AM 594-20

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 23 JANUARY 2020

RESPONDING TO THE CLIMATE AND NATURE EMERGENCY – 'NET ZERO WITH NATURE'

Report by: Andy Brennan, Sustainability Officer

Summary:

The New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA) has recognised the importance of mitigating and adapting to climate change since its establishment in 2005. A wide range of initiatives have been taken forward including reducing our emissions from day to day operations, promoting sustainable land management, raising awareness of renewable technologies and supporting community groups and businesses to make changes.

The climate and nature crisis has now been recognised internationally and the UK Parliament approved a motion declaring a climate emergency in May 2019. 260 Local Authorities have also declared their own climate emergency.

The role that national parks play in climate action and protecting and enhancing nature is now centre stage and key to the agendas of national and local government. The declaration of emergencies has created a renewed sense of urgency amongst our partners, local businesses and the general public to work together to stem the decline in biodiversity and reduce Green House Gas (GHG) emissions. As we enter a new decade, we are reaffirming our commitment to climate action, and calling on our partners to work with us to address the crisis for climate and nature to become a National Park that is 'Net Zero with Nature'.

Recommendation:

That Members:

1. **Reaffirm our commitment by declaring a climate and nature emergency**

2. **Commit the NFNPA to becoming a net zero organisation by 2030**

3 **Work with partners to develop a plan to respond to the climate and nature emergencies so that the New Forest National Park and surrounding area is "net zero with nature" by 2050**

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a special report in October 2018 - 'Global Warming at 1.5^{O}C'. The report concluded that we must reduce global GHG emissions by at least 45% by 2030 and to net zero by 2050 if we are to limit warming to 1.5^{O}C and avoid the worst impacts of climate change[1]. Net zero GHG emissions are achieved when the amount of GHGs emitted by human activities are equal to that being absorbed by the natural environment or land use (agriculture, changing land use and forestry).

1.2 In May 2019 the UK Parliament approved a motion declaring a climate emergency for the United Kingdom to achieve net zero emissions before 2050. 260 local authorities have declared their own climate emergency including Hampshire County Council (HCC), Test Valley Borough Council and Wiltshire Council. New Forest District Council (NFDC) has passed a motion to produce an environmental action plan with an ambition to be carbon neutral by 2050.

1.3 The National Park is internationally important for nature. So it is essential that our response to the climate emergency ensures that we maximise the benefits for wildlife at the same time.

1.4 We can do this by realising new opportunities to restore and create new habitats that enables adaptation to climate change whilst maximising carbon storage through land management – we need our work to be 'net zero with nature'.

[1] A Special Report 'Warming of 1.5^{O}C', Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2018

2 NATIONAL CONTEXT – NATIONAL PARKS WORKING TOGETHER

2.1 For many years National Park Authorities have recognised that climate change is the most serious long-term threat facing the special qualities of their areas. The UK National Parks Vision and Circular (2010)[2] set a clear remit for national parks to lead the way in adapting to and mitigating, climate change.

2.2 National Parks England convenes a working group, bringing together climate change leads to share good practice and respond to national consultations/calls for evidence. In December 2019 the group updated the National Parks England Climate Change Position Statement (**annex 1**). This commits National Parks to address the climate crisis through the key objectives of Mitigation, Adaptation and Education.

2.3 Reflecting the commitments in this position statement in the New Forest National Park we are focussed on:

a) Mitigation: reducing the GHG emissions from our own operations to net zero by 2030

b) Adaptation:
   1) working with partners and communities across the National Park geography to achieve net zero by 2050
   2) developing plans for carbon capture and the adaptation of natural systems through habitat management, restoration and creation and land use planning
   3) showing leadership and advocacy around the climate and nature emergencies

c) Education: encouraging behaviour change amongst our communities and visitors.

2.4 More detailed proposals for our local response are set out below.

[2] English National Parks and the Broads, UK Government Vision and Circular, 2010

3 MITIGATION

3.1 NFNPA net zero 2030

3.1.1 As an organisation we have worked to reduce our environmental impact and GHG emissions through our corporate sustainability plan which was last updated when we moved to our current office. We were one of the first National Park Authorities to install electric vehicle charging points and provide an electric pool car. We recycle items that are not widely collected, compost food waste, procure energy efficient goods, support local food and promote sustainable behaviour amongst staff.

