

AM 639/23

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 26 JANUARY 2023

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

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1 Summary:

1.1 In light of the twin climate and nature emergencies declared by the National Park Authority in 2020, a commitment was made to become a net zero organisation by 2030; and work with partners to develop a plan for the National Park and surrounding area to be 'net zero with nature' by 2050. This paper primarily reviews our work carried out during 2022 in respect of the latter work area (progress against becoming a net zero organisation is reported separately - see section 5) and identifies some key areas of activity for this coming financial year.

2 Introduction – the context within which we are operating

2.1 The latest assessment from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) - (AR6 Synthesis Report, February 2022), reports that the effects of the climate crisis are coming harder and faster than expected. The IPCC report limiting a rise in global temperatures to 1.5°C would substantially reduce projected losses and damages but cannot eliminate them; every warming increase is making the situation worse, pushing more people and species to their limits and beyond (e.g. the risk of extinction increases tenfold if the world moves from 1.5°C to 3°C of warming). It also highlights this is a critical decade for securing a liveable, equitable and sustainable future.

2.2 The IPCC has concluded 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°C. Net zero Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions are achieved when the amount of GHGs emitted by human activities on a global scale are equal to that being absorbed by the world's natural environment.

2.3 In October 2021 the UK government released its Net Zero Strategy which set out policies and proposals for decarbonising all sectors of the UK economy to meet the UK's net zero 2050 target enshrined in law. In 2020 the New Forest National Park Authority declared its ambition to be net zero by 2050, and local partners such as New Forest District Council, Hampshire County Council and Wiltshire Council have all made commitments to net zero.

2.4 The New Forest National Park is internationally important for nature and an important place for people to connect with nature and both its built environment and habitats are at risk from climate change impacts. Cross partnership working is vital to successfully tackle the threat it poses, since coordinated action is needed to both reduce emissions and increase our resilience to the now inevitable impacts.

- 2.5 The critical state of global ecosystems and their importance in regulating climate was highlighted at the UN Biodiversity Conference, COP 15, in December 2022 in Montreal where agreement was reached to deliver effective conservation and management of at least 30% of the world's lands, inland waters, coastal seas and oceans by 2030. A similar commitment was made by the UK government in 2020 to protect 30% of the UK's land for biodiversity by 2030.
- 2.6 Throughout 2022 we have worked with the English National Park Authorities to build a case for delivering nature recovery in our National Parks, to enable them to become beacons for both nature and climate recovery. Covering 10% of England National Parks have a key role to play in delivering the Government's ambition.

3 Progressing our 'net zero with nature' by 2050 commitment

- 3.1 The commitment to work with partners to develop a plan for the National Park to be 'net zero with nature' by 2050 is enshrined in the 2022-2027 Partnership Plan launched in July last year under our Net Zero with Nature objective.

The Agenda for Action associated with the objective includes:

- Establish data and evidence baseline
- Implement nature-based climate solutions
- Build a New Forest coalition for a net zero economy
- Activate communities
- Increase sustainable travel.

Below is a review of our 2022 work carried out in respect of these areas which also identifies some key areas of activity for this coming financial year.

3.2 Establishing data and evidence baseline - Defining Net Zero

- 3.2.1 In 2022 we achieved a significant milestone by publishing [a roadmap to net zero for the New Forest National Park](#). This was achieved by working in partnership with the family of UK national parks, Natural England, Southampton University and consultancy business Small World Consulting. It represents a huge step forward. The report:

- Identifies emissions associated with the National Park (rather than our organisation)
- Sets out a roadmap to net zero including the suggested scale and pace of emission cuts
- Identifies land use change targets in the context of the National Park (being one of the most important places for nature in Europe)
- Identifies the National Park's potential to contribute to achieving the UK's net zero targets through nature-based climate solutions.

- 3.2.2 Defining the emissions associated with the New Forest National Park has enabled us to quantify the net zero challenge. Over the coming year the net zero with nature programme will engage Authority teams and partners to identify actions that will achieve desired emission cuts. We will also work with the wider National Park family to identify how best to collectively monitor progress against our net zero target.

3.2.3 Quantification of carbon the dynamics of the National Park's habitats

3.2.4 In 2022 significant progress was also made in building a more complete picture of the carbon stored and released by the National Park's habitats. A study was undertaken to estimate the emissions occurring from degraded peat and fed into the net zero report for the National Park, which recommends that 160 ha of peat restoration a year would make significant progress towards the net zero target. In the coming year we will be engaging with partners to identify opportunities for peat restoration.

