



Yorkshire
Wildlife Trust

Yorkshire Peat Partnership 15 Year Report 2009 – 2024



yppartnership.org.uk

Rewet, replant, restore

CONTENTS

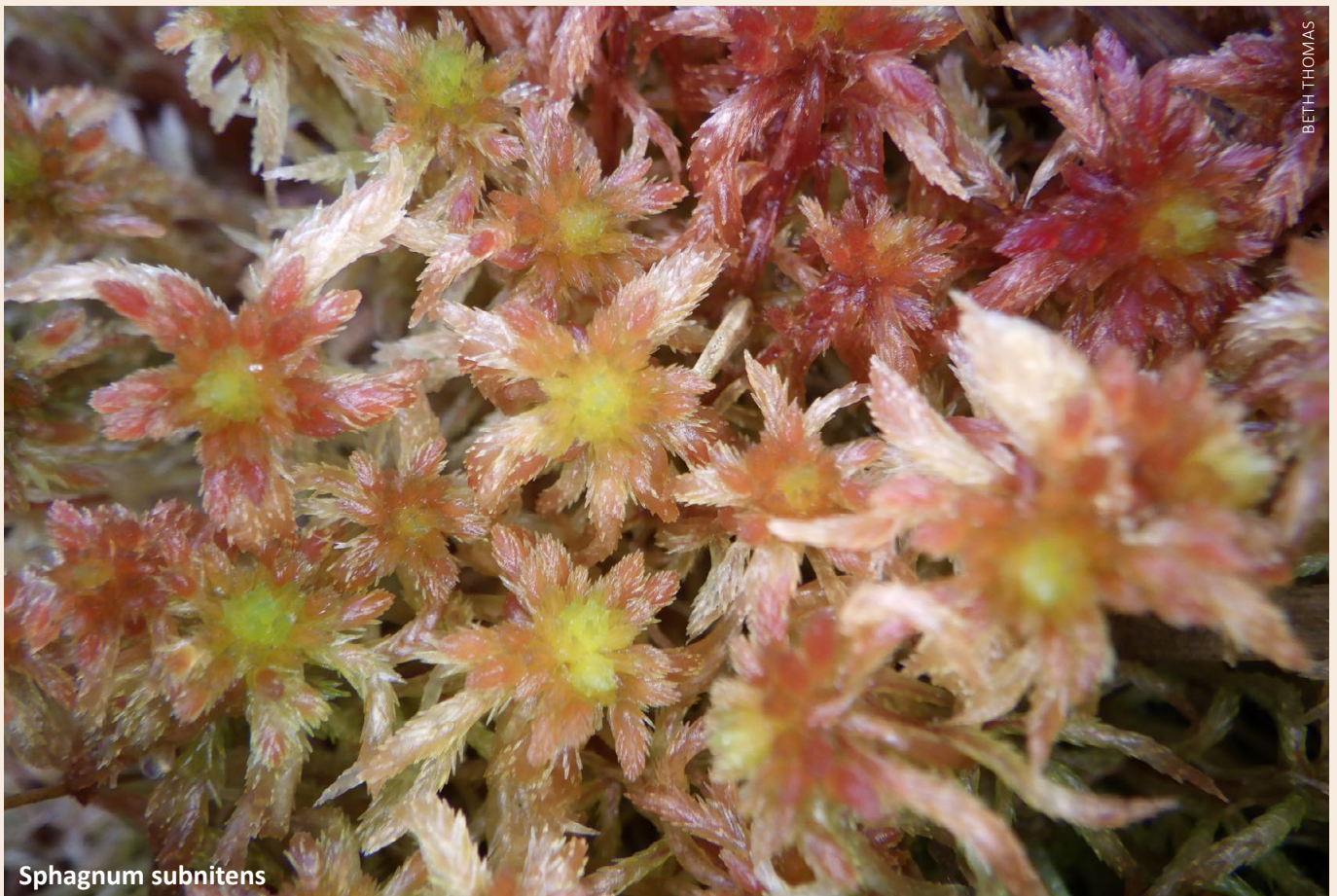
1. 15 Years of Yorkshire Peat Partnership

