

# National Park Authority Board Meeting



Agenda Item 12

## Climate and Nature Emergency – Our Mission Zero Route Map

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### *Paper for noting*

#### 1. Purpose

- 1.1 To present Members with an update on current activity surrounding our Climate and Nature Emergency activity, and to outline what first steps are on our 'Mission Zero' route map to achieve zero<sup>1</sup> carbon emissions, in line with Scottish Government national commitments.

#### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Board members are asked to:

- (i) **Note** the summary of policy context and current activity surrounding the Climate and Nature Emergencies
- (ii) **Note** our approach to creating a 'Mission Zero' route map
- (iii) **Discuss** potential target dates for becoming a 'Mission Zero' organisation.

#### 3. Contribution to National Park Partnership Plan and Our 5-year Plan

##### **National Park Partnership Plan:**

Outcome 1: Natural Capital  
Outcome 3: Climate Change  
Outcome 4: Land Partnerships  
Outcome 5: Recreation Opportunities  
Outcome 8: Visitor Management  
Outcome 10: Placemaking  
Outcome 11: Sustainable Growth  
Outcome 12: Sustainable Population

##### **Our 5-Year plan:**

Priority 3: Sustainable Organisation  
Priority 5: Placemaking and  
Sustainable Communities  
Priority 8: Communications and  
Engagement

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<sup>1</sup> Carbon neutrality refers to achieving Net Zero emissions by eliminating greenhouse gases altogether or, more commonly, by balancing emissions output with removal through technical capture or sequestration. As defined by the Committee on Climate Change (CCC)<sup>2</sup>, a net zero target requires 'deep reductions in emissions, with any remaining sources offset by removals of emissions from the atmosphere (e.g. by afforestation). This removal may require either the purchase of carbon offsets or direct carbon removal through additional sequestration activities. In contrast, a zero *direct* emissions target, would reduce emissions from all sources uniformly to zero.

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- 3.1 Our National Park Partnership Plan and Our 5-Year Plan both set strategic outcomes and priorities related to climate change and nature. The Partnership Plan focuses on collaborative land and water management projects which capture and sequester carbon and reduce flooding impacts. This includes targets to create 2,000ha of new woodland and 2,000ha of restored peatland by 2023, both of which will result in many thousands of tonnes of carbon being captured and sequestered. The Plan also prioritises managing visitors to protect the environment, promotes active travel and sustainable transport to reduce emissions, and seeks improved resilience to climate change for communities. Finally it prioritises the transition to a lower carbon local economy through appropriate development.
- 3.2 Within Our 5-Year Plan, we aim to be a sustainable, low carbon organisation, minimising our use of plastics, being powered by renewable energy and maximising the use of electric vehicles.

## 4. Background

- 4.1 Members are asked to recall discussions regarding the climate and nature emergencies in the recent Board strategic session on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2019 and are also asked to note the content of the associated presentation in Appendix 1. This session and presentation outlined the current policy and strategic context to the climate and nature emergencies.
- 4.2 As a National Park Authority we have had a Climate Change Group since 2017, with a Climate Change Action Plan since March 2018, and as a public body, we are also under a statutory obligation as part of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act to report annually to Scottish Ministers on how we are complying with our climate change duties. These annual reports contain our current levels of greenhouse gas emissions, which as of 2018 totalled 223.80tonnes of CO<sup>2</sup> emitted (tCO<sub>2</sub>e). Since the first year of reporting in 2013/14 our direct emissions have steadily reduced annually from a baseline of 359tCO<sub>2</sub>e to the current level.
- 4.3 Along with our duties under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act, we have been identified as a key delivery body with the other public bodies in the Environment and Forestry (ENFOR) portfolio of Scottish Government. We will therefore be expected to be a leading organisation in transitioning to net zero, and in time to zero direct emissions.
- 4.4 Since October 2019, we have also run a number of climate engagement sessions with staff from across the organisation, to seek more understanding and detail around the following questions:

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- Where are we now? What do we currently do in terms of our work around sustainability, climate and nature emergency - and how do we do it?
- What are the main organisational climate emergency aims for us in the next 2-3 years?
- What are our big / key challenges in terms of being climate ready? And how can we overcome these?
- Where should we focus our energy moving forwards?

The findings from these sessions, our work on the nature crisis and the input from Board members has guided the proposed next steps outlined in section 6 below.

- 4.5 This paper focuses on a forward look as to next steps and how we will practically transition to being a zero carbon public body. It will also give an overview of our approach to influencing all those who live, work and visit the National Park, with a view to creating a more sustainable future. It also covers how we will aim to demonstrate leadership and co-ordination to link tackling the nature crisis issues in the National Park, with climate emergency action.

