

*The*  
**Great North Bog**

**Strategic Plan**







## *Great North Bog* **Strategic Plan**

### **Vision for our Peatlands**

The peatlands of the northern English uplands (the Great North Bog) are fully functioning wetland ecosystems, providing benefits for nature, climate and people that are widely understood and appreciated.

### **Mission of the Great North Bog Coalition (see page 6)**

To restore all northern England's remaining degraded upland peatlands by 2040 – sooner if we can

### **To fulfil this mission, the partners in the Great North Bog Coalition will:**

- increase the pace and scale of restoration
- raise awareness of the importance of peatlands the benefits they provide
- increase skills and capacity for staff and contractors
- improve the evidence base for peatland restoration and conservation
- raise the necessary resources and further diversify income streams

### **Why the upland peatlands of the Great North Bog matter**

The upland peatlands of northern England support some of our most charismatic wildlife and have a sense of remoteness and tranquillity found in few other places in our country. Added to their often dramatic weather, they can feel like a place apart from the world below. Yet any sense of 'wildness' is more imagined than real, as even the most remote summits have been affected by human activity, be it by grazing livestock, heather burning, afforestation or the digging of drains (grips). Today our peatlands are increasingly valued for the benefits they provide for society when they are allowed to remain, or are restored as, functioning wetland ecosystems.



## So what do healthy peatlands do for us:

### Carbon storage and sequestration

Peatland in good ecological condition stores carbon and prevents it being lost to the atmosphere; it also 'pulls' carbon out of the atmosphere. Damaged peatlands release their carbon and cannot sequester it efficiently. There is more carbon stored in the peatland of the UK than in all the forests of France, Germany and the UK combined. We have a unique opportunity to prevent the current loss of 3.7m tonnes of carbon dioxide a year, turning the landscape into a carbon sink rather than a carbon source.



### Flood risk mitigation

Healthy peatlands soak up rainwater – they reduce and vary the speed and volume of water leaving the moors. Restored peatlands are the biggest and most effective natural flood management resource in the north of England.

### Clean water

Restoring peatlands and promoting natural hydrological processes reduces the amount of peat soils washed off moorlands and into our watercourses. This, and the water filtration function that healthy peatlands provide, reduces sediment load and can help reduce water colour, improve water quality and bring benefits for biodiversity.



### Biodiversity

Our peatlands support specialised communities of plants and animals – the better their condition, the more they can support wildlife. Blanket bog is a rare habitat worldwide and 92% of England's upland peat (including blanket bog) is within the Great North Bog area – the Great North Bog coalition partners have a significant international responsibility for its protection.

### Land management

Generations of farmers have produced stock on our peatlands, and large swathes of the uplands are managed as grouse moors. Bare and eroding peat has nothing for sheep to graze and no vegetation that grouse can eat or in which they can nest. Both these things need to be managed sustainably if we are to see thriving peatlands richer in wildlife.



### Historic environment

The waterlogged conditions that characterise peatlands preserve a valuable record of past human and environmental activity. Blanket bog is the largest contiguous area of undisturbed soil in England - it is estimated that there are 22,000 archaeological sites under peatlands, that are yet to be investigated.

### Health and well-being

Millions of people every year come to experience the clean air, tranquillity and opportunities for exercise that our peatlands provide, across the whole northern uplands including five National Parks, three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the new undesignated South Pennines Park.

**To help sustain all these benefits, decades of 'gripping' is being reversed, and increasing amounts of bare and eroding peat are now being restored, all of which ensures that our peatlands keep serving society into the future.**

More people are beginning to understand why peatlands matter, and why the work to restore them and maintain them in good condition, with an emphasis on promoting natural hydrological processes, is so important. The Great North Bog concept is about scaling-up this work, increasing the rate of restoration and promoting collaboration between all those involved.



## The Great North Bog and our Coalition

The area encompassed by the Great North Bog covers all the upland blanket peat in the north of England, including large parts of all the upland Protected Landscapes (AONBs and National Parks). These upland peatlands extend to nearly 6700 km<sup>2</sup> - over 90% of England's blanket bog is in the Great North Bog area. A good quality tract of blanket bog in the northern uplands contains heather, cross-leaved heath, hare's-tail cottongrass, bilberry, common cottongrass, cloudberry, deergrass, crowberry and bog asphodel, as well as many species of peat-building Sphagnum moss.