1.1 Safety blanket	4
1.2 Far more than just services	5
1.3 How it started	5
1.4 How it's going	5
1.5 Policy and funding recognition	6
1.6 Monitoring, research and technology	7
1.7 Building capacity	7
1.8 Building community	8

2. Our work

2.1 Our work on the ground since 2009	9
2.2 Our work to date	10
2.3 Funding	11

Acknowledgements	13
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Sphagnum subnitens

BETH THOMAS





HEADLINES

This is a progress report on the peatland restoration work completed in Yorkshire since 2009. Previous annual reports have included work in Forest of Bowland; this was, strictly speaking, carried out by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust rather than Yorkshire Peat Partnership.

Landscape-scale Action

Yorkshire Peat Partnership delivered a remarkable 46,952 ha* of peat restoration work by the end of March 2024 which is 50% of the estimated 94,220 ha* of peatland in our operational area.

Key highlights included:

-  Securing £6,468,566 to cover core costs (e.g. staff, vehicles, equipment and office costs)
-  Securing £29,895,571 of capital funds to carry out direct peatland restoration
-  Completing foot surveys of 70,825ha of the estimated 94,220 ha of peatland
-  Completing restoration plans for 67,623 ha of peatland

*this is defined as upland management units containing peat.

1. 15 YEARS OF YORKSHIRE PEAT PARTNERSHIP

1.1 Safety blanket

Back in the mid-noughties, people started to catch on to both the importance of our blanket bogs and also just how badly damaged they had become. Agricultural policy following World War II had led to drainage in pursuit of agricultural improvement. As water tables dropped bog surfaces dried out, killing off the characteristic flora that makes bogs bogs. Shorn of its protective vegetation overcoat, upland peat was exposed to the erosive effects of the weather and either washed off into river catchments below or simply billowed away into the atmosphere.

At the same time, there was a gradual pushback against the lifeless-wasteland narrative that had dogged these amazing places since at least *Wuthering Heights* (1847), and we began to recognise Conan Doyle's great Grimpen Mire for the fiction it is. Far from being scenes of horror, they support and nurture us – a safety blanket (bog), if you will. Upland peatlands store carbon, filter our drinking water, mitigate flooding downstream and provide space for recreation, but we diminish them when we frame them solely in the context of the benefits they afford us.



Hare's tail-cottongrass

1.2 Far more than just services

These magnificent, brooding landscapes may appear forbidding and solemn if you experience them in bad weather (as we generally do). Catch them on a sunny day, though, in late spring or early summer when the bubbling call of the curlew – somehow joyous and haunting – is ringing out across the moor; underfoot, a thick, rolling carpet of sphagnum hummocks blankets the ground in shades of green, yellow and red; soft, white heads of cottongrass bob luminously in the gentle breeze; a dragonfly circles a pool, its glittering wings rattling; cranberry, bilberry, crowberry, cloudberry speckle the moss, tiny jewels; overhead, a skylark rises into the sky to parachute back down like a musical shuttlecock; on the horizon, a short-eared owl quarters the ground on elegant, sculling wingbeats. Whatever services our peatlands provide, they are first and foremost homes for wildlife and they are *beautiful*.

1.3 How it started

Back in 2008 peatland restoration work was already underway in the Peak District and South Pennines (under the Moors for the Future Partnership) and in the North Pennines (under the North Pennines Landscape Partnership). However, this left a big gap running through northern Yorkshire. In response, a consortium of stakeholders funded by Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA) and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT) commissioned Tim Thom (YDNPA) and Astrid Hanlon (YWT) to scope out the potential for a peatland restoration project across northern Yorkshire. This scoping assessment led to the creation of Yorkshire Peat Partnership in 2009, now hosted and led by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.

