

Lochrosque Estate Case Study

One of the largest projects Peatland ACTION has yet funded is at Lochrosque Estate, near Achnasheen. More than 1400ha of peatland were restored over nine phases between 2017 and 2022. This case study focusses on Phase 8, where almost 700ha were restored in just six months.

Vital statistics

Landowner: Randal Wilson
Pat Wilson Farms, Lochrosque Estate

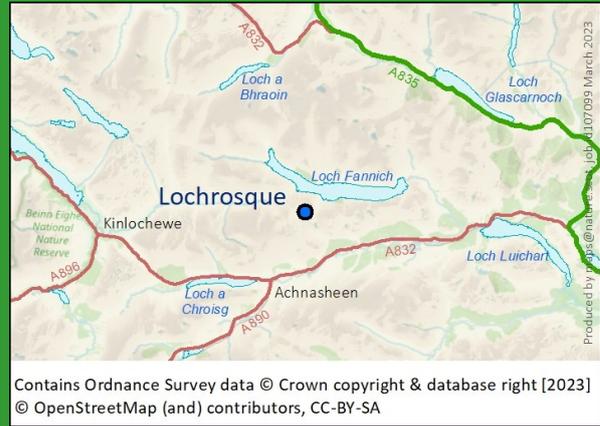
Lead organisation:
Angus Davidson Ltd (ADL)

Location:
Lochrosque Estate, Achnasheen.
(Phase 8 Doire nan Gobhar)

Grid reference: NH186 637

When: May to November 2022

Area of project:
699ha



Key restoration techniques carried out:

Hagg reprofiling: 78,871m

Peat dams: 13,666

Cell bunds: 0.74ha

Sphagnum transplant into newly created pools: 0.76ha

Summary

Lochrosque Estate is a great example of a multi-year project that has cumulatively achieved 1421ha of peatland restoration.

Starting small, phases have built up from 80ha in 2017 to almost 700ha in 2022. The landowner Randal Wilson took the decision to begin peatland restoration before the advent of the Peatland Code, identifying a range of benefits to the hydrology and biodiversity of the site. Restoration work has also brought economic benefits to the area, with around 20 people employed to work on the project in total, while there have been significant improvements to water quality, reducing ongoing maintenance needs of a hydro-scheme sited on phases 1-4.

The project

The subject of this case study, Phase 8 of the work, was carried out at Doire nan Gobhar, a large area of blanket bog on the Lochrosque Estate.

The majority of the restoration work has

involved reprofiling, damming and bunding of peat gullies and hags. This has been carried out by a contractor, Albamontane, based less than 10 miles from the site. The contractor used between four and six excavators. The lower elevations of the site were incredibly soft, and on several occasions machines had some difficulty manoeuvring around, making bog mats essential for navigating the terrain. One machine was fitted with nylon tracks, which in very soft areas reduce tearing of vegetation when the machine turns, as the edges of the tracks are angled.

The presence of red-throated divers meant a protection buffer had to be placed around their nest sites during the breeding season to prevent disturbance, but as the site was so large work could continue in other areas. On a smaller site a large protection buffer could



Red-throated diver © Mark Hamblin

cover the whole site. This is a benefit of larger scale projects, which allow an element of flexibility to work around any sensitive areas.

In fact at this site work was suspended in mid-August as more divers were discovered on small lochans north of the original birds that were found. This meant the remaining works could not be completed until after the beginning of September. And due to the contractors' work commitments elsewhere, work was not resumed until late October, but was still completed as planned.

