A joint partnership publication for the Humberhead Peatlands National Nature Reserve.
Isle of Axholme and Hatfield Chase Landscape Partnership

I wanted to update you on the Isle of Axholme and Hatfield Chase Landscape Partnership, which I introduced back in issue 6 of Moor Space. Since my introduction Laura Smith-Higgins has joined the team as our Archaeology and Heritage Officer and Joanne Meays as our Education Officer. Together with our project leads we have started to deliver a number of the sixteen projects that form the Partnership. For this update I will focus on the ones taking place around the Moors.

Our Reconstructing the Wildscape project is starting to pick up the pace with Nika Shilobod, a PHD student, taking up her role within the project. In September, Dr Nicki Whitehouse from Plymouth University gave an interesting talk in Crowle titled ‘Wastelands or rich ecological systems? A historical perspective on Thorne and Hatfield Moors’. To complement the talk, Nicki led a fascinating guided walk around Thorne Moors.

Planning permission for the viewing towers on Hatfield Moors has been approved with conditions set around the second platform installation. Work on procuring a company to build the towers is underway, however as we can’t undertake any building activity on the Moors between the end of March and October, we are planning for the towers to be installed towards the end of 2018.

The works to resurface the road along Moor Dike Road leading to the Ten Acre Lake car park on Hatfield Moors and Lindholme Island residence have now been completed.

We have lots of volunteering events, activities and training available; we are using our website, social media accounts and contacting people directly to let them know about what is coming up. If you would like to know more you can email us on landscapepartnership@northlincs.gov.uk or call us on 01724 296732.

The community grant is proving popular and two recently completed projects include the restoration of the pinfold in East Lound and the installation of 8 oak benches along the Haxey Line Local Nature Reserve. The IoAHC Project Team are happy to support the development of applications for eligible activities. For further details and to apply for the community grant visit the IoAHC Landscape Partnership website at http://ioahc.net.

Paul Schofield, Landscape Project Manager
The LIFE project has now been running for over three years with this being our last and final year. Looking back is always a wise and right thing to do with an eye to the future. We are on the closing stage of the project which will be drawn to a close at the end of June 2018. It’s been a long journey and whilst there is more to do to complete the project much has been achieved and many more achievements will crystallise over the next few months. In particular final reports for much of the monitoring will be produced and it is here that the effects of the work we have undertaken will be shown. We hope that these reports will be but one measure as to how the site is recovering. It is quite daunting when you hear that a functioning lowland peat bog will accumulate 1mm of peat a year so that 1000 years for 1m. If there has been on average 2.5m of peat extracted across the bogs then that might be 2,500 to get back to some sort of level that may have existed across the site. Of course an active raised peat bog isn’t flat so we would expect the centre of the peat dome(s) to possibly be higher.

Well whilst I might hope to be around for a good few years yet, I doubt it will be 100 years never mind 1000 years. Fortunately I can use my imagination, see pictures and even better I was given the opportunity to visit a more intact peat bog in Latvia earlier this summer. I visited the Kemeru National Park just outside Kemeru about 100 miles east of the Latvian Capital, Riga. Although most tourists rarely venture out this far, the wildlife reserve and national park at Ķemeri is one of Latvia’s most impressive natural treasures. Its ancient raised bogs, swamps, forests and lakes were created roughly 8,000 years ago when the sea retreated to its current position.

Plants and animals abound, the park is home to a wide range of fauna including rare birds like the black stork...
not to mention moose, deer, elk, foxes, wolves and wild cattle and horses that were reintroduced into this unique ecosystem with some help from the World Wildlife Fund. There are ten species of amphibians found in the National Park, some found on the bog itself but many in some of the marsh and scrub areas found within the park including the common spadefoot (*Pelobates fuscus*), sand toad (*Bufo calamita*) and the moor frog (*Rana arvalis*). Birdlife is extensive with over 260 of the 342 species found in Latvia having been recorded from the National Park including wood sandpiper, common cranes, white tailed eagles and lesser spotted eagles. Nearly 900 varieties of flora can also be observed in the park including plants that are found nowhere else in the country.