1.4 How it's going

The importance of peatlands and their restoration has risen on the agenda since 2009. Whilst we can't say that restoration funding is easy to come by, it's no longer a case of purely finding the right option on an agri-environment scheme. In the public sector, specific funding pots such as the Nature for Climate Peatland Capital Grant Scheme (NfCPCGS) are now available, and charitable trusts such as Garfield Weston Foundation and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation have provided essential support for our core funding as well as restoration. You can find a full list of our funders later in this report.

For the last 15 years we have been co-ordinating restoration across the Yorkshire Dales, North York Moors National Park and Nidderdale National Landscape, and doesn't time fly? In that time, we have raised over £36 million. This has enabled us to bring almost 47,000 hectares of peatland into recovery, and as a result will prevent almost 13 million tonnes of carbon emissions by 2050. We could not have achieved this without the support of our funders and partners, and the co-operation and participation of the landowners and managers on whose land we are working.

Those of you that have been following our work for some time will be aware of Fleet Moss, one of the most damaged sites in our operational area. Our initial works here were to block the drainage channels (grips), and then the funding ran out. The site was still patterned with a terrible lacework of gulleys (erosion channels), patches of bare peat and hags (steep banks of bare peat). Through the EU LIFE funded Pennine PeatLIFE project, we were able to return in 2018. Coupled with further funding from Defra, Environment Agency, Garfield Weston Foundation and Yorkshire Water, Fleet Moss has become a (fairly sizeable) microcosm of what we are achieving across North Yorkshire. Flexibility from our funders has given us the freedom to research and innovate; to try out new techniques that we can then take, with a demonstrable track record, to less flexible funders. When I first visited Fleet Moss in 2018, it was like Mad Max with mud; now it is verdant, squelching, shimmering with life.

Skylark



STEFAN JOHANNSON



1.5 Policy and funding recognition

With the rising profile of peatlands has come a recognition of the scale of the damage, the need to redress that and a concomitant rise in the availability and flexibility of funding.

In May, 2021, [Defra published the England Peat Action Plan \(EPA\)](#), with this foreword from then Secretary of State for the Environment, George Eustace:

“Our peatlands are an iconic feature of England’s landscape. Often referred to as ‘our national rainforest’, they perform many functions – they are our largest terrestrial carbon store, a haven for rare wildlife, a record of our past, and natural providers of water regulation. Yet, for too long we have taken this valuable natural resource for granted. Only 13% of England’s peatlands are in a near natural state.”

The EPA fit in with The 25 Year Environment Plan and one of its stated goals was to “[...] immediately fund at least 35,000 ha of peatland restoration by 2025 [...]” Although one might reflect that the ambition did not match the scale of the task at hand, it was an important step to finally get recognition for these special places.

The EPA also heralded the NfCPCGS, a very welcome change to the way some previous funding streams were managed. A major stumbling block in the early stages of the project related to the system of paying for works and claiming back from Natural England under the Higher Level Scheme. Under the scheme, 100% grant funded works such as peatland restoration