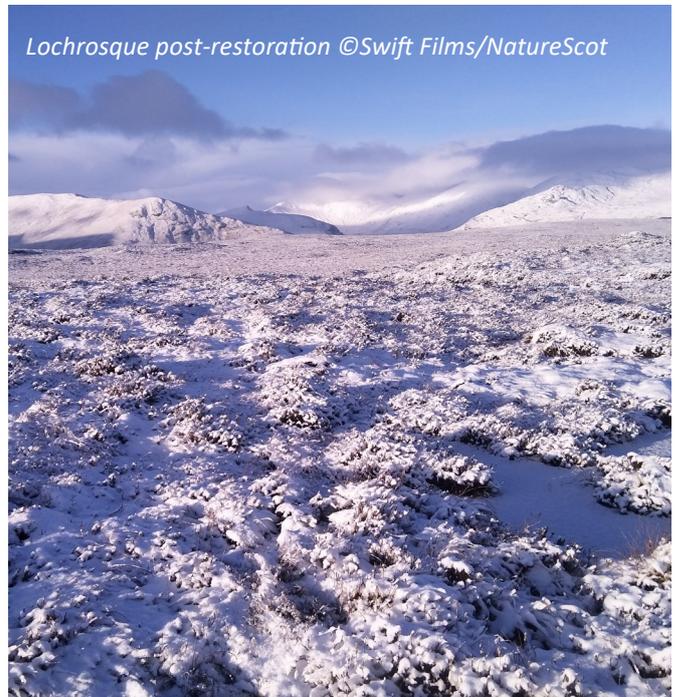
Challenges and benefits

These delays highlight the fact that peatlands are living ecosystems. No matter how good the pre-restoration surveys are, there is always the possibility that circumstances on the ground will change, and alternative plans will need to be made.

However John Dunnet of ADL commented that despite the inevitable 'challenges', he has never known a project not to go ahead in some form once work has begun.

In fact anecdotally it seems that the restoration work has also improved the efficiency of the hydro scheme. It has certainly reduced the work load on Estate staff to maintain it, reducing the need for filters to be cleaned from daily to monthly.

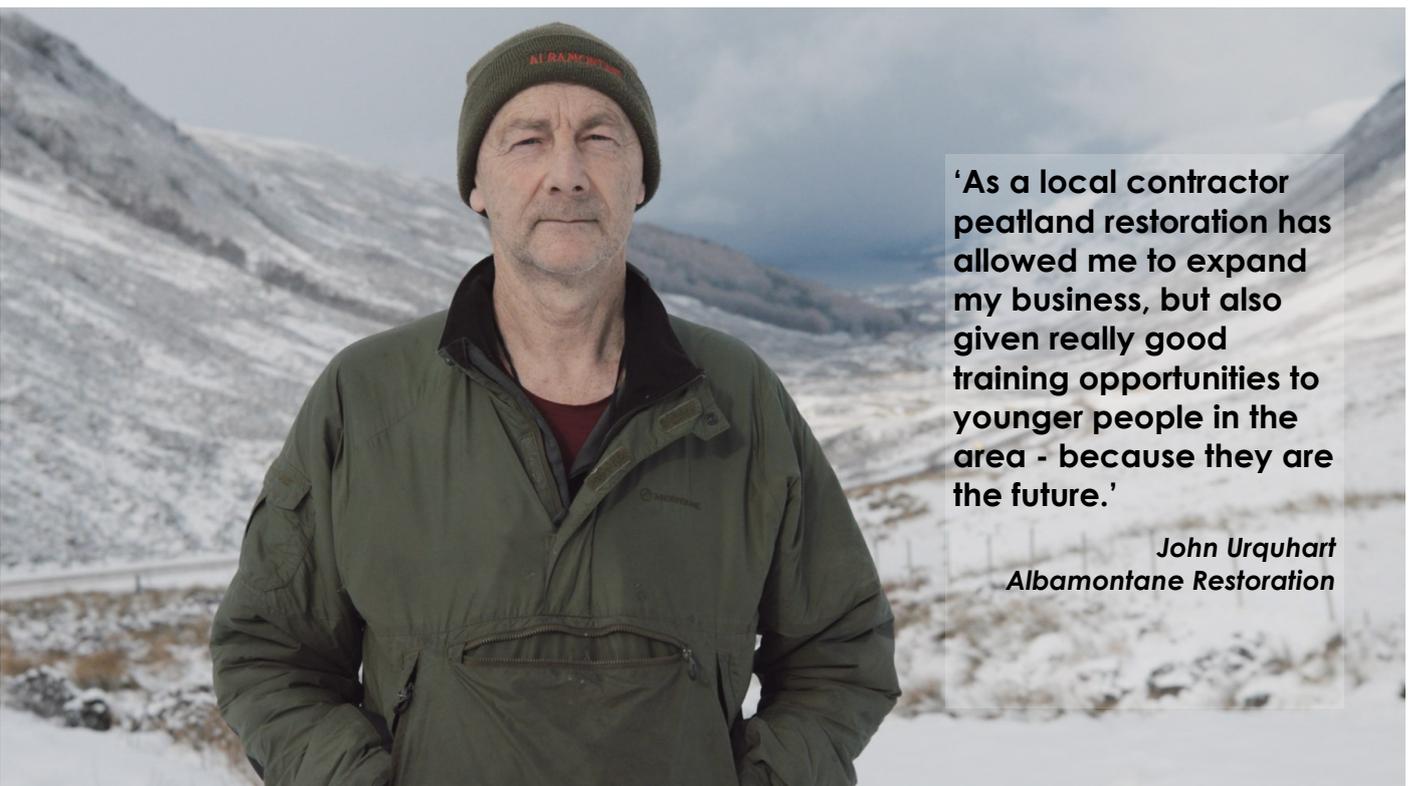
John Dunnet commented:



'Peatland restoration offers much wider benefits than just landscape improvements. While biodiversity improvements are a prime goal, it also strengthens our approach to carbon reduction goals, adds significant value to socio-economic frameworks here in the Highlands and visually this type of restoration is transformative.'

Economic gains

Previously mainly focussing on pathwork, Albamontane now spend a significant part of



their time working on peatland contracts, allowing them to increase job opportunities for local people, with up to eight staff now working for them in the sector. As the phases have grown in size the number of people employed to develop, deliver and monitor the work more generally has also increased. John Dunnet of ADL estimates that the project involved around 20 people in total.

The scheme has also offered opportunities for training. For example placement students from the University of the Highlands and Islands were invited to come and shadow the ADL field team while they were working. In the future there is also potential for Scottish Water and SSE staff to use the site to learn more about the effects of peatland restoration on hydrology and hydro-schemes.

Successful outcomes

Commenting on the work, John Dunnet of ADL said:

'The work has successfully raised the water table of the site as we have seen large pools forming behind dams and an increase in biodiversity within and around the pools. The bog has been returned to significantly greater health whilst simultaneously restricting carbon from escaping the eroding peat.

'The works that have been completed have provided a significant improvement to the visual aspects of the site, with large hags close to Toll Beag corrie being successfully



Peatland ACTION project officer Ndurie Abah discusses the project with Colin Morrison of Angus Davidson Ltd @Swift Films/NatureScot

reprofiled, which walkers have noticed from a distance when descending Fionn Bheinn. In just one growing season the sphagnum cover also significantly increased—a really encouraging sign which happened much more quickly than expected.

He concluded:

'While peatland restoration provides an abundance of positive impacts on the environment, there are also significant socio-economic positive impacts that occur as a result of this. This project involved local contractors, thus reducing the carbon impact of the work taking place. This in turn helps to support local economies and provide work for local businesses.'

Get in touch

We want to build on our restoration efforts to create a healthier peatland landscape for people and nature.

We offer funding for suitable restoration projects across Scotland.

We have officers who can help develop your project and complete applications.

We fund up to 100% of capital costs for work.

We fund much of the pre-application work, for example, peat depth surveys and feasibility studies.

Visit our web pages for more information:

www.nature.scot/peatlandaction

To contact the Peatland ACTION team with details of any potential projects, please email: peatlandaction@nature.scot



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