

Gillie Molland, Lead Ranger for the New Forest National Park Authority said:

‘Globally heathland is more rare than rainforest and takes decades to develop – the New Forest has the most extensive area of lowland heath remaining in Europe.

It’s home to many nationally and internationally rare species – including all six of the UK’s reptiles, insects, plants and birds such as Dartford warblers and nightjar.

This particular area, including the central reservation of the dual carriageway, is a stronghold for smooth snakes.

The New Forest also has important areas of pasture woodland with ancient trees, such as beech and oak, that have international importance for nature conservation. Heathland can eventually be restored, ancient trees are lost forever.

The loss of rare species and biodiversity is devastating and upsets the delicate ecological balance of the Forest , as well as reducing grazing land available for commoners’ animals.

Recovery is possible but it can take many years, with some features of mature heathland taking decades to return. Some rare heathland species may be lost or recover very slowly if local populations have been affected.’

We are part of the Local Resilience Forum which prepares and tests different emergency scenarios.

Last month we took part in a multi-agency ‘table top’ exercise with the emergency services, councils, landowner Forestry England and voluntary services to practice and test our collective readiness in the event of a wildfire.

How people can help:

Although this incident was caused by a vehicle fire we ask people to help support our Rangers:

- BBQs, fires and stoves are illegal in the open countryside and people can be fined – a Public Space Protection Order was introduced three years ago to protect the Forest
- Don’t drop litter, especially glass which can ignite fires
- Cigarettes should be completely extinguished.

On the roads:

Motorists are reminded to take extra care on New Forest roads and be aware of roaming livestock. The Forest roads are likely to be very busy at the moment with the peak summer visitor season and while diversions are in place from the A31.

Please allow yourself extra time to complete your journey, carry water in hot weather, and be prepared for animals to be on or near the roads at any time – they are also likely to be gathered in shady spots such as under bridges and trees.

New Forest livestock, such as ponies, donkeys and cattle are unpredictable. Pass wide and slow, be patient with animals and other drivers, and do not honk or rev your engines in an attempt to move them on.

We pass on our thanks and appreciation to all those working on the incident, including the emergency services and our colleagues in Forestry England for their bravery and dedication in protecting the National Park.

More information on our website

Follow the New Forest code

The New Forest is a unique place with rare wildlife and free-roaming livestock. Thank you for helping us care for this special place by following the simple New Forest code:

Be Forest Friendly!



Scan me to find out more



Keep your distance from the animals – don't feed or touch them*



Keep dogs under control. Don't let dogs approach or chase any animals



Stick to the permitted cycle tracks



Take home litter and dog waste



Park only in car parks



Drive with care – animals on the road!



No fires or barbecues*



No wild camping



Help wildlife by keeping to the main tracks

*Failure to comply may result in a fixed penalty of £100 or being taken to court and a fine of up to £1,000.



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