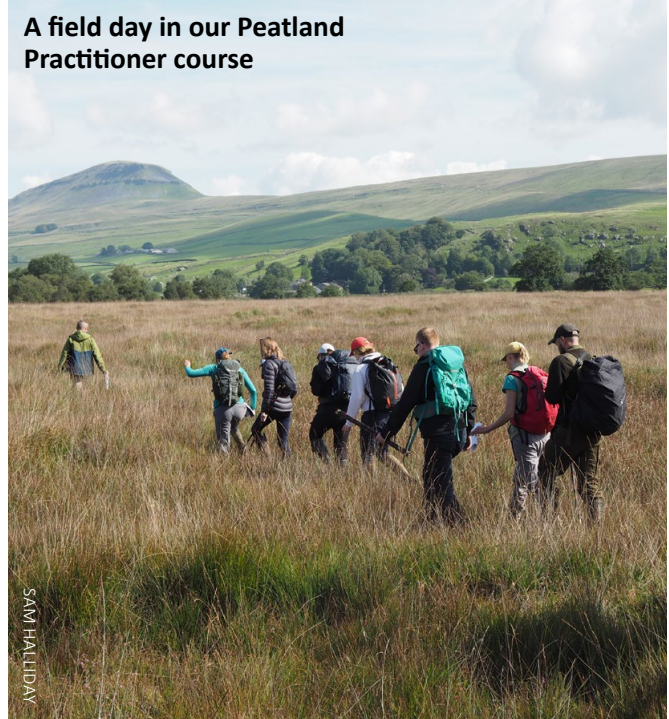
required agreement holders to pay up front and then obtain a “receipted invoice” in order to submit a claim to Natural England. Given the high cost of peatland restoration and the size of invoices most landowners were reluctant to pay out such large amounts and then have to wait for an unspecified period of time while their claim was processed. YPP was able to act as an “Authorised Payment Agent” to the agreement holder, pay contractors and claim back directly from Natural England without the agreement holder having to finance anything. As a small charity YWT would have suffered significant cash-flow problems if it paid a number of contractors on a number of different restoration sites and then had to wait for at least 2-4 weeks for claims to be processed. This was solved with the generous help of The Wildlife Trusts and the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, which provided interest-free “bridging” loans to cover the gap. Without this administrative fix it is unlikely that YPP would have been so successful.

In contrast, NfCPCGS gives peatland restoration partnerships the ability to apply directly for funding with no administrative or financial burden for the landowner; this means that our interventions are not limited by what an agri-environment agreement holder can afford to bankroll. Another very helpful development is that this funding stream will also pay for staff to carry out the restoration works. Although agri-environment schemes funded capital works, without staff to conduct surveys and write restoration plans, those works took a long time to come to fruition. We hope that the scheme will be extended while the new administration comes to conclusions about the successor to the current Countryside Stewardship scheme, Environmental Land Management schemes.

1.6 Monitoring, research, and technology

It's not just the nuts and bolts of restoration to which NfCPCGS is making a difference. In the infancy of our work, another function that we could not get funded was monitoring – this made it difficult to state with absolute certainty how much difference our interventions were making and over what timeframe. Certainly, we could look and see that vegetation was returning and the bog was more squelchy but scientifically speaking, this is anecdotal. We now have funding – for both equipment and staff – to conduct baseline studies before works commence and across the restoration programme. This enables us to establish the water table, and vegetation cover, before any works start and then measure, in real time, how our work is affecting the land on which we are working. In so doing, we can adapt our interventions more effectively as work progresses.

We have also been looking at new ways to achieve results more efficiently. We have slowed the flow of water across bare peat with coir logs; imported cell-bunding from lowland restoration to cost-effectively control water on shallow slopes; taken to the skies with Unoccupied Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) to better understand how water moves across the landscape and so target our interventions more accurately. Where once we used paper maps and dead reckoning to map erosion features, we now input peat-depths, erosion features and vegetation records onto handheld GPS mappers; the data is downloaded to our open source database, BogBase, which can automatically produce a restoration plan.



1.7 Building capacity

As the aspirations of the team has grown, so has the team itself, from a handful in 2009 to almost 30 in 2024. In our first 5 years, we worked on circa 21,000 ha of peatland, roughly 4,200 ha per year; this season we worked on 7,300 ha. The sector's aspirations as a whole are also growing but they are outstripping capacity. Across the country, as the urgency of restoration has increased, the number of people able to carry it out has remained static. To address this shortfall, we have designed a LANTRA accredited course, now in its third year. It is open to learners from across the UK to give them the skills and know-how to implement effective restoration best-practice and enables you to make a real impact on the ground. This course is for:

- Those looking to develop skills in project managing peatland restoration, from survey to construction
- Those looking to gain accreditation to support professionalisation of skills
- Those looking to gain understanding to enter the peatland restoration sector

Additionally, we will begin running an introductory course this year, aimed at those who need to understand the basics of the sector before committing to self-development for it.

