

# Race to Zero

## Membership update for UK national parks

May 2023

### Introduction

UK national parks are making good progress in joining the UN's Race to Zero initiative.

The aim is for all UK national parks to join together as soon as possible this year, and by August 2023 if possible.

Six national parks have already met the membership criteria. The key next step is for the remaining national parks to commit to Paris Agreement-aligned decarbonisation goals calculated by Small World Consulting.

This briefing includes:

- A recap on Race to Zero: what it is and why UK national parks are joining
- The work undertaken so far to meet membership requirements
- Next steps to join
- Working together to deliver Race to Zero action

### About Race to Zero

Race to Zero is the United Nations' global 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.

It was initiated ahead of the Paris Agreement to help:

- Shift the debate from long-term 2050, to near-term 2030 action
- Focus on 1.5 not 2 degrees
- Structure a role for non-state actors that are crucial to deliver decarbonisation in practice
- Introduce greater rigour and transparency

Together with global south countries, civil society, and the expert analysis of scientists, this initiative had a huge and vital impact on the Paris Agreement, and has a continuing legacy.

Race to Zero is now driving unprecedented action globally.

### The benefits of Race to Zero

- ✓ **The most effective global operation galvanising climate action** – Over 11,000 non-state members have joined Race to Zero, representing 8,307 companies, 595 financial institutions, 52 regions, 1136 cities, 1,125 educational institutions, 65 healthcare institutions and 29 other organisations. Nearly 100 of the world's biggest 'mega-cities' have joined and are on track to meet their tough targets. In the UK, 50 British local authorities have joined ranging from cities to rural areas – demonstrating it is a relevant framework for UK; as well as almost two-thirds of FTSE100 companies, and 68 universities.
- ✓ **Driving more action at a bigger scale and faster speed** – members deliver three times more climate action because they have clear high ambition plans capable of leveraging the investment needed.
- ✓ **Well-planned action**, rather than piecemeal or reactive measures, secure more benefits for local people and nature.
- ✓ **A compelling local-to-global vision to inspire support and action** – within organisations and with stakeholders and the public.

- ✓ **Robust data, consistency and transparency** building **trust** in the transition we need.
- ✓ **A coherent and efficient approach to coordinate climate action across different administrative levels and geographical areas** – using the same metrics and accounting methods, with no loopholes, and no double counting.
- ✓ **Access to a huge wealth of knowledge and resources** including relevant to rural areas.
- ✓ **Collaboration, innovation and problem-solving** with other signatories globally.
- ✓ **Formal recognition of effort** by the UN.

## UK national parks and Race to Zero

The latest science shows that climate impacts are happening sooner than climate models predicted just a decade ago. Critical tipping points in the Earth’s natural systems are already being breached. The future of civilisation, and the natural world as we know it, rests on delivering accelerated decarbonisation, and nature restoration at scale.

National parks globally have a crucial role to play in this global existential 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. This is a strategic role that no other entities can lead.

UK national parks will be the first national parks in the world to join the UN Race to Zero. The UN Climate Champions that lead the Race to Zero, together with supporting organisations like CDP are keen to support us because they understand the critical role of national parks to the global effort and want others to follow our lead.

## Joining Race to Zero

Membership is free of charge. Each Race to Zero member commits to five ‘starting line’ actions:

1. **Pledge:** to take action toward or beyond a fair share of the 50% global GHG reduction needed by 2030, and to reach net zero by 2050 at the latest.
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 UNFCCC Global Climate Action Portal.
5. **Persuade:** align lobbying and advocacy activities with net zero by proactively supporting climate policies consistent with the Race to Zero criteria.

### National parks taking a climate leadership role

Committing to take action to meet 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 national park authority will have the powers and resources to deliver the target itself. This leadership role is one that national park authorities are experienced in. The same approach is taken by city and local authority members of Race to Zero and is not unique to national parks.

## Work so far towards joining Race to Zero

UK National Parks have been working towards joining Race to Zero for more than a year, following a discussion at the 2021 Chairs and CEO’s fora to consider the package of activity in support of our engagement with the CoP26 Climate Conference in Glasgow.

Each national park worked with Small World Consulting to understand the carbon footprint of their area, and the decarbonisation trajectory needed to align with the Paris Agreement. That work is now complete.

Six of the fifteen UK national parks have publicly adopted the Small World Consulting goal (or similar) necessary to join – the ‘pledge’.

## Next steps and timescale for action

The remaining national parks are encouraged to publicly commit to work towards the Small World Consulting decarbonisation goal. This can happen in a variety of ways including:

- In a Management Plan
- In a Partnership Plan
- In a published climate change strategy
- A published Authority decision
- A media releases

### Timing

There is no fixed deadline but ideally all UK national parks joining Race to Zero would happen as soon as possible this year, and by August 2023.

UN Climate Week is in September, and UK National Parks joining could inspire others around the world to join.

## Working together to deliver Race to Zero action

The Climate and Energy working group will continue to function as a community of practice, and where necessary a body to marshal additional resources, to help members to deliver the action needed.

