Ralphshield Hedgerows

Summary Report

INTERVENTIONS

2-year old transplant native broadleaf hedging species were planted in a double staggered row with the aim to restore the 18th century internal field boundaries on the southern half of Ralph Shield Farm, Wallington Estate. These will link with habitat restoration works already delivered on neighbouring farms, with 10km of hedges planted in 2021. The hedges and fencing will protect existing veteran trees whilst providing much needed wildlife connectivity in a sparsely tree-covered landscape. Over 400 hedgerow trees will be planted to replace the declining veteran trees. The hedges will be broad, providing biodiversity corridors for invertebrates, but also important species such as existing red squirrels and hopefully future pine martens. With climate change and adverse weather, the network of hedges with provide good shelter for stock and will all combine to link existing hedges, veteran trees, small woods with Harwood Forest.

Summary of winter bird survey can be found below.

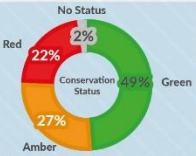
Birds

Total number of

1,480

birds spotted between

Nov 23 - Feb 24



41 different species spotted with 22% being in 'Red' conservation

Top 3 species of birds by amount spotted between Nov 23 - Feb 24

This is a summary of the winter bird surveys and were conducted over a single site visit per month.

Wansbeck Restoration for Climate Change (WRCC) is one of six pioneering nature projects across England to receive funding from Natural England to trial ways to capture carbon and mitigate the impacts of climate change. This nationwide project, 'Nature Returns', is funded by the Treasury's Shared Outcomes Fund, and co-sponsored by Defra and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. The project aims to provide the evidence for how nature-based solutions can tackle the environmental crisis. This project aims to restore mixed habitats, showcasing how land owners, environmental bodies such as the National Trust, and governing bodies such as Natural England, can come together to address climate change, increase biodiversity, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote carbon storage, in a way that benefits nature and society.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Wansbeck Restoration for Climate Change (WRCC) is one of six pioneering nature projects studying how we can best use land across England to address climate change whilst producing food and promoting thriving nature.

Led by Natural England, 'Nature Returns' is funded by the Treasury's Shared Outcomes Fund, and co-sponsored by the Department for Farming and Rural Affairs (Defra) and Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ).

WRCC is providing evidence through its trials as to how a range of nature-based solutions can help tackle the Climate and Biodiversity crises.

The project aims to restore mixed habitats and showcase how landowners, farmers, environmental bodies (such as the National Trust) and governing bodies (such as Natural England) can come together to:

- **address climate change**
- **increase biodiversity**
- **reduce greenhouse gas emissions**
- **promote carbon storage**
- **provide benefits for nature and society**

PROJECT SUMMARY

KEY FACTS:

Location: Ralph Shield Farm, NT Wallington Estate

Outputs: 3600m of new hedgerow comprising of 26,200 native hedgerow plants

Consents: Land Drainage Consent obtained for the grip-blocking work

Method: Native broadleaf hedging species were planted in a double staggered row at 400mm spacing, 6.6 plants per/m
Ground was prepared by strimming along a 1.5m wide strip to provide good soil conditions and as little competition from other vegetation as possible. Plants are 2-year-old transplants, 450mm to 600mm high, supplied with 600mm spiral guards secured with canes

Management:

Benefits: Hedgerow planting aims to restore the 18th century internal field boundaries on the southern half of Ralph Shield Farm, Wallington Estate. These will link with habitat restoration works already delivered on neighbouring farms, with 10km of hedges planted in 2021. The hedges and fencing will protect existing veteran trees whilst providing much needed wildlife connectivity in a sparsely tree-covered landscape. Over 400 hedgerow trees will be planted to replace the declining veteran trees. The hedges will be broad, providing biodiversity corridors for invertebrates, but also important species such as existing red squirrels and hopefully future pine martens. With climate change and adverse weather, the network of hedges with provide good shelter for stock and will all combine to link existing hedges, veteran trees, small woods with Harwood.

Site work

Fencing work completed by local fencer, Tom Gaisford in July 2023

Tree and hedge plants supplied by Thorpe Trees, York and planting work carried out by Matthew Wilson's team of planters, Prospect Woodland Services.

Hedgerow lines were closely strimmed before planting, and most planting work completed before end December 2023 owing to fine weather and good progress being made. An area of waterlogged ground on adjacent to the northern boundary was left unplanted

Bird Surveys

Groundwork commissioned Birdwatch North East Ltd to carry out bird surveys on various Northumberland study sites. A total of 62 species were recorded within these sites. Many were birds of conservation concern, sitting on either the red or amber list.

Farm	Date	Total no of species	Breeding	Non-breeding	R	A	G	Comments
Ralph Shield	June, July 2023; April-July 2024	42	21	21	5	15	22	House martins breeding around bldg to NE buffer. Skylarks, stone chats, starlings, meadow pipits with redstarts in boundary corridors all breeding. 110 Pink footed geese flew over northwards. Pair of ravens spotted calling and lifting up from plantation to the south of site.

CONCLUSIONS

We are very grateful to be able to access these study sites across Northumberland. Access to your land is allowing us to collect valuable data which is not only helping us to assess the effects of Groundwork's interventions, but is also allowing us to understand how nature and various agricultural practices interact.