



Tarras Valley Nature Reserve

Autumn 2023 Newsletter

With leaves turning orange, a bumper-crop of acorns, and fungi popping up throughout the woodlands, this Autumn marks the one-year anniversary of our second land purchase!

You can read more about some of what's been happening below; including a visit from the Right to Roam campaign, peatland restoration work, property development projects, a guest blog about the geological history in the area, and much more!



People

Belgian Scouts' Scotland Trip

In July, we hosted a Scout group who travelled from Belgium to spend a fortnight in Scotland. After spending their first week in the Highlands, they made their way down to Langholm to camp on the Tarras Valley

During their stay, they braved the wonderful Scottish summer weather to take part in a range of activities, include helping us to tackle invasive Sitka Spruce; going stream dipping in the Tarras; collecting bilberries, and heading into the town to watch the Benty ride-out set off.



Veterans' Volunteering Day

A group of former soldiers and Royal British Legion Scotland (RBL) youth team from the Annan area visited us to take part in a volunteering day, working with incredible enthusiasm to fell non-native Sitka spruce trees from the moorland.

Although the group were enveloped in fog all day, once it lifted we could see the huge impact that the group had on the number of spruce trees in the area, helping to contribute to the management and conservation of the nature reserve.



Rotary Volunteering

We had a fantastic day working alongside the Lockerbie, Devorgilla, Langholm, Borderlands and Kirkcudbright Rotary Clubs kick starting a programme of monthly volunteering days on the reserve over the coming months. The group worked hard to dismantle and remove an impressive 472m of old fencing during the session, a fantastic result and proof of what can be achieved with teamwork! The group were also joined by our New Reserve Assistant, Russ who recently started as part of the Tarras Valley team

Right to Roam Campaign

We were delighted to host the Right to Roam Campaign on the reserve last weekend following a historic mass trespass on the English Scottish Border at Scots Dyke. The group are campaigning for the same public

Right to Roam laws in England that Scotland has enjoyed for 20 years.

[Read more!](#)



Nature

Tarras Strip Felling

Our biggest restoration project to date is now underway at the 36ha Tarras Strip Sitka spruce forestry plantation at the lower end of the Tarras Valley. The plantation which has extensive windblow damage and a crop of mature timber, which is now due to be felled and will be restored to native broadleaf woodland through natural regeneration with a helping hand with some enrichment planting. We are working with local forestry consultant, Mark Seed Forest and Land, and Tillhill to carry out the felling operations which we expect to take around 6 months to clear-fell the site.

We have been busy ensuring necessary permissions are in place, carrying out ecological surveys, undertaking lots of community engagement and working with stakeholders such as the Council and Scottish Forestry to ensure we are following best practice to begin the operations this autumn. The plantation sits on areas with ancient woodland indicators such as bluebells and wood anemones so we are looking forward to seeing what grows when the light can get to the soil. There will be plenty of video, photos and drone footage of the site as we start, so we can document its restoration journey and we are looking forward to sharing this with you over the coming months!



Climate

Peatland restoration

We are continuing to work with Peatland Action to survey our peatlands in order to start a programme of restoration next year. The team at the Crichton Carbon Centre have been surveying the moorland drainage ditches and starting to seek necessary approvals for the works to begin on the Middlemoss Head area of the Tarras Valley. In this area there is an extensive area of historic drainage ditches (shown in the image below) which are having a very negative effect on our peatlands, washing away the carbon rich soils and eroding the ground at a rapid rate. We are hoping that we will be able to start ditch blocking on this area next year. Blocking these ditches will help store more water on the land and slow the flow of water downstream after heavy rainfall, supporting the creation of vital wetland habitat in our uplands and also locking carbon into the ground.

As well as active restoration works, we are really looking forward to being a host training site for the up and coming Bog Plant ID Course being run by NatureScot and Crichton Carbon Centre as part of the National Peatland Action programme to help build capacity and knowledge in the peatland restoration sector across Scotland.



Sustainability

Visitor survey

Our thanks to all of you who took part in the survey that was in the last newsletter, we got a really good response and the results were really interesting. You can find out the results of the survey by clicking the button below.

We are undertaking more research so will be looking at all the results and feeding them into our discussions. Thank you again, we appreciate your time.

We also appreciate feedback about what we need to include on the reserve to help visitors feel welcome – we have some funding secured from SOSE to help us implement improvements such as signage, access, toilet etc.

[visitor survey results](#)

Property development

In parallel to the market research we have just commissioned architects, John Gilberts, to undertake a mini master-planning exercise on some of the properties so we can see what's possible. Watch this space for more updates as the project develops. We are really grateful to the funding we have got from the Investment Ready Nature Scotland fund, which is allowing us to look at income generating opportunities that will help sustain the reserve into the future.

Cronksbank Cottage

This is currently one of our empty properties and we have secured funding from the Rural Housing fund and Solway bank windfarm to help us undertake a

feasibility on this. We will be working with South of Scotland Community Housing on this work.



Nature of Scotland Awards Community Initiative Award

We've been shortlisted for the RSPB's Community Initiative Award!

It's an honour to be recognised alongside such inspiring projects across Scotland showing the impact that communities can make for people and nature.

The award category is an open public vote and we need YOUR help to win!
Voting is open until October 11th, and every vote counts.

[Vote for us here!](#)

Guest Blog



Guest Author - [Dr Linda Cotterill](#)

Volcanoes and continent collisions!

The remote moorland of Tarras valley nature reserve has not always been the same as we see it now. About 430 million years ago (MA) the area was part of a massive collision zone between Scotland and England when two continents collided to form Himalayan scale mountains – the collision suture lying approximately along the current Scotland-England border!

The region was later volcanically active with erupting volcanoes and lava flowing over the land. An exciting past revealed by the rocks exposed today!

Click the button below to find out more about the geological history of the area!

[Read more](#)

Please follow our social media for further updates about our projects and the work we've been doing.

**With all our thanks,
The TVNR team and volunteers**

The Langholm Initiative

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