



## **IUCN UK Peatland Programme Press Release**

Issued by the Scottish Wildlife Trust on behalf of the IUCN UK Peatland Programme

**Peatland Programme**

**28/8/15**

### **IUCN UK Peatland Programme welcomes Scotland's National Peatland Plan**

Scotland's first National Peatland Plan has been published today and highlights how important these vital habitats are for Scotland's future.

The plan recognises that peatlands provide multiple benefits to society including biodiversity, good water quality and carbon storage. It also recognises that Scotland is one of the richest countries in Europe for peatland with these exceptionally important ecosystems and landscapes making up a key part of our natural capital.

Sadly, at least 80% of Scotland's peatlands have been damaged and the new National Peatland Plan provides a framework to restore their natural functions, enhance wildlife and protect those in good condition, helping support rural skills and employment in the process.

The plan sets out a vision that by 2020 Scotland is valuing its peatlands: protected areas should be in good condition, society is embracing peat-free gardening and public funding is supporting peatland management - complimented by private funding initiatives such as the Peatland Code.

To make this ambitious plan a reality, a step-change is required if Scotland is to restore 600,000 ha of peatland that has been identified as being restorable peatland in Scotland. However, early action is needed to be both cost-effective and protect those sites that are in good condition.

Achieving the plan depends on support from land managers, environmentalists, policy-makers and the private sector. Policy and funding mechanisms that reflect the true value of peatlands will be central to the process.

Chair of the IUCN UK Peatland Programme, Jonathan Hughes, said: "Scotland's National Peatland Plan is a vital to tackling the globally important issue of peatland conservation. We urgently need to convert peatlands from a liability to an asset. Healthy peatlands can lock up carbon, support wildlife, regulate water flow and improve water quality – but only if we make an investment to restore them.

“We must all play our part but clear leadership from the Scottish Government with the right policies and funding in place is essential if people are to be empowered to look after Scotland’s peatlands and appreciate their true benefits to society.”

## **ENDS**

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## **Notes**

1. To read the National Peatland Plan visit: <http://www.snh.gov.uk/climate-change/taking-action/carbon-management/peatland-action/national-peatland-plan/>
2. The attached image is of peatland restoration work at the Scottish Wildlife Trust’s Carsegowan Moss reserve - ©Scottish Wildlife Trust
3. The IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) UK Peatland Programme exists to promote peatland restoration in the UK and advocates the multiple benefits of peatlands through partnerships, strong science, sound policy and effective practice. The work of the Peatland Programme is overseen by a coalition of environmental bodies including the Scottish Wildlife Trust, John Muir Trust, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, RSPB, North Pennines AONB, Moors for the Future and the University of East London. The Programme is funded by the Peter De Haan Charitable Trust. For more information visit [www.iucn-uk-peatlandprogramme.org](http://www.iucn-uk-peatlandprogramme.org)
4. Peatlands cover less than 3% of the land surface of the Earth yet they contain twice as much carbon as the world’s forests. Huge areas of bog have been drained and damaged in the past, and the carbon which was locked in the peat for thousands of years is now rapidly being released to the atmosphere. Damaged peatlands are responsible for at least 10% of the world’s carbon dioxide emissions. Restoring peatlands is an effective and cost efficient way of reversing the carbon loss from damaged bogs.
5. The UK has the 17<sup>th</sup> largest peatland area, out of 175 nations with peat deposits and is in the top 20 countries with the most damaged peatlands. Scotland holds 80% of the UKs deepest peat (blanket bog). See Wetlands International for more information [www.wetlands.org/peatco2](http://www.wetlands.org/peatco2).
6. The Commission of Inquiry on Peatlands brought together experts in science, policy and practice to carry out a thorough review of key peatland issues and a deliver clear scientific consensus about peatland restoration, particularly in relation to climate change, biodiversity and ecosystem services. For more information visit <http://www.iucn-uk-peatlandprogramme.org/commission>

7. Research to develop a pilot Peatland Code has been funded by Defra as part of its wider suite of research pilots to test the potential for “payment for ecosystem services” approaches to preserving and enhancing the natural environment. Defra and the Devolved Administrations are continuing to support the pilot phase of the Peatland Code.