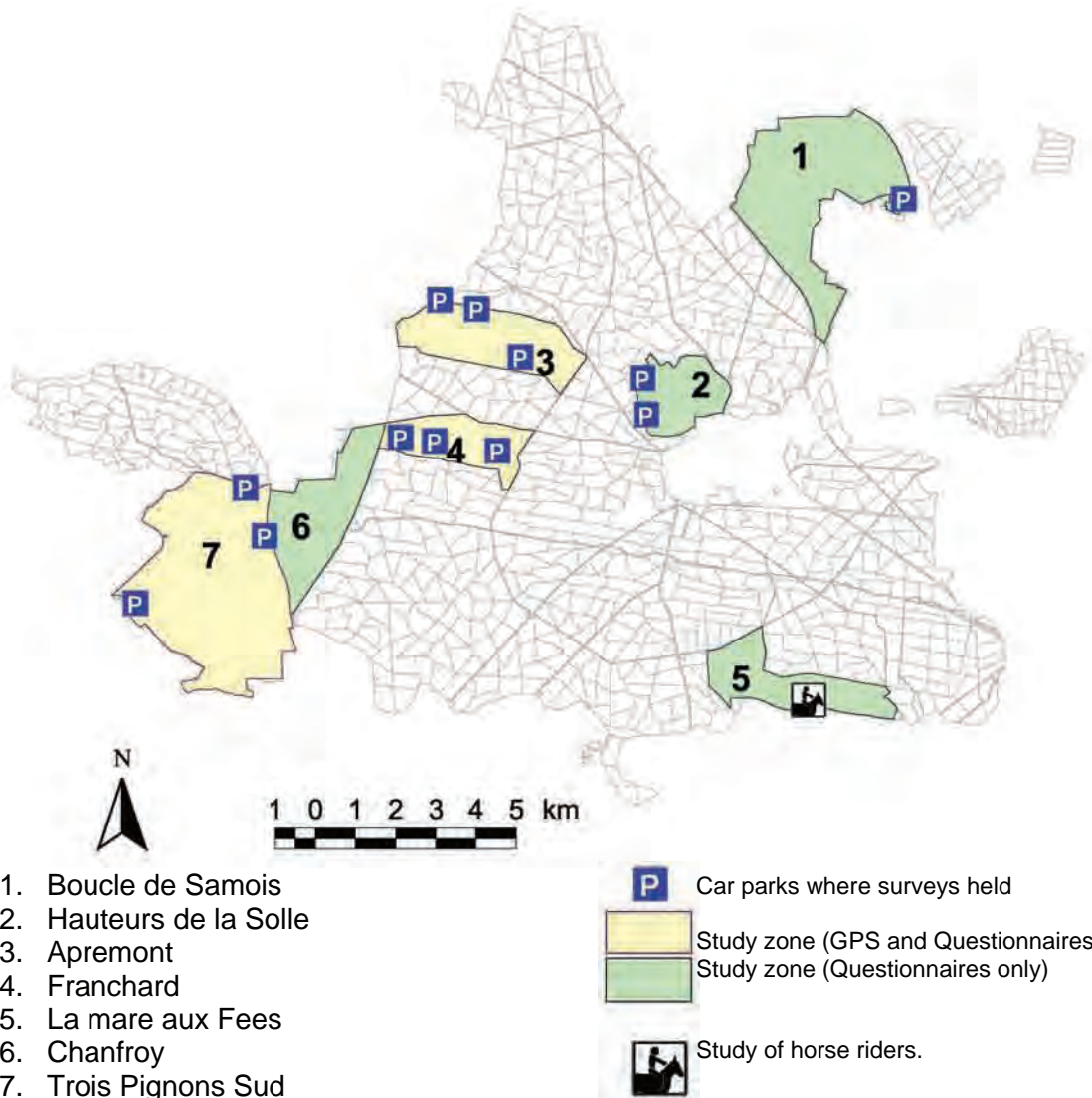
In any case, it is probably too early to say whether these project actions have made a significant impact on visitor behaviour at Pig Bush, even if initial results may suggest some positive changes. If visitor behaviour has changed positively, it is hoped that this will be seen in future monitoring surveys. It is also hoped that this will be shown in an increase in GNB population.

The PROGRESS team has secured joint funding from the Forestry Commission and Other government statutory bodies for a further five years of monitoring, after the project finishes in October 2007. This should provide enough reliable and accurate data to fully assess the impact of PROGRESS, not just on this site, but around the New Forest.



#### 4.1.1.2 Fontainebleau Forest

##### **Location of pilot action sites (and associated surveys) in Fontainebleau**



ONF implemented the following actions to help mitigate the impact of recreation:

- The closing of badly eroded areas, path maintenance and construction, forest road closures, installation of information boards and improved road signage all carried out in order to channel visitors to the most robust sites, capable of withstanding high visitor numbers.



**From the Left: Rocks placed to close off informal path; road closure; site information panels**

- Sandstone masonry and timber steps built to minimise and control erosion caused by recreational users. These have been built with the aim of integrating them into the environment.
- New circular walks or 'family strolls' laid out at robust sites to create short, well marked and easy to follow walks (previously walkers often wandered off the main tracks and into reserves).



*From Left: Waymarker for Gorges de Franchard family stroll; information panel explaining area closure in order to allow soil restabilisation; information panel explaining area closure due to erosion problems.*

- Improved marking, and in some cases fencing of biological reserve boundaries to prevent disturbance.



*Left: Biological reserve car park information panel  
Right: Biological reserve boundary marker*

- Improvements made to a number of car parks. The capacity of some car parks was increased or decreased to suit the level of demand. However, no new car parks were created as the land is protected: forest limits are now fixed forever.

## Case Study 4: Franchard

### ***Preserving sensitive areas in a heavily visited site and improving the quality of visitor experience***

#### ***Introducing the site...***

Franchard is the best known area of the Fontainebleau Massif. Described and recommended in various tourist guides, it boasts both historical heritage (the Ermitage, the UICN world conservation monument, the Blue Route, etc) and natural heritage (the Franchard gorges) and attracts a large number of visitors. The area offers a wide range of habitats, representing the different environments found throughout the Fontainebleau Massif. The habitats are diverse, which leads to the presence of both forest-dwelling species, such as the grey-headed woodpecker, the great capricorn beetle, the hermit beetle, Bechstein's bat and the greater mouse-eared bat, and species characteristic of more open environments like the European nightjar. A strict forest bioserve - the *Chêne Brûlé* - occupies the north east of the site, which has been in place since 1816, and is extended by areas of ecological interest. The Mare aux Pigeons lake at the site is surrounded by a managed bioserve.

Sporting and leisure activities are very popular in the area, but vary in distribution and location. To the east, the Ermitage car park is frequented by visiting tourists and families; to the west, the celebrated climbing areas attract hardened rock climbers. Between these two points, a dense network of pathways offers many viewpoints. The eastern and Franchard, Barbizon and Apremont areas were the only sites to benefit from road signage - erected by the DDE Regional Amenities Department. There are also so-called "soft access" opportunities, notably via the TMV (Fontainebleau Massif Cycle Tour), the GR 1 and GR 11 walking trails, and the No. 7 Denecourt Path. A visitor shuttle bus, known as the "Patache", provides public transport from Fontainebleau, Barbizon and Apremont.

The Ermitage car park, which is the main parking area and the only one indicated on the IGN 1/25000 scale maps, has a large capacity (350 places); it also provides parking for buses. The Carrefour de la Plaine de Macherin car park (50 places) and the Renardeau car park serve the climbing areas: for instance, the "La Cuisinière" and "Isatis" rocks. They also provide access to the GR 11 walking trail, and tend to attract a public that is better informed and more familiar with the forest.

***The Mare aux Pigeons Managed Bioserve***



#### ***Site issues...***

The principal challenge is preserving the natural and historical heritage of this heavily visited site. This involves putting in place a visitor management strategy that will minimise impact, notably in terms of erosion and disturbance of the area's fauna and flora. In fact, the site is very vulnerable to erosion, and high visitor numbers have accelerated this process. The Franchard gorges have been closed for this reason. Heavy visitor numbers have led to considerable sand-shift, with the result that the sand level at Roche qui Pleure has decreased by 2m in 20 years. Certain rocks have become unstable, making the area dangerous.

Paths need to be restored, but in a way that is sensitive to the character of the area.

It also seems useful to improve public education regarding the forest, its wealth and its fragility, so as to encourage responsible behaviour among visitors. The tranquillity of the two bioserves must be maintained.

There is a need to improve the site in recreational terms, and to make it more user-friendly; thus enabling visitors to find their way around more easily, and benefit from what the area has to offer.

***Franchard - the Massif's most visited area***





**Objectives for the PROGRESS team** *How would this be achieved?*

To implement measures to make it possible to direct visitors towards the most suitable areas, leading them away from the more fragile sites: the biological reserves and gorges.

**On-site measures**

Restoring eroded sections of the paths:

- Landscape study followed by restoration of the sloping section of the Carnage route (which is a new route created from part of blue path 6): irregular paving to stabilise the soil against erosion, installation of sandstone steps.

Erosion in the Franchard gorges



Channelling the public to less fragile areas and improving recreational facilities:

- Creation of the Franchard gorges walking loop, for use by the general public; this is a pedestrian walking circuit that takes about 1 to 2 hours to complete.
- Closure of access to the Gorges by the Roche Qui Pleure site; blocking off the route with forest logs.
- Bypassing of the blue paths and GR trails.
- Car park refurbishment.
- Creation of signage to mark the boundaries of the Chêne Brûlé biological reserve.

Improving site readability, and educating the public regarding the sensitivity of the area by:

- Installing a welcome notice showing the new routes.
- Installation of a notice explaining why the Franchard gorges have been closed.

**2004 Survey:** data gathered regarding the quantity and type of visitors (time and frequency of visits) and the use of the site (walking, cycling, climbing, time devoted to each activity, etc).

**Écotone Consultancy Study:** drawing up an analysis of the site, proposing measures to be taken and explaining the possible implementation of these measures.

**Stakeholder Group Consultation:** meeting between ONF, the towns and villages concerned, user associations, institutional partners, naturalist associations and tourist offices. Presentation of the study results and validation of some of the measures proposed.

**Action plan:** execution of measures validated by the partners concerned.

**2007 Surveys:** gathering of GPS tracks demonstrating current use of the site (most popular paths) and face-to-face surveys gathering visitor opinions and impressions of changes.

**Select technical committee:** expert report on the Roche Qui Pleure site and management possibilities suggested by ONF, a geologist, a landscape expert and a representative from the users' association.

**Stakeholder Group Consultation:** presentation of the results of the 2007 survey and proposed revisions of actions to the different partners.

## Results...

The 2007 survey, which combines a questionnaire with GPS tracks, shows that few visitors go into the Chêne Brûlé and Mare aux Pigeons reserves. The new bioserveur signage is very visible and people are not attracted to these areas due to the large amount of branches and deadwood on the ground.

