

7. **MOORS FOR THE FUTURE PARTNERSHIP OPERATIONAL PLAN 2018 - 2019 (SLD/CD)**

1. **Purpose of the report**

This report puts before Committee the sixth Operational Plan from the Moors for the Future Partnership. This plan is for the commitments in the financial year 2018/19 and includes a look forward, both at commitments for the following year (2019/20) and the expectations of business development during and beyond this timeframe. The Operational Plan is an appendix to this report.

Key issues

In September 2017 the first Year in Review (covering 2016/17) was produced. It is intended to produce this document annually.

During the year of this 2018/19 Operational Plan the Moors for the Future Partnership has so far raised and committed funds of £5.6m. The value of projects in the pipeline (subject to approval) is an additional £477,000. This is supported by £93,000 contribution from this Authority and a further £129,500 direct core funding from partners, with an anticipated £57,000 additional core funding from projects.

The Authority's Resource Management Meeting and this Committee receive business cases for new projects from Moors for the Future Partnership as appropriate within Standing Orders.

The implementation of these business cases bring significant investment into the moorland landscape of the Peak District and South Pennines and all have then been successfully out-turned over the past 15 years. Over £34m has been secured and invested by the Partnership's team over this period.

This plan sets out our programme delivery plan and helps the approvals process better understand how new projects fit into the bigger vision of delivering both the National Park Management Plan and key activities of the 2016-2019 Corporate Strategy - whilst taking into account the requirements of the Moors for the Future Partnership partner organisations.

An integral part of the Programme Management approach is the production of this annual Operational Plan which adds to the transparency of the whole programme and allows the approvals process to scrutinise new proposals more effectively in terms of benefits realisation.

The projects within the Operational Plan are funded by, and involve, a number of important partners. This will give the Authority good engagement opportunities with major partners who have significant influence over the management of the moorland landscape.

Programme management

There are typically around 20 projects being delivered at any one time, delivering three objectives outlined in the section below.

Recruitment has been undertaken in the last two months, increasing the capacity of the Conservation Works Officers (3 additional posts) and Research and Monitoring Officers (0.6 wte post) which will strengthen our project delivery resource over the period.

During 2018/19, in addition to managing the delivery of this project the programme management team will review business documents and develop a new Vision and Strategy to give direction and secure the future of the partnership.

We will continue to develop relationships with new partners and will use the methods agreed in the Partnership's Business Plan to achieve a balanced budget.

We are actively managing the core funding deficit - exploring additional projects with partners is one of the programme managers' core activities, responding to calls for potential work and proactively seeking financial resources with current and future partners, including maximising match funding opportunities. We have a high level of confidence that we will achieve this funding during the year. This is a business approach supported by the 2014 – 2020 business plan approved by this committee.

Communications and Engagement

We will continue to develop projects that enable us to achieve our first objective *“To raise awareness and promote positive action for the conservation of the moorland landscape.”*

As part of the MoorLIFE 2020 Project we will complete the work to develop a Bogtastic experience with the addition of interpretation at partner sites across the South Pennine Moors SAC. Six sites including the Moorland Centre at Edale have been identified for interpretation aimed at inspiring visitors about the importance of blanket bog and upland habitats.

We will run a programme of face to face engagement for urban and rural communities, land managers and partner organisations to inform and educate people about the important benefits of the uplands. As part of this we are taking every opportunity to embed the citizen science delivered by our Community Science Project in all areas of our work.

We will work closely with the appropriate teams at the National Park Authority to develop a new partnership website.

The Community science project will continue to engage new and existing volunteers in the three levels of moorland monitoring. We will finalise our volunteer strategy and legacy planning documents. We have obtained approval from Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for an extension to the project so that we can embed the important work of the team and begin to deliver on the legacy plan.

Conservation and Land Management

We will continue to develop projects that enable us to achieve our second objective *“To develop and deliver sustainable land management for these important upland resources, ensuring appropriate consideration of all of their benefits”.*

Through our Private Lands Portfolio we will deliver a number of Higher Level and Countryside Stewardship projects delivering conservation works including bare peat revegetation, drainage management, bracken control, bridleway repair and species diversification work including sphagnum application.

This year will see our biggest work period on the MoorLIFE 2020 project, with restoration actions from the Noe valley in the south to Keighley moor in the north. We will also look to maximise the opportunities to work effectively for our partners, by continuing to deliver projects for the ML2020 partners, such as the recent work for Yorkshire Water, planting sphagnum on Snailsden Moor.

