Interreg North-West Europe Care-Peat

European Regional Development Fund

Report of Workshop Proceedings

30th September 2020

Hosted by Lancashire Wildlife Trust and Manchester Metropolitan University

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Contents

1) Workshop goal

To identify gaps in policy that need to be addressed in order to move away from peatlands as a source of GHG emissions in the UK towards becoming a net carbon sink once again.

2) Introduction

The Care-Peat project has produced a comprehensive report examining the policies related to peatland management at EU, partner country and pilot region level. The Zoom workshop held on 30th September 2020 was intended to debate the area of peatland policy with policy makers and practitioners to examine the effectiveness of current policies in relation to achieving carbon emissions reductions through peatland restoration. It hoped to identify policy gaps, barriers and opportunities to try to support the implementation of the Care-Peat project aims.

3) Summary

The workshop was introduced and chaired by Professor Simon Caporn of Manchester Metropolitan University.

Speakers from Care-Peat UK partner organisations Lancashire Wildlife Trust and Manchester Metropolitan University set the scene regarding the current status of peatlands with regard to greenhouse gas emissions, summarised current EU, English and regional policies related to peat and outlined the Care-Peat project activities and aims.

Other presentations given by the IUCN UK Peatland Programme, Defra and the NFU outlined some of the policy challenges and gaps around UK peatlands, provided information about up to the minute policy, land management support and funding developments for England and set out the climate change ambitions and challenges from the point of the view of the farming sector.

Details of the presentations can be found in section 4.

Two break-out sessions were held with attendees split into smaller discussion groups. These focused on

- Gaps in peatland policy and barriers to change
- Actions and enablers

A full write up of points identified can be found in section 5.

A lively chat discussion also took place – the main points and queries from this and the main session are recorded in section 6.

The session concluded with a look ahead by Niall O'Brolchain of National University of Ireland Galway to how the workshop findings will be used within the Care-Peat project's policy work and opportunities for further engagement with the project – see section 7.

4) Presentations Synopses

Copies of presentation slides can be found at https://www.lancswt.org.uk/our-work/projects/care-peat-partnership

a) **How and why do we need to change our management of peat? -** presented by Dr Chris Field, Manchester Metropolitan University

- Outlined the extent of peat globally and its carbon storage ability e.g. despite covering just 3% of global land surface, peatlands store approximately 42% of all soil carbon
- Outlined the issues with degradation of peat through reasons such as drainage for land management and burning leading to CO_2 emissions (CO_2 losses from peat are twice that from aviation)
- Highlighted the findings from the recent report by Natural England on Greater Manchester's peat and associated emissions which has been produced this year for Defra (12000 ha of upland peat, 5000 ha of lowland peat storing about 5 million tons of carbon, total annual emissions are 180,000 tonnes, with 130,000 tonnes of this from lowland agricultural uses)
- Outlined how peat stores carbon through formation under wet, nutrient poor conditions, by slow decomposition of plants
- Oxidation of carbon in peat caused by drainage can be easily reversed by re-wetting peatlands and adding wetland plants – revert to becoming active carbon stores
- To meet Greater Manchester's 2038 carbon neutral target, it is estimated we need to restore or re-wet the management of between 50 and 75% of Manchester's peatlands.
- Introduced the Interreg North West Europe Care-Peat project
- 5 country, 9 partner €6.24m project running from 2019- 2023
- Overall objective to reduce C-emissions and restore C-storage capacity of different types of peatlands. The project will:
    - Develop reliable measuring methods and predictive models of C-fluxes as a base for a decision making tool
    - Identify sustainable socio-economic models and policies to promote peatland restoration
    - Demonstrate new techniques and methods to restore and improve C-sequestration in peatlands
- Talked through the different pilot sites across the countries.
- Explained the two UK pilot sites at Winmarleigh Moss in Lancashire and Little Woolden Moss in Greater Manchester.
- The Carbon Farm at Winmarleigh is on former, drained agricultural land. It has been planted with sphagnum supplied by Beadamoss. Aiming to restore to being a carbon sink. Will also look at benefits of re-wetting this buffer land to the SSSI and in terms of carbon offsetting potential.
- The Little Woolden Moss pilot is studying the effect of companion planting on restoration and carbon storage achievement rates of this formerly commercially extracted peatland.
- To reduce the carbon emissions from peatlands and achieve climate change aims we need the policy and economic enablers.

b) **Current state of play: Peatland policy, strategy and action** – presented by Sarah Johnson, Lancashire Wildlife Trust

