

THE GREAT NORTH BOG

The time to invest in our peatlands is now. We recognise that healthy peatlands are vital to helping tackle the climate and biodiversity crises. 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 being developed by the North Pennines AONB Partnership, the Yorkshire Peat Partnership and the Moors for the Future Partnership. It is a landscape approach to restoration across nearly 7000 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.

Partnership

By joining up of some of the most successful peatland restoration programmes in Europe we can bring about a massive and urgent step change in saving the majority of England's upland peatlands before it is too late. The Protected Landscapes of the Great North Bog represent around 92% of the upland peat in England. The Great North Bog includes four National Parks, three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the proposed South Pennines Park, and represents a significant opportunity to implement the peatland restoration objectives in the 25 Year Environment Plan.

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.

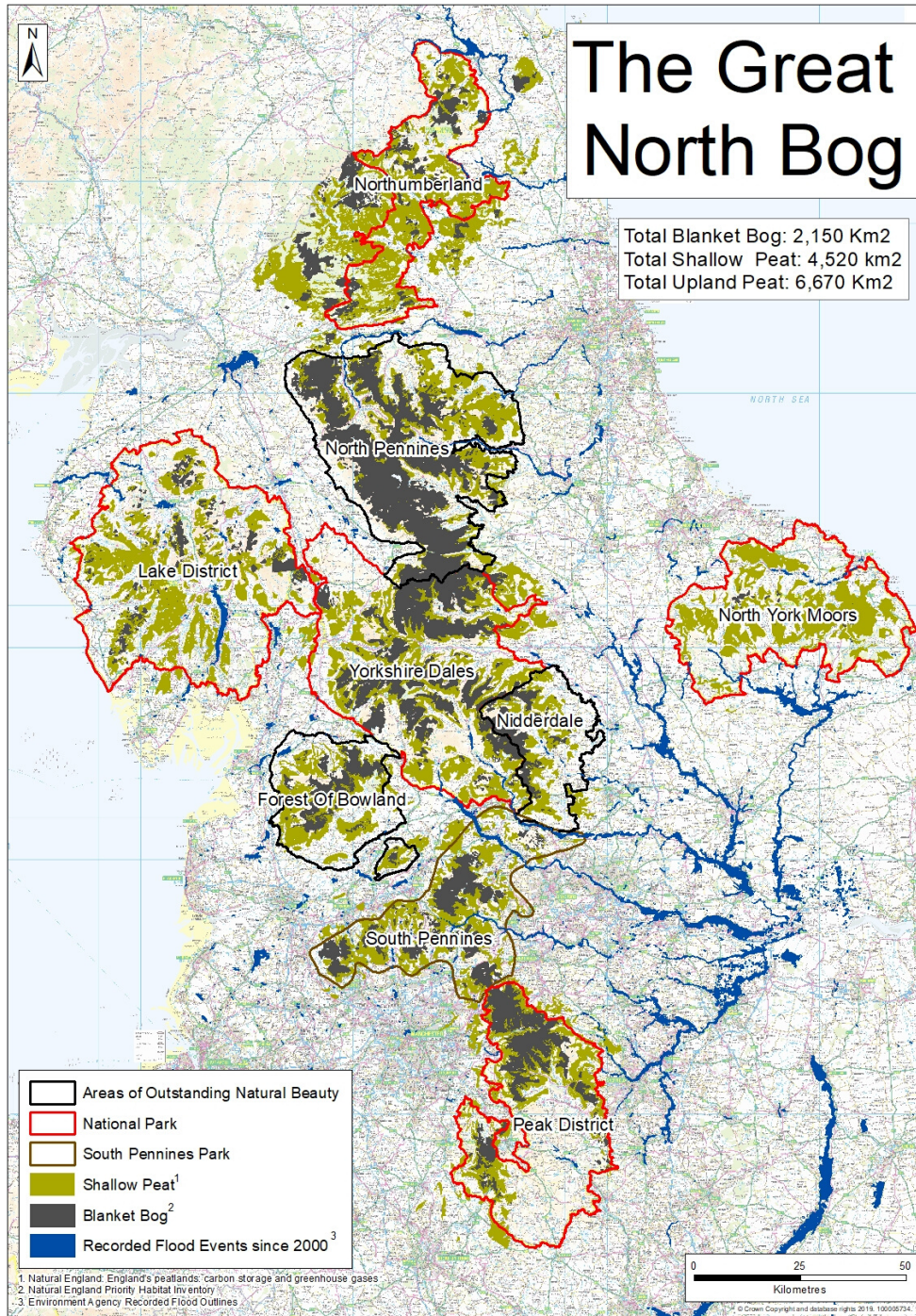
Benefits to society

- 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 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.

Costs and legacy

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.

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