



Silverlake Conservation and Community Fund

FINAL REPORT

For a final report, we would like you to give us some details regarding information about your project that is asked for below. If the boxes are too restrictive, feel free to write it on other paper but please answer the points below.

Project beginnings

How was the need identified? Who set it off?

The Dorset Peat Partnership (DPP) was established in December 2021, as a subgroup of the Dorset Catchment Partnership (DCP) led by Dorset Wildlife Trust (DWT). This brought together some key land managers of the Dorset Heaths; BCP Council, DWT, Forestry England, Natural England, National Trust (Purbecks), National Trust (Kingston Lacy) the RSPB and one private landowner. Supported by a Discovery Grant from the Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme (NCPGS) these partners worked together collectively to find eligible peatland sites in Dorset which they could put forward for restoration grant funding to restore degraded peatland habitats across Dorset. The DPP were successful in their bid and obtained a grant award of £757,000 from the NCPGS in August 2023 to restore 172 hectares across sixteen sites. This grant award covered 75% of the capital costs and the remaining 25% match has been collectively funded through project partners and external funding sources such as Silverlake Conservation and Community Fund. The DPP is very grateful to be in receipt of your contribution of £5000 towards the now completed works near Moreton, at Oakers Bog.

Aims & objectives:

What did you plan to achieve? Details of specific original outputs can be inserted here.

This part of the Oakers Bog mire complex is managed by Forestry England. The Discovery Grant identified that the mosaic of mire and wet heath habitat within the Moreton plantation had been degraded by previous forestry management interventions. This key in-balance being the state of hydrological connectivity on the site, which for the purpose of plantation conifer crops was the presence of deep drainage channels which lowered the water table. This helps the trees to grow but then leaves much drier vegetation communities on the ground surface which start to dominant like dense and tussocky Molinia (Purple Moor grass), plus natural regenerating pine and birch trees.

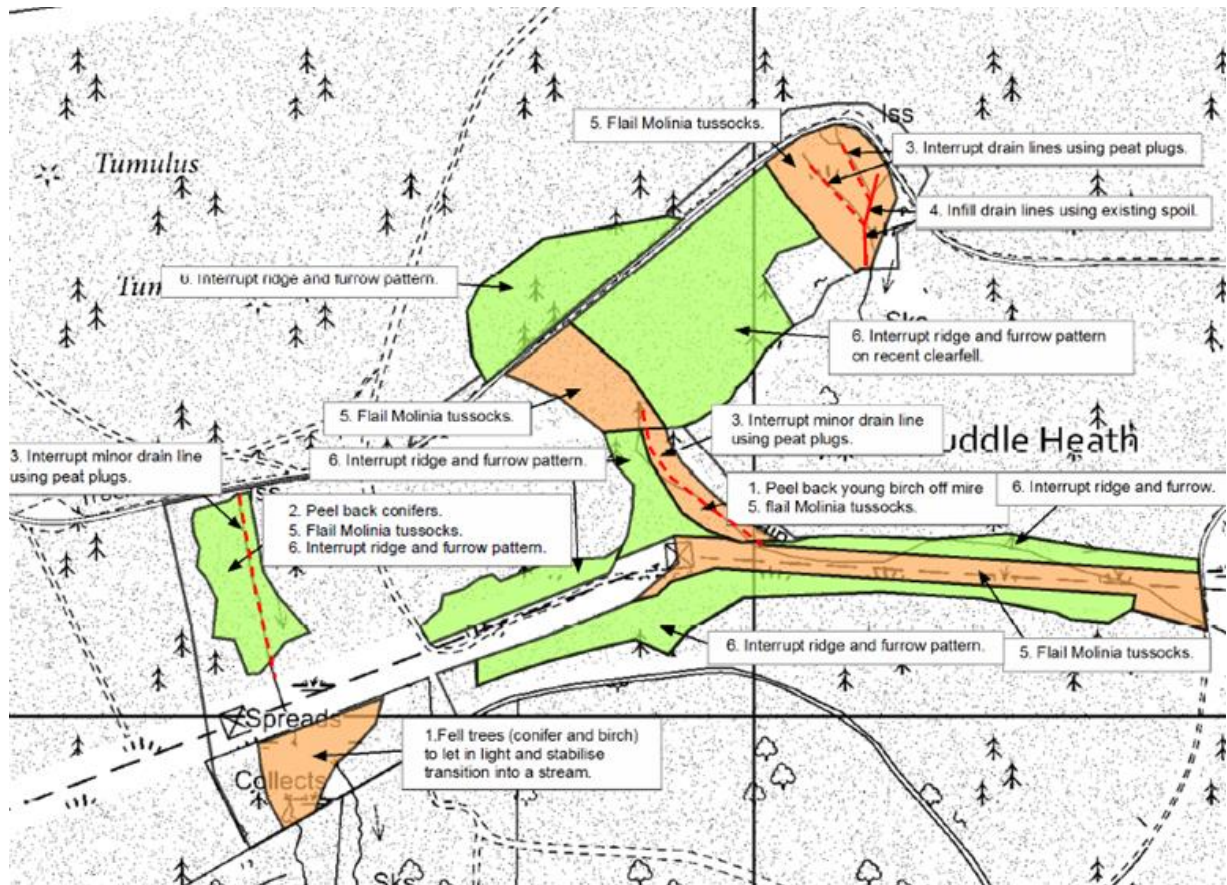
The key site aims were to:

