New trees and peat guidance: helping to inform where to establish trees and where to restore peat in England

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Setting the Context

- Ambitious targets for forest expansion and peat restoration.
- Opportunity for Foresters and other land managers
- Help deliver targets for woodland creation, nature recovery and tackle climate change.
- Important these activities are delivered in an integrated and complimentary way.
- Guidance reviewed in June 2023

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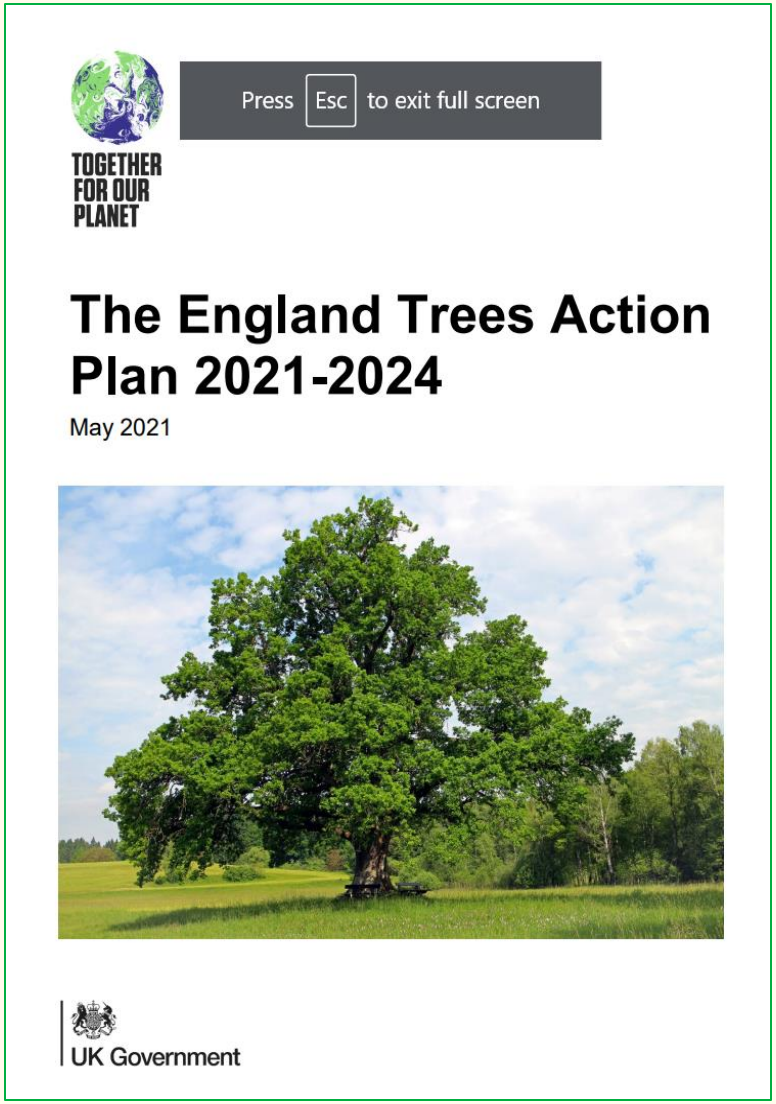

- **Develop new guidance for England** that will help determine when afforested peat should be restored to bog, and to minimise impacts on peaty soils from tree planting.
- **Develop metrics** that allow decision-makers to assess the realistic costs of forest to bog restoration.

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- **Develop new UKFS guidance for England** that will help determine when afforested peat should be restored to bog, and to minimise impacts on peaty soils from tree planting
- **Develop metrics** that allow decision-makers to assess the realistic costs of forest to bog restoration.
- **We will embed Local Nature Recovery Strategies**, a new system of spatial planning for nature, which will be introduced through the Environment Bill
- **We will improve land use decision-making** through the new peatland map data, once it is complete in 2024.

