

What is important about Lenzie Moss?

At the Open Meeting following our AGM on 2nd June, guest speaker **Andrew McBride** (Scottish Natural Heritage) spoke on the theme of the importance of Lenzie Moss.

Andrew explained the global context of peatlands: largely found in the temperate zone, but also in tropical areas such as Indonesia, where much of it is under forest. 3% of global land area is covered in peatland, totalling one third of the carbon bound in soil. Most peatland in Europe is in the North. 10% of the UK's land area is peatland, and there are about 1.7 million hectares of peat in Scotland. Lowland raised bogs such as Lenzie Moss are particularly important as they are rare. Blanket bog is more extensive, and the third type of peat – fens peat - forms more slowly.

The Scottish climate, with its high rainfall and low temperatures, encourages peatland to form. Peat is formed by the accumulation of dead vegetation, which can hold water up to 25 times its dry weight. Most lowland raised bogs have 5-6 m of peat. If peat is not restored, it soon dries out and looks like a desert. Dams are essential to stop water outflow and raise the water table.

The Scottish Government is currently interested in peatland, partly towards meeting their target to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Hence restoring peat is important. The current target is 21 hectares per year. A Peatlands Plan will be published, identifying action to restore peatland, but also integration into people's everyday lives. Peatland is important for flood management and for increasing biodiversity, with rare plants and insects such as sundew and Emperor Moth thriving on peatlands.

Looking at peat cores can show the history of peat, with glacial inwash of particular interest. This occurs where silt is pushed down rivers into basins. The different colours occurring in the core indicate different sources.

Trees on bogs need to be removed to keep the water table high, although it is recognised that *bog* woodland can be a viable part of a stable bog. Peat cutting is not necessarily a significant problem, provided sustainable methods are used, eg traditional hand cutting. Commercial peat cutting can strip all vegetation, and it is planned that by 2030 this will cease.

The EU Habitats Directive, if used effectively, gives protection to Special Areas of Conservation, and ongoing education is important. Much of the peatland in Ireland has been decimated, with peat mainly being converted into energy generation. Some of the damaged areas may be restored, but not all, and countries such as Latvia and Estonia have similar issues.

The Peatland Action Plan is working to restore Scotland's peatlands, with over 100 projects restoring and reprofiling peat throughout Scotland, from Shetland to Dumfries. The programme is also working with community groups, raising awareness, and advising on the use of bogs as a community resource.

As part of this, Scottish Natural Heritage has been collaborating closely with East Dunbartonshire Council in the regeneration of Lenzie Moss.

Jackie Gillespie (EDC's Neighbourhood Services Strategy Officer) also spoke about the importance of Lenzie Moss, as follows:-

Lenzie Moss is a Local Nature Reserve, a way of protecting sites from development. It is also a LNCS (Local Nature Conservation Site). Lenzie Moss has been cut and damage is visible. (The depth of peat on High Moss is 7 m.)

One patch of the rare bog rosemary grows naturally on Lenzie Moss, and at a few other sites of translocation. Some has been recorded on Lenzie Moss South.

There are small colonies of the green hairstreak butterfly on Lenzie Moss: the only metalmark butterfly in Britain. Encroaching birch destroys one of its food plants – the blaeberry.

Initial and ongoing work was described:

Scrub removal by contractors.

Boardwalk – it was slippery and needed passing places. Some of the posts were not long enough, so remedial work has been done. The Countryside Rangers are invaluable for keeping it in a good state.

A number of dams have been put in. A large one was needed where the volume of water had become a burn.

Water monitoring devices have been put in place.

A peat depth survey has been carried out.

The uncut peat bog needed different dams as peat is shallow there.

Scrub removal needed a felling licence from the Forestry Commission. Birch can regenerate easily so weed wipe with herbicide is required. There were three different areas for scrub removal. More areas have been identified.

Willow and rowan are not such coloniser species.

Lenzie Moss South working area: The landowner gave permission for scrub removal and dams for ditch blocking. This will create a perfect habitat for damselflies, dragonflies and palmate newt.

Fencing around the natural patch of bog rosemary is essential to prevent dogs from wallowing in it. Some shoots have come outside the fence.

There are only 5 raised peat bogs in East Dunbartonshire: Garnkirk, High Moss, Low Moss, Barbeth, and Lenzie Moss. (Another bog is also Millersneuk Marsh, where special tunnels allow otters to cross the road.)