

7. MOORS FOR THE FUTURE PARTNERSHIP 2021/22 OPERATIONAL PLAN (CD)

1. Purpose of the report

This report puts before Committee the ninth Operational Plan from the Moors for the Future Partnership (MFFP). This plan is for the commitments in the financial year 2021/22 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, along with the associated Service Risk Register.

This report also puts before committee the 2021/22 Interim Business plan again as a one year plan, due to the continuing volatility across the funding landscape which makes it difficult to plan beyond the coming year, with the exception of some longer projects. The Interim Business Plan is a second appendix to this report, along with the associated MFFP Programme Tracker.

Key Issues

It is important to note that this report is not seeking any approval for the projects items contained within the Operational Plan. They have either already been through the appropriate process or (for those in the pipeline) will be subject to standing orders as they develop.

It is seeking approval for the Interim Business plan which is a refreshed version of the previous plan with the Programme finances being now managed through the MFFP Programme Tracker.

During the year of this 2021/22 Operational Plan the Moors for the Future Partnership has so far raised and committed funds of £2.9m. The value of projects in the pipeline (all approved, subject to contract) is an additional £1.7m. This is supported by £100,000 contribution from this Authority and £55,000 direct core funding from partners, with an anticipated £92,820 (£69,820 secured, £23,000 pipeline) additional core funding from projects.

The Authority's Management 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 18 years. Over £40m 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 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 this annual Operational Plan and an active Business 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

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, 2020 has been a significantly challenging year, but against this backdrop, the team has continued work tirelessly on delivering projects, whilst continuing to operate in a Covid-safe manner.

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

Recruitment has been undertaken in the last few months, seconding one of our Project Managers for 12 months in to the Programme Officer Manager role and securing a replacement Project Manager - which will strengthen our project delivery resource over the period.

During 2020/21, in addition to managing the delivery of our projects, the programme management team, working with partners, have formed our new Strategic Management Board (a deliverable of our Moor Business Project).

We will continue to develop relationships with new partners and will use the methods agreed in the Partnership's revised Interim Business Plan 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.

The new Strategic Management Board is going through its setting up process and will enable the Partnership to operate at a more strategic level with the individual project boards picking up the operational issues.

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 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 2021/22. This will include additional restoration through our EU LIFE funded MoorLIFE 2020 project (ML2020). 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.

MFFP's Water Environment Grant (WEG) funded Building Blocks project will continue delivery into 2021/22. 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 continue to undertake landscape scale gully blocking in 2021/22 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. The Natural Flood Opportunity Mapping project, funded through the Environment Agency East Midlands Team, will make use of and build on this data, in order to complete a GIS analysis to identify areas for future NFM projects.

Other key projects in capital delivery in 2021/22 include restoration through the Private Lands portfolio completing 7 years of capital works delivering on behalf of landowners through High Level Stewardship. In 2021/22 under the Moor Water project, MFFP has worked with our water company partners to secure capital works delivery, communications and research and monitoring activities in line with their Asset Management Period 7 (AMP7). Agreements are in place to deliver Severn Trent's and Yorkshire Water's peatland and wider habitat restoration objectives 2020 – 2024.

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 research 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 2021/22 and recommends it to the Moors for the Future Partnership's Strategic Management Board and Operational Management Group

That the Programmes and Resources Committee approves the Moors for the Future Partnership Interim 2021/22 business plan

How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?

The strategic fit of the Operational 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.

Other policy contributions of the Operational and Business planning of the Moors for the Future Partnership

- This contributes to the Nature Recovery agenda across protected areas and generally across government. (It may in future be of benefit to change our language from that of restoration to that of Nature Recovery.)
- It will provide opportunities for investment in conservation and habitats from future net gain requirements from construction and development.
- It will deliver on the National Parks England plan for Wildlife
- In addition, it will deliver on the often-overlooked need to conserve cultural heritage assets in the upland peat landscape, preventing erosion of this fragile record preserved in peat deposits.

Background Information

The MFFP Operational Plan 2021/22 will be presented to the Programmes and Resources Committee on 30 April 2021. Following consultation with the PDNPA Resource Management Team.

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

(note the Plan was delayed this year due to delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic)

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

Financial:

The resources available to produce the Operational Plan and carry out the required business development planning 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 2021/22 is currently £2.9m already approved, with a potential £4.7m if the known pipeline projects come to fruition.

Core Funding 2021/22

The Authority's core contribution to the Partnership in 2021/22 is £100,000. Through the recent re-organisation Members agreed to remove this contribution over the next two years. A stepped approach to this reduction and a review of scale of this reduction will be introduced in a planned way during this year. The corporate overhead paid to the Authority related to the Moors for the Future Partnership staff teams will be £281,032 in the 2021/22 Financial year.

MFFP basic establishment costs are c.£303,000 - to support the current core team of 5 permanent staff with additional technical, and administration staff assistance (approximately 0.5 wte) where required. This amount includes a small amount for costs not directly funded by projects (e.g. business development, partnership visits, and advocacy). Currently (as of March 2021), we are £55,180 away from balancing our core funding for 2021/22. This is in common with the start of previous financial years. 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. We monitor core funding monthly and will report quarterly to the CFO through the MFFP Programme Tracker (Appendix 4).

The risk of MFFP core team not securing enough funding to cover its core costs has been included on the Corporate Risk Register (Item 11) in 2021/22. Mitigation measures for this risk include partial funding of the core team, securing core contributions via projects where ever possible and reduction in hours / redundancy of the core team. As the Moors for the Future Partnership has no legal standing in its own right, the PDNPA is legally

responsible for all contracts currently in delivery through the partnership, including staff contracts.

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. In addition, the Programme Office Manager has been working with the Chief Finance Officer to produce a Programme Tracker 2020-25 (Appendix 4). The aim of which is to give the Authority visibility of all MFFP's projects which are in delivery and in the pipeline.

Risk Management:

The 2021/22 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 Board at its quarterly meetings.

To mitigate the issue associated with the core funding, assistance from Management 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.£93k associated with projects (contracted £70k, pipeline £23k) and to mitigate this risk we monitor our core expenditure budget very carefully and restrict any expenditure until income is assured.

The Head of Moors for the Future Partnership and the programme management team will continue to pay close attention to partner advocacy during the 2021/22 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, this proposal fits within the context of the Moors for the Future Partnership Business Plan which is also included in this item. 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 approximately 62,000 tonnes per annum of CO².

In addition, 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 sequestration
- 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 2021-22

Appendix 2 - MFFP Service Risk Register 2021-22

Appendix 3 - Moors for the Future Business plan 2021-22

Appendix 4 - Moors for the future current copy of the Programme Tracker (business plan monitoring tool)

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

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