Should We Pick All The Low Hanging Fruit?

The Scale Of The Challenge

Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) mapped all the degraded peat in its area in 2022.

This mapping is accessible to all in a queryable dynamic web-tool – just search for **CNPA Degraded peat mapping**.

The tool summarises degradation by type, severity, altitude and these stats adjust to match selected land management units.

This identified some **31,000ha of eroded peat** and **21,000ha of drained peat**. Due to overlap, there is an overall degraded footprint of c **47,000 ha**.

c **5000 ha** of this has had restoration work so far. But some of the early work was unsuccessful – see our other poster.

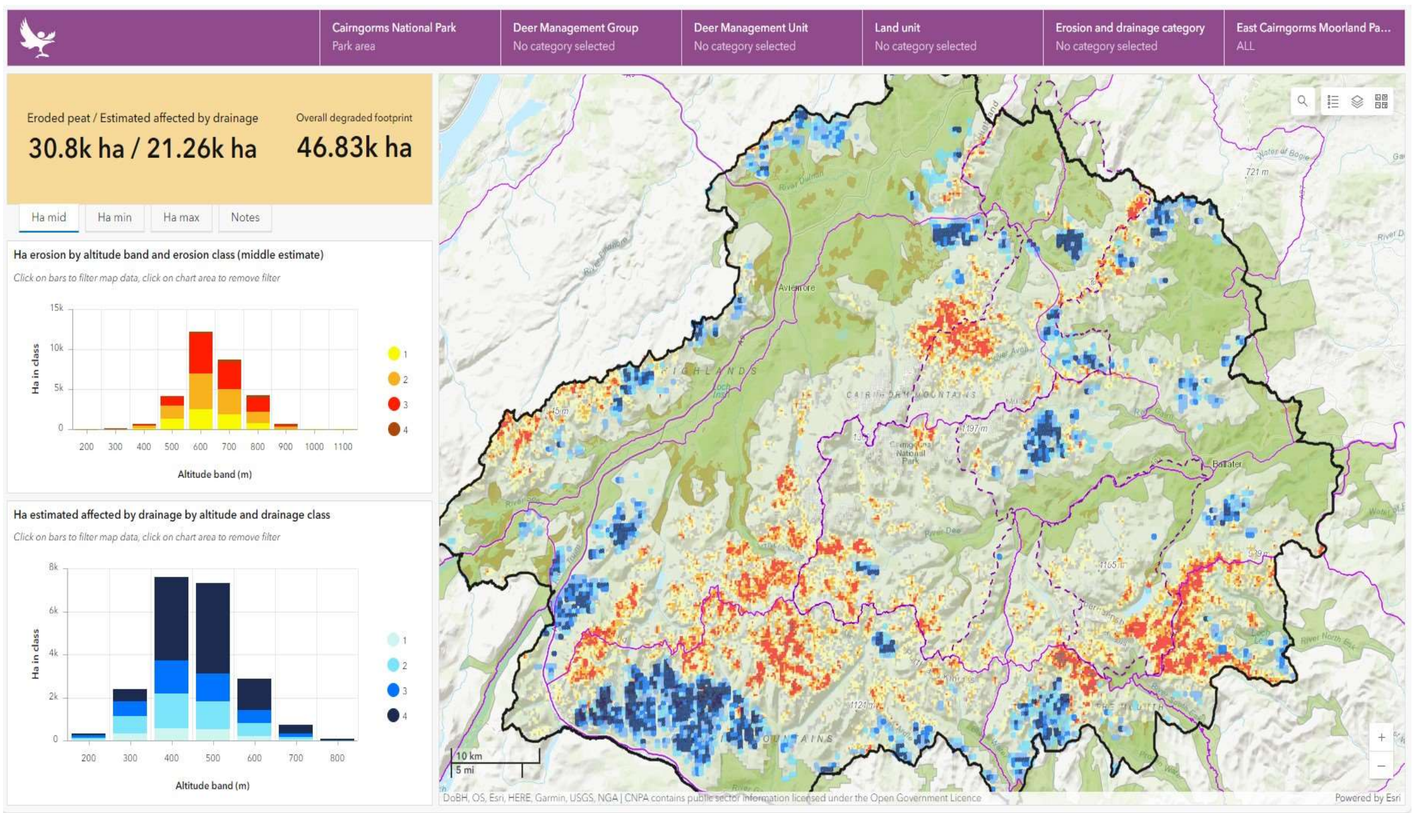
At an optimistic delivery rate of c 2,000ha / annum from 2025 this would require **20 years to restore**, so could just about complete by 2045.

