

PEATLAND CODE TECHNICAL ADVISORY BOARD – MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 10th September 2025

Time: 11am-1pm

Venue: Online Meeting – Teams Meeting Invite

Attendees: Renée Kerkvliet-Hermans (chair), Garance Wood- Moulin, Ian Dickie, Rebekka Artz, Andrew Moxey, Christopher Evans, Hans Joosten, Ian McKee, Andy Grundy, Steve Clarke, Euan Casey, Pat Snowdon, Colin Douglas, Katherine Birdsall, Tamarind Falk, Iain Diack, Richard Lindsay, Harriet Santon, Hans Joosten, Rebecca Fairman, Eimear Reeve, Ben Dipper.

Apologies: Emma Hinchcliffe, Alex Hart, Sophie Chapman, Patrick Jean-Martel, Judith Stuart, Vicky West, Peter Jones, Rhoswen Leonard, Gillian Mannix, Donald Nayer, Renny McKeown, James Dalton, Peter Phillips, Stephen Clarkson, Judith Bennett, Carolyn Norfolk, Sarah Erbanova, Rob Stoneman, John Couwenberg.

Agenda

1. Minutes and actions from last TAB
2. General updates
3. Wildfires before and during a PC project
4. Missed areas during restoration
5. Verification methodology
6. AOB

1. Minutes and actions from last TAB

- Stats on PIU issuances now visible on the new registry (completed).
- Work still needed on annual verification for smaller projects (delayed by the need for funding needed by organisation carrying out the work, PC cannot fund this)
- Emissions mapping comparison between Peatland Code and inventory still pending.
- Buffer area feedback on flat bare peat received from only 3 respondents; will be recirculated. (On internal discussion determined that the guidance on this is clear and no need for change)

2. General update

The PC team gave updates on the rate of registrations and projects moving through the process, along with some of the issues surrounding the new systems and help they have been providing to the VVB's to speed up process. Additionally, they provided updates to the progress of the CivTech challenge progressing to the next stage. The biodiversity crediting, for the latter a project manager has been assigned to work with the PCC and WCC on this until March 2026. The UKAS process is progressing for two out of the three into their pilots. Both applications for ICROA and ICVCM are progressing well ICROA hopefully will be completed by December 2025 and ICVCM by April 2026.

Project Registrations & Validations

- 365 projects registered (plus 4 pending registration)
- 88 project plan validated
- 38 restoration validated
- 0 Verifications due in September
- 224,699 PIUs sold so far in 2024/2025
- 33 projects registered so far for 2025
- £18,911.75 in levy cost income so far for the Peatland Code for 2024/2025

3. Wildfires before and during a PC project

Q: We have one project who had done the baseline but now there has been a fire, can they move forward?

Q: Other projects have gone through the code and they have had a fire, what should be done?

Tab member said that their organisation had been looking into this already using a pre-existing standard BS701, but that some of the wording needed looking at, summarising that the PD's/landowners need to anticipate and mitigate future fires.

- Discussion on what part the private sector could have in this, through insurance, with some companies already looking into this, two that TAB members are aware of, one insuring the credits while the other is insuring the project itself.

Q: What evidence would need to be provided as proof of the cause of the fire and how long would it take to get this evidence?

A: This burden of proof would fall to the landowners and this would take time, particularly if there was an investigation, this could cause issues with timelines for the project. Without the evidence though would be difficult to ensure was not deliberate.

- ICVCM looking into the risk of fire and how much of this risk is placed on the landowner.
- In addition, there is not yet the science to prove that rewetting prevents fires, it is a function of the moisture and water level. Research is ongoing, instead, the evidence suggests that water level affects fire severity not likelihood.

Q: Are PC sites allowed to use managed burns to control fire risk under the new laws?

A: In theory yes, PC sites would be allowed to burn for fire risk, however, it is unlikely that they would choose this method as it would reduce their chance for the area to improve and possibly even fail restoration meaning they will be unable to claim credits. They would also have to persuade the assessors that this is the best and only way to manage the fire risk in the first place.

- Severity of the fire is a factor in recovery.
 - Not enough data available yet to determine this.

TAB member highlighted that currently with the licensing in Scotland for burns as the government will inform if it is PA site but not if it's a PC site.

