



## Setting good project objectives

### Case Study: The Peatland Restoration Project

In January and February 2016 the RRC, Environment Agency and CaBA jointly delivered three workshops for Catchment Partnerships. These demonstrated the importance of setting SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic & time-bound) project objectives and having a robust monitoring plan in place. A presentation at one of the workshop's from Richard Vink (the National Trust) and Tia Crouch (Moors for the Future) highlighted this and showed how good objectives have been effective in a real scenario.

### Project Background

The Peatland Restoration Project was one of the 42 Catchment Restoration Fund (CRF) projects which were delivered in the period between 2012 & 2015. Managed by the National Trust and co-delivered by the Moors of the Future Partnership, this project aimed to reduce the impact of diffuse pollution from severely degraded blanket bog habitat in the Alport and Ashop catchments.

### Project Objectives and Results

Measure of success (target)	What was achieved	Demonstrated by
1a. Reduce POC and its associates into the river Ashop by 50% from current levels by end 2014.	POC and its associates have been reduced by up to 99%.	POC flux monitoring using time-integrated mass flux samplers (TIMS).
1b. Restrict bare peat to less than 10% of surface area of the Edge by end 2014.	Bare peat has been restricted to 8.8% of the surface area of the Edge.	2014 aerial imagery.
1c. Presence of <i>Sphagnum</i> colonies on 80% of suitable habitat by July 2015.	This measure of success has been removed because the <i>Sphagnum</i> application did not take place until March 2015.	
2a. Reduce POC and its associates into the Rivers Alport and Ashop by 50% from current levels by July 2015.	The method used to monitor POC flux has not provided evidence that the target of a 50% reduction in POC and its associates into the Rivers Ashop and Alport has been achieved.	POC flux monitoring using time-integrated mass flux samplers (TIMS).
2b. Raise sediment and/or water levels within gully systems by 40 cm by July 2015 (sediment or water level will depend on the type of gully block used).	Sediment and water levels within gully systems have been raised by 7.9 cm.	Sediment accumulation monitoring survey.
2c. Establish cotton grass ( <i>Eriophorum</i> spp.) and other moorland species on all areas of bare peat associated with gully blocks by July 2015.	Common cotton grass ( <i>Eriophorum angustifolium</i> ), crowberry ( <i>Empetrum nigrum</i> ) and bilberry ( <i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i> ) have shown a significant increase in percentage cover (100% each). Hares tail cotton grass ( <i>Eriophorum vaginatum</i> ) has increased in percentage cover (17%) but the increase is not statistically significant.	Plug plant monitoring and fixed point photography.



2d. Presence of <i>Sphagnum</i> colonies on 80% of suitable habitat by July 2015.	This measure of success has been removed because the <i>Sphagnum</i> application did not take place until March 2015.	
3a. Reduce POC and its associates into the River Ashop by 90% by July 2015.	POC and its associates have been reduced by up to 68%.	POC flux monitoring using time-integrated mass flux samplers.
3b. Restrict bare peat to less than 25% of surface area of the treated area by July 2015.	Bare peat has been restricted to between 14 and 16% of the treated area.	2014 aerial imagery and vegetation monitoring respectively.

Table 1: Taken from the project monitoring report, supplied by the National Trust and Moors to the Future.



The objectives and monitoring plan that was put in place has allowed the project partners to identify whether or not their project has been a success. The objectives are **specific** as they often refer to a certain specie; **measurable** because they have a percentage attached and suitable monitoring techniques were available; and **time-bound** with a date to achieve the targets. The objectives also had to be **relevant** to the overall aim and **achievable** within the time period.



### Benefits of SMART Objectives

Having good objectives and a robust monitoring plan not only allows you to demonstrate that your project was successful; it also shows future funders that the techniques you used were successful. For example the Peatland Restoration Project managed to conclude that:

*“Bare peat stabilisation through the application of heather brash, lime and fertiliser, together with gully blocking is successful in reducing sediment loss from eroding peatlands. This is demonstrated by significantly lower POC loss from blocked gullies than from unblocked gullies”*



This will give funders confidence in your organisation’s ability to successfully deliver a project. When a project’s techniques or monitoring techniques do not show the results that are expected, good objectives and a monitoring plan can ensure that this is learnt from in future projects.

*“Although LiDAR is a very accurate method of terrain mapping, there are potential issues in making comparisons between years, e.g. advances in technology resulting in differences in the accuracy and resolution between datasets. This has been a useful learning process for MFFP and investigations into current and future use of LiDAR is ongoing.”*



This shows why being able to evaluate your project is so important and that without proper objectives or a monitoring plan this might not be possible. Learning from previous projects can make achieving and demonstrating success easier and more cost efficient in future projects.

### Other Guidance

- *Practical River Restoration Appraisal Guidance for Monitoring Options - [View](#)*

