

Including Peatland Rewetting in National Greenhouse Gas Accounting

The next month holds a key opportunity to secure funds for peatland management as the UK Government considers whether to account for Wetland Drainage and Rewetting in its national climate change targets. Doing so could give extra impetus for Government spend on peatland rewetting and paves the way for business funding through carbon markets. This is potentially a vital new source of money that could directly support farmers and other land managers in often remote rural areas.

Because most drainage of peatlands in the UK took place before 1990 (the baseline year for greenhouse gas accounting) and grants are no longer available for such activity, the main impact of adopting the new category will be to allow peatland restoration projects to contribute to our climate change targets. This in effect could give extra reward to those land managers who choose to restore peatlands. It also means that all peatland restoration since 1990 can be included. Examples of some major UK projects are summarised in [Peatland Restoration: Demonstrating Success booklet](#)

Peatland rewetting can help ‘fill the gap’ in government policies for meeting the UK’s greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets and enable early action towards EU targets. Conversely, damaged peatlands are an ongoing source of emissions with only 5% of the peatland carbon store equivalent to the UK’s total annual emissions from all sectors.

The IUCN UK, Inquiry on Peatlands highlighted a shared desire across the land managing community to move away from the current situation where degraded and damaged peatlands result in loss of biodiversity, impact water supplies and release carbon. For many farmers and estate managers the erosion and gullyng of peatlands has direct impact on livestock and sporting interests. A key recommendation from the Inquiry was to secure new funds to help repair damaged peatlands, in a way that allows these areas to continue to be productive – for food, clean water, biodiversity, carbon sequestration and storage - through their sustainable management “allowing farmers to continue farming”.

The UK Government has to decide now whether to include peatland rewetting in its national greenhouse gas accounting for the next Kyoto Protocol commitment period 2013- 2017. At the same time the European Parliament is also considering inclusion of this activity in the EU’s greenhouse gas accounting rules.

This is a key opportunity to bring much needed resources to help pay for sustainable peatland management. Failure to include peatlands now could mean a delay of another five years before the next accounting period. Without urgent action, damaged peatlands will continue to emit annually the equivalent of all the households of Edinburgh, Cardiff and Leeds combined.

Briefing on the protocol and peatlands can be found here: [IUCN UK - Kyoto Protocol brief](#)

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