

Project Number : R4 Pestfurlong Moss



Project Overview:

The restoration of a rare lowland raised bog habitat through rewetting and scrub and woodland management. The site forms a significant ecological stepping stone between the larger Risley and Holcroft mosses that it sits between. The site is managed by a local community volunteer group (Friends of Gorse Covert Mounds) and the restoration process will provide an excellent way to engage local residents in the Carbon Landscape. Improvements will feature access path enhancements and boardwalk construction that will simultaneously improve access and protect sensitive areas of the site.

Project lead organisation and other organisations involved: Carbon Landscape Programme Team

Project Location: Gorse Covert Mounds, Birchwood, Warrington

Project dates: Aug 2017 – Mar 2019

Project Outputs

Measure	Target	Delivered	Notes
22 No pile dams installed totalling 20m in length	22	31	
130 m Plygene/peat bund created	130m	140m	
200 m boardwalk constructed	200m	0m	A decision made by the Woodland Trust was made to remove this element of the project. They didn't want to have to potential repair and/or replacement in the future.
230 m access path enhanced	230m	266m	Access tracks were enhanced, with an additional 36m of hard standing and steps to enable access down from Gorse Mound, onto the mossland itself. The steps replaced the original boardwalk plans.
1.9 ha mossland habitat improved	1.9 ha		
Additional outputs delivered			
Since the delivery of the first phase , there has been 2		0.8ha	0.4ha Mossland and 0.4ha wet woodland restored and created using bunding techniques. 10,000 bog plants introduced as plugs, including

additional phases of large scale capital works.			Common and Hare's-tail cotton grass, Sphagnum Moss species, Cross-leaved heath, Common Heather and Bilberry.
3 Great Crested Newt Ponds Dug		3 pools	These have created opportunity for Sphagnum Moss and other bog plants to thrive and increase open water for invertebrates, notably dragonflies.
Numerous volunteer sessions			12 volunteer sessions, including 7 practical management days and 4 training days. 73 volunteers engaged
Management Plan		1	This is to outline relevant bog management and to be used by the Woodland Trust and Friends of Gorse Covert Mounds

Reflecting on the last 5 years, what's the one thing that you're most proud of that has come from your project being part of the Carbon Landscape?

I am completely astonished on how well the mossland has responded to the rewetting work. The biggest achievement for phase one has to be how CL programme Team, Natural England, Woodland Trust and Friends of Gorse Covert Mounds came together to plan, fund and deliver the rewetting.

Also, without the original project, the two following phases would not have been made possible and the learning that spilled from that. Thanks to the Carbon Landscape, the site is in recovery and now functions as the intended stepping stone habitat, linking two internationally important mosslands, Risley Moss and Holcroft Moss.

What difference has this project made to the cultural and natural heritage of Carbon Landscape?

With around 99% of Mosslands lost in this area, restoring even just a small fragment like Pestfurlong Moss cannot be underestimated. The work restores our natural heritage, delivering a suite of benefits. The rewetting helps keep carbon locked away in the ground, helping us combat climate change and now the right plants are starting to thrive, the site will start to function as a carbon sink, actively drawing in carbon and locking it away in its peat reserves. The work will improve habitat for rare mossland species, such as Bog Bush Cricket and peat building plants like Sphagnum Moss.

Dr Paul Thomas Natural England

"The Manchester Mosses Special Areas of Conservation include Risley Moss and Holcroft Moss and they are internationally important. They cannot exist in isolation. They need to be connected for species to have a sustainable future. The rewetting of Pestfurlong is an important stepping stone. It is almost like an insurance policy since the bog bush cricket is here and we are working on this being a donor site to some of the other mosses around."

The access improvements will increase the number of visitors to the site, in particular to those who struggle with uneven surfaces. Working closely with local communities and the Friends of Gorse Covert Mounds has helped to increase awareness of mossland habitat and its importance for our environment and rare species.

The project is part of a wider effort to drastically reduce the amount of carbon in our atmosphere. It is now common knowledge how important Peatland habitats are for the environment and Pestfurlong Moss is at the heart of this. It is a great example on how small fragments can contribute to our governments carbon neutral targets.

What difference has this project made to people?

