

The Church Commissioners for England has signed a tenancy agreement with Natural England to improve biodiversity across two fields of additional land at Wybunbury Moss, a National Nature Reserve (NNR) near Crewe, Cheshire. The agreement will protect the species-rich area's



the reintroduction of livestock grazing and the propagation of ancient

“We are excited to see the arable reversion on this land take place which will have a myriad of benefits, from restoring and extending the biodiversity from the moss, to providing local residents with improved access to nature,” said Zara Gower, Asset Manager – Farmland Portfolio, at the Church Commissioners for England. “We look forward to our continued work with Natural England here at Wybunbury Moss and other sites as opportunities for partnership arise.”

Work by Natural England is now underway to enhance the biodiversity of Wybunbury Moss NNR. First designated as a nationally significant nature reserve in 1955, Wybunbury Moss is home to a diversity of nationally and locally rare plants and animals that were once more widely prevalent in the region and is situated at the centre of the ‘Meres and Mosses’ Natural Area at the intersection between Cheshire, Staffordshire and Shropshire.

Sphagnum moss, cotton sedge, cranberry, bog rosemary, white-beaked sedge and the insect-eating sundew, make up the peat raft. The partnership’s conservation strategy also includes the protection of rare insects and arachnids, including a ten-spotted pot beetle found only in the Wybunbury Moss NNR habitat.

Together with its surrounding woodland, reedswamp and meadows, the reserve spans approximately 16.5 hectares. Wybunbury Moss NNR is itself a ‘schwingmoor’, otherwise known as a floating bog. Limiting the area’s exposure to nutrients is essential to safeguard the site’s wide variety of flora and fauna, with the additional land provided by the Church Commissioners for England providing a much-needed opportunity for further growth of the nature reserve.

“Wybunbury Moss is a nationally important site as it is one of the finest examples in the country of a ‘schwingmoor’ (floating bog) and supports an outstanding assemblage of invertebrates, including many nationally and locally rare species,” explained Paul Shires, Senior Reserve Manager, West Midlands Natural England. “This new agreement will help us to protect the moss from high levels of nutrients, which have a serious negative effect on the site’s flora and fauna. It will also provide an opportunity for nature to spill out on to this new part of the nature reserve.”

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