




Our vision for the High Peak Moors

National
Trust

The next 50 years and beyond



Vegetation along water courses will become thicker with a variety of dwarf shrubs, wetland plants and scattered trees. Soils will be less prone to erosion and more tree cover will improve water quality.



This is our vision for the High Peak Moors, for the next 50 years and beyond. It's about protecting and making the most of the things that are important in this rugged and beautiful landscape.

What you'll find inside

We want you to know what we are trying to achieve in the High Peak Moors, and how we are trying to achieve it. This booklet explains this, and takes a close look at the five key elements of our vision. If you find there are technical points you'd like to look into in a bit more depth, then there's more detail on our website: www.high-peak-moors.co.uk or please do feel free to get in touch by email: peakdistrict@nationaltrust.org.uk

The booklet is divided into the following sections:

- The things that are special about the High Peak Moors
- What we plan to see over the coming years, and why
- How we will make this happen

The five elements of our vision are:

1. People being inspired
2. People looking after the land
3. Secure and healthy peat bogs
4. Vibrant wildlife, including birds of prey
5. More trees and shrubs in the valleys and cloughs

The things that are special about the High Peak Moors



■ High Peak Moors area

The High Peak Moors stretch over almost forty square miles of the Peak District national park, spanning the high ground between Manchester and Sheffield. They cover boulder-strewn landscapes of rocky tors, dramatic hanging valleys and cloughs, and mile upon mile of wild and remote bog. It's a remarkable place, made all the more remarkable by the fact that it is so close to, sometimes in sight of, the homes of millions of people.

That mixture of rugged wide-open space, neighbouring big modern cities and lots of people means that the moors can be **life-enhancing**. It was this that drew people to an iconic 'mass-trespass' on the land at Kinder in 1932, breaking the trail for the more than 10 million visitors who now come to enjoy the Peak each year.

The moors matter to people in lots of ways. They might be a place for striding out – riding, running, walking, cycling - for lungfuls of fresh air and open space. They might be a place where you see a peregrine soar – and never forget. They might be a place to come to the edge of, and take in more gently. For lots of people they inspire from afar; it can be life-affirming to catch a view, have memories, or just to know that they are there.

The moors also provide people with **a living**, and they have for generations (human traces have been found up here dating back 8000 years). The farming, mainly livestock rearing, that takes place on the moors has played a large part in making the landscape the way that it is. And enterprises, both traditional and new, which draw their business from the land will be a vital and practical part of making the moors work in the future.





We'd even go so far as to say that the moors are a **life support system**. The peat bogs and wet heaths soak up and shed huge volumes of water that is then gathered in the grand old Derwent Valley and Kinder reservoirs and piped out to homes by Severn Trent Water and United Utilities. The peat bogs can also trap and store carbon dioxide – the main contributor to climate change. There are 13 million tonnes of carbon stored up in the peat on the National Trust's part of the moors. That's almost three years' worth of greenhouse gas emissions from Sheffield. Protecting our water supplies and holding on to these vast stores of carbon are important responsibilities, and are likely to become even more important in the future. Nothing mankind has made performs these tasks as efficiently as the natural peat system.

There are other, more elemental qualities of the High Peak Moors that may not have an immediate practical function or use, but which we know are important. Things like the wildlife – the special mixture of plants and animals, including red grouse, golden plover, dunlin, short-eared owl, mountain hare; dwarf shrubs like bilberry and heather; and bog-building sphagnum mosses. We'd also include the rocks, the bog, the weather, and the wide open emptiness. Things like that are hard to measure, or to claim have a particular job to do; but they are important and are part of our vision, too.



What we plan to see over the coming years, and why

We want to protect and make the most of the things that are special and important in the High Peak Moors. We've talked to hundreds of people who value, use, visit, live and work on the moors; we've had hundreds more comments through our website, and we've asked experts from a range of specialist organisations for their opinions. Talking to people has helped us to decide on a very clear set of priorities for what we want to achieve over the next 50 years, and beyond.

