

MOORS FOR THE FUTURE PARTNERSHIP

MOORS
FOR THE FUTURE

PARTNERSHIP

A year in review 2019–2020

Protecting the uplands for the benefit of us all



Moor business but not as usual



By David Chapman,
Chair of Moors for the
Future Partnership

It was a busy year for the Partnership, with another record-breaking year of works coming to a close with the wettest February on record, followed by the start of the coronavirus pandemic which led to the suspension of activities a few weeks early. Despite this, the Partnership managed to complete most of our planned conservation works over nearly 2,000 hectares of peatland landscape.

Alongside the conservation works, we assisted the Heather Trust with an event for 40 people on Bradfield Moor in the Peak District and a follow-up discussion on natural capital.

We met Environment Agency CEO Sir James Bevan to demonstrate how much the Agency has achieved by partnership working. The visit included a trip to Winter Hill, which is to be restored as part of our Moor Carbon project.

Engagement with local MPs continued with a visit by Sir Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire Dales). Advocacy via partner organisations included visits by Holly Lynch (Halifax) and Ruth George (High Peak) to RSPB Dove Stone.

We gave a presentation at a workshop on natural capital organised by Greater Manchester Combined Authority, as well as presentations at Care Peat conference, APEM conference on delivering natural capital and at a Manchester Metropolitan University seminar on how evidence from monitoring informs our future conservation work.

We attended a reception at the House of Commons on the importance of peatlands, organised by IUCN UK Peatland Programme and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.

At the IUCN UK Peatland Programme Conference, in October 2019, we gave presentations on how we are trialling a new approach to vegetation management using our remote-controlled mower and how our Bogtastic van is used to inspire new generations about the importance of precious peatlands.





Our work to influence national policy continued with attendance at a Defra peatland strategy meeting, a round table on peatlands, and, alongside the North Pennines AONB Partnership and the Yorkshire Peat Partnership, we attended a meeting with Defra staff to introduce the Great North Bog concept – a joined-up approach to funding peatland restoration across the North of England.

We contributed to consultations, including the Greater Manchester Resilience Strategy, Environment Agency Challenges and Choices, and a Defra consultation on rotational burning of blanket bog, and made a submission for the EFRA consultation on peatlands.

Following the Ofwat Price Review PR19, discussions with Severn Trent and Yorkshire Water Services on how to assist with delivery of their AMP7 commitments progressed, with plans to continue working together in a new 5-year project.

Our Moor Business project concluded in March. We now have refreshed business processes and an interim business plan to aid the transition while we put them in place. As that project came to a conclusion we were delighted to be selected by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation as one of the five pilot projects across the country that aim to encourage sustainable private sector investment in the natural environment. The Moor Green Investment Project will help identify new opportunities for the Partnership.

Sensational stats

We revegetated over 27 hectares of bare peat by airlifting, and then spreading by hand, over 5,000 bags of cut heather brash and laying down over 13,000 square metres of geo-textile. This will protect the bare peat from erosion until work to re-establish native plant species is complete. We also planted over a million plugs of sphagnum moss (a crucial bog-building plant), covering over 1,000 hectares.

We installed nearly 8,000 mini-dams to block grips and gullies across our working area, and cut down invasive species across 600 hectares.

We renewed one kilometre of the North America bridleway, near Langsett in the Peak District. The route joins up with the iconic Cut Gate bridleway, a packhorse route, popular with mountain bikers, and one of the British Mountaineering Council's Mend Our Mountains initiatives. The work will provide a stable surface and protect the surrounding habitat, giving more space for birds to nest.

The work of the science programme continued, with monitoring of peat pipes and streams, vegetation diversity and hydrology following sphagnum plug planting and gully-blocking, along with an investigation of the effect of sphagnum plug planting in diversifying *Molinia*-dominated blanket bogs. Over 400 vegetation quadrats were surveyed in summer and over 7,000 dipwell measurements recorded in autumn.



Using data collated across the Peak District and a revised methodology, we produced a wildfire ignition risk map, which will inform our engagement with moorland managers and helps with where to focus our public engagement.

We attended 127 events, holding conversations with or giving talks to over 6,000 people. The Bogtastic van was on the road for 44 days, complemented with Bogtastic interpretation panels designed and delivered at locations across our area. Dove Stone, Edale and Holme Moss in the Peak District and Hollingworth Lake in the South Pennines, now showcase the Bogtastic benefits of the Partnership and its MoorLIFE 2020 project.



