



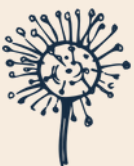
The Wildlife Trust for
**Lancashire
Manchester &
North Merseyside**



**Forest of
Bowland
National
Landscape**

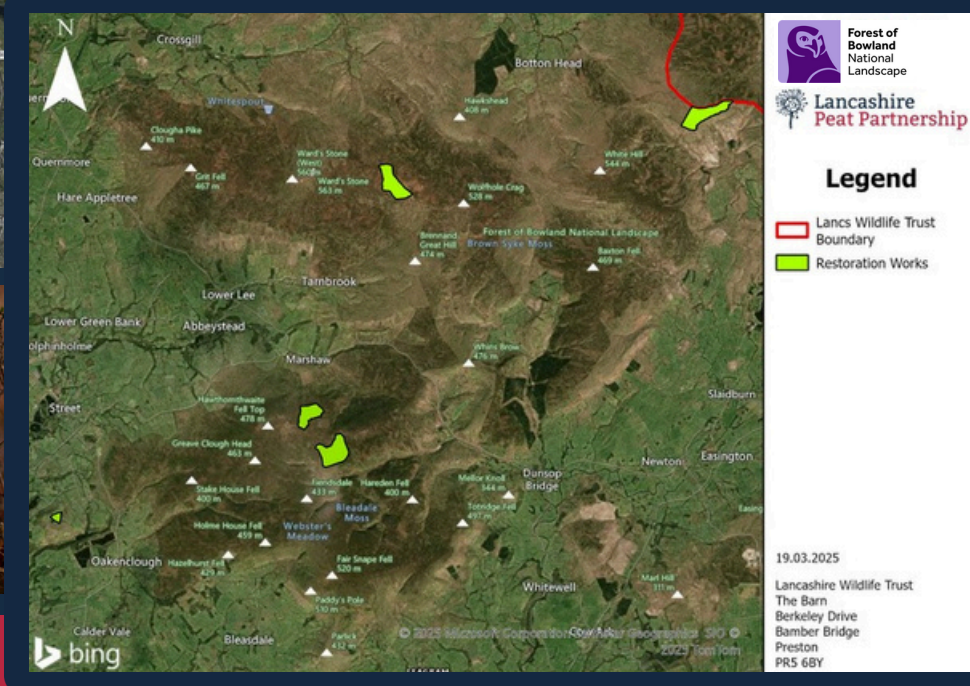
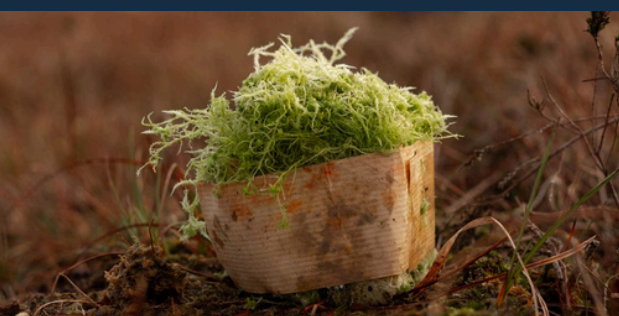
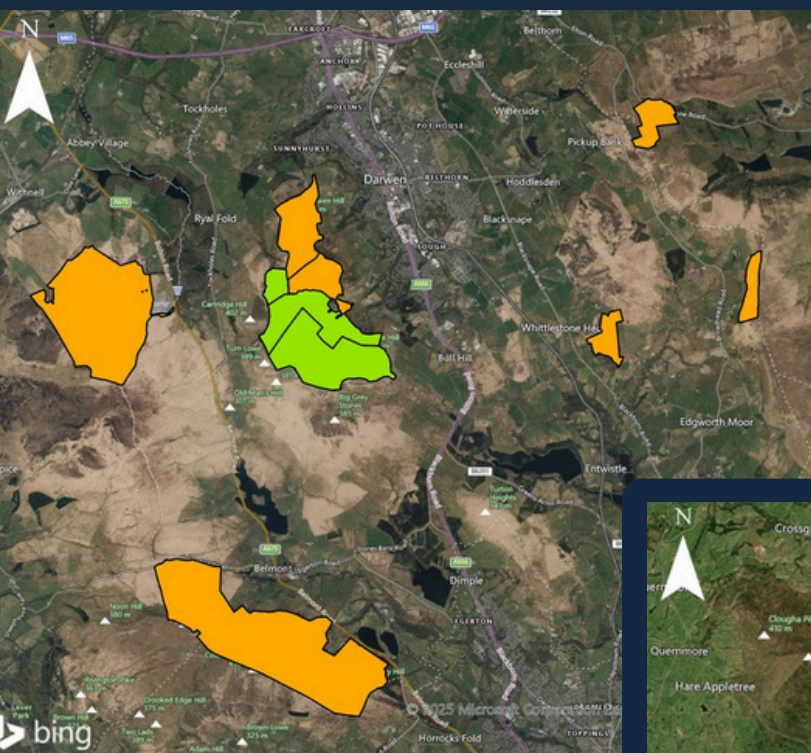