There has been over 20 years of concerted effort by active partnerships, including teams from the different Wildlife Trusts, AONBs and National Parks and private land managers; the history of restoring afforested peatland in the Border Mires of Northumberland goes back even further to the 1970s. Much has been achieved – between the delivery partnerships in the coalition 140,000 ha of upland peatland has been restored. The teams have developed unrivalled knowledge and expertise in devising and delivering restoration, in collaboration with land managers and ever more skilled contractors, more that we need to understand and more that we need to do.



## The Great North Bog Coalition and the six Delivery Partnerships

The Great North Bog Coalition is driven by 6 'Delivery Partnerships':



### Northumberland Peat Partnership

Led by Northumberland Wildlife Trust with Northumberland National Park Authority, working in upland Northumberland north of the A69.



### North Pennines AONB Peat Programme

The North Pennines AONB Partnership's peatland team works across the whole AONB in Durham, Cumbria and Northumberland.



### Cumbria Peat Partnership

Led by Cumbria Wildlife Trust and working across Cumbria (outside the North Pennines).



### Yorkshire Peat Partnership

Led by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, working in the Yorkshire Dales, North York Moors and Nidderdale.



### Lancashire Peat Partnership

Led by Lancashire Wildlife Trust with the Forest of Bowland AONB Partnership, working in Bowland and across Lancashire.