During 2018 Breeding bird and Dragonfly Identification and survey training were delivered with 10 volunteers taking part. The courses were delivered by two local friends groups, the Friends of Gorse Covert Mounds (FOGCM) and Risley Moss Action Group (RiMAG) and consisted of a classroom session in the morning followed by surveying in the afternoon. Following of from their training the 10 volunteers delivered Breeding Bird, Dragonfly and Butterfly surveys (21 volunteer days overall) and fed the data back to the Great Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) and the survey leader. Reports produced base line data set before any capital work had taken place. The data from these and future surveys will give us a great indication on the impact of the rewetting works.

The Carbon Landscape delivered a Leading a Group AQA training course that 8 volunteers attended. This training will enable volunteers to deliver future sessions independently, helping to ensure the legacy of the project. The Great Manchester Ecology Unit have delivered Breeding Bird Surveys and Willow Tit Surveys. Data from these surveys will be used to evidence any changes due to the restoration of the mossland.

A Peatland Conservation AQA was delivered to 8 Carbon Landscape volunteers and the course covered relevant conservation topics in a classroom setting in the morning and then practical management on Pestfurlong Moss in the afternoon. The practical session involved creating an additional dam in a large drain which brought the total dams to 31.

As the dams have created standing water in new places on Pestfurlong Moss, a member of the Friends of Gorse Covert Mounds has designed a survey methodology to monitor the water levels on the site. This method has been shared throughout the Friends of Group and ongoing water level and Wildlife Surveys will be delivered by the volunteers and FoGCM and RiMAG friends groups.

One regular user of the site can now access the mossland using the steps installed.

“Ever since I lived in Birchwood, I’ve been visiting Gorse Covert Mounds, but never been down to the moss. I struggle with a bad hip and now use the steps most days when walking my dog”

Annie, Carbon Landscape Restoration Work Placement used Pestfurlong Moss to study as part of her university dissertation.

“Working closely on and studying this site has helped me understand the true benefits of peatland restoration”

Steve Wright Chair of Friends of Gorse Covert Mounds.

“ I am so excited about this because it is actually working and everything is going to plan. When local people first found out about the rewetting they were puzzled at first because they thought it might negatively affect their properties. Now they can see that isn't the case. I have loved learning new skills like the new types of mosses and we live in hope that adders may come from nearby Risley Moss and have a deadhedge and found a piece of corrugated iron which apparently they like.”

Useful Links

www.carbonlandscape.org.uk/pestfurlong-moss-case-study

On site walking trail www.carbonlandscape.org.uk/pestfurlong-moss-1

www.facebook.com/groups/gorsecovertmounds

Future Plans and Legacy

The Woodland Trust were so impressed with the work that we have delivered in partnership that they have allocated a management budget to the site. This will ensure scrub and invasive bracken is kept on top of and any breaches in the dams will be fixed. The site is now part of two potential species reintroduction projects, acting as a donor site for the Bog Bush Cricket (currently in a captive breeding programme with Chester Zoo) and a potential receptor site for White-faced Darter dragonflies.

Lessons learned?

The original re-wetting of the woodland area wasn't originally as successful as we'd hoped. Looking back, installing a plygene bund around the perimeter of the woodland was required, however, there was no way of knowing this at the outset. The plygene has been delivered now in phase 3.

Photographic Evidence



Neil Oxley, the site manager from the Woodland Trust Planting Cotton Grass and Sphagnum Mosses to encourage a vegetation layer to develop.



Paths and steps installed to improve the visitor experience and guide site users onto the mossland trail. The new access ensures a safe route for visitors but also keeps site users of sensitive areas of the moss.



A ditch within the woodland is holding water. This should over time enhance the woodland and benefit a variety of species including and red list species, Great Crested Newts and Willow Tit.

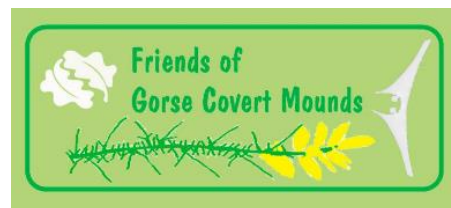


Staff from Manchester Metropolitan University, Nigel Balding and our Carbon Landscape restoration work placement, Annie installing dipwells to enable hydrology assessments.



Almost immediate results of the rewetting work. Ditches are clearly now holding water.

Funding Partners



WARRINGTON
Borough Council

