

RAPC 477/22

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

RESOURCES, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE – 7 MARCH 2022

AUTHORITY CARBON REDUCTION PLAN

Report by: Nigel Stone, Head of Resources (CFO)

Purpose:

This report sets out the final draft Carbon Reduction Plan for the Authority, containing the current status and proposed way forward, to reduce and/or offset the Authority's own carbon footprint from its assets and operations. A draft was brought to this Committee in November and has now been updated with our final baseline figures from defra.

It is presented in light of the global pressures from climate change, the wider UK target to be entirely Net Zero by 2050, our local declaration of a Climate and Nature Emergency and the agreed objective for the Authority itself to be Net Zero by 2030 at the latest.

Whilst this report concentrates on the Authority's own carbon outputs, there are significant strands of work elsewhere within the Authority and in partners organisations which look at the necessity to reduce and/or offset carbon within the New Forest National Park as a place.

1. Climate Change and Carbon Reduction

- 1.1 All companies, public sector bodies, organisations and individuals have a clear responsibility to play their part in the government's overall target to make the country Net Zero by 2050. Within these wider terms, the New Forest National Park Authority is a relatively small organisation, and indeed this is reflected in the relative size of our current annual carbon footprint, nonetheless it is incumbent on us to try to set a local and national example by ensuring our own house is in order.
- 1.2 Most organisations are in the process of producing policies, plans or strategies to reduce their carbon footprint over the coming years and decades. These have many different names such as Green/Greening, Climate Change, Carbon Management or Sustainability, but all have the same core targets and structure as set out here in our own titled 'Carbon Reduction Plan'. Whilst carbon is specifically mentioned, you will see from the plan that this terminology encompasses any harmful emissions/practices.

2. Plan and Way Forward

- 2.1 The final draft plan in **Annex 1** now contains confirmation of our carbon footprint baseline from 2019/20 which was being calculated by defra alongside the Carbon Trust and JBA Consulting. Originally the baseline year was expected to be 2017/18 but the consultants felt the data available for that year across the defra family was generally poor and therefore changed the baseline to 2019/20 instead.
- 2.2 The plan highlights the considerable work the Authority has done to date in reducing its carbon footprint – our Authority was founded in 2005 in a time of some climate-awareness and we have certainly worked hard since to reduce our own impacts on the environment our purposes and duty are there to protect. The plan targets a 40% reduction from the 2019/20 baseline by 2030. All remaining emissions are considered unavoidable and will instead be offset from 2024/25.

3. Recommendation

It is recommended that Members:

1 Approve the Authority Carbon Reduction Plan

Papers:

RAPC 477/22	Authority Carbon Reduction Plan – cover paper
RAPC 477/22 Annex 1	Authority Carbon Reduction Plan

Equality and Diversity Implications:

There are no specific equality or diversity implications arising out of this report.

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Annex 1



New Forest National Park Authority Carbon Reduction Plan

Version: 1.0
Completed: February 2022

Contents:

1.	Summary.....	page 5
2.	Definition of Net Zero / Carbon Neutrality.....	page 5
3.	Authority's Net Zero Vision.....	page 6
4.	Scope.....	page 6
5.	Strategy Summary.....	page 8
6.	Baseline and Methodology.....	page 8
7.	Actions Completed and Current Position.....	page 10
8.	Future Actions and Projects.....	page 11
9.	Offsetting and Insetting.....	page 12
10.	Monitoring, Review and Revisions.....	page 13

1. Summary

This Carbon Reduction Plan has been produced in response to New Forest National Park Authority's (the 'Authority') declaration of a Climate and Nature Emergency and its published objective to be Net Zero as an organisation by 2030 at the latest. This plan is solely about the Authority achieving Net Zero from its own direct actions and outputs rather than for the geographic area of the National Park which is being considered elsewhere (in particular within the new Partnership Plan, further details on our website).

The plan is to establish the Authority's carbon footprint within the defra-agreed baseline year of 2019/20, through its current position in 2021/22 and how it can then be fully Net Zero by 2030. The Authority has drafted an initial list of actions and projects to achieve this goal, as set out in section 7 of this plan; these will be updated as and when necessary throughout the life of the plan through to 2030.

Our plan will be monitored regularly, with a suite of suitable performance indicators produced and progress will be overseen by our Resources, Audit and Performance Committee and formally published on our website.

We believe it is clearly established, both nationally and locally, that we must act now to mitigate the impacts of existing climate change and further to avoid even harsher climate impacts for the future – this plan therefore does not include detailed description or analysis of the various drivers, policies or evidence that underpin our need to act now on carbon reduction.

The plan sets a challenging target of 20% carbon reduction by the end of 2024/25 (on top of all the work prior to the 2019/20 baseline) and rising to a 40% reduction by the end of 2029/30, all remaining emissions will be offset from 2024/25.