The Franchard walking loop is very popular. It is considered by visitors to be of good length and walkers are happy with the viewpoints provided on the circuit. Therefore, it is important to make sure that the viewpoints remain unobstructed in the future. It may even be appropriate to open a few more, so that visitors can take full advantage of the landscape.

The northern part of the Franchard loop is used less than the southern part. It appears that many walkers turn back after reaching the sandstone area. Due to a lack of information, people think that the remaining loop will be long, and prefer to turn back rather than continue along the route through the forest. The installation of markers showing walkers how much time the remainder of the route will take (or the distance) would encourage visitors to continue. This is also something that has been suggested to local stakeholders.

The survey also shows that visitors find the site maps unclear. They would like to see these better presented, along with the time the routes will take to complete.

The current closure of the Franchard gorges appears to have been effective in the southern

and middle sections, showing that the placement of forest logs to discourage access is proving effective. However this approach should be used in moderation as it gives a rather unappealing image of “incomplete” forest management and walkers get the sense of a “untidy” forest – walkers don’t understand what the logs are for but man-made fences and barriers cannot be placed everywhere.

Whilst the closure of the gorge appears to have been successful in these areas the northern section (including the Roche qui Pleure) still receives many visitors despite fencing and log closures, as the area can still be accessed from between the rocks. As people don’t understand what ‘gorges’ are they think that by diverting from the path they are not doing anything wrong. Moreover, there is an issue with signage in this area. The Roche Qui Pleure route is now closed, but directional signs placed at the top of the steps near the car park state “Access to the Franchard gorges”. While the gorges remain closed, these notices should be removed or their content changed. For example, they could read, “To the Franchard gorges viewpoint” and the documentation available to the public must be updated (e.g. the IGN map, rambler guides, etc).

A land survey was subsequently conducted, and in consultation with members of the technical committee, has enabled ONF to put forward several alternative management possibilities, to the stakeholders, for the Roche Qui Pleure site. The one that met with most approval by the stakeholder group was to secure a few indirect access routes (identified by GPS) and to better obstruct the main entrance. This site cannot be reopened without making the area safe as some unstable rocks currently represent a danger. Landscaping and geology experts have therefore been appointed to help identify methods to stabilise the area.



*The results of the GPS monitoring in 2007 show the spatial use of the site; most frequently used tracks (darkest red); main stopping points and areas of visitor diffusion and dispersal. These help the managers to identify target areas for work to be done.*

## Case Study 5: Apremont/Bas Breau

### *Preserving sensitive areas in a heavily visited site and improving the quality of visitor experience*

#### *Introducing the site...*

Along with Franchard, Apremont is one of the best known areas of the Fontainebleau Massif, described and recommended in national and international tourist guides. Its fame is particularly linked to the proximity of the Barbizon “*Painters’ village*”. The area consists of diverse landscapes and environments, as well as attractions such as the Caverne des Brigands. It also boasts some remarkable habitats (sandstone pools) and very special birdlife, including the woodlark, the European nightjar, the Dartford warbler and the grey-headed woodpecker. The entire area is ZNIEFF-listed as a natural zone of animal, plant, and ecological interest.

The Carrefour du Bas Bréau is an important and valued visitor reception area that includes a refreshment inn; it is a good spot from which to set out on a family walk, providing access to various paths, both marked and unmarked, and to some interesting sights. There is another visitor area at the Platières d’Apremont; this provides direct access to the viewpoint, and a picnic spot. In the gorges, a little further away from the car park, there is a sandy area which is a popular spot for family relaxation.

Two paths laid out by ONF provide short walking loops: the Sentier des Peintres (Painters’ Path) which starts in Barbizon, and the Erosion Path which starts at the Platières d’Apremont car park. Blue path no. 6 is of historical interest and leads either around or into the gorges, with a small diversion leading to the Mare aux Sangliers.

#### *Site Issues...*

The challenges are similar to those found at Franchard. Apremont is the second most visited area and its popularity, and the many activities that take place there, have led to serious erosion problems. Therefore, a strategy to manage visitors and to limit erosion must be introduced here.

In 2003, the Sully road was used by both pedestrians and cyclists, and also by cars travelling between Bas Bréau and the Platières d’Apremont.

It was also important to improve the recreational aspects and signage of the site, so that visitors can find their way around.

*Erosion at Bas Bréau*



#### *Objectives for the PROGRESS team...*

*As with Franchard, the management team wanted to direct the public to the less sensitive areas, reduce visits to the more fragile areas, and prevent the creation of false paths. Some sections of paths need to be restored, but in keeping with the character of the area. ONF wanted to make the Sully road ‘pedestrians only’, so as to restore tranquility.*

*Raised steps to combat erosion*



### **How would this be achieved?**

- Protection of the most eroded areas
- Installation of a raised step system to curb erosion
- Creation of a family walking loop from Apremont, called the 'Erosion Walk', as an alternative way to discover the site.
- Closure of the Sully route to motorised vehicles and consequential closure of several car parks, encouraging visitors away from the areas vulnerable to erosion
- Refurbishment of the Bas Bréau car park
- Installation of an information board explaining the work to combat erosion
- Work to close down the 'false' pathways created between the rocks
- Refurbishment of the two main paths leading to the Platières d'Apremont viewpoint, with wood chippings to prevent the heathland disappearing because of trampling
- Restoration of blue path 6 to enable the general public to enjoy this historical heritage.
- The creation of a family walking loop, based around the sandstone boulders called the 'Cavalière des Brigands'

**False paths closed off with rocks**



### **Results...**

It appears that the protection system has proved effective and the plant life is slowly re-establishing itself. However, the fences are in a poor condition in some places and need to be replaced.

Visitors like the raised wooden steps. They are happy with the stabilisation work and believe that it has been well integrated into the landscape. Visitors to Bas Bréau are aware of the erosion problem; many of them read the information notice about this and it is a good way of raising people's awareness of the fragility of the site.

The most popular path is the one leading to the Caverne des Brigands. The Cavalière des Brigands loop is rarely used in its entirety, as it is not marked clearly enough. At present, it is marked in three different ways (due to the location of existing signage) and the markings are not really suitable for the target audience: the walking loops are aimed at a novice public. The Erosion Circuit on the other hand is now better marked.

The information boards on-site are more effective than the welcome notice board. Explanation of problems and why some areas are protected leads to a high acceptance of the measures by the public.

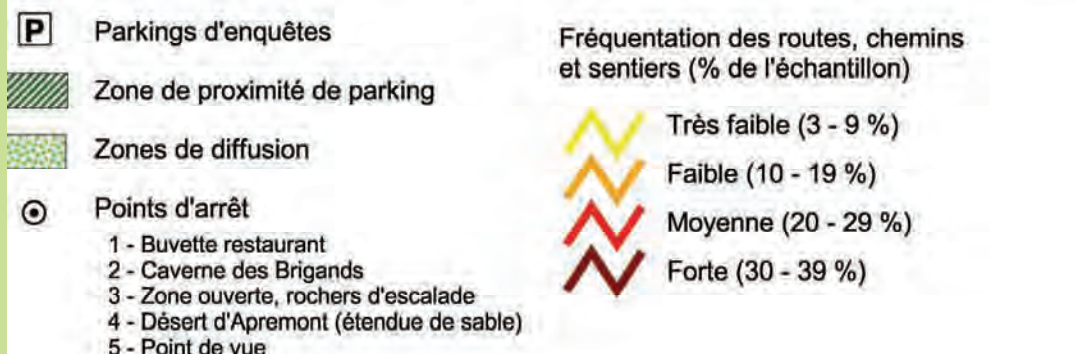
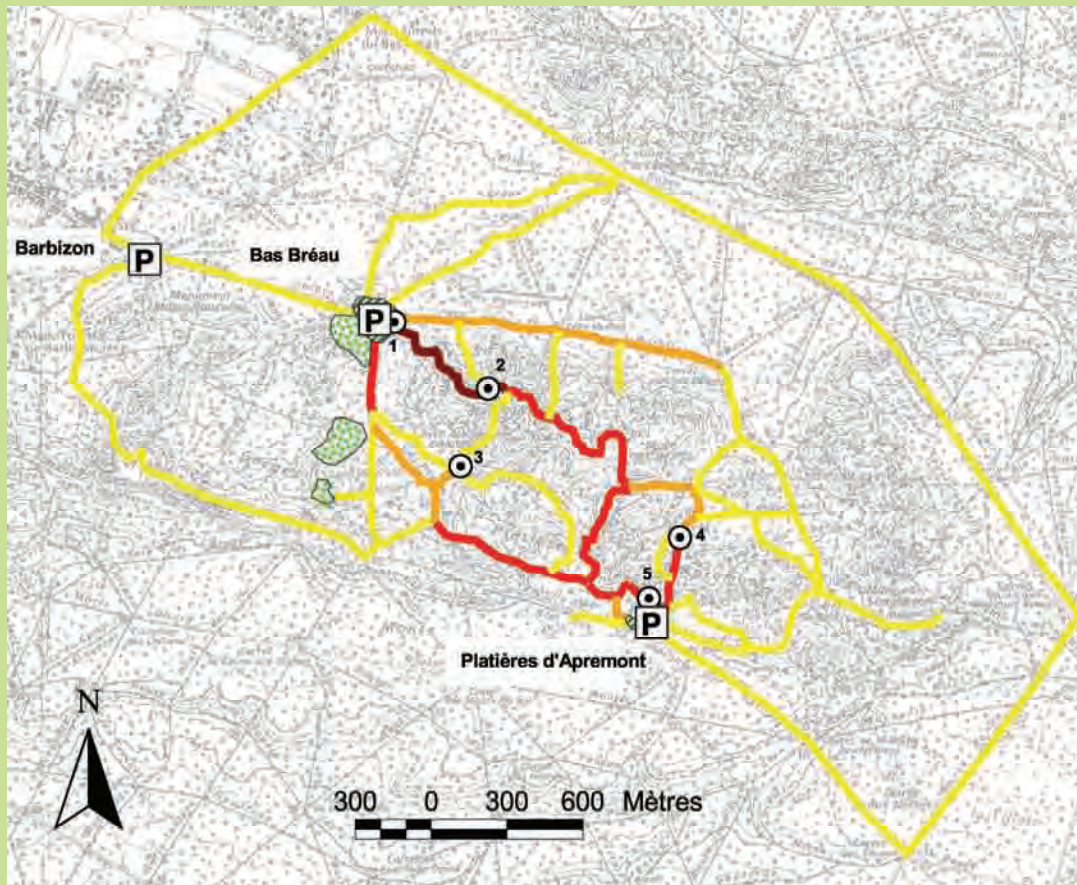
Walkers are happy about the closure of the Sully route, as they enjoy the new tranquillity. However, it has proved unpopular with rock climbers; climbing sites are now deemed to be less accessible than before, and climbers have to make their way to sites on foot, carrying equipment.

The closure of the road has not changed overall visitor behaviour. However, it has tended to increase the number of visitors at the Bas Bréau site, as the people who previously used the old car parks along this route now prefer to park there.

