

11. GREAT NORTH BOG SUPPORT PROJECT 2020 - 2025

1. Purpose of the report

This report puts before Committee the proposal to accept funds, initially from Defra and Environment Agency, to enter into agreements with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trusts and the North Pennines AONB to deliver the first phase of activities in the setting up and supporting the Great North Bog (GNB) initiative. It also makes arrangement for a further phase beyond 2020/21 should that opportunity arise.

Key Issues

- **Moors for the Future Partnership (MFFP), through the Peak District National Park Authority and its partners have, for over 17 years, led and delivered landscape-scale peatland restoration on the most degraded upland landscape in Europe. The Partnership has been successful in attracting a large amount of investment (circa £40m) into the landscape from a variety of sources, and through its expertise and collaborative approach has brought about a landscape-scale change in the condition of the region’s peatlands.**
- **In July 2019 the HoPD worked up a new initiative to try and encourage a closer and less competitive working arrangement between the three big Northern partnerships, which for the past two decades, have been carrying out significant restoration work. Initially, this was in order to have a better working relationship for bidding into Defra’s new Nature for Climate fund and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The initial idea was developed by the three senior officers of The Moors for the Future Partnership, Yorkshire Peat Partnership and the North Pennines AONB Partnership. This is now been taken forward by the CEO’s of the parent organisations of these partnerships. A request was made to Defra for support funding in November 2019. This was originally within the Moors for the Future Partnership’s Moor Carbon project. It has taken until now for Defra (through many questions and iterations) to agree to funding some support costs. The Environment Agency has also now made funding available for some of the initial mapping and data analysis. The support work fits mainly within the Moor Carbon and working with MoorLIFE 2020 partners authority, already granted by committee (ARP Minute Refs 05/17 and 50/18). It is now however, moving towards becoming a separate project needing its own authority.**
- **The state of peatlands across the North of England require more investment, with the most pressing need at the southern end of the Pennine chain in the Peak District.**
- **Even with acknowledgement of the significant achievements of the Partnership, it is vital to recognise that there remains a need for further investment into the landscape in order to bring the peatland habitats into favourable condition (Active Blanket Bog). Works completed to date have put peatland on a positive trajectory towards this aspiration. However, evidence shows that without further intervention this impressive feat is only temporary and there is a real danger that it will revert to its previous state. Further work is now urgently needed to build on the achievements made thus far.**

- **Collaborating on a bigger national story of upland peat across the North of England will create a better fit into national policy such as the 25 Year Environment Plan, the new England Peat Strategy and the new Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy. It will enable a better placement of bids into the Nature for Climate Fund and future strategic lottery bids.**

2. Recommendations(s)

That the Authority supports the proposed delegated function for fundraising and spending to support the setting up of the Great North Bog Initiative.

Specifically:

- 1. That the Authority supports the delegated function for the Head of Programme Delivery to accept funds from the Environment Agency and Defra to a maximum of £400,000 in FY 2020/21 in consultation with Director of Conservation and Planning, Head of Finance and Head of Legal services for the support costs of the Great North Bog Initiative.**
- 2. That the Authority supports the delegated function for the Head of Programme delivery to fundraise and accept funds to a maximum of £1.2M in FY 2021/22 to 2025 in consultation with Director of Conservation and Planning, Head of Finance and Head of Legal services for the support costs of the Great North Bog Initiative.**
- 3. That the Authority supports delegated function for the Head of Programme Delivery in consultation with Director of Conservation and Planning, Head of Finance and Head of Legal services to enter into arrangements with the other two Partnership leads, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and North Pennines AONB (Durham County Council).**
- 4. That the Authority may, subject to compliance with its procurement standing orders, enter into contracts for the delivery of the project.**

How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?

The strategic fit of the Great North Bog is fully integrated within the MFFP 20/21 Operational and the MFFP interim Business Plan 2020-2021. It is relevant to the Peak District National Park Management Plan delivery aims mainly through giving the MFFP a greater ability to leverage funds, specifically to support :

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; for many years the value of ecosystem services benefits has been well known. One of the difficulties in fully capturing this benefit has been the need to work on a genuine landscape scale - which the GNB does. It will also create greater collaboration between the major partners in this field whilst maintaining the Authority as an innovative leader.