2. Definition of Net Zero / Carbon Neutral

Carbon neutrality, or having a Net Zero carbon footprint, means achieving Net Zero carbon dioxide emissions by either reducing or eliminating carbon emissions derived from your assets or operations as an organisation.

The emissions included, those required to be reduced or eliminated to achieve carbon neutrality, has been specifically identified by defra for all its core and arms-length bodies – this defines our carbon footprint (see section 6).

Any emission(s) that cannot be entirely eliminated then require compensating mitigation, this can either be by our own organisation, within the same geographic area as they were produced, known as 'insetting', or carbon reductions elsewhere outside of our area, known as 'offsetting'. It is extremely unlikely that any organisation would be able to be Net Zero without some significant element of insetting or offsetting.

Whilst our initial primary target is to achieve Net Zero status by 2030, the Authority will look to become a 'carbon positive' organisation if and when possible. This means our carbon reduction programme, including any insetting/offsetting, will more than offset any emissions we produce within a given year.

3. Authority's Net Zero Vision

The New Forest National Park Authority recognises its corporate responsibility to the environment and will aim to:

- Lead the way with regards consideration and incorporation of greening impacts in all corporate policies and practices;
- Reduce the impacts of climate change and our contribution to the causes;
- Live within environmental limits, both locally and globally.

This plan specifically targets our direct contribution to any causes through carbon emissions from our assets (property and vehicles) and our operations (purchases, use/delivery of goods or services and the ways of working of staff and members). There is a clearly defined goal for us to be Net Zero by 2030 and a strong aspiration to achieve such status as soon as possible.

It should be clear that any actions to reduce emissions and build resilience, if done well, can deliver multiple benefits for our organisation wider than the carbon saving alone. We must consider our capacity, motivation to change behaviour and seek all opportunities by assessing how much change might be possible, where, with whom and by when.

It is recognised that, due to our small size and low number of owned assets, our most significant carbon outputs come from purchased goods and services – we will therefore need to choose suppliers and partners carefully, prioritising those who themselves show strong motivation and success in recognising and reducing their own emissions.

4. Scope

Since its inception in 2005, our Authority has monitored its carbon emissions in various forms, however this plan marks the most detailed assessment to date and the first agreed emissions scope for use across the defra family – this will not only allow clearer data to be collated, but for it to be more easily compared and contrasted with other organisations. Many organisations which currently claim to be Net Zero, or close to it, are doing so by using lower standards through excluding some areas of emission from the scope of their carbon footprint calculations – we are confident our definition covers all relevant emissions.

This plan has been developed within our current 2018-21 Authority Business Plan, but it will also form a key element of our future Business Plans, with business design and resourcing built around these requirements to achieve and maintain Net Zero - carbon reduction or elimination must work alongside all our priorities and not in conflict with them.

All greenhouse gas emissions are measured and recorded. While different greenhouse gases have a different impact on our climate, they are expressed as carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e). CO₂e signifies the amount of CO₂ which would have the equivalent global warming impact as all the gasses released and allows different gas emissions to be easily compared within a single statistic.

The scope of a carbon footprint is often defined according to the level of control and influence that the organisation has over its emissions and are categorised as 'Scope 1, 2 or 3'. Scope 1 and 2 cover direct emissions from operations and include the use of fuels and electricity within owned assets. Scope 3 includes emissions arising from sources such as waste, water and commuting and are generally emissions over which we have less or no direct control (for instance, we can control the amount of water we use but cannot control the amount of emissions which are caused when supplying the water to us). It is usual to include scope 1 and 2 emissions as standard and the scope 3 emissions which are appropriate to the organisation's needs and priorities.

The primary aim of this plan is to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions arising as a result of activities over which the Authority has direct influence and some control. For this reason, defra have chosen to include scope 1 and 2 emissions and some scope 3 emissions relating to waste, water, grey fleet travel (i.e. staff and member business travel in private vehicles) and purchased goods & services. Inclusion of these scope 3 emissions will enable the plan to have a wider influence and benefit.

Below is a table showing the agreed scopes across the defra family:

Scope 1	Scope 2	Scope 3
Fuel Combustion / Generation (HQ – Gas)	Purchased Fuels (HQ - Electricity)	Staff Business Travel
Owned Transport		Member Business Travel
Fugitive Emissions		Employee Commuting
		Purchased Goods
		Purchased Services
		Short-lease Assets
		Operational Waste
		Tenanted Properties

The Sustainability Leadership Group at defra has set their overall vision as:

"We take from the environment the minimum that we need to operate, and we put back more than we take. We will be the first Government group to reach net-zero."

As an organisation we are outside of the scope of the prescribed Greening Government Commitments (GGCs) that govern defra's Net Zero aspirations, however, we have chosen to follow the same framework and report ourselves on the same basis. This includes starting with the baseline year of 2017/18 and setting interim targets through to 2030.

