

AM 664/23

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY MEETING – 19 OCTOBER 2023

WORKING WITH UK NATIONAL PARKS – NET ZERO WITH NATURE

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

1 Summary:

- 1.1 UK National Parks have been working for more than a year towards joining the UN-backed [Race to Zero](#) initiative to halve global greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and build a fairer healthier future. Each National Park has worked with Small World Consulting to understand the carbon footprint of their area, and the decarbonisation trajectory needed to align with the Paris Agreement. Small World Consulting's research for the New Forest NPA was presented to Members back in January (paper AM 639/23 - Climate and Nature Emergency) . It includes a science-based decarbonisation target of 2041 for the New Forest National Park.
- 1.2 Building on this initial research, the National Parks UK family now want to act together in joining the Race to Zero (Net Zero with Nature) by the end of 2023. Membership of the scheme is free of charge but requires participating organisations to make a formal pledge and commit to five “starting line” actions.
- 1.3 The scheme fits nicely with our Partnership Plan outcomes around the climate and nature emergency and with those specific actions within our recently agreed Business Plan. Joining alongside all other UK National Parks will enable the New Forest NPA to take advantage of multiple benefits; it will complement our own internal organisational goal to be Net Zero by 2030, support the wider Net Zero with Nature approach set out in the National Park Partnership Plan, share good practice across the National Parks family and support the need for us to measure and report the Forest-wide climate impact and carbon reductions.

Recommendation:

To approve the New Forest National Park Authority joining the United Nations-backed ‘Race to Zero’ initiative and pledging to “maximise effort toward or beyond a fair share of 50% global greenhouse gas emissions reduction needed by 2030, and to reach net zero by 2050 at the latest”.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Race to Zero is the United Nations-backed global climate leadership initiative rallying non-state actors (like cities, local authorities, businesses, universities) to take rigorous and immediate action to halve global emissions by 2030 and deliver a healthier, fairer zero carbon world. We often refer to this as our 'Net Zero with Nature' programme.
- 2.2 The UN scheme was formally launched in 2021 to:
- Structure a role for non-state actors to help drive crucial decarbonisation
 - Shift the global debate from long-term 2050 to near-term 2030 action
 - Focus ambition on 1.5 not 2 degrees
 - Introduce greater rigour and transparency
 - Keep the global focus on building a fairer healthier future
- 2.3 There are now over 11,000 participating members in the UN programme. This includes 50 British local authorities – both urban and rural - almost two-thirds of FTSE100 companies, and 68 universities.
- 2.4 UK National Parks have been working towards joining the scheme for more than a year, as part of a package of activity in support of our engagement with the COP26 Climate Conference (held in Glasgow in 2021), us all working towards our targets within the new Environment Improvement Plan and from all our various individual Management / Partnerships Plans.

3 The benefits of Race to Zero / Net Zero with Nature

- 3.1 National Parks have a key role to play in responding to the climate crisis – both through leading nature-based carbon sequestration at a landscape scale, and by being part of the vanguard of decarbonisation in a rural setting. UK National Parks will be the first National Parks in the world to join the UN Race to Zero.
- 3.2 Working together within the UN programme will enable the New Forest NPA to drive more action at a bigger scale and faster speed, where appropriate, securing greater benefits by working together rather than taking a potentially new, fragmented and uncoordinated approach. Collective working will ensure data produced and published is robust and consistent, using the same metrics and accounting methods.
- 3.3 Being part of the programme will provide a way for us to establish data requirements and a reporting framework to measure the climate impact and carbon reductions of our externally funded projects. Funders are increasingly requesting this level of detail is monitored and evaluated during the life of funded projects. Identifying ways to achieve the decarbonisation trajectory set out in the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Assessment is an important element of the £1.4m Youth for Climate and Nature programme funded by The National Lottery Community Fund which will see thousands of people working together to take climate action across the New Forest, Southampton, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. Initiating the involvement of the NFNPA in the programme will help kick start this exciting area of work and provide us with a way to monitor and deliver tangible results that we can use to share and inform others.

4 Joining Process

- 4.1 Membership is free of charge. Each member commits to a formal pledge (coming from the 'top of the organisation' hence this paper) and also five 'starting line' actions:

The Pledge: to maximise effort toward or beyond a fair share of the 50% global greenhouse gas emissions reduction needed by 2030, and to reach net zero by 2050 at the latest.

Suggested Actions:

1. **Pledge:** how you will deliver on the pledge
2. **Plan:** within 12 months develop an evidence-based emissions reduction plan in line with the pledge.
3. **Proceed:** take immediate action towards meeting the pledge.
4. **Publish:** commit to report data and actions in relation to meeting the pledge, publicly and at least annually - feeding into the UN Global Climate Action Portal.
5. **Persuade:** align advocacy activities with net zero by proactively supporting climate policies consistent with the programme criteria.

5 National Parks taking a climate leadership role

- 5.1 We need to be clear that committing to maximise action towards meeting a decarbonisation goal for the National Park means a leadership role for the National Park Authority working with landowners and managers, residents, partner organisations, stakeholders and the public – rather than an expectation that the Authority will have the powers and resources to deliver the full target(s) itself. This leadership role reflects / mirrors our commitments to Net Zero with Nature set out in the Re:New Forest Partnership Plan and our role as convenor of the Team New Forest approach.

6 Next steps

- 6.1 The UK National Parks taking part in the UN initiative will take the following steps together:

Pledge: UK National Parks will work together to publicise joining Race to Zero, including seeking endorsements from globally significant players, and content that can be tailored for audiences local to each National Park.

Plan: UK National Parks will work together to support the development of Paris Agreement-aligned climate action plans for each National Park. For the New Forest this will involve building on existing local plans and will involve developing our climate partnership work. UK National Parks will use our collective voice to attract funding to support the planning work where needed. Having robust evidence-based plans using best-practice methodology will help UK National Parks to make a strong case for public and private sector funding.

Proceed: Each UK National Park is at a different stage of proceeding with climate action, and as a community of practice will learn from each other. There may be some initiatives we can proceed with collectively across UK National Parks.

Publish: We will work with the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) to transparently report to the UN our carbon footprint, plans and actions. CDP is a free platform. Verified climate action makes organisations attractive to investors and helps to build public and stakeholder trust.

Persuade: New Forest NPA will continue to make the case for rapid climate action with stakeholders, partners and the public. We can also work with UK National Parks where a collective voice will bring bigger impact.

RECOMMENDATION

To approve the New Forest National Park Authority joining the United Nations-backed ‘Race to Zero’ initiative and pledging to “maximise effort toward or beyond a fair share of 50% global greenhouse gas emissions reduction needed by 2030, and to reach net zero by 2050 at the latest”.

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Useful Papers:

AM 664/23 Cover Paper
AM 639/23 Climate and Nature Emergency - 26 January 2023
[New Forest National Park greenhouse gas emissions assessment report](#)