**PEATLAND CODE TECHNICAL ADVISORY BOARD – MINUTES**

**Date:**  20th February 2024

**Time:** 11am

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

**Attendees: Emma Hinchcliff (chair)**, **Garance Wood- Moulin, Renée Kerkvliet-Hermans, Ian Dickie, Eimear Reeve, Patrick Jean-Martel, Steve Clarke, Andy Grundy, Alex Hart, Peter Phillips, Rebekka Artz, Carolyn Worfolk, Pat Snowdon,** **Ed Salter, Richard Lindsay, Peter Jones, Judith Stuart, Katherine Birdsall, Tamarind Falk, Ben Dipper, Joe Anderson**

**Apologies: Andrew Moxey, Stephen Clarkson, Sarah Erbanova, Gillian Manniex, Sophie Chapman, Helen Avery, Rob Stoneman, Vicky West, James Dalton, John Couwenberg, Christopher Evans, Hans Joosten, Dinker Bhardwaj, Judith Bennett, Rhoswen Leonard**

1. **General update**

**Project Registrations**

95 projects were registered for 2023, more will eventually be recorded for last year 2023 as some registrations are still pending.

More detailed statistics have been added to the stats website as per last meeting’s action.

Better visuals are being worked on and the website in general is getting an overhaul.

**FIRNS Buyer seller standardised contract**

Following initial project set up including agreeing reporting process and preparing initial communications (webpage and newsletter), the project will commence in earnest with a first stage of stakeholder engagement during March 2024.

**UKAS**
Since our last TAB there has been good progress with UKAS. The Peatland Code, UKAS and all the validators recently met to discuss timeline for the pilot and have agreed to continue these meetings to keep the pilot on track. The next one is scheduled for April.

**ICROA**

**Other Updates:**

We have contracted Finance Earth to forecast demand and look at various operating models through the code. The only current income is via the Peatland Code levy, so we are looking at what other funding models are available.

1. **Risk Buffer Guidance Update**

The last draft the TAB received was a variable risk buffer, which was rejected by the EB as being over complicated.

Points to discuss:

4.1.1 Restoration activities. “*All Peatland projects must provide evidence that the revegetation or rewetting of the bog or fen was performed using the latest engineering, hydrological, and ecosystem practices*”. The TAB was asked if the guidance should add to this that Project Developers (PDs) should evidence the need for an experimental approach if they choose to take that course of action.

Suggestion to switch ‘latest’ to ‘appropriate’ or ‘best available’ suggested. We also need to have some way of accommodating innovation and not penalising those who try new techniques. AGREED

Examples in the guidance requested by TAB validation body representative to reduce the subjective nature of the document.

4.1.2 Management Activities “*To create high quality projects, development teams need to include at least one individual with a minimum of 4 years of experience in Peatland project design and at least one individual with a minimum of 4 years of experience implementing Peatland or similar carbon offset projects*.”

**Q: Does that TAB think it best to remove the minimum time of experience and list what the necessary experience is within the project team?**

**A:** Demonstrable experience of successful validations in the past within the team would be better.

‘4 years' experience’ would only be added guidance within the team section. AGREED

4.3 Fire risk *“Rewetting and diversifying the vegetation composition. Or through fuel removal by*

*mowing or clipping, establishment of fire breaks and fire towers, and ready access to adequate*

*fire-fighting equipment.*”D‘developing and implementing a robust wildfire management plan’ instead of the list currently in place. AGREED

**Question for the TAB:** What would happen to units in the buffer once projects are completed?

1. Leave them in the buffer for other projects to use
2. Cancel units from that project within the pool to mitigate reversals
3. Give the units back to the project

A growing estate of projects in 50 years time mean the buffer will need to be bigger, not smaller.

**Q: As the scheme grows, it has a very significant value. Could it form part of a long term funding model?**

**A:** It is also there for changes in risk levels, so we have to be confident it would cover a fire risk not just now but in 20 years time; there are a lot of unknowns.

It is about permanence. The buffer should be kept for that purpose.

The TAB will continue to consider what to do with the buffer units.

**3. FIRNS Biodiversity Crediting Project Phase 1 Summary and Pilot Approach Outline**

Joe Anderson, Biodiversity Crediting Project Officer, updated on this:

Phase 1 is complete, analysing the market as it is for biodiversity crediting.

Phase two focuses on stakeholder engagement and the development of the piloting process to occur in phase three.

ACTION: Joe and Richard Lindsay to meet to discuss Richard’s condition matrix that could be useful.

**4. Version 2.1 of the Peatland Code**

A year ago, version 2 was released. The biodiversity MRV is planned to be ready next year for version 3 release. In the meantime, some small tweaks and clarifications are planned for a v2.1 update. No major methodology is suggested, but some aspects aren’t working in the version 2.0.

If the TAB agrees, the version update will go through a 30 day consultation. Mid March-April planned depending on feedback and the Executive board.

TAB are supportive of version 2.1 release and no objections to the proposed timeline.

ACTION Please can the TAB provide additional feedback by March 4th in time for the next EB meeting.

Questions to TAB:

Main Peatland Code:

Shallow peat: the EB decided to remove the need for evidencing that it used to be deep peat and approved a definition of continuous shallow peat (see guidance box on page 3 of the PC). Does the TAB agree with 3 connected points? And should these shallow peat pockets be surrounded by deep peat, meaning they cannot be on the edge of a project boundary. This would minimise any agro-mineral soils being included in Peatland Code projects.

No objections to the 3 connected points suggestion.

Emissions from restoration, currently in 10% precision buffer, should we start calculating emissions during restoration based on standard emissions and milage? If yes, should we then adjust the precision buffer to 5%?

ACTION: Support to calculate emissions during restoration. This is too big a piece of work to include in 2.1 but will take forward for the next update. Anyone with experience in this or willing to assist please contact the PC team.

Guidance Document:

How old can the baseline site survey be (currently written 3 years at Project Plan Validation)?

PDs are asking for a longer timeframe as they were submitting surveys of over 10 years old and we were not comfortable with it, but it is giving issues for developers on larger estates in phased restoration cycles.

Agreed that a longer survey window between 5-7 years is suitable. EB to decide at the next meeting.

Field Protocol:

The condition category modified and the change to rewetted modified bog need to be defined better to make this change auditable. Should we use percentage cover of certain species or a more holistic approach like the condition change matrix developed by Richard Lindsay?

A TAB member is interested in contributing to the field protocol work as it correlates with the work their organisation is doing.

Other field protocol questions from the TAB papers relate to use of the matrix so will be revisited when the TAB has seen and commented on the matrix.

Fens General

**Q: Can we decrease the peat depth and thus the project length, making them potentially not qualify for ICVCMs Core Carbon Principles (but the bog units will).**

Peat degradation rate in fens currently set at 1.5 cm based on literature.

**Q: Rate of loss seems to be worst case scenario, do we have to use that?**

**A:** It was the ‘least bad’ we could find, if there is any other published data available it would be very helpful to a decision on fen loss rate. ACTION Richard Lindsay to review published data on Fen loss rate.

**5. Any Other Business**

Defra peatland grant evaluation project in England is being led by ICF. The award of the contract is in the public domain and is some mapping of processes but TAB members are likely to encounter it at some stage.

**Date of next Meeting:**

Tuesday 21st May 2024 11am-1pm