

BogFest 2017: Statistics, Sessions and Messages

Thank you to all that joined the Moors for the Future Partnership (MFFP) and IUCN UK Peatland Programme (IUCN UK PP) team's for BogFest 2017. It was a delight to welcome so many enthusiastic delegates and share in your experience and knowledge.

For those that were unable to join us BogFest 2017 was a joint MFFP and IUCN UK PP conference, hosted by the MoorLIFE2020 project in Edale. It was funded by EU LIFE and co-financed by Severn Trent Water, Yorkshire Water and United Utilities.

Here, we have tried to capture some of the key messages coming out of the conference as well as some of the statistics from BogFest 2017. At the end of this report, we have also included some questions that came out of the three days that the IUCN UK Peatland Programme will try to address or pursue going forward with the help of partner organisations.

If you have questions about any of the points below or would like to find out more please contact us by emailing info@iucn.org.uk.

BogFest 2017 Statistics:

People:*

- Thursday: 204 delegates
- Friday: 216 delegates
- Saturday: 174 delegates
- Public events: Approx. 100 members of the public
- Fell race: 71 adults and 17 young people

*These figures exclude MFFP & IUCN staff, casuals and volunteers.

Speakers & Sessions:

- Speakers: Over 85
- Sessions: 46

“Cinderella is yet to make the ball, but her fairy godmothers have been found and she is on her way.” *Rob Stoneman, Chair, IUCN UK Peatland Programme*

Peatland Management & Delivery:

A number of sessions across the three days touched on the delivery of peatland restoration and their management, with a strong focus on Day Three, Saturday 23rd September. Some of the key points coming out of these sessions included the below:

- Current, strong peatland partnerships and teams have made significant restoration progress and gained a wide knowledge base. They are working in wider collaboration to share knowledge and operate strategically, a delivery system that, post-Brexit, needs to be maintained and grown with secure resources.
- Natural Flood Management (NFM) is being integrated into the Environment Agency's thinking to become a culturally accepted part of the toolbox (although challenges around liabilities, effectiveness of methods and accessing ring-fenced funding by delivery bodies). The Commission of Inquiry Update (throughout 2018) 'Peatland Catchments' topic will build on the evidence for NFM and explore available data.
- Encouraging re-growth of woodland on blanket bog marginal slopes may provide stability to the peat edge, re-create a lost true bog woodland community peculiar to Britain and Ireland, and slow run-off and therefore reduce flood risk.
- Local action groups working collaboratively can make a big impact and for relatively little cost e.g. Tree Responsibility and [Slow the Flow](#) in Calderdale.
- Challenging targets set by the Water Framework Directive (WFD) can be met through partnership working in the uplands.
- National Park Authorities are increasingly willing to work in partnership outside of boundaries to deliver large-scale work (do not want to be limited by boundaries that nature does not recognise).
- Designated areas must lend expertise to undesignated areas e.g. data, resources, evidence, good practice (skill sharing).
- The 'public' should be involved in decision-making in their local areas – good opportunities to be had by including them on the boards of active partnerships.
- Satellite data is being explored as a means to assess UK peatland condition and inform national reporting – issues, however, involve inability to get cloud free images with sufficient sun angle and difficulty of distinguishing between drained and undrained modified peatlands landscapes, except perhaps using the latest paid-for imagery.
- Historical imagery data is of good quality allowing for 'monitoring back' as well as 'monitoring forwards' and thus is valuable in terms of assessing condition where change is occurring over time. This could be of significant use in restoration, but ease of access across the devolved nations varies and requires payment, and the current rate of digitisation is slow (with Scotland the most advanced, but still only part complete).
- Geospatial technology is improving year-on-year and is becoming more accessible to those on the ground.
- The Blanket Bog toolkit *Blanket Bog - Outcomes Approach: Land Management Guidance* was introduced and has been collaboratively produced by representatives of the Uplands Management Group (including Natural England, Moorland Association, NFU and RSPB). The guidance represents progress towards the delivery of five outcomes on blanket bogs and is designed to help land managers put into practice the joint voluntary Defra Blanket Bog Restoration Strategy: <http://www.moorsforthefuture.org.uk/blanket-bog-land-management-guidance>.

Peatland Finance:

Peatland finance sessions focused on how peatland restoration and management might be funded post-Brexit with discussions around new nature economies and what a new agricultural subsidy scheme might look like. Most of these sessions took place on Day One, Thursday 21st September, with the 1-2-1 surgery sessions on Day Two and Three.

