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On the ground

Moors for the Future update (2)

As many of you may already know Moors for the Future was launched in 2002 to reverse damage to some of the world's rarest habitats caused by erosion, pollution, fires and over-grazing. The project is managed by the Peak District National Park Authority and run by a partnership of 12 organisations. This is the second update for those of you 'on the ground'. We aim to keep you updated every quarter of what is happening and how you can get involved. The project is delivering successfully on all of its three main aims as set out in its' Strategic Management Plan.

MOORS FOR THE FUTURE 2 Work is busily going ahead behind the scenes to continue the Moors for the Future Partnership. The project will start to wind down at the end of next year and we are set to appoint a Business Development Manager on a one year fixed term contract to seek funding beyond the original 5 year period. For more details of the post visit <http://www.moorsforthefuture.org.uk/mftf/main/Vacancies.htm>

We are also keen to hear of any moorland projects in your area of the Park that you would like to see undertaken in the future, as we may be able to build them into new funding bids.

MOORLAND DISCOVERY LEARNING OFFICER

We would like to say a big welcome to Rachael Kerr who will be developing the educational programme for the project. Rachael will be initially based at Losehill Hall and then move to Longshaw when the Learning Base is built.

In September we received news that we were successful in our bid to the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) for £97,199. With funding now in place, work on site is set to start in the New Year.

HAVE YOUR SAY!

Do you have any burning questions you would like to ask the team? If so call Research: 01629 816580, Restoration: 01629 816584 or Interpretation/events: 01629 816582 or e-mail: moors@peakdistrict.gov.uk

MOOR CARE INITIATIVE

Events

The Moorland festival had mixed success with some events attracting good numbers while others had to be cancelled due to a lack of interest. The Family Fun Days were popular with seven of the eight events attracting 800 people (many who were a new audience to moorland issues). One event was cancelled due to bad weather. The team also attended a number of other shows including the Animal Day at Tittesworth Reservoir (5000 attendees) and the first Losehill Hall open day, where we put on activities such as mask making and bog book making.

Exhibition

During the year we ran an art competition for amateur artists and three winners won a trip on Pennine Helicopters `Moorland Experience` - a unique event for Moors for the Future. The overall winner was Tom Jolley (aged 13) with his photograph "Gathering Sheep for Shearing" (<http://www.moorsforthefuture.org.uk/mftf/information/events.htm>). A selection of the work will be exhibited at Castleton Visitor Centre between 24th October and 13th November.

Dogs on the moors

Jessica Robinson - who we reported in the first issue was awarded a research grant to investigate delivering positive messages to dog owners in the Peak District - has been awarded a "merit" for her completed thesis. We will keep you updated on who we intend to carry her findings forward.

GARDENING PROJECT

Following last years pilot where four volunteer groups produced 500 cottongrass plants, the Gardening Project has yielded a further 12,500 plants since harvesting seed in June 2005. The Green Health Partnership have been instrumental in the development of this project, germinated approximately 11,000 plants, with a success rate of over 80%. Planting of the first 2000 plants is being planned for March/April 2006. The probable donor sites are Kinder and Marsden Moor (both National Trust), but this is to be confirmed, as are the logistics of transportation!

NEW APPLIED RESEARCH

Research Conference

The annual moorland research forum conference 'Peak District Moorlands – past, present, future' took place on 20 - 21 September 2005 in Castleton, Losehill Hall. Around 100 participants came together to discuss the restoration and recovery of the Peak District moorland's blanket bog. Now in its third year this conference - sponsored by United Utilities with extra funding - looked at the present state of moorlands and what we need to do to sustain this precious landscape for the future. Speakers included prominent scientists from universities, high-level representatives from English Nature and Defra as well as practitioners. Discussions in workshops lead to identification of key issues and strategies.

Four new research notes have been designed and distributed as a preprint run at the conference. These will be available on our website soon.

SITE RESTORATION WORKS

Fire sites

During last three months, 80,000m² of geo-textiles have been spread on Bleaklow. The plant propagation project is continuing with good lab-based propagation of the species proposed for increasing the diversity of the restoration works and these plants have been planted onto Bleaklow.

Tenders have been out and received for the supply of heather brash for work on Arnfield, Kinder Scout and Black Hill and are undergoing evaluation.

The Tenders for the restoration of the footpath across Shining Tor have been evaluated and the contract has been awarded to Terra Firma Environmental Ltd. Work is due to commence during the beginning of October.

Path works

Work has started on the path at Curbar Edge, under a project delivery agreement with the PDNPA. This work is due to be completed by the end of December 2005.

The specifications and surveys have been completed for all of the paths that are to be completed under the project. Tenders are in preparation for the completion of the path at Win Hill.

PHYSICAL ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS

In September the first 'Moors for All' assessment panel met to discuss the 23 physical access improvement proposals put forward. The panel prioritised 12 of the projects to take forward for further investigation.

The panel has agreed that two of these – Slippery Stones, Derwent Valley and Upper Burbage Bridge - will commence this winter following match funding from the PDNPA and Sheffield City Council respectively (pending final agreement of the specification). The proposed work at slippery stones will see the removal of steps to the approach of the Packhorse Bridge at the northern section of the 12 mile circular route around the reservoir and surface improvements on the eastern side of the bridge. Work at Upper Burbage will see the provision of a bridle gate and surfacing improvements along the top 200 metres, taking into careful consideration the drainage issues.

The vast majority of proposals were on the eastern side of the National Park and none were received from the SW Peak. If you know of a suitable moorland route that needs improving or simply promoting to benefit disabled people, families with small children or the elderly then let us know.

SUSTAINABILITY BASE LINE RESEARCH

Footpath Condition survey

The footpath condition survey of all the way lines across the Moorlands is under way, using hand held personal digital assistants (PDAs). To date the PDAs have been working well and the volunteer rangers employed to carry out the survey have been walking several km per day, generating much data, however, continuous supervision is essential. First maps have been compiled to indicate levels of erosion, which will help focus future restoration works.

Visitor Surveys

A draft first year report of the visitor attitude and recreational use has been edited and will be published at the end of this month. Data analyses provide insights into visitor patterns and behaviour, which will be a key baseline for future recreation management including potential zoning. Also the data will be vital to target the Moor Care initiative and to focus work of the Moorland Discovery centre

THE NEW MOORLAND CENTRE

Work on the redevelopment of the new Moorland Centre has commenced. A temporary campsite booking 'office' has been set up on site and the campsite and Ranger base will endeavour to operate throughout. In the meantime we are keen to hear from anyone who would like to have their memories of working at Fieldhead recorded. We are also looking for a farmer, keeper and other locals to take part. Some of the recordings will be used for 'listening posts' in the new centre. Please contact Carol in the near future if you are interested in contributing or can suggest someone who might be.