

## PEATLAND CODE TECHNICAL ADVISORY BOARD – MINUTES

**Date:** Tuesday 24<sup>h</sup> February 2026

**Time:** 11am-1pm

**Venue:** Online Meeting – Teams Meeting Invite

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**Attendees:** Renée Kerkvliet-Hermans (chair), Garance Wood- Moulin, Emma Hinchcliffe, Ian Dickie, Rebekka Artz, Hans Joosten, Andy Grundy, Colin Douglas, Tamarind Falk, Iain Diack, Richard Lindsay, Harriet Santon, Christopher Evans, Ian McKee, Andrew Moxey, Pat Snowdon, Patrick Jean-Martel, Sarah Erbanova, Nadia Murphy, Rochelle Kennedy, Iain Detrey

**Apologies:** Stephen Clarkson, Steve Clarke, Ben Dipper, Alex Hart, Vicky West, Peter Jones, Donald Nayar, Renny McKeown, Judith Stuart, Eimear Reeve, Rebecca Fairman, Sophie Chapman, Judith Stuart, Rhoswen Leonard, Gillian Mannix, John Couwenberg, James Dalton.

### Agenda

1. Minutes and actions from last TAB
2. General updates
3. Biodiversity-
4. Verification methodology
5. Options around Restoration Validation in line with ISO standards
6. Redoing site survey after baseline has expired
7. AOB –
  - Chris Evans Defra work on transitional carbon sequestration.

### 1. Minutes and actions from last TAB

#### Ongoing Actions from November 2025 meeting:

**ACTION: TAB member**

Follow up with the CF team about the fire emissions inventory.

**ACTION: PC Team:**

How both PC and the inventory are mapping the emissions and determine whether the net calculations are coming to the same conclusion. Both taking different approaches to come to as close to the true value as possible.

**ACTION: PC Team:**

Follow up with (AM) re contact with Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management for the biodiversity code of practice.

AM did follow up on and contacted Sally Hayns and Mark Nason at CIEEM. They essentially pointed back to the Peatland Code for guidance on field surveys, although Penny Anderson is apparently drafting something for them. No need to discuss further just now.

**ACTION: TAB member**

Speak with NatureScot colleagues on their work with nature and hydrological datasets.

**ACTION: TAB member**

Set up a meeting with the delivery team at NatureScot and Peatland Code

**ACTION: All TAB members**

need to think more about how shallower cut peatlands can be included in the PC.

**Ongoing Actions from September:**

**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 member** to reach out the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management for biodiversity code of practice related questions and copy in PC Team.

TAB raised no concerns, considered these all complete.

## 2. General update

Sent ahead of time for TAB to consider

### Project Registrations & Validations

- 406 projects registered
- 109 project plan validated (18 pending)
- 46 restoration validated (11 pending)
- 1 Verifications due ASAP
- 293960 PIUs sold so in 2024/2025
- 6 projects registered so far for 2026

### UKAS

Two out of three Validation and Verification bodies are progressing with their pilots and in final stages. We currently have findings raised with the Peatland Code that we need to address before the accreditation can progress, more details can be found on agenda item 5 in the TAB papers. We have also raised our concerns with DEFRA due to the lengthy delays we have been facing and the long periods of inaction/unresponsiveness from UKAS.

### ICVCM

Planning to apply in Spring 2026 once the ICVCM application portal reopens, Garance in the team is working to get the dissolution plan in place which was missing on the last application.

### BSI

The Peatland Code was involved in the early adopter pilot for the British Standards Institute (BSI) overarching principles 701 standard. The aim of the pilot was to determine how many of the clauses the Peatland Code aligned with and to feedback on how the assessment process would work. This was a positive process and found the Peatland Code had partial conformity and praised the robust processes in place. More information can be found [British Standards Institute - BSI Flex | IUCN UK Peatland Programme](#).

## Other updates:

### **CivTech**

As you are aware we are part of the [CivTech challenge 10.6](#) together with the Woodland Carbon Code in which we are looking for tech solutions on bringing more efficiency to our processes. Unusually we were able to move three companies into the PCA phase, during which they can work out their solutions fully over around 12 months.