- Funding need estimated at £53 million to £2.5 billion to solve peatlands in England. This needs to be strongly promoted in post-Brexit land management discussions.
- There is a need to reframe how we look at peatland funding as Charitable Trusts are stretched and EU funding coming to an end, therefore new markets are essential. These could include compensation (e.g. offsetting under IUCN guidelines), environmental taxation (e.g. airport taxes) and public payments for public goods (CAP-replacement system).
- Ecological mapping is required to identify where funding is needed – our assets need to be mapped and invested in.

- Crowdfunding has been overlooked in the past – provides a new avenue to explore, which allows people to be involved in the solution e.g. [Mend Our Mountains](#) campaign (British Mountaineering Council, BMC).
- A New Nature Economy is required – global annual spend on nature is estimated at \$52 billion, yet the requirement is around \$300-\$400 billion. To raise this amount nature must be ‘sold’ to the right people (this sell might not be connected to the environment but focus on monetary figures) e.g. sell extreme weather protection to financiers investing in protection (insurance companies) – it is a case of marketing.
- Green infrastructure is key – getting it right could reduce Government spend on agricultural support and flooding if investment is in the right places (target transport, water etc.).
- Brexit has provided a generational opportunity for Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform but the markets and frameworks that will allow for these changes need creating. Natural capital solutions including Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) cannot compete with CAP in its current guise. A theory was raised that depending on what the current CAP scheme is replaced with may provide PES the chance to flourish, which could be good news for schemes such as the Peatland Code.
- Scale of investment must match achievable scale of action in CAP replacement – land managers will need to be able to collaborate for a coordinated delivery void of risk and will need help to enable them to do this.

Peatland Communications:

Communications, as is its nature, had a place in each of the sessions, however focussed sessions were held on Day Three, Saturday 23rd September. These included lecture sessions from experts and a workshop to enable partners to input into future plans for public and policy engagement by the IUCN UK Peatland Programme and its partners.

- Engagement with people benefits when centred around their connections to local area:
 - In some cases for peatlands this may be gardens as difficult to build a more local connection
 - Hill walking (8.96 million people – BMC figures) and outdoor activities are increasingly popular but often a connection is lacking as regards awareness of peatlands and related issues or to their impact on the countryside.
- The use of individual stories is important to make it personal.
- Language is key – use of overly complicated terminology in peatland communications; need to strip back use of words such as ecosystem services and talk about the real thing.
 - Ask people what they think is special about a certain landscape/concept and then use the same words they do in communications materials.
- Studies have shown that when engaging with nature people tend to respond to species (particularly animals) first, habitats second and ecosystems third.
- Need to find an inspiring advocate – could be a good opportunity to link with a sports kit company, alongside other non-specialist companies (manufacturers and retailers).
- Aspiration for collaborative action to share consistent messages in harmony e.g. (Inter)National Bog Day.
- Entry point may not be wildlife or environment, multi-entry points required – bring people together to core messages.

Peatland Policy:

Policy-related sessions were dotted throughout the programme, with a particular focus on the UK Peatland Strategy and Country Action plans on Day One (Thursday 21st September), along with a Question Time session around upland issues.

- A unique and key opportunity exists with Brexit to make the case for UK nature to Government – previously Brussels made the decision, but now the door is open and help required as clarity on the policy requirements is needed. This should be provided as a list of key points and will be taken forward by the IUCN UK Peatland Programme.

- Political appetite for the environment is currently high – there is increased media interest in environmental policy and spend, but the case needs to be strong to earn a place against demands for public health (promote links to both) and lax trade deals.
- Timing is a challenge – a strong case for peatlands is needed quickly.
- Government is committed to delivering a 25 Year Plan (to be published early 2018) – we currently have an opportunity for stakeholder involvement in food and environmental policy (the plan will cover both in one document contrary to previous reports).
- A growing interest and appetite for addressing the difficult issues of fenland agriculture exists. The Commission of Inquiry Update (throughout 2018) ‘Fen Peatland’ topic will explore the evidence around fens and agricultural fen peat and make recommendations for research and policy action.
- Defra suggested a keen desire for stakeholder engagement in the consultation states of England’s Peatland Plan to influence soil policy – workshops are to be held in September and October.
- Baseline figures are essential for monitoring new legislation/plans against e.g. 25 Year Plan.
- Good progress is being made by the devolved governments in:
 - Scotland: 110 restoration sites to date and 56 cases going forward (2017/18); 10,000 ha restoration challenge before April 2018.
 - Wales: new LIFE for Welsh Raised Bogs project to restore seven SACs to favourable condition, plus a commitment to have all peatlands in a favourable condition by 2021. New legislation supports this: Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Welsh Sustainable Management Scheme (SMS) has been approved for peatlands.
 - England: new peatland plan to be published in early 2018 following two stakeholder workshops; peatlands to make up one of the new 25 Year Plan delivery pots; £10 million restoration fund for peatlands 2017-18.
- Slow progress in Ireland: current spend is restricted to designated areas of through INTEREGG projects; no upcoming policy instruments.

