

Year Two – Project Review

Heathlands Reunited

The project

The Heathlands Reunited project is about restoring, expanding and reconnecting threatened heathland habitats in and on the borders of the South Downs National Park and enthusing and inspiring people to visit them, learn more about them, and use them responsibly. Our Vision is for;

‘Bigger, better, joined-up heathland that people know about, care and use responsibly and sustainably.’



Heathlands in our area have great landscape, biodiversity, cultural heritage and access value but are suffering from loss, fragmentation and degradation. Whilst the majority of the project area lies within the South Downs National Park, and heathland sites within the Park are identified as a priority in the Partnership Management Plan, designation alone will not conserve these special sites. If we continue the ‘business as usual’ approach heathland sites will continue to be lost and degraded to the detriment of people and wildlife. Heathlands require ongoing active management and urgent, targeted effort is needed to conserve, enhance and reconnect them and promote their continued responsibly and sustainably use.

The HeRe Project is a joint endeavour of 11 partners lead by the SDNPA. This project partnership will be working over the five years of the project (June 2016 - May 2021) to reverse heathland decline and to ensure that our heathland heritage is secured and sustainably managed for the future. Once complete the project aims to creating a lasting legacy for heathlands conservation and heritage.

The project is being delivered as two plans:

- The project activity plan aims to reach thousands of people through communication, education and outreach work, and will train and support more than 300 volunteers. Our People and Communities Aims for the Heathlands Reunited Project are to **Inform/Engage/Involve** people and local communities with the heathland heritage.
- The project maintenance & management plan aims to conserve and maintain 650ha of heathland across the 34 heathland project sites. Our Heritage Aims for the Heathlands Reunited Project are to: **Restore/Increase/Reconnect** heathland habitat and **Create** a lasting legacy for heathland in the project area.

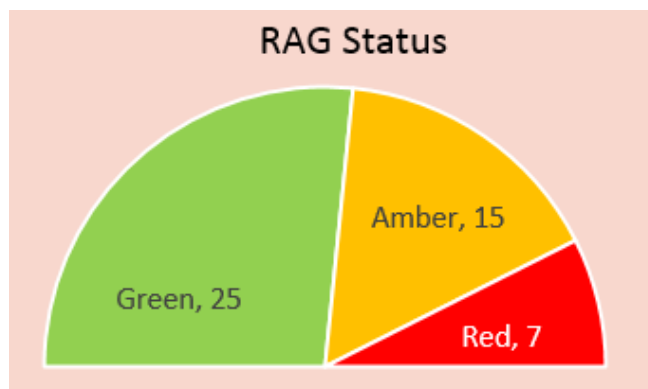
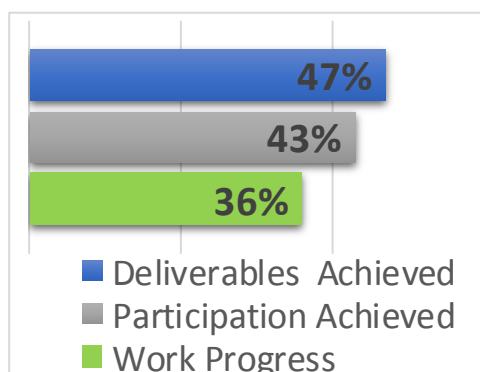
The project is funded by partners contributions totalling nearly £1 million in match funding (cash and in-kind) and £1.44 million has been secured from HLF to cover the total project cost of £2.37 million. The SDNPA partner contribution includes a £150,000 cash contribution and wider support provided to the project team from within the authority.

Outcomes are also measured as part of the project Monitoring & Evaluation plan which includes external validation at the end of year one, three and 5 the final year.