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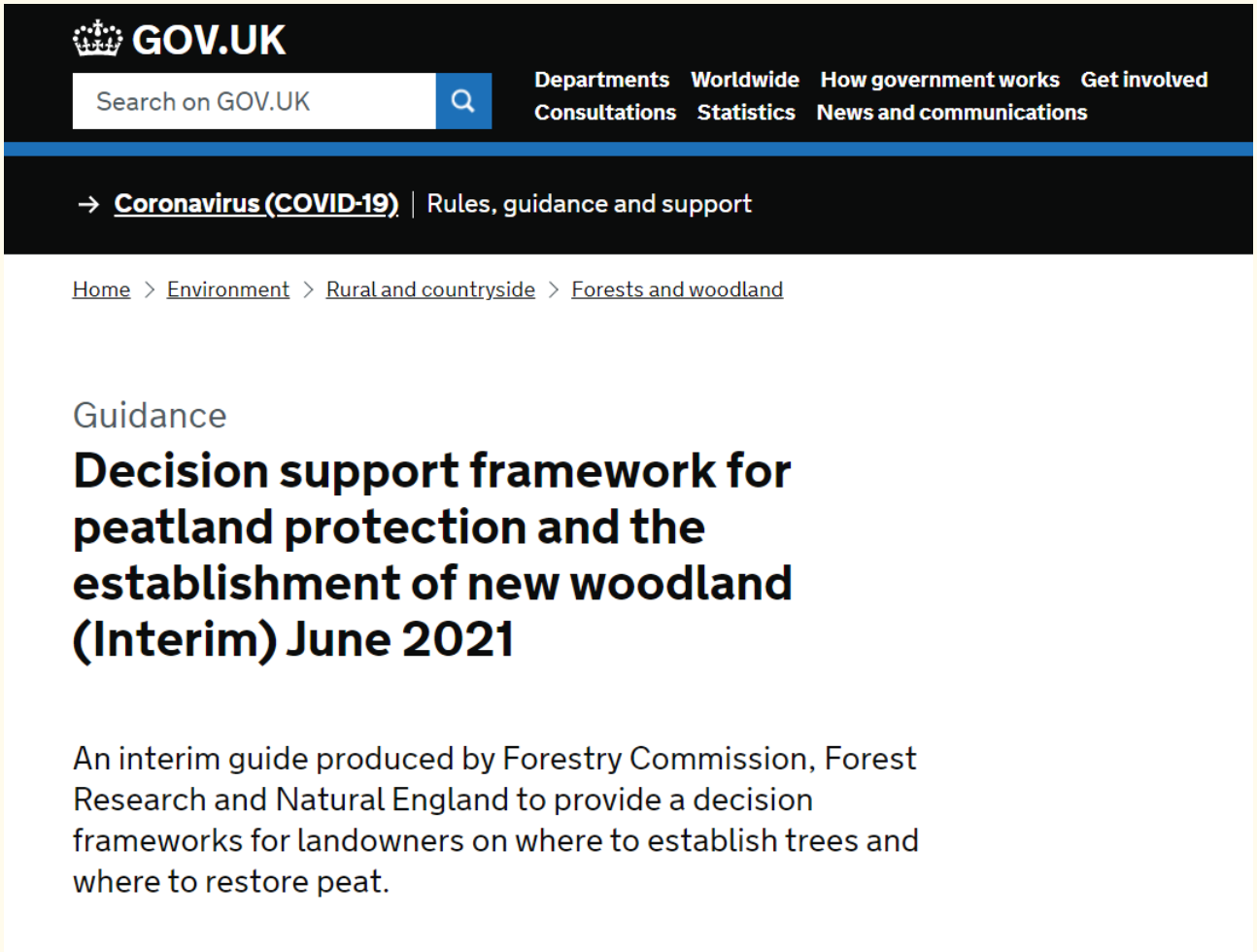
Interim Guidance published June 2021



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Full Guidance published 30 June 2022

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Peat and Definitions

Background

- There are approx. 1,420,000 hectares of peatland in England
- Deep peat (more than 40 cm depth) accounts for 678,000 ha
- Shallow peat (between 10 cm and 40 cm) also provides a suite of ecosystem services, including significant carbon stores

Existing woodland on peat

- National Forest Inventory (2012) estimates 51,500 ha of woodland is on deep peat
- 60% of the woodland on deep peat is conifer plantation, with the remainder broadleaf woodland
- 42% of the woodland on deep peat is within the Public Forest Estate
- 18% of the woodland is on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) designated for either priority habitat or species interest

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Peat and Definitions

Deep peat definitions:

- Natural England's peat map for deep peat – >40cm
- Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme criteria – >30cm
- UKFS Guideline for afforestation avoid peat - >50cm

UKFS (England update - 2021)

Afforestation on peat soils - **>30cm**

UKFS (England update - 2022)

Restocking on peat soils - **Restoration potential**

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What's in Scope ?

Location

- New proposals for tree felling or woodland creation on peatland in England only

That require Forestry Commission scrutiny and approval under:

- Felling licences
- Current grant scheme rules
- Environmental Impact Regulations for forestry

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The Decision Support Frameworks

Should be used to:

- Ensure that woodland establishment or woodland re-establishment only occurs on peat where there are **clearly justified** biodiversity and carbon benefits
- Ensure there is **no risk** is posed to the long-term integrity of the surrounding peatland and its long-term carbon store.

It is important to consider all positive and negative impacts of:

- Woodland establishment
- Woodland restocking
- Woodland removal

It is vital that desk-based assessments are confirmed by field survey including to establish whether a proposal is worth pursuing.

