

Coalfield Environment Initiative



Wetland Habitat Creation: Hannahston OCCS



Wetland habitat are reasonably widespread throughout Ayrshire, however, the habitats are localised and cover a small geographical area. As a priority habitat in both local and national biodiversity action plans, creation, restoration and enhancement of this habitat is

encouraged. The East Ayrshire local plan, in particular, identifies former open cast coal sites as providing excellent opportunities to extend this habitat, helping to reconnect nature.

Hannahston is a former Open Cast Coal Site (OCCS) that is currently being reclaimed for use as a community woodland. Within its boundary lie a significant body of open water and a wetland area characterised by drainage channels and wet grassland. Both of these areas represent great opportunities for enhancement, creating a mosaic of high nature conservation habitats where children and adults can experience, first hand, the complexity and beauty of their environment.



Project Location

Hannahston OCCS covers 27.9ha and is located 0.5km to the north of the village of Drongan, East Ayrshire.

Project Outline

This innovative project will enhance the ecological value of Hannahston's wetland habitats by creating a system of shallow pools and drainage channels that will extend the area of the current wetland habitat. Management of dominant species, such as bulrush, and transplanting native species, such as reeds, will help to increase biodiversity. Community involvement in the project will be encouraged through the CEI's conservation volunteering programme, and interpretation boards will be designed using the skills of the local primary school. A circular footpath and boardwalk will be created, providing access that, when combined with the interpretation, will aid understanding and enjoyment of the natural environment.

Habitat creation

At the core of this project is the creation and enhancement of wetland habitat. A hydrological study of the site will be undertaken and a habitat creation plan will be prepared. A contractor will be employed to create the wetland pools, drainage channels and bunds.

Native species planting and management programme

The UK species and habitats action plans will be used to devise a native planting and management programme which would see the removal of dominant plant species and the introduction of native species that would help increase plant diversity, whilst attracting a greater diversity of insect, mammal and bird life.

The planting and management programme would be undertaken by volunteers from throughout East Ayrshire, encouraging ownership and facilitating learning about biodiversity in the natural environment. This programme would continue over three years to allow a diverse range of plant species to become established.

Access route and interpretation

An integral aspect of this project is the provision of access and interpretation. A footpath would be created allowing people to visit each of the habitats on-site, with a board walk being created to allow people to navigate the wetland areas. Interpretation boards would be designed using the skills of Drongan Primary School, stimulating learning, awareness and engagement in conservation and biodiversity.

Project Objectives

The project aims to:

- Expand priority wetland habitats in East Ayrshire
- Encourage priority species such as , song thrush, dragonflies, butterflies and bats
- Engage the local community, encourage ownership and stimulate learning and awareness of conservation and biodiversity.
- Create a diverse range of habitats that local people will enjoy and appreciate

Project Timescales

This project will take place over a three year period. The earth works will be carried out in February/March 2005 followed by planting and management of native species. The site will be allowed to settle for a further year before the footpath, boardwalk and interpretation are installed in 2006. The planting and management of native species will continue until 2007.