Project Progress

Activity Plan Progress

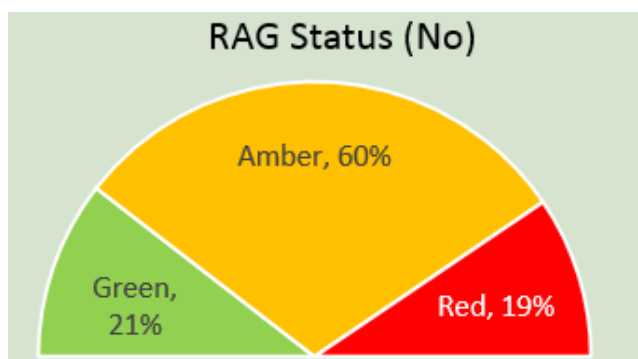
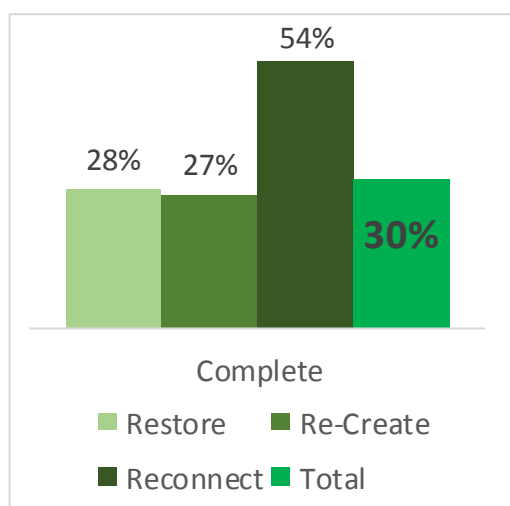
At the end of year two we can report that the project has delivered 47% of the events and activities which has contributed to completing 43% of the participation targets. In terms of overall progress we estimate that 36% of the projects work is now complete.



There are however a number of work tasks that are currently behind schedule (amber) and a number that have yet to be initiated (Red), these are currently being reviewed.

Capital Works Progress

At present 30% of the works programme has been completed which means the capital work delivery is behind schedule. This is due to a number of factors which are being addressed and we aim is to have a fully realigned programme in place with a significant increase in work completed and all work programmed for completion by April 2019 bringing the works back on track.



At present only 21% of the planned work has been completed or agreed. A further 60% has yet to be programmed but is not currently behind schedule. 19%

of tasks are not programmed in and are also overdue.

Project Successes

Events programme. The events programme which forms a major part of the project is now well established and developed. The project team have been working closely with partners to plan and deliver a wide variety of events over the project area. During the first two years we have jointly delivered over 38 events and activities which have been attended by over 8,000 people. This includes the annual flagship event “Secrets of the Heath” held at Petersfield which attracts large numbers of people.



Figure 1. Crowds at Secrets of the Heath event

Volunteer engagement. We have recruited and deployed four Dog Ambassadors who are now actively working with site managers to drive change and promote our key messages to dog walkers who use heathlands. A dedicated group of over ten fixed point photography volunteers are working on many sites capturing images which will record the changing landscape and record the conservation work being undertaken. Our heritage volunteer group have completed the collection of heathland oral history and archival research and are now busily writing heathland heritage stories which will be published in a fully illustrated children’s book which in turn will be used in the schools programme.



Figure 2. Children enjoying a heathlands visit

Schools programme. The authority’s education team continue to deliver a programme of heathlands visits to four schools each year. These are proving very popular and many school are using the visit to support other activities. Many of the schools have been involved in the development of the sculptures for the heathland interpretation trail and completed stone carving workshop with the artist.

Apprenticeship. After some initial delays we are now happy to have three apprentices working with the project. Two ranger apprentices are now working with the HeRe project team and the Heath and Wealden area team. In the coming months they will start a number of work placements with project partners. In addition the authority has also placed a business support apprentice in the HeRe team.

Partner Engagement. Perhaps the greatest success during the first years of the project is the building of the project partnership. Partners are supportive of the project and can be relied upon to engage and help whenever asked. The aspiration and aim going forward is to empower partners to take more of a lead in elements of the delivery, this will only be possible if the project is seen as a partnership by all stakeholders. The partner feedback we had from the year two internal evaluation indicated a high level of satisfaction in the project, this was qualified with indications of the need to provide more partner integration with the project team.

