



RRC Site Visit Series

Swindale Beck, Cumbria

Wednesday 7th December 2022

Join us in Swindale Valley in Cumbria to find out more about the interventions used to reverse impacts of past land management and water use practices, benefit wildlife and water quality, reduce downstream flood risk, and enhance the natural landscape. This project demonstrates that positive environmental improvements could be delivered within a farmed landscape.



Site visit lead
Lee Schofield (RSPB)
John Gorst (United Utilities)

The Project

RSPB, United Utilities, the Environment Agency and Natural England are working in partnership on a range of projects in the Swindale Valley near Haweswater in the Lake District. Situated in a remote part of the Eastern Lake District, Swindale forms a critical part of the United Utilities owned Haweswater drinking water catchment. Historic land management had focused on maximising agricultural output, often to the detriment of the natural environment. Over 160 years ago the beck had been straightened, deepened and embanked. Peatland drained, species rich hay meadows had been fertilised and overgrazed, and native woodland degraded. Since the 1950s water from the becks has been taken via the Swindale aqueduct to supplement Haweswater reservoir. Although an impressive feat of engineering, this focused on efficient and maximum abstraction at the expense of natural river flows.

Our ambitious and holistic approach has restored a large area of blanket bog at the top of the Swindale Valley by blocking moorland drains which will result in increased carbon storage, raise the water table, naturally purifying the water and providing a home to a wide range of specialist wildlife. Tree planting also stores carbon, slows surface water flows and increases water percolation into soil reducing flood peaks downstream. Sympathetic management of the floodplain hay meadows would result in further biodiversity gain.

The Swindale project is now one of the most high-profile projects delivered in the Lake District and is now being used an exemplar case study to enthuse others to do something similar.



Information

This site visit is **FREE to RRC members** (£10 deposit to be refunded following attendance at site visit). If space is available, non-members are welcome to attend at a cost of £30. Places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. To book a place please complete a booking form at the [link here](#). Booking closes when all spaces are allocated.

- The visit will start at 10:00 and end by 15:00. This will include time for a packed lunch (not supplied).
- Meeting point will be a small parking area close the entrance to Swindale. Closest postcode CA10 2QT. What3Words 'whoever.argued.odds'
- Wellington boots or walking boots and waterproof clothing are necessary as it will be a full day out walking to see the interventions.

[Watch the Swindale Beck video](#)

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