According to the analysis of the 2007 survey GPS results, the wood chip refurbishment of the two paths, leading to the Platières d'Apremont viewpoint from the car park, has proved effective. Moreover, those asked felt that this refurbishment had been well integrated into the landscape.

**Protection measures at Platières d'Apremont**





*The results of the GPS monitoring in 2007 show the spatial use of the site; most frequently used tracks (darkest red); main stopping points and areas of visitor diffusion and dispersal. These help the managers to identify target areas for work to be done.*

### **4.1.2 Results and achievements**

The extensive surveys of recreational use undertaken during the project have not only supplied the FC and ONF with a deeper understanding of recreational needs and the pressures exerted on their respective Natura 2000 sites but this information will also help the FC and ONF to make well founded management decisions regarding recreation and conservation well into the future.

Throughout the project, the use of the LARCH and MASOOR models has accelerated their development and increased their value. Even with the difficulties encountered, these still proved to be valuable decision making tools. These models have moved on a stage as a result of their use in the PROGRESS project and have now also been used by other organisations, including the University of Vienna in the Austrian Alps.

#### 4.1.2.1 Managing the impact of recreation within the Natura 2000 sites

Work carried out through PROGRESS in Fontainebleau has visibly reduced erosion particularly at Apremont. It is more difficult to gain an accurate appraisal of PROGRESS' efforts to channel visitors away from sensitive sites and decrease the disturbance to wildlife. For example, it is too early to say whether the trial seasonal car park closures in the New Forest have produced more favourable breeding habitats for the ground nesting birds, or whether their numbers have seen an increase as a result. However, a commitment from the RSPB and FC has been secured for the next five years in order to monitor the New Forest's ground nesting bird populations and breeding grounds.

ONF have been able to incorporate recommendations emerging from the project into their Natura 2000 management plan. Subsequently, a Charter has now been signed between ONF and the Minister of the Environment to ensure the protection of Natura 2000 birds and habitats.

Several robust recreational sites have been established inside and outside the two Natura 2000 boundaries which ONF and the FC have attempted to promote and channel visitors to.

#### 3.1.2.2 Diverting the pressure of recreational needs outside the Natura 2000 boundaries

It is hoped that the different approaches taken by the FC and ONF have led to some visitor pressure being diverted outside the Natura 2000 boundaries. In the New Forest, Watchmoor Wood has been developed and promoted as a recreational facility offering an alternative to the Open Forest.

ONF's approach has focussed more on promoting existing sites outside the Natura 2000 boundary rather than establishing new facilities. Improving the road signs from Paris and creating a new 'leisure map' (see case study 8, page 52) with information about attractions outside the forest has enabled the ONF to target the two main recreational users of the forest – weekend visitors from Paris and holidaymakers. In addition, CDT and local partners have implemented some scenic discovery tours through surrounding local villages. The next stage of this project will consist of promoting these through a common product (CDT has already edited some of its guides to include these).

### **4.1.3 Further reading**

- Revisions to original pilot actions (New Forest) (*CD-ROM: \\On-Site Pilot Actions\New Forest*)
- Pilot Actions in Fontainebleau (*CD-ROM: \\On-Site Pilot Actions\Fontainebleau*)

## 4.2 Communication

### 4.2.1 The role of communications within PROGRESS

The success of the PROGRESS project depends as much, if not more, on influencing peoples' behaviour as it does on physical 'works on the ground'. Communicating and engaging with the public plays a central role in ensuring sustainable recreation.

*Communication* represents a broad theme within the project and is not limited to the relationship and exchange between the visiting public and land manager. It also involves the relationships between the FC and ONF and their stakeholders, local governing bodies, tourism groups and businesses etc.

The major aim within this broad theme was education. The FC and ONF had already identified that much of the conflict between conservation and recreation was encountered as a result of the public's lack of knowledge about the specific needs of these two precious ecological areas. By educating and informing visitors about such needs it was hoped that their behaviour would be positively influenced. Targeting the irresponsible behaviour of some recreational users was one of the first areas to be tackled by the project's communications strategy.

A sizeable element of the communications strategy involved promoting and encouraging the use of the robust recreational sites. The message which the FC and ONF wanted to promote through PROGRESS was one of respect rather than restriction. The land managers still wanted to encourage the recreational use of the two forests. However, it was not the intention to increase overall visitor numbers, but rather channel the existing visitors away from particularly sensitive sites.

### 4.2.2 PROGRESS Actions

The different forest contexts and working cultures and practices of the FC and ONF dictated that, whilst sharing common goals, their communication strategies would be different. Before the project, contrasting strengths and weaknesses in each organisation's communications had been noted and it was hoped that working in partnership through PROGRESS would help the FC and ONF learn from each others experience, sharing best practice.

In particular the Office National des Forêts, partly due to their funding structure, has traditionally integrated more fully into the local tourist economy. This is something the Forestry Commission were interested in investigating further. Likewise, the ONF felt that it could learn from the FC's experience of public engagement programmes and establishing stakeholder groups.

As with the *ecology* theme of PROGRESS, *communications* absorbed a huge amount of effort over the four years and produced a vast array of actions. A summary of the FC and ONF's work is outlined here, with more detailed insights contained within the subsequent case studies.

#### 4.2.2.1 The New Forest

- Formulation and circulation of codes of conduct (see case study 6, page 49) and the subsequent "Bag it and bin it" dog poo campaign, to tackle inappropriate user behaviour within the forest. The codes were launched as a series of leaflets, gaining widespread local and even national media coverage.
- Public engagement and gauging of public opinions about pilot action proposals through site surgeries, community workshops, surveys,



Dog Poo Campaign Poster

PROGRESS project team presence at the New Forest Open day and New Forest Show, project presentations at the sustainability conference in autumn 2006 in Brockenhurst, photograph competitions, school drawing competitions etc (see case study 7, page 52)



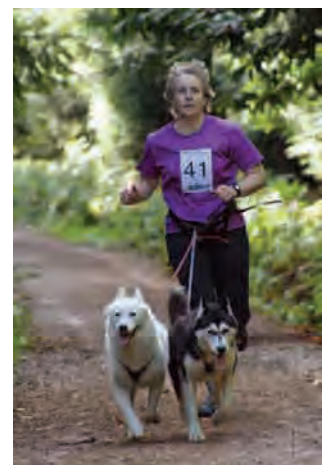
*Right: Display used at public engagement events about pilot action proposals  
Left: Ground Nesting Birds school art competition winners presentation.*

- A sustained programme of press releases detailing the project's actions, aims and objectives. On average seven press releases per annum were solely PROGRESS related, with other more general FC releases also promoting the project.



*Press cuttings from local papers about the New Forest codes of conduct*

- Continual face to face communication with visitors on site by FC rangers and volunteers. Training given to volunteers about PROGRESS messages.
- Development and distribution of the New Forest Visitor Pack (working with other local bodies e.g. the New Forest National Park Authority).
- PARKWISE campaign (May 2006) launched in partnership with the local fire and ambulance services with the aim of discouraging verge side parking and parking in front of gateways. Also highlighted the problem of people camping overnight in car parks.
- The project was involved in organising an initiative with mental health patients from Fordingbridge Primary Care Trust called Walking in Mind, a pilot scheme to demonstrate the positive effects that walking in the countryside can have on mental well being.
- An innovative recreational event was established within the New Forest called 'cani-cross'. The first trial event in October 2006 proved very successful, leading to three further meetings in 2007. Cani-cross involves a dog and its owner, attached throughout, completing a cross-country route of approximately five kilometres. These events meant that PROGRESS had helped dozens of participants enjoy a new responsible form of recreation with their dogs on the Natura 2000 site. It also provided the Forestry Commission with another opportunity to get the PROGRESS



*Cani-Cross event*



message over to a key audience, as dog walkers (and more specifically their loose dogs) were shown to be a cause of disturbance to the ground-nesting birds.

- Work with local schools to develop partnerships. The FC has commissioned the Rapport publishing group to produce a four-lesson cross-curricular, downloadable course regarding sustainable forestry. This is being developed for a nationwide launch in September 2007 and is aimed at primary school level (five – eleven year olds). This links into work they already do with sustainability on the national curriculum.

#### 4.2.2.2. Fontainebleau Forest

As the project team in Fontainebleau was less well equipped personnel-wise than the New Forest team (who had a part-time communications manager) combined with the way the French media is run, the communications actions were less extensive.

- A ‘Charte des activités’ (code of conduct) was developed and initially placed on information panels in car parks. However, later this was considered under-effective and it was subsequently released as leaflets to local communities, stakeholders and at presentations. Currently codes for individual user groups are being developed with a view to a wider distribution (see case study 6, page 50)
- A leisure map is being developed which will show only carefully selected robust sites within the forest, and attractions and sites outside the Natural 2000 boundary to attempt to encourage their use rather than sensitive sites.
- Work with Fontainebleau Tourism Board to create an information desk (“Antenne Forestière”) at la Fasaindarie.
- Engagement with tourism body to develop an accreditation scheme.
- Some press releases on the project and works implemented.



Fontainebleau Forest Information Centre

In addition, three project newsletters were published in English and French each year. These newsletters proved to be a useful means of raising the project’s profile, spreading the PROGRESS messages and providing interested parties updates on project actions. These newsletters were also available in electronic format from the PROGRESS website, which was maintained by Alterra.



PROGRESS website



PROGRESS Newsletter

## Case Study 6: The Codes of Conduct

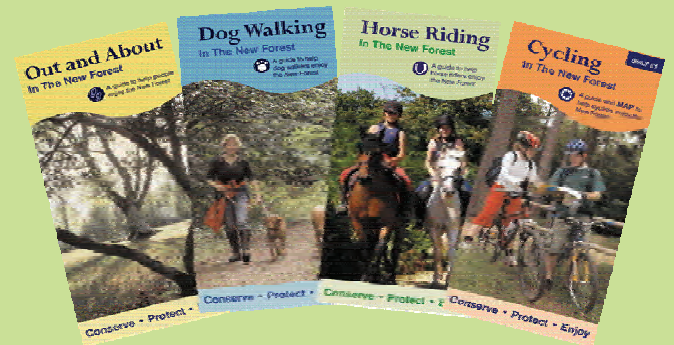
### *Enhancing the visitor's knowledge of, and appreciation for, the conservation needs of the two Natura 2000 sites*

#### ***In the New Forest:***

To make the public and forest visitors more aware of the conservation needs of the forest and to encourage responsible behaviour, the PROGRESS team decided to develop codes of conduct. These were drawn up and agreed by the stakeholder forum during their meetings. The stakeholder forum was made up of representatives from local forest user groups – people who regularly undertake recreational activities in the New Forest themselves and therefore have a vested interest in the project – and also local conservation and wildlife groups. During these meetings the group was split into 4-5 focus groups which then looked individually at a code of conduct for a particular user group e.g. cyclists, horse riders etc. These smaller focus groups brainstormed and discussed the conflicts between user behaviour and the needs of conservation in the forest and drew up a

livery stables etc. The cycling code is sold for £1 as it includes a cycling map and is made of more durable paper.

