

**8. MOORS FOR THE FUTURE PARTNERSHIP 2020/21 OPERATIONAL PLAN AND 2020/21 INTERIM BUSINESS PLAN**

**1. Purpose of the report**

This report puts before Committee the eighth Operational Plan from the Moors for the Future Partnership (MFFP). This plan is for the commitments in the financial year 2020/21 and includes a look forward at the expectations of business development during and beyond this time frame. The Operational Plan is an appendix to this report.

Also brought before Committee is the MFFP 2020/21 Interim Business Plan.

**Key Issues**

During the year of this 2020/21 Operational Plan the Moors for the Future Partnership has so far raised and committed funds of £4.8m. The value of projects in the pipeline (all approved, subject to contract) is an additional £848,426. This is supported by £100,000 contribution from this Authority and £129,500 direct core funding from partners, with an anticipated £85,031 (£34,287 secured, £50,744 pipeline) additional core funding from projects.

The Moors for the Future Partnership focus is on highlighting the importance of upland and peatland conservation and the need to continue to restore blanket bog at a landscape scale in the North of England. As the work of the Partnership to date has been influenced by EU funding and regulatory guidance, clarification is now crucial on how the known risks to the environment are to be addressed in terms of both protection and improvements.

It is therefore planned that a 5 Year Business Plan will be developed later in 2020/21 as the direction of travel for environmental policy and subsequent funding should be clearer at that point. In the meantime, through continuing to invest in this partnership and its vital work, the individual partner organisations involved are demonstrating their collective support in rising to the challenges facing the UK and at the same time, inspiring others to join this work to achieve long- term impact.

The Authority's Senior Leadership Team 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 17 years. Over £40m has been secured and invested by the Partnership's team over this period.

These plans set 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 2018-23; outcomes and Key Performance Indicators of the 2019-24 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 the 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, 24 important partners and private landowners. This will give the Authority good engagement opportunities with key 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 few months, increasing the capacity of the Conservation Works Officers, and a Research and Monitoring Officer - which will strengthen our project delivery resource over the period. Our aim is to have sufficient core funding to employ a part time Business Development Officer to directly support our work in engaging new partners; especially core funding partners.

During 2019/20, in addition to managing the delivery of our projects the programme management team (as part of the Moor Business Project), working with partners, developed a new Vision for the Peak District and South Pennines to give direction to the future of the partnership work. We have reviewed our costings methodologies and revised them, also as part of our Moor Business Project. We are developing a succession plan as part of our continuing programme management.

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

We continue to actively manage 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.

### **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."

We will continue to deliver our programme of engagement activities. Working through MoorLIFE 2020 and other projects, we will continue 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 delivering a programme of youth engagement. We are also building on the success of Community Science Project by embedding citizen science across our programme. We will continue to work with the PDNPA volunteer coordinator to strengthen support for existing volunteers and recruit new ones.

### **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".

MFFP will achieve this through the continuing programme of landscape scale restoration delivery in 2020/21. This will include additional restoration through our EU LIFE funded MoorLIFE 2020 project (ML2020). This will be achieved in an extension to the project that has been secured as a result of the excellent cost performance on the project which has achieved all the project KPIs by March 2020. The extension to the project period will allow us to deliver more vital conservation work and achieve project and habitat outcomes far in excess of the original project KPIs.

2020/21 will be the final year of the Defra funded Moor Carbon project which will deliver

significant working during the year to address bare and eroding peat on some of the worst remaining degraded sites, to include those sites devastated by wildfires in recent years. This is vital work, and this project plays an essential role to reversing the damage caused and placing these sites and others onto a positive trajectory towards functioning ecological status.

MFFP's Water Environment Grant (WEG) funded Building Blocks project will also be in full delivery in 2020/21. This project will increase the biodiversity and resilience of degraded blanket bog habitat through hydrological restoration and species diversification. This project has undertaken detailed hydrological modelling to identify priority areas where outcomes can be maximised based on hydrological factors and a suite of linked criteria.

This project will undertake landscape scale gully blocking in 2020/21 and also provide a blue print for prioritising hydrological restoration across the Peak District and South Pennines (in the form of the hydrological modelling data), which will be invaluable for focusing efforts across the Partnership's work on future projects.

Other key projects in capital delivery in 2020/21 include restoration through the Private Lands portfolio completing 6 years of capital works delivering on behalf of landowners through High Level Stewardship. In 2020/21 MFFP will also develop and agree restoration proposals with our water company partners to deliver their peatland and wider habitat restoration objectives between 2020 and 2024 in line with Asset Management Period 7 (AMP7).

As an integral part of all of our conservation work we will continue to work with and engage land managers on the benefits of working with the Upland Management Groups' Land Manager Guidance. As part of this we will seek opportunities to work directly with land managers to facilitate and deliver sustainable land management through our ML2020 project extension, and develop new projects beyond the end of ML2020 to continue this engagement and advocacy work.

### **Research and Monitoring**

Through our third core objective, we will continue to develop our expertise in the sustainable management and restoration of moorlands, monitoring the outcomes of our restoration work, and taking an active lead in research and development in this field of conservation. We will continue to focus on the ecosystem benefits delivered by peatland restoration, such as natural flood management, water quality, biodiversity, and carbon sequestration.

We will continue to monitor our core sites and maintain the monitoring of vegetation and water table depth across the Peak District and South Pennines which will feed into our trajectories of restoration. Supplementing this monitoring work, we will maintain our research and teaching facilitation with academics and students at Universities across the UK, and will continue to support external research projects, working toward becoming a hub for moorland research in the UK.