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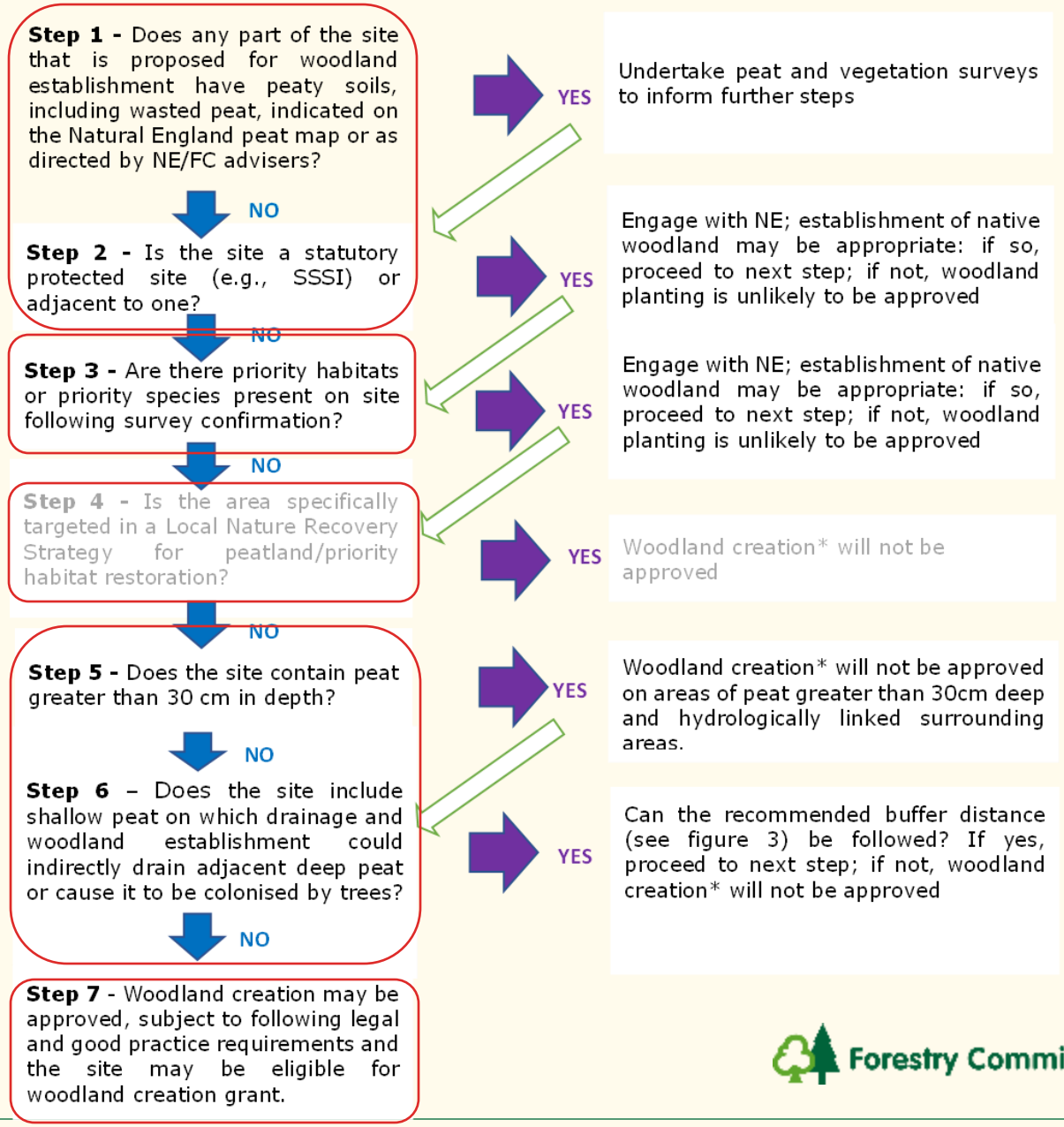
Peatland protection and the establishment of new woodland

