

## UK PEATLAND STRATEGY LAUNCH

### Workshop Goal: Restoration

*Restore heavily degraded areas towards functioning peatland ecosystems.*

Whilst challenging, peatlands that are severely degraded can be stabilised through restoration intervention and placed on the road to recovery.

There are a number of heavily degraded sites across the UK where action can be taken now, whilst assessing and prioritising other opportunities.

### CONTEXT

This goal focuses on the restoration of heavily degraded areas of peatland that do not support any semi-natural vegetation. Restoration in this context equates to the stabilisation of the site and recovery of peatland function. The timeframe for this restoration may be unknown, nor necessarily through conventional methods e.g. seeding of rye grass to stabilise bare peat. This goal is important in terms of preserving carbon stores and maintaining extent of peatland habitat. A target of 80% of degraded peatland brought under restoration management is included in this goal, recognising that a tolerance is required allowing for areas that cannot be restored e.g. built development losses. Peatland restoration does not exclude other land uses, but it cannot be used as a justification or future solution to undertaking damaging land uses.

### Who needs to be engaged for the successful delivery of this goal?

Group?	Barriers? Considerations?
Landowners, farmers and tenants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land cost/loss of productivity as a concern/barrier</li> </ul>
NFU/CLA/SLE etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These groups as a way to engage with landowners and other groups in the process of restoration. Facilitating advocacy, providing advice etc.</li> </ul>
Cross- government and agency policy departments leading on agri-environment scheme design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capital costs <u>and</u> stewardship support in schemes is vital for delivery of restoration</li> <li>Options can provide mechanism for the advice and support needed to facilitate a change in land use or methods of management</li> </ul>
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct political engagement is needed to raise the profile of peatland restoration (why/how/benefits/costs)</li> <li>This engagement needs to be across government departments</li> <li>Recent combined agencies (e.g Welsh and Northern Irish models) have caused problems due to movement of staff and a shift to a more generalist focus as departments/agencies are merged.</li> <li>Staff continuity in post is a big issue. Movement of individual staff is often followed by loss of agency expertise on particular issues and an unwillingness/inability to continue engagement.</li> </ul>
Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communities valuing peatlands will be key (e.g. minimise vandalism, promote 'ownership' and volunteer engagement)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear communication of ecosystem service values (“hilltop rain to urban drain”) may be one way to engender public support and therefore facilitate public spending by government.</li> <li>• Volunteer groups help to deliver <i>some</i> aspects of restoration and management. Is proven to be cost-efficient but often little/no funding to help support and facilitate these groups (staff resource and equipment needed as a minimum to maximise engagement)</li> <li>• Schools education through the curriculum</li> <li>• Community payback schemes- mobilise volunteers who would ordinarily not engage with peatland issues</li> <li>• Outdoor user groups e.g. ramblers, trail runners etc.</li> </ul>
Peat extractors/ producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivering restoration on sites as an end-use</li> </ul>
Peatland partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of restoration</li> <li>• Policy engagement to promote future funding to facilitate restoration</li> <li>• Funding cycles and schemes do not always facilitate partnership delivery of restoration. Agri-environment schemes should be tailored to fit peatland practitioners needs for delivery (i.e. amount of funding, spend conditions and funding cycles to allow for seasonality).</li> <li>• Work to advise n new policies and funding schemes is a huge staff time investment and the future reward is not guaranteed. Need a strong advocate voice to speak for peatland partnerships and represent their interest.</li> <li>• Seasonality of restoration and yearly funding cycles are barriers to delivery of restoration. Need mechanisms to roll over budget across years to allow phased and sustainable restoration.</li> </ul>
National peatland action groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy engagement to promote future funding to facilitate restoration- tasked with addressing barriers at a country-scale</li> <li>• Addressing knowledge gaps through commissioned, applied research to inform good practice</li> </ul>
Forestry bodies (agencies (FC/FCS/NRW/NI Forest Service), research bodies (FR) and trade groups e.g. Confor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large amounts of peatland under national forest estate and private forestry across the UK</li> <li>• Some areas of current restoration activity taking place within previously afforested land.</li> </ul>
Planning authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
Funders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to understand ‘why’ peatland restoration is worth funding</li> </ul>
Treasury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approach through each relevant government department/committee e.g. Natural Capital Committee or the Committee on Climate Change</li> </ul>
NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landowning organisations</li> </ul>
Environmental consultants and contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often brought in to support other delivery bodies and provide expert advice/recommendations for site restoration and management</li> <li>• Availability of consultants and contractors is key to being able to deliver restoration</li> </ul>
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land management students/agricultural colleges to encourage future good stewardship and promote restoration uptake</li> <li>• Academic training to improve understanding and applied scientific research to enhance and improve restoration delivery</li> </ul>
Rural Payments Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure efficient transfer of funding to deliver restoration</li> </ul>
Commercial/business engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage in the reasons for peatland restoration through advocacy work- need £ and service figures to make the case</li> <li>• Voluntary and compulsory measures to facilitate support of peatland restoration from these sectors is needed</li> </ul>