4 Implementing nature-based climate solutions

- 4.1 We have continued to support the delivery of several nature-based climate solutions alongside partners. This includes habitat restoration work funded by Green – Blue Horizons programme, increasing the land's ability to sequester carbon. Through the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme trees and hedgerows have been planted too, which will be drawing down carbon from the atmosphere and storing it as they grow.
- 4.2 The New Forest Land Advice Service (NFLAS) on-going work on deer management with the northern farming cluster is helping adaptation to climate change by creating areas for trees to naturally regenerate.
- 4.3 In the coming year we hope to scale up the implementation of nature-based climate solutions, focusing specifically on working with partners and identify funding to support the delivery of the land-use change actions identified in the Net Zero report for the New Forest National Park (see Appendix 1 for details).
- 4.4 Identifying the opportunities for nature restoration across the National Park will be key to steering land use decisions and attracting the investment needed to tackle the climate and nature crises at the scale required. We have worked with the English National Parks, Natural England and National Parks England to produce a Case for Delivery of Nature Recovery, highlighting the significant potential to deliver 120,000 hectares of nature rich areas across the Parks by 2030. Each National Park will be developing how this can be delivered locally within each Park.
- 4.5 We are investing resource into developing a portfolio of nature recovery projects for the New Forest National Park. Working with key partners we have identified over 150 opportunities to expand and connect key habitats, making them more resilient to climate change and to enable wildlife to thrive. This portfolio will sit alongside a soon to be published "prospectus" to help guide potential investment from the emerging carbon markets, mitigation schemes, Biodiversity Net Gain and the Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELM).

5 Building a New Forest coalition for a net zero economy

- 5.1 The Partnership Plan 2022-2027 provides a framework for action on net zero across the National Park, with measures of success and target dates and will be a key component of our work programme for the coming years. We will be guided by the [Delivery Plan for Climate Leadership in National Parks](#) which represents the collective work of the UK National Park family to define how NPAs can best support the drive to net zero. In

addition, the Green Leadership programme undertaken by several NPA managers provided an opportunity to identify new working practices to enhance collaboration and enable others to act and has resulted in the formation of a cross team working group to accelerate progress towards our net zero goal.

5.2 Private finance

5.2.1 The government stated in its response to the Landscapes Review (published January 2022) it believes private finance provides significant opportunities to lever more investment into protected landscapes. We continued to be at the forefront of action to develop private finance markets locally to fund land-based climate change mitigation projects. This was enabled by the Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund (NEIRF) award made to us in 2021.

5.2.2 The NEIRF-funded project resulted in the creation of a bespoke cashflow model for each of the three participating landowners, setting out the private sources of revenue and costs associated with nature restoration, with resulting financial returns per year for 30 years. Restoring nature on the Barker Mill and Cadland Estates was revealed as a profitable business case when using private funding. Forestry England nature restoration plans were not eligible for accessing the ecosystem service markets as a publicly funded body. The project revealed a wealth of information on the state of the ecosystem services market in the New Forest National Park. It raised awareness of the financially sustainable opportunities but also exposed the current barriers preventing further uptake in the market. We held a highly successful event on 16 September 2022 to showcase the NEIRF project results to local 50+ stakeholders including land managers, local planning authorities and public bodies.

5.2.3 We created web content to ensure the project results were captured for the benefit of local stakeholders. This information equips land managers with the preliminary insights required to make investment decisions for nature restoration at an increased scale and pace. In 2023 we will continue to work with local stakeholders to explore how private finance can support nature restoration and climate resilience in the National Park.

5.3 Planning

5.3.1 Our Planning Team has worked to both mitigate the impacts of climate change and increase resilience to its inevitable impacts.

5.3.2 In January 2022 the New Forest National Park Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was adopted and included a greater focus and coverage of sustainability and climate change than the previous version (2011). Chapter 6 on 'Sustainability' supports the re-use of materials and provides design guidance on improving energy efficiency in developments. In relation to renewable energy, the Design Guide covers solar power, wind power, heat pumps and combined heat and power. The Design Guide SPD is a key document for our planning team and is used in negotiations with applicants, as well as in planning decisions.

5.3.3 The National Park Authority's adopted Local Plan (2019) includes a strategic objective to 'plan for the likely impacts of climate change on the special qualities of the New

Forest'. This strategic objective is supported by several detailed local planning policies on climate change (SP11); flood risk (SP12); coastal development (DP13) and renewable energy (SP14). Such local planning policies continued to ensure development proposals mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change through avoiding development in areas at highest risk of flooding; locating development to reduce the need to travel by car; supporting sustainable design and construction, including improved water and energy efficiency; and supporting small scale renewable and low carbon energy generation that are appropriately located.