5. Strategy Summary

Our core strategy to reduce our carbon footprint and achieve Net Zero can be easily summarised as:

Avoid – stopping carbon intensive activities wherever possible and practical

Reduce – cut demand or improve the efficiency of our carbon generating activities

Replace – research and consider alternative, low/no-carbon activities

Mitigate – inset or offset any unavoidable remaining emissions

Mitigation is deliberately placed last within this prioritised list. Clearly one option would be for the Authority to simply offset/inset all its current carbon emissions straight away and not require any further work to avoid, reduce or replace any such activities – indeed this is what some organisations may choose to do. However, this temptation must be avoided, particularly when setting time-related targets to reach Net Zero, as those first three options clearly deliver greater societal and environmental benefits than does offsetting your impacts alone. The Authority will therefore only use inset/offsetting for any genuinely unavoidable emissions, even if this slightly delays our time to reach Net Zero overall.

The Authority will commit to examining, wherever possible, the full lifecycle emissions of any projects or purchases so that the full impact of its proposed actions can be appraised prior to the decision-making process.

Time and resources will be targeted by the level of emissions produced by a project or purchase and the ease of implementation of any measures. Our draft plan therefore contains a mix of easy ‘quick-wins’ and ideas that will take longer or be more difficult to achieve.

Staff and Members will of course play a key role in the success of this plan - ensuring a carbon-reduction mindset is embedded across our organisation and work, finding creative solutions / alternatives to current issues and by developing projects to offset any remaining emissions.

6. Baseline and Methodology

As stated, we will be following the defra-agreed scopes and methodology for calculating our carbon footprint and associated indicators each year.

Our baseline year will be 2019/20, however the approach now is primarily forward-looking rather than backward-looking. If we intend to be Net Zero by 2030, then the baseline itself is less of a focus and is solely useful an indicator of successes to date. Our annual footprint is more important for us to be able to measure progress and identify key milestones for carbon reduction over the course of the next eight years.

Defra have agreed a contract with the Carbon Trust and JBA Consulting to provide each defra organisation with the methodology for calculation of carbon emissions each year and have provided our 2019/20 for us as a worked example as shown in the table below:

	Data Used	2019/20 Baseline (tonnes CO ₂ e)
Scope 1		
HQ - Gas	Meter readings / bills	18
Pool Vehicles	Mileometer readings / Fuel card data	13
Scope 2		
HQ - Electricity	Meter readings / bills	21
Scope 3		
Business Travel	Expense claims	13
Operational Waste	HQ & Staff No's	24
Commuting	Estimated based on local data	32
Purchased Goods / Services	Estimation based on local data	124
Tenanted Properties	Estimation based on national data	29
TOTAL		274

This draft (rebased) carbon emissions data shows our 2019/20 baseline as c274 tonnes of CO₂e.

The table above also has no offsetting or insetting elements included, as again these will be set out in the ongoing work by defra, the Carbon Trust and JBA Consulting. It is likely that some of our existing works within the Sustainable Communities Fund and/or habitat restoration works (e.g. from the Landscape Partnership Scheme) will qualify to reduce the net carbon footprint.

7. Actions Completed and Current Position

In the years prior to 2019/20 we have:

- Significantly decreased our water usage at the Town Hall
- Significantly decreased our electric usage at the Town Hall
- Split our waste to recycle as much as possible
- Purchased our first electric pool vehicle
- Installed two electric vehicle charging points
- Built our two affordable homes within the 'Code for Sustainable Homes'
- Arranged staff book / plant swaps
- Donated unused assets to local schools and charities
- Supported the New Forest Marque local food scheme

This equated to a c30% reduction in our scope 1 and scope 2 emissions in the seven years leading up to 2019/20; we did not calculate scope 3 emissions during this period.

In the years between 2019/20 and 2021/22 we have:

- Continued and expanded the work highlighted above
- Declared a Climate and Nature Emergency
- Appointed a 'Net Zero with Nature' Programme Manager
- Appointed a 'Finance and Sustainable Performance Officer'
- Commissioned a study into our Town Hall energy usage
- Purchased our second and third electric vehicles
- Highlighted the issue of single use plastics
- Moved to holding many more meetings virtually
- Updated our procurement rules to highlight sustainability
- Reviewed our ICT outputs in particular

In order to continue achieving emissions reductions, as well as reducing operating costs and avoiding financial exposure from climate risks, the Authority is committed to identifying and implementing carbon saving projects.

