

Clocaenog Forest Wind Farm

Habitat Management

The main purpose of the Clocaenog Forest Wind Farm Habitat Management Plan is to balance the effects of the construction and operation of the site, and to leave the site in an improved state for nature.

This is being accomplished through a series of actions which will have both direct and indirect benefits for the flora and fauna of Clocaenog Forest, thus benefitting biodiversity overall.



Total spend to date

£471,254

including:



Nightjar surveys
£107,810



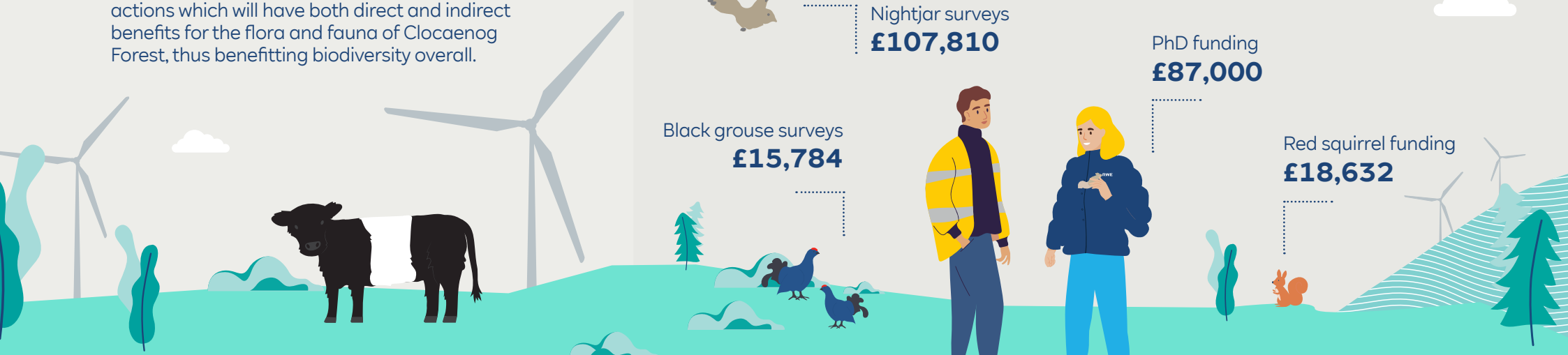
Bat surveys
£98,551

PhD funding
£87,000

Black grouse surveys
£15,784



Red squirrel funding
£18,632





“I feel very lucky that I get to carry out my research at Clocaenog. Not only do I get to work with a very charismatic European Protected Species, but I get to do it on a beautiful site in Wales.”

PhD Funding

Dormouse conservation



Charlotte is conducting a PhD on the ecology and conservation of Hazel Dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) funded by RWE.

Clocaenog is a commercial conifer plantation, and therefore not a 'typical' site for dormice as they are thought to prefer managed native broadleaf habitat.

However, they seem to subsist at Clocaenog, and Charlotte is investigating dormice diets using fur samples she has collected from individuals on site. These samples will be compared to dormice from 'optimal' habitat to further our understanding of how dormice are able to survive at sites such as Clocaenog.

Charlotte noticed that a lot of dormice were very sleepy during their active season (April-October). A high proportion of dormice at Clocaenog are found in torpor (a mini hibernation) at a time when they should be active and breeding.

Charlotte has found that torpor use is more common at sites that are colder and wetter, which explain why the Clocaenog dormice are using it so much! Unfortunately, Charlotte has also found that when dormice enter torpor more they breed less.

Thanks to Charlotte's findings and climate forecasts we can predict that dormice will enter torpor less as the UK gets warmer. So hopefully the number of dormice at Clocaenog will continue to rise. However, climatic extremes, such as really wet or dry seasons, are still of concern and could result in high torpor use.

By using footprint tunnels, Charlotte has discovered three new areas where dormice were previously thought to be absent on site. Highlighting these new dormouse areas will allow Natural Resources Wales and RWE to effectively manage operations for dormice in these areas, and thereby actively contribute to their conservation.



“This is my third year working with the dedicated team to manage and create habitat areas and I’m extremely proud to be a part of it.

“We graze native cattle in the area, which flourish eating the native grasses and plants. They look after the environment and encourage new habitat areas, protecting the wildlife in the process.”



Habitat Restoration

Introducing Andrew Holmes & friends

RWE is very fortunate to have their very own grazier, forester, fencer and general jack-of-all-trades Andrew Holmes living right in the forest itself for the past 58 years.

Andrew has been carrying out all of the habitat restoration works on site to date, which is no easy task!

The heathland restoration works involve felling and flailing self-seeded Sitka spruce to enable the proliferation of heathland vegetation, and following that the return of a diverse array of faunal species relying on this habitat type.

The peatland restoration works involve using low ground-pressure equipment to meticulously and delicately block drainage ditches across the bog, in order to raise the water table, and therefore return this degraded habitat to a more healthily functioning ecosystem that will capture carbon while hosting an array of species.

Andrew is also responsible for everyone’s favourite feature of the site- his hardy herd of upland cattle who do most of the ongoing management work for us in a natural and sustainable way, thereby moving away from manual mechanical cutting as much as possible.

The cattle will graze the areas through the spring, summer and autumn seasons, thereby preventing further regeneration of commercial Sitka spruce, while also ensuring a mosaic of habitat structure with varying ages of heather and other heathland vegetation. This increased structural floristic diversity will in turn increase biodiversity generally across Clocaenog Forest.



Stakeholder Group

Working together, towards a common goal

The CFWF HMP Stakeholder Group exists to review management actions and monitoring results in order to ensure appropriate implementation of the CFWF HMP.

This group consists of three main parties in a decision-making capacity, including RWE Renewables as the chair of the Group, as well as Natural Resources Wales (the Landowner and Statutory Consultee) and the Local Planning Authorities (i.e. Denbighshire County Council and Conwy County Borough Council).

However, other attendees contribute significantly to the Group, including consultant ecologists, contractors, local volunteers and academics.

The Group meets twice a year, on site, to review and discuss progress on the ground... always with a cuppa and cake in the forest to keep the energy levels up!

The spirit of the Stakeholder Group is one of exemplary collaboration, and working together towards positive results for the flora and fauna of Clocaenog Forest.



“It has been a privilege to be involved with the Clocaenog Forest Wind Farm HMP Stakeholder Group and to see the tremendous work RWE have been achieving for biodiversity within the Natural Resources Wales (NRW) -managed forest at Clocaenog. The Habitat Management Plan (HMP) is an ambitious project of monitoring, protecting and enhancing threatened habitats and species within the forest, and RWE, with support from the Steering Group, have done an exemplar job of putting this plan into action.

“The successful implementation of this plan supports the sustainable management of the forest by NRW, and schemes such as this make an important contribution to addressing some of the negative impacts of the nature and climate emergencies that we face.”

Adam Dempsey | Specialist Environment and Social Advisor,
Commercial Development Team, Natural Resources Wales

