

UK PEATLAND STRATEGY LAUNCH

Workshop Goal: Sustainable Management

Applying land uses that are compatible with healthy peatlands.

Conserving and rehabilitating peatlands, so that they function fully does not mean that these areas become off-limits to economic activity. Various options for site-adapted land use on wet and rewetted peatlands have been developed and tested including farming, sporting and other recreation.

This includes minimal intervention where no action is required to maintain peatland habitat.

CONTEXT

This goal focuses on establishing and applying land uses that are compatible with healthy peatlands and/or peatland restoration activities. Several land uses are recognised as being compatible with re-wetted peatlands e.g. farming and grouse shooting, however some sites may require no intervention to achieve sustainable management. Where necessary, regulation or other means might be required to ensure unsustainable or damaging practices are prevented. It is important to recognise that sustainable management will equate to different things in different landscapes – working with local communities and land managers to help recognise these differences will be important. Funding to support sustainable management will also be essential.

NOTES FROM WORKSHOP

Who should we engage with to co-ordinate delivery of this goal?

- Farmers and representative groups:
 - NFU, UFU, NFU Cymru and NFU Scotland
 - National Sheep Association
 - Tenant Farmers Association
 - Crofters Association
 - Beef farmers (no collective)
- Landowners, shoot owners, managers and representative groups:
 - Moorlands Association
 - Heather Trust
 - CLA
 - Scottish Land & Estates
 - Game & Conservation Trust
 - British Deer Association
- Other landowners:
 - National Trust

- National Park Authorities
 - Country Parks
 - Natural England/Scottish Natural Heritage/Natural Resources Wales
 - NGOs including The Wildlife Trusts, RSPB
 - Forestry Commission and Forest Service
- Water companies
- Utility and renewable energy companies
- Funders e.g. Heritage Lottery Fund (win-win – lottery tickets fund sound environment)
- Treasury and policy makers
- Recreational users – awareness of wild fire and access considerations
- Emergency services – wild fire
- 'Peat' companies – to include horticulture e.g. Bord Na Mona and fuel
 - Compost manufacturers (including peat-free e.g. Dalesfoot)
- Horticultural suppliers e.g. B&Q and customers
- Local community groups to include those on Scottish Islands, Wales and Northern Ireland
 - Domestic fuel users – is this sustainable use? Many areas now using machinery
- Whisky industry
- Insurance industry
- End users of public benefits derived i.e. all of us (public engagement)
- Sphagnum planters and harvesters
- Paludiculture trials and companies
- Soil Association
- Agricultural contractors and specialists (may require new skills and training if management techniques to change – same true of gamekeepers and land managers)
 - Ties into local community – often best contractors and managers – not put off by peatland, know what they are dealing with could new generations provide a fresh outlook/new employment opportunities – also increases buy in
 - Wales LIFE contractors
- Academic community, education establishments and colleges – provider of training
- Media.

What is already being done or has been planned that will assist in the delivery of this goal?

- Paludiculture trials
 - This can include grazing by water buffalo
 - Currently small-scale (could it be upscaled?) with a focus on arable (or this is the perception!)
 - Sphagnum farming trial – also small scale e.g. Micropropagation Ltd working with MMU and UEL
- Natural England have carried out work on carrying capacity of sheep – how many sheep can a peatland support? What is the economic return of this and how much public money is needed to prop it up
 - National trial involving 4,000 farmers across all habitats e.g. Nidderdale AONB
 - Regulated livestock grazing on healthy peatland is compatible (although not during restoration activities)
- Moors for the Future Partnership and National Trust trail – 4,000 acres fenced off from sheep

