

Green Halo Partnership launched to ensure business and the environment thrive

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A hundred business and community leaders came together to launch a new partnership and pledge to ensure our most precious landscapes work in harmony with the economy.

The Green Halo Partnership brings together organisations from across central southern England to protect and enhance our 'natural capital' - the benefits we derive from nature such as clean air and water, protection from flooding, food and healthy outdoor activities.

Architects, wildlife charities, councils, utility businesses, health bodies, universities and civil engineering firms were among around 70 organisations signing up to the partnership at the launch at Ordnance Survey, Southampton, yesterday (Wednesday, 22 November).

The partners identified a range of actions and projects which will help maintain and enhance our natural resources and so protect the unique character and identity of the New Forest and surrounding area.

New Forest National Park Authority Chief Executive Alison Barnes said: 'Companies and organisations attending the launch today have shown that working with the environment in mind has benefits now and in the future. For example, water saving measures are not only good for our environment but for a company's bottom line; designing eco buildings is not necessarily more expensive and results in energy savings and less use of natural resources; creating communities with green space is good for wildlife but also for our health and wellbeing.

'These organisations today have shown their commitment to creating a world class environment and world class economy here in the south.'

The conference included workshops around four themes with ideas put forward to:

- Support the local economy
- Improve health and wellbeing
- Encourage sustainable living Enhance
- the natural environment.

Paul Stubbington, Environment Director of consulting engineering group Ramboll, said: 'Ramboll's largest office outside of London is located on the edge of the New Forest. This brings with it various challenges but these are outweighed by the benefits that the New Forest environment provides us, offering the staff a first class environment to work in, and demonstrating our environmental credentials in our everyday activities. Being part of the Green Halo Partnership enables us to promote the benefits of being in the New Forest as well as having an active role in the protection and enhancement of our natural capital within and around it.'

Kate Rice, Southern Water's Catchment Strategy Manager, said: 'Protecting the environment is of the utmost importance to Southern Water. We rely on the natural environment to provide the water we supply to our customers so we need to ensure we are protecting and enhancing this important resource. Events like this are crucial in bringing everyone together to ensure we are placing a true value on nature and the benefits - such as clean water - that it provides.'

Dr Mike Short, CBE, Chairman of Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), said: 'Developing and sustaining a low carbon economy is a priority item on the LEP's strategic agenda and we are proud to have supported investments of £13.45 million in the low carbon economy and sustainable places to advance this priority. We are delighted to be supporting the Green Halo Partnership in order to enhance the value of our natural assets, drive sustainable business growth and improve the quality of life in our area.'

Gary Wilburn, Managing Director of HPW Architects, said: 'We are proud to be founder members of the Green Halo Partnership. We are actively involved in engaging public, private and third sector businesses and organisations in developing projects which the partnership can support, guide and positively influence. As a local business we focus on sustainable solutions with context and sensitivity, and which complement the beautiful surroundings of the National Park and its wider area. We encourage you all to take an active part in helping enhance the Natural Capital in our region and beyond.

Fran Davies, Natural England's Hampshire, Dorset and Isle of Wight Area Team Manager, said: 'Natural England is a committed member of the Green Halo partnership. The aims of the Green Halo align perfectly with our Conservation Strategy and local ambition in the region. this is significant partnership opportunity and we are excited to see the projects that will emerge that protect and enhance our precious natural capital.

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