Sphagnum reintroduction in the South Pennines: A Partnership Approach

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Introduction

The blanket bog habitats of the Peak District National Park and South Pennines are some of the most degraded in the world. 200 years of industrial pollution combined with wild fires and grazing pressures have resulted in extensive areas of bare peat.

and substantial erosion. Air pollution from the industrial conurbations of Manchester and Sheffield had catastrophic consequences for the Sphagnum that grew here.

The Moors for the Future (MFTF) Partnership has revegetated large areas of bare peat. This, along with cleaner air quality in recent decades, mean that conditions for Sphagnum to grow improved. However, one of the key constraints however is the limited amount source material, meaning that natural recolonisation is slow.

As a key peat building plant, the reintroduction of Sphagnum is seen as an important next step in moorland restoration.

MFTF have set up a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to provide a forum for discussions and knowledge sharing. The TAG enables partners in the South Pennines to:

- Develop application techniques
- Share results and build on each others knowledge and experience
- Develop coordinated monitoring programmes across a range of sites and application methods
- Work towards comprehensive guidance on Sphagnum application on blanket bog

In addition to trials on revegetated areas, MFTF are also investigating the application of Sphagnum propagation treatment. In September 2012, Black Hill was the first MFTF site to receive large scale application of Sphagnum beads as part of the EU funded MoorLIFE Project.

MFTF contacted Micro-Propagation Services to find a way of finding creating a large quantity of South Pennine Sphagnum where there was no real donor source.

Using micro-propagation techniques large quantities of Sphagnum material was produced using a small amount of Sphagnum collected from the South Pennines. This technique allows a variety of species to be produced increasing the diversity of Sphagnum species on the moor.

A bead was developed to allow landscape scale application. The bead offers a means of application and a protective surround to improve sphagnum establishment.

Over 4 million beads are to be applied over the next 3 years.

Sphagnum propagation

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Knowledge Sharing

Several partners within MFTF are undertaking sphagnum application projects on their sites. These techniques can be seen in the work undertaken by MFTF (MoorLIFE Project), RSPB, National Trust and Natural England.

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