



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

ENGLAND PEATLAND STRATEGY UPDATE

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Forestry Commission
England



Environment
Agency

Overview – England's Peatlands



Only 13% of England's peatlands are in a near natural state.

Lowland raised bogs are an increasingly rare habitat with no undamaged habitats existing in England. Of an estimated 35,721 ha, only **9,690 ha** remains in a semi-natural state, with the majority of that (8,270 ha) designated SSSI.



There is a greater area of remaining **blanket bog** habitat with 244,329 ha still retaining blanket bog vegetation cover, with 187,239.68 ha within SSSI boundaries. Not all of that will be currently peat forming.



Fenland Peat habitats once extended to 300,000 ha. However, only 22,998 ha remain in a semi-natural state. It is estimated that the East Anglian Fens could lose all of their peat topsoil in 30-60 years under current land management practices and a changing climate. This represents a loss of some of our most productive cropland.

Lowland peatland whilst a small proportion of the agricultural land in England is some of the most fertile soils 20% of lowland peatland in England is grade 1 agricultural land and further 19% is grade 2 (only 21% of farmland in England is within these two grades hence the importance placed on it).

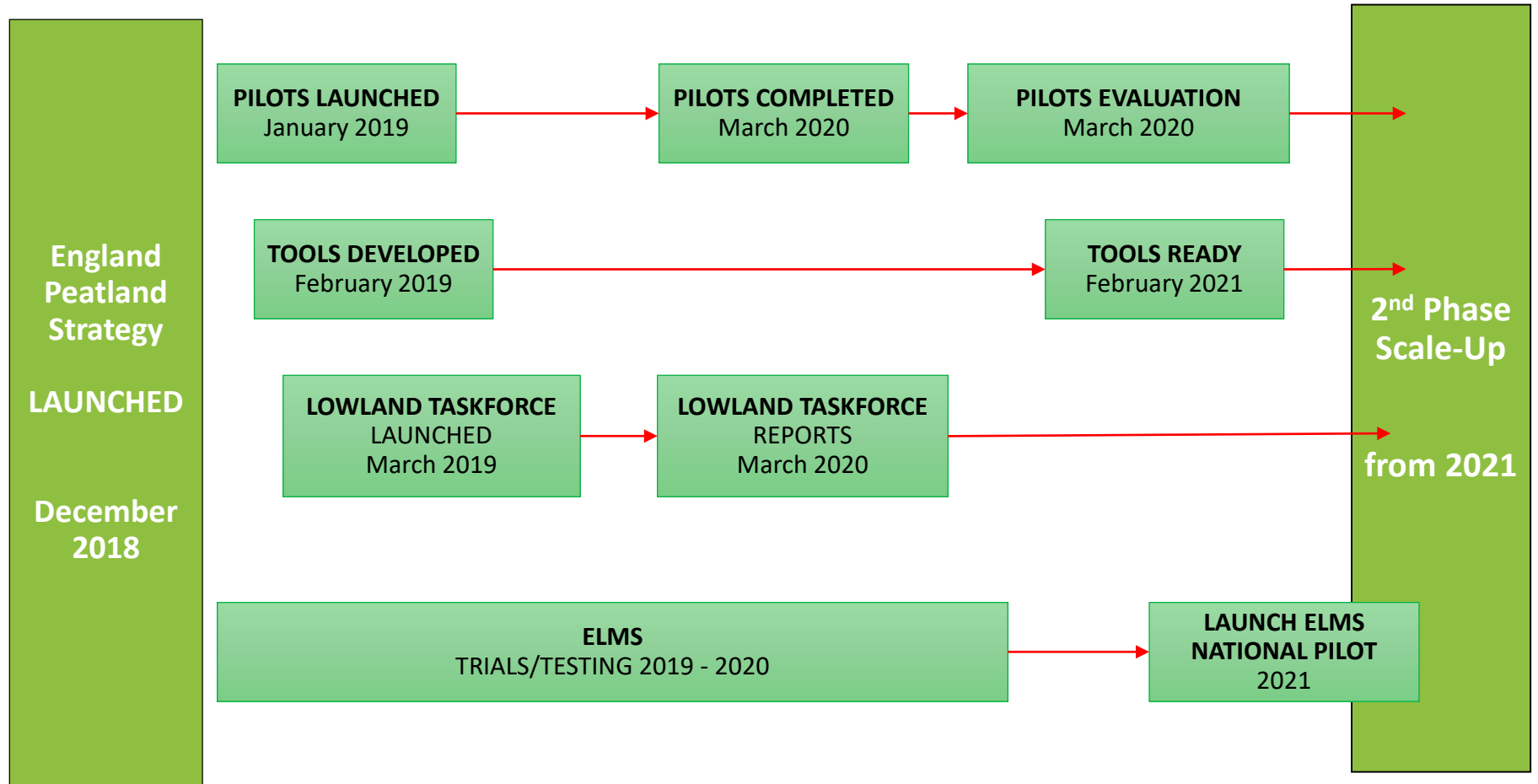
Developing the England Peatland Strategy

