## Seven Lochs Peatland for People – update report

## February 2024

The Seven Lochs Peatland for People project aims to deliver 3 principal outcomes:

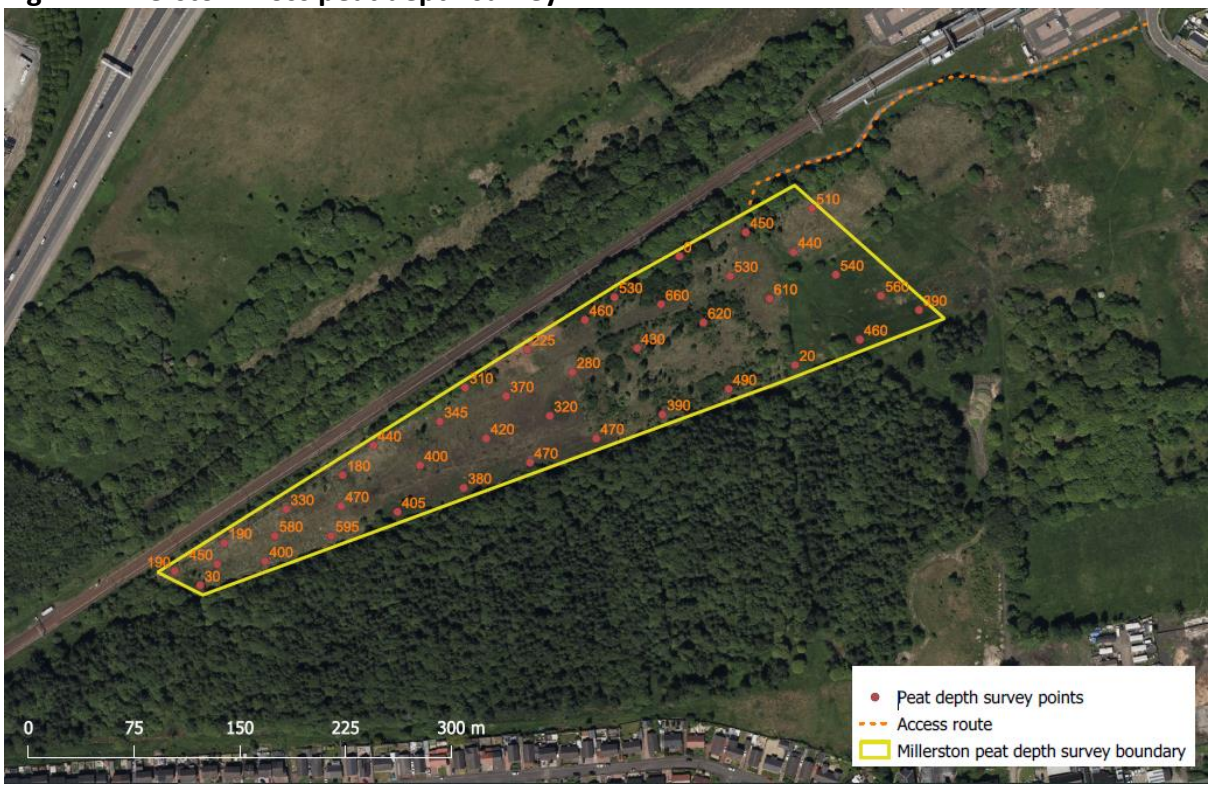
- Lowland raised bogs and other peatland habitats across the Seven Lochs Wetland Park are restored, better managed and in better condition.
- Peatland and habitats are more accessible to people and are better interpreted and explained.
- Carbon credits and other ecosystem services linked to peatland restoration are identified, assessed, and are used to secure investment.

This report provides an update on project activities in 2023 / 24, and our plans for 2024 / 25.

