**PEATLAND CODE TECHNICAL ADVISORY BOARD – MINUTES**

**Date:** 23rd August 2023

**Time:** 11am

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

**Attendees: Emma Goodyer (Chair), Garance Wood- Moulin, Ed Salter, Renée Kerkvliet-Hermans, Steve Clarke, Ian Dickie, Andrew Moxey, Pat Snowden, Alex Hart, Peter Phillips, Judith Stuart, John Couwenberg, Jonathan Head, Sarah Erbanova, Tamarind Falk, Rebekka Artz, Christopher Evans, John McKillen, Hans Joosten, Dinker Bhardwaj, Patrick Jean-Martel, Rob Stoneman.**

**Apologies:**  **Richard Lindsay, Eimear Reeve, Alison Baker, James Dalton, Ben Dipper Carolyn Worfolk Peter Hutchinson Judith Bennett, Paul Vaight, Rhoswen Leonard, Vicky West, Peter Jones, Gillian Manniex, Andy Grundy, Katherine Birdsall, David Drake, Sophie Chapman, Helen Avery.**

1. **General update**

* **Project Numbers**
* Version 2 was launched in March 2023.
* 200th Peatland Code has been registered, with comms release imminent. The registrations have doubled in the past year.
* First project has been registered in Northern Ireland
* First Fens project have been registered. These will go into the 200th registration news piece.
* Our first year 5 verification is underway, at Dryhope .
* Currently the Peatland Code has 213 projects registered, 59 project validated and 11 restoration validated. Having 3 validation bodies has ramped up the speed of validations.
* 29,000 ha of peatland restoration, 6,190,000 tCO2e emissions reductions

**Q:** **Is that emissions figure for validated projects?**

**A:** No, it is for registered projects. In future we will make that clear.

**•** **ICROA**  **(International Carbon Reduction and Offset Alliance)**

We have started the application process for getting ICROA approved.

* **ICVCM (Integrity Council for Voluntary Carbon Markets)**

We have started reviewing their assessment framework and started on the application form which has been launched in the portal last month. We will give a further update in section 3, but work has started looked into how we can meet the CCP’s (Core Carbon Principles).

* **BSI (British Standards Institution)**

We are hopeful that all these standards and accreditations align, and we do not have to provide different information for each one. We will keep the TAB updated

* **UKAS (United Kingdom Accreditation Service)**

The United Accreditation Service (UKAS) is going through an assessment of two of our validators against the ISO standards. They have a 3-phase approach to ensure compliance, impartiality and that the same levels of assurance are given across all validation bodies.

* **Price Index**

The report is in its final stages and is due to be published soon once it has been finalized when it can share, the report will share findings on price, location and proposed next steps.

* **Risk Buffer**

We are working with a consultant from Sierra Solutions and the project developer to look at the risk assessment process and the rules around the risk buffer for the Peatland Code. So far, the project developers have been very engaged in this process and we will be having our third and final workshop early September. Looking to define what we can class as avoidable and unavoidable risk, how we can include requirements from the ICVCM. Update in next TAB on the conclusion of the next workshop.

1. **Version 2 of the Peatland Code Amendments**

* **Evidencing deep peat**

**Q: Should we evidence shallow peat?**

**A:** In England you could put the project onto the peat map and look at the wasted peat areas.

Concerns were raised with the original text and the definition of wasted peat, which is not mapped in Scotland. EFs have not been checked for shallower peats with the exception of cropland. If we do not get this right then projects could be registered in Scotland where emissions can’t be quantified. A definition of what is continuous deep or shallow peat is favoured.

AGREED Checks to be put in place to make sure we are not including extensive areas of shallow organo- mineral, which could be done through soil coring.

The Peatland Code will continue to include areas of shallow peat where it is contiguous with deeper peat and that can be evidenced through peat probes.

Condition and intervention will be considered when deciding if it is eligible for inclusion or not.

ACTION Renee will circulate some text to the TAB before the next update and it could be tested against some sites.

**Drainage buffer around water bodies:**

In version 2 of the Peatland Code, we included for the first time a 30m buffer around water courses from which no claims of any can be made. The thinking was that if we say that when blocking drains, you rewet to 30m, the other way around would be valid as well; a water course has a draining effect to 30m and thus that area should be excluded. However, after discussions there seems to be some debate around this approach.

