

8. GREAT NORTH BOG SUPPORT PROJECT 2022 – 2030 (CD)

1. Purpose of the report

This report puts before Committee a proposal to increase the previous ceiling (agreed by Authority on the 4 September 2020) for this Area of work. The previous approval to accept funds and enter into agreements to deliver the first phase of activities in the setting up and supporting the Great North Bog (GNB) was successful. What we know is on offer now and is likely to grow, now requires a longer approval period and higher financial ceiling to allow this area of work to continue.

Key Issues

- **Moors for the Future Partnership (MFFP), through the Peak District National Park Authority and its partners have, for over 19 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 £50m) 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 Head of Moors for the Future Partnership 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 has now been taken forward by the six partnerships involved in the restoration of the upland peat landscape across the North of England. This amounts to 7,000 sq km including five national parks and three AONB's making up 92% of England's upland peat landscape.**
- **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, with the most pressing need at the southern end of the Pennine chain across the Moors for the Future Partnership's working area.**
- **Collaborating on a bigger national story of upland peat across the North of England is creating a better fit into national policy such as the 25 Year Environment Plan, the new England Peat Action Plan 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 Moors for the Future Partnership to bid for funds and accept funds to a maximum of £3 million in consultation with Head of Finance and Head of Legal services for the support and delivery costs of the Great North Bog Initiative.**
- 2. That the Authority supports this delegated function for a period leading up to 31.03.2030 in consultation with Head of Finance and Head of Legal services for the delivery and support costs of the Great North Bog Initiative.**
- 3. That the Authority supports delegated function for the Head of Moors for the Future Partnership in consultation with Head of Finance and Head of Legal services. To enter into arrangements with the legal entities of the other five Peat Restoration partnerships (Yorkshire Peat Partnership, North Pennines AONB Partnership, Northumberland Peat Partnership, Cumbria Peat Partnership and the Lancashire Peatland Initiative). For both accepting funding and deliverables raised by one of the other Partnerships and for transferring funding and deliverables to one, or several of the other partnerships which has been raised by the Moors for the Future Partnership.**
- 4. That the Authority may, subject to compliance with its procurement standing orders, enter into contracts for the delivery of project work arising from point 3.**

How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?

The strategic fit of the Great North Bog is fully integrated within the Operational and Business Planning process of the Moors for the Future Partnership. 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 Great North Bog Coalition 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. 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

This requested approval is put before committee not specifically due to known proposals, but in recognition that our past experience leads us to believe there will be opportunities forth coming which will require two things which this proposal will give.

1. An ability to rapidly respond to opportunities which do not fall within the cycle of this committee
2. Confidence that time invested in working up a fundraising action, and raising the expectations of partners in doing so, has the prior approval supporting this investment. (providing of course it meets the due process and standing orders of the Authority)

Examples of two immediate projects which would need cover of this extended approval

1 The Esme Fairbairn Foundation funding to the Great North Bog Partnerships

The foundation have agreed funding of £2.7m over 5 years across all 6 partnerships. The funding is aimed at increasing the capacity of the partnerships by individually funding gaps and weaknesses identified by each of the partnerships. A gap has long been recognised in the Moors for the Future Partnership in our ability to capitalise on Corporate Social Responsibility and Public Giving. Esme Fairbairn are funding MFFP to engage with these sectors in creating a sustainable income stream. MFFP will also be funded to provide a secretariat facility to the GNB board and Operational group.

The portion of this funding which will be allocated to the Moors for the Future Partnership will be £400,000 which is within the original committee approval for working with GNB partners however the funding will run to 2027 where the original approval runs to 2025 so this new approval would cover this.

2 Mobilisation Project for the England Peat Map

Natural England wish to enter into a MoA with Moors for the Future Partnership (via PDNPA) to coordinate the collection of data across the Great North Bog area. They then wish to enter into agreements for use of this data in the forming of part of the new National Peat Map. This would be a small project of less than £50,000 with a MFFP staff member coordinating across the other partnerships to catalogue and capture existing vegetation and peat depth data. The approval to enter into this is mostly in place already with the exception of entering into MoA's with all of the GNB partnerships (present approval only mentions 3 of them). This would also resolve this project approval.

Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?

Financial:

The Moors for the Future 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 through a programme tracker which is updated every month.

It is anticipated based on experience that the GNB will drive some useful funding and in particular the investment by Esme Fairbairn will manage growing enthusiasm from the public and business sector to contribute to aspects of our work especially where an additional engagement of volunteering or a close business connection.

Below are recently delivered and close to confirmation financial activities likely to engage and support this proposal if approved.

Income source	Funded activity	Actual and estimated resources
Previous supporting investment		
Defra	Original GNB set up costs	£60k
Environment Agency	A number of project activities to support the partners is setting up aspects of working together	£221k
Known investment offers		
Esme Fairbairn	Capacity increase over 5 years in order to create sustainable funding streams in the charitable giving arena	£440k
Natural England	Initial mapping work across the GNB for the England Peat map	£50k (est)
Future investment possibility		
From legacies	Currently have one confirmed and one on offer both involving Sphagnum planting of a (value in hand £40k)	£50k PA (est)
From BMC Access and Conservation Trust	Contributions from BMC members and business sponsorship from outdoor industry (current in hand £60k)	£40-60K PA (est)
From Business and giving generally if we were to invest time in this arena	Unallocated general contribution from the Golden Bottle Trust of 20k (charitable trust of Hoare's Bank) giving some confidence that this funding is available	£100k - £400k PA (est)
From Grants associated with GNB	MFFP carrying out a coordinating role	£50k - £100k PA (est)

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 RID assessment - and includes brief summaries of progress highlights. Income and Expenditure of projects and programme team are also monitored by the various project boards covering the live projects currently in delivery.

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.

As part of the process of accepting new work onto the books, the MFFP Programme team always undertakes an impact assessment of the resource requirements of delivering a project. This is in consultation with the partnerships project team. The continuation of adequate capacity in light of ongoing commitments on other projects will remain the responsibility of the MFFP Programme Managers.

The passing of work and funds between the Moors for the Future Partnership (via the PDNPA) and the other five partnerships will be managed through partner agreements. This is a familiar process, which is already in use for this purpose.

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 Business Planning. It will help extend a more sustainable and longer term approach looking to security to 2030. Creating synergies between projects is a key component of the sustainability of the Moors for the Future programme.

Protection of the peatlands in 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, Huddersfield and Sheffield.

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

Collaborating across the North of England creates a bigger and better understood aspiration which has a greater ability to sustain policy and funding support.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

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 or the Moors for the Future Partnership's working area, the benefits from the Great North Bog initiative are likely to be more productive to the southern end of the Pennine Chain.

The potential for reduction in carbon emissions in degraded peat is higher at the southern end of the Pennines, so that within the Peak District National Park, as the peat is more degraded and vulnerable to damage due to its legacy damage making it more vulnerable and a higher likely hood of wildfires driven by larger surrounding population.

- 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 on a trajectory of recovery in 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 Great North Bog Coalition 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

Chris Dean Head of Moors for the Future Partnership - 21st April 2022