**PEATLAND CODE TECHNICAL ADVISORY BOARD – MINUTES**

**Date:**  4th June 2024

**Time:** 11am

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

**Attendees: Emma Hinchliffe (chair)**, **Garance Wood- Moulin, Renée Kerkvliet-Hermans, Ian Dickie, Eimear Reeve, Steve Clarke, Andy Grundy, Ed Salter, Richard Lindsay, Tamarind Falk, Joe Anderson, Andrew Moxey, Stephen Clarkson, Sarah Erbanova, Christopher Evans, Hans Joosten, Dinker Bhardwaj, Renny McKeown, Jon Watts, Iain Detrey**

**Apologies: Vicky West, Judith Stuart, Rhoswen Leonard, Patrick Jean-Martel, Pat Snowdon John Couwenberg, James Dalton, Sophie Chapman, Gillian Manniex, Ben Dipper, Katherine Birdsall, Peter Jones, Peter Phillips, Rebekka Artz, Carolyn Worfolk, Judith Bennett**

**Agenda**

1. General updates

2. V2.1 consultation feedback

1. Methane emission calculations in fens – paper by Ben Freeman and Chris Evans (UK CEH)
2. Water table measurements in fens
3. Rust rods
4. Accuracy and Frequency
5. AOB
6. **General update**

**Project Registrations**

 We registered fewer projects in May compared to last year, which we think that is because PA had this short deadline for applications for the end of May. It takes considerable effort to develop projects for the funding stage and everyone in Scotland was working on that instead of registering projects, which comes later in the process. We are expecting to get a big influx of registrations over the summer. We are still seeing very few registrations in England, Wales, NI and Fen though.

We have a lot of projects for validation in with the registry and our first verification is due in September.

**SBTi**

Have a meeting set finally, 24th June and held a pre-meeting in preparation.

**VAT on Carbon credits**

Guidance on how credits are treated for VAT is now available. Still some questions on PIUs and if they are applicable, plus a few more questions are in with HMRC.

**FIRNS Biodiversity crediting**
we have data being collected at three out of the four pilot sites and we've been working with the upwell method and our ecologist at SRUC to come up with.

**UKAS**
Pilot phase going smoothly. Head office assessments with audits due in September. SA UKAS audit is scheduled in for the end of July. OF&G the same.

**ICROA**
No updates still waiting for the assessment team to feedback from the application and additional evidence provided.

1. **V2.1 consultation feedback**

18 responses received through an anonymous online survey with additional feedback received via email. Core questions on lowering peat depth in fens, risk buffer, grouping, peat depth survey length and condition matrix.

Respondents were happy with the risk buffer guidance but raised concern on the condition matrix and its applicability/additional work in field.

**Fens**

When we included Fens in V2.0 it was for peat depth of greater than 45cm. There is a large resource of shallower peat that could open up projects to the code.

We originally used 1.5cm degradation rate equalling 30-year minimum duration in bogs.

ICVCM state you need at least 40 years duration, which would affect the shallower projects not being core carbon principle approved.

**Does the TAB support the decision to lower the minimum peat depth in Fens?**

Agreement that there should be some activity on Fens peat depth by considering what depth would be eligible and what criteria we use to assess the viability of those shallower peat soils.

Reducing down to 30 was supported by a TAB member.

If a project has measured its carbon stock in the topsoil then we’d have a good idea of the true lifetime of how much carbon there is left to lose in the soil. Renee will work with Chris on this ACTION

Because of the large emissions of these Fens, even a conservative approach would deliver a lot of reduction. These are emission hotspots.

**Risk Buffer**

Currently, the guidance states that at verification you only need 75% of Assessment Units (AUs) to get 100% of your units verified. The risk buffer consultation highlighted that usually more than 5% is considered a reversal. Suggestion is to move to 90%.

