

Conference 2022: Field Trip Options, *Wednesday 5th October*

Field trips depart from the Aberystwyth Arts Centre and are due to return by 5pm or earlier.

Cors Caron SAC

[Cors Caron National Nature Reserve](#) is a 800ha wetland Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designated primarily for its active and degraded raised bog habitat features. Three large, raised bog domes, comprising up to 12 metres depth of peat, are bisected by the River Teifi SAC and other surface drainage features producing a complex landscape of peat bog, reedbeds, fen, wet grassland, woodland, waterways and ponds. It represents one of the most intact and surviving examples of a raised bog landscape in the UK, however all three domes have suffered extensive damage as a consequence of past drainage, peat cutting and burning.

[The LIFE Welsh Raised Bogs Project](#) has undertaken extensive restoration works across all three bog domes since 2017. This includes the installation of over 40km of low-elevation contour bunding to plug cracks and raise water levels within each dome, mowing of dense *Molinia* to kickstart restoration of peatland vegetation and removal/treatment of invasive scrub species. Alongside this, the team have undertaken detailed monitoring of the hydrology, vegetation, peat surface movement and greenhouse gas emissions from the bog surface.

A - Cors Caron SAC West Bog

Full Day - Depart 9am

 45 mins each way
- 4hr visit including
lunch break.



Wellington boots required.
Terrain is rough, wet
and uneven (6.5km)



B - Cors Caron SAC North East Bog

Half Day - Depart 9am

 45 mins each way
- 2hr visit including
lunch break.



Wellington boots required.
Terrain is rough, wet
and uneven (2km).



The walk will take attendees to Cors Caron's West Bog – the largest of the 3 bog domes – to see the restoration work and monitoring practises as described above. The walk takes in the peripheral heavily modified lagg zone, and measures to re-wet cutover peat, the floodplain and fen meadows, and crosses over the River Teifi - providing opportunity for discussion about the newly started 4 Rivers 4 LIFE project that aims at re-meandering sections. Lunch will take place on the way back in the impressive wooden floating bird hide.

The walk takes attendees to Cors Caron's North East bog to view the restoration measures described above. A key experiment undertaken by project staff, monitoring vegetation, green house gas emissions and the water table to closely assess the impact of restorative actions, will provide a great opportunity for discussion. Heavily peat cut areas will also provide discussion around restoration of cut faces and cutaway plateaus, as well as a look at historic attempts to re-wet cutaway areas, and the challenges presented by them today. Lunch will take place in Tregaron's impressive Red Kite Centre – where the project's comms officer will be on hand to discuss engaging with local people about peatland habitats through innovative art work.

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C - Cors Fochno SAC

Full Day - Depart 9am - 2 out of the 3 options will be selected for the morning and afternoon.



20 mins each way - 3hr visit including lunch break.



Wellington boots required.

[Cors Fochno](#) is one of the 2 large sites within the [Welsh Raised Bogs LIFE project](#), with the SAC covering an area of 653ha. The SAC is part of the much larger Dyfi SSSI and Dyfi Biosphere with a large proportion of the SAC being a NNR managed by NRW. The surviving core area supports the largest expanse of near-natural raised bog in an estuarine context within the UK.

Restoration work of the site has been extensive and ongoing since the late 1980's and has involved a range of hydrological control techniques including, large to small peat dams and pressure bunds, piling of small ditches and peat cuttings and more recently low elevation contour bunds as part of the LIFE Welsh Raised Bogs project.



Option 1 – Monitoring Boardwalk

Terrain: Stoned track & narrow boardwalk (3-4km)

From the monitoring boardwalk that traverses over the centre of the raised dome examples of recent contour bunding will be viewed and extensive areas of piling dammed peat cuttings dating from the 2000's. The central area gives opportunity to see an extensive area with surface patterning characterised by *Sphagnum pulchrum* lawns and provides a useful backdrop for discussions on performance indicators for favourable conservation status through SAC vegetation and hydrological monitoring. The boardwalk has been used for several decades for 3 SSSI feature species to be found on site – The Rosy Marsh Moth, Large Heath Butterfly and the Bog Bush Cricket with the data sets providing useful insights into the recovery of the raised bog.

Option 2 – Ty mawr Walk

Terrain: Rough, wet bog surface (3-4km)

The walk from Ty Mawr starts at the northern periphery of the site and heads south into an area that was drained and intensively sheep grazed until 25 years ago. The ditches have been dammed and the area has been managed through extensive grazing since. It is a remarkable diverse mosaic of vegetation with some good areas of recovering degraded bog and poor fen. Important species associated with the less damaged area of the reserve have colonised such as large heath and bog bush cricket as well as some areas having spectacular shows of 5 orchid species. The next area where the land rises more steeply to the primary surface has had several LIFE actions including scrub control, mowing and low contour bunds in the last 3 years. We will then look at contour bunding on the neighbouring area of recovering primary surface. This area of the bog also has four very large, dammed ditches creating large areas of open water, discussions will be had regarding the possible future management of these, and the issues surrounding sea level rise on this western fringe of the raised dome.

Option 3 – Visitor Boardwalk

Terrain: Stoned track, boardwalk & path (1.5-2.5km)

From the Visitor boardwalk, that is a circular walk which takes in the edge of the raised bog and a small woodland centred round a low outcrop, examples of recent contour bunding will be viewed. A large peat dam restoration project will be looked at with issues including sustainability of large peat dams, construction, and creation of large areas of open water topics for discussion. The walk will also provide an opportunity to discuss the impacts of peatland restoration on habitat specialists such as the Rosy Marsh Moth, Large Heath Butterfly and *Sphagnum beothuk* and *austinii* referencing long running monitoring projects from the site. The woodland associated with the outcrop and a peripheral adjoining grazed compartment on degraded bog will provide for discussions on consideration for management of a range of SSSI, EPS and other species that can be at odds with the management of the SAC; these include Hazel Dormouse, the reptile assemblage, Nightjar, and Irish Lady's-tresses.