Our priorities are fairly straightforward, and we can picture them as a set of five key elements we could expect to see if we were to take a look at the landscape in 50 years' time. This is our vision for the High Peak Moors.

People being inspired

We want to see people out there loving the moors as their own, and feeling free to explore them. And we want to see people who might not have thought of venturing up here before feeling like it's their place, too. We want this because we believe the beauty and open spaces of the moors are important in people's lives, and because our purpose is to look after them for ever, for everyone.



Before...

...and after
Areas of bare peat will become vegetated again with mosses, grasses and dwarf shrubs. This wet blanket bog will soak up water like a sponge, reducing the risk of damaging flash floods and locking up carbon as new peat forms.





People looking after the land

We want to see people working on and around the moors, helping us to care for them. We will work with people who share our vision and who want to help us find the best ways to achieve it. Our partners might range from other conservation organisations, to local businesses, water companies, local farmers and grouse moor managers. Whoever it is we're working with, our aim is to see a moorland landscape that is protected because of people's activities, rather than despite them.

Secure and healthy peat bogs

You might need a trained eye to spot this, but we need the blanket bogs to be healthy. Healthy bogs are wet, and covered by plants that rot down to form new peat. The bogs are threatened when the peat is exposed, when it dries out, and when it is worn away. We have to keep the blanket bogs healthy because they are important for the Nation; they can trap millions of tonnes of carbon, they are a harvesting ground for public water supplies, and they are home to a special and protected community of plants and animals.

Vibrant wildlife, including birds of prey

We want to see a landscape that is full of life, and in particular full of the sorts of wildlife that mark the moors out as different from other places. This means that in the future we'll need to see more of some types of wildlife, like birds of prey. We'll also need to give wildlife the chance to shift and adapt, because we know that there will be changes in the climate over the next 50 years, and these will affect where and how plants and animals can survive. This is important, because like the rocky tors and the peat, the wildlife is part of the moors. We believe we should protect it for ever.

More trees and shrubs in the valleys and cloughs

If you were to take time-lapse pictures of the High Peak Moors over the coming decades, you would see more native trees and shrubs spreading up into the valleys and cloughs. We want to see this because trees and shrubs will help keep the valley sides stable, and will provide shelter and food for wildlife. They will also make the landscape beautiful in a way that it was in the past, with wooded valleys providing a contrast to the wide open treeless spaces of the moor tops.



How we'll make this happen

Our vision, what we want to achieve, is clear and firm. We love the High Peak Moors, and we will protect and make the most of them, so that they are here for ever, for everyone. Quite how we achieve the five elements of our vision is more flexible. We don't claim to have all the answers, and we know that circumstances can and will change over time. So we're open to trying things out; working with others; listening to new ideas; learning from our mistakes, and adapting the way we work. And this is a vision for the long-run, so we are not going to rush things. Some of the work will be gradual, and some of the vision isn't so much about change – it's about protecting the things that are already important to the High Peak Moors. In this light the next few pages should give you a flavour of how we expect the five key elements of our vision to be achieved.



Blocking gullies with small dams to trap water and reduce peat erosion.

1: People being inspired

We want to see people out there loving the moors as their own, and feeling free to explore them. And we want to see people who might not have thought of venturing up here before feeling like it's their place, too.

We will find ways to make sure everyone feels welcome, and confident to come and enjoy the moors in their own way and on their own terms. We understand that mostly this means encouraging people, but sometimes it means arranging things so that conflicts are avoided, and the moors themselves aren't damaged.