1.8 Building community

We want people to care about our peatlands and take action to help us rewet, replant, restore. In 2002, we stepped beyond standard communication into engagement with our Give Peat a Chance exhibition at the Dales Countryside Museum and then the Museum of North Craven Life in Settle, and finally in Cliffe Castle Museum in Keighley. We sought to inform and engage the public about peatlands through the lens of artistic interpretation, using visual arts, textiles, film, poetry and music, all centred around a bog in a box.

Building on this, we are seeking to expand that engagement with our ACE Bogs project with Denton Reserve in Nidderdale National Landscape. At the heart of ACE Bogs is the aim to engage the public in understanding the management of peatlands through active volunteering and involvement in a long-term citizen science project. ACE Bogs intends to equip volunteers with the skills to monitor key indicators of the health of peatlands over time. As well as this, the project aims to provide opportunities to volunteers to use what they have learned and observed to share their findings and analysis with others through a series of artist-led workshops to generate and disseminate creative campaign outputs.

Moving the exhibition to Keighley has led to another exciting endeavour with Keighley Creatives, *Pledges to the landscape*. This project, funded by West Yorkshire Combined Authority sees us working with six primary schools across the town to help them understand the peatlands that surround them. It will culminate in the pupils' artistic responses to their peatlands being incorporated into our restoration.



Our monitoring work is also a keystone of our engagement activities, both through NfC funding and the IUCN UK Peatland Programme's Eyes on the Bog (EotB methodology). It enables our volunteers not only to feel that they are making a difference but also act as advocates for peatlands and their restoration. Our team of volunteers has notched up the following successes:

NfC:

- 👉 105 volunteer days total across 42 volunteers (NfC)
- ✅ 215 plots set up
- ✅ 215 peat depth rods installed
- ✅ 2,880 dipwells installed
- ✅ 70 TIMs (time-integrated mass-flux sediment traps) installed
- 👤 Across one dipwell monitoring season, the team covers ~7,404 metres of elevation gain across all 6 visits for our NfC sites, which is the equivalent of climbing over the height of Kilimanjaro.

EOTB:

- ✅ 47 EOTB Plots in North Yorkshire
- 👉 58 registered/ interested volunteers
- 👤 Over 70 guests attended our EOTB Day
- ✅ 1,705 vegetation records
- ✅ 137 rust rod records, 137 von post records

On the virtual side of engagement, we have a catalogue of peatland films on our Vimeo channel, produced in-house, to entertain and educate. We have expanded our social media channels from Twitter (nobody really calls it X) to include Instagram and TikTok, with some fairly rapid successes:

- 📷 **Instagram Followers:**
07/2023 – 119 followers 07/2024 – 588 followers
- 🎵 **TikTok Followers:**
07/2023 – 56 followers, 07/2024 – 2,213 followers
- ❤️ **Total likes:**
07/2023 – 613 likes, 07/2024 – 108,622 likes
- ⭐ **Most liked video:**
07/2023 – 326 likes, 07/2024 – 42,000 likes
- 📺 **Most viewed video:**
07/2023 – 3,402 views, 07/2024 – 453,300 views

