

Cumbria Peat Partnership Annual Report April 23 - March 24



Report produced by Cumbria Wildlife Trust on behalf of Cumbria Peat Partnership

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1. Cumbria Peat Partnership

The Cumbria Peat Partnership (CPP) is a group of stakeholders with an interest in peatland habitats in Cumbria. The CPP, established in 2013, aims to share knowledge, develop best practice and actively support the restoration of all peat habitats in Cumbria. Cumbria Wildlife Trust is the secretariat for the CPP and employs a peatland team who deliver a programme of peatland work on its behalf.

Representatives from the following stakeholder organisations form the membership of the partnership:

- Cumbria Wildlife Trust (CWT)
- Environment Agency (EA)
- Natural England (NE)
- The Forestry Commission (FC)
- The National Trust (NT)
- United Utilities (UU)
- Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA)
- Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA)
- National Farmers Union (NFU)
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
- Moorland Association

Collaborative working within the CPP is key to its success, with many of the peat projects delivered in partnership. Similarly, the achievements of individual peat partnerships can be amplified when working together through securing resources, collaborative projects, sharing skills and advocating for peatlands.

Cumbria Peat Partnership is part of the Great North Bog Coalition – a coalition of 6 ‘delivery partnerships’ working to restore the peatlands of the northern English uplands (the Great North Bog). The protected landscapes of the Great North Bog represent around 92% of the upland peat in England.

Cumbria Peat Partnership is also part of the Northern Lowland Peatland Coalition, working in partnership with Lancashire Peat Partnership to restore lowland raised bogs. Between the member organisations of this coalition we encompass the largest remaining extent of this priority habitat in England, with Cumbria holding around 45% of what remains in England.

In 2023/24 the CPP held two in-person full partnership meetings, a smaller meeting focusing on peatland finance options, for those partners who are landowners and a site visit to Nichols Moss Nature Reserve to view some completed restoration work.



Cumbria Peat Partnership visit to Nichols Moss, August 2023

2. Achievements

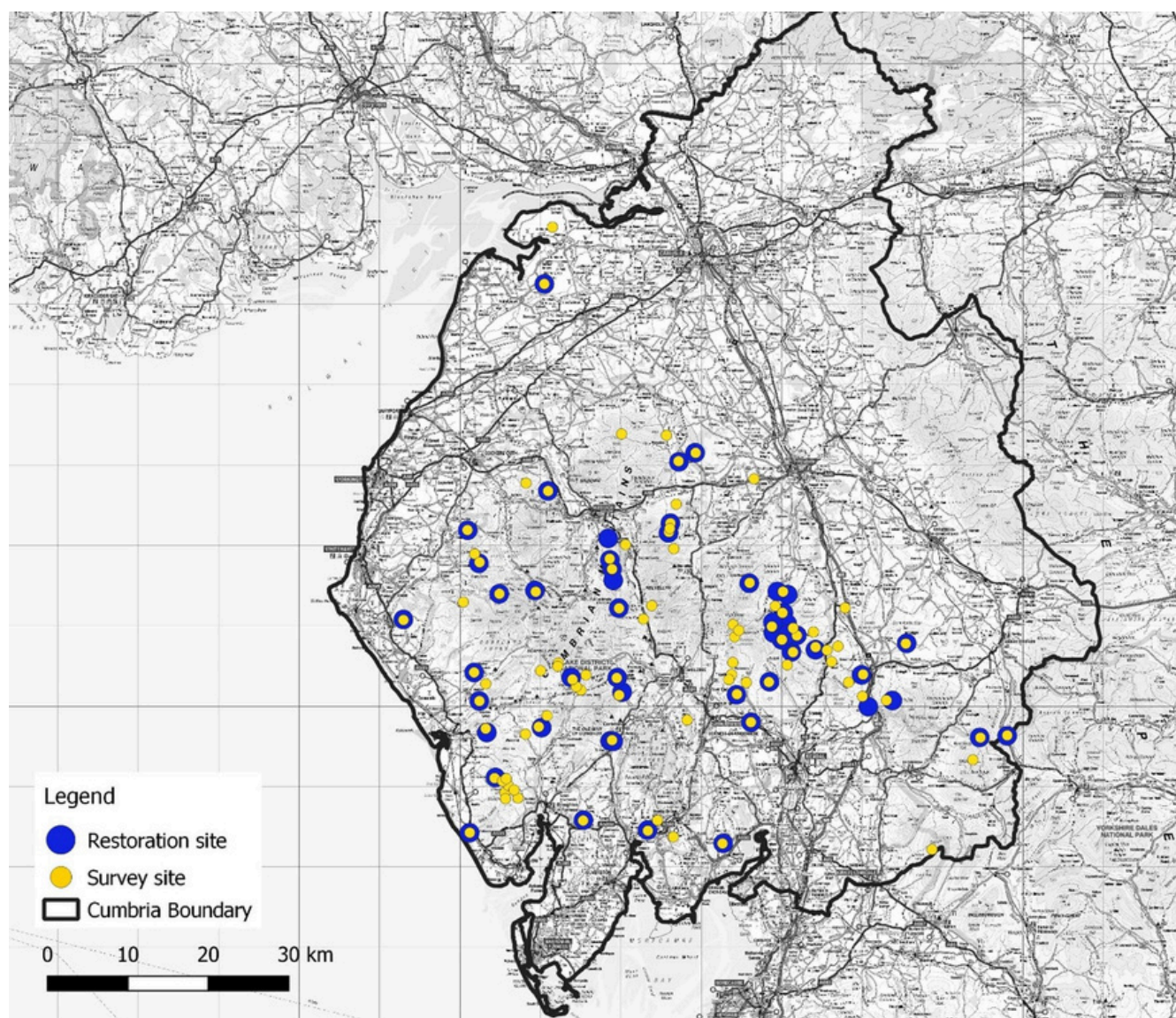
Since 2013 a total of 10,250ha peatland has been surveyed and 4,621ha has undergone restoration work*. During 2023/24, 403ha was surveyed and 471ha underwent restoration.