The GNB also has strong connections with other North of England initiatives such as the Northern Powerhouse and the Northern Forest.

Background Information

Background – The wider background in which this initiative is set.

Peatlands, Climate Change & the 25 Year Environment Plan

It is widely recognised that healthy peatlands are vital in helping tackle the climate and biodiversity crises.

Peatlands are the UK's rainforests, storing vast amounts of carbon. Restoring them will also reduce carbon emissions released by damaged peat and enable it to sequester more in the future.

A healthy peatland slows the flow of water from the hills, reducing the risk of flooding and the impact of storm water, directly benefitting towns and major cities downstream.

The Great North Bog provides drinking water to 15 million properties in the area. Eroding peatlands discolour water, increasing the cost of water treatment. Restoration reduces the costs of providing safe drinking water.

Healthy peatlands support a wide range of wildlife. Restoration will help to reverse the trend of decline in upland species, such as curlew and golden plover (identified in the State of Nature 2019 report). Healthy peatlands are resilient and ecologically diverse habitats that provide benefits for people and nature. Restoring the Great North Bog will increase local contractors' skills and capacity, benefitting rural economies.

The peatland restoration programmes of northern England have developed a vision to match the scale of this ecological challenge.

The Great North Bog is an ambitious, grand-scale peatland restoration initiative being developed by the North Pennines AONB Partnership, the Yorkshire Peat Partnership and the Moors for the Future Partnership. It is a landscape approach to restoration across nearly 7,000 square kilometres of upland peat in the Protected Landscapes of northern England, which currently store 400 million tonnes of carbon. Damaged peat in the Great North Bog releases 3.7 million tonnes of carbon annually. The programme aims to develop a working partnership to deliver a 20-year funding, restoration and conservation

plan to make a significant contribution to the UK's climate and carbon sequestration targets.

In the last two decades, the three leading peatland programmes have restored about 1100km² (YPP – 323km², NPAONB – 350km², MFFP – 454km²). This is a great start but despite this massive effort it is still less than 20% of the total area and, with a climate and biodiversity emergency, now is the time to pool our skills to make a revolutionary change in the rate of restoration of England's upland peatlands.

To restore the remaining damaged peatlands in the Great North Bog, the partners are seeking blended investment from both public and private sector sources of approximately £200 million over 20 years. Once restored, the Great North Bog will safeguard the increased carbon it stores and will avoid annual carbon losses estimated at 3.7 million tonnes per year. The restoration of the Great North Bog will leave a living, national legacy of a functioning ecosystem providing vital services for future generations.

Proposals

Proposals

The three existing partnerships across the North of England already have a significant ability to deliver at a large scale and pace. The Great North Bog will not seek to substitute this but will seek to resolve some of the barriers so increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the present delivery.

In the initial phase 2020/21 it will employ staff to undertake;

- The project management of the initial phase of setup work.
- Business development and business planning to establish a better and more sustainable funding support for all three of the existing partnerships
- Better data and mapping resource in order to tell the story more effectively and to maximise the effectiveness of the present evidence.
- Better understanding of the Natural capital and how this could be utilised to supply more sustainable funding streams

In the following phase 2021 to 2025 we believe there will be further funds forthcoming to develop business and joint working on a variety of project items.

Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?

Financial:

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.

It was anticipated that the original value of the funding was in the region of £171,483.89 from DEFRA, plus an additional £50k (£221,483 total) from the EA. This was on the basis of the Defra funding being over a 12 month period leading to April 2021. An outline costing is given below. The final figure from Defra is still being negotiated; the figure below may reduce or may stay the same with more staff being employed. It is difficult to estimate in this volatile period hence the HoPD request for a 400k ceiling which will only be utilised if capacity allows.

It is anticipated any further funding to 2025 would include funding from the Nature for Climate Fund and may be able to take advantage of other funding streams. This is difficult to estimate and to ensure a sensible working headroom, the HoPD is suggesting a £1.2m figure is used for this period. Again this would be assessed against capacity to deliver.