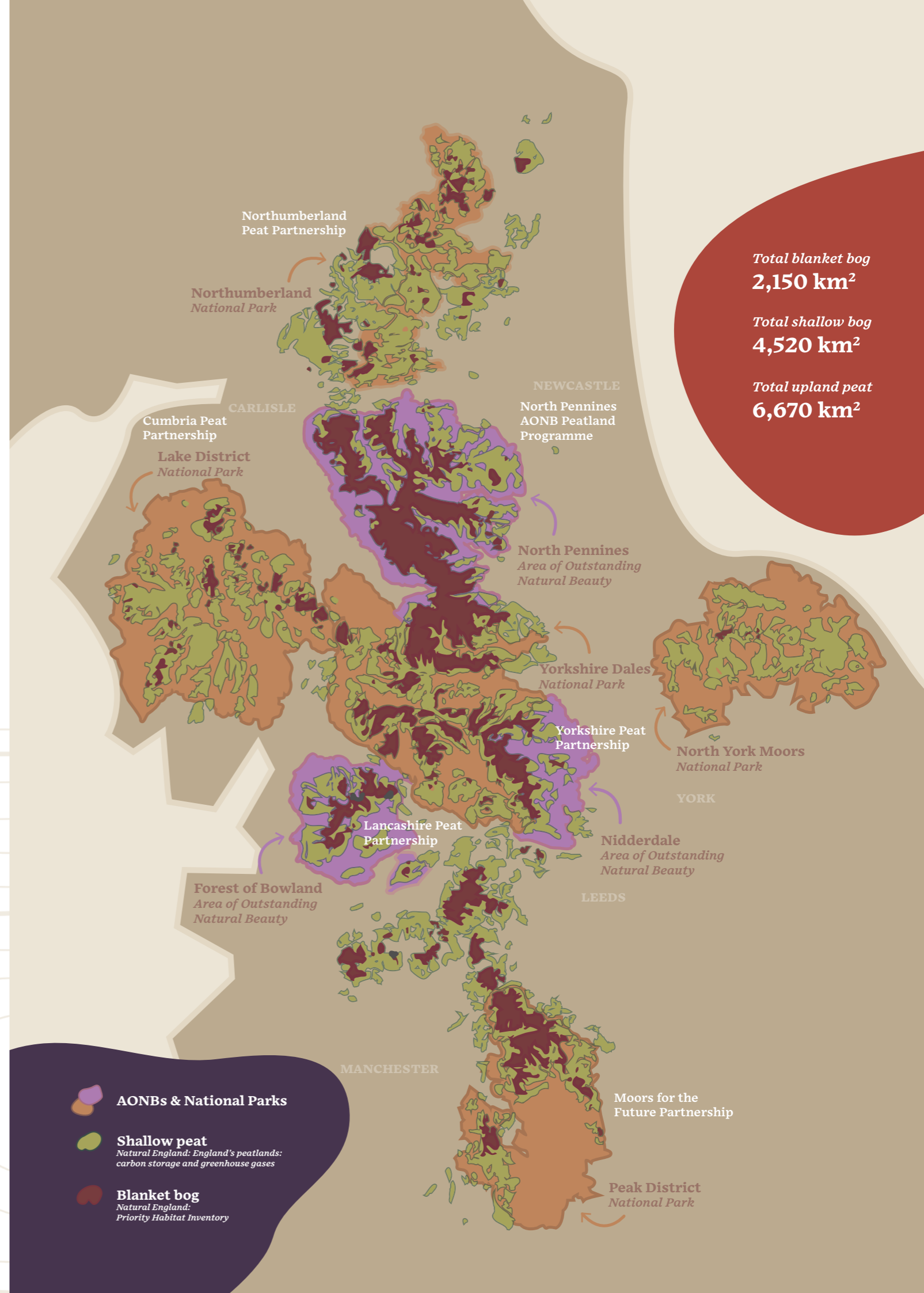
### Moors for the Future Partnership

Led by Peak District National Park Authority, working in the Peak District and South Pennines.



Regionally, the leads for the Delivery Partnerships work closely with other organisations and the land management community to:

- devise, deliver and monitor restoration work,
- secure locally-targeted resources,
- establish governance structures to provide leadership and advocacy for peatlands, whilst supporting the GNB Board in national advocacy work,
- engage with local communities of place and interest to promote restoration and raise the profile of peatlands.







### Working as part of the Great North Bog Coalition, the regional partnerships and teams can deliver much more than they could alone.

The achievements of individual partnerships (such as two decades of outstanding restoration work by the Moors for the Future Partnership working on Europe's most degraded upland peatland), can be amplified when working together – jointly securing resources, sharing skills and expertise, restoring peatlands through collaborative projects, and providing a clearer and more coherent single voice to Government, agencies, regulators, potential funders and the public.

## Governance

The Great North Bog coalition has a simple governance structure, in which each element has clear terms of reference:

### GNB Board

#### Setting strategic direction for the coalition

Six Delivery Partnerships; Defra; Natural England; Environment Agency; Water Companies

### Operations Group

**The engine room of The Great North Bog Coalition, contribution to strategic direction, devising and delivering joint funding bids, training, engagement and work on the ground. Task & Finish groups as required.**

Delivery Partnerships plus other National Park Authorities, AONB teams, National Trust, Water Companies, RSPB, Natural England, Environment Agency

### Stakeholder Group

**A forum for two-way flow of information and insight about action for peatlands driven by The Great North Bog Coalition**

A wide group of interested parties including eNGOs, Protected Landscape teams, private sector land managers and others.





# Resourcing and investment

Since the early 2000s Delivery Partnerships have raised over £40m to invest in our peatlands. Sometimes Partnerships have combined to raise funds and deliver projects, e.g. in the £6m Pennine PeatLIFE programme in North Yorkshire, Bowland and the North Pennines.

## To date, funding for restoration has largely come from five main sources:

- **The European Union, through the LIFE and INTERREG programmes** supporting the restoration of an asset of Europe-wide importance for conservation and climate change mitigation
- **UK Government through a range of grant schemes** in support of Government targets on carbon reduction and on conservation
- **Defra arms-length bodies (NE, EA, FE)** supporting nature recovery, water quality and flood risk amelioration
- **Water companies** supporting the protection of the core asset (land and water), increasing water quality, reducing water colour
- **Small-scale private sector investment** largely based on Environmental and Social Responsibility commitments

It should be possible to create the circumstances whereby UK Government funding offered over a period of years does not have 'use it or lose it' annual cut-offs (also requiring annually allocated match funding) but can be spread across the years of the agreement, to account for the impacts of weather and other unpredictable factors.

## Future funding

Future funding will be based on blending public and private finance. Private finance for peatlands is increasingly focused on carbon values and the sale and purchase of carbon credits. The Delivery Partnerships are in advanced discussions with a range of investors, though there are several challenges to overcome, including: a lack of certainty from Government that any private sector (blended) finance would not impact any future CS/ELMS payments; the need to kick-start to the peatland carbon credit market by way of a set floor prices of carbon and some high profile sales to set the example for the UK; the development of large-scale, long-term GNB & private sector partnerships.

The Delivery Partnerships have also been instrumental in helping to develop the IUCN UK Peatland Code. The Peatland Code is a voluntary certification standard that supports the monetisation of the climate benefits of peatland restoration. It provides assurances to voluntary carbon market buyers that the climate benefits being sold are 'real, quantifiable, additional and permanent'. The Code is a prime mechanism for driving investment in restoration, but this is still in its relative infancy. The Delivery Partnerships, who have a long track record and a wide range of expertise in doing the restoration work, are exploring how they can best work with potential buyers of carbon credits and the landowners who effectively own the carbon units.