#### ***New Forest Codes of Conduct***



#### ***New Forest Codes of Conduct photo for press launch***



list of what they felt should be included in each code. Subsequently these were presented to the group as a whole to be discussed and amended. This whole process spanned a long series of meetings, which in retrospect was considered to have been too drawn out, with long debates about exact wording. The finished codes of conduct; Out and About, Dog Walking, Horse Riding and Cycling (including cycling map), were finally launched as a series of leaflets, which gained widespread local and even national media coverage, leading to several reprints. All the codes, apart from the cycling code, are free and have been widely distributed at local campsites, rail stations, hotels, holiday parks, cycle shops,

#### ***In Fontainebleau:***

In Fontainebleau a slightly different approach was taken. A 'Charte des activités touristiques et sportives' (code of best practice) was developed and initially produced for the public as part of the information panels (see below), which were placed in 40 car parks around the forest between 2004-2005.

#### ***Car park information panels at Fontainebleau***



By April 2006, ONF decided that these messages of 'best practice' were not reaching the public as effectively as they would wish. Therefore, they decided, having seen the work of the FC on codes in the New Forest, to follow a similar methodology and create a leaflet. The first leaflet developed was very similar to that on the display panels, a generic leaflet for all users with conservation messages and user conduct guidance. This leaflet was circulated to local communities, to the stakeholder group and local user groups who have displayed it on their websites. In addition, leaflets were dispensed at meetings, events, conferences and exhibitions given by ONF e.g. at sports competitions held in the forest, at a nature fair in Fontainebleau, at an exhibition in "Carrefour" supermarkets in the Seine et Marne area, and at the forest information point ONF created in Faisanderie in association with the Fontainebleau tourism board.

Currently new codes of conduct for different user groups (cyclists, horse riders and walkers) are in the later stages of development and are hoped to

be completed and disseminated soon. These have been developed in a similar way to the New Forest codes of conduct, via a series of focus groups. It is hoped that the new leaflets will be distributed on a larger scale than the initial leaflet; however this will depend on financial provision.

**Fontainebleau initial generic leaflet "Charte des activités"**



**Ensemble protégeons et préservons la forêt**

- En ne faisant pas du feu de camp sans autorisation des élus.
- En ne passant pas dans les réserves biologiques intégrales, espaces naturels protégés et sensibles.
- En s'empêchant à l'emploi et à l'usage des armes à feu de plus de 150 m de ligne de visée sur ces sites, en respectant les écoulements d'eau à toute intention et en ne procédant jamais dans les parcs.
- En ne prenant pas les hooks d'escalade, en n'utilisant ni brosse métallique ni marteau et en ne procédant à aucun travail sauvage.
- En évitant de passer dans les sous-bois et en tenant votre chien en laisse au 1<sup>er</sup> ou 2<sup>e</sup> degré de densité de la forêt.

Les magnifiques paysages du massif domaniale de Fontainebleau accueillent plusieurs millions de visiteurs par an...

**S**oumis à une telle pression, certains sites risquent de se dégrader immédiatement. Pour que les générations futures puissent elles aussi en profiter, promeneurs, cyclistes, cavaliers, randonneurs, sportifs, respectez ce milieu naturel fragile.

Appliquez les recommandations de la Charte des activités touristiques en forêt de Fontainebleau.

**Ensemble partageons la forêt**

- À l'usage de la forêt, il est interdit de faire du feu de camp sans autorisation des élus.
- En respectant les autres usagers de la forêt.
- En évitant de passer dans les sous-bois et en tenant votre chien en laisse au 1<sup>er</sup> ou 2<sup>e</sup> degré de densité de la forêt.
- En respectant les autres usagers (exploitation, travaux, etc.) en évitant les zones boisées pour la chasse à tir.
- La forêt est un espace naturel protégé et sensible. Évitez de passer dans les sous-bois et de procéder à aucun travail sauvage.

## Case Study 7: Public engagement in the New Forest

### *Enhancing the visitor's knowledge of and appreciation for the conservation needs of the two Natura 2000 sites*

The PROGRESS team tried several different methods to engage the public and make them aware of, and gauge their opinions on, the pilot actions planned through the project and the needs of conservation in the forest. These included:

- **Public Opinion Survey** – In Aug/Sept 2006 PROGRESS held a survey in car parks throughout the New Forest in order to discover public opinion of proposed pilot actions and changes (e.g. car park closures). The survey asked people's opinion about the importance of wildlife and nature conservation and how much they would be willing to change in order to continue this.
- **Site Surgeries** – three site surgeries were held in Sept 2006 at each of three main sites (a total of nine) where closures and pilot actions were planned and also at the local farmers market. Marquees were set up with information boards and PROGRESS staff were on hand to give people the opportunity to find out more and voice their opinions or worries about the project's proposed work.
- **Focus Groups** – these were informal meetings held in Oct/Nov 2006 between the Forestry Commission and local people who had shown an interest in learning more about the forest and its management during the initial visitor surveys. These groups are being regularly updated on the work of PROGRESS and have enabled the team to gauge the opinion of the general public to complement the work with the stakeholder groups.
- **Community Events** – in March 2007 a community event was held to help locals learn more about the forest. This was a joint venture with local organisations e.g. fire services, local cycle hire shops, dog wardens. The event included children's activities and a falconer in addition to displaying information about the New Forest.
- **Community Workshops** – In April 2007 a workshop was held in Boldre village hall. The PROGRESS team displayed an enlarged map of the New Forest so that people could show the team where they thought problems were and could be informed about the project and could give their opinions. The afternoon was very much an informal pop-in style and a more formal question and answer session followed in the evening.
- **Public Open Day** – held in May 2007 at Wilverley inclosure, the operational workings of the Forestry Commission were demonstrated, including tree felling, wood burning and harvesting. Rangers, keepers and FC staff were on hand to provide information about the FC and how it maintains and cares for the forest. Activities for visitors were run throughout the day.

Site surgeries



Community workshop at Boldre



## Case Study 8: Leisure map

### Informing visitors and promoting the use of robust recreational sites

Fontainebleau's leisure map is to be a strategic tourist document aimed at families, on which the sites shown have been carefully selected to try to channel visitors away from sensitive sites to the more robust recreation areas.

ONF have utilised data and GPS tracks gained through the initial visitors surveys (2004 and 2006) in Fontainebleau to identify and classify both robust sites (sites that had capacity to take more visitors combined with more robust habitats) and sensitive sites (sites that were over frequented by visitors in sensitive habitats).

A map produced from survey data is shown below. It indicates that the Gorge d'Apremont, Gorge de Franchard and areas of the Trois Pignons were over frequented whilst sites like la Feuillardière and la Canche aux Merciers were more robust sites capable of supporting higher visitor numbers.

This information along with their own expertise have enabled them to tailor the leisure map to reduce recreational pressure on sensitive sites.

The map is tailored specifically to show only:

- Selected robust recreation sites (e.g. la Feuillardière) – the trails network is not detailed in areas where recreation is undesirable in terms of conservation.
- Recreation sites outside the Natura 2000 boundary (such as the new scenic routes

created in local surrounding villages by CDT and local partners).

- Areas which provide safe and robust sites for activities such as rock climbing (only children's climbing areas are marked).
- Camping sites are displayed to stop 'wild' camping in the forest, which is forbidden.

In addition, villages are marked along with the possibilities for refreshment and accommodation in the area.

The map also includes conservation and best practice messages about the responsible use of the forest to inspire respect.

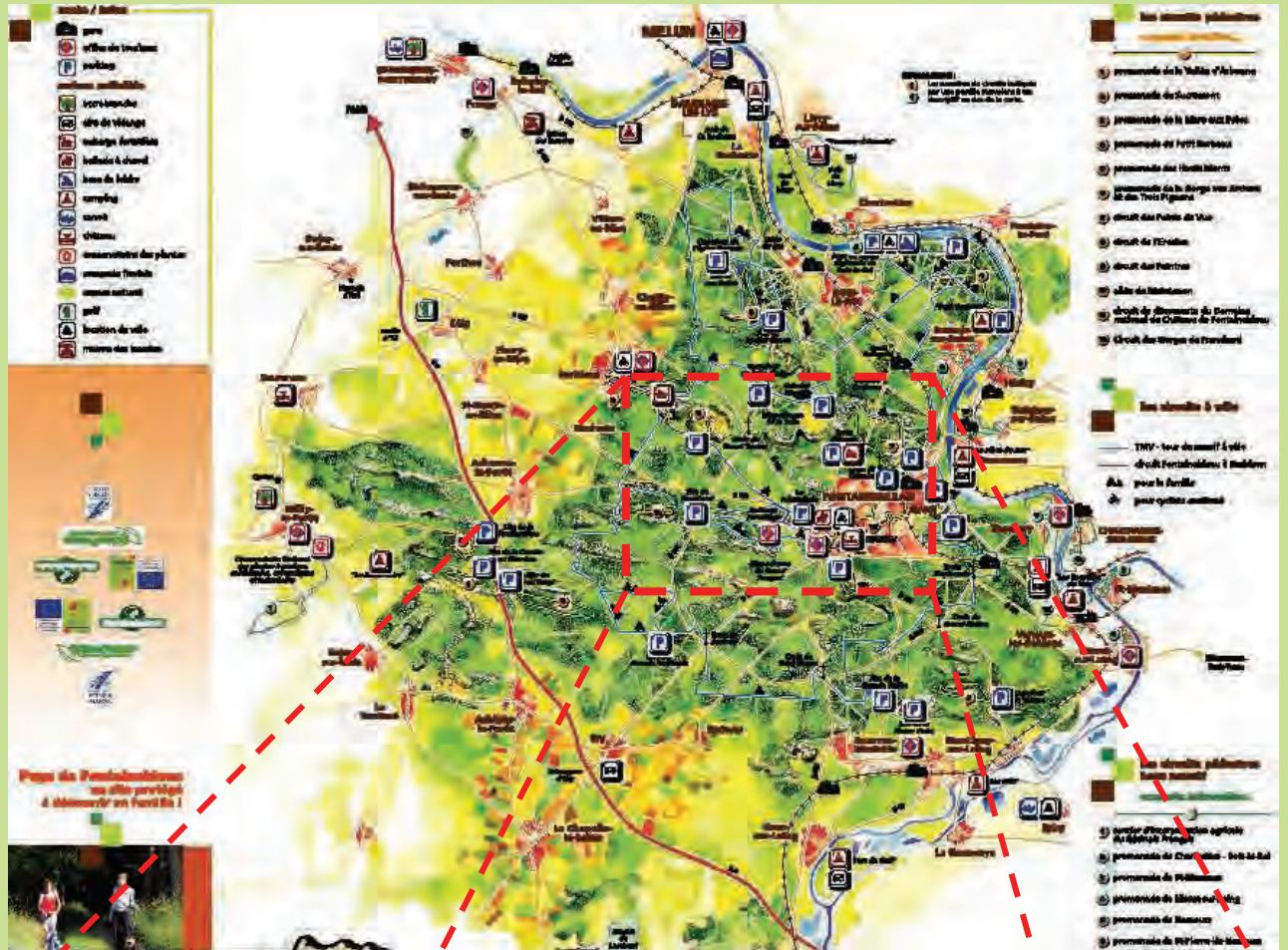
The map has been tailored aesthetically to appeal to the target audience - the two main recreational users of the forest – weekend visitors from Paris and holidaymakers.