Work will continue to engage with land managers on the benefits of woodland creation, including undertaking the Forestry Commission's Woodlands for Water Advisor role within Yorkshire and the North East. We will continue to work with the Clough Woodland Project Board members and other stakeholders to set the strategic direction and define future goals of the project.

We will hear in February 2018 whether we have been successful in our application to Defra's Peatland Restoration Fund, which received approval from this Committee in early January.

We will be looking to complete drainage management on 58.5 kilometres of grips and gullies, initial revegetation of 47 hectares of bare peat and sphagnum planting on 777 hectares.

Science and Monitoring

We will continue to develop projects that enable us to achieve our second objective *"To develop expertise for the sustainable management of moorlands ensuring that the programme is properly resourced with the capacity and capability to achieve this"*

We will develop a 10 year evidence strategy to inform the delivery and development of our conservation and land management, communications and engagement and business development programme of works. As part of this we will produce a long-term monitoring strategy to evidence the trajectories of recovery and ecosystem service provision from our partnership's blanket bog restoration works as well as trials evidencing the efficacy and effectiveness of novel restoration techniques. This will enable us to develop and communicate a resource plan and funding strategy to best ensure we are able to collect, analyse and interpret data over the long-timescales to fully evidence the benefits and lifecycle of the impacts of our work.

Through MoorLIFE 2020, we will continue to monitor the recovery of bare peat stabilisation and Sphagnum reintroduction on blanket bog condition and ecosystem service provision (originally set up in our Making Space for Water Project) on the introduction of Sphagnum into dwarf shrub heath dominated blanket bog (heather); and grass dominated blanket bog – on purple moor grass dominated bog and cotton-grass dominated bog. We will continue to develop our capability and capacity to use Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) to monitoring these impacts at a landscape scale.

We will continue delivery of our award winning Community Science Project that aims to engage and increase knowledge, understanding and value placed on our blanket bog and the wider moorland habitats through citizen science. This project focuses on monitoring biodiversity across the south Pennine and peak district uplands and the impact climate of climate change on our wildlife. We aim to develop and increase our use of citizen science across our partnership's work as informed by the MFFP evidence strategy.

We will continue to develop and deliver a breeding bird survey across the phase 1 South Pennine Moors Special Areas of Protection. In this we MFFP will collaborate with the British Trust for Ornithology to secure additional resources to undertake a comprehensive data analysis to fully evidence the impact that different land management interventions, and particularly the huge amount of blanket bog restoration work, has had on upland breeding birds since the last comprehensive survey in 2004.

We will continue have provided a valuable research facilitation service to universities. We will support at least one student placement per academic year and help facilitate at

least 20 student projects. We will continue being a partner in, and support, two PhD studentships, one looking into the socio-economic impacts of rewilding the uplands and one looking into the effectiveness and impact of blocking peat pipes. We will aim to identify, develop, and respond to requests to collaborate on additional PhD studentships and research and monitoring projects with external research organisations; the number of proposal will reflect the capacity and resources within MFFP (which is therefore dependent on success). We have two collaborations ongoing into 2018/19, both with the University of Manchester: *EnviroSAR*, an initiative use radar and other satellite technology to deliver all-weather wildfire burned-area products; and *Optimising Natural Flood Management in Headwater catchments to Protect Downstream Communities* ('Protect').

We will work with the Environment Agency to develop Natural Flood Risk Management scheme and funding solutions across all the upper catchments in the EA areas represented within our core working area.

Recommendation

2. **That the Audit Resources and Performance Committee supports this Operational Plan and recommends it to the Moors for the Future Partnership's Strategic Management Group.**

How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?

3. The successful delivery of our projects contributes to the four directional shifts of the Corporate Strategy and directly input into the indicators of success. We will continue to deliver conservation land management on a landscape scale, contributing to inspiring visitor experiences and connecting people by direct engagement and obtaining and reporting scientific evidence to audiences as appropriate. Project delivery also contributes to the Authority's sustainability objectives.

PDNPA Management Plan contribution – There is an opportunity during this planning period, within the new Management Plan for the National Park, to promote and link the activities of the Partnership into the outcomes of the National Park Management Plan and in so doing form a much stronger Management Plan and a clear delivery role for the Partnership.

The strategic fit of the Operational Plan is relevant to the Peak District National Park Management Plan strategic themes and covers many aspects which will support the delivery of the National Park Management Plan. For the management plan under development it supports all 7 special qualities and for the current management plan specifically:

DL1

- Deliver conservation on a landscape scale through a diverse range of models, in keeping with the Landscape Character Assessment and supporting adaptation to climate change
- Ensure that the conservation of landscape character areas extends beyond the national park boundaries

DL3

- Conserve and enhance geo and bio-diversity by continued action for priority habitats, sites and species within the national park in line with the Biodiversity Action Plan
- Focus on the natural environment, ecosystem services and the part we play in these systems through integrated action and fostering greater understanding.