Credit A.J.Critch Wildlife



**Lancashire
Peat Partnership**


Annual Report
April 2024 - March 2025



Headline Stats:

We have put **424 hectares** of the uplands of Lancashire on the long path towards restoration, protecting the peat soils from further erosion, making the land more resilient to wildfires, drought and flooding, securing the carbon in the soils and improving the biodiversity of the land.

Across the West Pennine Moors area, the team have installed over **4,000** different ditch blocks, created **5.5 km** of surface bunding, reprofiled **1.5 km** of eroding edges and planted **182,000** sphagnum moss plug plants, **60,000** of which were planted with the help of volunteers.

In the Forest of Bowland National Landscape, the team have installed over **2,000** different ditch blocks, covered more than **8 ha** of bare peat, reprofiled more than **40 km** of eroding edges and planted **12,000** sphagnum moss plug plants.

In addition to the restoration works, the team have surveyed approximately **1,500 ha** of blanket bog habitats in preparation for future restoration works.



Season Highlights

Lords Hall Estate | Bunding Trial

In March 2024 work completed on a large area of bunding on the Lords Hall Estate on Darwen Moor. A requirement of this was that we had to closely monitor the impact on the land, as requested by the regulator, Natural England.

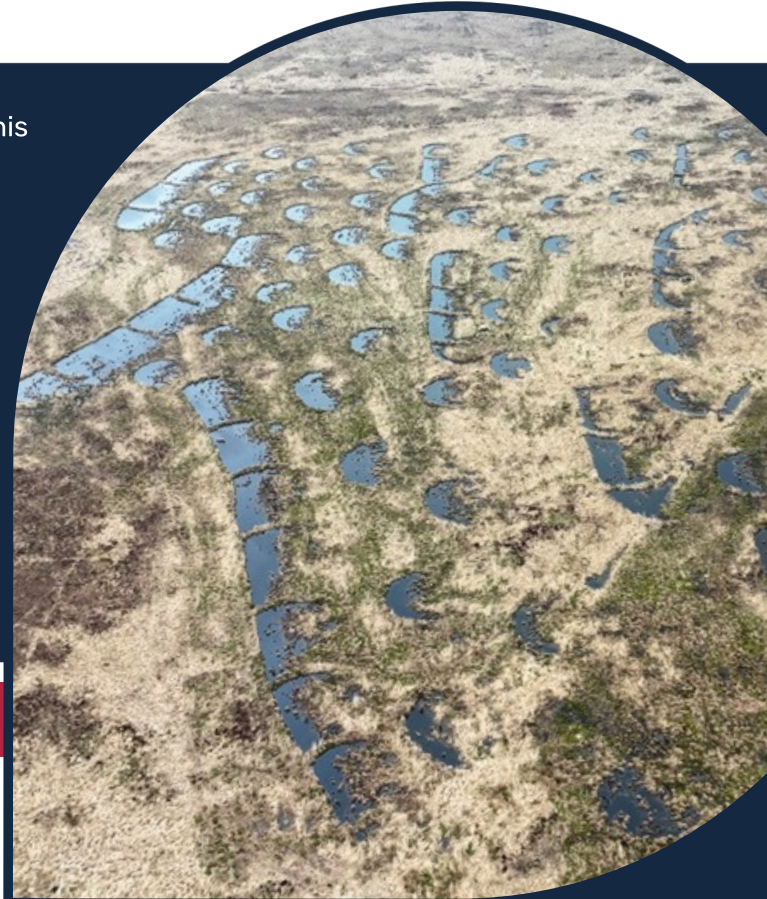
The Lancashire Peat Partnership is happy to report that this trial has been a success. While it was considered a possibility that the surface bunds would not fill with water, all bunds now have pools of standing water behind them – most of them filling within less than 24 hours of being created. This is not only providing a swathe of new habitat for numerous species, but also making the land more resilient to wildfire by creating a natural, wet fire break, and reducing the dominance of purple moor grass (*Molinia caerulea*) which is increasing the fire risk.