The inventory perspective is that if the current OS maps state it is a water source, you would have to have a specific reason for being able to claim it is caused by drainage. You would have to buffer around such natural courses. The inventory mops up water features as a part of the normal landscape.

**Q: How does this apply to mapped drains?**

**A:** We are possibly including them in the definition. The current definition is that it is any water system on site that cannot be restored. When you should and shouldn’t have an exclusion buffer in there is difficult as the guidance must be clear for validators.

What is the effect of the peat body and the emissions? Exclusion is the easiest way, but it reduces the potential of creating carbon credits.

In discussions with project developers, they stated they would not do any work on that exclusion zone as there are no credits in play.

A TAB representative from a validation body added that defining a watercourse is challenging, as boiling down such a complicated point to a clear definition that can be applied across all projects on the Peatland Code. Subjectivity to these issues causes problems for auditing bodies and creates differences in practices. Clarity is key from an auditing perspective.

Discussions will continue.

* **Water table baseline for fens**

For fens, we require water table measurements. We have said you need a 12-month baseline of water table measurements. This is tricky for projects to accomplish for most projects. Funding window is also very short, so changes are needed to sites before a 12-month baseline is established.

The focus is gathering the robust data baseline that we need to justify the award of carbon credits.

**Q: If there is 1 continuous logger in the site, could we use that as the baseline?**

If you make it plausible that the site is homogenous then it is not a problem to have only 1 logger. The size of the site is also factor. However, hardly any site is and the proof would be when you install more loggers if the water table responds the same over the whole year.

Reducing the 12-month baseline is challenging. The low-cost methodology that we have already suggested is as far as we’ve been able to bend while maintaining the scientific rigour.

**Q. How does the TAB feel about having baseline data where there is a gap between the data and project start date?**

**A.** For bogs, the majority of the variation in water level can be explained by rainfall variation and temperature variations. So, if you have a disjointed data set, then you would have to as a minimum look at the climatic variation during that particular year of observation compared with others.

If you have only 1 year from defining your baseline, you must define if this year is representative. For fens there must be a record from the past.

The TAB agreed not to make any changes at this point.

* **High winter water table in fen**

**Q. The calculator is based on mean annual effective water table. Do we say for winter flooding we exclude?**

**A.** No. Any highwater level management in the Somerset levels for example, you'd probably get winter flooding and would cut out that whole area from the Peatland Code, which we don't want to do prematurely. We use mean water table because that's what we could get for those relationships. There are areas where probably you are going to have to have some inundation in winter to keep the side wet enough in the summer.

We shouldn't design a system based on 'winter' or 'summer' flooding. That might have been the past pattern and still the majority of years, but we have summer floods and increasing variation with climate change (it seems)

**Q: Is it possible to approach it conservatively?**

**A:** Rewetted sites are still novel systems where more data is needed. We need zero C02 and can worry about methane later.

TAB agreed to continue discussions on this subject.

1. **Future Developments of the Peatland Code**

* **ICVCM**

Garance presented timeline for ICVCM approval and explained that this was subject to change depending on when we submit the application form and if there are any changes to the requirements on a category level. As the Peatland Code is not CORSIA certified we have extra criteria to meet which will add to the timeline.

* **Biodiversity quantification**

The IUCN UK PP and WCC put in a joint FIRNS bid which is 50% Nature Scot funding and 50% National Heritage Lottery Funding the aim of the project would be to find out if Biodiversity credits can be stacked or bundled and to test a few Biodiversity MRV’s with pilot sites. If successful, the IUCN UK PP would recruit a Project Manager to lead on the FIRNS bid.

* **Paludiculture call for evidence**

If any TAB members have feedback on the timeline circulated in the papers, please contact us.

1. **Any Other Business**

We intend to publish TAB minutes onto the IUCN Peatland Programme website. To do this, we require agreement from all TAB members. Ed has requested approval via email and TAB members were asked to contact him via email or indicate in the Teams chat whether they agree or not. This version of the minutes will be a template for the future and no names will be stated in the online minutes unless there is an action connected to them.

1. **Date of next Meeting:**

November 22nd, 2023, 11am-1pm