



Cumbria BogLIFE

Bringing Cumbria's Raised Bogs to Life

Introduction

Cumbria BogLIFE is a five year Natural England project that is restoring three lowland raised bog sites within Cumbria:

- Bolton Fell Moss to the north-east of Carlisle
- Roudsea Woods and Mosses National Nature Reserve (NNR) in south Cumbria, and
- Wedholme Flow - one of four raised bogs within the South Solway Mosses NNR to the north-west of Carlisle.

The project, which has been 50% match-funded by the EU LIFE+ Programme, will directly restore 507 hectares (ha) of degraded raised bog. As the sites are part of wider areas of bog, this will result in improvements to 751 ha of habitat – that's equivalent to around 1000 Wembley Stadium sized football pitches!

Three top reasons to restore these bogs:

- They are home to a wonderful mix of specialist and rare plants and animals, including the sundew - a carnivorous plant (pictured above)
- They provide a unique historical environmental record - an archaeological treasure-trove
- Healthy bogs store carbon from the atmosphere; damaged ones release it, contributing to climate change.

Why Cumbria's bogs need life and love

Lowland raised bog is one of Western Europe's rarest and most threatened habitats.

Around 94% of this unique habitat has been destroyed or damaged in the UK.

45% of what remains within England lies within Cumbria. Despite a lot of this being protected at a European level, much of it needs restoration to bring it back to its natural state.



Bolton Fell Moss (T Crockett, NE)



What are Lowland Raised Peat Bogs?

They have formed since the last ice age, in shallow basins that have poor drainage (often with a clay base), where water-logged conditions have slowed the decay of plants and limited the types of plants that can grow there. Over thousands of years the partially rotted plants, mainly sphagnum mosses, develop into peat and build up into a dome that is higher than the surrounding land – hence the name ‘raised’.

The peat within an undamaged bog is fairly odourless, soft and quite smooth to touch. It is 96% water by weight but the living ‘crust’ of bog plants that are on the surface of the bog enable us to walk on them.

The peat bogs within Cumbria can be up to 12 metres deep - holding a huge amount of peat, the water within it and the carbon that has been locked up by the plants over the years.

Restoration

Centuries of drainage, peat-cutting, tree planting and agricultural practices have left the bogs in a condition that is unsuitable for the specialist bog plants and animals that depend on them and releasing carbon in to the atmosphere.

The Cumbria BogLIFE project is undertaking large-scale restoration works, using specialist contractors and innovative techniques that are:

- Re-creating wetter, boggier ground – by blocking drainage ditches and creating ‘bunds’ (small walls of undamaged, wet peat) that will hold water within the bog.
- Removing some areas of trees that have started to grow in the artificially dry conditions – as bogs do not naturally have trees growing across their surface.
- Re-introducing bog plants to areas with a bare peat surface.



Black Darter (R Petley-Jones, NE)



Baseline vegetation survey (T Crockett, NE)

Monitoring and sharing best practice

Throughout the Cumbria BogLIFE project we are measuring how the work we carry out is changing the vegetation, water levels and carbon emissions. This will enable us to assess how effective our restoration methods have been.

Through communicating with other peatland restoration projects and specialists, we are aiming to use cutting edge techniques in lowland peat bog restoration.

We are running a number of workshops and conferences to enable best practice to be shared amongst professionals.

Community Engagement

For centuries, Cumbria's lowland raised bogs have played an important part in the life of the communities that surround them.

Cumbria BogLIFE aims to celebrate this historical connection and the future role of bogs within their local communities - both as an important habitat and as a place for people to visit and enjoy.

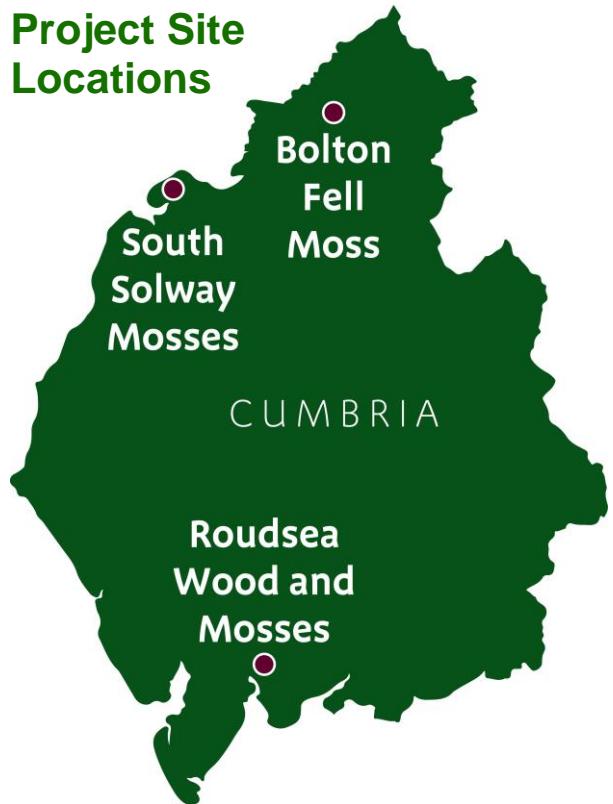
We are working with the communities living near the project sites, to inform and inspire them about the bogs and the restoration works being carried out. With their input, we will develop a programme of events and activities that meet their interests – from schools and local groups to individuals.

The programme may include for example: guided walks, illustrated talks, the development of on-site information boards and artworks that depict what is considered special and interesting about the bogs.



Solway Wetland Explorers (T Crockett, NE)

Project Site Locations



LIFE+

This work is being generously supported by the European Union's LIFE+ Nature and Biodiversity Programme, which is the funding instrument for the environment. Funding is awarded to best practice, innovative demonstration projects that contribute to the objectives of Natura 2000.

Natura 2000

The three bogs that we are restoring through the Cumbria BogLIFE project are part of 'Natura 2000' - a network of the very best areas for wildlife across Europe.

Restoration of degraded lowland raised bogs on three Cumbrian SSSIs/SACs (LIFE 13 NAT/UK/000443

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www.gov.uk/government/publications/cumbrian-bogs-life-project

Natural England is here to conserve and enhance the natural environment, for its intrinsic value, the wellbeing and enjoyment of people and the economic prosperity that it brings.

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