- 5.3.4 The most recently available monitoring period (April 2021 – March 2022) saw a large increase in planning applications granted for, or incorporating, renewable energy schemes within the New Forest National Park. The majority comprised solar panels (19 applications), with 12 schemes incorporating air source heat pumps (compared to two last years). All were small scale schemes, in accordance with the adopted Local Plan (2019) policies. In terms of flood risk, the Authority routinely consults the Environment Agency on planning applications that may impact on flood risk. During the April 2021 – March 2022 monitoring period the Environment Agency submitted objections to two applications within the National Park based on reasons of flood risk. One application was refused by the Authority on grounds including insufficient information to rule out flood risk, and the other application was subsequently withdrawn.
- 5.3.5 In addition, the Authority's annual Building Design Awards 2022 included a category for 'Best Green Building', showcasing sustainable construction and materials. In March 2022 Cameron's Cottage at the RSPB Franchises Lodge in Landford was awarded 'Best Green Project' winner. The once-derelict estate cottage has been sympathetically refurbished and extended for use as a residential retreat for young people. The design incorporates an outdoor classroom, locally-sourced timber, solar panels, sustainable heating, and numerous homes for wildlife including bats and birds.
- 5.3.6 The Authority's planning and building design and conservation officers continue to work with property owners and applicants to maximise sustainable construction techniques and materials.

5.4 Stakeholder engagement

- 5.4.1 We supported local partners including the RSPB to work towards net zero by running support sessions offering advice and signposting tools.
- 5.4.2 We continued to highlight to stakeholders the potential the national park offers in tackling the nature and climate emergency. We hosted a ministerial visit (Lord Benyon) where we highlighted the important carbon storage and the potential sequestration role of the National Park's habitats, as well as the risk factors threatening its ability.

6 Activating communities

- 6.1 We dedicated the New Forest Show theme to the nature and climate crisis, with over 2,000 people visiting the stand. We:
- Provided engaging information boards to demonstrate the important role the National Park's habitats play in combatting climate change and demonstrate the climate actions individuals can take to make an impact
 - hosted a climate quiz to deliver information in a fun and easy-to-digest format
 - promoted our nature and climate pledge to create a community of like-minded action-takers.
- 6.2 We launched and promoted the Climate and Nature Challenge pledge for the National Park, inviting people to sign up online www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/pledge and commit to at least four of seven actions towards more sustainable living. So far nearly 1,000 people have taken the pledge and are signposted to further ways to put their intentions into practice.
- 6.3 We continued to provide support to our business community including the New Forest Business Partnership, for whom we provided a mentoring session on how businesses can calculate their carbon footprint and receive technical advice and support to reduce their carbon emissions.
- 6.4 We drove greater collaboration and coordination between local community green groups in and around the National Park by convening a Green Groups Forum. This enabled local green groups to come together and amplify their impact, sharing knowledge, resources and funding. The Green Groups attended our stand at the New Forest Show, hosted events as part of the Awakening Festival and the NPA had a stand at the Ringwood Eco Fair. Green Groups also benefited from £10,000 in grants from the Sustainable Communities Fund to work together on community energy saving initiatives.
- 6.5 Through our Sustainable Communities Fund (SCF) to date about £1.28 million has been provided to 187 projects since 2006 that have helped to reduce the carbon footprint of the national park and improve nature (table below).

Project type funded by SCF	No of projects (2006-2022)
Feasibility, research, and energy audits	24
Green building/renovations - insulation, LED lighting, solar, biomass, heat pumps	33
Conservation	80
Supporting local food / produce	19
Sustainable education / events	15
Reducing waste	9
Sustainable transport	7
Totals	187

- 6.6 We continued to support community tree and hedge planting initiatives. For example, the 'Family Trees' tree planting initiative which is going ahead at New Park on 4 February 2023, involving local families and our rangers. NPA volunteers have also helped plant a hedge at Rockford Farm with the New Forest Trust, as part of the Queen's Green Canopy. In 2023 we will look to scale up our support of tree planting efforts through partnership with Hampshire County Council tree partnership programme.
- 6.7 The second Awakening Festival was held in February 2022. Events ranged from wildlife talks and walks to a tree nursery visit, farm tour, clothes swap, and workshops on how to reduce our own carbon footprint. There were also family-focused events to engage children about the New Forest's rare habitats, and the chance to find out more about local New Forest Marque producers. Messages about the climate and nature emergencies reached 1,300,000 people, while nearly 100,000 people engaged with the online posts or events.
- 6.8 Social media campaigns on COP27, net zero with nature week, Earth Day and the Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund have seen over 240,000 impressions and nearly 10,000 engagements.
- 6.9 We helped promote the Hurst Spit to Lymington coastal plan consultation headed up by the Environment Agency.
- 6.10 The Green Blue Horizons programme has helped the Countryside Education Trust (CET) develop the Fort Climate Centre and three climate education posts. We also submitted an Expression of Interest to the National Lottery Climate Action Fund to increase our capacity to drive community-led climate action.