**AGREED: The TAB supports moving to 90/10%**

**Q: Given the feedback received, is the TAB still comfortable with the risk buffer changing from 15% to 20%.?**

The reason for changing it is to be in line with ICVCM, so we’d have to change it to 20% then anyway.

**Q: Can some of the % points be returned at the end of the project?**

**A:** We have been advised against this as we’d need that big insurance pot going forward.

**TAB agreed to change from 15% to 20%**

**Grouping:**

Validation and verification still has to happen for each site, but there would potentially a cost saving through the benefits of scale (suing contractors across similar amount of time etc) Defining what is allowed to be grouped is an issue. Distance/project number restrictions aren’t suitable.

**TAB agreed to flexibility on projects joining a group later but keeping the same verification dates.**

**Peat Depth Survey**

**Does the TAB still support the decision to accept a 7 year old baseline peat depth?**

This is very site specific. On the top of a windswept hill you could lose 30cm or more over 7 years.

**Q: Could depth data affect the survey age?**

**A:** Yes it could, except we only require peat depth data of up to 1 metre.

**AGREED The TAB approved 7 years site survey, although If projects want to use older data, site condition is a factor.**

**Vegetation Condition Matrix**

Consultation respondents didn’t have the full guidance on the matrix, which may have reflected their nervousness on using the matrix. They said that it would add extra time and energy in their surveys on an area that might not give them much return.

Evidencing for validators has been difficult, in particular vegetation change.

**The TAB agreed that brief training in using this matrix is essential.**

**Q: Feedback from the consultation felt that the matrix was a lot of extra work for a condition category where there will be little to no return. Is the TAB still comfortable to proceed with this approach given the feedback or is there an alternative option?**

**A: The TAB agrees with this approach.**

1. **Methane emission calculations in fens – paper by Ben Freeman and Chris Evans (UK CEH)**

At the previous TAB adjusting the calculator to monthly averages was discussed. Ben Freeman and Chris Evans have looked into this and put together a useful paper that summarises why it should not be done.

The Peatland Code would like to do this and think it is possible, but the current data is from infrequent chamber measurements taken some time ago and are not sufficient to do this well.

**ACTION all TAB members to consider the information in the paper and provide feedback.**

**Q: We cannot currently quantify the methane, but could a cut-off such as up until a certain month be allowed to have winter inundation?**

**Does the TAB agree to leave the maximum annual average water table at 5 cm above the surface?**

**Does the TAB agree that sites with winter inundation should still be eligible under the Peatland Code? And if so, which month should be the cut off for allowable inundation?**

ICROA are interested in our decision-making process. If we aren’t sure now, would it be best to do a call for evidence?

**No decision was made by the TAB.**

**Renee and Emma to explore calls for evidence and funding.**

**Renee will take it to the Executive Board later today.**

1. **Water table measurements in fens**
	1. **Rust rods**

It has come to our attention that our methodology of measuring water tables was not right, regarding rust rods applicability to Fens. We currently say the methodology for measuring water table states that for each field unit you need to have water table measurements in place of 1 continuous logger, 5 dipwells and 15 rust rods. If you want to you can replace all rust rods with the dipwells and the pals needs to be measured monthly and rods throughout need to be read quarterly.

Rust rods do not work well in Fens. The rust rod concept was developed for the Eyes on the Bog citizen science programme. It was designed in use for Fens because of the chemistry of Fen waters and the nature of the sediment layers in fens.

**Q: What is the best option to replace rust rods with in the Field Protocol?**

**A: Dipwells were agreed as the best option. AGREED**

**Q: How many readings a day is enough from a continuous logger, including accuracy levels?**

**A: One day and to the nearest centimetre AGREED.**

* 1. **Accuracy and Frequency**

**Q: Is 5 mm accuracy acceptable, should this be more or less?**

**A: One a day reading is enough. AGREED**

**5. Any Other Business**

No further business was discussed.

**Date of next Meeting:**

Tuesday 20th August 2024 11am-1pm