### 5. Our Mission Zero Route Map

- 5.1 The current national level policy framework is wide and quickly evolving. The current [Programme for Government](#) is one of the first direct drivers for reaching the new ambitious national targets. In this rapidly changing policy landscape, there is an ongoing need for clear guidance and support from Scottish Government to assist all public bodies, who like us, are undertaking a journey towards fully understanding and then delivering on zero emissions. We are not alone in requiring advice, expertise, and in time, extra resources to help us along this road.
- 5.2 In recognition of this situation, Scottish Government is currently holding a [consultation](#) on the role of Public Sector Bodies in tackling climate change. At the time of writing our intention is to respond to this consultation, recognising the need for additional support, training and resources to help us deliver on 'Mission Zero'. At the same time we have been asked by the Cabinet Secretary to summarise by December, our current climate change policies and actions, and by spring-summer next year, set the date by which we intend to achieve zero emissions on our estate and operations.
- 5.3 Even prior to this heightened urgency, both as a National Park Authority and as a National Park we were already making steady progress towards reducing our environmental impacts and engaging others with positive climate activity and messages, through delivery of our current Climate Change and Wild Park action plans. The national situation regarding tackling the nature crisis is less clear, and members will recall from recent discussions, that collectively we, and other delivery partners, are performing below target on some key natural heritage National Park

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Partnership Plan indicators, such as woodland creation, condition of designated sites and water body condition. We are already undertaking actions through Wild Park to address these, within the limitations of existing available resource. We do understand however that efforts are underway in Scottish Government to renew focus on the delivery of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy and Scottish Environment Strategy, and our nation's commitments to delivering Aichi targets.<sup>2</sup>

5.4 At the recent National Park Partnership Plan partner event on 12<sup>th</sup> November, the Deputy Director of Climate Change for Scottish Government outlined that there were a number of critical asks for Public Bodies within Scotland, and whilst these are not yet time bound, they underpin our approach:

- To set a date by when they will reach zero emissions (as discussed in 5.2 above)
- To report accurately on how spending aligns with emission reductions
- To make annual reports publically available and accountable account and to celebrate everything that is already being achieved in this area.

5.5 As a National Park Authority, we are uniquely placed to deliver real, place-based climate and nature outcomes on the ground, and also to demonstrate effective partnership working at a variety of different scales. We will aim to provide leadership and co-ordination through delivery of pilot schemes that will have tangible climate and nature benefits, within the National Park. We will seek to share our learning and contribute into the wider Scottish context.

5.6 So what do we mean when we talk about our Mission Zero Route Map? We envisage that it will be an action plan including the following elements:

### **Desired Outcomes**

- *Internal:* For the National Park Authority to be 'net zero' before 2045 (date to be confirmed, but expected to be well ahead of 2045)
- *External:* To influence behaviours of those who live, work and visit the National Park and support how they can play their part in Scotland becoming net zero.

### **Where are we now?**

- *National Park Authority Baseline Emissions* – summarising our current levels of fossil fuel-based energy use (gas, petrol, diesel), electricity and renewable energy supplies, consumables, waste volumes and types. And developing a system for tracking this in an ongoing way.

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<sup>2</sup> A ten-year internationally agreed framework for ambitious action by all countries to save biodiversity, 2011-20.

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- *Carbon Sequestration Activities* – both direct (on our own estate) and indirect (others land in the National Park), e.g. tree planting and peatland restoration levels and impacts.

### **What are we going to do to change the baseline?**

- *National Park Authority Climate Delivery Plan* – costed and prioritised actions to reduce our carbon footprint and waste levels. Looking at transitioning our travel patterns to more public, active and electric. Upgrading our buildings to be more energy efficient and powered by renewable sources. Reducing consumables, waste levels and the footprint of our procured services.
- *National Park-wide Climate Delivery Plan* – prioritised actions to help reduce emissions and waste levels across the National Park. At this point in time we believe this will focus on travel, our planning function and the carbon and waste footprint of Park settlements.
- *Wild Park Programme* – development and delivery of existing and new projects and proposals from the existing Wild Park programme. A costed plan focused on carbon sequestration and tackling the key threats to nature.

### **Supporting delivery**

- *Policy & Procedure Review* – a timescale to review our suite of strategies, delivery plans, policies and procedures to be Zero emission focused, e.g. Local Development Plan, budgeting and procurement
- *Communications Plan* – how we will use our influence, network and media platforms to change behaviours and advocate Mission Zero transition to staff, Board, partners and those who live, work and visit the National Park.