## Stakeholder delivery: What is currently being done to facilitate/deliver restoration by partners?

Partner	Activity/Actions
Natural England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administering funding to deliver restoration projects e.g. government funding (e.g. Defra £10mi), facilitating LIFE projects (e.g. Fens and Whixall, Cumbria BogLIFE)</li> <li>Some partnership delivery of projects (not as lead partner) which may access public or charitable grant funding</li> <li></li> </ul>
Northern Irish Government and Environment Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most restoration action is currently being undertaken by NGO groups e.g. Ulster Wildlife Trust, RSPB etc.</li> <li>Intereg projects (short term- will lose access upon EU Exit)</li> <li>Creating and updating inventory data using earth observation and ground truthing. Data used to identify sites of national priority.</li> <li>Restoration also being facilitated by private funding but this has been restricted to date. Mobilisation needed and often need public seed funding to come alongside/encourage private investment. Garron Plateau project part-funded by water utilities.</li> </ul>
Peat Producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restoration activity on sites with ceased permission. Activity solely within site boundary and often confined to planning requirements.</li> <li>Move to reduce peat content in bagged compost, combined with weather, is reducing demand for peat on sites and potentially leaves a greater peat resource on-site to restore.</li> </ul>
Beadamoss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Innovation and development of novel products to support restoration delivery through permitting and facilitating species enrichment and rapid re-vegetation with target species (e.g. Marsden Moor)</li> </ul>
Academic institutions and research projects e.g. University of Newcastle, York, Leeds, Manchester and projects such as iCASP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of models/tools to improve efficiency of delivery</li> <li>Valuation of benefits delivered through restoration helps to make the case for justifying continued/increased spend on restoration projects</li> <li>Translating existing science to make it applied and therefore support practice</li> </ul>
RSPB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restoration activity on owned land (nature reserves)</li> <li>Partnership projects, such as SCAMP e.g. Dovestone</li> <li>Supporting delivery through policy advice and advocacy</li> </ul>
Contractors/consultancies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moving on good practice and supporting delivery of restoration of difficult or expansive sites through innovative methods</li> </ul>
NFU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential for future engagement in habitat restoration but will be driven by changes in future policy and agri-environment options available to members</li> </ul>

## Reporting on restoration activity: What is the best way in which to report activity? What is being done internally within your individual organisations to record, collate and report on restoration activity?

Partner	Reporting
Peat Producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restoration activity may be captured and reported through annual company reports</li> </ul>
Northern Irish Government and Environment Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restricted at present to Habitats Directive reporting on designated sites only. May be difficulties in attributing whether site condition improvements reported are due to either restoration activity or changes in land management practice.</li> </ul>
Natural England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Largely through reporting and monitoring delivery of agri-environment scheme options. Do current peatland options allow for restoration interventions to be distinguished from other management payments? (This has been done for grassland schemes as options</li> </ul>

	<p>have been coded for creation/restoration/management based options)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environment Programme reporting will capture some restoration activity</li> <li>• Restoration activity undertaken on own estate e.g. Humberhead. NE will centrally hold data on these sites.</li> <li>• SSSI monitoring will pick up on changes in habitat condition but, again, changes in condition may be difficult to attribute to restoration vs management alone.</li> <li>• Where delivery is through multiple partners and NE is not the lead, would struggle to pull together data on restoration.</li> </ul>
Welsh Government and NRW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'ERAMP' is used to capture spatial data from individual projects so should be straightforward to create summary reports.</li> </ul>
RSPB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual reporting is carried out for nature reserves</li> <li>• Cyclical reporting for most partner projects e.g. SCAMP</li> </ul>
Government (Agri-environment schemes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No reporting specifically for peatland but can be requested:</li> <li>• Old data a nightmare to interrogate. New coding on recent schemes should make it easier to report for peatland options.</li> </ul>
JNCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-ordinating biodiversity and CSM target recording on a 6 yearly cycle but not capturing restoration activity as such.</li> <li>• However, restoration will eventually drive ecosystem service provision improvements and, ultimately, affect site condition so <i>could</i> incorporate plans to monitor restoration delivery to inform future targets for conservation?</li> </ul>

#### General notes:

- **Who is recording and reporting restoration failures, loss of habitat or damage to peatland habitat i.e. activity which goes against the UK Peatland Strategy targets and Goals?** This will include recording development losses, damage caused by unsustainable practices and land management which results in a need for restoration intervention.
- **How do we capture multiple interventions on the same site e.g. stabilise and then restore?**
- **Capital works carried out using public funds- data should be made publicly available and this should be made a funding requirement of any new schemes.**
- For implementation, need to ensure four country adoption of restoration targets (firm, numeric values) through country-level plans
- The amount of peatland *needing* restoration (split out under Goals 'Conserve', 'Restore', 'Adapt') needs clarifying.
- Need to avoid perverse land management incentives or restoration activity that may enhance bog but damage adjacent fen e.g. fen flushes within blanket bog or lag fen remnants.
- **How are we wanting to see restoration recording being standardised? And how are we defining areas under restoration management?** Differences in ways of recording different types of restoration of degraded sites e.g. area of forestry plantation felled and treated, area of intensive grassland re-wetted, length of grips/haggs reprofiled or blocked. Do we want to see restoration/site area reported as a standard and allow for some tolerance of zone of ecological impact/actual effect of restoration interventions (still likely to be small error when amalgamated at a country/UK level?)
- Still a job to be done in justifying the **need** for peatland restoration, especially to decision makers and funders.
- Delivery is still currently fragmented across the UK. Need to deliver across all countries with adequate resourcing allocated to deliver restoration where strategic targets and action plans exist.
- Some desire to make better use of the [IUCN UK PP Peatland Project Map](#) for some basic reporting of restoration activity.
- For reporting, the framing of targets at the different levels (regional/country/UK/International) makes reporting difficult. Different data and reporting frameworks may be needed for each level?