

6. **DEFRA GREEN RECOVERY CHALLENGE FUND FOR ENGLAND - GREAT NORTH BOG PROPOSAL (CD)**

**THE DEEP PEAT PROJECT**

1. **Purpose of the report**

This report puts before Committee the proposal to accept funds from the Green Recovery Fund. An expression of interest has been submitted to the fund, for a project to establish peat depth / value assessment across the 7,000sq km Great North Bog Area. This is expected to employ 18 people directly for 16 Months. It will provide conclusive data on the amount of Upland peat across the North of England, the carbon it contains, its age and the plant material, which has formed it. This will provide / retain jobs and will provide the currently missing baseline of value the landscape contains. This will evidence future natural capital income proposals with our surrounding industry.

**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.**
- **We are lacking a solid baseline of value for the upland peat across the North of England which is required if we are to encourage large business to engage with future funding. This project will go some way to providing that.**
- **There are posts at risk in this authority and across our partners, this will provide short term employment for people with hill skills which may ease that difficult situation.**
- **The Defra Green Recovery Challenge Fund for England has been released, administered through the National Lottery Heritage fund. This is open to Partnership bids which must be led by one organisation and must include at least one environmental charity. Other not-for-profit organisations (e.g.: Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, National Parks, local authorities, non-environmental charities, universities) could lead a partnership and may receive grant funding. However, a substantial proportion of the project funding must be used by one or more environmental charities to deliver the project on the ground. This proposal meets these requirements.**
- **In August 2020 Authority approved an externally funded support project to set up The Great North Bog. This included the statement *“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.”* This is the first of those expected items.**
- **Even with acknowledgement of the significant past achievements, 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), particularly at the southern end of the Pennine chain, in the Peak District. 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.

- It is proposed that the Authority through the Moors for the Future Staff team will provide the lead partner and will deliver the project outcomes over the MFFP working area. Agreements will then be entered into with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and North Pennines AONB who will deliver the outcomes to the North. 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 to accept (if the bid is successful) Funds from The Green Recovery Fund (National Lottery Heritage Fund) and enter into delivery arrangements with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and North Pennines AONB for the delivery of the project.

Specifically:

1. That the Authority supports the delegated function for the Head of Programme Delivery to accept funds from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and other funders should the opportunity arise, to a maximum of £3 million, in consultation with Director of Conservation and Planning, Head of Finance and Head of Law for the delivery of the Deep Peat Project.
2. 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 Law to enter into arrangements with the other two Partnership leads, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and North Pennines AONB (Durham County Council), and, if necessary, tendered contracts to deliver works.

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

The strategic fit of Deep Peat 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 evidence and lever 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 and collect evidence on this scale - which this project will. It will also create greater collaboration between the major partners in this field whilst maintaining the Authority as an innovative leader.

This project will also provide evidence to improve connections with other North of England initiatives such as the Northern Powerhouse and the Northern Forest.

## **Background Information**

**It is widely recognised that healthy peatlands are vital in helping tackle the climate and biodiversity crises. There is missing information to help assess that state of health. This project will help provide that information, this will help with all the following points:**

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, understanding this requires the evidence which this project will provide.

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, and the evidence this project will help support that.

Background to the Great North Bog in which this project proposal is set. This is an ambitious 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 1100km<sup>2</sup> (YPP – 323km<sup>2</sup>, NPAONB – 350km<sup>2</sup>, MFFP – 454km<sup>2</sup>). 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.

This proposal here will be a major foundation of evidence to achieve this.

## **Proposals**

The three existing partnerships across the North of England already have a significant ability to deliver at a large scale and pace. This project would establish 3 small survey teams. One based in the North Pennines and Northumberland National Park employed and managed through the North Pennines AONB Partnership. One based across Bowland the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors employed and managed through the Yorkshire Peat Partnership and one based across the West Pennine and South Pennine moors and the Dark Peak employed and managed through the Moors for the Future Partnership.

### **Over the project delivery timeframe these three small teams will;**

- Establish the peat depth of the whole 7,000 Km of upland Peat across the great North Bog area.
- Carry out Mass Density analysis and so establish the carbon stored across the whole of this landscape.
- Carry out analysis of the original plant content which has formed the peat to help indicate its restoration plant assemblage.
- Carry out a date assessment and if possible historical climate information
- Provide employment and science / project management career experience to at least 18 individuals.

- Provide progress on all the relevant KPI's of those three sponsoring organisations
- Provide an external corporate overhead to support core functions.

### 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 is anticipated that this project will have a value (dependant on bidding negotiations) of a little under £2m with the project time running across 2020/21 and 2021/22 financial years. Probable start 1 December, finish 31 March 2022. Full information on start and completion times will be available when the scheme is fully detailed.

The present costings are based on PDNPA pay scales as a guide. This may be slightly different across each of the three sponsoring partners. The National Lottery Heritage Fund has previously advised that it will not cover corporate overhead costs of organisations such as National Park Authorities, so officers are looking at ways in which this can be covered. However, the 6 proposed staff employed through the MFFP would bring into the Authority an externally-funded corporate overhead of £51,264.

Members will note the draft estimation of costs supporting the bid is less than the £3m ceiling of approval being requested. Experience has shown that these projects often have opportunities to attract further funds. As such, some headroom is being proposed.

<b>Task</b>	<b>Estimated Time spent over 16 month period</b>	<b>Estimated Costs @16 months £</b>
<b>Programme Managers</b> Strategic, technical, and line management time. For each of the 3 Partnership leads.	45 days (15 days for each PD)	<b>£16,626.00</b>
<b>3 Project Managers</b> Three posts across each of the partnership areas. Recruit and line manage the team. Drive the project forwards. Deal with land access and organising volunteer support.	Full time for 16 months (@ PA unit cost including all on costs of £56,791)	1 post £75,721.28 so <b>£227,163.84</b>
<b>15 Project Officers</b> 5 officers in each partnership area. Carry out field work. Process and record field work. Supervise volunteers.	Full time for 16 months (@ PA unit cost including all on costs of £53,576)	1 post £71,434.56 so <b>£1,071,518.40</b>
<b>Transport and accommodation costs</b>		<b>£100,000.00</b>
<b>Communications activities:</b> Produce public facing results and information material. Stakeholder engagement.		<b>£100,000.00</b>
<b>Specialist site Equipment &amp; PPE</b>		<b>£18,000.00</b>

<b>Specialist Equipment and Science support</b> Particularly to assess standards compliance and more technical support such as mass density analysis	£300,000	<b>£300,000.00</b>
<b>Volunteer &amp; casual support costs</b> T&S and training costs for casuals / volunteers and training people acting as buddy support for project officers		<b>£150,000.00</b>
<b>Draft Total over 16 months</b>		<b>£1,983,308.24</b>

### **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 a potential area of risk which is currently being explored with the Legal Service along the lines of previous similar delivery arrangements with partners.

### **Sustainability:**

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 CO<sub>2</sub>. This project will allow a better understanding of the importance of that avoided loss.

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. Understanding the value of the peat body will illuminate the true threat of those shocks and stresses.

### **Equality:**

There are no equality issues arising from this report.

### **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. This project will better quantify that value.

#### 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 fully valuing 7,000 square kilometres of upland peat landscape, 92% of the upland peat in England showing its increasing importance to 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 value the resource that, in time if restored, will 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. The objective of this project, 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. This project will help value that existing carbon store.
- 3. Background papers (not previously published)**
- None
- 4. Appendices**
- Appendix 1 - Great North Bog Plan

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

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