5.7 Through the development of our Mission Zero Route Map we have the opportunity to demonstrate what is possible when ambition and creativity come together in Scotland's National Parks. We want our Route Map to be the tool that transforms the practice of our organisation and brings partners together to deliver more for the current global climate and nature emergencies.

## 6. How do we plan to move forwards?

6.1 From the various discussions to date we have created a series of short term priorities for action to ensure that we are continuing to deliver for climate and nature as we develop our Route Map. This is expected to take us through the next six to nine months, and to the point of having a draft Route Map for Board to consider.

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- 6.2 The short term priority actions are as follows:
- Creation of internal 'Mission Zero' Steering Group to drive forward delivery
  - Seek shared service opportunities and peer support with local authority and portfolio partners
  - Consideration and pursuit of potential quick wins through reducing the negative climate and nature impacts from the National Park Authority estate and activities. These could include but are not limited to:
    - Shift to a green energy supplier
    - Improving internal waste management and better use of waste hierarchy
    - Increased practical action projects through Wild Park delivery for tackling Invasive Non Native Species, tree planting and peatland restoration
    - Review of internal carbon accounting
  - Undertake conversations with local businesses, communities and interest groups, to identify what they feel is needed in terms of support for positive climate and nature action in the National Park. Working with partners to help us achieve this will be essential. For example linking to the recently funded 'Rural Community Climate Change Learning Programme' soon to be delivered by the Community Partnership
  - Whole organisation day-long 10.02 (all staff meeting) – focus on Climate and Nature Emergency, creation of the Route Map to Mission Zero
  - Finalise both internal and external key communications messages
- 6.3 This is not a task, or cost to be underestimated. At this early point of scoping, we believe that in order to make impacts on the scale required, we will need to build on the actions above and make transformational changes across the whole organisation. Examples of medium to longer term challenges could include retrofitting all our buildings and infrastructure to become carbon neutral, ensuring all work journeys by staff, volunteers and Board are carbon neutral, adapting our procurement and finance systems to ensure carbon reduction is engrained in our procedures and policies, and further investment in ICT and digital solutions. Additionally across the National Park, climatically driven changes to natural events such as storms, floods, tidal surges, landslips and algal blooms will likely test the resilience of the artificial fabric, environment and communities of the area.
- 6.4 It is anticipated that in order to achieve these transformational changes we will need additional skills, guidance and revenue and capital resource. The impacts of which will need to be directly aligned with emissions reduction targets. We will need to look creatively at securing funding opportunities to allow us to achieve the outcomes which will be outlined within the Mission Zero Route Map.

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### 7. Who do we need to talk to and what do we need?

- 7.1 As outlined within the existing National Park Partnership Plan, the National Park Authority has a key role in contributing to adaptation and mitigation of climate change effects, and tackling the nature crisis both directly within the National Park area, but also in by demonstrating best practice examples which can be replicated more widely.
- 7.2 However we cannot do this alone. We need to work collaboratively with others to influence and enable action on the climate emergency. Our Mission Zero Route Map will include priorities for working at multiple scales; to influence policy at national level while also facilitating action at a local scale through our partnerships and projects.
- 7.3 We have a number of strong existing platforms for wider engagement around these issues, such as our Climate Change Group, National Park Board, Youth Committee, Wild Park Steering Group, Local Business Forums, the Community Partnership network, Countryside Trust, Sustainable Scotland Network (SSN) and our wide range of strategic partners, who are active within the National Park.
- 7.4 We will build on these strong relationships and work to develop more partnerships through the development of our Mission Zero Route Map. If approved, the aim is that we will, in time, then have a network of delivery partners to enable a transformational change in positive climate and nature emergency activity across the National Park.
- 7.5 As a small organisation we currently have very limited financial and staff resources to focus on climate change action so we need to identify additional external expertise and funding to inform and support development and delivery if we are to fully realise the ambition and potential the National Park has in responding to the Climate Emergency.

### 8. Conclusion

- 8.1 This paper outlines the approach to the creation of a Mission Zero Route Map, which, although complex and potentially costly, is a task that we are embarking on with passion and commitment. We firmly believe that everyone tackling the climate emergency must do what is right, not just what is easy.

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- 8.2 The development of a draft Mission Zero Route Map plans to provide this not only for the National Park Authority, but also for the National Park itself. We welcome Board Member support and ideas for action to help us develop and deliver this.

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