## Habitat restoration, management and enhancement

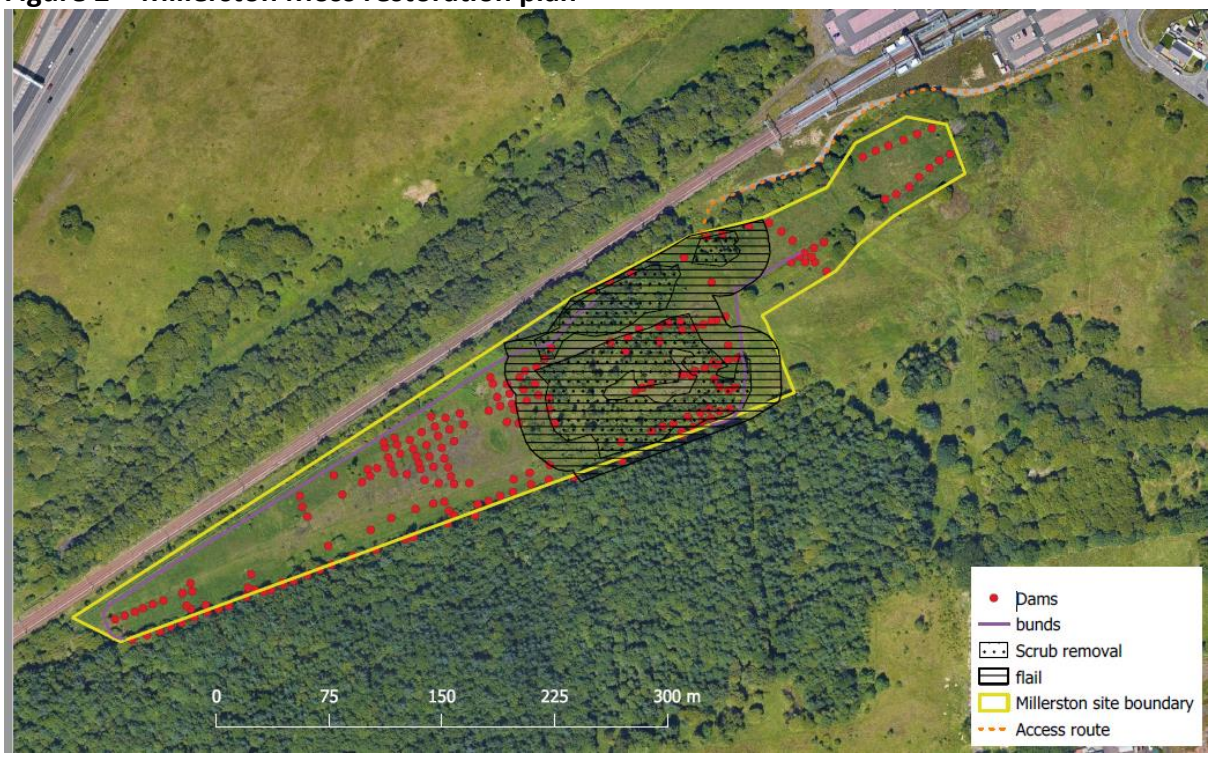
Over the course of 2024 we have developed a partnership with Tilhill to restore 3.45ha of severely degraded peatland at Millerston Moss. Working with Tilhill we have completed a site survey and developed a peatland restoration plan for the site. The site survey shows that there is a significant depth of peat remaining on the site – over 6m deep in places (Fig 1). The survey also found extensive scrub invasion, a network of old drainage ditches, and areas of bare and dried out peat. It concluded that although the site is modified and degraded, there are still some patches of sphagnum and other peatland plants, and that restoration of the bog will have long-term benefits for biodiversity and climate.

**Fig 1 – Millerston Moss peat depth survey**



The restoration plan proposes removal of almost 1ha of birch scrub, and construction of a 568m peat bund around the perimeter of the site over 200 peat dams to block drainage ditches and hold more water on the site (Fig 2).

**Figure 2 – Millerston Moss restoration plan**




A contractor has been appointed and the restoration works are scheduled to take place in Feb / March 2024. A pre-restoration fixed point photo survey of the site has been completed, and following restoration we will carry out ongoing fixed point photo survey and vegetation surveys to monitor the impact of the restoration works on the peatland habitat.

TCV Scotland have continued to deliver peatland restoration activities with volunteers at sites in the Seven Lochs Project area. In July 2023 TCV took a group of volunteers from the Scottish Government's Peatland Action Group to Commonhead Moss for a day of scrub removal. The group wanted to gain some 'hands-on' experience of the type of projects they support – and are keen to return for more volunteer days in future.

## Access and Awareness

To increase awareness of Seven Lochs peatlands as places for people and nature we have delivered two peatland interpretation projects. The Drumpellier 'peat post' – which was installed at Drumpellier Moss in December 2023 – consists of two interpretation panels and a 3m hight engraved post. One panel highlights some of the species that make peatlands their home. The other focuses on the thousands of tonnes of carbon stored in the peat soil,, how this is released if the peat dries out, and the importance keeping peatlands wet so that they lock up more carbon and helping to address the climate emergency. It also looks at how peatlands store a record of the past – showing that as you go down into the peat you go back in time, and using key points in history – from the Iron Age to the Industrial Revolution – to bring this to life.

The ‘Cardowan Rocks’ has installed 3 large rocks on the edge of Cardowan Moss – each with plaques showing peatland nature. On a visit to Cardowan Moss pupils from Sunnyside Primary School took a close look at some characteristic peatland plants and invertebrates. Following the visit pupils produced drawings of peatland nature – including mosses, dragonflies and butterflies. These have been produced as etched bronze plaques fixed to large rocks and placed next to an existing dragonfly sculpture on Cardowan Moss.

**Drumpellier ‘Peat Post’**





## Carbon Credits and Ecosystem Services

Linked to the Millerston Peatland Restoration project we have alco worked with Tilhill and Carbon Store UK to register the site with the Peatland Carbon Code, and seek validation for carbon credits associated with the restoration of the Site.

Carbon Store UK have advised and supported the development of the Project Design Document and Management and Monitoring Plan that need to be submitted to the Soil Association in order to assess and validate any carbon credits that the project will deliver. Validation requires ongoing assessment of the site for a minimum of 30 years to ensure that the site remains in good condition, and any loss of carbon from peatland degradation has been prevented. The validation documents were submitted at the start of December 2023, with the process expected to take up to 3 months.

Once the carbon credits associated with the project are validated we will look at how these can be used. One option is to use them for project partners' carbon accounting – helping to work towards net-zero carbon emissions. Another option is to sell the carbon credits to a third party to contribute to their progress towards net zero, and to generate income for future site management and maintenance.

## Plans for 2024 / 25

We will continue to work with project partners and others to carry out peatland restoration and management, working with groups of volunteers to undertake peatland restoration and management. We will develop our partnership with The GCC Countryside Ranger Service and Butterfly Conservation to involve volunteers in surveying and recording peatland wildlife.

We will also use the Millerston Moss Restoration Project, and the associated carbon credits, as a practical example of lowland raised bogs can be restored in a way that generates a small but long-term income stream. We hope this might help persuade some private owners of peatland in the Seven Lochs Project area to consider working with us on new restoration schemes.

Scott Ferguson
Seven Lochs Project Coordinator
Feb 2024