- Restore a raised water table in the mire to encourage Sphagnum expansion/ peat formation.
- Reduce the height of Molinia tussocks to encourage Sphagnum colonisation
- Removal of the conifer crop and areas of natural regeneration to reduce the mire drying out

The objectives of the restoration were to:

- Fell trees (mature conifer) and natural regen around the mire extent to reduce it drying out
- Interrupt minor drain lines with peat plugs, to raise the water table within the mire
- infill drain lines within the open mire using existing bankside spoil
- Machine mulch the densely perched Molinia tussocks
- Interrupt ridge and furrow topography to reduce runoff and to create an evenly distributed water table

Restoration Site Map Oakers Bog SSSI



Delivery:

*Who did what? What did you spend the money on? What has this project achieved?
Did you put more match funds/time into the project than initially thought? If so, how much?
Please provide some facts and figures in this section.*

Forestry England staff oversaw the site supervision of the appointed contractors. The actual site works were split into two phases:

Year 1 (Winter 2023-24) delivered the felling of the mature conifer crop trees (Scots and Corsican pine) this was achieved with a mechanical harvester to fell and forwarder to extract produce to roadside. The additional scattered pine and birch trees and scrub were carried out by manual chainsaw cutters and scattered over the site. These works were contracted to Hart Forestry Ltd and this site was worked during February 2024.

Delivery Outputs:

Site works achieved over a period of days.

A total area of 1.37 hectares of vegetation was removed.

The cost to deliver this work was £7092

FE staff time contribution equated to approximately 40 hours of direct site time supervision and overseeing all the contract management.

Year 2 (September-October 2024)

The key intervention works mulching the Molina, peat blocks to interrupt the minor drainage channels, full channel infill and ridge and furrow works were contracted to RSK Habitat Management (RSK ADAS Ltd). The contractors mobilised to site on 16th September, with the following sites works completed by 18th October 2024.

Delivery Outputs

3.6 ha Molinia Mulching

52m drain infill using existing spoil to the level of the surrounding ground.

350m drain line interruption with peat plug dams at 20m intervals.

2.7ha ridge and furrow, levelling out pronounced ridges to allow surface water to spread over re-profiled ground.

2.5 days Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) on reptile watching brief

The total cost to deliver these works were £32,767

FE staff time contribution for direct site supervision and overseeing the contractors was approximately 42 hours over the period.

Learning, Best practice & experience:

What has been the key to the success of this project?

Would you do anything differently given another chance?

Are there any suggestions you'd give to other people thinking of a similar project?

The success of this project has come from getting good timely procurement in place and appointing experienced contractors who can deliver value for money.

The site operatives who worked the site with excavators on low ground pressure tracks, demonstrated great skill and techniques to achieve the required finish for the drainage ditch infilling and ridge and furrow reprofiling works. This was also in part to the client working closely with the contractors and their operators from the start to achieve the requirements of the specification.

We are confident that the works were approached correctly and have achieved the restoration specification.

For other people who might wish to deliver a similar project to restore peat habitats, would be to get skilled machine operatives and contractors who understand habitat restoration, and can interpret and visualise the required finish.

Evaluation:

Did the project meet its original aims?

What have been your highlights that you have enjoyed/learnt/discovered?

What has been successful in obtaining funding for this project meant to you?

Please add a personal quote on what this project has achieved and what it means for your organisation.

The completed works at Oakers Bog have met the aims of the restoration specification and the site works were completed in a timely manner.

The real evidence of the future success will be monitored over time, as we will continue to carry out repeat fixed point photography to evidence changes to the vegetation communities. We also hope to analyse data from two automated dataloggers which have been recording ground water levels on site pre and post works.

The highlights from this site have been the ability to successfully restore some of the tricky ridge and furrow areas, which was a new discipline for the project partner involved.

The success of the project will be seen by the impacts we have made to re-connect the hydrology across the mire and wet heath areas which we hope will start to encourage those specific mire vegetation communities, such as Sphagnum moss which act as sponges to hold back water, and bring wider biodiversity benefits to the habitat for longer term ecosystem enhancements.

Participant Quote- This project is another instalment to our overall project delivery to restore sixteen degraded peatland sites across Dorset through this fantastic Peat Partnership. Oakers Bog is a valuable 6.18ha of area restored for future peat formation, carbon capture and water storage to help mitigate the wider impacts of climate change.

- **Please tell us if there's anything else about the project or the grant process from your experience that you think we ought to know.**
- **Please send any digital photos of the project to DC via the officer you have been liaising with.**