Project Issues

Outstanding Activities. The focus during the initial years of the project have been to work on the more critical elements of the activities plan and this has been achieved. There are however areas within the activities plan which require more work, these include the walks and talk work tasks, community engagement targets, volunteering engagement, and to a lesser extent stakeholder training. As yet the resources and capability to deliver these elements have proved difficult to engage. Solutions are being explored which include measures to increase HeRe team efficiency and capacity, increase partner engagement and outsourcing where practical.

Capital Works Progress. Progress in the delivery of the capital works programme during these initial years has been slow with a number of issues leading to delays. During year one little was achieved due to the short lead time from project start date to the beginning of the work season. Double funding concerns have also impacted progress, this has now been addressed. It is evident that there has been a disconnection between the capital works detailed in the programme and the intentions and aims of site managers. The project is now working with partners to realign and reprogramme the works with the intention to have a new agreed plan in place by April 2019.

Partner Contributions. The general understanding of partners regarding their partner contribution has been that it was not linked to the delivery of the capital work programme. It seems that the assumption was that all work on the capital works programme will be funded by the HLF grant. This is not the case and only a proportion of the capital works programme for each site is funded by the HLF grant and the remainder is funded by the partner which in most cases constitutes as their Partner Contribution. This issue has been compounded by the request and acceptance of partner contributions which do not relate directly to project delivery. This was completed with HLF approval to meet the cash flow requirement of the project. The position has now been clarified but has identified a potential shortfall in partner contribution which may need to be factored into the projects ongoing delivery. The position will be clarified with partners once the review of all capital works programmes is completed by the project team.

What changes are required and why?

Outstanding Activities

There is a need to review resources required to deliver elements of the project that are falling behind, this should also include identifying and scoping the delivery solutions. This will identify if and what resources are needed and available. There has been some work already completed in an ongoing review; additional recourses engaged as a result are making a difference.

Capital Works Progress

There is now a need to review the programme to ensure it meets the aims of the project and the plans of the partners. This is well underway and our aim is to have a fully realigned programme in place with a significant increase in work completed this work season.

Some of the conservation grazing aims of the plan also need to be worked out as some partners aims have changed since the initial plan was agreed.

Partner Contributions. There is now a risk that partners are not in a position to fund the work in the capital works programme and the targets which funding has already been received will not be met. The aim is to work through the capital works programme with partners to identify the potential scope of any shortfall and work within the partnership to ensure the capital work targets are met. There may still remain a risk that more funding will be required to compensate for potential short falls in partner contributions and therefore this should be included in the corporate risk register.

Assess the current financial status of the project.

The total estimated cost of the project is £1,984,412 (with an additional non cash contribution of £382,200).

Project Income

| Source | Projected | Received | Remarks |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|--|
| HLF Grant Award | £1,451,400 | £506,780 | Claims 1 - 8 |
| Local authority (HCC&SDNPA) | £157,740 | £90,000 | Year 1-3 PC (Cash) |
| Central government (FC/NE/MOD) | £57,952 | £0 | No PC relating to HeRe delivery |
| Trusts/Charities/Foundations (SWT/HIWWT/ARCT/LS/NT/RSPB) | £282,320 | £3,720 | PC that relate directly to HeRe delivery |
| Increased management and maintenance Costs (maximum five years) | £35,000 | £0 | None identify |
| Total | £1,984,412 | £600,500 | |

Current income received to date is £600,500

Current actual expenditure to date is £464,245 (with a further £128,924 committed).

Variance £136,255

Partner Contributions (PC)

The following partner contribution have been received. Where the PC is cash or relates to HeRe delivery it is included as income.

| Source | Cash | HeRe Delivery | None HeRe Delivery | Grand Total |
|--|----------------|---------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Central government (FC/NE/MOD) | | | £15,564 | £15,564 |
| Local authority (HCC&SDNPA) | £90,180 | | | £90,180 |
| Trusts/Charities/Foundations (SWT/HIWWT/ARCT/LS/NT/RSPB) | | £3,720 | £235,276 | £238,997 |
| Grand Total | £90,180 | £3,720 | £250,841 | £344,741 |

Legacy Planning

A legacy plan is being developed to capture and develop the long term benefits of the project. The plan will aim to develop a sustainable approach to Heathlands Management and recognition of its heritage and improve the status of Heathland as an important habitat within the National Park.