Media coverage in over 100 instances included local and regional radio, printed press and publications. Notable highlights are the BBC Radio 4 *Today* programme, *Countryfile Diaries*, ITV's *Britain Underwater* and the *Guardian*.

Read more highlights of the year in the pages that follow...





Reviving woodland in Hope Valley

A landowner has created seven hectares of new upland woodland in the Hope Valley. The work was made possible by grants from Natural England, the Forestry Commission and the Woodland Trust and includes the planting of over 11,500 trees of mixed native species, including oak, silver birch, downy birch, common alder, hawthorn, and hazel.

By expanding and connecting existing broadleaved woodland it will provide a habitat for a range of birds including willow tit, tree pipits, redstarts and pied flycatchers. The project meets the Peak District National Park Authority's Biodiversity Action Plan objectives and has natural flood management benefits.

The trees will eventually help control dense bracken in the Hope Valley which prevents grazing and other plants from growing, and can cause instability of slopes, making them more prone to landslides.

We have published a set of guiding principles for clough woodland creation in the Peak District and South Pennines. The three documents are available to download for free from our website.



See all our clough woodland guides [here](#)



Plant your own

How harvesting sphagnum can help rebuild peat bogs

Sphagnum moss is an essential ingredient for peat-building, bringing the landscape towards a sustainable blanket bog habitat. Our study, commissioned by Natural England, aimed to see whether it is sustainable to harvest *Sphagnum palustre* from Site of Special Scientific Interest areas for translocation to nearby sites. And the results were promising: it found that within five years a patch of this sphagnum will have recovered enough to be ready to harvest again.

It is especially useful to identify sustainable sources of hummock-forming species as they are better at forming peat than flush-forming species such as *Sphagnum fallax*. It is already established that it is possible to sustainably harvest flush-forming species.

The study took place on United Utilities land at Dove Stone, which is managed by the RSPB. Handfuls of sphagnum were harvested from quadrats, taking 10% from each.

In some quadrats, the sphagnum around the resulting hole was patted back, in others it was not. A faster recovery rate was achieved when patting back the holes immediately following harvesting, which is best practice guidance, as opposed to leaving gaps.

[Read the summary](#)

[Read the report in full](#)



Almost £2 million funding from Natural England from the Water Environment Grant has kick-started the ambitious Building Blocks project, which will shape future work for years to come. Modelling provided by Newcastle University allowed us to map out 100,000 gullies and create a prioritised list of future works. The work began in 2019–20, with 483 of the planned 7,800 gully blocks built and the bulk of the work planned for 2020–21.

Find out all about the project



Building blocks for a healthy moorland



Pooling results of the ninth annual dipwell campaign

A healthy blanket bog relies on a high water table for its unique and boggy conditions. Every year, Moors for the Future Partnership is indebted to a team of volunteers who take to the moors to measure the depth of the water table in hundreds of locations. This is known as the dipwell campaign.

The data has been analysed and some interesting results have surfaced. The benefits of restoration were unusually visible in the drought year of 2018 with water tables on restoration sites much higher than on unrestored control sites. The raised water table was less visible in 2019 as all the locations were very soggy due to the wet autumn of 2019.

But even with the wet autumn clouding the results, the initial results from this year's campaign generally show that water tables are continuing to rise, even in the face of hot, dry summers. This improves the landscape's resilience to drought and reduces wildfire risk.

These datasets provide long-term evidence of the effects of conservation works. They were made possible by the brilliant volunteers who headed out weekly in autumn and winter, in often gruelling conditions.

Full analysis will be published in the final report of the MoorLIFE 2020 project in 2021.

Read more on our dipwell monitoring





A Bogtastic year

2019–20 was a busy year with 45 visits with the Bogtastic van across the Peak District and South Pennines, from Buxton in the south to Halifax in the North.

Following the devastating wildfires of 2018, the van was central to delivering the Fire Aware message across the region. Working with our partners at Pennine Prospects (with whom we produced the leaflet *Protect Our Moors*), we attended events across the South Pennines area, that had been badly affected. We visited schools that had been forced to close at the worst of the fires, reinforcing messages of fire awareness on the moors, whilst also rebuilding a love of nature in children affected by the devastation of the previous year.

In June, we attended the first Manchester Festival of Nature. It was a successful event, bringing together more than 7,000 people

interested in discovering and caring for the plants and creatures living right on their doorstep in the South Pennine and Peak District moors.

