

TREE PLANTING PROGRAMME

The Trust's two sites, Lintzgarth and Thornhope, are at differing heights with differing characteristics. However the objectives of the habitat management are the same, to improve habitat diversity to provide safety, cover and areas of good feeding for vulnerable upland species, mainly black grouse and breeding waders. The Trust embarked on a continuous tree planting programme to help achieve this as well as contribute to improved air and soil quality and increased carbon sequestration.

In partnership with the Woodland Trust who after site visits kindly donated a considerable number of trees and tree guards for both sites, our planting programme started on Lintzgarth, an exposed site with few trees apart from the cleugh at the north end of the site. It was agreed to plant pockets of mixed species trees along either side of the access route to provide additional shelter and cover for black grouse and in the cleugh to augment the existing varieties. In late 2014 and early 2015 1500 young trees made up of hawthorn, silver birch, downy birch, hazel, bird cherry, sessile oak, rowan and crab apple were planted by volunteers, some from the Woodland Trust. Over the following years our warden has spent many hours ensuring the trees and tubes are upright providing protection needed for good growth given the potential for damage from being eaten by wildlife and the relative harshness of the area with its short summers. In harsh weather buds and berries of trees and bushes provide a critical emergency food source in addition to woodland cover for black grouse.

In 2016 the Trust began a dwarf shrub regeneration project which was complemented by the planting of 500 bare rooted trees, again in partnership with the Woodland Trust. Species included alder, aspen, hawthorn and birch. If successful this will provide a further woodland pocket providing cover and areas of good feeding. These trees have not fared so well over the years and it is likely that several will need replacing.

Thornhope, also locally important for black grouse, has a beck running through the site known as the ghyl. It has mature trees at its southern end and slopes covered in bracken, thorn and other shrubs of which juniper, a threatened species and a food source for black grouse, is particularly important. As soon as the Trust acquired Thornhope Moor it was agreed to augment the number of juniper and they have become well established over the years. With the support of the Woodland Trust mixed species trees were planted beside the water courses in 2017 to encourage smaller birdlife such as ring ouzel,

whinchat and others by providing a good food source and shelter. This will also naturally reduce the bracken growth. Good evidence of growth was noted as early as September of the same year with green growth already above the tubes and we are pleased to note has continued.

This year the Trust is hoping to plant a number of rowan trees on both sites. Rowan is an excellent food source, particularly for black grouse and will add to the diversity of vegetation.