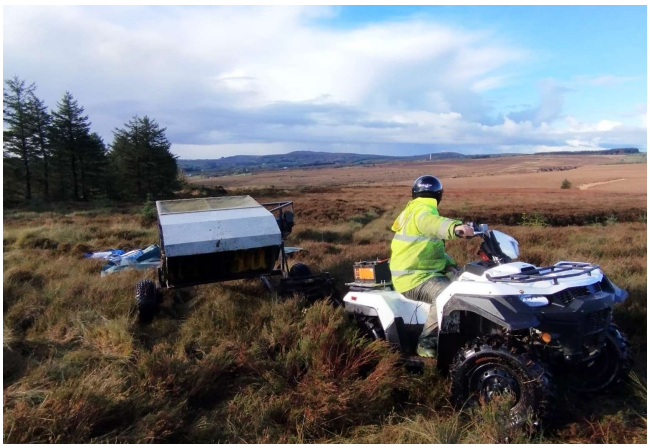
Peatland Restoration

Restoring appropriate vegetation on peaty areas helps reduce drainage problems and assists the re-establishment of native flora to support local biodiversity. Restoration also helps a site to blend in with the surrounding field patterns. The sooner vegetation is established, the quicker carbon loss will be mitigated.

1. Brush harvesting

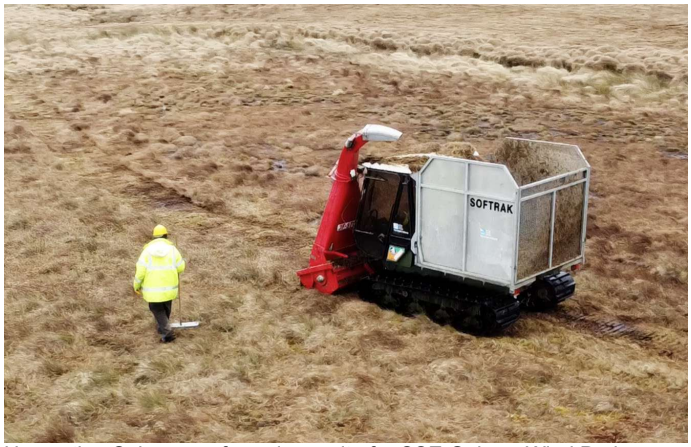
The brush harvester collects seed using a gently rotating brush that leaves the donor plant intact. It is typically towed by an All Terrain Vehicle, causing minimal disturbance to the existing habitat. The harvested seed is then taken to EcoSeeds nursery for further drying, cleaning, and processing. Further information on the brush harvesting is available here.



Harvesting heather seed at Murley Mountain Wind Farm, Tyrone

2. Sphagnum harvesting

We use this restoration method in conjunction with re-wetting. We harvest sphagnum, grasses, heather, and pleurocarpous mosses using specialist machinery. Doing this also indirectly harvests samples of peatland “microbial communities”. Inoculating the receptor site with these important microbial species plays a signifcant role in the restoration process. The harvested areas are recorded by GPS location.



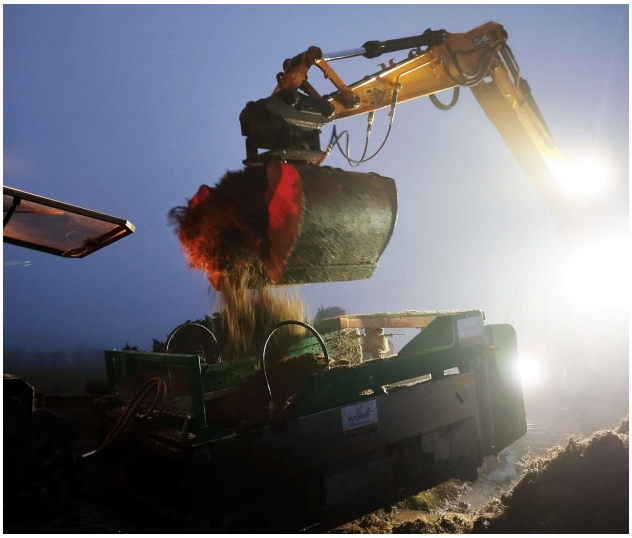
Harvesting Sphagnum from donor site for SSE Galway Wind Park

3. Seed and brash transfer

Brush harvested seed and brash (heather, grasses, mosses) are mixed and spread using specialist machinery on low ground pressure tyres. Spreading must be completed within 48 hours of cutting the brash to prevent decomposition.

Receptor areas are lightly tine harrowed to open up soil prior to spreading. The seed and brash mulch is spread over the area to provide a nurse crop for sphagnum to grow (combined with water level 10cm above or below surface). Once spread, this will provide a 'living carpet' to assist hydrology and help establish a more diverse range of species.

Peatland Restoration



Transferring brash to spreader, Murley Mountain Wind Farm, Tyrone

4. Practical working arrangements

We work in partnership with agricultural contractors. Expertise in moving large quantities of living material - within a tight time frame and with a light touch - is essential to the success of large scale habitat restoration projects. We also work closely with an agricultural engineer who helps develop our specialised machinery and who is on hand for maintenance and repair. We collaborate with ecologists as part of a team to source donor sites that “fit” receptor sites and to measure success in terms of species coverage and diversity.

5. New areas of work

- Tissue micropropagation of sphagnum
- Field production of sphagnum
- Seed priming - brush harvested heather seed is “primed” to enhance germination.

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