



New Forest C-19 Recovery Plan (05/05/20)

Introduction

GNF's Little Acorns Marketing Group and other members have helped shape this Recovery Plan. By nature, the development of the plan will be an ongoing process. For the plan to be fully effective everyone involved needs to contribute to its content and deliver its actions, so we can all benefit from its success.

Timetable for Recovery

We are not sure when travel restrictions will be adjusted which poses a problem in setting timed actions for the plan. It is likely any easing of the lockdown will be gradual, so by necessity it will need to be delivered as a staged process with timetabling adjusted as we go forward.

However, there is a lot we can do to prepare in the meantime. Whether it's creating the virtual delivery of destination and individual business offerings, by distributing photographic & video imagery to adopting key message content targeted at all existing and potential consumers identified in our agreed 2020 marketing plan.

All new content should where relevant refer to social distancing and responsible behaviour, particularly towards our wildlife such as ground nesting birds which are likely to be active when the forest re-opens.

A GNF Member's Handbook has been designed which is full of detailed "how to" information and ideas will help businesses develop their operational and promotional output. This output will give member businesses a direct opportunity to help deliver the plan through the initial actions identified under each of its four main sections:

Immediate Activity: To maintain and where possible, enhance the market profile and allure of the New Forest in advance of re-opening. Identify and construct a destination-wide social distancing visitor management plan to support the safe re-opening the New Forest to visitors.

Advance Revenue: To help member businesses remain operational and stimulate innovation, ideas and campaigns to generate immediate income for individual member businesses through gift vouchers/crowdfunding etc.

Recovery Communications Plan: To deliver a minimum three seasons of promotional activity for the New Forest and its visitor economy to agreed target audiences and in accordance with the Government's guidance on when particular businesses can reopen.

Big New Ideas: Any big picture ideas that don't fit into any of the above.

Immediate Activity

We know that during lockdown, consumers are using social media and other online features far more than previously. Potential visitors are looking forward to the good times returning and developing a pent-up desire to get away on a break away from home as soon as restrictions are lifted. In planning to do this they are creating their own wish lists.

We therefore need to make sure the New Forest is on those wish lists by communicating that the New Forest is a safe, responsible, welcoming destination close to where they live. And most particularly that it is a special place full of wide open spaces, it lends itself perfectly to social distancing.

To do this we also need to work in partnership with all managing agencies and interests to create a destination-wide social distancing and infrastructure re-opening plan including the creation and adoption of a New Forest C-19 Safe Business Charter.

1. DESTINATION WEBSITE

Give potential customers a virtual visit to the New Forest, so they can dream of future holidays and visits by letting them virtually experience all the great things that makes this place so special.

GNF Action:

1.1 Continue to re-engineer the destination website with C-19 related content particularly on all relevant landing and product pages. (Done & ongoing)

1.2 Use social media to promote the new content including uploading and distributing business and consumer video and web cam content. (Done & ongoing)

1.3 Refresh old content and publish new C-19 related Blog and YouTube content. (Done & ongoing)

Member Action: (More detail in Members C-19 Handbook)

1.4 Improve old content and find new ways of telling your story. (Now)

1.5 Learn new skills, improve and practise new processes and create new partnerships. (Now)

1.6 Focus on building your email lists. (Now)

1.7 Work on a new piece of “big content” for your re-opening or later this year – be big, be bold. (Now)

2. SOCIAL DISTANCING VISITOR MANAGEMENT PLAN

Before the New Forest is able to welcome back visitors when leisure travel restrictions are adjusted and hopefully after that lifted altogether, it will be crucial to have a destination social distancing and visitor management plan in place. The plan will need to accommodate Government guidance and take account of the destination’s rather unique landscape, cultural heritage and physical layout.

The plan will have to identify how the wider New Forest destination area’s infrastructure can be best managed to provide safe socially distanced visitor access to its honeypot locations, car parks, visitor businesses and shopping areas whilst also providing for effective vehicle and visitor flows.