The map itself has been created by ONF working with a focus group which was especially created for the purpose. Members included the Comité Départemental du Tourisme (CDT) for la Seine et la Marne (Dpt 77), and for l'Essonne (Dpt 91), the local tourism information centre, and the Association des Amis de la Forêt de Fontainebleau (AAFF).

The map, which is in the final stages of production, will be free and available at the tourism information centre. A wider distribution is planned for the future if funds are available.



# Fontainebleau Leisure Map



### 4.2.3 Results and achievements

Unlike 'on-site' pilot actions, it is difficult to assess the impact or success of these communication actions: they involve changing user perceptions, which are hard to quantify. In practice, the effectiveness of the communications programme is probably best assessed through event feedback from the public, the number of reprints, and the breadth of distribution of leaflets and the publicity message. In addition, as some of these actions are not yet complete (e.g. Fontainebleau leisure map) it is not yet possible to gauge their success.

- The New Forest Visitor Pack and Codes of Conduct were well received by the public, which has led to several reprints throughout the project.
- Over the course of the project, New Forest PROGRESS press releases reached millions people. The code of conduct, in particular, generated a significant amount of local and national media interest, with articles being published in local newspapers (e.g. Lymington Times and Hampshire Chronicle) and magazines (e.g. What mountain bike? and the Forest journal). PROGRESS also featured on national and local TV, and radio programmes, such as BBC Breakfast news, BBC Radio 4, BBC South Today and BBC Radio Solent).
- Several members of the public have indicated that the efforts made by the FC to keep the public involved and informed - for example, through community workshops and site surgeries - has nurtured a positive relationship between the two.
- ONF succeeded in successfully launching 2 specialist user groups (a mountain bikers group and a horse riders group), with whom ONF worked on a tailored communication plan. As a result, specialised codes of conduct were produced and also leaflets and panels. This process set up will help ONF to better target the users and to have the support of officials respected by these user groups, who have an impact on the forest.

### 4.2.4 Lessons learned

- Marketing an event is the key – don't underestimate how long and how much this can take. The Open Day at Wilverley was extremely well received (we got excellent feedback from those who attended) but attendance was lower than expected, despite extensive adverts in the local press.
- School projects – schools need months of notice in order to plan a trip, get consent forms from parents, budget, etc.

### 4.2.5 Further reading

- The PROGRESS communications strategy (**CD-ROM:\PROGRESS documents**)
- PROGRESS Newsletters (in English and French) (**CD-ROM:\ PROGRESS documents\PROGRESS Newsletters**)
- New Forest Codes of Conduct (**CD-ROM:\ PROGRESS documents\New Forest\Codes of Conduct**)
- New Forest Visitor Pack (**CD-ROM:\ PROGRESS documents\New Forest**)
- The Fontainebleau "Charte des activités" and horse riders code of conduct (**CD-ROM:\ PROGRESS documents\Fontainebleau**)
- Public Opinion and the PROGRESS project in the New Forest (**CD-ROM:\Surveys\New Forest\ Visitor & Recreation**)
- Fontainebleau communication plans for horse riders and mountain bikers (**CD-ROM:\ PROGRESS documents\Fontainebleau\communication plans**)
- Fontainebleau Leisure Map (**CD-ROM:\ PROGRESS documents\Fontainebleau\leisure map**)

## 4.3 Sustainability

### 4.3.1 The need for a sustainable approach

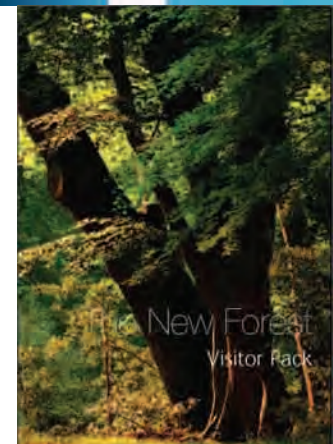
Although PROGRESS is only a four-year project, its aims are much longer term. As such, the project focused not just on the short-term implementation of projects, but also on its long term goal; to secure sustainable recreation in the two forests. In the New Forest, the main challenges to creating a sustainable approach will be making the public more aware of conservation issues, and developing effective partnerships with local tourism groups. In Fontainebleau, however, one of the main issues will be that of gaining sufficient funding. The FC receives most of its funding from the government, and Office of the Deputy Prime Minister; to which is added the revenue from timber sales and recreation (campsites). By contrast, only 47% of ONF's recreation management costs come from the regional HQ; the rest must be obtained from other sources. These are: the Seine et Marne county council; open space agency of the Ile de France; the national and local environment agencies; the department for agriculture and forestry; UNESCO; and the EU. The PROGRESS project therefore aims to begin to implement actions to tackle these challenges.

### 4.3.2 PROGRESS actions

ONF and the FC have worked on developing partnerships with local tourism groups and businesses as a means of promoting key environmental messages. Both have also taken steps to begin to tackle the public's lack of knowledge and understanding of conservation issues; and to encourage a sense of ownership of the forests, by including local groups in the entire planning process. In addition, steps have been taken to establish how the public and local tourism providers can help financially with sustainable management (particularly in Fontainebleau).

#### 4.3.2.1 The New Forest

- Partnership with 'Cycle Experience' in Brockenhurst – working with the bicycle-hire outlet to develop wall displays of conservation messages and codes of conduct.
- Extensive work with public engagement (see case study 7, page 52)
- Development of Visitor Pack to promote sustainable messages.
- Work with the New Forest Tourism Association (NFTA) to develop a 'forest stewardship' element to the Green Leaf Tourism sustainable tourism accreditation scheme (see case study 9, page 57)
- Site visits with local tourism providers, to help them better understand the role of the FC and PROGRESS in recreation provision and forest management.



**Top: Information Panel at Cycle Experience**

**Bottom: New Forest Visitor Pack**

#### 4.3.2.2 Fontainebleau Forest

- Development of Leisure map to reduce visitor pressure (see case study 8, page 53) and codes of conduct (see case study 6, page 50) to spread conservation messages.
- Study, looking at how the public (local public, tourism groups, businesses etc) can contribute financially towards the cost of sustainable management in Fontainebleau (case study 10, page 58).
- ONF are hoping to create a forest volunteer ranger group, as in the New Forest.
- Sustainability Accreditation Scheme (Forêt Patrimoine).



## Case Study 9: NFTA Green Leaf Tourism Accreditation Scheme

***Encouraging sustainable use of the forest and sustainable practices in local businesses.***



The New Forest Tourism Association, of which the Forestry Commission is a member, have designed, with the help of its partners, an accreditation scheme for local businesses, such as hotels, B&Bs, local attractions etc. Accreditation is based on a points scheme, and the criteria include:

- Promoting and encouraging **car-free tourism**
- Purchasing and/or promoting **New Forest Marque produce** (the local farmers' market) in order to support local businesses and provide high quality, low food miles products to customers.
- Participation in an **Energy, Waste and Recycling Audit training** programme.
- **Landscape & conservation** – develop grounds and gardens to help support wildlife and increase biodiversity.
- Participation in the **Forest Friends Visitors Stewardship Programme**. Run by PROGRESS project staff, this is a series of site visits and meetings with rangers, keepers and foresters. The aim being to help business managers and staff better understand the management of the New Forest, current site and conservation issues and projects, recreation opportunities, and the location of sensitive habitats, so that they can pass this knowledge on to guests and visitors.
- **Community Support** – joining the local tourism group, or actively participating in local community based events, in order to develop good relationships with the public and local organisations.

The scheme began accreditation in 2006/2007 and has received widespread support; it now has many accredited members.

### ***The PROGRESS team's work for the Green Leaf Tourism Accreditation Scheme:***

In March 2007 the PROGRESS team ran its first Forest Friends Visitors Stewardship Programme day for local tourism providers as part of the NFTA's accreditation scheme. Local managers of B&Bs, hotels and local attractions were taken on site visits around the New Forest to see how the forest is maintained and habitats conserved, and were also introduced to PROGRESS, and its work reconciling the conflicts between recreation and conservation (e.g. informing them of sensitive habitats and robust sites). In addition the group were given opportunities to talk with rangers and keepers during their visit. It is hoped that this programme will provide another avenue to inform the public about the forest and recreation within it as well as helping to form positive relationships between the Forestry Commission, the NFTA and local tourism providers.

#### ***On-site visits conducted by the PROGRESS team as part of the Forest Friends Visitors Stewardship Programme***



## Case Study 10: The Athlane Study “public contribution to sustainable management in Fontainebleau Forest”

### ***Assess the potential of making money for sustainable management via public/tourism/stakeholder contributions.***

For recreation management, ONF finances 47% of the cost. To cover the remaining costs, ONF has to apply for funding from the Seine et Marne county council, open space agency of the Ile de France, the national and local environment agencies, the department for agriculture and forestry, UNESCO and the EU. Recreation represents 51% of the management budget for Fontainebleau – more than ONF finances for forest renewal, upkeep and biodiversity.

A significant problem with this type of income is that it can change quickly, depending on political context and people in powerful roles (e.g. Mayor) whose priorities may change and who have many projects to support. In addition, as it tends to rely on ONF bidding for funds, it is not secure.

It is therefore clear that the security of funding is likely to be a significant challenge to sustainable management in Fontainebleau. Accordingly, ONF commissioned Athlane to undertake a study, as part of PROGRESS, to find out:

- How ONF can make money in a sustainable way (to fund sustainable management)
- The part tourism revenue can have in this
- The kind of partnerships ONF can improve between themselves and - directly and indirectly - linked groups (e.g. local associations and user groups, tourism businesses, hotels, campsites etc)
- The feasibility of these initiatives, and how they could be implemented

The study indicated that, at the present time, recreation management in Fontainebleau costs €1.85 million per annum. €1 million of this goes on investment: creation of hiking paths and hiking signage, communication and education initiatives and campaigns, research and studies, etc. €0.85 million is spent on upkeep works, such as road repairs, landscaping, public safety, replacement of recreation equipment, surveillance, etc. ONF would like to see a rise in funds for the future, to meet the cost of sustainable management; and the actions required to preserve sensitive habitats, improve security at some sites, to channel people, and for education.

See Athlane Study Report:  
CD-ROM: \\Surveys\Fontainebleau\2006\Athlane Study

The study also estimated that the revenue per year, gained from tourism by local businesses (e.g. accommodation, transport etc), totalled €90 million. That is 50 times the cost of recreation management! Given this fact, it was felt that these businesses should put some money into management, since they clearly benefit from it.

It was shown that ONF would need at least €1.3 million each year for investment (if the current partners that give ONF funding continue to give the same amount of money) and taking into account the 5% increase in visitor numbers each year.

