Westhay Moor Peatland Restoration Project

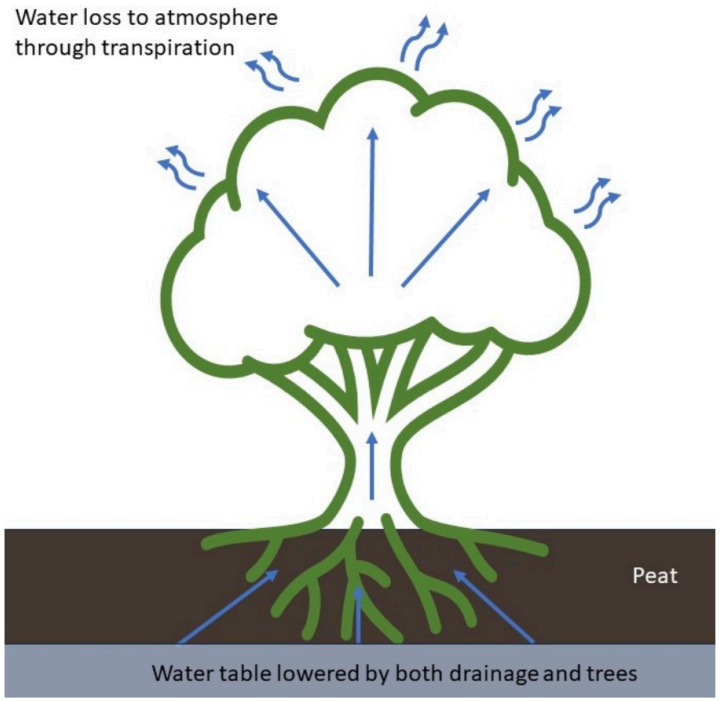
Why are we removing trees and scrub?

Westhay Moor is situated on peat which centuries ago would have been a wet, boggy habitat. But drainage to reclaim the land lowered water tables and has allowed non-peatland vegetation to encroach.

Further to the drainage, trees and scrub impact the peatland hydrology by:

1) Drawing water from the peat and transpiring to the atmosphere
2) Intercepting rainfall preventing it from reaching the peat surface

Through drying out the peat in this way, trees and scrub increasingly change the habitat to suit more non-peatland species.



Aren't trees good at locking up carbon and helping the fight against climate change?

The right tree in the right place is key. Trees and scrub damage the hydrology of a peatland. Although they lock up carbon from the atmosphere they are only decades old. The peatland that these particular trees call home was made over thousands of years and hold ancient stores of really dense carbon from when peat-forming habitats dominated this part of Somerset.

As the peat dries out, the processes that locked these ancient stores of carbon away are reversed and it's being lost to the atmosphere. So, in removing the trees and undertaking hydrological remediation works shortly we are working to preserve the peatland and the carbon stored within it.