

North West England

Sustainable Catchment Management Programme (SCaMP)

BACKGROUND

United Utilities plc owns two-fifths of the catchment area land owned by the UK water industry. Much of this is high moorland in National Park areas such as the Lake District, the Peak District and the Forest of Bowland. Much of these areas act as a catchment for reservoirs which supply water to more than 7 million people. As well as their importance for water catchment, the areas contain many Sites of Special Scientific Interest and have an amenity and tourism value.

Upland areas in Britain are frequently very wet and the peaty soil acts both as a sponge, to retain water, and a large filter, cleaning the water as it is slowly released into reservoirs and rivers. The land has been managed for generations by tenant farmers under agreements where the landowner did not interfere in the management of the land, however United Utilities, partly as a result of the development of the Water Framework Directive, has introduced this major initiative to work with farmers and other land users to manage the land in a more sustainable manner.

PROBLEMS

Under the Common Agricultural Policy in the 1970s, farmers were encouraged to increase the productivity of the land. As a result land drainage was widely introduced in moorland areas. Known by the local name 'grips', the long drainage ditches or channels rapidly remove the water from the upland areas. This has caused a number of problems:

- Drying out of the peat and a reduction in the active blanket bog - a vitally important habitat for wildlife
- Rapid drainage of surface waters, leading to flooding of rivers, loss of vegetation and soil erosion.

The rapid drainage of water from the hills results in increasingly coloured raw waters with a high turbidity. This requires increased treatment before it is suitable for public water supply.



Whitendale



Piling to form a small dam, Whitendale, February '05

SOLUTIONS

The SCaMP Project will operate from 2005 to 2010, and will make significant changes to the farmed upland areas including:

- Blocking drainage ditches to re-wet peat bogs that had been drained, creating new habitats for wildlife.
- Restoring areas of eroded and exposed peat and heather moorland.
- Establishing woodland by planting thousands of new trees and replacing existing coniferous trees with native broad-leaf species.
- Providing new waste management facilities to reduce run-off pollution of water courses.
- Fencing to keep livestock away from areas such as rivers and streams and from special habitats

“Water treatment starts on the catchment - the gathering grounds for our reservoirs - and when we get it right there it means we don't need to keep adding more, expensive engineering solutions at our treatment works.”
Martin McGrath, United Utilities SCaMP programme manager

BENEFITS

The long term benefits of the project are expected to be:

- Restoration of stunning and vitally important landscapes and habitats such as blanket bog and heather moorland with their values to both wildlife and tourism.
- Stopping the decline in numbers of rare bird species.
- Development of sustainable farming practices to aid in maintaining and enhancing special habitats and wildlife, as well as water quality

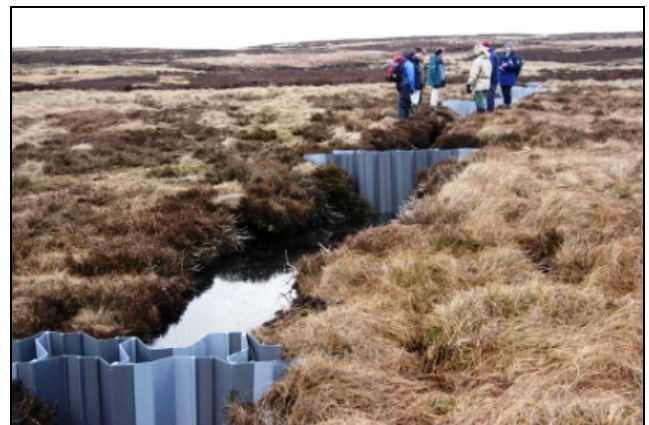
AUTHOR

QUESTOR Centre
QUB, N. Ireland

Developed from publicly available information
SCaMP Website:

www.unitedutilities.com/?OBH=3128

Tel: +44 1925 537246



Completed dams in a former drainage channel