

Cabinet Committee on Climate Change and the Environment

Meeting to be held on 8th December 2010

Part I - Item No. 9

Electoral Division affected:
All

'Our Moors, Our Planet' – Completion Report

(Appendix 'A' refers)

Contact for further information:

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Executive Summary

'Our Moors, Our Planet' was established by the County Council (as part of its climate change agenda) to support the restoration and re-wetting of blanket bog and lowland raised bog habitats in Lancashire. These habitats are recognised internationally as vitally important carbon stores (or sinks).

At the completion of the initiative in March 2010, the County Council has supported five peatland projects across the county delivered by public, private and voluntary sector organisations. These projects have helped to:

- Restore and re-wet 94.5ha. of blanket bog and lowland raised bog habitats
- Re-profile and re-vegetate 5.2km of gully edges
- Block 3.1km of moorland grips (or ditches)

These habitat improvements will help to reduce carbon loss (in the short term) and promote carbon capture (in the longer term). In addition, these priority habitats and associated species will now be more likely to be able to adapt to future climate change. The projects will also help to reduce downstream flood risk and moorland wild fires.

Recommendation

The Cabinet Committee on Climate Change and the Environment is requested to note and comment on the completion report for 'Our Moors, Our Planet'.

Background and Advice

Peatlands in the UK hold more carbon than forests of the UK and France combined. They cover a significant area of both the uplands and lowlands of Lancashire. However, during the last two centuries, peatlands were drained in an attempt to lower the water table, dry the land and make it more productive. Other factors, such as peat extraction, overgrazing, inappropriate burning and recreation, coupled with

the drainage have contributed to significant loss and degradation of peatlands over many years. (Appendix 'A' shows the nature of this degradation, for example, bare peat and eroding moorland grips.) This habitat loss and degradation has resulted in reduced capacity to retain and capture carbon; increased wildfire risk due to drier conditions; reduced capacity to moderate flooding; biodiversity loss and a poorer countryside recreation experience.

The Cabinet Committee on Climate Change and the Environment approved the establishment of 'Our Moors, Our Planet' in January 2008. Approval was given for a budget of £30,000 per year over three years (total £90,000) from the County Council's Climate Change budget to implement the initiative.

The aim of the initiative was to:

- Avoid carbon loss and capture (or sequester) carbon
- Moderate flash flooding
- Reduce the incidence and severity of moorland fires
- Improve wildlife habitats
- Leverage external funds for projects

Completion Report

At the completion of 'Our Moors, Our Planet' in March 2010, Lancashire County Council had supported five peatland projects across the county, as follows:

1. Edgerton and Bentley Moss (West Pennine Moors) – grip (or ditch) blocking and gully re-profiling to re-wet blanket bog habitat.
2. Far Pike Lowe (West Pennine Moors – grip (or ditch) blocking and gully re-profiling to re-wet blanket bog habitat.
3. Healey Nab (West Pennine Moors) – blockage of underground drains to re-wet mire habitat.
4. Heysham Moss (Heysham) – hydrological surveying, scrub woodland clearance, bunding of drainage channels and installation of polythene sheeting to retain water on lowland raised bog habitat.
5. Langden Head (Forest of Bowland AONB) – installation of geotextile and lime and heather brush treatment to re-vegetate bare peat, alongside "drip-edge" re-profiling to restore and improve blanket bog habitat.

This initiative has helped to:

- Restore and re-wet 94.5ha. of blanket bog and lowland raised bog habitats
- Re-profile and re-vegetate 5.2km of gully edges
- Block 3.1km of moorland grips (or ditches)

Appendix 'A' shows some images of this habitat restoration work and results.

Also, the investment of £90,000 from 'Our Moors, Planet' has unlocked additional 'match-funding' of over £345,000 for these projects.

In relation to carbon and climate change, these habitat improvements will help to reduce carbon loss (in the short term) and promote carbon capture (in the longer term). Also, these priority habitats and associated species will now be more likely to be able to adapt to future climate change. The improvements will also potentially help improve biodiversity, water quality and moderate flash flooding.

In November 2010, 'Our Moors, Our Planet' was short-listed (from over 250 projects nationally) for the Environment Agency's Environmental Pioneer Awards, in the 'Pioneering Biodiversity Programme' category. The category winners were announced on 24th November and unfortunately "Our Moors, Our Planet" was not among these.

Post-completion developments

In anticipation of the completion of 'Our Moors, Our Planet', the County Council led the formation of the Lancashire Peat Partnership (in November 2009) to help continue the progress made by 'Our Moors, Our Planet' in restoring Lancashire's peatlands.

The partnership (comprising representatives from the County Council, Environment Agency, Natural England, Forest of Bowland AONB, Pennine Prospects, United Utilities, West Pennine Moors and the Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Greater Manchester and North Merseyside) seeks to co-ordinate planning, delivery and monitoring of peatland restoration projects within Lancashire and its border areas. It is intended that through this co-ordination and prioritisation work, partners can avoid duplication and maximise increasingly limited resources.

The Cabinet Committee is requested to note the completion report for 'Our Moors, Our Planet' and to confirm its agreement to the County Council continuing its involvement in the Lancashire Peat Partnership in order to assist co-ordination and monitoring of peatland restoration in Lancashire.

Consultations

N/A.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

There are no significant risks relating to this completion report.

Financial

There are no financial implications.

Continuation of limited officer involvement in the Lancashire Peat Partnership steering group to assist with partnership activities (approximately 1 day per month).

Any representations made to the Cabinet Committee prior to the issue being considered in accordance with the Public Notice of Forward Plans

Name: Organisation: Comments:

N/A.

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
List of Background Papers**

Paper Date Contact/Directorate/Tel

N/A.

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A.