

2020 Group – Land Use & Forestry Subgroup Meeting 11 November 2013

Summary of Scottish Natural Heritage Peatland Activity

Summary

1. Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) engages with peatlands in many different ways. These include:
 - Development planning and management
 - Site safeguard and management
 - Green Stimulus Peatland Restoration Project
 - National Peatland Plan
 - Policy and good practice development
 - Research
 - Local/Regional Initiatives, e.g.
 - Flow Country
 - Central Scotland Green Network

Development planning and management planning

2. SNH contributes to the Development Plan process undertaken by Planning Authorities by advising on areas of peatland which should be safeguarded and, where appropriate, opportunities to ensure a range of other public services.
3. When consulted on planning applications which may affect peatland areas, SNH's priorities are to ensure that designated areas are protected, to reduce loss of and damage to peatland habitats, and to advise on mitigation measures to increase the resilience of the remaining resource.

Site safeguard and management

4. Some 20% of Scotland's blanket bog and 60% of its raised bog is designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) under the EC Habitats Directive. Those and other areas are also designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest under domestic legislation. In addition to these, examples of other peatland habitats, such as fens and bog woodland, are similarly designated. Government is obliged to ensure that the qualify features of SACs do not deteriorate and to ensure that the Favourable Conservation Status of these features is achieved. SNH advises government on how this can be achieved and works with land owners and managers to help meet these objectives.

Green Stimulus Peatland Restoration Project

5. The Green Stimulus Peatland Restoration Project (GSPRP) is part of the Scottish Government's Green Stimulus Package announced in October 2012. The funding profile for the Project is:
 - 2012/13 - £200k
 - 2013/14 - £500k
 - 2014/15 - £1m

Project Objectives

6. Primary Project Outcome
 - Restore peatlands to maintain Carbon stores and encourage Carbon sequestration.

7. Secondary Outcomes
 - Demonstrate and raise awareness of peatlands and their restoration
 - Restore peatland ecosystem functions
 - Lessons that can be learnt to support future restoration
 - Enhance ecosystem resilience to Climate Change

Project Progress

8. Fourteen projects were supported in 2012/13 at a cost of £201,405 (Annex 1).
9. The application round that closed on 29 June 2013 resulted in a further 16 applications. The **total value** of applications was £497,000 in 2013/14 and £307,000 in 2014/15. Following the assessment process and trimming, the breakdown now is **£347,000** (2013/14) and **£207,000** (2014/15).
10. The round of applications that closed 4 October 2013 resulted in a further 10 applications. Some of these are large and complex and subject to further discussion and project development

Additional funding?

11. On 26 September Scottish Government announced a further commitment to peatlands with £15m over the next two financial years, to be delivered through the SRDP. SNH will be meeting with Scottish Government shortly to discuss opportunities and possible delivery mechanisms.

National Peatlands Plan

12. The idea for a national peatlands plan arose during discussion among SNH, SEPA and Scottish Government officials around the IUCN Peatland Programme Commission of Inquiry¹ and in the context of the Scottish Government's discussion paper on Carbon Rich Soils².
13. The overarching objective of the Plan is to avoid further deterioration of the peatland resource, to improve the condition and resilience of damaged peatlands and restore areas of degraded peatland where this can be done in a cost-effective and sustainable manner for the delivery of a range of ecosystem services. While the primary driver for much of this work will be to improve the national GHG balance, most activities in this regard will have multiple benefits. There will also be some sites for which other drivers take precedence.
14. Development of the Plan is overseen by a Steering Group chaired originally by Susan Davies (SNH Director, Policy & Advice) and now by Ron Macdonald (acting SNH Director, Policy & Advice) and comprising SNH staff, Neil Ritchie (Scottish Government, Environmental Quality Division) and Simon Thorp (Director, Moorland Forum). This Group also oversees the work of the Green Stimulus Peatland Restoration Project.
15. A group of key external stakeholders has been identified and will be established shortly to help secure a broad base of engagement and support.

¹ <http://www.iucn-uk-peatlandprogramme.org/commission>

² <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/921/0109512.pdf>

In addition Scottish Government recently established a Peatland Policy Group to help coordinate existing policy initiatives and identify inconsistencies and gaps. These will be incorporated into the Plan.

16. Opportunities to link with other initiatives, such as the Land Use Strategy and the developing Peatland Carbon Code will also be identified and the Plan will have a significant role in identifying and delivering potential Greenhouse Gas benefits.
17. A structure for the Plan has been agreed and this will be expanded shortly with a view to having an outline draft available for public consultation by Christmas and a substantially complete Plan by March 2014.

Policy and good practice development

18. SNH works with Government Agencies, industry and others to develop policy and guidance to reduce adverse impacts on the peatland resource, promote sustainable management and encourage habitat restoration.

Research

19. SNH engages with the peatland research community in a variety of ways including partnership projects, the commissioning of research and the funding of PhD Studentships.

Local/Regional Initiatives, e.g.

- **Flow Country**
- **Central Scotland Green Network**

20. In the Flow Country of Caithness and Sutherland SNH is a member of the Peatlands Partnership together with RSPB, Highland Council, Plantlife, Forestry Commission and the Environment Research Institute at Thurso College (part of the University of the Highlands & Islands). The Partnership will shortly be submitting a Stage 2 bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for a large project focusing on peatland restoration and interpretation. The value of the project is around £9m.
21. The Peatlands Partnership has also recently submitted a 'Technical Evaluation' of the Flow Country as a prospective World Heritage Site to the Department of Media, Culture & Sport (UK Government). This paper will be assessed to determine whether a full application to UNESCO for World Heritage Site inscription is likely to be successful.
22. In June 2013 SNH submitted an Application to the EU Life + for a project entitled "**Implementation of integrated habitat networks to improve ecological coherence across the CSGN**" on behalf of a broad consortium of interests (public sector, industry, NGO). Much of the project will focus on peatland habitats. The value of the project is just over €3m

Green Stimulus Peatland Restoration Project
First Round Projects: 1/12/12- 30/3/13

Site/Project	Restoration Activity
Abernethy RSPB	Mapping and survey of dams/ditches in 1841ha of peatlands within the forest as preparatory work for future damming.
Airds Moss RSPB	Fencing (2200m) to facilitate better stock control over 220ha of bog
Blawhorn Moss SNH	Additional ditch blocking and re-profiling pool edges for safe stock grazing. (21ha)
Commonhead Moss GCC	Scrub clearing (9 ha) and ditch blocking (20 plastic dams)
Fannyside Muir N. Lanarkshire Council	Peat (9 ha) and plastic dam (26 plastic) installation
Forsinard RSPB	Tree crushing and ditch blocking (46ha). Data logger installation (32 loggers).
Lenzie Moss E.Dunbartonshire Council	Scrub clearing (11.5ha) and boardwalk extension (10m).
LLTNPA	Phase 1: Desk-based survey using aerial photography and local knowledge to prioritise peatlands requiring restoration. Covers 186,340 ha
Munsary Peatlands Plantlife Scotland.	Purchase and installation of 5 data-loggers.
Portmoak Moss Woodland Trust	Scrub clearing (9ha), ditch blocking (45) and peat stability and management report (34 ha).
The Oa RSPB	Ditch blocking on 8 ha of blanket bog
Wester Moss Stirling Co./BC	Scrub clearing (1.5 ha)
Data loggers	Purchase 21 dataloggers and ancillary equipment
Plastic Piling	Purchase 1700m plastic piling