What funding would be needed to deliver all this work?
The table below models this based on CNPA's average delivery cost from 2023, modified for inflation at 4% to 2045. No allowance has been made for the higher costs of more challenging or remote sites. Between now and 2030 projects in the Park would need some **£42m** and to 2045 - **£190m**

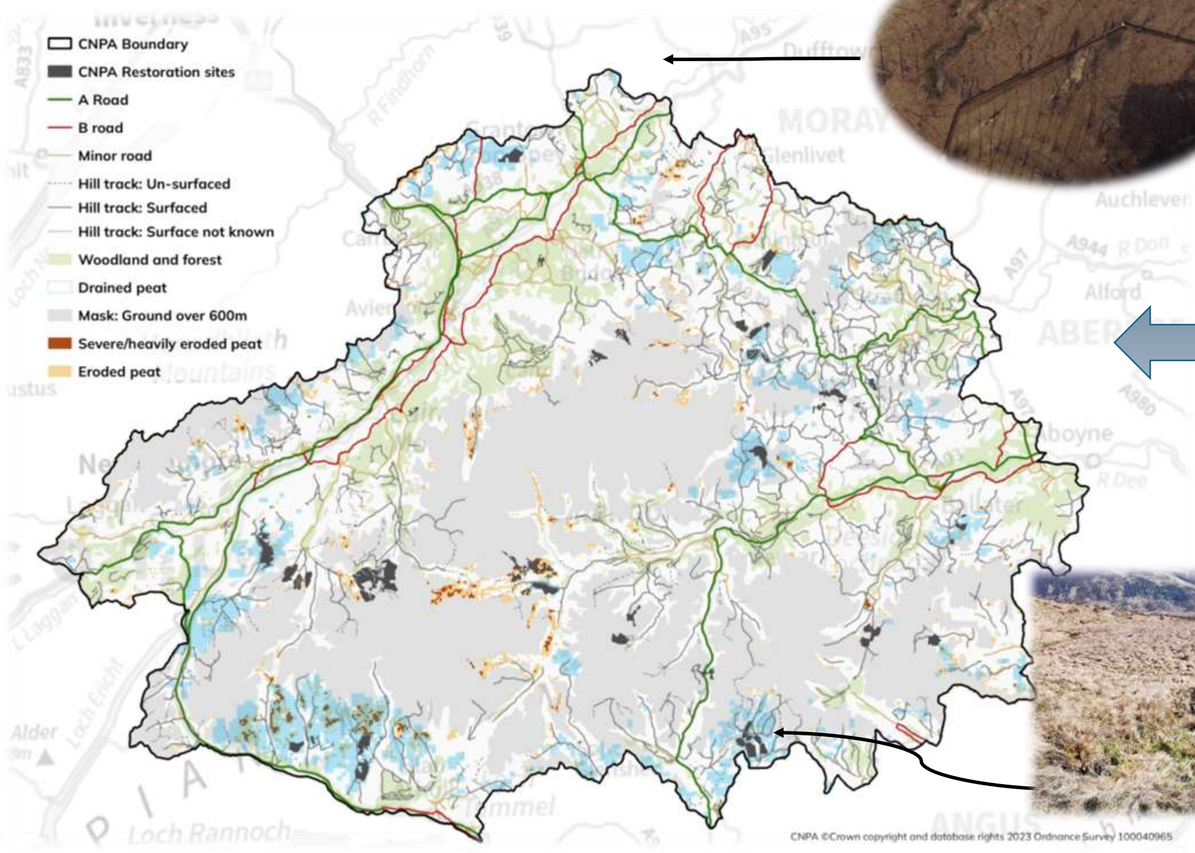
Average cost per hectare	£2,800
Inflation value	4%
Hectares per year from 2025	2000

Year	Cost/Ha	Hectares	Budget needed
2024	£2,800	1500	£4,200,000
2025	£2,912	2000	£5,824,000
2026	£3,028	2000	£6,056,960
2027	£3,150	2000	£6,299,238
2028	£3,276	2000	£6,551,208
2029	£3,407	2000	£6,813,256
2030	£3,543	2000	£7,085,787
2031	£3,685	2000	£7,369,218
2032	£3,832	2000	£7,663,987
2033	£3,985	2000	£7,970,546
2034	£4,145	2000	£8,289,368
2035	£4,310	2000	£8,620,943
2036	£4,483	2000	£8,965,780
2037	£4,662	2000	£9,324,412
2038	£4,849	2000	£9,697,388
2039	£5,043	2000	£10,085,284
2040	£5,244	2000	£10,488,695
2041	£5,454	2000	£10,908,243
2042	£5,672	2000	£11,344,572
2043	£5,899	2000	£11,798,355
2044	£6,135	2000	£12,270,290
2045	£6,381	2000	£12,761,101
	Totals:	43500	£190,388,631

The Opportunity Map



CNP peatland restoration scoping dashboard (arcgis.com)



The Low Hanging Fruit

Budget limitations and hectare-based targets incentivise selection of lower cost/easier sites, which correlate with lower altitudes, easier access and easier work types – the 'low hanging fruit'

In the Cairngorms National Park we might (simplistically) consider these to be sites that are:
Below 600m
Have existing roads or access tracks nearby
Be mainly drain damming or easier erosion work

The map to the left shows restoration work that meets these criteria. These are mainly drain damming areas (c 16,500ha), and some erosion (c 4,800ha). These types overlap so the potential from these areas **is c 19,000ha, just c 47% of the total area we need to restore.**

Much of this ground is in a productive zone where drainage is valued because of perceived benefits for grazing, improved grassland productivity for cropping, or better moorland conditions for game bird activity. Ongoing agricultural use of this ground contributes to agri-environment grants. Consequently, some landowners or tenants are reluctant to remediate drainage in these areas

The Fruit That's Left.....

