

6. **MOORS FOR THE FUTURE PARTNERSHIP – MOORLIFE 2020 PROJECT (SLD / KM / CD)**

1. **Purpose of the report**

At the time of submitting this report there has been no response from the Commission to indicate if the bid has been successful or not. This report and the MoorLIFE 2020 business plan (Appendix 1) are written in the context of a successful outcome. If successful, authority from Committee will be required to proceed and the purpose of this report is to request authority to proceed in anticipation of a successful outcome. If between now and the meeting the Commission turn down the bid we will remove the report from the agenda.

2. Following an 18-month bidding operation the European Commission LIFE Nature programme have accepted a bid and its revisions and have made a grant offer for the MoorLIFE 2020 project (ML2020). This offer is made to the Co-ordinating Beneficiary which is the role given to the Authority within the bid. The offer is for 16,046,116 Euros (£12.78m).

Key issues

The work concentrates on the conservation and protection of active blanket bog across the South Pennine Moors Special Area of Conservation (SAC). SACs form a significant part of European Natura 2000 sites, which are the priority areas for the LIFE Nature grants.

The bid has been undertaken by a small bidding team funded by this Authority, the utility companies, Natural England and the Environment Agency; (the Authority contributed £10k).

The SAC covers all the moorlands of the Dark Peak and South Pennines, some 650 km², which is widely accepted as the most degraded upland area across Europe. The majority of the ML2020 works take place within the National Park and the project will run for five years.

Severn Trent Water, Yorkshire Water and United Utilities are Co-financers of the project; each are contributing a little over £1m. The Authority is contributing £25k (agreed by RMT) and the other Associated Beneficiaries as set out below are making contributions based on the funds they will receive.

The implementation of this project will bring significant investment into the moorland landscape of the Peak District and South Pennines. It will be implemented by the Moors for the Future Partnership team and will include the RSPB, National Trust and Pennine Prospects as Associated Beneficiaries who will also be responsible for delivering aspects of the work.

The Moors for the Future Partnership has delivered approximately £22m. of work since its inception. The team are presently delivering the closing stages of the present LIFE project (MoorLIFE) which is viewed as a well set up and well managed project by the Commission. MoorLIFE 2020 will be the largest grant ever given to a UK conservation project by the LIFE Programme.

The team have reviewed the project and programme management process and are continually improving this to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of delivering projects.

The attached ML2020 Business Plan shows how the finances and business risks will be managed in delivering the project.

3. **Recommendations**

1. **That the Audit Resources and Performance Committee supports the MoorLIFE 2020 Business Plan and accepts the grant from the Commission.**
2. **That the contracting details with the Commission, the Co-financers and the Associated Beneficiaries will be signed by the CEO in consultation with the Moors for the Future Partnership Manager, the Chief Finance Officer and the Head of Law.**
3. **That the Authority may, subject to compliance with its procurement standing orders, enter into contracts for the delivery of the business plan.**

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

The conservation and enhancement of biodiversity and the landscape, the contribution to the Authority's climate change obligations and enhancement of ecosystem services will all benefit from this project. AS such, the strategic fit of ML2020 is relevant to the present Peak District National Park Management Plan strategic themes which will support the delivery of the National Park Management Plan. It also fits with the longer term vision for the Peak District National Park and the Authority's new corporate plan.

In particular the project will contribute to the following items in the present Management plan:

Action DL1.2 – Deliver conservation on a landscape scale through a diverse range of models, in keeping with Landscape Character Assessment and supporting adaptation to climate change.

Action DL1.3 – Ensure that the conservation and enhancement of landscape character areas extends beyond the national park boundaries.

Action DL3.1 - Conserve and enhance biodiversity by continued action for priority habitats, sites and species within the national park in line with the Biodiversity Action Plan.

Action DL 3.4 - Focus on the natural environment, ecosystem services and the part we play in these systems, through integrated action and fostering greater understanding.

Action DL 3.5 – Manage river water quality and supply within the national park.

Action DL 4.2.1 - Protect and enhance the storage of carbon through blanket bog stabilisation and restoration.

Action DL4.2.2 – Research and demonstrate the role of peat/soil in water storage and water flow risk management, and carbon storage and management within the national park.

5. **Background**

Building on the success of MoorLIFE the Moors for the Future Partnership team have identified a further opportunity and have made a second application to the European Commission's LIFE Nature Programme. MoorLIFE 2020 builds on the existing Moors for the Future Partnership and its successful track record for delivery. It will deliver works across the SAC to protect active blanket bog including engagement initiatives to

encourage best management practice and raise the public awareness about critical issues, especially the danger of fires.

Project Description

The aim of this project is to conserve and protect the EU priority habitat Active Blanket Bog within the South Pennine Moors Special Area for Conservation (SAC) and the ecosystem services it provides. Project objectives address the priority threats to active blanket bog identified for this SAC in the 'Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 Sites' project. Prioritising works within Water Safeguard Zones, MoorLIFE 2020 will:

- 1. Protect the integrity of approximately 9,500ha of active blanket bog (through the implementation of best practice and development of techniques).**
- 2. Increase the resilience of 8,500ha of active blanket bog habitat.**
- 3. Safeguard Active Blanket Bog through: promotion of land management appropriate to its protection; responsible enjoyment; and reducing the threat of wildfire.**

The project consists of the following partners:

Peak District National Park Authority – Co-ordinating Beneficiary

United Utilities – Co Financer

Severn Trent Water – Co Financer

Yorkshire Water – Co Financer

National Trust (Marsden Moor Estate and High Peak Estate) – Associated Beneficiary

RSPB (Dovestones Estate) – Associated Beneficiary

Pennine Prospects – Associated Beneficiary

The programme of work and contractual arrangements with the project partners will be formally documented prior to the Authority accepting the grant offer from the Commission.

6. Proposals

The proposal here is for the Authority to accept the grant from the Commission for MoorLIFE 2020 in consideration of the information provided in the attached business plan. As such the following actions are proposed:

1. Confirm and complete contractual arrangements with the project partners and in doing so ensure that all the costs of running the project which sit outside the delivery budget are covered (our experience of running the previous LIFE project tells us that there is likely to be a supervisory and administrative function required of the Programme Team. We will not be able to resource this from the project budget and may require the partners to commit to fund this separately).
2. Conform and complete contractual arrangements with the Commission.
3. Set up the governance mechanism.
4. Set up the supporting infrastructure.
5. Recruit the team and start up.

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

The execution of LIFE projects is very tightly monitored and managed through processes which the Commission set down. This and the significant experience of the team in running previous large projects, governed by Standing Orders, gives a confident background to the management of this project. There are Corporate, Partnership and delivery risks associated with this large project and these are mitigated within the attached Business Plan.

The Chief Finance Officer will give instructions to the Moors for the Future team as to how these financial risks will be managed, in particular with reference to the exchange rate risks outlined in the Business Plan.

8. **Financial**

The financial management of the project places cash flow and currency demands on the Authority which are detailed in the business plan.

9. **Appendices**

Appendix 1: The MoorLIFE 2020 Business Plan – 2015 - 2021

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

Christopher Dean, Partnership Manager, Moors for the Future Partnership, 9 July 2015