

AM 592-21

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 29 April 2021

CLIMATE & NATURE EMERGENCY

Report by: Paul Walton, Head of Environment & Rural Economy

Summary:

In January 2020 the Authority declared a climate and nature emergency, committing to become a net zero organisation by 2030 and working with partners to develop a plan for the National Park and surrounding area to be 'net zero with nature' by 2050.

This paper reviews our work carried out during 2020/21 towards these objectives and identifies some key areas of activity for this financial year.

1. Introduction

1.1 The paper considered at the Authority meeting on 23 January 2020 (AM 594-20) set out the three key areas we need to focus on to meet our net zero goals:

1) Mitigation: reducing greenhouse gases from our own emissions to net zero by 2030

2) Adaptation:

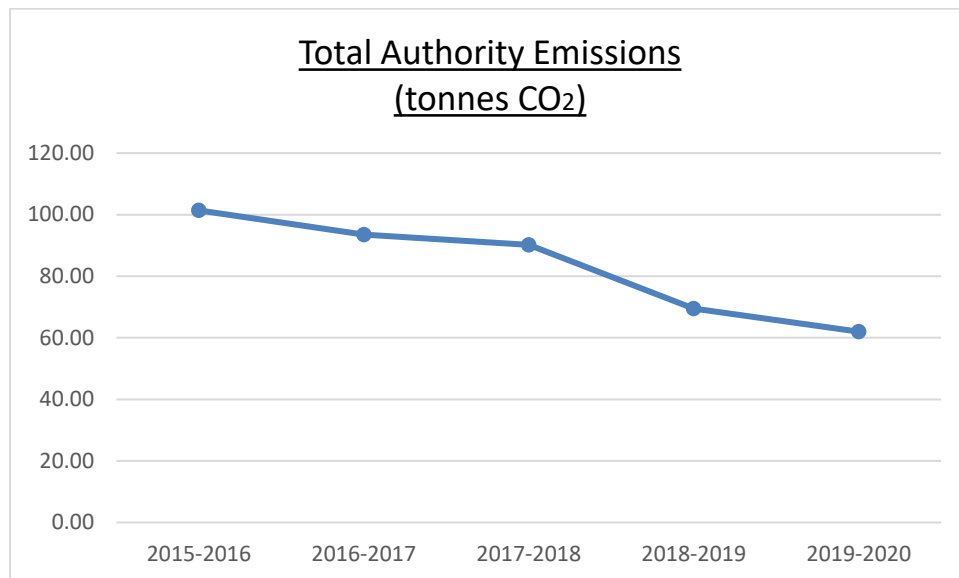
- working with partners and communities to achieve net zero by 2050
- developing plans for carbon capture and the adaptation of natural systems through habitat management, restoration and creation and land-use planning
- showing leadership and advocacy around the climate and nature emergencies

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

Set out below are some of the measures and actions we have taken in respect of these key areas:

2 Mitigation

2.1 Over the past five years for which the data is currently available, 2015/16 – 2019/20, the Authority has already successfully reduced its emissions by around 40% from over 100 tonnes of CO₂ produced each year to just over 60 tonnes as shown in the graph below:



- 2.2 Within these figures, our emissions are largely related to the use of our office premises (c65%) and work related travel (c23%). However we will shortly be reviewing our data collection to include other emissions, known as 'Scope 3 emissions', which cover staff commuting and more of the impacts of items we use or procure e.g. ICT equipment; 2020/21 will therefore provide a new (higher) baseline figure.
- 2.3 During 2020/21 the impact of the 'work from home' requirements as a result of the Covid pandemic is likely to show a marked reduction in electricity and gas use and the amount of miles travelled for work purposes. However, to measure the full impact of working from home we will also need to calculate the 'externalised' emissions of home-based staff in terms of their own electricity and gas usage whilst in work time.
- 2.4 To help assess our office-based emissions we commissioned a review of the energy efficiency of the office building in Lymington, with the aim of identifying ways to reduce energy consumption and minimise carbon dioxide emissions. The review identified a number of 'quick win' measures that can be carried out as part of routine in-house maintenance and some suggested improvements that would require investment that would pay for themselves over a four to five year period - given that our office lease ends in November 2026 we will need to consider each measure and payback period closely.
- 2.5 The office study also identified the area of highest return in reduction of energy demands would be to remove our ICT infrastructure from the 24/7 climate-controlled server room. This would require a move to online/cloud-based infrastructure and this will be built in to our future ICT replacement plans which are currently being reviewed by the team. The recent upgrade of the financial system moved it to an online platform, the Planning System upgrade will soon do likewise and all staff are already on Microsoft Office 365 which is cloud-based.
- 2.6 In keeping with our current sustainable procurement policy, we recently replaced our diesel pool car with vehicle with an electric Nissan Leaf.

- 2.7 In February 2021 we recruited two posts – a Net Zero With Nature Programme Manager and a Finance and Sustainable Performance Officer. Working with the Resources Team, these two posts will help to develop our programme of work to reach the net zero by 2030 goal.
- 2.8 Our Local Plan has set the strategic policy approach to support proposals that mitigate climate change and adapt to the impacts of climate change (policy SP11); prevent development that increases flood risk or adversely affects coastal processes (policies DP12 & DP13) and support for small scale renewable energy generation (policy SP14).