On my visit to the mire I was struck by the sheer abundance and dominance of a range of brightly coloured sphagnum mosses along with bilberry, crowberry and blueberry with sundews. The sphagnum mosses ranged in colour from wine red through to yellow with all hues of oranges, tawny and pinks. There are stunted Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) and an abundance of small open water pools.

A recently refurbished 3km boardwalk takes you through a picturesque landscape of stunted trees, red sphagnum moss and dark pools of water at this raised bog. An observation tower is located in the middle of the boardwalk and affords visitors fantastic views of this natural wonder. Is this how Thorne and Hatfield Moors will look in 1000 years? I can only wonder but let’s hope that the work being undertaken by both Natural England and Doncaster East IDB will put Thorne and Hatfield Moors on a trajectory that will see the mire returned to some of its former glory.

**David Hargreaves, LIFE+ Project Manager**

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**Take care**

- There are many old peat workings, drains and water courses. You are strongly advised to keep to way marked walks and existing tracks.
- Please take responsibility for your own safety. In hot weather you will need a sunhat, drinking water and insect repellent.
- Dogs must be kept under effective control at all times. You must keep your dog on a short lead between 1 March and 31 July and all year round near farm animals.
- Camping, fishing, barbeques, motorcycles, horses and cycles are not allowed. Cycles are permitted on the designated route only at Hatfield and horses by permit only at Hatfield.
- Do not leave valuables in your car.
- Danger deep water. No swimming.
- Snakes live here. Do not touch them.
- Prepare for your visit by wearing suitable outdoor clothing – you will need to wear stout shoes or wellingtons.

**Please follow the Countryside Code**

- Be safe, plan ahead and follow any signs.
- Leave gates and property as you find them.
- Protect plants and animals and take your litter home.
- Keep dogs under effective control.
- Consider other people.

**Facilities**

- There are toilets on Hatfield Moors at the Boston Park car park but none at Thorne Moors – the nearest being in the town.
Peat Bogs – what are they good for?

If you are of a certain age, you may recall the bearded environmentalist, David Bellamy. On TV, you could often see him exclaiming, ‘Look at that, it’s weally wonderful stuff’ as he scooped up something organic and, usually, yucky. One can imagine him doing that on Thorne Moors, enthusing over a handful of sphagnum moss or saturated peat. David Bellamy understood the importance of peat bogs, but do the rest of us?

Why are peat bogs special?

Peat bogs are special for loads of reasons. Previous issues of Moor Space have highlighted some of the wildlife that depends on the Moors, from birds to adders and mini-beasts. Hannah Curzon, from the University of York, explained the value of the Moors to people, as places for learning, recreation and better health. But what about the stuff beneath our feet: peat, the very (oozy) foundation of a raised bog? Who would realise that peat has a vital part to play in reducing global warming? Or that peat’s value to our heritage is in the same league as our national museums, libraries and monuments? In this article of two halves, we’ll delve more deeply into the value of peat.

First half – Carbon: lock it or lose it!

No, not a slogan from South Yorkshire Police, but possibly one for environmentalists: curbing the release of greenhouse gases and removing them from the atmosphere both help to slow down global warming.

When plants grow – in forests, moorlands or the seas – they extract one greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide, from the air and lock it away in their tissues. But it is lost again when the vegetation dies and decomposes. Not so with peat. As it is formed in waterlogged, acidic conditions, without oxygen, the remains of sphagnum mosses and sedges do not break down: carbon is effectively locked away for good. As a result, peat contains nearly half of all the carbon in Britain’s soils - around 3 billion tonnes – but in less than a tenth of our land area. This is more than all the carbon in the woodlands of Britain and France combined! So peat has become a really important part of our ‘natural capital’. This is the latest environmental buzz-word describing the ‘stock’ of natural resources of value to society and essential to a sustainable economy.