Task	Estimated Time	Estimated Costs @12 months £
MFFP: Project Director: Programme Managers Strategic, technical, and line management time.	15 days/yr (5 days for each PD from GNBSP)	5,542
MFFP: Project Manager Drive the project forwards.	Full time	56,791
YPP: Project Officer Research and Development activities, including ecosystem services metrics review and peatland resource mapping.	Full time	53,576
YPP: Communications Officer: Stakeholder engagement and develop Communications Plan and GNB launch.	0.6FTE	21,500
NP AONB: Business Development Officer Develop funding strategy for Phase 2.	0.6FTE	34,075
Workshops / meetings / travel / Presentations / Comms material.	Much of this now not possible due to Covid19	
EA funding for external research assistance / consultancy support / software licences Mapping/ ecosystem services matrix mapping.	Serviced by the staff above, this will be the supply budget for the practical requirements and may also include contracted services	50,000
Original total over 12 months		£221,484

Risk Management:

The MFFP staff team 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 projects and programme team are also monitored by the Partnership's Operational Management Group at its quarterly meetings.

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.

The application for funding proposed within this report is within the expertise of MFFP. As such the risk of the work not delivering the required results, is considered to be low.

As part of this recommendation, the MFFP Programme Management team has undertaken an impact assessment of the resource requirements of delivering this project. This has been in consultation with the MFFP teams and Head of Programme Delivery. The continuation of adequate capacity in light of ongoing commitments on other projects will remain the responsibility of the MFFP Programme Managers.

Elements of the project will be delivered by The Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and the North Pennines AONB acting as delivery partners through partnership agreements. This is currently being explored with the Legal Service along the lines of previous similar delivery arrangements with partners.

Sustainability:

From a business sustainability perspective, this project will help keep both MFFP and the Authority in a leadership position with an opportunity to develop new sources of project funding and income.

This proposal fits within the context of the Moors for the Future Partnership interim Business Plan 2020-2021. Undertaking additional projects for our partners, building on current work, 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, is avoiding the loss of circa 62,000 tonnes loss per annum of CO₂.

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

Equality:

3. There are no equality issues arising from this report.

4. **Climate Change**

1. How does this decision contribute to the Authority's role in climate change set out in the UK Government Vision and Circular for National Parks?

Whilst the context of this matter is much wider than the boundary of the Peak District National Park, the benefits from the GNB initiative are likely to be more productive to the southern end of the Pennine Chain. This is largely due to the much higher degree of benefit to climate change when dealing with the most degraded rather than slightly degraded land and due to the much larger population, which surrounds the southern end of this landscape.

The potential for reduction in carbon emissions in degraded peat is higher in the Peak District National Park as the peat is more degraded and vulnerable to damage due to the much larger population, which surrounds the southern end of this landscape.

- a. Educators in climate change

- The Blanket bog landscape of England is still very much out of sight and out of mind to the majority of the public. The issue needs to be told in a bigger story in order to capture more of the public imagination and drive behaviour change, particularly around fire prevention and litter prevention. Being part of a bigger story across the North of England does just this and is likely to be more successful at individual behaviour change.

- b. Exemplars of sustainability

- This is exactly what this initiative will do. It will make a step change happen in adapting 7,000 square kilometres of upland peat landscape, 92% of the upland peat in England, into a more resilient landscape with an increasing quality of ecosystem services delivery.

- c. Protecting the National Park

- See above point

- d. Leading the way in sustainable land management

- This will set the most degraded of England's upland peat in the priority context across the whole upland peat landscape

- e. Exemplars in renewable energy

- This is not a renewable energy solution but it does have a relationship with energy in that it will, in time if restored, provide a continual means of sequestering carbon produced by the creation and use of energy.

- f. Working with communities

- There are future opportunities for individuals to balance their own negative effect on the environment through the practical help in volunteering and through contributing funds.

2. How does this decision contribute to the Authority meeting its carbon net zero target? (Not applicable)

3. How does this decision contribute to the National Park meeting carbon net zero by 2050?

A rough calculation has been made that the poor condition of the upland Peat of the North of England is losing 3.7m tonnes of carbon a year, a bigger share of this loss is in the southern reaches of the Pennine chain. One of the objectives of the initial project actions for which approval by committee is sought is to develop and refine this data.

4. Are there any other Climate Change related issues that are relevant to this decision that should be brought to the attention of Members?

Preventing the loss of carbon from the upland peat of the North of England and bringing this into an active condition is the biggest and easiest way of preventing terrestrial carbon loss nationally.

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

None

6. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Great North Bog Map and Vision summary

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

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