Our Common Cause:
Our Upland Commons

Blanket Bog Restoration Trial – Harford Moor

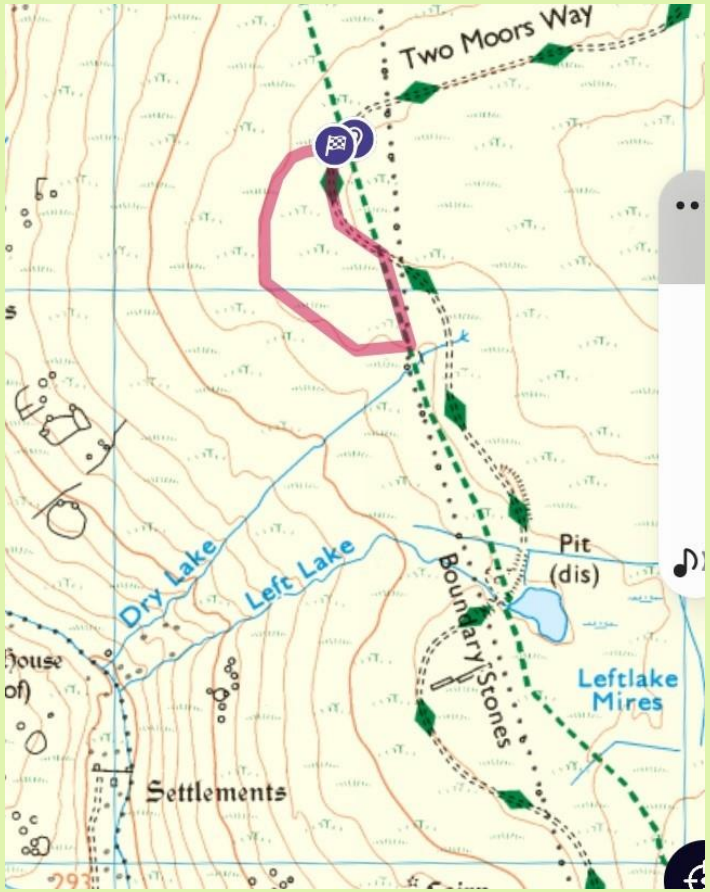
During the Defra funded Dartmoor peat restoration works, Harford and Ugborough graziers and landowners noticed that within the areas that the diggers used as access tracks to get to Hangingstone Hill on the north moor and Red Lake on the south moor, the Molinia had been completely flattened and broken up. As a result, these areas became accessible to cattle, which grazed the *Molinia*, allowing light and space for sphagnum and other species to grow.

Proposal

To trial flattening 5 ha *Molinia* dominated area of blanket bog on Harford Moor (north-west of Left Lake) with the special low ground pressure diggers that are carrying out the peatland restoration works at Red Lake and Left Lake.

Aim: To reduce the dominance of *Molinia* and increase the abundance of other blanket bog species.

Date the works were carried out: Friday 7 January 2022



Images: Map of Intervention area on Harford Moor, aerial map of intervention area and low-pressure diggers used to flatten the area.