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D - Cernydd Carmel and Llyn Llech Owain

Full Day - Depart 9am

 1.5hr each way
- 3hr visit including
lunch break.



Wellington or waterproof walking boots required. Terrain is a steep, rewetted hillside (2km)



Cernydd Carmel is a 360ha Special Area of Conservation characterised by a diverse range of habitats including woodland, grassland, heathland, peat bog and the only turlough found in mainland Britain (a seasonal, groundwater-fed lake). This wide distribution of habitats is thanks to the SAC sitting on a band of limestone and millstone grit geology, it is within a glacial depression that the 7ha raised bog has formed.

Historic drainage to improve the grazing potential of the peatland, light peat cutting and burning in the past has hugely impacted the condition of the raised dome – with much of the favourable peatland vegetation having been over dominated by *Molinia* and colonisation of invasive scrub.

The [LIFE Welsh Raised Bogs Project](#) has undertaken extensive restoration works since 2017. This includes the installation of over 3km of low-elevation contour bunding to plug cracks and raise water levels within the peatland, mowing of dense *Molinia* to kickstart restoration of peatland vegetation, removal of invasive scrub species and introduction of light grazing. Alongside this, the team have undertaken detailed monitoring of the hydrology.

After a visit to the project site, attendees will have lunch in nearby [Llyn Llech Owain country park's](#) impressive visitors centre. A second short walk after lunch will show further habitat restoration of afforested peatlands by Carmarthenshire County Council.

E - Tywi afforested peatland restoration multi-site visit with National Peatland Action Programme (NPAP)

Full Day - Depart 9am

 1hr 10mins each way
- 3hr visit including
lunch break.



Live and wet site with uneven ground, so full PPE (including steel-toe footwear) and good mobility/fitness required. (3 short site walks totalling 3.5km)



This visit will be to the Natural Resources Wales managed [Tywi Forest](#), part of the Welsh Government Estate which at this site comprises a large upland forest intended for timber production as well as degraded afforested peatland and adjacent eroded sites with gullies up to 1.5m deep.

This Tywi multi-site visit has the advantage of seeing sites before, after, and during peatland restoration. The only live site visit. The primary issues addressed are:

- Peat erosion
- Drainage
- Afforestation

Multiple interventions have been conducted on these afforested or eroded sites, with specialists at hand to discuss:

- peat dam and bund construction work
- surface smoothing (stump flipping and compressing conifer regeneration into the peat profile)
- minimum intervention afforested peat restoration, where a substantial cover of low yield class conifer is retained.
- actions around encouraging biodiversity and peatland vegetation re colonisation, e.g. *Sphagnum cuspidatum*, *Sphagnum capillifolium*, Cotton-grasses *Eriophorum sp.*, Bog rosemary *Andromeda polifolia* and Sundew *Drosera rotundifolia*.

Interesting themes arising from this visit will include planning restoration in the context of the woodland estate, contractor engagement and restoration methods, impact of, and on, site margins, and restoration prioritisation.

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F - Llyn Efyrrwy (Lake Vyrnwy), Berwyn with National Peatland Action Programme (NPAP)

Full Day - Depart 9am

 1hr 25 mins each way
- 3hr visit including
lunch break.



Wellingtons or waterproof walking boots required. Full waterproof PPE needed. Terrain is steep, re-wetted and exposed hillside. (2-3km)



Visit RSPB restored peatland funded through the NRW-led [National Peatland Action Programme](#). The Llyn Efyrrwy (Lake Vyrnwy) Estate constitutes about 25% of the Berwyn range which contains the largest tracts of both upland dry heath and near-natural blanket bog in Wales. Llyn Efyrrwy Estate is owned by water company Hafren Dyfrdwy and around half of the estate (4800ha) is managed by the RSPB under a Farm Business Tenancy where it runs the largest organic farm in England and Wales. In addition, RSPB owns an adjoining upland area named Cerniau.

The RSPB has embarked on an ambitious 30+ year programme to restore all the degraded blanket bog on the land it either owns or manages around Lake Vyrnwy (in excess of 1800ha) to a 'naturally functioning' state alongside working upland farming.

Initial restoration is primarily by grip and gully blocking using peat dams together with peat hag re-profiling to reduce the amount of bare peat and reduce the risk of peat erosion. The gully-blocking is resulting in a landscape which mimics natural patterning, an element restricted to now very few Welsh blanket mires.

This work is only the start of 30+ year plans which ultimately aim to return the degraded bog to a "naturally functioning" state.

Registered under the [Peatland Code](#).

Restoration of around 400ha has been completed by spring 2022. This visit will take in one of these areas with the chance to view the standard of restoration being achieved and the speed of response from the vegetation after just one summer.

Warm clothes and waterproof coats are required for participation in fields trips.

Walking boots are the minimum requirement as suitable footwear (site E requires steel toe). Some field trips will include crossing uneven, unstable, water-logged ground, including drainage channels, and require wellington boots - please see individual descriptions above.

The field trips are primarily outdoors and will go ahead unless weather conditions are prohibitively severe. The peatland sites offer little or no shelter and the weather can be quickly changeable.

Packed lunches will be available for delegates to collect prior to boarding the coaches at the Aberystwyth Arts Centre.

Facilities at the different sites vary. Bringing your own water bottle and flask to fill before leaving the Arts Centre is highly recommended.

Please confirm your field trip preference by Friday 16th September either through survey link sent to registered email address or by emailing info@iucn.org.uk directly.

<https://forms.office.com/r/1cLSSGADuw>

Please note all field trips are subject to change.