At the end of July, the van visited Ogden Water near Halifax for Ogden Goes Wild, organised by Calderdale Council and Yorkshire Water to highlight the importance of natural flood management.

The Bogtastic van has proved to be a valuable asset to the Partnership, with requests outstripping the team's capacity, but whether in sunshine or rain, parked securely on tarmac or needing a tractor to pull it out of a muddy showground, the van was there, taking the Bogtastic message across the region.

Local youth climate action collect 'moor' results

The Moorland Indicators of Climate Change Initiative (MICCI), is a UK-wide project giving secondary school students the opportunity to take part in real-world climate science. Students from schools in or close to UK National Parks – including the Peak District – visit peatland areas to monitor the health of these sites.



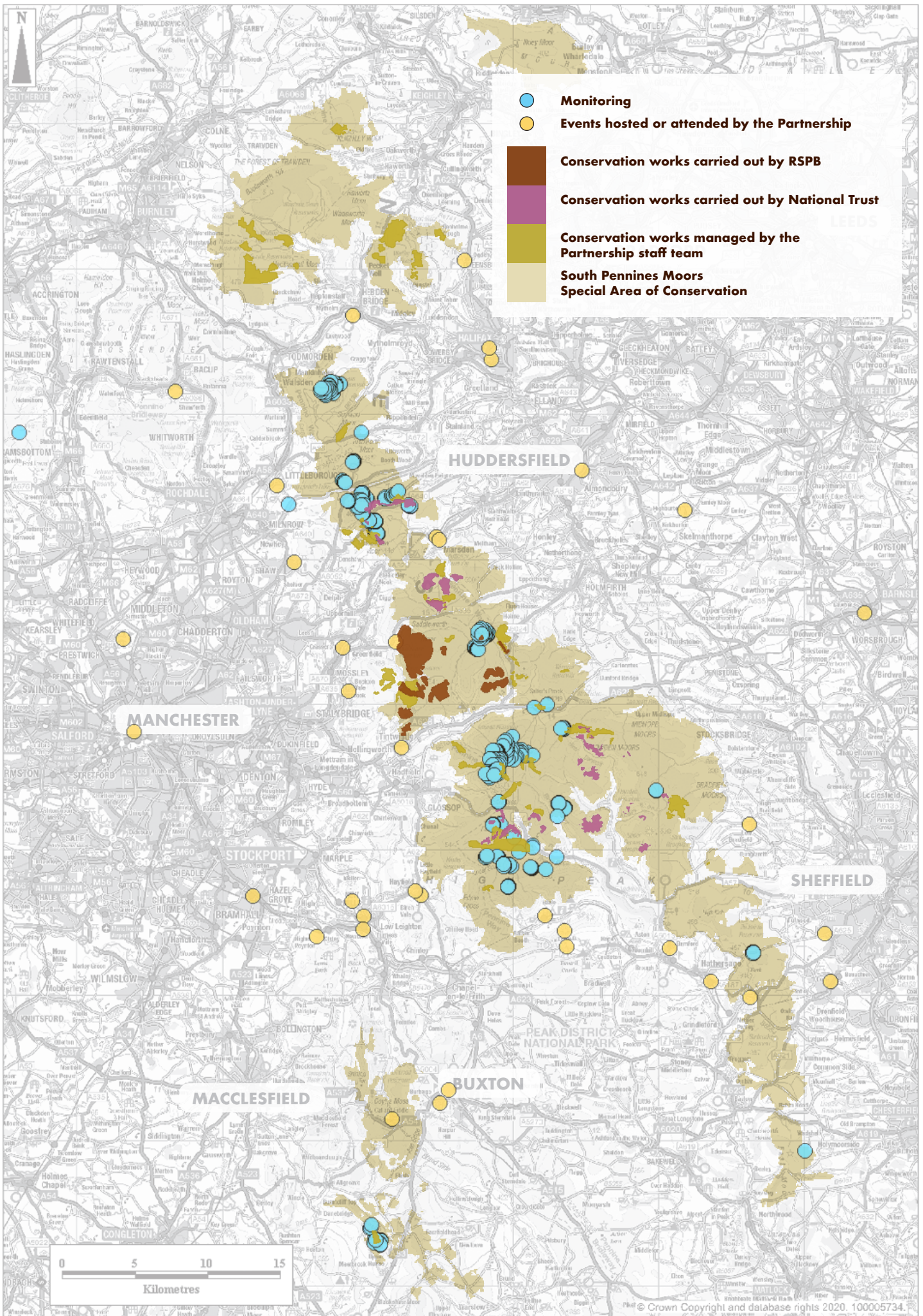
Since 2008, the Peak District National Park has been leading MICCI sessions for young people, offering students an opportunity to take part in ten different experiments designed to see how peatlands are changing over time. MICCI also explores scientific methods in the field and the relationship between weather, climate changes, carbon and water cycles, plants and wildlife – and the human environment.

