

Peatland Initiatives for SNH – feedback from Scottish Environment LINK member bodies. - May 2010.

Archaeology Scotland: Peatlands preserve organic archaeological deposits when in good condition, hence AS's interest and support of the IUCN Peatlands Programme. Useful websites are [Scottish Paleoecological Archive database](#), and the [Scottish Wetlands Archaeology database](#).
Contact: Jonathan Wordsworth, j.wordsworth@scottisharchaeology.org.uk, Tel: 0845 872 3333

Buglife and Butterfly Conservation: are planning a joint peatland restoration project, on 3 or 4 lowland bogs in the central belt, with a focus on invertebrates - monitoring how they respond, and eventually producing guidance.
Contact Craig Macadam, craig.macadam@buglife.org.uk tel: 01786 447504 or Paul Kirkland, paul.kirkland@btconnect.com, Tel: 01786 447753

John Muir Trust: JMT and Stuart Brooks in particular are closely involved in the IUCN peatlands programme, Stuart Brooks is on the steering committee. We are also highlighting the risk to peat and its benefits in our recently launched wild land campaign. Peat is a major factor considered in management of our properties.
Contact: Helen McDade, policy@jmt.org Tel: 01796 484935

National Trust for Scotland: Has peat bog restoration projects at Ben Lomond and Goatfell. NTS has an initiative within the Gardens Department to become peat-free. The only exceptions are a couple of specific peat features in two of our gardens. NTS plans to stock these using peat obtained from our properties as a by-product of other building/engineering projects. Following the recent adoption of NTS moorland guidelines, it now has peat conservation objectives on all upland properties (an estimated 60% of our 76,000ha). Many NTS woodland projects are structured to avoid peat areas and, in cases where wet woodland is involved, should result in peat accumulation.
Contact: Richard Luxmoore, 07713 786264 email: rfluxmoore@nts.org.uk

Plantlife: has a peatland reserve at Munsary, next door to the RSPB reserve at Forsinard. It's our biggest (and only reserve in Scotland) and we have a long term monitoring programme set up there, with Richard Lindsay at University of East London. A report is due with Plantlife from last season's work. This is providing detailed information on peat restoration, following the installation of drain blocks in 2002.

Plantlife are also involved in discussions at ministerial level in England on the future for the peat use target, which expires, and will be missed, in 2010: to have 90% peat-free materials in all growing media and soil improvers by 2010. Parallel meetings in Scotland with Roseanna Cunningham have been with RSPB (no progress to report). There has been discussion of a UK wide peat free gardening campaign.
Contact: Deborah Long deborah.long@plantlife.org.uk Tel: 01786 478509.

Scottish Allotments and Gardens Society: Member of SNH's Garden for Life Forum and a couple of years ago produced a leaflet promoting Peatfree Gardening. It is a free leaflet which we hand out at events etc. Copies are available from SNH Garden for Life website.

Contact: Jenny Mollison, jennymollison@yahoo.co.uk Tel: 0131 665 2055

Scottish Wildlife Trust: currently embarking on a two-year national project revisiting ca. 60 non-designated lowland raised bogs that were surveyed about a decade ago. We hope to assess any changes (either in the presence or absence of management) as well as (ambitiously) hoping to be able to say something about carbon sequestration. We are currently in the middle of a laborious process of trying to bring together a method that suits everyone while still reflecting what was done during the baseline survey and remaining manageable for the average surveyor.

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Soil Association Scotland: has done some work on soil carbon - a related issue - and have many licensees practising organic farming on peat soils, which we think is the optimal farming system where soil carbon retention is a priority.

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M: 07775 521 789

RSPB Scotland

Practical peatland restoration

Demonstrating restoration and improving the evidence base underpinning restoration interventions are both important parts of the IUCN UK Peatland Programme strategy which seeks to provide clear and strong evidence on the effectiveness and benefits of peatland restoration.

The centrepiece for RSPB Scotland's peatland work is the Flow Country reserve at Forsinard where there is ongoing management to restore damaged blanket bog habitat and conserve the breeding bird population. Large areas of habitat restoration involving the removal of planted conifers and blocking drainage ditches has been undertaken but there are still significant areas of forestry and moor gripped bog that need to be tackled to help deliver the aims of the Peatland management strategy for the Flows. We are working with the Forestry Commission to help identify opportunities for further tree removal and to agree on the areas which will provide the best biodiversity returns both in terms of bog restoration and reduction of forestry edge effects on current bog habitat and bird populations.