- Research required into 'grouse spectrum' – must be a tipping point between peatland with no grouse to peatland that delivers XX bags of grouse, which delivers satisfactory number of healthy grouse and sustains habitat
- DECC wetland cutting project looking into end uses
- Learn from programmes abroad (in some case innovation maybe faster as reaching crisis point with sea level rises and potential land loss):
 - Germany research into production of biofuels, typha and canary grass – need to ensure sustainability and not shift problem onto another sector e.g. what are the related greenhouse gas emissions of these alternative products and new markets? Is it any better?
 - China – opportunities for rice farming and developing paddies
 - SE Asia – could new agricultural methodology be applicable here?
 - Netherlands
- Natural England is developing whole farm management plans
 - Trial in Wensleydale (and other areas?) looking at payment-by-result
- Estates currently signing up to voluntary 'no burn' through Natural England – could this be a caveat to restoration as in Scotland
 - Not known which estates these are, who they are owned by and whether it is owner or manager who has signed up e.g. water companies, grazier
- Peatland Code – offers opportunities to support carbon farming – but will this always be in the minority? Could help Government meet targets.

How best can we monitor and report against the outcomes as set by this goal?

- Peat depth information still very patchy – almost no data on changes in depth
 - Improve and use this to monitor improvement under different management
 - Requires clear categorisation to allow for changes in condition to be noted and this needs to be consistent across the UK
- Use of technology to monitor large-scale areas e.g. drones
 - Satellite monitoring can pick-up certain management techniques e.g. burn / no burn
- Agri-environment subsidies could clearly measure changes from agriculture to paludiculture under its requirements
- Develop categories with 0-100 scale e.g. economic sustainability, environmental sustainability etc (need clear metrics and baseline data)
- Determine a measure of resilience
- Need to agree trade-offs between different 'types' of sustainability and create a consistent arena to measure against
- Any monitoring would very much depend on the management required for that site.

Further thoughts and suggestions:

- Discussion around terminology: sustainable vs. responsible – different meanings to different people, no perfect solution – be clear with definitions
 - Ecological vs. public vs. economic sustainability – which are we aiming for? All three?
- What is a healthy peatland and what does it look like? Users need to know before they start trying to make changes

- At what point is intervention required or should there be any? Straightforward for bogs but maybe not fens
- Re-education might be required – peatlands can provide a ‘niche’ summer grazing resource in some places – not a barren land as maybe perceived
- Can all farming on peatlands be termed as paludiculture? Needs clarification
 - Could it include forest on peatland in anyway? Birch crops?
- Policy will drive change, but there may be accidental consequences too
- Role around what the appropriate drivers vs. regulations are – where can balance be struck?
- Debate shouldn't just be between heath vs. bog for land available for grouse management, but also grass – could more grass be converted to heath?
- Require farming innovators to set an example and showcase different methods
 - Factsheet on where grazing works and case studies would be helpful
- More research required on tipping points: sustainable vs. economic
 - Can we pursue sustainable intensification? Many different factors e.g. levels of restoration, biodiversity, water management
- Need better links between university research programmes to drive agenda forward and avoid overlap
- Need to create new markets e.g. meat products from a conservation site such as Welsh Black (specialist project – demand higher prices and drive a bigger wedge of the market through marketing); needs to include pellets for construction, insulation (fire-proof) etc
 - Use of a broker could help build a competitive market that drives creativity
- Abandonment of fen management could be dangerous – need clear definition of sustainable management here is essential
- Alternative management is very space-dependent – site approach required; in terms of innovation however, working as a collective at catchment-scale will drive faster progress
- New policy will be required if voluntary approach isn't successful in relation to sustainable management requirements.

SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS:

Clear definitions in terms of what is meant by sustainable management and any scheme to monitor progress against are essential, so that everyone is working to the same agenda. A collaborative approach to research of new and alternative management is required, both nationally and internationally, learning from other peatland nations driving innovation. Where alternative land use is to be pursued training requirements should be considered, particularly if a relatively new field.

1. Initiate conversations with identified audiences to explore potential sustainable land uses and any barriers to implementing these
2. Bring sustainable management goal into Government policy, building on plans such as the 25 Year Environment Plan, to ensure targeted funding for ongoing research and support for land managers implementing sustainable land uses
3. Working with statutory agencies and Government develop a monitoring scheme with clear expectations and definitions to support any payment system
4. Develop advice and factsheets on sustainable land uses showcasing innovators where appropriate.