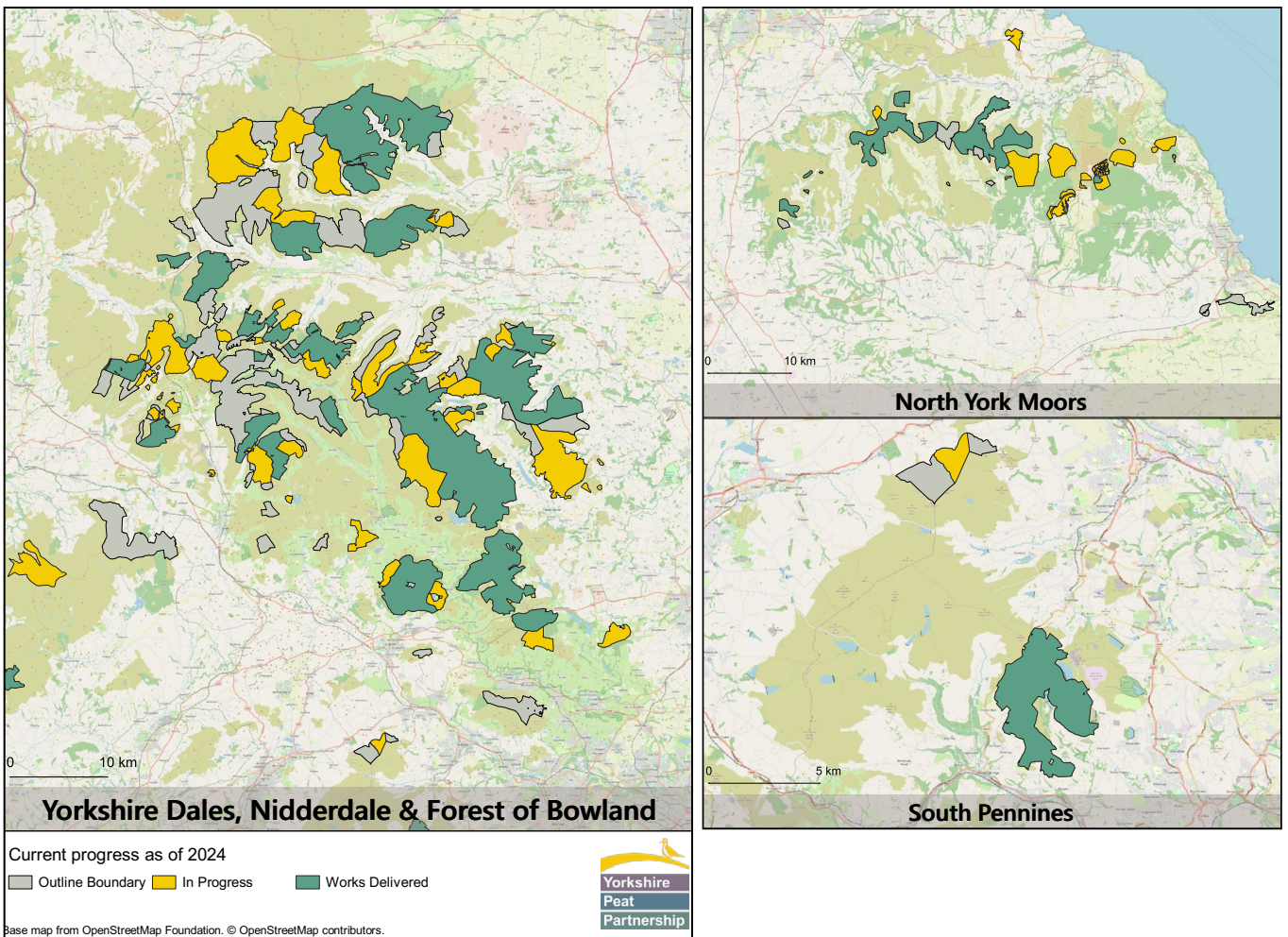
Great North Bog

It is YPP's pioneering spirit that we hope to share with our partners in the Great North Bog, spanning 7,000 sq km of peatlands across the north of England. Our 15 years of graft and earned expertise can not only help those that have recently come into our niche, it can demonstrate to private finance that this coalition is worthy of their investment.