7 Increasing sustainable travel

- 7.1 We continued to advocate for reforms to the transport network that will deliver the scale and pace of emission cuts recommended by the net zero New Forest National Park report. (a 50% reduction in car use by 2030 is considered necessary for decarbonisation to be in line with limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees). We have been working with HCC to explore what a bespoke approach to rural roads might look like in the National Park. This might include approaches to traffic management, speed and physical infrastructure to support a reduction in emissions associated with road usage.
- 7.2 We, alongside officers from HCC, New Forest District Council and Forestry England continued to work on the production of the New Forest Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). Subject to adequate funding, HCC will next carry out public engagement on the New Forest LCWIP to assess attitudes towards the desktop-based auditing carried out of proposed primary and secondary utility routes and leisure walking/cycling routes.
- 7.3 The New Forest Tour continued, offering a car-free way to access and enjoy the New Forest. We continued to support the Community Rail Partnership. The launch of an integrated multi-modal public transport ticket is due in 2023 which includes an activity at an attraction along the way, making for a sustainable 'day out' itinerary.

7.4 Unfortunately, HCC didn't receive any funding from the DfT Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) which will hamper bus service provision in the New Forest. We promoted the government-supported £2 single fare price cap of bus services to and around the New Forest and will continue to work with partners to support bus service provision within the national park.

7.5 We celebrated the 10th year of the NPA Walking and Cycling Festival in the autumn which exists to increase public uptake of walking and cycling as sustainable forms of transport. Cycling was added to the programme in 2021 and we built on these foundations for 2022, with several cycle businesses involved. We ran 96 events and attracted 732 attendees.

8 Adaptation

8.1 While working to reduce emissions we must also continue to adapt to the impacts of our changing climate that are evident now and will increase in the coming years. The UK accounts for around 1% of global emissions so efforts to reduce emissions need to be accompanied by measures to enable us to be more resilient in the face of warmer, wetter winters and hotter drier summers. In addition to the adaptation planning policy work and our work on nature-based climate solutions to enhance climate resilience (both outlined in relevant sections above), we continued to advocate for resources from government to conduct a comprehensive Climate Change Risk Assessment for the National Park. In the face of mounting evidence that the impacts of climate change are coming harder and faster than previously expected, we see this as a vital tool for developing a resilient landscape and maintaining the National Park's status as one of the most important places in Europe for conservation. In 2023 we will continue this advocacy and work with the family of UK National Parks to make our case.

9 Progress on becoming a Net Zero organisation ourselves

9.1 The Authority's own Carbon Reduction Plan was agreed by members of the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee (RAPC) in March 2022 - paper RAPC 477/22. This set out an ambitious but achievable route to becoming net zero as an organisation by 2030 at the latest, and to do so (with some necessary offsetting/insetting) by 2025 if possible.

9.2 As the plan states, officers are currently continuing to work alongside the Defra Sustainability Centre of Expertise and the Carbon Trust to establish our carbon-equivalent emissions data as an organisation for each financial year since the agreed base year of 2019/20. This data is being collated, using the same formula, for all Defra core and arms-length bodies.

9.3 The data includes scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions, the highest and most transparent standard of reporting, and has recently been updated to include the impacts of staff home-working arrangements. Our 2019/20 base year emissions have been identified as 299 tonnes CO₂e; the second lowest amongst the English National Park Authorities and third lowest amongst all Defra bodies.

9.4 It is expected that data for 2020/21 and 2021/22 will be available by March 2023 and we will therefore provide a further review and updated action plan to RAPC in the summer.

Recommendation: Members are requested to note the content of the report.

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Papers: AM 594-20

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Potential land use change targets to support net zero target

Proposed Land Use Targets	Value	Units
New Native Broadleaf / Mixed Woodland	70	ha per year
New Productive Coniferous Woodland	0	ha per year
Restored Peatland	160	ha per year
Agroforestry (improved grassland & cropland)	34	ha per year
New Hedgerows (improved grassland & cropland)	1.9	ha per year
Legumes (improved grassland)	231	ha per year
Cover Cropping (cropland)	33	ha per year

Source: Net Zero report for New Forest National Park November 2022