The study suggested money could be made through:

- Forest product purchase
- Donations
- Sponsorship
- Community donations
- More partnerships with local associations
- More partnerships with tourist office
- Volunteer programme
- Charging a tax, or for parking

A public opinion survey, as part of this study, suggested that 30% of people would be willing to give money (IOD 1996); but they'd prefer giving “gift” money, rather than paying taxes or for parking.

It was also clear that education of the public about ONF's funding sources is key, as the majority of the public and local groups and businesses believe that ONF are funded entirely from the government. It is important in the future, therefore, to explain management costs and show that ONF is not government funded. That, in fact, there is not a balance between revenue from harvesting and visitor numbers.

It is hoped that ONF can encourage more donations by:

- allowing the public and local businesses to have more input into forest management
- publicising and recognising work done by groups in the forest (e.g. the AAFF)
- formally publicising and showing how donations have helped the forest.

## 4.4 Wider European Transnationality

### 4.4.1 The importance of working in this way

Projects with a number of different partners are becoming the norm. Therefore, organisations have to learn how to work together, in order to get the maximum benefit out of the funding.

Collaboration in this way is valuable, as different organisations have varying experiences, expertise, and methods of best practice, which can be shared. In particular, it helps to broaden the views and experience of participants, making them more aware of different management methods. Potentially, it can help them to improve their own management policies and practices.

### 4.4.2 Actions: How PROGRESS worked towards these ends

To aid the process of international sharing of expertise and knowledge PROGRESS undertook the following actions:

- Regular transnational meetings, including technical team meetings; this enabled PROGRESS project members to get updates on work in the different forests, share ideas about actions, and raise and debate any resulting issues.
- An international steering group was set up, composed of twelve specialists representing six European nations. Their role was to advise the project management group, and help review and guide the project's pilot actions. Meeting approximately every six months, this group also helped stimulate a broader international debate around the issues concerned.
- International exchange visits were organised between ONF and FC staff, and also between the forests local businesses and groups. For instance, exchange visits were organised for New Forest Tourism Association members and for the New Forest Volunteer Rangers. (see case study 11, page 60)



*Technical team meeting in Paris*



*From Left: International Exchange; PROGRESS team meeting; Presentation during NFTA exchange to Fontainebleau*

- Alterra attended many international conferences to publicise the PROGRESS project (e.g IUFRO conference Bulgaria, IUFRO world congress Brisbane, 3<sup>rd</sup> conference on monitoring and management of visitor flows (MMV3) Switzerland, Symposium for protected Alpine areas and tourism Italy, and International symposium on society and resource management, Vancouver Canada).
- End of project conference to present key messages and project results in the wider sphere of land management and planning.

## Case Study 11: Exchange Visits

### *How the Forestry Commission and Office National des Forêts shared their experience and knowledge to the mutual benefit of the wider organisations, staff and forests*

ONF and the FC wished to take full advantage of the project's international nature. For this reason, many exchange visits were organised between FC and ONF staff - working on, and outside, the PROGRESS project - as well as other organisations like local tourism groups. It was hoped that such exchanges could provide opportunities to observe differences in practices, and allow the interplay of ideas, experience and expertise.

#### **FC – ONF Exchanges**

In addition to the PROGRESS project team members, these exchanges also involved other ONF and FC staff, such as keepers, foresters and forest volunteers.

An exchange visit by the FC to Fontainebleau, in the early stages of the project, enabled FC staff to compare the differences in recreational pressure and associated problems between the two areas. It also allowed brainstorming, and exchange of views and experience about particular pressures, and how to tackle them at the specific sites visited (e.g. Franchard).

A later exchange visit to Fontainebleau allowed Laurence Degoul, of the FC Wareham office, to observe the pathway landscaping work, with steps and pavements, being undertaken at the Franchard site. Subsequently, similar works have been applied at the Ramsdown site in Ringwood.

Exchange visits by ONF to the New Forest enabled ONF to see the New Forest volunteer group at work and appreciate the benefits of having such a group. The volunteers so impressed the ONF staff with their dedication, commitment, and ability, that ONF are hoping to introduce a similar group in Fontainebleau.

During a visit to the New Forest in August 2006, ONF were also able to observe the partnerships between the FC and local groups (e.g. extreme off-road cycling group or NF trust) and to observe FC database management and GIS. Information gained was deemed to be useful, particularly in helping to increase the efficiency and speed of ONF's database management.

Forest keepers indicated that ideas obtained from observing the high quality management of oak stands in Fontainebleau could be put into practice in the New Forest.

#### **Wider exchanges**

In addition to project internal exchanges, the PROGRESS team organised wider exchanges for local organisations with interest in the project. Of particular note is the NFTAs visit to Fontainebleau in September 2006. This consisted of an intensive programme of presentations and site visits, to identify the differences in approach, and involvement Fontainebleau's local groups and tourist organisations, compared to the New Forest.



### **4.4.3 Results and Achievements**

The sharing of experience and knowledge, and seeing different approaches at close hand, has been an invaluable part of the project.

The exchange visits have helped broaden the minds of both FC and ONF, and each has taken something from the experience. Naturally, comparisons of methods were often difficult, due to the very different ways in which the FC and ONF operate in matters of stakeholder interaction, surveying methodology, and forest procedures and cultures. For example, the New Forest's unique traditions of 'commoners' and 'Verderers', and France's larger number of geopolitical scales, with many local representatives having various powers.

Such differences were no obstacle. The FC 'borrowed' from Fontainebleau, applying landscaping work with steps and pavements, seen there, to the Ramsdown site in Ringwood. ONF have seen the value of having a volunteer ranger programme and have taken much from the FC in terms of public engagement strategies. Moreover, working in collaboration with Alterra on the ecological and recreational modelling, has given FC and ONF exposure to recreational management techniques elsewhere in Europe, due to Alterra's involvement in many European projects.

Communications between partners were generally good. This owed much to regular face to face team meetings, where definite problems could be resolved through discussion, often saving time in the long run. As with any international project, there have, of course, been some issues relating to full and free exchange of information. This can largely be attributed to misunderstandings, affecting expectations, over language and the availability of key personnel. Though, on occasion, such difficulties do cause some problems, and can take time to resolve, face to face team meetings were found to be the best answer.

Now that the partnership has been formed - and forged in the heat of a complex four year project - all will wish to continue to work transnationally on further projects in the future.

### **4.4.4 Lessons Learned**

A key lesson learned during the project is that, although a lot of the communication can be done electronically and over the phone the value of face to face meetings should not be underestimated. It was found that these could produce far better results, and tended to save time in the long run.

In taking on an international project, partners should not have overly high expectations of international sharing; it is often the case that different methods and practices in each country are not directly applicable, transferable, or comparable to other areas. It may be advisable for project members, wishing to work transnationally, to agree standardised procedures, such as surveying methods, if direct comparisons are important for the project.

Moreover, members should expect, tolerate, and be aware of potential language problems and misunderstandings resulting from this.





## **5.0 Pilot action monitoring.. the story so far**







It is unlikely that outcomes from pilot actions will be seen immediately, especially in relation to biodiversity and wildlife populations (e.g. wading birds in the New Forest). However, some results from the first round of pilot action monitoring surveys are available that give insight into some of the effects. For example, knowing how visitors responded to the initiatives, particularly in Fontainebleau, has helped the process of adaptation and modification to make some of the attempted solutions more effective.

## 5.1 Fontainebleau

### 5.1.1 Introduction and Methods

In Fontainebleau, the visitor surveys, and the horse riders survey at La Mare aux Fees, were conducted between mid-April and mid-May 2007; they took place in 13 car parks, at the seven sites where pilot actions were implemented. Visitor questionnaires consisted of two common parts, framed to pinpoint purpose of visits, numbers, demography, length of stay, etc. The other parts of the questionnaire were specific to the site, asking interviewees if they had noticed changes to car parks, paths, and so on, and did they feel changes were positive or negative. At sites where new paths (family 'strolls') had been added and waymarked additional questions sought to determine whether visitors used this path (all of it, some of it, and if not, why?). Also, what other pathways they took, how did they feel about the new signage, was it easy to follow, etc. At sites affected by the road closure, visitors were asked whether they had changed car parks. Visitors were also asked if they had read car park panels, if the information was sufficient, if there was more information they wish was displayed. 932 questionnaires were completed and 308 GPS tracks were collected.

### 5.1.2 Main Findings

From the initial 2004 surveys the car parks in Fontainebleau were classified into three categories; the very popular overcrowded sites where ONF wished to attempt to channel visitors away to other more robust sites (e.g. Franchard, Apremont, Bas Breau); those sites that were less well known, frequented by fewer people, and more robust environments where ONF wished to encourage more people to use by better road signage, the leisure map etc; and finally those that had low visitor frequency but also sensitive habitats which ONF wished to remain less frequented and therefore less disturbed.

In the category one sites the following results were found:

From the initial 2004 surveys, the car park sites in Fontainebleau had been classified into three categories. These were:- Very popular, overcrowded sites, from which ONF wished to try and channel visitors to other, more robust sites (e.g. Franchard, Apremont, Bas Breau); sites that were less well known and frequented by less people the more robust environments ,that ONF wished to encourage more people to use, with better road signage, leisure maps et al; and, finally, those with low visitor frequency, but also with sensitive habitats that ONF wished to remain less frequented and therefore less disturbed.

In the category one sites the following results were found:

In Franchard, results showed that the new family stroll was well used. However, in the southern area of the Gorge de Franchard, visitor numbers had fallen - probably as a result of the nearby road closure, In the Northern area of La Roche qui Pleure, however, visitor numbers accessing the gorge



*Visitors enjoying the tranquillity of the closed road*

had not been significantly reduced; this, despite being barricaded by branches and displaying panels stating that it was an erosion site.

At Apremont, GPS tracking helped to show that the new woodchipped path appeared to have effectively channelled visitors along it. The GPS also showed that the new signage indicating biological reserves was working; few people appeared to enter the reserves, and those that did only covered a few meters before retreating.

In addition, it became clear from the surveys that diversion or restriction of visitors tended to only be successful where such areas were marked by specific signage indicating why (e.g. biological reserves, areas closed due to extreme erosion etc).



**Wood chipping path at Apremont successfully channels visitors**

At the category two sites (e.g. La Feuillardiere), the surveys showed that the majority of people visiting were locals who stopped there by chance (usually with dogs) and only stayed a short time or climbing groups that used the car parks to access specific climbing sites. As a result it was clear that the lack of use of the family strolls in the area identified by the survey was probably due to other user groups frequenting the sites.

### **5.1.3 Consequences**

The results of the surveys were presented to the stakeholder group and it was clear that certain modifications would have to be made to the pilot actions. A geology expert was appointed to study la Roche qui Pleure area of Franchard because as it is so popular that people were unlikely to discontinue using it and it needed to be made safe. These findings were presented before a specially formed technical committee in order to produce viable modifications. Currently these are being debated and considered by ONF and its stakeholders, not only for Franchard but also for other sites (e.g. how to improve signage at Bas Breau and how to encourage more people to use the category two sites). It is hoped that such changes will resolve the problems and have a positive effect on recreation impact. The process of post-action surveying, even so early after action implementation, has clearly been shown to be a valuable exercise not only for seeing if the actions are beginning to be effective but also in enabling early identification of problems with actions which can then be adapted.

