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Ettrick Habitat Restoration Project

The Ettrick Marshes is one of the largest floodplain woodland restoration projects in the UK. Located in the heart of the Scottish Borders, the Ettrick Marshes contain remnants of the ancient Ettrick Forest. Borders Forest Trust has been working for over 6 years with Forest Enterprise, 12 local landowners and other members from the local community to restore over 125 hectares of natural woodlands, wetlands, grassland and wildflower meadows in the Ettrick floodplain.

A major strength of this project has been the high level of support shown by the local people. The local community have been closely involved, through a community steering group, in the development and management of the project since the start, particularly in the access and interpretation planning.

A network of XXkm of way marked paths and boardwalks have been created and installed through the project site thanks to the hard work of the local Scottish Wildlife Trust practical team. It is now possible to explore the rich habitat of the Ettrick floodplain by foot and venture up to the highest vantage point where the whole of the Ettrick floodplain can be viewed. The interpretation, signage and way marked trails will encourage responsible public access and the visitors will generate a modest income increase for the valley residents, many of whom rely on tourism to supplement their incomes.

BFT has entered management agreements with farmers, landowners and Forest Enterprise to ensure sensitive site management of the floodplain habitat for 25 years. The project has encouraged local farmers to manage areas of meadow in a traditional way to maintain their floral diversity. Cutting late hay allows wildflowers to set seed, creating important habitats for small mammals and rare insects. XXha of conifers have been felled on Forest Enterprise land to allow the restoration of natural habitats on the floodplain. Largely left to nature, this area has become quickly re-colonised by native species and the floodplain is well on its way to recovery.

This project has received assistance and generous financial support from the Millennium Forest for Scotland Trust, Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission, Scottish Power Rural Care, European Union 5b and the World Wildlife Fund.

The Ettrick Marshes project is now entering it's second phase, where lots of maintenance and joint working with the local community will be required to ensure the establishment of newly planted woodlands.

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