We have already worked well together on **Pledge**: Working collectively with Small World Consulting to develop analysis of each national park carbon footprint and Paris-aligned decarbonisation pathway has involved joint problem-solving and enabled us to generate economies of scale. We now have a science and equity-defined decarbonisation target specific to each national park. We will work together on:

**Plan**: Developing evidence-based plans for each national park to achieve the decarbonisation goals pledged. We will draw on the best practice from around the world, as well as within our own UK national parks network. Where useful we will identify further efficiency savings and economies of scale. We will be a collective voice to attract further 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 we can learn from each other, avoiding re-inventing wheels and accelerating to the speed of the fastest. Whilst we are the first national parks to join Race to Zero, there will be much we can learn from other members. There may be some initiatives we can proceed with collectively across UK national parks.

**Publish**: The methodology designed with Small World Consulting is now being adapted into a tool to help us monitor changes in the carbon footprint in each national park. This will be available at minimal cost. We will work with CDP (formerly the Carbon Disclosure Project) to transparently report to the UN our carbon footprint, plans and actions.

National Park	Pledge?	Where is it public?
Bannau Brycheiniog	Yes	Management plan
Broads	No	
Cairngorms	Yes	In board paper
Dartmoor	No	
Eryri	No	
Exmoor	No	
Lake District	Yes	Partnership Plan
Loch Lomond and the Trossachs	No	
New Forest	No	
North York Moors	Yes	York and North Yorkshire route map to carbon negative
Northumberland	Yes	Management plan
Peak District	No	
Pembrokeshire Coast	No	
South Downs	Yes	In Climate Action Plan
Yorkshire Dales	Yes	York and North Yorkshire route map to carbon negative

CDP is a free platform. There are no minimum reporting requirements, but the more information we share about our plans and actions, the more robust the process is, and the more we will be able to learn from other Race to Zero members facing similar decarbonisation challenges. Verified climate action makes organisation attractive to investors. The CDP reporting framework is aligned to a range of government and organisational reporting requirements which means duplication of effort is avoided.

**Persuade:** Many UK national parks are already active advocates for Paris-aligned climate action within local partnerships, UK and devolved governments, and with the public. We can share best practice in how to make the case effectively with different stakeholders. We can also identify where a collective voice will bring bigger impact.

## UK Race to Zero members

**Nations:** Wales and Scotland

### English local authorities

Birmingham Council  
 Bradford Council  
 Brighton and Hove Council  
 Bristol Council  
 Bury Metropolitan Borough Council  
 Calderdale Council  
 Cambridgeshire County Council  
 Cheltenham Council  
 City of London Council  
 Cornwall Council  
 Cotswold District Council  
 Gloucestershire County Council  
 Greater London Authority  
 Greater Manchester Council  
 High Peak Council  
 Leeds Council  
 Leicestershire County Council  
 Liverpool Council  
 Liverpool City Region  
 London Borough of Camden  
 London Borough of Enfield  
 London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham  
 London Borough of Lambeth  
 London Borough of Lewisham  
 London Borough of Southwark

London Borough of Waltham Forest  
 Manchester Council  
 Newcastle Council  
 Nottingham Council  
 Oldham Met Borough Council  
 Oxford Council  
 Oxfordshire Council  
 Plymouth Council  
 Reading Borough Council  
 Royal Borough of Greenwich Council  
 Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council  
 Sandwell Council  
 Sheffield City Council  
 Somerset West and Taunton Council  
 St Albans City and District Council  
 Staffordshire Moorlands Council  
 Stevenage Borough Council  
 Stroud Council  
 Sunderland Council  
 Swale Borough Council  
 Warwickshire County Council  
 West Midlands Combined Authority  
 Westminster Council  
 Wiltshire Council

### Scottish local authorities

Aberdeen Council  
 Dundee Council

Edinburgh Council  
 Glasgow Council  
 Perth and Kinross Council  
 West Dunbartonshire Council

### Northern Irish local authorities Belfast

### Welsh local authorities on a path to join:

- Blaenau Gwent Council
- Bridgend County Borough Council
- City of Cardiff Council
- Caerphilly Council
- Merthyr Tydfil Council
- Monmouthshire Council
- Newport Council
- Rhondda Cynon Taf Council
- Torfaen Council
- Vale of Glamorgan Council
- Powys County Council

### UK Businesses

Almost two-thirds of FTSE100 (Britain's biggest) companies

Many water companies; SMEs and B-corps.

### 68 UK universities

## Further information

- UN Race to Zero website including full criteria and members: <https://climatechampions.unfccc.int/>
- CDP: <https://www.cdp.net/en>
- Richard Leafe, CEO of Lake District National Park and Liz Hutchins, Senior Advisor to Bannau Brycheiniog National Park are happy to discuss with individual National Park Authorities. Contact: [caroline.matthews@lakedistrict.gov.uk](mailto:caroline.matthews@lakedistrict.gov.uk) or [liz.hutchins@beacons-npa.gov.uk](mailto:liz.hutchins@beacons-npa.gov.uk)
- Race to Zero is a regular agenda item on the UK National Parks Climate and Energy Group meetings.