

COMMON LAND AND CARBON MANAGEMENT

The peatland soils of upland commons store millions of tonnes of carbon, and play a significant role in mitigating global warming.

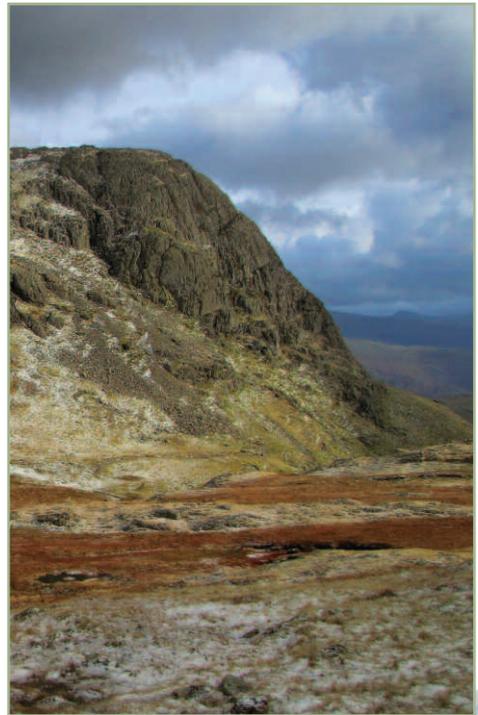
The sympathetic management of these commons, so that atmospheric carbon continues to be sequestered and retained in permanently saturated peats, is a significant component in action to address climate change.





Healthy peat bogs, with dense growth of bogmoss (*Sphagnum*), remove atmospheric carbon and store it in saturated soils, thus producing a cooling effect on climate. Management is aimed at maintaining high water tables, preventing erosion and ensuring complete vegetation cover.

The UK is amongst the world's top ten countries with extensive peat reserves. These cover over seven million hectares. Almost three quarters is in Scotland, with concentrations in the Northwest Highlands, and the Western and Northern Isles. Half of the common grazing land in Scotland is on peat soils, whilst one third of all peat over 2m deep is under common grazings. Major peatland commons in Wales are in the Llantisilio Mountains and Brecon Beacons. In England, peat soils are associated with the Pennines and the large commons of North Yorkshire, County Durham and Northumberland. Other significant peatlands are on Dartmoor and the Cumbrian High Fells.

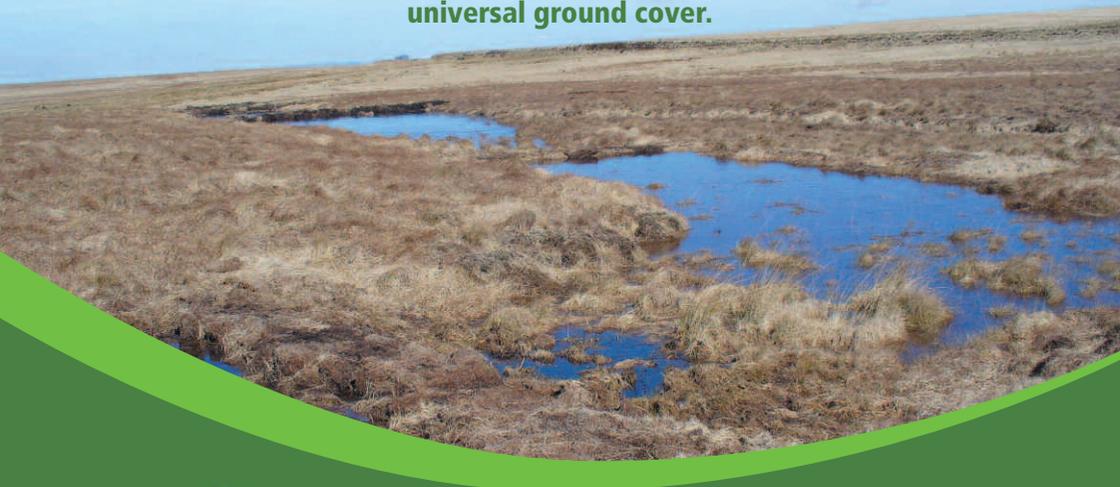




- Britain has 12% of Europe's peatland and 12% of the world's blanket bog.
- Upland peat stores three billion tonnes of carbon.
- Some 49% of Scottish common grazing land is on peat soils
- The peatlands of Lewis, Benbecula, Skye and the Shetlands are almost entirely located on common grazings.
- More than 9 million tonnes of carbon are stored in the peat soils of Dartmoor commons alone.
- Peatland restoration work is being undertaken on common land in the North Pennines, the Western Isles, Dartmoor and Yorkshire.
- Around 200,000ha of England's peat soils are located on common land.

When peat dries, stored carbon is oxidised and released to the atmosphere. Restoration projects include the Yorkshire Peat Partnership which restored 19,000ha on 15 commons, and Berwyn/Migneint project of mid Wales which focuses on blanket bog. Crofters in the Lewis Peatlands Special Protection Area, covering nearly 60,000ha, most of which is common grazing, have helped stabilise carbon, and provided benefits for specialised flora and wading birds. In the North Pennines, over 1,000km of eroding gullies have been dammed to raise water tables.

The role of commoners is critical to these schemes, establishing appropriate stocking levels, controlling burning, and re-establishing universal ground cover.



Keeping commons alive by active grazing

www.foundationforcommonland.org.uk

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Our vision is of thriving commoning communities across Great Britain and beyond making real contributions to economic, cultural and environmental wellbeing