3 Adaptation

- 3.1 A Natural Capital baseline assessment for the National Park has been completed providing, for the first time, data on carbon storage and sequestration in the vegetation and soils within the National Park. This data will help inform decision making on future land management and provide valuable evidence on the level of ecosystem services provided by the National Park.
- 3.2 The information provided by the baseline has been utilised in a partnership between the NFNPA, National Parks Partnerships and Palladium. This is exploring the development of a Net Zero With Nature Facility to help direct future investment of private green finance into restoration of key habitats. The natural capital baseline was a key element of our application to the Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund in March.
- 3.3 A key outcome of our advocacy work has been the preparation of a *Greenprint for South Hampshire*; a framework for recovery following the impact of the Covid pandemic, endorsed by the Partnership for South Hampshire in January 2021. This was prepared in partnership with Future South and the universities of Southampton and Portsmouth and has Net Zero with Nature as one of its five priorities.
- 3.4 At a national level England's 10 National Park Authorities developed a Delivery Plan for climate leadership, aiming to work together and at scale to achieve rapid action towards net zero in National Parks.
- 3.5 National Parks UK also intend to promote the Net Zero with Nature work with Palladium at the COP26 summit in Glasgow in November. An Expression of Interest has been submitted to the UK Government. If selected to attend the summit we, as part of National Parks UK, will be expected to sign up to the Race to Zero campaign led by the Under2° Coalition. A commitment to achieving net zero, identification of GHG reduction targets and measurement of emissions are prerequisites of signing up to the campaign.
- 3.6 This will also give us the opportunity to collaborate with local businesses and stakeholders in a concerted effort to reduce GHG emissions. The pressing need for this was marked by the recent government announcement to bring forward the current target for reducing carbon emissions by 15 years.

4 Education

- 4.1 Encouraging behaviour change amongst our communities and stakeholders to enable people to reduce carbon in relation to travel, energy use and diet will be essential if we are to meet our climate goals.
- 4.2 In March RAPC approved further work in partnership with Hampshire County Council, NFDC and Forestry England on the production of a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for the New Forest area. Since 2017 LCWIPs have been the Government's preferred way to prioritise improvements in walking and cycling infrastructure to enable modal shift away from using private vehicles, especially for short journeys close to where people live. The New Forest LCWIP is being developed in tandem with the progression of the 22 actions of the Recreation Management Strategy, to enable the maximum benefit of any future network developments to both utility and recreational journeys. Consultation has been carried out by NFNPA officers on behalf of the partners, at the Parish and Town council quadrant meetings, the Access Forum, Cycle Working Group and Recreation Management Strategy Advisory Group.
- 4.3 Alongside the LCWIP process, modal shift has also been encouraged by our work in partnership on:
 - Extension of the New Forest Tour for the 2021 season (extra 6 weeks to take the season to 15)
 - Presentations to the New Forest Zero Carbon Alliance
 - Support of the Brockenhurst to Lymington Community Rail Partnership
 - New and improved walking routes (Historic Routes and Lepe Loop)
- 4.4 The first virtual New Forest Awakening Festival looking at the nature and climate emergency in the New Forest was held online throughout February 2021. Events for all ages took place including:
 - a Facebook live tour of a commoner's holding
 - seed shows from Fairweather's Garden Centre
 - woodland storytelling with Hoburne Bashley holiday park
 - a heathland webinar with conservationist and author Clive Chatters
 - a screening of the Motherload sustainable transport film including a Q&A with the director
 - online school assemblies about the climate crisis provided by NPA education staff
- 4.5 Overall, our messages about the climate and nature emergencies were seen by over 815,000 people; nearly 70,000 people engaged with the online posts or events (attended webinars, viewed videos, commented, liked or shared posts). One of our aims was to target new and younger audiences on Instagram and we reached 72,000 people with our posts.
- 4.6 A small grants scheme as part of our Sustainable Communities Fund was launched at the end of the Festival for schools and community groups to apply for funding to kickstart their climate change and nature projects.

- 4.7 A 'snapshot survey' of resident's experiences of and thoughts about lockdown was completed by over 2,750 people and included questions about the climate emergency. Overall, a large majority of people felt they are now living a more sustainable, climate-friendly lifestyle. The three most stated reasons for that were doing fewer car journeys, buying local and reusing / recycling more.
- 4.8 An overwhelming majority (90%) of survey participants would like to see the environmental improvements that resulted from the lockdown sustained in the longer term. It is important to note that more people thought ensuring better outcomes for wildlife and helping to tackle the climate emergency was slightly more important than providing a better quality of life for people.

5 Future Work

- 5.1 The work programme for 2021/22 identifies key priority areas regarding the climate and nature emergencies. These include:
- The publication of a spatial plan for nature recovery for the National Park and immediate surroundings.
 - Identify and gain support for a programme of nature-based solutions to mitigate climate change and enhance the special qualities of the National Park.
 - Volunteer action from individuals, communities and businesses to tackle the nature and climate emergency and care for the National Park.
 - Children and young people having improved understanding of the National Park and the climate and nature emergency so that they can take positive action in response.
 - Enhanced public engagement with action on climate change amongst National Park communities and businesses.

and a commitment to:

- Achieve 'Organisational Net Zero' by 2030 or earlier.

We aim to publish a full NFNPA Sustainability Plan by the end of September 2021 to chart a route to achieving Net Zero within the next nine years. Progress on these outcomes will be reported to the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee throughout the year.

Recommendation:

Members are requested to note the content of the report.

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Papers: AM 594-20

Equality Impact Assessment: