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Stakeholder Workshop Report

Rishi Sunak MP Site Visit

Fleet Moss

08/02/19

Peninme PeatLIFE delivery partners



Peninme PeatLIFE is funded by



Date: 08/02/19

Location: Fleet Moss, Oughtershaw, Yorkshire Dales

Topic: Advocacy

Attendees: Rishi Sunak MP and Secretary, Tim Thom (Peatland Programme Manager, Yorkshire Peat Partnership), Jenny Sharman (Pennine PeatLIFE officer), Matthew Snelling (YPP Officer)

1. Aims

As MP for Richmondshire, many of Rishi Sunak's constituents live in the location of peat covered moorland. Many manage peatlands for sheep grazing or grouse, and many – both locally and nationally - are subject to the negative impacts of their degradation – the release of carbon, an increased flood risk, increased water colour and the need for costly water treatments, and declining biodiversity.

The main aim of the event was to make Mr Sunak aware of these points and the need for a long-term commitment from government to support peatland restoration for the benefit of all society.

Also, the team sought to enlist Mr Sunak's support for the then impending Environment Act.

2. Overview

Rishi Sunak MP accepted an invitation to come and learn about peatland restoration through a site visit to Fleet Moss, one of the most degraded sites in his constituency currently being restored through the Pennine PeatLIFE project.



Figure 1. Pennine PeatLIFE officer, Jenny Sharman, showing Rishi Sunak MP an erosion feature on Fleet Moss.

The weather on the day was extremely unkind but Mr Sunak bravely took on the driving rain, and walked with the team around the site. He was shown the problems of a degraded peatland, and engaged very positively in the discussion. Later, in the warmth of a car, the ecosystem services of this particular site were explained by Pennine PeatLIFE Officer, Jenny Sharman. He was interested to learn how during heavy rainfall events, sediment and water from the site cascade down into the valleys below, destroying fences and scouring out tracks before flooding lowland meadows and pastures and depositing vast quantities of detritus in their wake. The sediment ultimately ends up in Semer Water, a SSSI site, which is now failing in this status due to an abundance of phosphorus which is most likely to be coming from Fleet Moss. Similarly, the site feeds into the key catchment of the River Wharfe via Oughtershaw beck, contributing to the flashy nature of the river and the detrimental quantity of particulate and dissolved organic matter.

By the end of the visit, Mr Sunak was fully briefed on the importance of peatlands in his constituency and the desperate need for restoration measures.

3. Press coverage

Rishi Sunak subsequently wrote an article in a local paper as a result of his visit:
<https://www.rishisunak.com/news/ds-column-vital-importance-our-pennine-peatlands>

4. Outcomes

Rishi Sunak MP is now a strong advocate for peatland restoration. He has continued to champion the cause of peatlands, helping to organise and host an event held later in the year at Westminster alongside Pennine PeatLIFE, the North Pennines AONB and YPP.

In his position in the Treasury he has allocated £640 million towards peatland restoration and the planting of trees. This is an unprecedented commitment by government.