8. Future Actions and Projects

A full list of actions and projects will be developed during the 2022/23 financial year; however, the current ideas are:

Actions to reduce our Carbon Footprint	Linked Actions
Replace all vehicles with electric (or hybrid if necessary) models when time for renewal	Staff environmental pledges
Work with NFDC to review the energy usage and efficiency of the Town Hall building	Provide staff with guidance and tips for energy efficient homes
Ensure sustainability is at the heart of all Authority policies and procedures, including any future office space	Support and inspire others to act similarly, highlight opportunities for them
Work with staff to draft and implement a travel action plan (business travel and commuting) e.g. no domestic flights, cycle to work scheme, working from home, public transport / pool car usage incentives	Utilise the corporate training budget to increase training and awareness amongst staff and members
Utilise technology to improve carbon efficiency wherever possible and practical	Continue to support Nature Recovery and Climate Change projects throughout the New Forest National Park
Consider land ownership for tree planting or agreements with existing landowners	
Support climate positive recreation and green infrastructure	

Any actions or projects must work alongside our core Business Plan priorities and will be drafted to include consideration of resources required, overall climate impact, likelihood of success and measures of success.

Authority Commitments:

The Authority will commit to inset or offset all its remaining emissions by the end of 2024/25, thereby achieving Net Zero status at that point – this would likely equate to 20% of the 2019/20 baseline emissions having been removed and the remaining 80% inset/offset.

The Authority will commit to continue its carbon reduction programme to aim for a 40% reduction from the 2019/20 baseline by the end of 2029/30, again insetting or offset the remaining 60% of unavoidable emissions.

9. Offsetting and Insetting

As already stated, it is extremely unlikely that any carbon reduction programme can completely remove all the emissions of an organisation, therefore some 'offsetting' of the remaining outputs will be required. Given all the work we have done prior to our base year and up to the present day, our scope for reducing carbon emissions further is already limited and will not therefore be as high as some other organisation may be able to achieve.

Our Authority will prioritise 'insetting', whereby our remaining carbon emissions are offset locally within the boundaries of the National Park through schemes we have designed. Should this not be possible we would then look to offset in other protected landscapes, through other defra family organisations and then other UK offsetting (prioritised in that given order).

It is currently estimated that approximately 40% (c200 tonnes CO₂e) of our baseline 2019/20 emissions can be removed through our actions set out in this plan, leaving approximately 60% (c165 tonnes CO₂e) to be inset.

Further work will be undertaken during 2022/23 to establish an agreed list of insetting and offsetting projects for the Authority – current national guidance suggests either matching our carbon outputs with a direct reduction elsewhere or establishing a cost basis for offsetting - currently approximated as £190 investment required per tonne of CO₂e.

Some examples of likely insetting projects are:

Sustainable Communities Fund Grants – setting aside Authority funds to support projects which eliminate carbon with the National Park.

Tree planting / Habitat restoration – using Authority funds to support tree planting ('right tree in the right place'), or habitat restoration, either by purchasing land to use or working with existing landowners.

Green Energy Generation – consider the use of solar panels, ground/air sources etc within current or future buildings.

10. Monitoring, Review and Revisions

All staff and members will have a key role in progressing our work to achieve Net Zero by 2030, however formal monitoring of the Carbon Reduction Plan will be primarily overseen by:

- Head of Resources – Nigel Stone
- Head of Environment & Rural Economy – Paul Walton
- Net Zero with Nature Programme Manager – Olivia McGregor
- Finance and Sustainable Performance Officer – Tom Knott

Regular updates will be given to the Authority's Strategic Leadership Team and through the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee via the existing quarterly progress reports. We will also publish regular progress updates on our website and within our Annual Reports.

We will primarily report on our overall carbon footprint, the table below sets out our core targets:

	Data Used	Baseline 2019/20	Target by end of 2024/25	Target by end of 2029/30
Scope 1				
HQ - Gas	Meter readings / bills	18	-20%	-30%
Pool Vehicles	Mileometer readings / Fuel card data	13	-20%	-30%
Scope 2				
HQ - Electricity	Meter readings / bills	21	-20%	-40%
Scope 3				
Business Travel	Expense claims	13	-30%	-50%
Operational Waste	HQ & Staff No's	24	-20%	-40%
Commuting	Estimated based on local data	32	-40%	-60%
Purchased Goods / Services	Estimation based on local data	124	-15%	-40%
Tenanted Properties	Estimation based on national data	29	-8%	-15%
Insetting				
Insetting (used as offsetting)	Estimation based on national data	TBC	100% inset/offset	100% inset/offset
	TOTAL	274	c220	c165
	CHANGE		-20%	-40%

Further linked indicators will be (targets by 2030):

- Paper and Printing Usage – reduce by 75%
- % of waste recycled – greater than 90%
- Total distance travelled on flights – absolute minimum
- ICT efficiency – increased by 25%

Plan reviews & revisions:

As a minimum, this plan will be fully reviewed and refreshed in 2023/24 and 2026/27 – this timetable will allow review prior to the interim target dates set out above.

These reviews will consider progress to date, any issues/risks identified, focus of priorities, plan resilience and any opportunities to accelerate delivery.