**A separate funding strategy is being produced for the Great North Bog coalition. This strategy will be updated once that is complete, during 2023.**

## The cost of not investing in our peatlands

Investing in our peatlands provides many benefits for society. It may seem costly at first glance, but neglecting our peatlands will make matters much worse — the cost of trying to replicate lost natural assets and all they provide for us is much greater than the cost of maintaining them in good ecological condition.

A 2013 study suggested that conserving nature costs 100 to 1,000 times less than trying to restore it once it is lost or damaged and the benefits it provides have been compromised; it makes economic sense, as well as environmental sense, to look after it.

Degraded peat soils in England are releasing 3 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere each year – the equivalent of the annual emissions from 330,000 households and similar to those from the UK chemicals industry. Without investment in peatland restoration, these emissions will continue to increase. Water quality and colour will continue to worsen and the costs of dealing with it will rise; we will be less able to cope with the expected more frequent and severe floods caused by climate change; there are likely to be greater losses and higher insurance costs. Valuable habitat for wildlife will be lost and more grazing land for animals will turn to bare soil.

**The time to act on peatland restoration is now — to save nature, to save carbon and to save money.**

# Delivering for the nation

There are clear multiple benefits of blanket bogs that are restored to fully-functioning wetland ecosystems. They can do more for nature, people and climate than any other habitat. Their restoration has a strong fit with policies, plans and strategies at England and UK-wide level. Examples of this include:

Plan / Policy	Policy statement or intent delivered through the restoration of the Great North Bog
UK Government's 25 Year Plan for the Environment	<p>Restore 75% of our one million hectares of terrestrial and freshwater protected sites to favourable condition, securing their wildlife value for the long term.</p> <p>Create or restore 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat outside the protected site network, focusing on priority habitats as part of a wider set of land management changes providing extensive benefits.</p> <p>Improve our approach to soil management: by 2030 we want all of England's soils to be managed sustainably</p> <p>Make sure that all policies, programmes and investment decisions take into account the possible extent of climate change this century</p> <p>Improve soil health, and restore and protect peatlands</p> <p>Improve the condition of peatlands in England, cutting carbon emissions and delivering a slew of environmental benefits</p> <p>Expand the use of natural flood management solutions</p>
England Peat Action Plan	<p>Secure our peatlands' carbon store so they meet their contribution to Net Zero by 2050.</p> <p>Deliver Natural Flood Management and improve water quality, to increase drought resilience and the sustainability of our water supplies.</p> <p>Protect and restore our peatland habitats so they are healthy, well-functioning ecosystems rich in wildlife. These wildlife rich peatlands will form a key part of our Nature Recovery Network.</p> <p>Take continued action on peatland restoration. Wet and well-functioning peatland increases resilience and reduces the risk of severe damage by wildfire.</p> <p>Drive private investment in peatland restoration through natural capital markets that allow the accreditation and sale of the ecosystems services that healthy peatlands can provide.</p> <p>Protect the historic environment of peatlands so the important evidence of our past can be preserved for the future, and ensure that restoration projects deliver cultural heritage, education and enjoyment, alongside other public goods.</p>
Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener	<p>Restore at least 35,000 hectares of peatlands in England by 2025, through the Nature for Climate Fund. Restore approximately 280,000 hectares of peat in England by 2050, including via funding from the new environmental land management schemes</p>
30x30	<p>Give greater depth to the inclusion of AONBs and National Parks in the 30x30 calculation through bringing up to 7000 km<sup>2</sup> of peatlands into good ecological condition</p>
Regional and Local Strategies and plans	<p>Deliver on peatland elements of statutory AONB and National Park Management Plans, Local Authority Climate Action Plans and the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategies</p>



