



Portmoak Community Woodland Group

Work on the Moss

WHAT'S GOING ON?

Through September there will be quite a lot of work happening. This is an important part of our long term goal to restore Portmoak Moss to be a healthy raised bog.

We need the water table to be near the surface but this means that the water pressure at the steep edges of the moss is quite high. That gives a danger of bog burst, where the bank collapses and all of the ground and water behind it gets washed away.

The main work you'll see is to stabilise the banks by smoothing them out so that instead of being vertical they will be sloped. This will be done on the left and the right sides of the steps which take you up onto the peat crown. We'll minimise the visual impact by rolling back the surface vegetation, creating the slope then stretching the vegetation back over the top.

Most work is away from the paths so your visit to the Moss shouldn't be affected - just keep clear of the work areas. Occasionally a path might need to be closed for an hour or so if something is happening nearby. In that case you should still be able to find another route to enjoy.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Peatlands are a priceless natural resource. They provide rich biodiversity, lower the risk of flooding and they store carbon. However, development over the centuries means that 90% of our raised bogs have been damaged or lost.

When the Woodland Trust bought this land back in 1996 it was a conifer plantation. It was good to walk around but because the canopy was so dense there was hardly anything growing at ground level: not many plants and very few insect species. And the woods were so thick that you couldn't see very far.



Sphagnum moss: the sign of a healthy raised bog

But then we found out that this used to be a raised bog and we decided to return it to its natural state. We started by removing the conifers from the peat dome and damming the drainage channels. This opened up the views and a whole new ecosystem started to develop with many types of sphagnum mosses, grasses, dragon flies, damsel flies, birds and much more. Today about 11.4ha is open bog and heathland vegetation on deep peat which stores around 57,000 tonnes of carbon, equivalent to the annual carbon footprint of 47,000 people.