

**ENRD Seminar on  
Stakeholder Involvement**

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**Involving and accompanying farmers in the  
restoration of blanket bogs in Wales**

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# The project:

- Aimed to improve the condition of the blanket bogs across two Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) in north Wales.
- The work focused on the RSPB nature reserve at Lake Vyrnwy and on Penaran, an area of land owned by Forestry Commission Wales.
- The project also aimed to encourage neighbouring farmers to participate.
- The main threats to these areas were historic drainage ditches (or grips) and non-native trees.

# Why involving farmers?

- Blanket bogs are a rare and important upland habitat found on areas of deep peat that are fed exclusively by rainwater.
- They are an important source of drinking water and an excellent carbon store.
- The bogs are home to many specialist plants, insects and birds, including black grouse and hen harriers.
- The Welsh uplands, where the bogs occur, are an integral part of Welsh history and culture, with upland farming and recreation being an extremely important source of income for the local economy.

# Stakeholders involved.



- Partnership project led by RSPB and included The Countryside Council for Wales, The Environment Agency and Forestry Commission Wales.
- 150 farmers visited the project or had a visit to their own land by a member of project staff to provide information, advice and guidance.
- The project educating 1 800 school children about blanket bogs.
- 2 500 people, many of them local, attended a guided walk or a talk



# Lessons

Based on previous projects where we have sought support from local farming communities we knew that early engagement would be critical to:

1. Discuss the project with them directly and provide information.
2. Understand concerns and win their trust.
3. Consider divergent perceptions – farming v conservation.
4. Encourage participation in the project

Site visits were an effective means of engagement and 13 farmers joined the project.

# Achievements/Results

- The initial plan was to restore 5 500 ha of blanket bog, however, as a result of engaging with local farmers the project ended up re-wetting a massive 8 500 hectares of upland habitat in mid-Wales.

We have also removed non-native Sitka spruce trees from over 5 800 ha including from two private farms.

*“Working with local landowners was key to the success of the project”*

- The project helped inform the Welsh Government’s decision that all semi-natural blanket bog will be included in a restoration programme by 2020.
- There are a number of farmer advocates for this approach – they know why bogs are important and what the benefits of restoring them are for the environment and farming.
- Many of the participating farmers are now skilled in bog restoration techniques.
- The project has built a local partnership which we hope will develop into an exemplar of sustainable land management.

The full project report can be found at:



[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.showFile&rep=file&fil=Blanket\\_bogs\\_Brochure.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.showFile&rep=file&fil=Blanket_bogs_Brochure.pdf)