It is important to note that even when a site has undergone 'restoration' work, this is just the first step towards the recovery of the ecosystem. Further interventions may be required in future, including further phases of restoration work. Appropriate management is also key to the long-term success of a project.

Projects worked on in 2023/24 included:

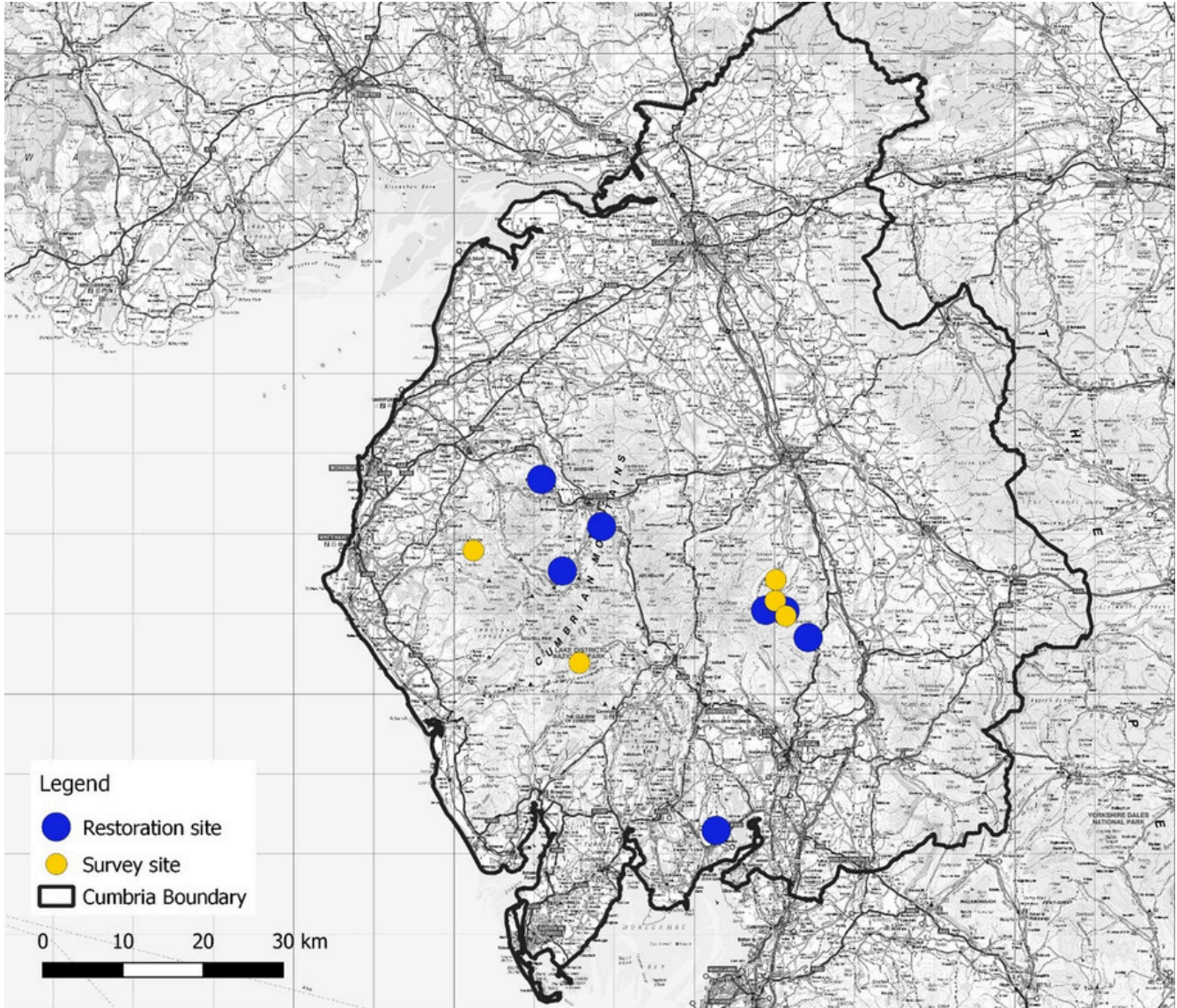
- Great North Bog West - Upland Restoration Project
- Northern Lowland Peatland Coalition - Lowland Peatland Restoration Project
- Haweswater Peatland Project
- Cumbria Connects
- Upper Duddon Landscape Recovery Project