# Great North Bog outcomes framework

High level actions (Initial Lead)		Short term outcomes (3–5 years)	Medium term outcomes (5–8 years)	Vision
<b>Peatland restoration &amp; conservation</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop restoration and management plans for peatlands</li> <li>2. Deliver at least 10,000ha of restoration each year across the Great North Bog area</li> <li>3. Resolve any uncertainties around benefits for water quality/resources, fire resilience, carbon, biodiversity, afforestation and recreation, to unlock more restoration potential</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There are enhanced programmes of restoration across the north of England, led by regional delivery partners who are resourced to take action</li> <li>2. Peatland restoration is a significant feature of ELM, as one of several routes to public investment which are readily accessible as part of blended finance to support the work</li> <li>3. More businesses and land managers/owners understand the potential to address their carbon emissions and deliver wider ecosystem services through support for peatland restoration; there is growing corporate investment in the work</li> <li>4. More landowners and managers are supportive of peatland restoration and there are clear business opportunities and incentives for them to do so</li> <li>5. Ecosystem services markets are developing out of collaboration between GNB partners and business and there is an increased understanding as to their market value</li> <li>6. There is increased knowledge and capacity amongst partner staff, contractors and suppliers to support restoration</li> <li>7. The evidence base for the multiple benefits of peatland restoration is enhanced and barriers to increasing the evidence base are removed</li> <li>8. There is a supportive policy environment for peatland restoration to flourish</li> <li>9. There is increasing awareness amongst all sections of society of the value of peatland and the importance of its conservation and restoration for all the goods and services it provides and its value to nature recovery</li> </ol>	<p>There is a broad coalition of public bodies, NGOs, landowners and business focused on a shared goal for peatland restoration</p> <p>All the north's upland peatlands are under conservation management plans with a focus on restoring their ecological and hydrological function</p> <p>Public policy and resources support the restoration and long-term conservation of peatlands</p> <p>The necessary financial mechanisms are in place to support restoration and management</p> <p>A sound and widely agreed evidence base, supports restoration effort and management and helps to attract further resources</p> <p>There is broad public awareness of what well-managed peatlands deliver for society</p> <p>Collaborative action for peatland restoration through the Great North Bog coalition is a national and international model of best practice</p>	<p>The peatlands of the northern English uplands are fully functioning wetland ecosystems, providing benefits for nature, climate and people that are widely understood and appreciated.</p>
<b>Generating awareness and support</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Advocate for policy and practice in local and national government which supports the protection and management of peatlands</li> <li>2. Create shared tools to deliver programmes of engagement at local level</li> <li>3. Create common advocacy tools to highlight the importance of peatland and the need for investment in restoration and better management of peatlands – including making ecosystem services more widely comprehensible</li> <li>4. Develop a communications strategy and an advocacy plan for the Great North Bog</li> </ol>			
<b>Building capacity and collaborative working</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide training for field staff to enhance skills and knowledge within the delivery partnerships and wider stakeholder group (YPP)</li> <li>2. Provide contractor training in bare/eroding peat restoration (YPP)</li> <li>3. Offer traineeships to generate new entrants to the peatland restoration community</li> <li>4. Develop confidence in the contractor, equipment and materials supply chains to increase investment and grow capacity</li> </ol>			
<b>Research, Monitoring and metrics</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consult with the research community to generate consensus on the current scientific evidence base, and agree a timeframe for regular review and updates</li> <li>2. Advocate for the resources for long term survey and monitoring of restoration and its ecosystem service benefits</li> <li>3. Create an easily accessible central GNB data platform that also includes information on areas restored and future strategic priorities</li> <li>4. Identify a 'Top 10' monitoring and research questions</li> <li>5. Trial new techniques in restoration and monitoring and disseminate the results widely</li> <li>6. Ensure the monitoring of local restoration work beyond the compliance monitoring of funded projects</li> <li>7. Assist in the better understanding of the causes and effects of peatland wildfires across northern England, mapping their frequency, extent and impact on the 6 Key Goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan</li> </ol>			
<b>Securing and allocating resources</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish a vehicle for the receipt and disbursement of private sector investment to the delivery partnerships</li> <li>2. Develop a resourcing strategy for the Coalition that blends public and private investment and is linked to the multiple benefits of restoration</li> <li>3. Produce a prospectus for the Great North Bog and what the partnerships can deliver collectively for different audiences</li> <li>4. Bid collaboratively for resources to major funding opportunities such as the Nature for Climate Fund and its successors, and to Trusts and Foundations</li> <li>5. Contribute to further development of the Peatland Code, including delivering work on trial sites</li> <li>6. Further develop the GNB as an investible concept for businesses seeking to decarbonise to net zero</li> </ol>			



## Local Contacts / Information

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## Great North Bog website

[greatnorthbog.org.uk](http://greatnorthbog.org.uk)

## Board Chair and Vice Chair 2022 – 2024

### Chair

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