3.1.2 We have an established system for monitoring our GHG emissions and whilst it is limited in its detail it does identify the main sources (table 1). Since 2014 we have reduced our emissions by 28%[3] per full time equivalent member of staff.

Table 1: NFNPA emissions 2018-2019

Source	Electricity	Gas	Water	Car travel	Train travel	Air travel	Total
Tonnes of CO_2e*	25.59	21.12	0.36	20.98	2.13	2.35	72.52
Percentage	35	29	1	29	3	3	100

**CO2e is 'carbon equivalent' and includes other GHGs*

3.1.3 In order to achieve net zero by 2030 we need to:

- update our corporate sustainability plan with actions to reach net zero by 2030
- standardise our emissions monitoring systems across all national parks
- reduce our impact from the goods that we purchase by making carbon neutrality and sustainability central to our procurement process.
- review our policies, plans and ways of working to ensure that sustainability is embedded in all we do and that we plan for the unavoidable impacts of climate change.

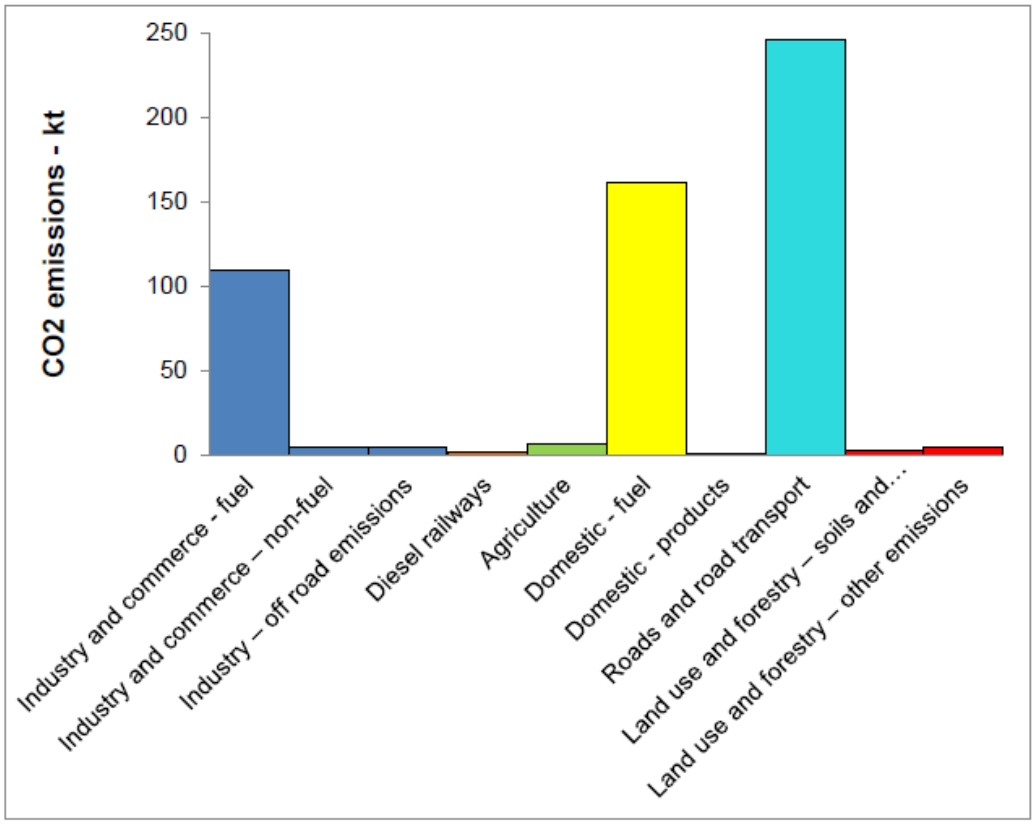
3.1.4 We will not be able to reduce our emissions to net zero by our actions alone, for example we have no control of the carbon footprint of the water or emissions from train travel. Our approach must be to reduce our GHG emissions to the lowest possible level and then look at options for offsetting any remaining emissions.

[3] It should be noted the part of the reduction in emissions may be down to how gas and electricity usage is monitored.

3.2 Area emissions

3.2.1 The most recent data we have for emissions across the national park area is for 2006 when 522.83kt[4] of CO_2 was emitted (figure 1). It is highly likely that emissions have declined since then as over the period of 2005-2017 emissions across the New Forest District fell by 28%[5].