Now coordinated by the Partnership, we have moved our sessions from March to September, trading rain and snow for (mostly) sunshine.

Five groups came out from various locations that range from Saddleworth, Greater Manchester to Handsworth near Sheffield, to collect a range of data about the health of our moorlands. They visited Harland Brook for the first time in a while to find it was swarming with spectacular four-spot orb-web spiders, and found reptile skin at our sites at Holme Moss in West Yorkshire and Cowper Stone at Stanage Edge in the Peak District!

[Read this report in full](#)





The year in numbers

Income £4,049,584

Expenditure £4,566,737

Our funding spans multiple years which means the income in a given year may be earmarked for successive financial years.

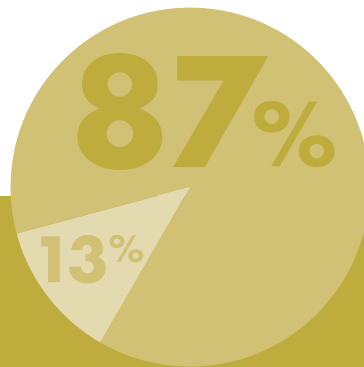
Sources of income

Grants £3,545,033

Match funding £503,866

Grants

Match funding



13,152m² of
**GEO
TEXTILE**
LAID

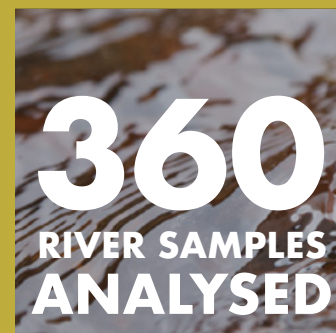
8,268
DAMS INSTALLED

390
HOURS'
CONSERVATION
BY YOUNG
PEOPLE



70.3
HECTARES
OF SWARD CUT

432
VEGETATION
QUADRATS
SURVEYED



Major current projects

MoorLIFE 2020

(and associated project works with project partners)

Moor Carbon

Building Blocks

Mend Our Mountains

Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment

Private Lands Portfolio

Upland Skies land management advice

Crompton Moor volunteer project

Stalybridge NFM project

Etherow Upland Water Monitoring Network

Projects ending

Moor Business

Slowing the

Flow Calderdale

Breeding Bird Survey

14
MAJOR
PROJECTS

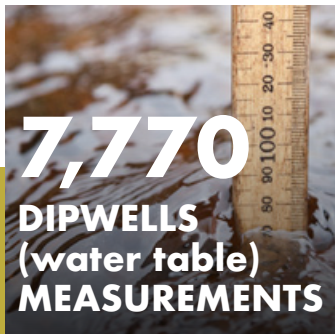
1,210m
OF FOOTPATH
REPAIRED



11,296
METRES OF
FENCING
INSTALLED



7,770
DIPWELLS
(water table)
MEASUREMENTS



10 km²
sphagnum
planted



4,300
PEOPLE
LEARNED ABOUT
OUR WORK

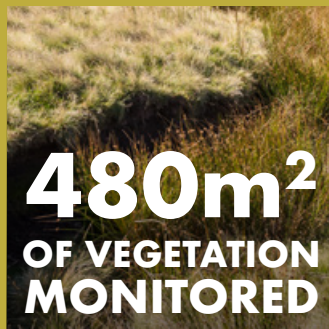
including...
2,100
under 25s

16 **JUNIOR**
RANGERS



6km²
OF INVASIVE
SPECIES
CONTROL

480m²
OF VEGETATION
MONITORED





Contributing Partners:



The work of the partnership is delivered by the Moors for the Future staff team through the Peak District National Park Authority as the lead and accountable body. We also receive financial support from our partners Environment Agency, National Trust, Pennine Prospects, RSPB, Severn Trent, United Utilities, Yorkshire Water; and support and advice from representatives of the moorland owner and farming community including the NFU and Moorland Association.

www.moorsforthefuture.org.uk

Moors for the Future Partnership

The Moorland Centre, Fieldhead, Edale, Hope Valley S33 7ZA
t: 01629 816577 e: moors@peakdistrict.gov.uk