## **5.2 The New Forest**

*NB. The following represent very early monitoring results as implementation of pilot actions in the New Forest were significantly delayed and not well established at the time of surveying.*

### **5.2.1 Bird Survey 2007**

The breeding wader surveys were undertaken at eight areas in 2006 and nine areas in 2007. The study areas selected support a range of open habitats favoured by wading birds. These areas also feature significant visitor infrastructure such as car parks, with the intention of changing the use of these car parks and monitoring the effects on breeding wader activity in subsequent seasons. Two of the nine study areas are controls where no changes to normal visitor management were proposed.

Due to the limited time availability during the 2006 breeding wader season, surveys were only conducted between 10<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> June, with a minimum of 2 visits to each site. In contrast, a full season of survey work was undertaken in 2007, with a minimum of 3 visits to each site between 4<sup>th</sup> April - 4<sup>th</sup>

July. The shortened survey season in 2006 meant that some early nesting attempts (whether successful or otherwise), in particular by Lapwing, will not have been recorded. Therefore this explains the difference

Summary of survey results to date:

Survey area	Lapwing	Snipe	Curlew	Redshank
Stonyford Pond	1 (2)	0 (3)	2 (0)	0 (1)
Crockford	16 (6)	4 (7)	3 (3)	1 (2)
Pig Bush/Denny	6 (0)	1 (2)	2 (1)	1 (0)
Longwater Lawn	4 (0)	1 (2)	2 (0)	0 (0)
Fulliford Bog	0	2	0	0
Hincheslea Bog	3 (1)	3 (4)	0 (4)	0 (0)
Holmhill	0	1	2	0
Clayhill (Burley)	3 (0)	6 (3)	2 (1)	0 (0)
Ditched Brook	0	1	0	0

N.B. The figures in black text are from 2007, figures in red are from 2006.

From the summarised data above it can be seen that there is a general trend of more Lapwing during the breeding season in 2007 than there was in 2006. A similar trend can be seen for curlew (with the notable exception of the Hincheslea study area). The unseasonal wet weather conditions in the breeding season of 2007 has not helped, and it is likely that snipe will have been under-recorded from several sites. Redshank are now unfortunately present in only very low numbers in the New Forest, and this survey confirms the situation in the areas considered.

Due to the limited window of survey opportunity in 2006, and the unseasonal wet weather throughout the breeding season in 2007, it is too early to draw conclusions on breeding wader occupation in the study areas. For example, the control sites at Longwater Lawn and Stonyford Pond show significant fluctuations in the breeding waders using these areas of the last two seasons in the absence of any manipulation of visitor pressure. Similar fluctuations can be seen in the seven other study areas where the PROGRESS Project has sought to change patterns of visitor pressure. Because it is too soon to draw conclusions from this work, it is essential to continue to monitor breeding wader occupation in these study areas each season until sufficient data has been gathered to inform the future planning of visitor management.

## 5.2.2 Visitor and Closed Car Park Surveys 2007

### 5.2.2.1 Introduction and Methods

These amounted to a survey of visitors at pilot action area car parks and an observation survey of car parks closed through PROGRESS to protect birds, where a tally was made of the number of people and their main activity. Surveys were carried out over a total of twelve sessions (08.00-12.00 weekdays (3 sessions); 15.00-18.00 weekdays (3 sessions); 08.00-12.00 weekends (3 sessions and 15.00-18.00 weekends (3 sessions) between March and July 2007. The visitor survey captured 776 responses and 303 GPS tracks and 372 observations were made at sites where the car park was closed. The aim of these surveys was to assess the impact of car park and footpath closures and pilot actions on the use of the forest.

The survey sites were as follows (for the location of these within the forest please see pilot site map on page 29):

Car park type	Car park
Pilot actions (e.g. new signage, maps of suggested routes)	Ashley Walk
	Burbush
	Deerleap
	Godshill Cricket
	Hincheslea Moor
	Longslade Bottom
	Longslade View
	Norley Wood
	Pig Bush
	Wilverley Plain
Closed car park	Clay Hill
	Crockford
	Crockford Clump
	Hincheslea

### 5.2.2.2. Main findings

The main results from the surveys were as follows:

- Only 5.5% of respondents overall were at a particular site because the car park that they wanted to use was closed to protect GNBs. However, there was considerable variation between sites:
  - 21% of respondents were using Hincheslea Moor because of another site being closed.
  - 17% of respondents were using Norely Wood because of another site being closed (all of these respondents stated that this was due to the closure of Crockford and/or Crockford Clump). In addition, 146 groups were observed still using the Crockford and Crockford Clump sites despite the closures. More over, in this closed car park survey 45.2% of groups observed in the week and 30% of groups observed at the weekend at the Crockford Clump had parked at the site (but the occupants were not seen during the survey session, and therefore couldn't be surveyed as to their activity). At Crockford, the main activities of people continuing to use the site were dog walking and walking.
  - Sites where a car park that served it had been closed to protect GNBs, were still being used by up to 8 people an hour. The distribution of use of these sites throughout the day is shown below:

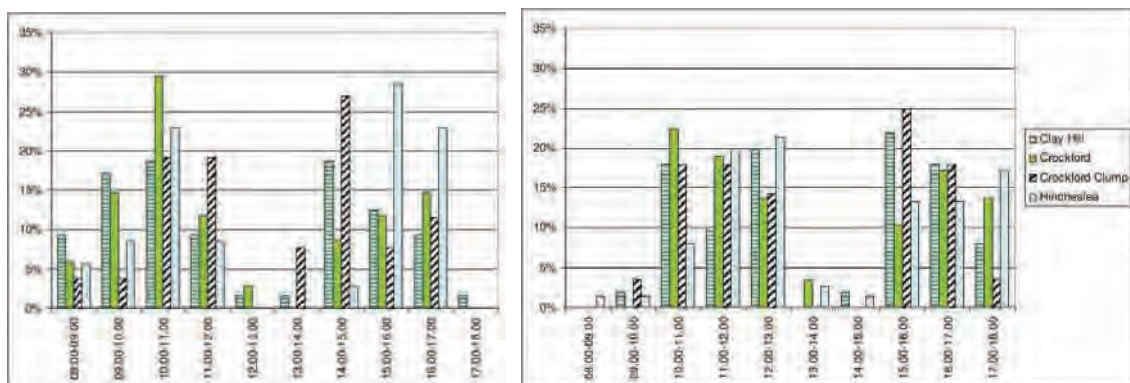


Figure 8: The percentage of users who used the closed car park sites in each survey timeslot – weekdays (left) and weekends (right)

- Initial comparisons between the tracks monitored in 2004 and 2005 and the tracks from the current survey shows that there does not seem to have been any significant change in the routes taken before and after the pilot actions were implemented. However there may be some initial indications of positive change at Pig Bush (see case study 3, page 36).

### 5.2.2.3 Consequences

It is clear from the results that sites where car parks have been closed to protect GNBs are still being used, which is not altogether unexpected and it is hoped that whilst some people still use these sites, the overall numbers of people using these areas will have dropped.

Also, even though it is probably too early to judge whether the pilot actions have had significant impact on user behaviour and on the GNB population, the early results can give us some information. The results, particularly the GPS tracks, may suggest that the signage used at the sites to channel people may need to be revised for future years to make it clearer what areas are sensitive and what routes are recommended – this may be the reason why some areas still show significant use of some paths at sites.

### **5.3 Further reading**

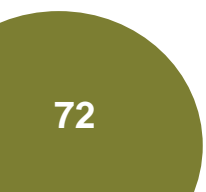
- The Fontainebleau monitoring survey (***CD-ROM: \\Surveys\Fontainebleau\2007***)
- The New Forest wading birds survey 2007 (***CD-ROM: \\Surveys\New Forest\bird\2007***)
- The New Forest monitoring and closed car park survey (***CD-ROM: \\Surveys\New Forest\Visitor & Recreation\2007***)





# 6.0 Beyond PROGRESS







## 6.1 Evaluation and Conclusion

The project has facilitated transitional sharing and all partners have learned a great deal. By definition, however, as a partnership, it has perhaps taken longer than if it had been managed by a single organisation.

Although some monitoring of pilot actions has been undertaken, the effect of some - in relation, for example, to wading birds - is unlikely to be seen for several years. Complete evaluation is, therefore, not possible at present, and monitoring will have to continue into the future to achieve this. It is true that the results often mean making adaptations to actions; there is always something to do, as the monitoring surveys have shown in Fontainebleau. However, it must also be noted that results from the initial monitoring surveys are generally positive.

Although we cannot evaluate the effect of pilot actions themselves, we can attempt to evaluate the work of the project by comparing actions, and work undertaken, with the objectives set out at the beginning of the project. See below:

## Original objectives vs. actions

Objective		Actions undertaken
1. Ecology		
1.1	<b>To reduce the negative impacts of recreation by better understanding the issues to be resolved.</b>	At both sites, surveys and studies were undertaken (for a comprehensive list see page 20), which combined with ONF and FC expertise and Alterra modelling results, have helped land managers to better identify the conservation issues arising from the impacts of recreation. Studies also helped to identify more robust areas, capable of handling visitor pressure. In the New Forest, Alterra models were used more extensively, particularly for impact assessment of pilot actions. In Fontainebleau, work done by ONF and a team of ecologists, on the revised Natura 2000 management plan, alongside the work of PROGRESS, enabled identification of crucial bird breeding areas, and assessment of different species' sensitivity to recreation.
1.2	<b>To reduce the negative impacts of recreation by implementing a strategy of positive incentives to change the way people use sites included in this project.</b>	<p><b>New Forest:</b> a range of pilot actions were implemented. These included creating interpretation boards at key sensitive sites, encouraging use of robust sites, more communication, and dissemination of conservation messages. A stakeholder group was created which had continuous input into the development process; and public opinion was frequently gauged through surveys, site surgeries, community workshops etc. Following implementation of pilot actions, monitoring surveys were undertaken (2007).</p> <p><b>Fontainebleau:</b> a range of pilot actions were implemented. These included a road closure to improve tranquillity, security, and to limit access to eroded areas and sensitive habitats. In addition, routes were reorganised to divert pressure, and new family strolls were created. Information boards were also put in place, as were improvements to car parks and pathways, and of road signage to channel people to more robust, less frequented areas. A stakeholder group had significant input into the process for developing pilot actions. In addition, communication with mountain bikers and horse rider associations was stepped up, and specific committees were formed drawing from these user groups. Visitor and GPS surveys, in 2007, for monitoring of actions (see page 67 for results), showed positive outcomes and led to further revisions of pilot work - such as shutting off access to La Roche qui Pleure (see page 65).</p>