- Needs to be more messaging out there to inform landowners about the risks to their projects and/or their funding if they apply for a license and choose to burn.
- Don't yet have the emissions data yet to inform what affects burn will have on credits.
- Many factors would have to be evidenced such as climatic temperature, wind speed, relative humidity and flammability of the vegetation communities present.

- Need to ensure that any policy we put in place does not incentivise burning, but as said above unlikely.

ACTION: TAB member to provide a write up of the ICVCM webinar to the PC Team for dissemination, looking at the risk placed on landowner.

ACTION: TAB members and PC team determine how would the severity of the fire be defined/distinguished and how would it be included in the code. Could include a conversation with Scottish Fire Danger Rating system and determine what they use as a definition and classification.

4. Missed areas during restoration

Issues around inadvertent missing of restoration of features/areas has been raised by assessors in some recent projects at post-restoration. Two options to move forward are:

- the landowner chooses not to make amendments and the area/feature is excluded from the PC code and all documentation is altered to reflect the change.
- The landowner chooses to still include it, then the option of a forward-facing corrective action could be authorised by the VVB's, this would not affect the start date.
 - The project could choose to delay the start date and fix the missed areas.
 - The project could choose to keep the start date but remove that area as a separate clustered project, receiving its own validation (available under version 2.1).

Q: Does the TAB approve of the percentage area approach as the threshold to determine whether a project can proceed or will need to take one of the corrective actions?

A: (No conclusion)

- What is the condition category that has been missed, as which area it is could affect how impactful the omission is.
- Instead, could a minimum number of units be the threshold.
- If there is a spread of missed areas could make it difficult to calculate.
- TAB member raised that PA alignment could be an issue as PA as funding projects in a "piecemeal" fashion would be impossible to manage.
- Have to ensure that the threshold does not create an incentive to delay work.

ACTION: (all TAB members and PC team) How will we define the units-based threshold for the project to proceed? Or should the projects have to move start date to when corrective action is completed?

5. Verification methodology

Alongside the VVB's, the guidance for the PD's at pre-verification site survey in the field protocol, has been updated, following a report from one the PD's.

- Current guidance suggests that the assessor only looks at the points on the 100m x 100m grid whereas in reality a 5m radius around this is assessed for percentage condition category.
 - How easy is it to determine category changes or successes of features, some are easier to visually check than others?
 - Difficult to assess also if these were not included in the pre-restoration phase so PC team is also looking to add this as a requirement at pre restoration.
- Suggestion was made that doing aerial shots and data would give better idea, but the PC team is not looking at making it a requirement at this time.

Q: Should we include aerial photography as an option for verifying restoration or a requirement?

A: TAB member raised a concern as to whether you could see the success of features such as dams, through aerals.

- VVB member stated that currently only using the fixed-point photography only as examples to determine whether PD's have assessed the condition categories successfully.
 - Some high-resolution imagery could show category change.
- TAB member suggested that aerals would reduce the inaccuracies present in fixed point photography, as there is a chance that the pictures aren't being taken in the same place each time in the field.
 - Only sampling a small number of features increases the chances of coming across failed ones as opposed to sampling a larger number of features.
- The cost to smaller projects could be prohibitive. Is there be an option of having an approved supplier/operator so that projects could bundle together to bring down the cost of the aerial survey, as carried out by another project.
 - Fisheye 360° images could be the solution for smaller projects as they are a lot cheaper.
- Fully (free) remote imagery does not yet have the resolution to make assessments.
 - Additionally, the international community has not yet decided on a single approved methodology.
- Some studies in Europe are using remote sensing to assess normalise different water index to track changes in the water levels, could have scope in the future to track water level changes and soil moisture.
 - Currently not sensitive enough to use but studies are now modelling it.

TAB member discussed the subjectivity of the judgements being made and disparities between PD's and assessors. Suggested that there needs to be a discussion on having a percentage threshold between these differences.

TAB AGREES: Aerials and 360 camara's have potential to be important component for reporting in the Peatland code but should be an option and not mandatory.

ACTION: (PC team) To have guidance for the inclusion of aerials for the next TAB.

ACTION: TAB member (AM) to reach out the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management for biodiversity code of practice related questions and copy in PC Team.

6. Any Other Business

- Hoping to launch updates to the condition matrix at the IUCN Peatland Programmes conference at the end of September.

Date of next Meeting:

Tuesday 18th November 2025 11am-1pm