- Manage river water quality and supply within the National Park
- Respond appropriately and adequately to new animal and plant health risks and invasive species

DL4

- Develop a better understanding of carbon use in the national park

ES1

- Enable more farmers and land managers to access advice and reward payments

WI4

- Work together to minimise damage and disturbance on unsealed routes
- Enhance recreational opportunities and management at key sites through joint partner approaches

Background

4. This Operational Plan is a practical manifestation of the current (2014-2020) Business Plan.

At the time that the 2017/18 Operational Plan (currently in delivery) was approved by this Committee the team intended to complete the suite of revised management tools, with a new future strategy and an annual reporting process to fully celebrate the work the Partnership is delivering. Our first annual review was produced in July 2017.

The work to produce a new strategy will be progressed during 2018/19. An application will be made to HLF Resilient Heritage fund in February 2018 to support this work.

The Resource Management Meeting on 8 January 2018 endorsed this Operational Plan with suggested changes which have been made. Consultation has been undertaken with Senior Leadership team, Chief Finance Officer, Head of Law, Head of Information Management and suggested amendments included in this report.

Proposals

5. The intention (agreed at ARP in January 2013) is to have an on-going Moors for the Future Operational Plan which will be reviewed once a year, bringing the next financial year version to an appropriate Committee. The annual reporting to Committee will follow the programme below with some flexibility to fit around large projects in order for the reporting to encompass work in a meaningful way. Individual reports will continue to be brought to Committee as necessary to gain authority for new initiatives as required, to meet Standing Orders.
6. The reporting structure is:
- **Resource Management Meeting in January** The draft Operational Plan for the following year will be presented for comments.
 - **Moors for the Future Partnership Strategic Management Group in February**
Comment on the draft Operational Plan for the upcoming financial year.
 - **Audit Resources and Performance Committee in March**
Final version of Operational Plan put to Committee for approval; Committee then to recommend the final version (after any changes required by Committee) to Moors for the Future Partnership Strategic Management Group.

- **Moors for the Future Partnership Strategic Management Group in May**
Accept the Operational Plan for the upcoming financial year.

Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?

7. **Financial:** The resources available to produce the Operational Plan each year are those of the existing staff team with welcome advice from senior officers. No additional resources are available.

Financial summaries are included in the Operational Plan in terms of core income and project expenditure. Project expenditure in 2018/19 is likely to be between £6-7m.

The Authority's core contribution to the Partnership in 2018/19 is £93,000. The corporate overhead related to the Moors for the Future Partnership staff will be £283,659 in 2018/19.

The shortage in core funding (aim £320k, projected £222k) is a high priority for the programme team. One of the outputs of the Moor Business Project is a funding strategy. The programme managers will be dedicating 20% of their work programme to business development during 2018/19.

The Partnership has a history of sound financial management, income control (including draw down of funding and claims) are of great importance and overseen by the Programme Office Manager. Regular updates are held with the Chief Finance Officer with monitoring of cash flow to ensure the 'books' are balanced.

8. **Risk Management:**

The 2018/19 Service Risk Register is attached as an appendix. Risks identified in this register are reviewed quarterly and reported within the corporate performance management regime. Risks, Issues and Dependencies of the programme of projects are monitored and reviewed quarterly alongside the Programme Progress Log. Project Managers update their project risk logs weekly and report via the weekly programme status update meetings.

To mitigate the risk associated with the core funding, advocacy work by senior leadership team with the Environment Agency has been identified as a priority.

The risk identified within the project fee element core funding is twofold -

- 1 The Moor Business Project is not funded - therefore £13k for business development time will not be available. We have a high level of confidence that this amount is achievable as the grant application to HLF has been rewritten and
- 2 The programme management element of projects - we anticipate £57k associated with projects and to mitigate the risk of this (certainty until later in the year) we monitor our core expenditure budget very carefully and restrict any expenditure until income is assured.

The Head of Programme Delivery, Moors for the Future Partnership and the programme management team will continue to pay close attention to partner advocacy during the 2018/19 delivery year in order to maximise any available resources. Engaging additional funding partners is an objective which is included in our individual work programmes.

9. **Background papers** (not previously published) – None

Appendices:

1. The Moors for the Future Operational Plan 2018/19
2. Moors for the Future Service Risk Register 2018/19

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

Sharon Davison, Programme Office Manager, Moors for the Future Partnership, 22 February 2018