

# News

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## **Volunteers restore peat bogs on fire-damaged moor**

A team of volunteers from Morgan Sindall Construction & Infrastructure has taken part in an environmental volunteering day to help make local moorland less vulnerable to fire damage.

Working close to areas of Saddleworth Moor which were severely damaged by fire during the summer, a team of 15 volunteers drawn from the company's Manchester and Leeds offices - overseen by the RSPB, which manages moorland in partnership with United Utilities - spent all day restoring the moorland, which is protected due to its scientific and ecological value.

After a one kilometre trek, the team carried out a vital conservation task, using heather bales to block up eroded gullies in the peat. By holding water back, the moorland will become wetter, making fire less likely, and less damaging and easier to control if it does happen. In addition, Morgan Sindall Construction & Infrastructure also donated £500 worth of tools and equipment to the RSPB to assist them on this and other projects.

The fire in June and July - which was thought to have been started deliberately and was then fuelled by the summer heatwave - spread from Stalybridge across thousands of acres of moorland, and affected two square kilometres of the moorland. At its height, 100 soldiers were even deployed to try to extinguish the blaze.

It took more than three weeks to put out the fire and unfortunately, the damage to the moorland was considerable. The flames had in places burned deep into dried-out peat, releasing huge stores of carbon into the atmosphere, setting back work by the RSPB and United Utilities to restore degraded blanket bog on their land, but wetter areas were more resilient, and it highlights how important it is to make the moor wetter again.

In addition, the fires had a severe impact on wildlife such as ground nesting birds and voles, with many eggs and nests destroyed, causing a knock-on effect on the rest of the food chain.

Discussing the initiative, Jane King, sustainability manager, said: "We are all local to the area and were very upset by the terrible fires that occurred on the moors this summer.

"The dramatic landscape that fringes Greater Manchester is so beautiful, ecologically important and very much part of the character of the area, so we wanted to play a part in helping to restoring it back to health. It was certainly hard work, but very worthwhile, and we all thoroughly enjoyed our day volunteering with the RSPB."

Dave O'Hara, RSPB Dove Stone site manager, added: "These fires unfortunately devastated moorland that is not just of local importance, but of significance nationally and even globally.

"The restoration work carried out which the team from Morgan Sindall so kindly assisted with will help make the site more resilient to any future wild fire by making the bog wetter. We are very grateful for their support, not only on the day, but also in donating valuable equipment to help us carry on our work on the moors."

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