Locations of surveys and restoration since 2013



* There is no consensus on how best to report the area of peat restoration. In this report the area that has undergone restoration is calculated by applying a 30m buffer to all features restored within a site.

Locations of surveys and restoration in 2023/24



Surveys

Five areas were surveyed in 2023/24, covering 403ha. The details and next steps are outlined in the table below.

Site	Size (ha)	Project	Funder	Delivery Organisation	Next steps
Upper Duddon	70	Upper Duddon Landscape Recovery Project	Defra	CWT	To be delivered through Upper Duddon Landscape Recovery Project
Whiteoak Moss	31	Great North Bog (West) Upland Restoration	Section 106/ Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme (NfCPGS)	CWT	To be restored in 2024/25
Dodd Bottom	14	Haweswater Peat Project	United Utilities	CWT	To be delivered through Eastern Fells Landscape Recovery Project
Naddle Valley Mires	40	Haweswater Peat Project	United Utilities	CWT	To be delivered through Eastern Fells Landscape Recovery Project
SCAMP Areas	248	Haweswater Peat Project	United Utilities	CWT	Restored through Haweswater Peat Project



Restoration

In 2023/24, 471ha of restoration work was completed across seven sites with the following interventions:

- 43,800m of hags, gullies, and grips reprofiled
- 11,000m of bunds created
- 28,900m of grips and gullies blocked with peat, timber, or stone dams
- 0.15ha of bare peat revegetated
- 9ha of trees cleared
- 2.5ha of lowland peat cell bunded

Site	Size (ha)	Project	Funder	Delivery Organisation	Protected Landscape
Nichols Moss Field	2.5	Lowland Peatland Coalition - Lowland Restoration	Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme (NfCPGS)	CWT	Lake District National Park
Branstree and Artle Crag	154	Network for Nature/ Haweswater Peat Project	Network for Nature (Highways England)	CWT	Lake District National Park
SCaMP areas	42	Haweswater Peat Project	United Utilities	CWT	Lake District National Park
Wasdale	198	Great North Bog (West) Upland Restoration	Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme (NfCPGS)	CWT	Lake District National Park
Barf Common	32	Great North Bog (West) Upland Restoration	Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme (NfCPGS)	CWT	Lake District National Park
Armboth Fell (Phase 3)	43	Great North Bog (West) Upland Restoration	Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme (NfCPGS)	CWT	Lake District National Park
Rigg Head	0.0175		Starling Bank and European Regional Development Fund	Fix the Fells	Lake District National Park

Monitoring

Long-term monitoring has been set up for 16 sites including vegetation quadrats, fixed point photography and 'Eyes on the Bog' kit (dipwells, rust rods and surface level rods).

Thirty-six volunteers are working with the CWT peatland team to collect the Eyes on the Bog data, contributing to the UK-wide citizen science peatland monitoring programme.