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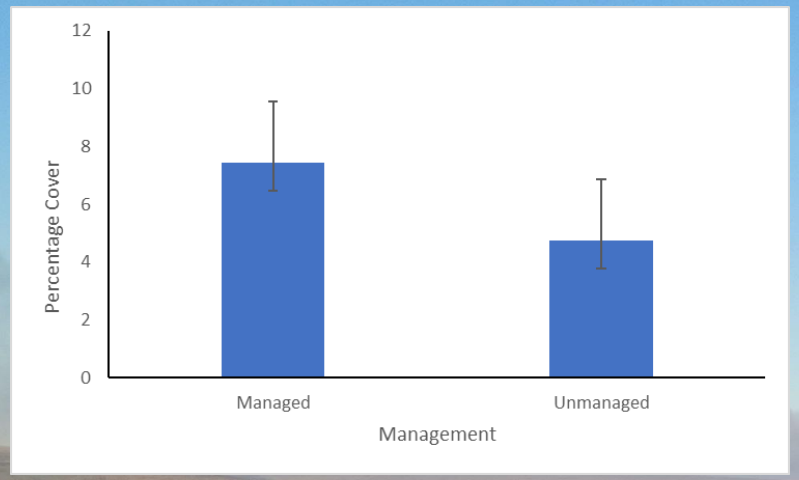
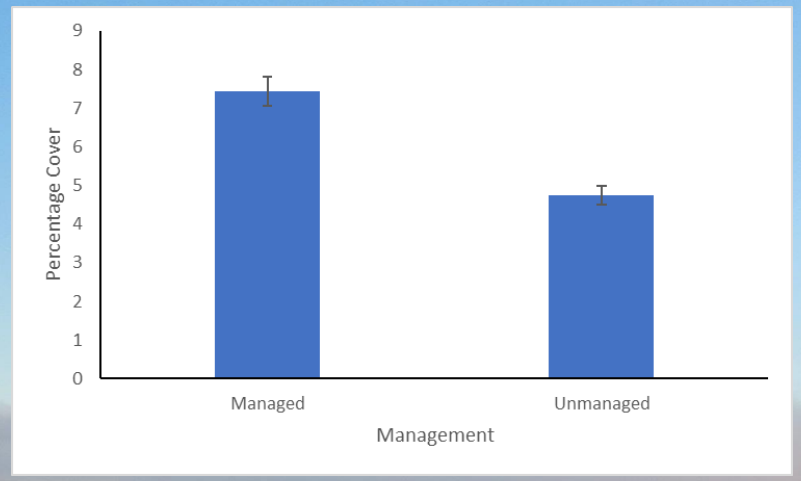
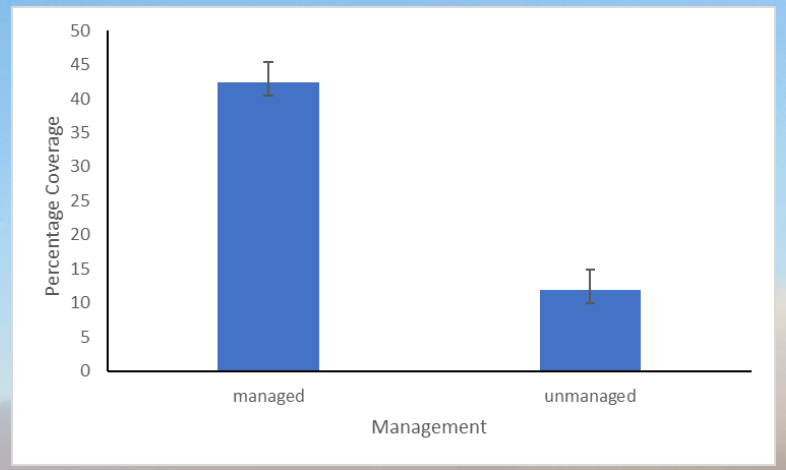
Image showing the difference between the area flattened by low pressure diggers and the surrounding area.