Figure 1: Carbon emissions in the National Park, 2006, in kilo tonnes



3.2.2 We need to work with other national parks to establish, standardise and update the baseline of emissions so that we can identify priority areas for action.

[4] Data on the carbon footprint of National Parks was provided by what is now the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

[5] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-carbon-dioxide-emissions-national-statistics-2005-to-2017

4 ADAPTATION – Working across the geography of the National Park

4.1.1 Our approach in supporting nature recovery has been to unlock opportunities to implement the Lawton Principles[6] to create landscapes that are 'bigger, better managed and more joined up'. Habitats that are large in size, in good condition and well connected are more resilient and adaptable to climate change. For example, the recent purchase of Franchises Lodge nature reserve with the RSPB and the habitat improvements being delivered through the Higher Level Stewardship scheme.

4.1.2 The advice given through the New Forest Land Advice Service, and the projects it runs such as Better Boundaries and Working Woodlands, improve the environmental condition of farmland, hedgerows and existing woodlands as well as creating new habitat. Not only is this good for wildlife but it also helps to improve soil condition, carbon storage and resilience to climate change. Large scale expansion of these projects would increase the resilience of the National Park to climate change by creating habitats and improving connectivity of habitats across the national park and surrounding area.

4.1.3 The forthcoming Agriculture Bill and Environment Bill will set out future land use policy. This may lead to the release of agricultural land to other low carbon uses such as catchment sensitive farming, wetland and heathland restoration and woodland management. We are already working on this agenda with the Forest Farming Group and recently published 'Understanding the New Forest's Natural Capital'; aiming to use this to shape future agri-environment policy to support the public goods that the New Forest provides.

4.1.4 Whilst nationally there is a focus on tree planting as a response to the climate crisis, habitats that are healthy and functioning absorb and store carbon until the point of saturation. The unique and extensive mosaic of woodlands, hedgerows, heaths, mires and saltmarshes of the national park all provide this function.

4.1.5 To improve the state of nature and reduce the impact of climate change on the natural environment we propose to:

- develop a nature recovery plan in conjunction with our partners
- create a portfolio of large-scale projects consistent with Lawton principles to seek investment from partners, businesses and government
- map current and potential natural carbon stores and investigate if carbon offset schemes could deliver environmental benefits in the New Forest.
- take the approach of the 'right tree in the right place' to ensure that action to minimise climate change maintains and enhances the unique mosaic of habitats in the New Forest

[6] Lawton, J.H. et al *(2010) Making Space for Nature: a review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network.* Report to Defra.

4.2 Land Use Planning

4.2.1 The Authority's recently adopted Local Plan (August 2019) includes strategic objectives to plan for the likely impacts of climate change on the special qualities of the New Forest. The Inspectors' Report (July 2019) endorsed our Local Plan policies on addressing climate change, which include (i) avoiding development in areas at highest risk from flooding (informed by a detailed National Park-wide strategic flood risk assessment that factored in long-term climate change projections); (ii) requiring a higher standard for water efficiency in new residential development than that set out nationally; and (iii) supporting appropriate renewable energy development in the National Park.

4.2.2 Local Plans must have regard to guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2019) and the accompanying National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) resource. These currently require robust evidence and viability testing before local sustainability and zero carbon requirements in new development can be set by local planning authorities. The Government's preferred approach is to address energy performance standards for new housing through the Building Regulations.

4.2.3 If we are to realise deep emission cuts, then these national and local policies will need strengthening; this is not a situation unique to ourselves and other Authorities will be making the call to government to introduce net zero policies.

4.3 Leadership and technical advice

4.3.1 Our first National Park Management plan (2010) recognised the impact that climate change will have on the national park and this programme of work continues in the current Partnership Plan.

4.3.2 We have drafted a risk assessment looking at the potential impacts of climate change on biodiversity, built heritage, access, local communities, land management and landscape. Through the Hampshire Sustainability and Energy Officers Group and the Public Sector Sustainable Development Group (both convened by HCC) we work with other local authorities to share specialist advice and knowledge.