2. OUR WORK

2.1 Our work on the ground since 2009



2.2 Our work to date

Areas surveyed and brought into restoration management to date

Total area covered by surveys (ha) to date	70,825
Total area brought into restoration management to date	45,592

Interventions to date

Restoration technique	2009- 19	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	To date
Blocked grips/gulleys (km)	2,025	83	156	211	157	346	2,978
Reprofile hags and gullies (km)	3,179	74	22	287	353	491	4,406
Dams (no.)	200,949	3,631	6,557	18,004	8,713	15,848	253,702
Bare peat revegetated (ha)	108	33	22	32	14	67	276
Planting							
Sphagnum plugs(no.)	93,850	126,500	76,177	638,113	413,978	658,122	2,006,704
Cottongrass plugs(no.)	124,775	85,596	173,080	258,013	158,834	370,896	1,171,194
Crowberry plugs (no.)	0	0	0	137,006	167,162	342,900	647,068
All plugs (no.)	218,625	212,096	249,257	1,033,132	739,974	1,371,918	3,825,002



BETH THOMAS

2.3 Funding

Yorkshire Peat Partnership is not-for-profit; all of our funding goes into covering our overheads, research and development, monitoring or capital restoration works.

Core revenue funding

Organisation	Amount £					TOTAL
	2009-19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	
Yorkshire Wildlife Trust – legacies, fundraising, overhead recovery and consultancy	428,173	106,054	53,556	27,051	-	614,834
Morgan Sindall donations to Nature for Climate					200,000	200,000
Yorkshire Wildlife Trust – Individual donations					11,794	11,794
Yorkshire Wildlife Trust – Corporate donations					7,800	7,800
Yorkshire Wildlife Trust – People’s Postcode Lottery Nature Based Solutions			188,843			188,843
Yorkshire Wildlife Trust – VP PLC corporate donor to Peatfix project	-	-	24,000	-	24,000	48,000
Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority	300,100	-	-	5,000		305,100
North York Moors National Park Authority	93,146	-	-	-		93,146
Nidderdale National Landscape Partnership	1,000	-	-	-		1,000
North Pennines National Landscape Partnership	10,000	-	-	-		10,000
Environment Agency – direct	314,379	95,000	14,348	14,250	13,180	451,157
Environment Agency – via Pennine PeatLIFE	225,000	-	95,000	-		320,000
Environment Agency - Great North Bog Development	-	-	59,833	-		59,833
Natural England	588,845	-	-	-	23,961	612,806
DEFRA Peatland Fund – via YWT	66,666	33,333	13,703	-		113,702
DEFRA England Peat Strategy Pilot	45,083	-	-	-		45,083
Higher Level Stewardship Scheme	248,864	-	-	-		248,864
Countryside Stewardship (PA2s & CoW)	154,231	90,977	97,227	73,536	63,774	479,745
Yorkshire Water – contracts	405,074	61,258	194,661	178,924	150,936	990,853
Yorkshire Water – via Pennine PeatLIFE	143,771	-	-	-		143,771
Peter de Haan Conservation Trust – via YWT	100,000	-	-	-		100,000
EU-LIFE – via Pennine PeatLIFE	-	121,902	119,630	70,025		311,557
Natural England – Nature for Climate Fund	-	-	90,820	147,657	194,685	433,162
Nature for Climate Fund – Moor to Restore	-	-	-	44,363	4,736	49,099
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation – via YWT	-	-	110,000	176,000	121,000	407,000
Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority FiPL	-	-	-	-	6,288	6,288
Nidderdale National Landscape Partnership FiPL	-	-	-	-	6,288	6,288
Tees-Swale: Naturally Connected (Heritage Lottery Fund via NPAP)	-	-	-	23,640	20,638	44,278
Bradford MDC – WYCA Climate Community Grant	-	-	-	-	26,000	26,000
Groundwork contribution – New to Nature Trainee	-	-	-	-	18,238	18,238
Peat Practitioners training course	-	-	-	-	14,115	14,115
Garfield Weston Foundation				15,000		15,000
TOTAL	3,124,332	508,524	1,061,621	785,044	989,045	6,468,566
Average per annum	284,030	-	-	-		462,040
Loans – Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority	2,107,341	-	-	-		-
Loans – The Wildlife Trusts	1,500,000	-	-	-		-