The reality for peatland restoration in the Park is that c 53% of our work is:

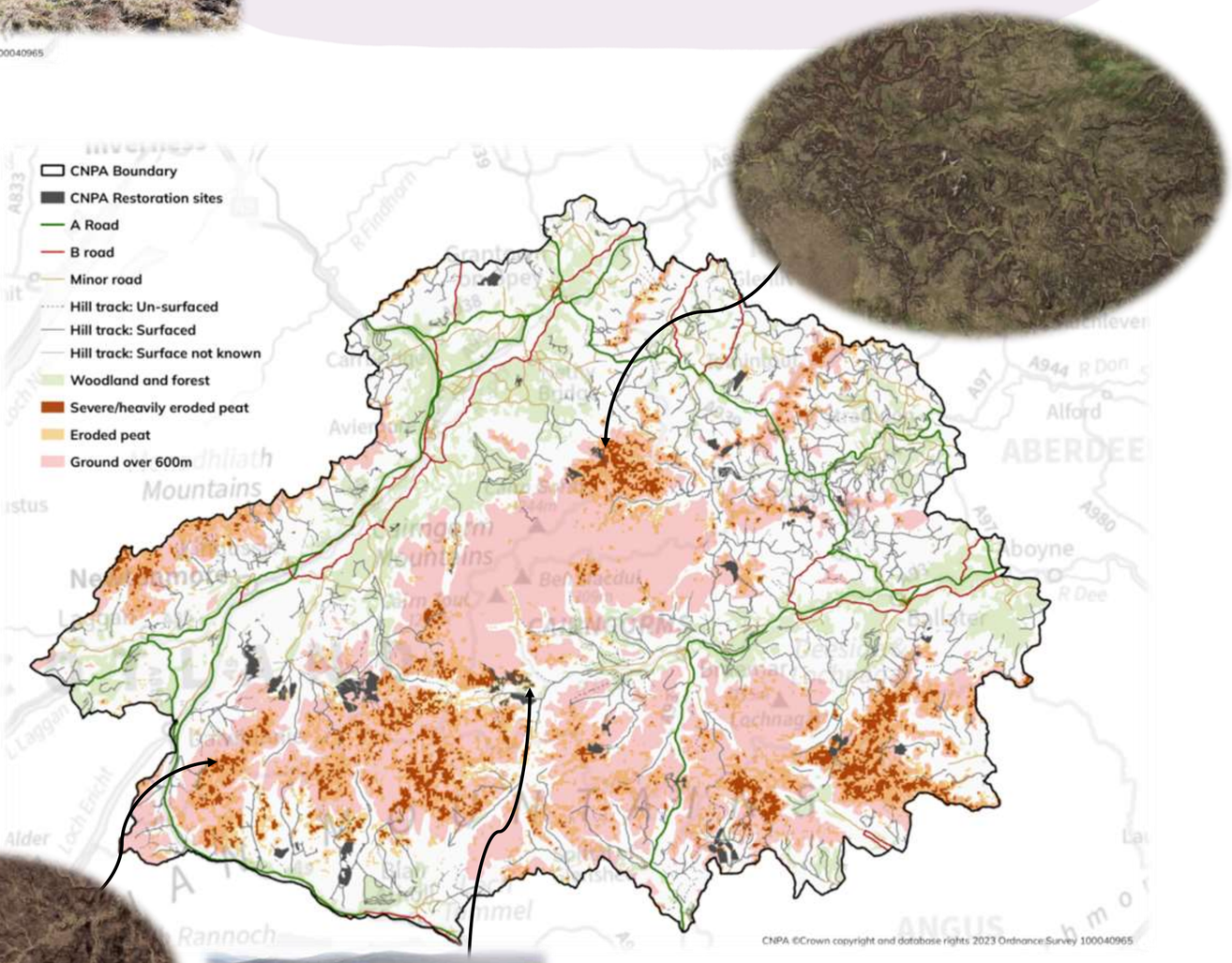
Above 600m
Very remote from existing roads or tracks
Often very complex with large and severe erosion features
Affected by high herbivore numbers
Subject to significant weathering effects
Hampered by a very short growing season
Constrained by a short delivery window

The map to the right shows the scale and severity of the degraded areas which don't meet the 'low hanging fruit' criteria. The majority of this is severe erosion at high altitude and remote from existing access routes.

These factors have a compounding effect on **cost** and **risk** so a key question we need to answer is: **How do we fund work in these areas now, and in the future?** CODE Capital will not favour these areas!

We need to keep working on these sites now so we continue to learn how to restore sites successfully. We currently don't have all the solutions!

We also need to understand what future climate predictions mean for our work, are there regions of the Park that cannot be functional blanket bog in the future, can we make marginal areas more resilient?



Cairngorms National Park
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