### **Rethink Carbon**

Are working on Rethink Codes, which is a platform that will streamline the process of filling in our documents, document checks by the validator/verifier and us - all the steps that happen before things are uploaded to the registry. They are planning on making smart use of AI to reduce human input which should help with capacity in the sector.

### **Sylvera**

Are working on a measuring approach for above ground biomass in forestry and peat depth measurements using radar under a helicopter. The expectation is that on the forestry side this will result in a method that the WCC can adapt and on the peatland side it is more experimental and will further our understanding of the possibility of using this technology.

### **Cwiri**

Cwiri is a spin off from UKCEH and they are working on a way of deploying low-cost water table sensors to peatland sites to improve our understanding of hydrology of restoration projects as well as using the data to ground truth remote sensing methodologies. For woodlands they are looking at the soil carbon loss in agro-mineral soils and again using low-cost sensors for this.

### **Carbon Price Index**

We are working with the Woodland Carbon Code to develop another Carbon Price Index for 2025. The data is collected by Ecosystem Marketplace, an independent organisation that aggregates and anonymises submissions, ensuring individual transactions remain confidential.

## 3. Biodiversity

- Currently biodiversity is implicitly bundled in with the carbon credits, but we have been looking into an explicit bundle, checking against other biodiversity crediting system.
  - Determined that Wallacea was the one that works best for PC model and integrity.
- Wallacea method uses taxonomic groups plus structural metric (for PC that would something like the peak condition score), and for peatlands this would include plants, invertebrates and birds.
  - These are then weighted against their conservation value and use of a reference site.
- Some limitation includes the lack of pristine sites and knowledge gap on the conservation status of many insects groups
  - Unhealthy peatlands might have a high composition of species not associated with a healthy peatland so there may be a drop in biodiversity during restoration as they move towards healthy species populations.
- Within the Wallacea method there are options for if reference sites are unavailable
- Costs could escalate if you are having to assess the reference site and the restoration site.
- Looked into different methods of determining the percentage biodiversity uplift for projects, how do we weight different species importance in a peatland.

- The financial modelling has been contracted out the results of which are due at end of February.
  - This includes how the biodiversity uplift might impact the cost of carbon credits/ how the surveying costs are going to play into it.
  - Currently aiming to deliver a spreadsheet-based tool, that can be altered to explore how different factors may affect the cost.

**ACTION:** PC team is aiming to put together an application for the next round of FIRNS funding, would the rest of TAB feed into suggestions for additional work?

### Reference sites

**Q:** Is there additional work going to be looking into further subdivision within fens and bogs

**A:** Yes, in the future there will be further break down, to look at regional and for example lowland bogs.

- **TAB Member:** This will require some sort of characteristic and species categorisation for each of the breakdowns in order to be clearly defined.

**Q:** Based on the map there is a western and northern bias on the data for pristine sites so far.

**Q:** How close would the reference site would have to be classed as a reference site in terms of climatic and regional changes?

**A:** There is a lot of degradation in the sites to the east and site so getting that detail could be difficult. Finding a pristine site close to the ones to be classed as a reference could be difficult. So would have to refer back to the alternative Wallacea methodology for those sites that don't have a suitable reference site. Possibility of using those sites in a more reasonable condition that may have been previously restored, but this is difficult to measure against the code.

**TAB Member** do we have an understanding on what buyers actually want? Biodiversity uplift and quality may be great in terms of science but not interesting to the buyer.

- Could be seen as a cost without reward.
- Would need to look at a bundled rather than stacked route.

**A:** no at this stage we don't have this answer, but we want to investigate that with the next funding stage.

- Cost of the possibly investigating what the buyers are actually interested in
- Incorporate the biodiversity increase into the premium.

**TAB Member :** Currently the buyers only appear to be looking for integrity, permanence and trust, and they would probably just be looking at the simplicity of the credits.

**TAB Member:** Have to be aware, however, that without the detail there is a risk to undermine reputation when you don't comply to rigorous standards.

**PC Member:** Some projects are reintroducing the rarer plant species rather than relying on natural regeneration, this is usually in fen and lowland bog situations.

**TAB Member:** there needs to be confidence that those species are correct ones for the space and are resilient to the changing climate.

- **PC Member:** could look into modelling how these ranges could change, based on climate, but this would be out of scope for the current project.

