

UK PEATLAND STRATEGY LAUNCH

Workshop Goal: Communicate

Communicate peatland values, both intrinsic and measurable to a wide audience.

Widespread public and organisational support in delivering long-term protection for those areas of peatland in good condition and is preventing damaging activity that would reduce peatland function in other areas. This recognition of peatland benefits is delivering the means for peatland conservation.

CONTEXT

This goal is based on communicating the importance of peatlands and taking immediate action, as summarised in goals 1-4. It is recognised that without instilling the value of peatlands to a wider audience then achieving long-term change will be an uphill struggle, if not impossible.

NOTES FROM WORKSHOP

What are the basics we need to establish to communicate better?

- Clear and simple messages around key benefits e.g. clean drinking water, natural flood management – make sure these are developed for target audiences and standardise them
- Tailor messages to two sets of audiences: urban (limited/no knowledge) and rural (perception as infinite resource)
- Establish one simple, single message for the general message – use clean water provision as a starting point? Ability to provide a visual metaphor
- Encourage partnership organisations to develop their messages and communication channels – so that the same audiences are receiving peatland messages in slightly different ways to build a drumbeat of key points
- Be explicit about the outcome we're looking to achieve before starting communication work
- Establish a co-ordinated effort to engage the unusual suspects e.g. working class/industry – need to go to them in the Working Man's Clubs, Village Halls etc
- Environment Agency research into economic impacts of peatland restoration at a catchment level – use this to inform our communications (are LIFE projects also capturing this data?)
- Manchester Mosslands is a working class project – what can we learn from this to communicate beyond the usual middle class subjects?

Questions we need to know the answer to?

- What do the public know about peatlands?
- What makes peat unique?
- What media are our key audiences using? Traditional mix vs. social

What methods or ideas should we explore to better communicate peatlands and their values?

- Identify trophy species to push to TV programme such as BBC Springwatch
- Use history to sell peatlands e.g. use of sphagnum as a wound dressing in WWII (this non-septic isle)
- Be wary of putting big effort in for small gain
- Work with local communities to engender pride in their bogs
- Creating a natural play area – bouncy bog for kids / Whacky Warehouse idea
- Use augmented reality to help people understand what we are talking about
- Communicate to visitors (captive audience) particularly in rural areas about the benefits to them and their local community
- Certification scheme for peatland produce e.g. grouse, mutton etc to increase buy-in
- Resources for teachers at Key Stage 2 – particularly around carbon (awareness of woodland carbon benefit but not peatland)
- Engage with the insurance industry – healthy peatlands reduces flooding claims through natural flood management
- Sell bottled water next to mineral water with message and donation
- Research into peat-free plugs and plants – how many people ask for them?
- Use peers to deliver messages – put them into the right words for their audience
- Develop a communications strategy with famous Pete's or Petra's to deliver messages about peat e.g. Peter Capaldi (link with time)
- Will Millard – Welsh Bafta winner for documentary following a river from source to sea – link in (connection through Anna Millard, Natural England)
- Produce a marketing pack for the BBC and ITV (new blood in the BBC – might engage with different subjects)
- Push for anything publicly funded (gardening/planting) should peat-free
- Engage in neighbourhood plans under NPPF – could we work with The Wildlife Trusts to do this?
- General public convinced peat is best substrate – the modern alternatives are far better than they once were and we need to be getting this message on e.g Gardener's World.

What would you put in a ½ page piece in The Sun?

- Use shock tactics – article of state of UK peatlands vs. SE Asian peatlands
- Build on national pride – 13% of world's blanket bog
- Peat extracted from drinking water goes to landfill – paying twice over
- Beautiful pictures at different scales
- Bring birds back to the bogs?

What is happening already?

- In Scotland, the arts are being used to some success, but not necessarily hitting the right demographic
- Bog snorkelling!
- Focus groups have been held to find out what people know by the James Hutton Institute
- Eco-school curriculum in Wales and Scotland at primary level – opportunities for England (NB: Scotland has had difficulty getting it started)
- Mend Our Mountains campaign by British Mountaineering Council – adopt a bog
- Memories of the Moss at Bolton Fell Moss in Cumbria – provides a cultural reconnection and celebrates industrial past – this enables people to express themselves whether happy or angry, giving them a say
- European site visits have shown projects building cultural connections through the picking of berries – community rights
- Door-to-door visits through Cumbria BogLIFE followed by open days that led to community ownership (led by a facilitator)
- Some local museums with small exhibitions and displays
- Bog beer pump labels where a connection to a landscape e.g. Myrciale
- Red Grouse Whisky – RSPB encouraged a black grouse label
- B&Q working on peat-free products
- Peat bog-themed children's story
- Viewing towers on blanket bog e.g. Forsinard
- HLF-funded discussions around why peatland is important at Lough Neagh
- Moors for the Future Partnership engagement work but very dependent on funding (research, citizen science etc)
- Volunteer groups – these develop as a result of engagement activity – important to recognise/record
- Developed and developing relationships with landowners e.g. Bishopdale with Rob Brown (Wensleydale Natural Flood Facilitation Fund)
- iCASP presentation on public knowledge on peat
- Carmarthenshire County Council has provided a grant for a project to demonstrate the value of peatlands to local communities
- Snowdonia NPA have an oral history project on the cultural importance of peatlands (rural communities historically dependent on peatlands)
- Carbon Landscape project in South East Lancashire
- 'Welsh wellbeing of future generation' – one of the nine principles: involving local communities in participation in environment.