

Gordon Watson – UK National Parks and Commercial Partnerships

Slide 1 – Intro and GDP Impact of Climate

In this section of our talk, I want to outline how all 15 UK National Parks have been collaborating together to harness support from significant businesses and corporates to secure additional investment into nature.

Our National Parks are directly funded by central Government, but in recent years funding has been extremely challenging and there has been a need to focus on what opportunities there are to secure support from the business sector. Given the scale of ambition of scaling up our efforts to address climate change and to restore nature on a landscape scale – the need to secure such investment is ever more pressing.

Many individual National Parks have pursued commercialisation programmes. This can include operating commercial enterprises through visitor centres, such as retailing, developing merchandise lines and hospitality. Often National Parks operate visitor sites and facilities and charging for some services such as car park charges, camping facilities and boating facilities can generate income which often is only able to help reduce running costs rather than generate profits to invest in significant projects.

So why would a large multi-national business wish to partner with and invest in National Parks?

Increasingly global businesses are recognizing that the twin nature and climate crises will directly impact of profitability in the future, Last year the Green Finance Institute stated that **“Nature degradation could cause a 12% reduction in GDP by 2030 - larger than the hit from the global financial crisis (5%) or pandemic (11%).”**

Particularly in the last few years since the COVID pandemic and COP26 being held in Glasgow in 2021 we have seen much more active interest from businesses wish to prioritise the environment and the benefits it provides to us all in terms of Corporate Social Responsibility activity.

Slide 3 – NPP Governance

IN order to better engage with the business sector and realise some of these opportunities the 15 UK NPAs came together to set up a new organisation to act on its behalf – secure partnerships and deals and distribute this money to projects and activities across all of the NPs.

National Parks Partnerships was set up in 2016. This allowed us to employ a small team of staff who are experts in commercial partnerships and sponsorship fundraising. The Board of the organisation is 50% NPA reps and 50% experts from the corporate sector who are able to help deliver new funding opportunities. Together the NPP Board and

Team brings commercial, partnerships, brand and green finance expertise and a capability to available within NPAs

Each NPA contributes to the running costs of the organisation and the return on this investment is significant.

This approach to national commercial partnerships offers opportunities at a scale which the National Parks would struggle to create individually.

Slide 3 – National Commercial Partners with Shared values

In seeking out Our partners we must be comfortable that they share the National Parks core values of care for the environment, connection, inspiration, balance and diversity. When considering entering into a partnership we must be satisfied that the company is not engaged in activities that are damaging to the environment and that it has credible plans to improve sustainability and reduce carbon emissions. We do a due diligence to ensure that our partners are truly aligned with what National Parks are seeking to achieve.

Companies are attracted to working with the UK National Parks as this gives the opportunity to benefit from association with a globally recognised brand known for conservation, enjoyment, exploration, well-being and education. National Parks are highly recognized around the world and many companies see significant benefits from associating with us.

The brands on this slide give you an overview of our biggest current partners which you can see are all multi-national brands

Slide 4 – Growth in Value of Partnerships

Shows current position which is 'good', delivering about £1.2m value.

BMW biggest at the top, then middle tier of brands.

Strategy not to proliferate lots of lower level deals that take resource to service for less return.

This means that we have to be judicious about the value of partnerships we are willing to enter into that are sufficient to distribute benefits across all 15 NPs

Slide 5 – Promoting the Opportunity

All 15 Member NPAs agree with NPP what areas they have projects that could be fundable by a private partners. It is important to create themed propositions that partners can relate to and which have projects ready to fund behind them.

Here is an example of recently launched 2x lead generation campaigns, to solicit interest from potential partners

To secure partners interested in Nature restoration we have a campaign which we have called 'A Natural Partnership'

'An Active Partnership' is a campaign where we are try to attract companies interested in supporting 'Access to Nature' projects aimed at supporting people to enjoy and access our national parks

These campaigns are promoted into various business networks to try to generate leads that our NPP team can follow up and have discussions with potential funders.

Slide 6 – Generating Leads

These are examples of how we engage our corporate audiences.

Business Green and edie 2 top media titles in the UK which business Environmental and Social Governance and sustainability professionals use. By creating joint content gets us in front of key decision makers for large corporates.

The 15 National Parks help provide relevant content to enable NPP to compete with other environmental charities such as WWF, National Trust and The Wildlife Trusts who are already positioned well in these areas.

Slide 7 - Case Study BMW

Since launching the partnership in October 2022 under our 'Recharge in Nature' campaign, BMW UK has strengthened its brand with a 56%* increase in interest to purchase a BMW Electric Vehicle.

It has also had a significant impact across the UK National Parks in first 2 years delivering:

- **86** Electric vehicle charging sockets in National Parks where there are currently gaps in the EV charger networks – good fit with NPs mission to be net zero places.
- **93** pieces of press coverage with a reach of **22,095,980**
- **10 impact projects** including;
 - Spanning sustainable transport projects, nature restoration and programmes engaging young people in nature
 - **1,300+** young people engaged
 - **3k+** youth volunteer hours delivered
 - **20k** trees planted

Slide 8 – Activating the Partnership

BMW have used the National Parks collaboration across advertising; retail campaigns; and advertorial content. This means that we as National Parks are benefiting from these campaigns by getting our message in front of audiences we would not otherwise reach.

Slide 9 – Columbia Case Study

Columbia was the Official Outfitter to the National Park Rangers and staff from 2017 to 2022.

Demonstrating huge commitment to the National Parks, Columbia outfitted upwards of 2,000 National Park staff including 300 rangers, providing high quality clothing that's 'tested tough' and designed to keep them warm, dry, cool and protected in Britain's toughest conditions.

This partnership was worth £2.5M with additional promotional benefits for National Parks on top of that. While the partnership was in-kind supply of all NPA uniform needs – this represents the value of savings that NPAs could divert to other activities.

It also helped to provide all UK NPA with a unified look with all 15 NPAs wearing variations of the same uniform designs. – more recognition and impact

Slide 10 – Activating the Partnership

Columbia used the National Parks collaboration across retail campaigns, in store promotions and advertorial content. Through this platform we were able to achieve national presence for National Parks and our messaging about the importance of the outdoors.

Slide 11 – Closing Remarks