**TAB: AGREES** with **TAB member** that this is tricky in fens because of variety of fen types.

- In terms of reference sites hard to find good ones, but **TAB Member** is right in that we are looking for an increase in quality of the species that we have on a site, then that should be seen as positive, but there needs to be reasonable indicators of positive or negative species composition change.

**TAB Member** Would buyers know what they need and want? They would need reassurance that it would have reached a threshold (would they need a higher level of accuracy).

- How would this metric compare with that already assessed under metrics such as SSSI?
- Variety occurs across areas in terms of species composition, but a buyer wouldn't need to know that they would just need to be good or bad site.
- Carbon is specific and calculatable, and biodiversity is not calculatable in the same way

**PC member:** Using the Opp Wall method and going for a bundle of metrics to try to avoid that, Wallacea methodology is currently more comprehensive than current SSSI method and is planning an update soon.

**TAB Member:** Value of our judgements and risks that can be introduced through this process need to be considered, we could provide the leadership in this we could tell them what we think is the best species and lead the projects on that.

- Projects would be given a list of species needed to achieve credits.
- This could lead to more species being artificially introduced to give more biodiversity uplift becoming a possible issue.
- Natural restoration without artificial interference should be preferential and not introduction.

**TAB member:** have to focus on what the customer wants – are we planning to link specific biodiversity uplifts to specific market credits?

- Does the general market want a general increase in the biodiversity?
- Natural processes- fens is depending on management so there is always this element of anthropogenic interference, so it is difficult to reference a pristine site. So have to look at the increase rather than the comparison.

**TAB Member:** keep an idea on the risks to us from the market with the changes to the standards.

**TAB AGREES:** Product not quite ready to go forward yet more work needs to be done.

**ACTION:** one to ones with TAB to be arranged with RK to discuss in more detail next steps.

**ACTION:** PC team request some input from TAB on market risks.

#### 4. Verification methodology

- Version 2.0 we updated how we would do the survey; this was written with one of the verifiers and tested and used by 2 projects. Since then, there has been push back on its viability, so we have used a separate working group to go through the methodology. This group included PD's, VVB and scientists.
- We acknowledge the feedback that there needs to be further overhaul of the methodology but currently need to clarify methodology to get some pending projects over the line.
- The feedback we have received has been varied
  - One organisation doesn't like reliance on drones and costs associated with accessing and storing the data.

- Another wants more reliance on the drones, as then they wouldn't want to rely on the cost of extensive ground surveys.
- One suggested that the assessment look at trajectory rather than evidence, but this is problematic as this is a verification of what has been achieved rather than what could be.
- Another believes that satellite imagery be relied upon more, but this was discussed over the working group and dismissed due to inconsistencies with resolution and availability.

**TAB:** inconsistencies in the reporting currently on the metrics, but we need a standard that we are currently working on.

- Water is currently the metric we rely upon but vegetation is the most important factor, we are currently working on how this would be measurable.

**TAB Member:** ISO standards being difficult to comply with for the PC and other nature-based entities.

**TAB Member:** Do we have a route in to change this with ISO standards?

A: Difficult as ISO not written for environmental factors, we have had no capacity to get influence these to be more inclusive of environmental factors.

**ACTION:** TAB Member: to contact on the ISO standards, if PC Team and TAB have a specific concern with them he could go through the process to raise them.

**TAB Member:** Would like to highlight that we should manage expectations as any changes made to these ISO standards can move through long time scales, with them only meeting on every 5-10 years.

**PC member:** condition categories in their current format make it difficult to define transitions.

- Eg. With revegetated – description of change of category makes it difficult to put a non-conformance against, for example if any amount of bare peat is found within it. But modified allows for micro erosion.

**Q:** What is the background of the emissions factors for these factors and how much bare peat was allowed before non-conformance?

- do we have specific emissions factors for micro erosions?

**A:** No specific emissions factors for micro erosion but the emissions factor is linked to the amount of water.

**Q:** Modified does not have a percentage of bare peat it just has some micro erosion allowed?

**A:** If you can evidence that revegetated has occurred then that can be a better gauge of progression.

- Micro erosion isn't yet defined; we just don't have the evidence to support a lot of these transitions and get them through the inventory process.

**TAB Member:** currently inventory method uses the area of bare peat, but you can see local variation, some areas were classified under one category, but with higher resolution they are looking to include other categories within them, this could affect how they were classified and how they are linked to the emissions from those sites.

