

Blacka Moor User Forum
Meeting notes - 24th September 2016
Blacka Moor Nature Reserve



Attendees:

Nabil Abbas (Living Landscape Manager, SRWT)
Hannah Wittram (Community Wildlife Ranger, SRWT)
Mark Ridler (Local resident)
Dawn Biram (Local resident) – attended briefly to leave comments

Apologies: Chris Measures

1. Open Forum

DM – Arrived at the start to explain that she no longer wished to attend the meeting and wanted to leave a few comments for discussion.

DM was unhappy about the role of the Blacka Moor Conservation Group.

This is an advisory group formed to oversee, monitor and actively assist with the delivery of all aspects of the Blacka Moor Management Plan. It consists of a small group of people who specialise in different subjects relevant to the work on Blacka Moor, who have volunteered their time to help support the work of the Wildlife Trust. They look at the ongoing and upcoming work programme for the reserve as set out in the management plan and perform an advisory role.

DM was concerned that the management of Blacka Moor isn't being carried out in a minimal intervention way, and that the siting of signs and infrastructure is damaging the wild character of the site.

In line with the management plan, SRWT are working to conserve the reserve in a sensitive way with as little management as possible, but need to balance the conservation and recreational use of the reserve. Unsightly old metal signage has been removed, and all new signage is wooden and in-keeping with other Peak District sites. The signage should encourage responsible use of footpath and bridleway routes, marking these routes clearly to avoid confusion and help prevent disturbance to the sensitive habitats on the reserve. The 2 benches installed in 2015 were installed following consultation with members of Dore Village Society and the User Forum to decide their location.

DM was concerned about losing the wealth and variety of habitats at Blacka Moor, including the historic feature of the rhododendron plantation.

The reserve is being actively managed to conserve the mosaic and diversity of habitats which makes Blacka Moor special. As an invasive, non-native species on a SSSI, it is best practice to remove rhododendron. For this reason we are aiming to remove most of the rhododendron on the reserve. However, in the management plan we have committed to retaining a buffer strip along the western and northern margins of Strawberry Lee Plantation to provide shelter from the prevailing wind and traffic noise.

2 . Rhododendron:

Work will be continuing to reduce rhododendron cover in Strawberry Lee Plantation, retaining the buffer strip along north and west boundaries. Cut rhododendron will be burnt or chipped. Areas that have previously been cleared of rhododendron are recovering well with a variety of native saplings growing through including rowan and birch.

3. Interpretation

Three interpretation boards have been designed with a map of Blacka Moor and some information about the habitats and species found on the reserve. Subject to obtaining planning permission, these will be installed at Stony Ridge Car Park, Strawberry Lee Lane Car Park and Shorts Lane. These locations are at key entry points and are in-keeping with the principles of the Sheffield Moors Masterplan.

4. Rights of Way

The flag-laying has been completed and seems to be working well, with eroded areas recovering well. We have had positive feedback on the work. The old metal Rights of Way signs have been removed and replaced with wooden Finger Posts and Way Markers which are much more in-keeping with the reserve.

5. Fire breaks

Over the winter period 2 fire breaks will be cut to reduce the chance of wild fire spreading across the heathland in an event of a wild fire. These will be 10m wide. As well as creating a fire break they should also encourage new heather growth.

6. Wader recovery project

Curlews were spotted nesting on the pastureland this year. There are proposals to improve the pastures for waders by creating a new scrape next year.

Date of next meeting: March 25th 2017, 10am – 12pm, Venue to be confirmed