

## **Dark Peak Nature Improvement Area**

### **End of year Report 12/13**

#### **Objective One**

##### **Blanket Bog Restoration.**

There had been no work planned in this objective for the first financial year, however due to unforeseen circumstances in the other objectives it has become necessary to start some work early.

At Dove Stone the RSPB reserve to the north of the NIA, we are applying Lime, Seed and Fertiliser to the Peat Pan, and degraded Peat areas. This is following discussion with NE and UU, and is based on experience on site, where it is clear that bare peat pans and degraded areas that have been treated with Lime, Seed and Fertiliser are improving in terms of re-vegetation far quicker than areas with only water table restoration work undertaken. By treating some of the peat pan areas it will complement and enhance the water table restoration work we are carrying out through the NIA by supporting re-vegetation processes. A further piece of work undertaken in September 2012, confirmed that Sphagnum has increased in these treated areas, a key target for the NIA work. We were also able to secure SITA fund of £92,000 to increase the amount of Blanket Bog restoration we are able to carry out.

On the High Peak Estate, the National Trust has also been carrying out some Blanket Bog restoration work. Using NIA funds, they have been able to transport the equipment needed for gully blocking. They were able to build 48 dams blocking 350 meters of gullies. They have also secured Catchment Restoration Funding, which amounts to just under £2.1 million from the Environment Agency, to help improve the water quality of the Rivers Ashop, and Alport, and their catchments, to meet the Water Framework Directive

This will be done by a range of moorland restoration works on bare peat (to re-veg it), on Ashop Moor, Alport Moor and the eastern flanks of Kinder.

#### **Objective Two**

##### **Heathland Restoration and Creation**

We have been collecting Bell Heather seeds using volunteers and then spreading the dried seed in order to increase the diversity of Heathland at the RSPB's Dove Stone Reserve. We have also been directly planting plug plants with the seeds.

Over at the Eastern Moors Partnership they have been installing the infrastructure so that cattle can now be handled on site, they are also installing Poly Tunnels so that they are now able to grow their own plug plants on site. These plug plants will be planted out into the Heathland to increase diversity. Through burning and grazing, the team have started to overcome the Molinia problem, which has become dominate in some parts of the estate.

Sheffield Wildlife Trust and the Peak District National Park Authority have been using contractors to control the spread of the bracken on their sites.

#### **Objective Three**

##### **Woodland Restoration and Creation**

Sheffield City Council Ecology department has extensively monitored the plantation at Burbage, which is managed by Sheffield City Council, so that we have all the baseline data that is needed for the permissions that we require. We have also created before and after shots, of what the valley will look like after the works have been carried out, these will help with our public engagement around the project which is due to start at Easter 2013.

The plantation at Crowden is being felled and will be replaced with broadleaf trees. The NIA money will be used by United Utilities to close the A628 whilst the felling and abstraction takes place. Without this road closure being place, the felling would not have been able to take place.

The woodlands at North Lees Estate have been through extensive restructure process this year, with the removal of larch to create much more open grounds. There has also been coppicing of Alder in order to create glades. Some of the timber that has been felled has been used to create stock proof fencing around the estate. All this work was carried out by local contractors, who know the site and the Dark Peak well.

In order to create a scrub layer in one of the woodlands of the site 60 holly trees have been planted, the Site Manager Bill put out media releases to call for people to come and plant these trees, and the reason for choosing 60 was so that it could tie into the queens jubilee.

We have also been able to put together 3 new woodland creation applications resulting in 78ha over the original target of 200ha as set out in the final business plan. These applications included one which is a Private Landowner, and whose land was not in the original NIA boundary.

Moors for the Future are also hosting a Woodland Clough Officer, for at least the next 12 months, although not funded by the NIA, this officers role will be to actively encourage landowners to create new clough woodland, which will all add to the overall objective of the NIA.

## **Objective Four**

### **Grassland Restoration and Creation**

The RSPB and United Utilities have become the process of restoring 13.5ha of improved grassland into species rich meadows, this work has been carried out through the cutting and spreading of green hay and by direct seed spreading.

Work has begun on the Longshaw Estate and on Eastern Moors to improve 42ha of semi-improved grasslands. At Longshaw, the National Trust have been cutting and spreading green hay from, already species rich hay meadows. At Eastern Moors, the team have used the NIA money to purchase a seed-spreading machine. This will improve the efficiency when it comes to seed spreading next year.

Sheffield Wildlife Trust have begun the process of restoring 1.5ha of species rich grassland by 2020, with the removal of scrub that has encroached into what was historically a hay meadow.

Moors for the Future also wrote the monitoring protocol, for all the partners to use, so that we would have the baseline data.

## **Objective Five**

### **Access and Recreation**

The Eastern Moors Partnership has restored the Moss Road, reversing the drastic erosion that has occurred on this access route over the last few years. This work was carried out with extensive consultation with the key stakeholders and users, so that the newly designed route would meet their requirements. These stakeholders and users then formed work parties to carry out a large proportion of the work themselves. This means that we have been able to use the NIA money to also restore an adjoining bridleway; this one connects the Eastern Moors with Sheffield Wildlife Trusts Blacka Moor. This is an excellent example of the NIA partnership working as these two partners worked together on this project, Sheffield Wildlife Trust made their volunteer work parties available to work on the Eastern Moors.

## **Outside of the Objectives**

One of the challenges that Natural England set the Dark Peak NIA, was to try and close the gaps in our boundary over the course of the three years.

We have been able to add one new partner in the shape of National Trust at Marsden. We have also been able to add further pockets of land, when an agreement was put in place for all land covered by the Sheffield Moors Partnership to be within the NIA boundary.