**ACTION:** TAB Member to contact colleague about the current inventory method in terms of calculating emissions related to areas of bare peat.

**PC Member:** With PC verification surveys the current deadline at the end of year 5, with surveys commencing one year before, but concerns were raised that the changes in year 5 could be missed.

**Q:** Should the survey start at year 5, so would meet verification at year 6 but that then includes the year 5 changes instead of starting at effectively year 4?

- Yes, this would delay the verified unit, how much would the year make?

**TAB AGREES** that 1 year could make all the difference.

**PC Member:** reminded that there are currently delays on RV, so maybe the delay would not make that much difference.

**PC Member:** drone imagery- look at the site where there are high areas of non-conformance, high resolution less on the ground site survey, lower resolution more onsite visits

- Satellites were deemed as not currently detailed enough yet to use.

**Q:** should we include UAV, helicopters, etc not just specify drone usage?

**A:** Having a resolution requirement rather than a method type, this could be a cheaper option for some projects, so the code would not proscribe the method, but the resolution needed.

**TAB AGREES** quality of the data rather than the methodology of capture should be the metric, so could include UAV's, helicopters and remote sensing if the desired resolution is met.

**PC Member:** Would we specify a timeframe around which the data needed to be collected, the suggestion is 6-month window for the imagery/survey around the deadline – 3 months before and then 3 months after deadline?

**Q:** should we keep the window around vintage or should it be specific time frame?

**TAB member:** Seasonality could be an issue as in the spring imagery everything seems to be green, but summer allows for more variations, and determination of species type.

**TAB Member:** Cannot lose site of the linkage to the original emissions factors, presence and absence of a feature isn't the gauge of effectiveness it has to be a functional feature. Whether it is present or not is not the factor this leads us onto non-conformance.

- Could tighten up the language around the definitions and when you assess for flow within the risk areas.

### Non conformances

- Actively eroding- currently the bare peat is defined as an area that needs an intervention.
- Drained hagg/gully- been no work done to the hagg/gully.
  - Should gullies that have been damned, but then have less than 50% of area have been filled with water and filled with sphagnum as the definition of success/failure?
  - Needs to be clearly define so that the VVB can check against a standard

**TAB Member:** where you have high flow you don't have vegetation and instead have bare peat.

**TAB Member:** Frequency of the dams on a feature could be the reference for success, especially in relation to gradient of the features situation.

**TAB Member:** Have to keep in mind that lowlands are different and might complicate this as the ditches are necessary to bring in water

**TAB Member:** water as an indicator of flow is additional factor, is not great for lowlands as a lot of the time this is standing water.

**Q:** would the 50% be okay as the threshold?

**TAB AGREES** would the 50% be okay as the threshold.

**Q:** Do all non-conformance and risk areas, as well as a proportion of areas on top need to be walked? Do we want the walking all points or would drone be sufficient? (some of the PD's suggest that this is too much)

**A:** Needs to be looked at in the testing period.

- Needs to be a balance between the amount needed to be checked against the drone, this amount needs to be defined

**TAB Member:** Keep in mind that the VVB's going to be sampling some of the points anyways.

**ACTION:** PC team requests feedback from the TAB on all other questions that there wasn't time for.

## 5. Options around Restoration Validation in line with ISO standards

This will be coming out in the next update of the PC, aiming for spring 2027. Coming from discussions around restoration validation and its place within the ISO standards. Issues arose around the peat depth check occurring at restoration validation, and UKAS determining that this is a verification action.

It was decided that this amendment can't be changed this through a clarification document as this would affect the projects already in the process, so we have got UKAS to agree to the current methodology is fine but that we would add this change to the next version update.

## 6. Redoing site survey after baseline has expired

A lot of projects have missed their deadlines, meaning that their baselines for peat depths and emissions categories are out of date.

**Q:** do they have to re-baseline the whole site or alternatively what proportion would you request for re baselining and what would be the threshold for success/failure be?

**ACTION:** ALL TAB MEMBERS please respond by emails to this question.

## 7. AOB

DEFRA – New project to determine the state within the degraded peatland sites and find a way of including them in the inventory.



**Peatland Programme**



**Date of next Meeting:**

**Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2026 11am-1pm**