4.3.3 Reducing emissions across the communities of the national park presents a challenge that will involve leadership and advocacy and considerable public engagement. We have done some work on this through the Green Halo partnership which brings businesses, academics and charities together to around a natural capital vision for our area "To be a global exemplar of how our most precious landscapes can work in harmony with a thriving, economically successful community."

4.3.4 The climate and nature emergencies require us to use of our influence and convening role at a local and national level. We need a coherent, joined up approach involving the public, private and third sector. With the climate and nature emergency higher up the agenda of our partners, the review of the Partnership Plan in 2020 is critical to setting strategic direction for collective and determined action. Our leadership, technical advice and championing of these issues will be vital over the coming year to secure the level of commitment to actions needed.

5 EDUCATION - Community engagement and behaviour change

5.1 Engagement with our communities has been crucial in our work to tackle climate and nature recovery issues. Through our Sustainable Communities Fund about £1.2M has been provide to 116 projects since 2006 that have helped to reduce the carbon footprint of the national park and improve nature (table 2).

Table 2: Sustainable Communities Fund Projects 2006 -2019

Project Type	Number of projects
Feasibility, research & energy audits	23
Green building/renovations - insulation, LED lighting, solar, biomass, heat pumps	28
Conservation	22
Supporting local food/produce	17
Sustainable education/events	15
Reducing waste	8
Sustainable transport	3

5.2 We have invested more than a million pounds to encourage more sustainable forms of transport and behaviour such as improvements to over 80km of cycling and walking infrastructure, supporting cycle hire businesses, the New Forest Tour and walking festival. Projects supported by the Our Past Our Future programme have enhanced woodlands, streams and ponds and created new hedgerow habitats.

5.3 We have run several Green Open Doors and Greener Living events to showcase renewable technologies, eco-buildings and green gardening. Through our support of the New Forest Marque we help promote sustainable, local food which has a lower environmental impact.

5.4 This work has supported community engagement and local projects across the National Park but needs to be scaled up to reach the net zero target. Shifts in behaviour will need to be made in three key areas: transport, heating and diet[7]. Surface transport accounts for 27% of UK GHG emissions and there needs to be a modal shift to low emission vehicles, public transport, walking and cycling which is compatible with the sustainable use of the national park. Decarbonising heating within the home, improving the energy efficiency of buildings and reducing the impact of industry will be necessary. UK agriculture is expected to account for approximately 30% of GHG emissions by 2050 and a shift in animal husbandry methods and dietary habits is likely to be needed.

5.5 In 2015 we ran a survey ‘Attitudes to Climate Change’, which was completed by 260 people. High levels of concern about climate change were expressed with only three people stating ‘there is no such thing as climate change’. 76% of respondents said they were prepared to make lifestyle changes such as improving energy efficiency, recycling more and taking part in campaigns. Over 50% of the actions to reach net zero by 2050 require people to do things differently[8]. However, it is known that the willingness to change does not always extend to action and some form of intervention

[7] Carmichael, R (2019) Behaviour Change, public engagement and Net Zero Imperial College, London
[8] https://www.theccc.org.uk/2019/07/10/uk-credibility-on-climate-change-rests-on-government-action-over-next-18-months/

is needed. There are high levels of trust in information received from environmental organisations and the NFNPA.

5.6 As noted above, if climate goals are to be met there will need to be changes in the way land is managed and accompanying behavioural and societal change. We need to:

- develop a joint action plan to reach net zero with nature by 2050 with partners involving businesses, communities and other local organisations
- support the action plan with a behaviour change strategy
- work with other Local Authorities to make the case for national polices and resources to support responses to the climate emergency
- re-focus the Sustainable Communities Fund to deliver innovative action on climate change and nature recovery

6. RECOMMENDATION

That Members:

1. **Reaffirm our commitment by declaring a climate and nature emergency**

2. **Commit the NFNPA to becoming a net zero organisation by 2030**

3. **Work with partners to develop a plan to respond to the climate and nature emergencies so that the New Forest National Park and surrounding area is "net zero with nature" by 2050**

Contact:	**Andy Brennan, Sustainability Officer, andy.brennan@newforestnpa.gov.uk / 01590 646 676**
Papers:	**AM 594-20 (Cover report)** **AM 594 – Annex 1 National Parks England Climate Change Position Statement**
Equality Impact Assessment:	**There are no specific equality or diversity implications arising out of this report.**
Resources:	**To be built into our budget setting and work programme for 2020-2021**