Capital funding

Organisation	Amount £					TOTAL
	2009-19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	
Environment Agency	643,410	-	80,652	6,583	138,750	869,395
Natural England – Water Framework Directive	166,239	-	-	-	-	166,239
Natural England Nature for Climate Fund	-	-	219,600	2,045,597	2,586,536	4,851,733
Higher Level Scheme (administered by Natural England through individual land manager agreements)	11,417,822	77,076	-	-	-	11,494,898
Countryside Stewardship Scheme (administered by Natural England and Rural Payments Agency through individual land manager agreements)	176,219	573,551	1,250,563	73,536	222,937	2,296,806
Yorkshire Water – contracts	2,489,508	149,709	415,585	789,532	719,619	4,563,953
Yorkshire Water – via Pennine PeatLIFE	756,229	-	-	-	-	756,229
EU-LIFE – via Pennine PeatLIFE	38,588	799,341	140,437	19,736	-	998,102
DEFRA Peatland Fund -via YWT	1,621,850	1,811,373	98,106	-	-	3,531,329
Nidderdale National Landscape Partnership FiPL	-	-	-	6,495	-	6,495
Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority FiPL	-	-	-	-	63,392	63,392
Garfield Weston Foundation	-	-	-	297,000	-	297,000
TOTAL	17,309,865	3,411,050	2,204,943	3,238,479	3,731,234	29,895,571
Average per annum	1,573,624	-	-	-	-	1,993,038

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The success of Yorkshire Peat Partnership is the result of the hard work of by a huge range of partners and could not have happened without them. Landowners, their agents, gamekeepers, farmers and tenants have helped deliver the restoration work on their land, often helping practically but also providing advocacy support and helping to unlock funding.

None of the work could have taken place without our major funders supporting both the capital work but also the hugely important core funds that enable Yorkshire Peat Partnership to function. We are hugely grateful to Natural England, the Environment Agency, Yorkshire Water, the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, the North York Moors National Park Authority, Peter de Haan Conservation Trust, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation & Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation, Vp plc, People's Postcode Lottery and Defra.

We would also like to thank our Steering Group members for supporting and guiding our work.

A special mention goes to Yorkshire Wildlife Trust for hosting Yorkshire Peat Partnership and providing all the essential back-up services we couldn't have done without. The impact and cost of hosting YPP should not be under-estimated.

Last but not least none of this could have happened without the support of Yorkshire Wildlife Trust's hugely dedicated, hard-working peat team (Shanti Adamson, Roz Bardon, Joe Bodycote, Katie Bolton, Mark Brown, Josh Burge, Lucy Cardy, Pete Christopherson, Matt Cross, Aaron de Raat, Emily East, Liberty Firby-Fisk; Rhiannon Green, Sam Halliday, Joseph Haywood, Dom Hinchley, Astrid Hanlon, Les Hughes, Ceri Katz, Emma Knowles, Lucy Lee, Megan Lee, Samantha Lewsey, Tessa Levens, Ollie Mackrill, Lyndon Marquis, Jessica McMaster, Chris Miller, Gautier Nicoli, Chris Osborne, Manon Pue, Sophie Pyne, Jenny Sharman, Ellen Shields, Lizzie Slingsby, Alexandra Smith, Jackie Smith, Matt Snelling, Rosie Snowden, Emily Stewart-Rayner, Elizabeth Sullivan, Kane Szuman, Tim Thom, Beth Thomas, Kay Waites, Jamie Wharton, Laura Watson, Jo Welch) who have come and gone over the years but remain the heart, soul and spirit of Yorkshire Peat Partnership.

JENNY SHARMAN



Volunteer planting sphagnum on Fleet Moss