Agri-environment:

- Peatland issues should be comprehensively addressed in whatever replaces CAP.
- An adaptable replacement to CAP is required that takes into account the complexities of individual sites – concerns that decisions made on a project basis can lead to unattainable outcomes being set that farmers cannot deliver against on their particular farm.
 - Simplicity is important – call for a scheme that is outcome driven (nature isn’t black and white).
 - Could a new scheme be devised on a local rather than national scale to avoid some of the issues above?
- Public money for public benefit as a replacement to CAP has generally been accepted – discussion is moving onto how much is available and how it will be split (this is where a strong case will be required to fight against competing demands on the budget).
- Agreements should be long-lasting so that it is difficult to undo any good work done; objectives set should also be for the long term and agreed across political parties, and across conservation, farming and other peatland stakeholders.
- Important to avoid a policy that drives cheap food production – wholly unsustainable.

Peatland Science:

Sessions loosely fitting under the topic heading peatland science were held across the three days, although many of these sessions interlinked with headings above. These included sessions providing an update on current scientific understanding, advances in monitoring techniques, as well as an overview of global peatlands today for which renowned peatland scientists, Prof. Hans Joosten (Greifswald Mire Centre), Prof. Susan Page (University of Leicester) and Prof. Mark Reed (University of Newcastle) provided presentations.

- Tropical land use change is one of the biggest drivers of carbon emissions in SE Asia, with all cultivation requiring drainage of peat swamp (Indonesia and Malaysia is meeting 85% of global demand for oil palm).
- 0.4% of land emits 5% of all anthropogenic emissions (2% of global emissions are from the tropical peatlands in Indonesia and Malaysia alone; also issues around water quality e.g. dissolved organic carbon (DOC) content).
- SE Asia is reaching saturation point with plantations so there is a risk that with increasing demand for palm oil products of moving to untouched peatland areas e.g. Africa and South America – education is required in the UK on responsible consuming (new initiatives e.g. [RSPO](#)).
- Drained peatlands emit 174 Mt CO₂ globally– EU second only to Indonesia.
- Peatlands has biggest potential of any land types to help combat climate change (new UNEP report – [Global Land Outlook](#)).
- Significant issue: people don't recognise peatlands – but they are everywhere e.g. rainforest, tundra etc; even the Ramsar Convention overlooked them for 25 years.
- 30% of all agricultural emissions stem from peatlands – in Germany damage amounts to €3.6 billion through agriculture, yet farmers paid €300 billion.
- It is not possible to restore all drained peatlands with a growing population – need a new way of managing them – paludiculture could allow conservation of existing carbon stock and market produce e.g. reeds for construction and paper production; grazing water buffalo – a possible solution for the fens? (As above, to be addressed by the Commission of Inquiry Update).
 - But, legislative and fiscal problems need to be addressed e.g. reed not recognised as a crop and therefore not covered under CAP (could it be covered under UK replacement?).

Questions to be addressed:

- How much does it cost to pull together a LIFE bid or similar e.g. Defra grant? And how much is needed to support the on-the-ground delivery of that funding (a relevant consideration for supporting spend from capital-only grants)?
- Will money be made available to manage and deliver the Defra pot? (Currently no staff support only capital works).
- Could we draw up a common framework between devolved governments for CAP scheme?
- Could the Scottish Peatland Action model be adopted in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, which provides support for the delivery staff i.e. regional advisors?
- Peatland restoration is tagged onto water bills, but are there other bills the cost could be added to e.g. the green levies already added to domestic energy bills?
- Could the responsibilities around drainage consents be better joined up across different areas of Government (e.g. EA, Local Authorities), to make it easier to deliver natural flood management schemes?
- Have we got our natural management strategy right as nature is continually depleted? How can we better manage our designated areas to deliver what they were intended to deliver?
- How can we fund the management and maintenance of peatlands in good condition or those that have already undergone restoration? These sites cannot currently access carbon markets etc.
- Restoration projects are providing data for geospatial technology ground truthing but are then unable to afford the technology developed – how do we overcome this?
- How do we better share geospatial imagery to make the most of resources?