Does the wildlife approve? **Yes!**

Staff have seen a large flock (~30) of **golden plover** (*Pluvialis apricaria*) using the site as a pit-stop, foraging in the pools mid-migration back to Scandinavia. A survey of **Odonata** species (dragonflies and damselflies) done in the August, just 5-months after the bunding zone was completed saw a 150% increase in these flying insects.

Species seen included:

- Black darter (*Sympetrum danae*)
- Common darter (*Sympetrum striolatum*)
- Four-spotted chaser (*Libellula quadrimaculata*)
- Emerald damselfly (*Lestes sponsa*)
- Migrant hawker (*Aeshna mixta*)
- Common hawker (*Aeshna juncea*)



Staff have also seen **red grouse** (*Lagopus lagopus scotia*) using the slightly raised land to keep an eye on the surroundings, and **curlew** (*Numenius arquata*) wandering through and foraging in the pools.



Credit Alex Hubberstey

The Sphag Shack Baby!!

The Peat Partnership has been working with another branch of Lancashire Wildlife Trust; The Greenhouse Project. Together, we have been setting up one of the unused greenhouses as a bog plant growing facility.



With teachings from Calderdale Council who undertook a similar project, we have installed a new misting irrigation system and have identified and harvested seven different sphagnum moss species from a site on Darwen Moor to grow on in the greenhouse. These mosses will eventually be replanted back on the sites they were harvested from.

The species harvested are:

- Sphagnum capillifolium
- S. rubellum
- S. palustre
- S. papillosum
- S. fallax
- S. fimbriatum
- S. subnitens



Watch our video

Science & Monitoring



Prioritisation Tool

The Peat Partnership has been working with an independent researcher and the Environment Agency to create a Peatland Prioritisation Tool for the whole of the uplands of Lancashire.

This tool allows us to assess different climate scenarios in the future and prioritise areas which will be the least resilient in their current state. These then become a focus area for engagement with local stakeholders and landowners to build relationships and enable surveys/restoration work in the area.

E-DNA Surveys – The Bowland Bug Hunt

Working with a Lancashire-based Ecological Consultancy and University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands, a pioneering project regarding invertebrate eDNA (Environmental DNA) on peatlands in the Forest of Bowland was undertaken in the spring and summer of 2024. Pitfall traps collected invertebrates which were catalogued by entomologists and then sent off for metabarcoding. This study aims to add to the growing area of research, with the hope of one day metabarcoding becoming a reliable technique that can be rolled out across the industry more widely for the monitoring of invertebrates.

eDNA detects the traces of species left behind in waterbodies or soil. All species, including humans, leave small traces of DNA wherever they go, and this scientific field can identify species from those traces. If DNA is detected, you know that a certain species has passed through or lives in that area. This is a much less invasive survey method than using pitfall traps which result in the invertebrates which fall into them being killed, the species collected are then identified and counted.



Looking to the Future

The Peat Partnership currently have a number of “shovel-ready” sites which will undergo restoration works in the coming working season. This includes another large site on Darwen Moor, around Jubilee Tower, another smaller site on the edge of Holcombe Moor, and the second phase of works on Aushaw Moss will begin.

In the Forest of Bowland it is expected that restoration works on at least four sites totalling 420ha will begin. Delivered through the Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme in partnership with the National Trust, local landowners and NGOs.

If funding can be secured, Winter Hill East will also begin restoration works. This will be the largest project the Peat Partnership has delivered to date.

We will continue to survey sites across Lancashire to build a pipeline of “shovel-ready” projects for delivery when funding becomes available.



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