

Lake Vyrnwy to Aberdeen!

Round-up of the Project's Achievements

Management Work

The EU funded LIFE Active Blanket Bog in Wales Project has been extremely successful in exceeding its original restoration targets. Through excellent partnership working, high class local contractors and close working with local farmers, the project has blocked a staggering 484.5km of upland drain on the Berwyn and South Clwyd Mountains and Migneint-Arenig-Dduallt SACs. That's Lake Vyrnwy to Aberdeen! This is largely been thanks to 13 local farmers who have worked with the project to block drains on their own land.

In addition, 248 ha of conifer plantation have been felled and the planting ditches blocked. A total of 11,479 trees were removed from the blanket bog at Lake Vyrnwy alone, but Tan yr Allt, Pen y Bedw, Penrhyn Isaf and Penaran were also cleared of non-native "alien" species (mainly Sitka spruce and Rhododendron).

This restoration work has re-wetted 8,740ha of uplands in Wales.



Other Projects restoring Blanket Bog in Wales

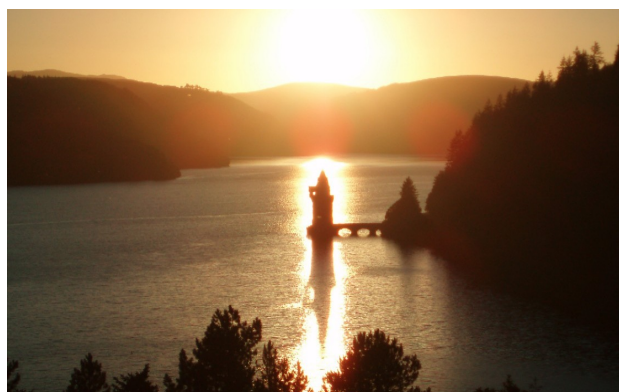
Blanket bog restoration is not complete across the project areas. There are still vast drainage networks which require blocking, non-native trees to be cleared and grazing levels to perfect. The project partners are committed to continuing this work across Wales, as are other organisations. The National Trust's Upper Conwy Catchment Project will continue to work with tenants on blanket bog restoration. There is also on-going work through the Pumlumon Project by the Montgomery Wildlife Trust as well as in the Brecon Beacons National Park and Snowdonia National Park.



23,000 + readings, cows and snow

Has all this management work made any difference? Monitoring the effects of the management on the hydrology (23,000+ readings were taken) of the blanket bog from before the drains were blocked, has shown that flood response has reduced, water quality and colour improved, and less organic matter is flushed downstream. The vegetation monitoring at both Lake Vyrnwy and Penaran has shown that there is a decrease in diversity of species next to the open drains but after blocking the species diversity is slowly increasing again. It will take a follow up survey in a few years time to determine exactly how the vegetation is changing due to the blocking. The surveys have shown that the drains did not improve the vegetation for stock and that by blocking them you reduce the impact of sheep getting stuck and drowning.

The monitoring has not been all plain sailing of course. The cattle trampled all over the equipment and it was buried under 2 feet of snow for long periods during the last two winters!



Community Based Work

The community based work has been a fantastic success with schools from the project area receiving outreach visits and going up onto the moor at Lake Vyrnwy to see the work for themselves. Over 1800 children got involved with the project. Most of those visiting the project were primary school children but teacher groups from across Europe, University and A-level students have also visited the bog. Getting the children onto the blanket bog was essential as they will be the managers of this land in the future.

Talks and guided walks have gone on throughout the project with 2500 people attending a project talk or taking part in a guided walk. International Bog Day in July 2010, attracted over 500 people to learn more about the bog and local farming. The commonest comment was that they did not realise just what was here on the doorstep and how important it is.

Events

To “take the bog to people”, the project has had stands at the National Eisteddfod in Bala, the Royal Welsh Show and the National Sheep Association in Cerrigydrudion. Our farmer demonstration day held at Lake Vyrnwy was attended by over 90 farmers or members of the farming industry.



Nerys Evans (AM) and Jan Evans at Royal Welsh Show 2010



International Bog Day July 2010

Highlights

One of the highlights has to be when the project was the focus of “Natur ein Bro” run by CCW during the National Eisteddfod. Eight primary schools from around Bala visited the project and wrote poems about the blanket bog, which they then performed in Y Babel Lân at the National Eisteddfod. This was an important event for the project and the children made it a huge success. Local poet, Robin Hughes, also wrote “Gorgors y Berwyn” for the project to display at the Eisteddfod.

Glastir

At time of writing the All Wales Element of Glastir application window has finished for the 2012 start date. Farms to be put forward for the targeted element of Glastir starting in 2013 will be selected from these applicants. It is in the targeted element where it is thought that the type of management carried out by the project will be funded, i.e. drain blocking and Rhododendron clearance. Out of the 5 themes in the targeted element the Welsh Assembly have stated that, “in the first two years of the scheme the scoring process will be particularly weighted in favour of delivery towards improved carbon storage and water management”. The type of management carried out by the project over the last 5 years will deliver on both these objectives.

As with all projects with time-limited funding, there is a danger that any momentum produced will just stop. It is important that Glastir provides financial impetus to continue the practical restoration. To gain a complete and ongoing understanding of the true nature of the effects of drain blocking on water, carbon, the habitat and farming, it is vital that the hydrological and vegetation surveys that have begun as part of this project are continued. Blanket bog changes very slowly over time and it may take many years to see the final results of the practical work.

Website

The project’s website (www.gorgorscymru.org) will still be running after the project finishes. Look out for any updates or view the Eisteddfod poems or the DVD about the project presented by Iolo Williams.