- **25 year ambition** is for England's peatlands to be functioning healthily for the needs of wildlife and people
- We recognise that peatland serves multiple objectives and this can create tensions [e.g. with forestry], therefore the Strategy aims to surface and resolve these tensions through applying a **systematic approach**, which we will pilot in five areas from 2019
- We will also develop a number of **tools to assist local decision making** which will include:
 - Baseline map,
 - New classification scheme,
 - New trajectories,
 - Register of peat restoration projects,
 - Innovative research

Developing the England Peatland Strategy

- Particular focus in England on lowland peat given that it is responsible for the majority of our GHG emissions from peatland.
- Establishing a **Lowland Agricultural Peat Taskforce**
- We do not want national strategy to function as a top-down strategy – rather we will rely on **locally based partnerships** reporting into local governance and national governance aligned with biodiversity and forestry strategies to ensure trade-offs are captured
- We don't yet have all the answers –
 - The impact of **EU Exit** on our ambitions is not yet known
 - New **Environmental Land Management System** is still being developed, requires to be trialled and tested between now and 2021

Developing the England Peatland Strategy: Timeline

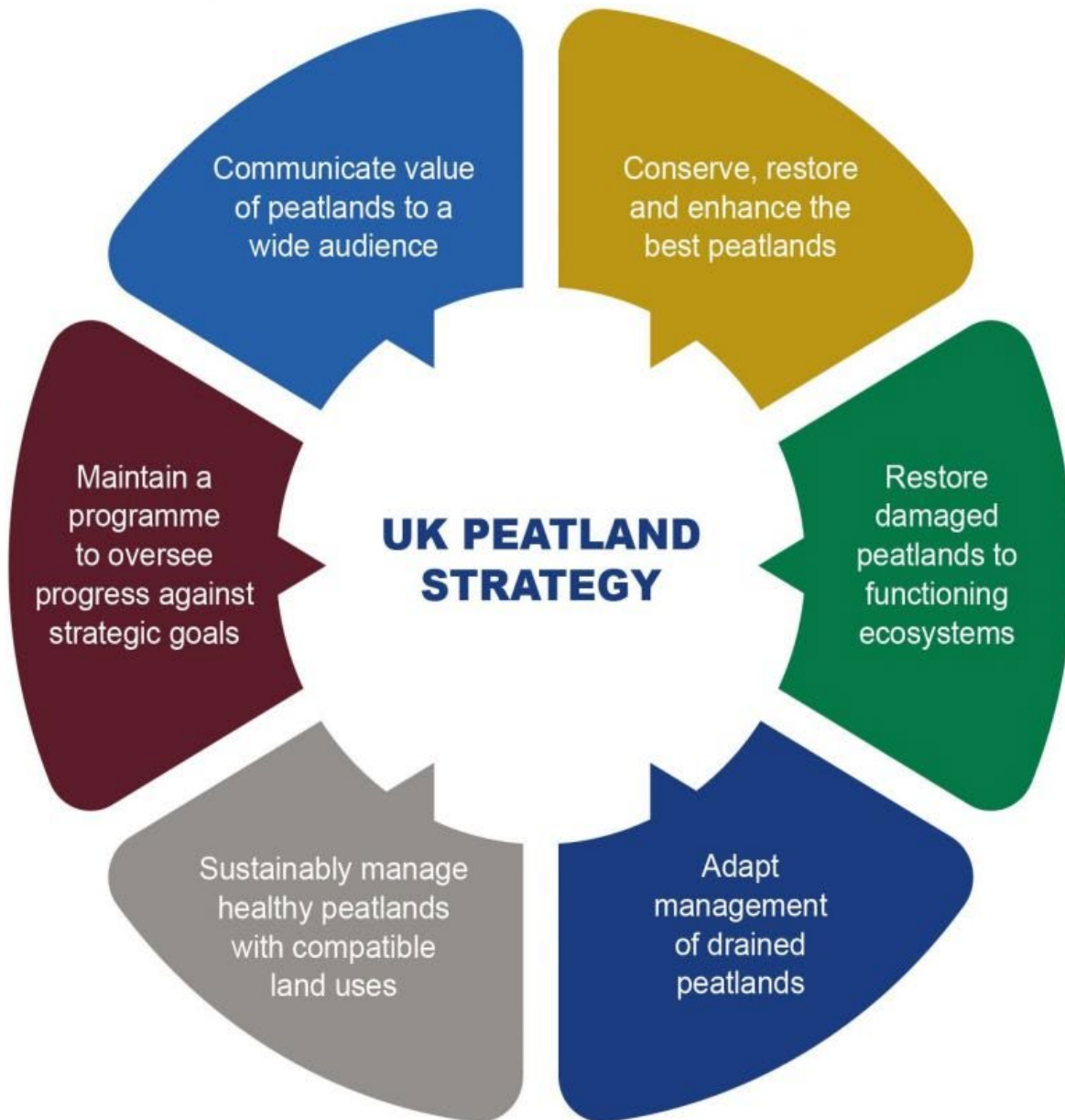


£10m Grant Scheme for restoration

Announced in July 2017 by Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey

“Peatlands are a vital part of the natural ecosystem that provide key habitats for wildlife, supply us with clean water and reduce carbon emissions. This scheme will help fulfil our ambition to be the first generation to leave the natural environment in a better state while returning thousands of hectares of peatland to their natural state.”