Here are some of the things we will do:

- We'll connect with people. By communicating with walkers, cyclists, riders, picnickers we can help them understand the moors, and they can help us understand the things they like most, and the things that can be frustrating. It's also a good way to spread the word about the High Peak Moors. We'll do this through the organisations and websites people use, through the other places they visit, and we'll also do it in person – we'll be arranging for more rangers to be out and about, talking with people.
- We'll take care to keep the moors feeling wild and remote. Paths, signs, steps and gates can make places look cluttered, and they can take away the feeling of wilderness on the moors. We're happy for the moors to be a bit of a challenge, and we'll keep man-made features to a minimum.
- For those who want to, we'll provide opportunities to turn inspiration into action, by working alongside us as volunteers.
- We'll make the moors robust, and able to cope in the places where there is pressure from visitors. We are good at this, and we'll keep on striving, with access routes that are well thought through, and paths, signs, steps and gates that are well designed, well built, and well maintained.



2: People looking after the land

We want to see people working on and around the moors, helping us to care for them. We will work with people who share our vision and who want to help us find the best ways to achieve it. Our partners might range from other conservation organisations, to local businesses, water companies, local farmers and grouse moor managers.

Having a working landscape is important, because in order to deliver our vision for the moors we need skilled and professional people who can actively work with the land. Whoever it is we're working with, our aim is to see the moors protected because of people's activities, rather than despite them. Sometimes this will be very straightforward – we'll forge links with organisations that have similar aims to our own. But we also plan to work with traditional local enterprises, to think creatively and to find common ground around issues like heather management, or how and where sheep graze and the role of cattle.

And we expect that many of the things we want to achieve on the moors will create opportunities for new enterprises, new ways of working, and new sources of income. For example:

- There will be practical work needed to create woods and re-wet bogs, and this will provide opportunities to take on contract work.
- Some of our aims for the moors, like trapping carbon or protecting water supplies, could attract payments from government or industry in the future. This is something we're working on nationally, and might be something we could work on together locally as partners.
- Providing accommodation for visitors, selling traditional produce, or supporting outdoor fun and education all help with our vision. We'll help people who live and work on and around the moors to make the most of these sorts of opportunities.



Grouse shooting

It's our job to make sure people can always come here, to love the moors and do their thing. So although our vision for the moors embraces change - including heather cover and encouraging birds of prey - we still see shooting as an important part of the future. The moors are for everyone.





3: Secure and healthy peat bogs

We need the blanket bogs to be healthy. Healthy bogs are wet, and covered by plants that rot down to form new peat (sphagnum mosses being the most important). The bogs are threatened when the peat is exposed, when it dries out, and when it is worn away.

This is going to be a big and long term effort – we’re really serious about it, we’ve already made a start, and it has to work. The most important thing we’ll be doing is keeping the bogs wet; and where they have become dry, we’ll be making them wet again (known as ‘re-wetting’). This will mean doing a range of different sorts of tasks:

- **Blocking gullies.** Where water channels have cut into the bog they drain the surrounding peat, and the water washes peat away. We’ll be doing a lot of work to block these gullies up.
- **Putting vegetation back.** Bare, exposed peat quickly dries out, so we’ll be doing careful work to put back natural vegetation in the places where it has been lost. You can expect to see us spreading lime, seed and fertilizer; strewing cut heather, and directly planting species like cotton grass, as ‘plugs’. And you’ll see us putting a lot of effort into getting sphagnum moss to thrive, because it plays a central role in forming new peat.

- **We’ll also be trying to stop things that damage the bogs.** For example, we’ll be making sure trees don’t establish on the moor tops – because they dry out the peat. We’ll be phasing out burning on the blanket bog. And we’ll keep on finding ways to make sure work vehicles, access tracks, and other routes don’t damage the moors.

Wildfires

Wildfires have happened before on the moors, and there is always a risk that they’ll happen again. As we shift away from traditional heather management we’ll make reducing the risk of wildfire a key focus of our work. We know this won’t be simple, but in the end we aim to get a wetter, more mixed and less fire-prone moor.

4: Vibrant wildlife, including birds of prey

We want to see a landscape that is full of life, and in particular full of the sorts of wildlife that marks the moors out as different from other places.