Restoring carbon

The carbon in Thorne and Hatfield Moors was locked away for about 4,000 years, until the Moors were drained and stripped of peat. Once the dry peat was exposed to the air, it broke down naturally and carbon dioxide escaped. That’s why restoring the water levels on the Moors not only brings back a special habitat, it also halts carbon loss and gets peat forming again – at a rate of 10cm a century. It’s estimated that if all of England’s and Wales’ peatlands were restored, it could save an additional 400,000 tonnes of carbon a year. That’s the same as the annual greenhouse gas emissions from 84,000 cars! So peatlands offer ‘carbon capture and storage’ the natural way, even if the Drax power station is no longer undertaking this as a technological fix.
Second half – Peat: time machine to the prehistoric age

If you go onto the Moors today, you’re sure of a big surprise...? Hopefully not, but it’s always possible that you’ll stumble upon something remarkable, as retired planning officer, Mick Oliver, did on Hatfield Moors in 2004. He chanced upon the work of human hands that hadn’t seen the light of day for more than 4,000 years. Made from pine wood, the ‘Lindholme trackway’ turned out to be the oldest one with a ‘corduroy’ design anywhere in Britain and Ireland: it was dated from 2,500 to 3,000 B.C. So, when Hatfield’s early inhabitants first laid its timbers - to keep their feet dry - their southern relatives were labouring over Stonehenge and it was the heyday of Egyptian pyramid building. Zoom forward to the present and in 2017 the trackway’s importance was recognised with ‘Ancient Monument’ status: something of Neolithic note in your own backyard!

The Lindholme trackway shows us that the deep peat of raised bogs offers an invaluable window on the past. Because organic remains don’t break down in the wet peat, it preserves a stunning record of all things prehistoric, the lives of ancient peoples, past climates, what plants and insects existed and sometimes even people themselves. Hundreds of such ‘bog bodies’ have been discovered in the peatlands of northern Europe, although none is reliably recorded from the Moors.

This peat record represents a literally priceless resource for understanding and learning about the past: a treasure trove of knowledge for society. So the next time you venture onto the Moors, spare a thought for the dark stuff beneath your feet. You’re not walking on a ‘waste’, but a heritage to rival the contents of the National Gallery or British Museum. And while you may not be lucky enough to find a bog body, careful searching on your knees could reveal the remains of other ancient inhabitants.

Richard Smith, LIFE+ Project Monitoring Officer

Archaeologists investigating the Lindholme trackway in autumn 2005 © Henry Chapman

A wing case of the reed beetle Plateumaris discolor – long lost from the Moors but still given up from the peat © Natural England
Walks and Events Coming Up

For more information or to book where stated, call 07766 420290.

**Sun 11 March 10.30am** – Reptile Spotting guided walk on Hatfield Moors – As adders awake after Winter slumber now is a good time to look for them as they bask in the warming sunshine at the side of tracks. Join NNR volunteers and staff and find out more about these residents. To note there will be two walks as separate parties to take a short walk (approx. 3 miles) and a longer walk (approx. 4-5 miles). *Booking essential.*

**Thurs 12 April 10.30am** – Buds and Bird Song guided walk on Thorne Moors – approx. 5-6 miles at strider pace. Listening to the morning chorus from resident and visiting birds and appreciating the warmer and longer Spring days. *No need to book.*

**Sun 13 May 5.30am** – Dawn Chorus guided walk on Hatfield Moors – Approx. 3 miles at stroller pace drinking in the morning’s experience provided by our feathered friends. *Booking essential.*

**Weds 23 May 6.30pm** – Evening guided walk on Hatfield Moors – Approx. 4-5 miles at strider pace. *No need to book.*

All events are free but donations welcome. Unless stated otherwise, **all Hatfield events are to meet at Boston Park car park, DN7 6DR and all Thorne events are to meet at Recreation Ground car park, Moorends – end of Grange Road, DN8 4NA.**

What is Happening in the Boston Park Car Park?