Initial discussions have taken place between GNF, NFNPA and Forestry England who will also work with NFDC and HCC as the Highway Authority to create the basic framework of the wider plan. Just as with all aspects of Covid-19 recovery, timing is difficult until we have the Government's detailed roadmap but it will be important to have the Social Distancing Plan agreed and ready to operate as soon as possible.

GNF Action:

2.1 Draft the initial framework of a destination-wide social distancing visitor management in partnership with NFNPA, NFDC, HCC and Forestry England (May)

Member Action:

2.2 Input to the draft social distancing visitor management plan (June)

3. LOCAL CONSUMERS FIRST

Before we start targeting the large audiences which live at least 30 minutes journey time away it will be critical to win the hearts and minds of our local residents in supporting the re-opening of local tourism. Major aspects will be to demonstrate our businesses are Covid-19 safe, emphasise the large local supply chain we support and the local jobs we provide and create a destination-wide social distancing plan.

Our initial promotional programme will continue to target New Forest, Southampton and Bournemouth residents as the consumers of the first stage of re-opening our visitor economy by building on the success of GNF's weekly Business Services Newsletter circulated every Thursday.

GNF Action:

3.1 Publish a weekly Local Services newsletter and incorporate its content into 3 new web pages covering take-away and deliveries, online shopping and virtual events and promote on all destination social media platforms. (Done & ongoing)

3.2 Create and deliver a Hearts & Minds campaign to illicit the support of the local population for the local visitor economy and its staged recovery including the need to provide a warm welcome to visitors when travel restrictions are lifted. (Draft by Mid-May)

Member Action:

3.3 If operational, provide GNF with innovative content for the new take-away and delivery, online shopping and virtual events services. (Now)

3.4 Adopt the principles of the Hearts & Minds campaign and help deliver its various actions, particularly in providing a Covid-19 safe and warm welcome to visitors when travel restrictions are lifted (June)

4. ALL CONSUMERS

A programme of activity that builds on our existing countryside "Escape" theme using beautiful imagery and video and sharing them on all digital platforms to lift consumer spirits and stimulate future visits. Target audiences using the current destination content plan. Relevant imagery will be town/village, countryside, coastline, people and animals. This last group of subjects will include both forest wildlife and our Attraction based animals, what they're up to and how they're being cared for during lockdown.

GNF Members can tell their own stories of lockdown, what they enjoy and how they've adapted. Involve residents and social media followers to send in their own relevant lockdown stories. What does a deserted honeypot village look like? Include a fond memories/looking forward to returning campaign via our monthly destination newsletter where consumers post their favourite forest experience photographic and video memories.

GNF Action:

4.1 Daily Polls, Games, Quizzes using forest based content or subjects all posted on the destination's social media platforms. (Done & ongoing)

4.2 Social media programme to ask engaging questions such as "What are you looking forward to most when you can visit the New Forest again?" (Done & ongoing)

4.3 Add live webcam content from member businesses to relevant destination website pages (Done & ongoing)

4.4 Live Q&A sessions via webcam on Commoners Smallholding? (Mid-May)

Member Action:

4.5 Access to exclusive waiting lists to maximise the "missing you" element. (Now)

4.6 Premium product and service development to cover social distancing issues. (Now)

4.7 Social media programme to ask engaging questions such as "What are you looking forward to most when you can visit the New Forest again?" (Now)

4.8 Live webcams on site to provide live links to destination and member's websites (Now)

Advance Revenue

A programme of innovative activities to support businesses finances by helping to bring in advance revenue to keep our businesses afloat and the destination's offer uppermost in consumer's minds. It's important promotional activity does not discount but focusses on added or unique extra value and responsible support. Activities should demonstrate a warm and safe welcome awaits when guests are eventually able to take up the offer opportunity.