## **2. Recommendation**

**That the Programmes and Resources Committee supports the Operational Plan and the interim Business Plan recommends it to the Moors for the Future Partnership's Strategic Management Group**

## **How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?**

The strategic fit of both the Operational Plan and the interim Business Plan is relevant to the Peak District National Park Management Plan Vision and covers many aspects which will support the delivery aims of the National Park Management Plan 2018-23 - specifically:

Special quality 1: Beautiful views created by contrasting landscapes and dramatic geology

Special quality 2: Internationally important and locally distinctive wildlife and habitats

Special quality 3: Undeveloped places of tranquillity and dark night skies within reach of millions

Special quality 4: Landscapes that tell a story of thousands of years of people, farming and industry

Special quality 6: An inspiring space for escape, adventure, discovery and quiet reflection

Special quality 7: Vital benefits for millions of people that flow beyond the landscape boundary

Areas of impact:

- 1: Preparing for a future climate
- 2: Ensuring a future for farming and land management
- 3: Managing landscape conservation on a big scale
- 4: A National Park for everyone
- 5: Encouraging enjoyment with understanding
- 6: Supporting thriving and sustainable communities and economy

In addition the Operational Plan will support and contribute significantly to the National Park's Corporate Strategy 2019-24 by contributing towards key outcomes including:

- A Sustainable Landscape that is conserved and enhanced (specifically KPI 3 & 4)
- A National Park loved and supported by diverse audiences and
- Thriving and sustainable communities that are part of this special place.

## **Background Information**

An outcome of the Moor Business Project, (working alongside consultants), is to produce a new Investment Planning Strategy and other relevant business documents. Our third Annual Review document (covering 2018/19) was produced in January 2020.

The Resource Management Meeting on 11 February 2020 endorsed this Operational Plan with suggested changes which have been made. Consultation has been undertaken with Senior Leadership team, Chief Finance Officer, Heads of Services, the Moor Business project consultants - and suggested amendments included in this report.

## **Proposals**

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.

The usual reporting structure is:

- **Resource Management Meeting in December** The draft Operational Plan for the following year will be presented for comments.
- **Programmes and Resources Committee in January**  
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 February**  
Accept the Operational Plan for the upcoming financial year.

(note the Plan was delayed this year due to delays in confirmation of funding for 2020/21)

### 3. **Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?**

#### **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 (pages 14 and 16) in terms of core income and project expenditure. Project expenditure in 2020/21 is currently £4.8m already approved, with a potential £5.6m if the known pipeline projects come to fruition.

The Authority's core contribution to the Partnership in 2020/21 is £100,000. The corporate overhead paid to the Authority related to the Moors for the Future Partnership staff teams will be £307,944 in the same period.

There is a current shortage of £32k in core funding (aim £346k, projected £314k). Business development is the highest priority for the programme team and the £346k includes a part time Business Development role – which we will recruit to as and when funds are available. New, additional funding partners are being sought. We are producing a funding strategy which we will work to, ideally with business development support.

The Partnership has a history of sound financial management, income control (including draw down of funding and claims) is 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.

#### **Risk Management:**

The 2020/21 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 weekly and reviewed quarterly alongside the Programme Progress Log. Our health & safety log is reviewed weekly.

Project Managers update their project logs weekly and report via the weekly programme status update meetings with in-depth updates held monthly.

We produce a Programme Progress Log four times a year which identifies approvals and financial values of projects - with issues identified through a Red/Amber/Green assessment - and includes brief summaries of progress highlights. Income and Expenditure of the programme team are also monitored by the Partnership's Strategic Management Group at its quarterly meetings.

To mitigate the issue associated with the core funding, assistance from Senior Leadership Team in terms of advocacy work with senior personnel from partners, or potential partners, is requested.

There is a level of uncertainty identified within the project fee element of core funding which will not be clarified until part way through the year. We anticipate c.£85k associated with projects (contracted £34k, pipeline £51k) and to mitigate this risk 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 2020/21 delivery year in order to maximise any available resources. Engaging additional funding partners is an objective which is included in our individual work programmes.

### **Sustainability:**

From a business sustainability perspective, the documents associated with this report provide a strategic steer through a period of transition over the next 12 months. Undertaking additional projects for our partners, building on work which is already being done, is a key part of our business model and has allowed immense improvements to the landscape and conservation of the Dark Peak and beyond. Creating synergies between projects is a key component of the sustainability of the Moors for the Future programme.

Protection of the peatlands of our core work area is a key part of protecting land based carbon, which internationally has the potential to have a huge impact on climate change. In addition, the ecosystem service benefits of our blanket peat work is well known, reducing the risk of flooding, improving water quality and improving the landscape, so highly valued for recreation.

The revegetation and conservation of peatlands is a vital role in reducing erosion, enhancing the quality of the landscape and transforming a source of carbon into a carbon sink. Our work, to date, has avoided the loss of 62,000 tonnes per annum of CO<sup>2</sup>.

In addition, the moorland fires and drought conditions have shown how the upland landscape needs to be in the best ecological condition to withstand the shocks and stresses of a changing climate in order to deliver positive benefits for the downhill, downstream and downwind communities in places such as Manchester.

By revegetating the areas of damaged blanket bogs, we aim to:

- halt the erosion of peat from the moors
- reduce the loss of carbon
- increase the amount of carbon absorption

- turn the damaged carbon sources back into carbon sinks

**4. Equality**

There are no equality issues arising from this report.

**5. Background papers (not previously published)**

None

**6. Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Moors for the Future Partnership Operational Plan 2020-21

Appendix 2 - MFFP Service Risk Register 2020-21

Appendix 3 - Moore for the Future Partnership Interim Business Plan 2020-21

**Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date**

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