There are lots of different sorts of plants, mammals, insects and birds that live on and around the moors – and we will be working to protect and encourage them all. It's a complicated job because different plants and animals have different needs. And conditions - especially the climate - are always changing. But we've got experience here. In broad terms there are two different ways of tackling this, and we'll be doing both:



Working in a targeted way, to protect and encourage some very specific types of plants and animals.

For example:

- Protecting birds of prey – we'll work with specialist groups; communicate closely with the people making their living on the moors; we'll watch and protect nesting sites, and we'll be vigilant about the law against harming raptors.
- Targeting specific habitats – for example where the blanket bog is covered in heather we'll aim to get other moorland plants to come in too, like cotton grass, sedges, cloudberry, and bilberry.
- Re-introducing species – we'd only do this in special circumstances, perhaps for black grouse.

Black grouse

Black grouse were lost from these moors a long time ago. If they were ever to come back and thrive, it would be a sure sign that the moors were thriving too. This is because black grouse need a full range of bogs, trees, shrubs, grasses, rushes, and sedges; not to mention wildflower rich grasslands off the moor as well.



Working in a more general way, to create the right mix of conditions for a wide range of plants, animals and insects to thrive and to adapt to change.

For example:

- Being strategic across the moorland landscape – we'll adjust the mix, so you can expect to see more tree and shrub cover in the valleys, taking over from bracken, and less heather over the deep peats on the moor tops.
- Keeping the peat bogs healthy – and re-wetting the ones that aren't.
- Working with neighbouring landscapes – the wildlife doesn't stop at the edge of the moors, and nor will we. So for example, we'll work with farmers to help make 'inbye' meadows support moorland birds like curlew and twite.

5: More trees and shrubs in the valleys and cloughs

If you were to take time-lapse pictures of the High Peak Moors over the coming decades, you would see more trees and shrubs spreading up into the valleys and cloughs.

This is going to be a gradual process, and we're going to do it in ways that look natural. In fact in some cases, the processes actually will be natural – because we'll allow native trees and shrubs to spread in of their own accord. Rather than big dark blocks of woodland, you should expect to see a smattering of trees and shrubs, with copses and denser woodland cover developing in places where it looks and seems natural. And this is all in the valleys and cloughs – we don't plan to establish trees on the moor tops.

Fences, signposts, stiles and gates

We want the moors to feel wild, and we want people to feel free to roam. So we'll only use fences, signposts, steps, stiles and gates sparingly. And they'll only be there to keep animals out, not people. So where we need fences – for example to get trees to grow – we'll make sure there are stiles and gates so people can come through.

These are the things that we'll do to make it happen:

- **Controlling grazing.** Sheep are the main reason there aren't more trees already. So we will work with shepherds, or use fencing and other protection to keep sheep out of selected areas, at least while the trees are small and young.
- **Allowing trees to spread in naturally.** Once the grazing pressure is down, trees will often seed in naturally. We'll just let this happen.
- **Planting trees and shrubs.** Sometimes the best thing to do if you want a particular type of tree or shrub in a particular spot is to plant it. We'll be doing this too.
- **We'll talk with people as we do it.** People are understandably wary of change in this precious landscape. We want to make sure we get it right. And we want people to know what to expect, and what not to expect.



...and we'd like you to be part of this

Whether you're a walker, farmer, horse rider, bird watcher, picnicker, camper, grouse shooter, mountain biker, sun-bather, or even if you'd never thought of coming anywhere near – the moors are yours. We want you to come here, do your thing, and love the moors like we do. And you can get involved more actively, too. It might just be by talking to us, and sharing your thoughts and ideas. You might work alongside us practically, as a volunteer. Or it might be that you work with us in more business-like ways. Whichever you do, you're welcome to be part of the vision.



However you wish to be involved, you're welcome to be part of the vision.



Volunteers planting cottongrass





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