Appendix I

Activity Plan Progress

The activity plan is slightly behind in term of delivery of activities at 36% this is as expected at this stage of the project due to initial delays and we fully expect to catch up in year 3, (see below). There is a structured and proven event programme now in place. This measure of progress does not capture the engagement targets in terms of numbers and audiences. This data has been captured but still requires but requires formulating into a useable format for analysis, this work is ongoing.

There are currently areas within the activities plan which require more work, these include the walks and talk work tasks, community engagement targets, volunteering engagement, and to a lesser extent stakeholder training.

| Task Name | Detail | % Complete |
|---|---|------------|
| HeRe Project Activity | | 36% |
| 1. Heathland Heritage - Inform & Discover | 1. To inform people and local communities about the heathland heritage (inform / raise awareness) | 34% |
| 2. Heathland Heritage Engage/Encourage/Inspire) | 2. To engage people and local communities with the heathland heritage (engage / encourage /inspire) | 42% |
| 3. Heathland Heritage - Involve & Participate | 3. To involve people and local communities with the heathland heritage (Involve / participate) | 34% |
| #Monitoring & Evaluation | # Monitoring & evaluation of People and Community activities and outcomes: interim and final evaluation of project by consultants | 44% |

| AP | Activity Title | % Complete Quantity | % Complete Participation | Schedule | Status | RAG |
|------|---|---------------------|--------------------------|----------|-------------|-----|
| AP4 | 1.A.1 Create a linking interpretation trail. | 0% | | Behind | In Progress | |
| AP4 | 1.A.2 Heathland interpretation boards and self-guided trail | 13% | | Behind | In Progress | |
| | 1.A.3 Heathlands Reunited project web portal. | 100% | | On Track | Complete | |
| AP6 | 1.A.4 'Horrible Histories'-style storybook of heathland tales. | 0% | 0% | Ahead | In Progress | |
| AP7 | 1.A.5 Create a heathland learning resource for local schools. | 0% | 0% | Behind | In Progress | |
| AP10 | 1.A.6 Access for All Workshop. | 0% | 0% | Overdue! | Not Started | |
| AP6 | 1.B.1 Community heritage projects. | 50% | 100% | On Track | In Progress | |
| | 1.B.2 Accessing and enjoying heathland events. | 33% | 15% | On Track | In Progress | |
| | 1.B.3 (events) 'Heathlands for Humans'- themed talks | 40% | 20% | Overdue! | In Progress | |
| | 2.A.1 Activities for under-represented groups | 0% | 0% | Overdue! | Not Started | |
| | 2.A.2 Secrets of the Heath events | 60% | 155% | On Track | In Progress | |
| | 2.A.3 Deadly Heathlands' family events at heathland sites. | 60% | 51% | On Track | In Progress | |
| | 2.A.4 Project technical conference | 0% | 0% | On Track | Not Started | |
| | 2.A.5 Project celebrate event | 100% | 0% | On Track | Not Started | |
| | 2.A.6 Serpents trail story teller walk | 50% | 30% | On Track | In Progress | |
| AP7 | 2.A.7 Heathland Schools programme | 100% | 0% | On Track | In Progress | |
| AP7 | 2.A.8 Create Heathland Geocaching Trail | 100% | 0% | On Track | In Progress | |
| | 2.B.1 Three 'Bringing heathland home' events | 33% | 29% | On Track | In Progress | |
| | 2.B.2 John Muir Award on Heathlands | 160% | 160% | On Track | In Progress | |
| | 3.A.1 'Take the Lead on the Heath' campaign | 100% | | On Track | Complete | |
| | 3.A.2 Develop and disseminate information card aimed directly at dog walkers. | 100% | | On Track | In Progress | |
| | 3.A.3 Guided walks aimed at dog walkers led by site managers. | 20% | 4% | Behind | In Progress | |
| AP9 | 3.A.4 horseriders on accessing heathland areas with | 100% | 133% | On Track | Complete | |