- Funding schemes that restore upland and lowland peatlands, create habitats for vulnerable wildlife, reduce flood risk and increase carbon capture.
- The scheme is for **capital works** and is open to everyone outside central government and their agencies.
- Part of Defra’s £100 million of capital funding for direct investment in projects that support the natural environment.
- Closing date for applications was November 2017
- Funding **available for three years from April 2018**
- Fund is in addition to the £4 million Defra has already allocated to existing Natural England peatland restoration schemes across the country which have raised water levels for mosses to thrive and seen rare species replanted.



England Peatland Strategy aims to meet these goals by:

Ensuring the best peatlands are conserved, restored or enhanced.

Funding restoration of damaged peatlands and testing new approaches in Environmental Land Management

Engaging with land managers IDBs etc to adapt and change land uses.

Piloting a systematic approach.

Working to a timeline that will deliver against short and long-term goals

Recognising the importance of connection with visitors and local communities.

Conference focus:

What constitutes public benefit?

“...a vital part of the natural ecosystem that provide key habitats for wildlife, supply us with clean water and reduce carbon emissions...”

Access to nature, social and community context and environmental archive

How do we account for public benefits and reward those who provide them?

Environmental Land Management System from 2021

How does the provision of public benefits impact land management decisions?

Pilots

Local Natural Capital Plans

Local Partnerships