Above: Peatland volunteers undertaking Eyes on the Bog monitoring at Eskdale

Right: CWT staff taking dipwell reading at Armboth



Engagement

During 2023/24 the CPP delivered a broad range of engagement activities:

- Westmorland Show – peatland stall at the Cumbria Wildlife Trust marquee
- Featured in Financial Times film 'Peatlands' Carbon Problem'
- Shap Wildlife Festival – talk and guided walk
- Big Green Week at Gosling Sike - talk
- Cumbria Wildlife Trust Penrith Local Support Group – talk
- Cumbria Wildlife Trust Member's Conference and AGM – talk
- Peatland planting day at Nichols Moss
- Worked in partnership with the Field Studies Council to deliver a field visit to Matterdale Common for Oxford University MSc Students and created a blog for their Climate Enquiry event
- Supported Natural England's NFM school workshop trial in Grasmere Primary School
- Talk for Fix the Fells staff about peatland restoration techniques
- Peatland restoration workshop for the Environment Agency National Environmental and Sustainability team (North West)
- Lowland peatland restoration session for Northumberland Peat Partnership



Peatland demo at Grasmere Primary School
Photo credit: Grasmere Primary School

3. Successes and challenges

The CPP secured £1,268,529 of funding for peatland scoping and restoration projects in 2023/24. A total of 403ha was surveyed and 471ha of peatland underwent restoration, bringing the total area surveyed to 10,250ha and the area of restoration to 4,621ha.

Thanks to investment in scoping work, largely through the Peatland Grant Scheme Discovery fund and Haweswater Peatland Project but also through a number of other projects and smaller contracts, there is now a fully scoped pipeline of potential restoration sites that could be delivered over the next couple of years. We are grateful to the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for providing core funding for staff via the Great North Bog, and to Westmorland and Furness Council for support through the Climate and Nature Partnership Fund.

Challenges remain for funding as the Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme is likely to end in the next year and there is still uncertainty around future funding for peatland conservation. The ongoing funding for the core peatland team will be critical to the long-term success of Cumbria Peat Partnership; without retention of dedicated, experienced staff to survey, design, oversee and monitor restoration projects, delivery will stall. Similarly, long term certainty about peatland delivery is needed for local contractors in order that they can invest in developing their businesses as a critical part of the peatland sector. Development of future funding including blended finance options will be key to the ongoing delivery of our peatland programme.

The rate at which projects can be delivered is currently limited by capacity constraints which again is linked to long-term funding. In order to deliver peatland restoration at the scale and rate required to meet UK's climate targets this must be addressed.

There is a need to enhance stakeholder engagement, particularly with commoners and tenants, to ensure projects run efficiently and so that scoped sites can move quickly into restoration when funds do become available for capital works. The historic environment also needs to be carefully considered when designing projects to ensure sufficient resource is built in for appropriate archaeological reporting and investigation and that stakeholders are engaged in a timely manner.

The overall success of peatland restoration work can be impacted by external pressures such as poor management or extreme weather events. Most projects are only funded up to the restoration stage; by extending funding to include return visits to sites and monitoring of peatland condition, the long-term success of projects could be greatly improved.

4. Next steps

Surveys and restoration projects are scheduled and funded for the full 2024/25 season, and many of these follow on from work that has taken place in the last two years.

The CPP is currently planning the peatland programme for 2025/26 and beyond; as outlined above, development of blended finance will be key to delivery. New CPP targets will be created to guide delivery as the original targets set by the CPP have been met. CPP is involved in the development of the Cumbria Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and will ensure that the CPP targets align with the LNRS.

5. Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the many project partners, organisations and individuals who have supported our peatland programme.

We are hugely grateful to the funders who have supported our project work and provided core funding over the last year. Thanks to Natural England, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Westmorland and Furness Council, United Utilities, Highways England, Cumbria Connects Endangered Landscape Project and DEFRA. The peatland team is part of Cumbria Wildlife Trust and we are grateful to their members for their support.

We are grateful to the landowners, tenants and commoner's associations who have supported our work. We worked with a range of local specialist peatland contractors including Terra Firma Environmental Ltd, OpenSpace Cumbria Ltd and Field and Fell Environmental Limited.

Thanks to our peatland volunteers who are playing a vital role in assessing bog health and measuring the success of restoration.

Finally, thanks to Cumbria Wildlife Trust's Peat Team, which during the period was: Susie Webb, Gemma Jennings, Heidi Buck, Tom Lemmey, Sean Prokopiw, Mel Sugden, Sandra Moran and Grace Fuller.

Cumbria Peat Partnership