7 Steps



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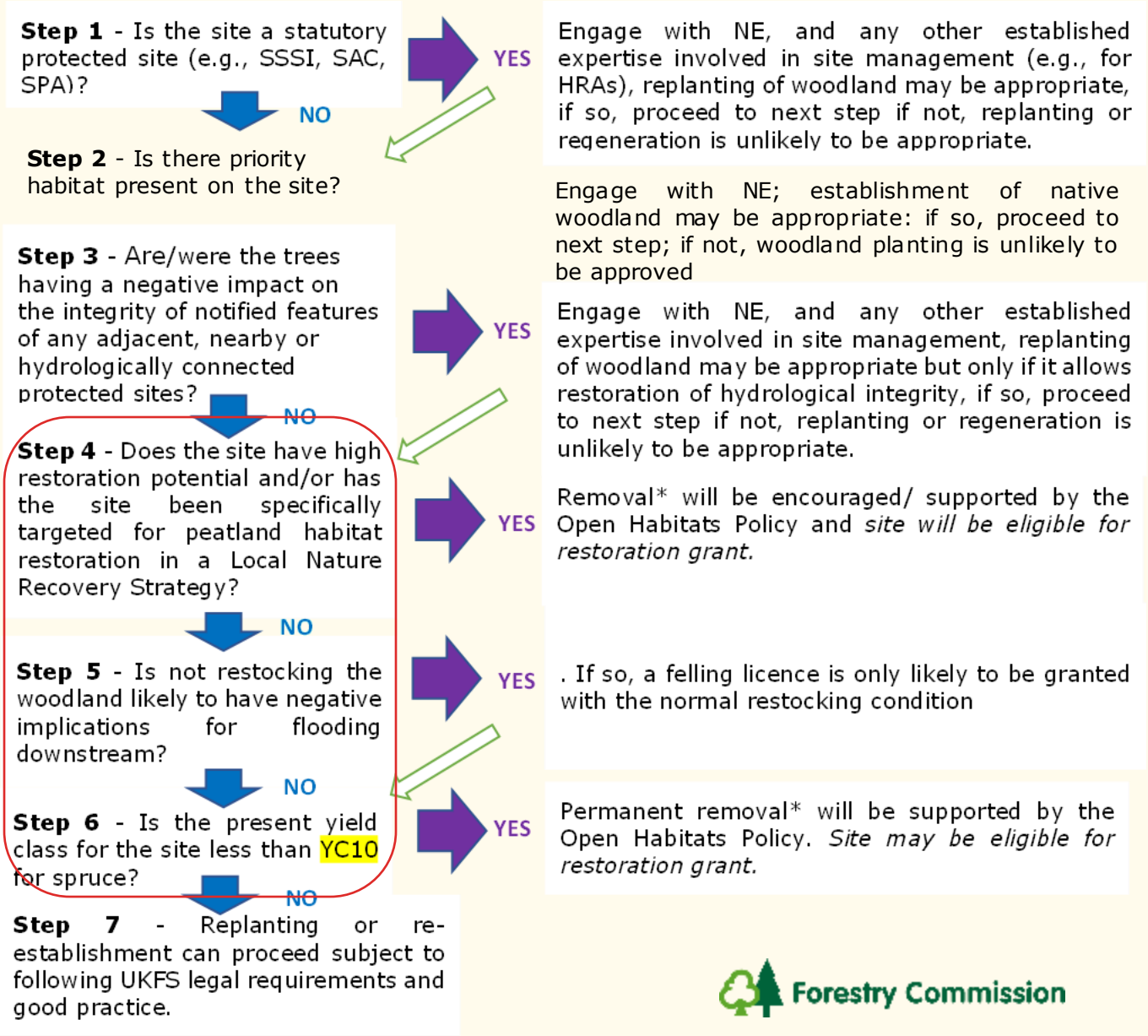
Peatland restoration, protection and the regeneration of woodland

7 steps

(New)



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Forest to Bog Metrics Tool

- Hosted on an on-line platform
- Link to it is included in the published guidance
- Support decision-making rather than to make the decisions
- Tool will help land owners and regulators **consider the merits of proposed forest plans** and felling or grant applications
- National map scores can be adjusted following site assessment/survey
- Basic summary statistics are produced at national/regional or county level alongside barplots showing the proportion of land in each level that falls within each of the suitability scoring deciles.
- Restoration costs, opportunity costs, revenue and natural capital accounting are being developed to sit within the tool as additional functionality

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The datasets used and how suitability is scored

Dataset	Score_1	Score_2	Score_3
National Forest Inventory Interpreted Forest Type (NFI IFT)	Conifer, broadleaved, mixed	Low density, Failed, Shrub, Groundprep, felled, windblow	Young trees, bare area, assumed woodland
Slope (in degrees)	>10 degrees	10- 5 degrees	<=5 degrees
Peat status (peatmap 2014)	Soils with peaty pockets	Shallow peaty soils	Deep peaty soils
Yield class estimates (Sitka S.)	Yield class 18+	Yield class 10-16	< Yield class 10
Peatland status	Not a priority habitat or a designated site	Priority habitats	Designated sites

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Forest to bog metrics tool - User feedback

- Is the app easy/intuitive to use? Are the pop-up boxes and instructional material sufficient to allow you to use the app properly?
- Methodology: have we got the right datasets to indicate restoration potential? Is there anything we haven't covered? Have we scored the environmental variables correctly (i.e., NFI IFT types, yield classes)?
- Summary statistics: are these useful to you in their current form? Are there any other values you would like to view? Is the frequency histogram easy to interpret?
- Would it be useful to indicate a suitable high restoration threshold or range on the 0-1 scoring scale? If so, what would it be?
- Are there any other features which you think might be useful in the app?

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Any Questions ?