Objective	Actions undertaken
<b>2. Communication</b>	
<p>2.1 <b>To enhance visitor/user appreciation of, and greater personal responsibility for, the conservation of natural resources and the specific needs of the two Natura 2000 sites (including targeting user ignorance).</b></p>	<p>It was generally decided, in respect of both forests, that, for the most part, paper based information wasn't the best way forward. Public Information Points (PIPs) were used extensively on both sites, often located in car parks and at the start of waymarked trails. Moreover better or specific signage, at sites in both forests, aimed to increase public awareness. Examples are: erosion and conservation information panels; the marking of biological reserves at Fontainebleau; ground nesting birds signage; and panels to discourage people from walking in certain areas. Nonetheless, though kept to a minimum, some paper-based information was created:</p> <p><b>New Forest:</b> codes of conduct, visitor pack,  <b>Fontainebleau:</b> Charte des activités published on panels in car parks, Charte des activités (codes of conduct) in leaflet form, cycle routes and walk leaflets, and intensified communication, targeted specifically at mountain bikers and horse riders.</p> <p>In addition, various websites were developed to spread conservation messages: the PROGRESS website was developed by partners and published by Alterra; a PROGRESS web page was posted on the FC website and linked to the local site; ONF also produced a Fontainebleau-specific web page on the Fontainebleau tourism website.</p> <p>Information was also disseminated at public engagement events and by personnel:  <b>New Forest:</b> information boards used at New Forest Show; FC open day in Wilverley inclosure; site surgeries when canvassing for public opinion on car park closures; community workshop at East Boldre; PROGRESS boards taken to other community events, such as school open days, by non-PROGRESS staff to promote the messages; rangers and volunteer rangers conveying the PROGRESS message to visitors on site. Drawing and photography competitions in schools, newsletters, press releases - all focusing attention on the conservation needs of the Forest.</p> <p><b>In Fontainebleau,</b> an information centre/Auberge is planned for the Franchard site, but awaits planning approval in Fontainebleau. The temporary solution has been to create an information office (called "Antenne Forestiere") in the ONF offices, just outside Fontainebleau town. This is staffed spring-autumn by Fontainebleau Tourism Board personnel, and is signposted from the road and town.</p>

Objective	Actions undertaken
<p>2.2 <b>To promote robust recreation facilities.</b></p>	<p><b>New Forest:</b> utilised better signage; landscaping works; improvement of tracks within robust sites; improvement of nearby car parks, to encourage people to use these areas; creation of Watchmoor bike park.</p> <p><b>Fontainebleau:</b> produced a leisure map, in consultation with the local tourism council. This highlights only the robust sites in the park, and attractions outside the Natura 2000 Boundary, in order to encourage people to use these sites. In addition, road signs to robust sites have been improved, especially those from Paris.</p>
<p><b>3. Sustainability</b></p>	
<p>3.1 <b>To evolve partnerships that secure sustainable recreation in the Natura 2000 sites.</b></p>	<p>Both ONF and FC undertook some kind of financial study. In the New Forest, a survey was undertaken to establish how much visitors spend, where, and on what. In Fontainebleau, a study was done by Athelane to establish how the public sector - local tourism organisations, businesses and the public - currently contributes financially to the sustainable management of the forest; and how they can contribute further in the future (see case study 10 page 58)</p> <p>Both the FC and ONF worked on establishing relationships and partnerships with local tourism organisations. The FC joined the New Forest Tourism Association (NFTA), and took its members out to sites to explain conservation issues and what the FC were doing about it. The aim was to ensure that these accommodation and leisure providers give out the correct messages to their guests. In addition, the New Forest Conservation Awareness Day became part of the Greenleaf accreditation scheme (see case study 9, page 56). In Fontainebleau, the link between tourism bodies and ONF was already fairly well established, due to the way the organisation runs. However, additional work has been done to establish an accreditation scheme (similar to the Greenleaf scheme, but also involving funding, called "Forêt Patrimoine"). Delays to its implementation in Fontainebleau have occurred, as ONF wish to roll it out nation-wide, with a standard format across the whole of the organisation.</p> <p>In the New Forest, a link has been established with "Cycle Experience" - a popular cycle hire shop at Brockenhurst – to display FC information boards on codes of conduct and conservation. The FC is also working with the local community on joint projects: for example in livery yards, and doing maintenance work around the forest. Schools are also being engaged, and the F.C. has developed a series of online downloadable lessons on sustainable forestry and management.</p> <p>With an eye to the future, the cost of facilities was also addressed during the surveys. Visitors expressed a willingness to pay for amenities, such as toilets, if they were to be made available.</p>

Objective	Actions undertaken
	<p>The New Forest visitor pack (placed in B&amp;Bs, hotels, tourist attractions, local businesses), and the Fontainebleau leisure map, are aimed at promoting future sustainable recreation and conservation messages.</p>
<p>3.2 <b>To explore mechanisms, which would integrate recreation strategies within wider regional and national planning frameworks.</b></p>	<p><b>New Forest:</b> Greenleaf accreditation scheme; 'Walking in Mind' programme; education pack.</p> <p><b>Fontainebleau:</b> leisure map; "Forêt Patrimoine" accreditation scheme (on-going); contracts with leisure providers; donation/patronage; volunteer programme.</p>
<p><b>4. Wider European Transnationality</b></p>	
<p>4.1 <b>To develop shared solutions to issues and promote findings to other managers of countryside recreation within and beyond the NWE zone.</b></p>	<p>International exchanges between PROGRESS personnel in ONF and FC (see case study 11, page 60), which allowed brainstorming, and exchange of views and experience about specific pressures and how to tackle them.</p> <p>The project has been promoted in a variety of ways. Alterra have demonstrated their models and the PROGRESS project at a number of international conferences. The project website and newsletters in French and English, have spread news about the project. Steering group members have promoted PROGRESS, through their land management and academic connections. This PROGRESS project handbook has been prepared for dissemination. An end of project conference has been organised to promote project findings.</p>
<p>4.2 <b>To pool a range of transnational expertise to guide the development resolution of issues and stimulate much wider cross-country debate with the other land managers, planners and their stakeholders."</b></p>	<p>International exchange visits allowed the pooling of expertise, not only from PROGRESS staff but also tourism organisations, foresters, forest volunteers and rangers. Several ideas, seen on such visits, have been implemented by the other partner (see case study 11, page 60).</p> <p>Work with the steering groups also added to the available expertise, and work with stakeholders brought in local views and expertise.</p> <p>Promotion of the project at conferences, and the final project presentation at the end of project conference, have helped bring PROGRESS results to the notice of other land managers and planners. This process will continue. It is hoped that it will stimulate cross-country debate, and information exchange, to help ensure Europe-wide, sustainable forest recreation and management in the future.</p>



## 6.2 Future PROGRESS

### 6.2.1 Results still to be quantified/qualified

The delayed start to the pilot actions within the New Forest means that, at the end of the project, we have fewer firm results and therefore, conclusions that can be drawn. However, even if everything had gone as scheduled, all the results from a project like this would have taken a significant time to filter through. Only when they do, can the real value of the pilot work be truly realised.

In Fontainebleau, it has been shown that initial monitoring surveys are generally positive; although it is clear that continued periodic surveys should be done in order to see the full effect, which may not become apparent for several years.

The New Forest has secured funding for a five-year study of ground nesting birds in the area (FC and RSPB), to monitor the effectiveness of pilot actions in limiting disturbance. It is hoped that this will show an increase in population numbers, improved breeding success, and thereby validate the measures undertaken as part of the PROGRESS project

In Fontainebleau, ONF has secured future participation in various bird survey programmes, for example STOC, headed by the National Natural History Museum; Biodiversity Atlas, with the local county council leading; and the provision of a national database, lead by ONF HQ. It is hoped that the results of these programmes will allow ONF to see the positive effect its pilot actions have had on local bird numbers.

### 6.2.2 Actions to be sustained

In addition to the continuation, maintenance, and monitoring of currently implemented actions - continuing improvements to inclosures, work at sensitive sites, engagement with local groups and tourism, and distribution of literature, - the FC and ONF also hope to carry forward several PROGRESS-initiated initiatives:

#### 6.2.2.1 The New Forest

- Possible large-scale reorganisation of 1970's-implemented car-parking facilities throughout the forest, to cater for current demands. This followed on from an extensive review of car parking provision, and its adequacy, which in turn stemmed from the results of trial car park closures in the New Forest ,as part of the PROGRESS project.
- The nation-wide launch of the School's Education Pack produced by the FC. This consists of a four-lesson, online downloadable course on sustainable forestry, which links into work already done on sustainability in the national curriculum.

#### 6.2.2.2 Fontainebleau

- The nation-wide implementation of a Sustainability Accreditation Scheme (Forêt Patrimoine) in Fontainebleau, consisting of a series of contracts between ONF and local businesses and groups – so that each participant would be certified along sustainable principles. ONF would promote those within the scheme, which should stimulate some competition between the groups, raising the general standard of sustainable development. The idea came from a report produced as part of the PROGRESS project, which was presented to high level local policy makers and ONF directors. It was so well received that ONF directors wish to roll it out nationally, across the whole organisation. A great response, though one that has delayed the scheme going ahead in Fontainebleau, while ONF establish national standards and methods.
- ONF hopes to development better communication, to encourage patronage and financing of recreation management.
- The possible establishment of a volunteer rangers programme in Fontainebleau.

### 6.2.3 Key lessons/points for the future

Many key lessons have been learnt during the PROGRESS project. Clearly, it is important to highlight these, so that ONF, the FC, and other land managers and planners, can take them into account in any future projects.

- Partnership working across a number of international boundaries is not easy. Planning, and open and honest communications, are the key to a successful project, with particular consideration given to communication barriers and potential cross-language misinterpretations. The value, but also the associated costs, of face-to-face meetings should not be underestimated. It is important to decide in detail, at the beginning of the project, as exactly as possible, what role each partner will play and what is expected of them. It is also vital to appreciate partners' strengths, weaknesses and capabilities. – and to be fully aware of their other commitments.
- Remember to account for the possibility of lengthy negotiations with stakeholder groups and other governing bodies; also, when dealing with such groups, expect a degree of compromise to be required.
- Try to bear in mind potential risks (e.g. changes to budget, status of organisations, funding, local legislation and guidelines) and make contingency plans for overcoming these.
- In terms of communication, remember that marketing an event is the key – don't underestimate the amount of time and input this will take. Also, if organising school visits or projects with schools, remember that they need several months notice in order to plan a trip, get parental consent etc.
- In terms of sustainability, working closely with the public, local organisations and businesses, not only for the project but in the long term, can be a highly effective investment of time and resources. In addition, it is important to consider how your actions can be sustained after the project has ended. Low cost, low commitment, and low maintenance actions are more sustainable in the long term since funding may be significantly reduced after the project.
- Remember to utilise all available resources. Not all of a project's work will be carried out by project staff or with project money. Some things may be happening anyway. Look to utilise these opportunities, to get the project involved and promoted. It is cheaper and more effective to combine your events with those of other parts of the organisation, or similar groups, than to run similar events twice. For example, FC always attends the New Forest Show, but PROGRESS was represented as well. Perhaps an open/fun day is already on the schedule – so why not see if your project can participate? Regarding publications, if your organisation already produces something, it is far more cost and time effective to add a couple of pages and tap into networks – both of distribution and knowledge - than issue a new publication.