Research on peatlands

Underpinning management intervention at Forsinard we are investing in research to test biodiversity responses to grip blocking. We also have some monitoring in place to test the process of bog restoration and bird population response in felled areas, but a more comprehensive programme is needed. Additional work is also being carried out on the peatland habitat at Airds Moss in East Ayrshire.

RSPB is also funding research on the carbon and GHG dynamics aspects of peatlands and peatland management interventions, including a recent review commissioned from Richard Lindsay, with support from SNH. Further work has also been

commissioned to develop this research report into a series of briefings examining the carbon implications of drainage, forestry, restoration and grazing/burning on peatlands. In the latter context, RSPB is also conducting a review of the biodiversity and wider environmental impacts of grouse moor management, is collaborating with the University of Edinburgh, SNH and SEPA through a new PhD studentship which will investigate peatland responses to fire, and is seeking funding for a new GIS study to map the nationwide distribution of strip muirburn and its spatial overlap with deep peats.

RSPB Scotland continues its investment in research to understand the ecological needs of bird species of high conservation concern in peatland habitats, and is currently involved in a three-year study, supported by SNH, of the ecological requirements of Scotland's declining population of common scoter, as well as monitoring studies of the impacts of windfarm construction on breeding birds (e.g. golden plover) at several moorland sites.

At a strategic level, RSPB Scotland is working with SNH and a number of academic institutions to help coordinate and promote peatland research in the Flow Country, following successful conferences in Inverness and Dundee which highlighted the benefits of such research to peatland conservation policy. At a wider scale, we have been supporting the Scottish Government Rural and Environment Research and Analysis Directorate in reviewing peatland and carbon research across Scotland and helping promote a coordinated approach to future research funding on peatlands.

Policy Reform

Ensuring that we have strong policy support and funding for peatland restoration under CAP and Climate Change policy are key goals for the IUCN UK Peatland Programme. The RSPB is working with Scottish Environment Link to help promote the multiple benefits of peatlands for biodiversity, water and carbon but much of the evidence to date is based on peatlands in northern England where the circumstances are not always of immediate relevance to Scotland. RSPB is therefore keen to see a number of demonstration initiatives across Scotland with focussed restoration effort supported by a combination of agencies, industry and government funding to help demonstrate the benefits of landscape and catchment scale peatland conservation and restoration. The Flow country is clearly one example but it is important to help stimulate political and public interest to also have sites closer to the major conurbations. The Central Scotland Green Network presents opportunities for stimulating such peatland restoration initiatives for fens, raised bogs and blanket bogs with benefits for biodiversity, carbon saving, water quality and flood management. RSPB Scotland is keen to engage with Scottish Water to help deliver large-scale peatland restoration, following on from the multi million pound initiatives being undertaken by water companies in England.

To help explore possible new funding routes, we are working with our Birdlife partners in Eastern Europe who have successfully secured climate change funding for a major peatland restoration programme in Belarus. The RSPB is closely involved in climate change discussions around LULUCF which could see peatland restoration being formally approved as contributing towards national climate change targets.

Strategic planning

As a nation dominated by peat soils it is important to take a strategic approach to planning development which may conflict with or indeed support peatland conservation and restoration. We are working closely with the development of the Scottish Land Use Strategy and are developing peatlands as a case study example to highlight the opportunity that the strategy could bring to help spatially resolve the delivery of forestry and renewables targets with peatland restoration. We also want to use peatlands to demonstrate how the strategy could help bring together the different public bodies and Ministerial portfolios which concern peatlands, such as water, climate change, soils, environment and agriculture. In this way we should be able to deliver more peatland restoration by combining the efforts of a wide range of players but also secure costs savings through delivering the multiple benefits.

The RSPB has long been working with the renewables industry to help deliver renewable energy in an environmentally sustainable way and we are currently working on an agreed set of principles aimed at recognising the importance of renewables and peatland conservation. The draft principles highlight the environmental constraints in important peatland areas but also recognise opportunities for peatland restoration as part of good windfarm design and there is an agreement on the need for more coordinated research into the impacts of windfarms on peatlands.

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