| AP | Activity Title | % Complete Quantity | % Complete Participation | Schedule | Status | RAG |
|------|--|---------------------|--------------------------|----------|-------------|-----|
| | grazing animals. | | | | | |
| AP10 | 3.A.5 Managing people with dogs at heathland sites | 0% | 100% | On Track | Not Started | |
| AP9 | 3.A.6 'Dogs on Heathlands' workshop aimed at dog walkers | 0% | 0% | On Track | Not Started | |
| AP10 | 3.B.1 'friend of' type groups workshop | 100% | | On Track | Not Started | |
| | 3.B.2 'Meet the cattle' days, ("Hairy not Scary!") | 50% | 73% | On Track | In Progress | |
| | 3.B.3. "Heathland hosts" | 100% | 0% | Behind | In Progress | |
| AP9 | 3.C.1 Butterfly Transect | 100% | 0% | Behind | In Progress | |
| AP7 | 3.C.2 Apprenticeship scheme. | 100% | 100% | On Track | In Progress | |
| AP10 | 3.C.3 Manage contractors on heathland sites | 100% | 44% | Behind | In Progress | |
| AP9 | 3.C.4 Fixed point photography | 100% | 125% | On Track | In Progress | |
| AP10 | 3.C.5 Generate income using heathland products | 0% | 0% | Behind | Not Started | |
| AP10 | 3.C.6 Woodland management on heathland sites | 100% | 100% | On Track | Complete | |
| AP10 | 3.C.7 Commons legislation | 100% | 200% | On Track | Complete | |
| AP10 | 3.C.8 Biodiversity value of heathland cultural heritage assets | 0% | 0% | Behind | Not Started | |
| AP10 | 3.C.9 Positive engagement with dog walkers | 0% | 0% | On Track | Not Started | |
| | 3.C.10 Dog walker ambassador | 100% | 33% | Behind | In Progress | |
| AP9 | 3.C.11 Volunteers trained in presentation skills. | 0% | 0% | Behind | Not Started | |
| AP9 | 3.C.12 Guided walks leaders | 0% | 0% | Behind | Not Started | |
| AP9 | 3.C.13 Identifying and recording heathland species | 20% | 28% | Behind | In Progress | |
| AP10 | 3.C.14 Workshops land management skills and crafts. | 60% | 30% | Behind | In Progress | |
| AP5 | 3.C.15 Workshop on preparing fire plans for heathland sites | 100% | 150% | On Track | In Progress | |
| AP9 | 3.C.16 Workshop on Community habitat mapping & 'bioblitz' | 40% | 61% | On Track | In Progress | |
| | 3.C.17 'Health Walk' leaders on heathland sites | 2% | 0% | Behind | In Progress | |
| AP11 | Monitoring & evaluation of activities and outcomes | 33% | | On Track | In Progress | |
| AP11 | Dog Walker Survey | 50% | | On Track | In Progress | |

Appendix 2

Capital Works Programme Progress

The main element of the projects maintenance and management plan is the Capital Works plan. Progress to date has been slow with a number of issues leading to delays. These are being addressed and catch up plans are now being agreed. Our aim is to have a fully realigned programme in place with a significant increase in work completed this work season. Some of the conservation grazing aims of the plan also need to be worked out as some partners aims have changed since the initial plan was agreed.

Other areas of concern at present are linked to the partner's capacity to complete the planned works and the potential conflicts with HLS/CS schemes and partner contributions. Solutions to these issues have been identified but will require some time to implement.

| Capital Works | Approved Purpose Target | Complete (ha) | Complete (%) |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Restore (conserve) | 582ha | 61 ha | 10% |
| Re-create (Increase) | 66ha | 12ha | 18% |
| Reconnect | 35ha | 6ha | 18% |
| Total | 683ha | 79ha | 16% |

There are a number of additional area within the M&M plan which have yet to be full actioned, these various planning, management and heritage activities. The focus to this point has been of the practical conservation element of the project. We are however at the point in the project where these aims need some attention.