

UK PEATLAND STRATEGY LAUNCH

Workshop Goal: Co-ordination

Maintain a formal, government-supported programme to stimulate appropriate funding support, share experience and encourage good land management practice to support all of the strategic goals.

CONTEXT

This goal focuses on establishing or maintaining a formal programme/umbrella body at the UK level to implement and deliver the UK Peatland Strategy, and co-ordinate restoration and conservation activity. The IUCN UK Peatland Programme has played a central role in establishing the strategy and providing co-ordination, however this programme operates on an unsustainable business model reliant on grants from charitable trusts. Moving forward a formal programme with a more sustainable and stable business model and funding regime is required.

NOTES FROM WORKSHOP

What are the issues/barriers to delivering this goal?

- Farming sector – a huge influence in regards subsidy and land management, which outweighs that of the peatland partnerships; there is a need to change agricultural policy to recognise the significance of the public goods from peatlands
- Need for appropriate support to secure positive management
- Agriculture is financially vulnerable and maintenance of peatlands could part of a solution to maintain land management in the uplands
- Devolution – need to find a way to co-ordinate across the nations
- Need to look beyond designations to the full resource
- Training requirement to increase farmer/land management skill-set
- Over-arching funding is required to support ‘partnership’, which is important for restoration
- Strong co-ordination between farming and conservation is needed
- Should we be looking for an integrated partnership restoration body? E.g. Pennines to include Moors for the Future, Yorkshire Peat Partnership, North Pennines AONB Partnership and Cumbria Partnership
- Lobbying power of a central co-ordinating body is fundamental to its success – must be funded (potentially by Government) but remain independent
- Pot of money in England for restoration but no money for staff to maximise money spend on the ground – how can restoration be delivered without staff to deliver (partnerships don’t have the funding to deliver capital projects)

- Wales currently has no equivalent to Yorkshire Peat Partnership or Moors for the Future Partnership
- Major issue around delivery of public goods and Government policy to deliver, and funding of partnerships and central co-ordination
- EU LIFE has funded a lot of partnership co-ordination – could this be replaced by a UK LIFE scheme post-Brexit; in Northern Ireland Interreg are using the same approach
- LIFE has recognised the true costs – Defra need to follow suite and apply funding appropriately
- Would a central programme focus on advocacy to Government or co-ordination of restoration works across the UK?
- Steering group needs stronger representation across sector e.g. business interests
- Is there potential to build commercial sector into a central lobby
- Annual funding not working for phased restoration
- 3-4 month restoration window makes no sense (December – March) – difficult to complete work, especially with unpredictable weather patterns
- What would long term consolidation of peatland action cost and how would it be funded
- Fenland restoration is different due to land shrinkage – needs co-ordination at scale, needs different policies to the uplands and to be properly funded
- Currently only IUCN UK PP providing co-ordination in absence of JNCC

The need for co-ordination:

- Agri-environment schemes need to be designed to facilitate rather than frustrate restoration and management of peatlands; the new stewardship scheme is pretty much unworkable e.g. two year limit; payments not upfront and can be huge
- New forms of farming on organic arable soils evolving – requires new markets, technical developments in machinery, new skills – this needs co-ordination and pump-priming investment
- Need to co-ordinate an integrated approach to land-use and carbon-rich soils e.g. people paid for being carbon guardians
- Co-ordination through the partnerships to allow monies to be used effectively – provide advice/set out plans/deploy public funds efficiently
- Defra currently ‘use’ co-ordinating partnership to effect delivery of peatland restoration
- Co-ordination of payments could help resolve tenant/landowner issues
- A voice/champion is required for peatlands – strong, cohesive and unashamed lobby group – not necessarily branded as IUCN to allow for ability to lobby; also can’t be linked entirely to business (e.g. IPS) – needs to be independent
- Needs to work at a national and international level to ensure we don’t export away our environmental issues
- Needs co-ordination within nation states and across the UK – even more important post-Brexit
- Co-ordinate differences between lowland fen and upland
- National body is a must for delivering a strong message to decision-makers
- IUCN UK PP has been successful in creating an evidence-based context for peatland restoration – ongoing need
- Needs central co-ordination to help set-up locally-driven partnerships with the right individuals/skills – passion/enthusiasm
- Need constancy of framework for reporting

- Needs a pyramid approach – local/regional groups (the current partnerships) feeding into national states and UK (JNCC)
- Greenhouse gas carbon accounting from land-use – JNCC reporting for wildlife but not ecosystem services
- Co-ordination of monitoring – important to provide consistent approach to judge effectiveness
- Scale required – e.g. catchment-scale rather than farm-scale

Potential avenues for funding:

- Forestry Commission set up by Government for woodlands – why not for peatlands? Forestry Commission was born in crisis and peatlands are now in crisis
 - Forestry Commission manages the Woodland Carbon Code, so would make sense for Government body to take on management of Peatland Code in the future
 - Don't want the central programme to be too bureaucratic (stewardship is different)
 - FC has clear and narrow remit (but tree planting focus)
- Rather than government funding, perhaps an opportunity for major environmental NGOs to fund e.g. RSPB, National Trust and the Wildlife Trusts – similar to Climate Coalition
- Could be enshrined in law – similar to Committee on Climate Change
- Or link to the natural capital agenda and fit under the Natural Capital Committee
- National Park Authorities could fund partnerships e.g. Peak District NPA funding Moors for the Future Partnership
- Could there be a Department for Peatlands? Or Peatland Agency? National Park Authority for Peatlands? These would be centrally funded
- Ring fence money for future 'wins' from different departments e.g. carbon from BIES; wildlife from Defra; flood prevention from EA and Defra; insurance reduction from BIES etc
- Possible funding from national state agencies
- Role for universities e.g. iCASP – creating tools to provide better consistency and evidence
- Could Local Nature Partnerships pick this up at 'local' level – could they co-ordinate?
- Example: Biosphere reserve in Cambridgeshire Fens – evaluation of a grand partnership that buy into the concept of Biosphere reserve
- Will the Government's new regulatory body have a central co-ordinating focus?

SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS:

The need for a co-ordinating group is recognised across sectors, although different ideas exist as to the shape of this group. What is agreed, is that it is critical for the group to co-ordinate across the four devolved administrations and between sectors e.g. conservation and farming. Several funding options were suggested, which will need further exploration. The current IUCN UK Peatland Programme was recognised as providing some of this co-ordination, but is currently operating on an unsustainable business model, with funding in place from Charitable Trusts until 2019-20.

1. IUCN UK Peatland Programme steering group to meet to discuss future options for the programme including new funding avenues and/or exit planning

2. Training programme to be developed by the IUCN UK Peatland Programme in partnership with others to deliver some of the requirements as highlighted in the workshop e.g. consistent monitoring methods etc.
3. Discussion to be had with government as to potential options for monitoring and co-ordination in the long term.