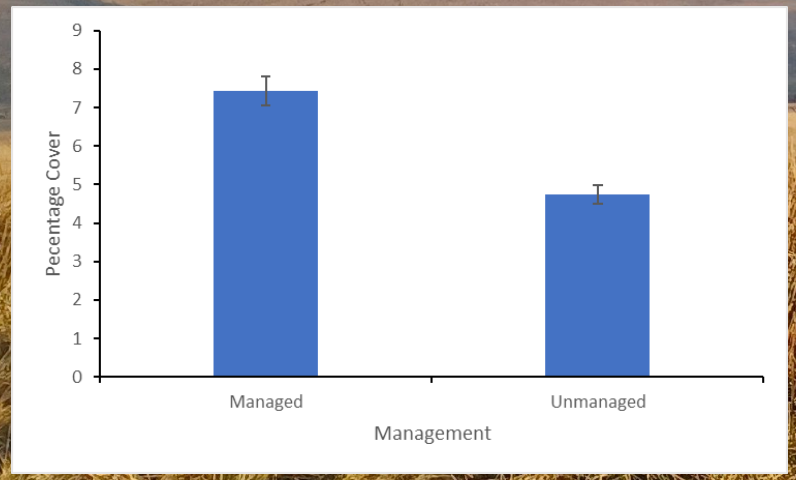
Heather



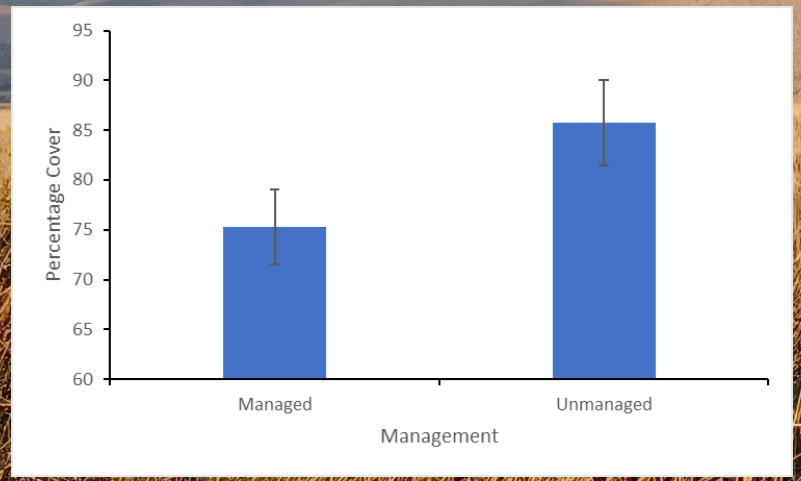
Bilberry



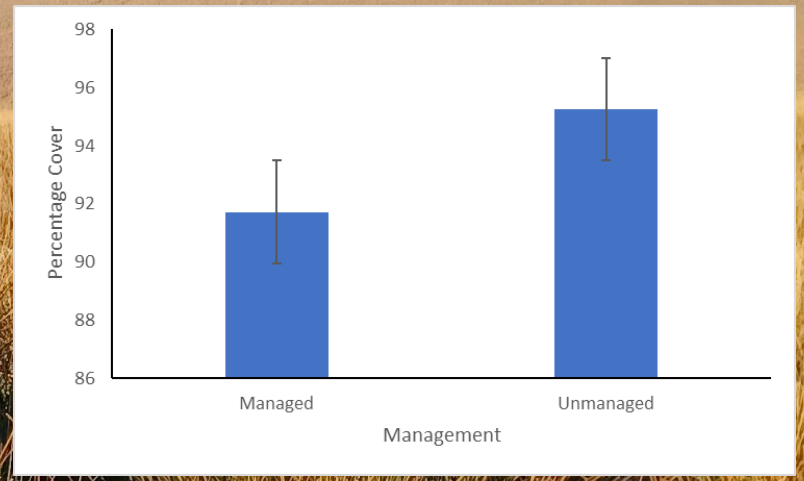
Moss



Heath Bedstraw



Molinia



Total vegetation

Survey Results of Molinia Control Trial. *Joshua Puckett, Undergraduate Student, University of Plymouth (Aug 2023).* ANOVA Test results show a statistically significant increase in the percentage cover of Heather, Bilberry, Moss and Heath Bedstraw at the managed site and a reduction in the percentage cover of Molinia. However, there was no significant difference in total vegetation cover between the two sites.

Visual results & Conclusions

Images (left to right) show Molinia height in a) unmanaged area, b) managed area and c) historic drain found in the managed area.

The image in the middle shows evidence of grazed Molinia and there is visible evidence of livestock dung (predominantly cattle). These images were taken at the end of September 2023 and provide evidence that livestock are grazing the managed area.

Joshua's student dissertation results indicate that following the intervention of flattening the Molinia with low pressure diggers, the biodiversity of the sward has increased. Grazing is helping to control the Molinia dominance of the managed area. Further monitoring is required to see if flattening the Molinia in a grazed landscape is effective in increasing the diversity of the sward long term. Future interventions to continue to restore the blanket bog in this area may include blocking the historic drains found on the site, to raise the water table.