

Aims

The project aims to:

- promote a feeling of ownership and responsibility towards the forests among both visitors and residents;
- raise awareness of vulnerable wildlife habitats;
- re-direct people away from the most sensitive sites;
- guide recreation through communication and education;
- collect up-to-date information on recreation to help guide future forest management;
- forge closer links with local organisations, user groups, tourism/accommodation providers, etc, encouraging a unified approach, and;
- improve, promote and create more robust facilities for visitors that will have minimal impact on the forests.



Partners & Funding

PROGRESS (Promotion & Guidance for Recreation on Ecologically Sensitive Sites) is a four-year project (2003 – 2007) costing €3.7 million. It is jointly funded by the E.U. Interreg IIIB Programme, the UK's Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, and the project's five partner organisations:



Forestry Commission (lead partner)
The government department responsible for managing the New Forest.



Office National des Forêts
The public body in charge of managing the Forest of Fontainebleau.



Alterra
A Dutch research institute specialising in ecology and recreation.



Countryside Agency
The UK public body working to improve the quality of the countryside.



Comité Départemental du Tourisme
The regional French tourism organisation responsible for promoting the Forest of Fontainebleau.

Contacts

The Forestry Commission project team is based in the New Forest at The Queen's House, Lyndhurst. For more information, or to give your thoughts on recreation and conservation in the New Forest, contact:

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For more information about PROGRESS visit

www.progress-eu.info

For more information about the New Forest visit

www.forestry.gov.uk/newforest



Conserve
Protect
Enjoy



PROGRESS is
a project to
safeguard two
of Europe's
most treasured
landscapes -
the New Forest
& Fontainebleau
Forest

Why do we need PROGRESS?

Fontainebleau Forest and the New Forest are both beautiful places. They are situated within reach of large centres of population and attract millions of visitors each year who come to enjoy the wild open spaces and the peace and quiet of the countryside.

Both forests are nature conservation sites protected under EU Directives and support a huge variety of wildlife, including some internationally rare species. Some parts of the forests are coming under increasing pressure from countless feet, horses' hooves and bicycle tyres, and action is needed to help protect the habitats and wildlife.

Whilst quiet recreation is increasingly important for people leading busy lives, it is essential to conserve these forests so that future generations can continue to enjoy the tranquillity and spiritual renewal that they provide.

This is the main objective of the PROGRESS project – to help reconcile the needs of conservation with those of recreation.



Who manages PROGRESS?

The Project Team

There are five partners in the project: the Forestry Commission and the Countryside Agency in the UK; the Office National des Forêts and the Comité Départemental du Tourisme in France; and the Alterra Research Institute in The Netherlands. The Forestry Commission is the lead partner and manages the project via a small team based in the New Forest.

Local Stakeholders

The involvement of local stakeholders is crucial to the project. In both Fontainebleau and the New Forest, conservationists, recreational users, interest groups, businesses and statutory agencies have been brought together in a project forum to provide a source of local knowledge and helpful advice.

Steering Group

A range of specialists from across Europe sharing skills and links into wider European networks form an independent project Steering Group. Meeting every six months, the group advises and guides the project team, reviewing project progress and the implementation of any pilot actions.

What will PROGRESS achieve?

Ultimately PROGRESS will aim to reduce the impact of recreational pressure in the forests. Project actions will channel people to more robust sites and improve their understanding of the important conservation needs of the New Forest and Fontainebleau Forest.

The project aims to succeed through a variety of different methods. To understand more about how the forests are being affected by recreation, huge visitor surveys were conducted in the first year to find out why people visit these forests and what they like to do there. Computer models will analyse the results of these surveys to highlight the likely impacts on sensitive sites. The project can then identify where pilot actions can be implemented to reduce or eliminate these adverse impacts.

Vital to the success of the project is the encouragement of responsible use of the forests. This will be accomplished via media articles, press releases, talks and leaflets. The first leaflets produced were codes of conduct for the most popular forest activities - horse riding, cycling and dog walking. These codes carry important messages to help tourists and locals alike do their bit to protect the two unique sites.

The project will also aim to forge closer working relationships with schools, raise awareness of conservation issues through new website developments and produce visitor information packs.

It is hoped that these actions will help protect these beautiful forests and allow visitors to enjoy them for years to come.

