



## Peatland Restoration Guidance

Through the Principles of Moorland Management (PoMM) project, Scotland's Moorland Forum is preparing a range of guidance that provides practitioners, working in upland and moorland areas, with a source of information that reflects good practice and establishes a standard for accepted management techniques.

Information that is available elsewhere has not been duplicated, but a reference to it is included.

All the documents should be seen as representing evolving guidance. The aim is to review the documents at least annually so that they reflect the latest information.

Practices in this guidance, which are backed up by legislation and/or regulation, contain the word '**MUST**' in bold, letters. Failure to adopt these practices could lead to prosecution.

Parts of the guidance contain the word '**should**' in bold, lowercase letters. The actions identified in this way are not covered by legislation but land managers are expected to follow these parts of the guidance, as they represent sound, acceptable practices, which aim to achieve sustainable management of the hare population.

### Revision Table

Date	Details

### Acknowledgements

This guidance was developed by Scottish Land & Estates and published in January 2019. Permission, which is gratefully acknowledged, has been granted for it to be published through PoMM.

The guidance has been approved by the members of the PoMM Steering Group and it will be reviewed annually, to keep the guidance up to date.

The member organisations of Scotland's Moorland Forum are listed below.

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## Members of Scotland's Moorland Forum

Association of Deer Management Groups	Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors in Scotland
British Association for Shooting and Conservation	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Scotland
British Deer Society	Scottish Association for Country Sports
British Trust for Ornithology (Scotland)	Scottish Countryside Alliance
Cairngorms National Park Authority	Scottish Environment Protection Agency
Confor	Scottish Gamekeepers' Association
Crofting Commission	Scottish Government
Forestry and Land Scotland	Scottish Land & Estates
Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust	Scottish Natural Heritage
Heather Trust	Scottish Raptor Study Groups
James Hutton Institute	Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)
Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority	Scottish Water
National Farmers Union Scotland	Scottish Wildlife Trust
National Trust for Scotland	

## Background

Government targets on mitigating climate change have focused attention on the huge quantities of CO<sub>2</sub> locked up in the UK's peatlands. If peatlands deteriorate, they could reverse the benefit of other carbon lock up policies, so it has become a priority to restore those which are in poor condition. Increasing amounts of funding are now being directed at this objective. In 2015 Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) developed Scotland's National Peatland Plan to identify the benefits provided by healthy peatland habitats.

Most of UK's peatlands are on privately owned land which is both an opportunity and a responsibility for land managers. There is opportunity to restore damaged peatland with external funding and possibly to generate long term income from keeping existing peatland in good "carbon sequestering" condition and to be justifiably seen as the guardians of a vital natural resource. To encourage this attitude the Peatland Code has been developed by the IUCN as a voluntary standard for UK peatland projects to demonstrate the benefits of the project to the climate change mitigation.

All peat soils lock up CO<sub>2</sub>, but the focus is on wet/deep and blanket peat over 50cm in depth, with over 60% of sphagnum moss cover, as these are the most effective in locking up CO<sub>2</sub>. The biggest areas are in the far north and west of Scotland (i.e. Lewis and the Flow Country) but there are smaller blanket peat areas all over the uplands and most moorland ownership units will have some. Important areas may already be designated SSSI. Dry and shallow peat soils typically found in the east of Scotland are of less concern for this purpose.

There are significant areas all over upland Scotland which were drained post war, were cut over for fuel or industrial use, or eroded by deer and sheep grazing. These areas can now be restored. Scottish Land & Estates believe that this is an important part of upland land management and are working with SNH and the Moorland Forum to alert moorland managers to what can be done and the sources of funding now available.

## Looking after Scotland's peatlands

Interest in restoring peatlands stems from a number of agendas including carbon storage, natural flood management and improved biodiversity.

A restored peatland is one whereby the water table is at or close to the surface and the predominant vegetation is sphagnum moss. Restoration is very often achieved by simply blocking draining channels, thus allowing rewetting and, over time, sphagnum moss to build up. It may also be necessary to remove any trees planted in the peat, reduce grazing pressure and reduce or eliminate muirburn.

The anaerobic conditions that rewetting creates means that rather than vegetation degrading as it normally would when it dies which causes a release of carbon dioxide, it instead builds up in peat forming layers which contain the carbon absorbed from the atmosphere when the plant was growing. Sphagnum moss also absorbs a great deal of water, holding it in the uplands for much

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longer than would be the case if the upland was drained. However, this habitat can become saturated during heavy rainfall, restricting the ability for flood defence.

The challenge from a land management perspective of restoring peatlands is that it reduces the potential for economic activity. Peatlands are likely to have been drained as part of the post-war

Government policy to increase forestry or improve livestock grazing. There can be benefits to the landowner from restoring peatland. Water quality can be improved, and flooding reduced. They may also benefit from a reduction in the number livestock and game getting into drainage channels. The financial benefits of restoring peatland however largely accrue to others/society in general. This includes cleaner downstream water, less need for downstream flood defences, atmospheric carbon reduction and a more resilient ecosystem.

There are broadly two ways in which this issue can be addressed. The first is for private businesses that benefit from peatland restoration to fund restoration projects. The second is for society, through public funding, to fund restoration.

### **Private Funding Schemes**

Private business may be willing to pay landowners for restoring and retaining a functioning peatland. There are examples of water companies, such as Yorkshire Water, undertaking this type of activity because restored peatland produces cleaner water that does not need to be treated later in its journey to domestic taps. Some private business may also be conscious of their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions levels and wish to buy into a scheme which allows them to offset those emissions. Schemes such as the [woodland carbon code](#) successfully offer carbon offsetting for tree planting projects. There is also a growing carbon offsetting market for peatlands, such as that being undertaken by Heathrow in Lancashire to make steps towards Heathrow Airport being carbon neutral.

### **Public Funding**

Following the development of Scotland's National Peatland Plan a number of funding streams have been made available to provide support for peatland restoration. [Peatland Action restoration project](#) provide advice and funding administered by SNH on behalf of Scottish Government. Pre-application advice is available for the next funding round visit -

Funding may also be available from [Scottish Rural Development Programme 2014-2020](#), which sets out a package to help support the management of peatlands.

### **Further Information**

[Scotland's Peatland Plan](#) can be downloaded from SNH's website.

IUCN's peatland programme: information is available [here](#).

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