GNF Action:

5.1 GNF Member business Crowdfunder page added to destination website. (Complete & ongoing)

Member Action:

5.2 Individual and itinerary based online gift voucher promotion, to link or be separate from Giftpro (Now)

5.3 Develop a Crowdfunder campaign to raise advance income and which might be match funded by Solent LEP. (Now)

Recovery Communications Plan

GNF's business and membership model is built around common purpose, mutuality, strength in numbers, working together and taking collective action to reach further and more completely into the consumer marketplace. All these principles are central features of this Recovery Plan which will

require co-ordinated delivery by all GNF members and partner organisations. For Members, it is critical to promote the key messages of each seasonal stage and embed them into their own business and communications plans.

Specific timing will continue to be an issue until there is clear guidance from Government on each re-opening element of what we expect to be a staged lifting of travel restrictions. The order in which the tourism's different business sectors are able to re-open will also have a big impact on our plan. However, whatever the format or configuration, we should plan for all promotional activity to be delivered virtually, socially distanced and with variations of the two for some time to come.

During the recovery period, consumers will be drawn to destinations which are able to demonstrate responsible and caring policies, especially if they are delivered as components of great visitor experiences. In 2007, the New Forest won the World Responsible Tourism Awards, so GNF will be refreshing and relaunching the New Forest "Green Leaf" business scheme which won this major international accolade and embed it into the plan.

Similarly, consumers are now more likely to be conversant with the real truth about OTAs following the way they were treated during the cancellation processes at the outset of the crisis. GNF will therefore be refreshing and relaunching the Book Direct New Forest scheme, and efforts should be made to persuade every GNF accommodation provider to join the new campaign.

The Communications Plan initially covers the next three seasonal periods:

6. SUMMER

A programme driven by the destination content plan promoting businesses that have adopted the New Forest C-19 Visitor Business Charter. Alongside this, a New Forest wide social distancing plan constructed by GNF/NFNPA/NFDC & Forestry England for car parks and popular locations will help reduce both resident and consumer concerns and aid the safe and co-ordinated re-opening of the forest.

GNF Action:

6.1 Relaunch the Book Direct the New Forest Scheme by refreshing material from consumer learning on OTA policies during the initial stages of the C-19 crisis and getting every GNF accommodation member to sign up. (Draft by end of May)

6.2 Relaunch the New Forest Green Leaf Scheme (Version 3 currently being business tested)

6.3 Complete the new Persona/Itinerary target audience profiling tool to support delivery of the Content Plan. (June)

6.4 Work with NFNPA, NFDC and Forestry England to create a co-ordinated social distancing plan for visiting the New Forest. (May & June)

Member Action:

6.5 Produce new socially distanced operational plans for all aspects of business including staff training and health & safety programmes in readiness for recovery. (Now)

6.6 Create maximum awareness of the destination's key messages by embedding all key New Forest messages in play at each moment in time in their own marketing and communications plan. (Now)

7. AUTUMN

Continue to improve the “safe to visit” operations of our business sectors and promote the unique attraction of autumn colours and harvest time by maximising the NPA’s October Half Term Walking Festival and GNF’s November Food & Drink Festival Fortnight by linking them to individual business offerings which are operating safely within the C-19 Charter.

GNF Action:

7.1 Refresh and re-work the 2020 Forest Food & Drink Strategy for C-19 safe delivery and embed as the framework to deliver the New Forest Food & Drink Festival Fortnight in November (Early June)

Member Action:

7.2 Produce individual Food & Drink week menus, activities and promotional material for inclusion in GNF media promotion (Early June)

8. WINTER

Christmas, New Year and the rest of Winter will be extremely critical periods to build on learning from sections **6 Summer & 7 Autumn**, to maximise business opportunity and aim to recover previous lost income.

GNF Action:

8.1

Member Action:

8.2

Big New Ideas

Create a range of virtual New Forest experiences especially a series of subject based (Food & drink, history, wellbeing, cycling, walking and nature etc) treasure hunts with linked itineraries and maps.

GNF Action:

9.1

Member Action:

9.2

05/05/20