We are currently building our new office and workshop, giving us an on-site base to work from for the first time. Having our staff and volunteers on-site will allow us to work more effectively in restoring this internationally important site, whilst being better able to help our visitors enjoy and appreciate this unique habitat.

This new building has a significant research and educational purpose, including a classroom and facilities for important scientific research. This will inform the long term restoration of the Humberhead Peatlands and allow us to share our learning with others. These new facilities will also help to provide exciting outdoor learning opportunities, events and other activities for our local schools and the community.

We are working carefully with our building contractors to minimise disruption, keep the site safe for our visitors, and minimise impact on the reserve’s special wildlife. Find out more about the story of our new building on our Facebook page [facebook.com/humberheadpeatlands](http://facebook.com/humberheadpeatlands)

If you would like to be part of the future success of this nature reserve, why not become one of our volunteers? Volunteering at the Humberhead Peatlands is open to individuals and corporate groups, in fact anybody with enthusiasm for the environment. If you think you have some time to help us out, contact our Volunteer Co-ordinator on **07766 420290**, or write to us at our current office: Unit 1a, Green Tree Warehousing, Tudworth Road, Hatfield, Doncaster, DN7 6HD.

Robert Burnett, Manager, Natural England, Yorkshire and Northern Lincolnshire
Our website tells you more about who we are, what we do, our approach and how you can find out more about our programmes.

www.flyingfutures.org

How do I get to Humberhead Peatlands NNR?

The closest towns to the NNR are Goole, Thorne, Doncaster, Scunthorpe, Crowle and Hatfield.

By public transport

Rail stations – Thorne North and South.
Contact South Yorkshire Transport on 01709 515151.

Moorends is served by bus from Thorne.
Contact Doncaster Tourist Information on 01302 734309.

Crowle is served by rail and bus.
Contact Brigg Tourist Information on 01652 657053.

Hatfield Woodhouse and Wroot villages are served by a limited bus service.

To receive future issues of Moor Space contact us at moorspace@yahoo.com

How do I contribute to Moor Space?

We’d like you to tell us what you think – your concerns and also what you enjoy about the Moors so we can focus on the right subjects in each issue and seek out the most useful information for you the reader. We welcome other points of view, providing they are constructive and supported by facts.

Contact as above marking for the attention of the Moor Space Editor.

Follow the Humberhead Peatlands National Nature Reserve on http://www.facebook.com/humberheadpeatlands
Moor Space is produced and edited by a Steering Group who can be contacted at moorspace@yahoo.com

The Steering Group includes representatives of the following organisations:

**North Lincolnshire Council** – Own and manage land on Crowle Moors and maintain access to this and other land nearby.
Contact: 01724 729000  ★ environmentteam@northlincs.gov.uk

**Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council** – Publicises access to and around the Moors.
Contact: 01302 736000  ★ publicrightsofway@doncaster.gov.uk

**Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust** – Owns land on Crowle Moors and manages it as a Nature Reserve.
Contact: 01507 526667  ★ info@lincstrust.co.uk

**Natural England** – Natural England owns land on Thorne Moors, Goole Moors and Hatfield Moors. It is all part of the Humberhead Peatlands National Nature Reserve.
Contact Senior Reserve Manager: 07827 280405.
www.gov.uk/natural-england

**Thorne & Hatfield Moors Conservation Forum** – Prioritises science and publishes research, see website for list of publications. It also campaigns on issues affecting the conservation of the Moors.
www.thmcf.org and see also thmcf.wordpress.com
Contact: execsec@thmcf.org

**Restoring the Humberhead Peatlands** – LIFE+ Project (LIFE13NAT/UK/000451) – Funding from the European Union’s Biodiversity and Nature Programme (EU LIFE+), Doncaster East Internal Drainage Board and Natural England is helping the restoration of lowland raised mires of Thorne and Hatfield Moors.
Contact: Humberhead.Peatlands@naturalengland.org.uk

FRONT COVER IMAGES: Cotton-grass scenery with bog wood © Steve Hiner, Cotton-grass flower spikes © Janet Canning, Dragonbacks ponds © Janet Canning