- Care-Peat has produced a report on the current peat policies and strategies at EU, country and regional level.
- UK policy on peat is a complex picture! Peatland use is influenced by a wide range of policies.
- No specific policy for peat as a whole, no single body responsible for peat in UK, largely due to overlapping interaction of peatland habitats with range of land uses and policy areas such as water, agriculture and climate. Some overarching policy targets at UK level, but most relevant policy areas are almost entirely devolved to four UK administrations which determine priorities and how funding is allocated.
- Brexit means uncertainty on final shape of policies that affect peatland management.
- Increasing awareness of the issue – e.g. climate emergency declared by all 4 devolved nations.
- UK is signed up to a number of international treaties and conventions e.g. UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- European policies have had major impact on our peatlands e.g. Common Agricultural Policy, EU Birds and Habitats Directives, Climate Change programme.
- Some peatlands are protected in England by SSSI designation, NPPF states that Local Authorities should not grant planning permission for extraction.
- There is some funding for peatland restoration e.g. through voluntary agri-environment schemes, grant schemes.
- There are conflicts between restoration and other land management practices, e.g. drainage, caused by conflicting subsidy schemes.
- Climate Change Act 2008 does not include formal recognition of the role peatland restoration could play in meeting emissions reductions goals
- 25-year Environment Plan also includes objectives on soil health, restoring and protecting vulnerable peatlands, ending peat use in horticultural products by 2030, a new framework for peat restoration to ensure peatlands are functioning for the needs of wildlife and people by 2030.
- Plan recognises the inherent unsustainability of draining peatlands for agriculture, and states that it will develop new management approaches to reduce greenhouse gas emissions where land use can't be changed
- Key policy and strategy reports were discussed e.g. IUCN UK Peatland Strategy, Committee on Climate Change Land use policies for a net zero UK (which includes aims to restore 50% of upland peat and 25% of lowland peat)
- The Greater Manchester Combined Authority's 5 year environment plan sets out an aim to be carbon neutral by 2038 and includes aims to restore peatlands
- The local plan for Salford where Little Woolden Moss is located includes policies on climate change and biodiversity
- Lancashire's climate change strategy runs to 2020 and includes aims to manage upland and lowland peat to sequester carbon and prevent its release.
- Outlined what the current state of play is with action on peatland including delivery by regional peat partnerships, river trusts and catchment partnerships
- £476million of Defra, EU and NGO funding per year has been spent on peat projects; also some work is carried out by the private sector e.g. United Utilities
- A number of alternative land management trials are underway in the UK e.g. sphagnum farming, Waterworks project, Canape project

- Concluded that the UK is one of the country's leading the way in restoring peatlands and setting aims on peatland management, yet most peatlands in the UK still remain in a damaged state (80%) releasing greenhouse gases in large quantities, with conflicts between subsidised land management practices and restoration. However, we are in a position of opportunity, leaving the EU could present a chance to do things differently.

c) **The role of peatlands – from ambition to action** - presented by Clifton Bain, IUCN UK Peatland Programme

- Need to remember that we have come a long way in 10 years, when the IUCN UK Peatland Programme was set up to address the need to coordinate the issue
- In 2013, they brought 4 UK environment ministers together to make a statement on peatlands
- Agreed that peatland policy is complex as the impacts on peatlands are dealt with by different sectors of government and society
- Although the UK has moved strongly on climate change e.g. Scotland has set legal targets on peatland restoration, it hasn't yet done so on biodiversity. It's important to consider and address all peatland benefits together – carbon, biodiversity and water, as well as its role in Green Recovery, such as supporting jobs, recreational use and wellbeing.
- More long term economic stimulus beyond capital investment is needed. Mechanisms are uncertain currently, though there is an opportunity for private investment through e.g. Use of the peatland code
- There is some opposition due to concern from the land management community who wish to see a clear signal that not only will there be support to restore peatlands, but that there will also be an ongoing income for keeping it in good condition in the long term
- We still have obligations towards important sites under international conventions, even if we are out of EU but there will be a gap following Brexit left by the loss of EU funds.
- Another concern is that of competing land uses and government commitments to restoration, but also windfarms and expanding forestry. Peatlands can be the cheapest land available so there is pressure here for inappropriate and damaging development. Need a more sophisticated land use policy that resolves these conflicts.
- There is also a need for much more focus on the data needed for public investment, to protect peatlands, economic benefits, progress reporting, biodiversity benefits of restoration, gaps in knowledge of the carbon benefit, the effectiveness of new approaches, how much has been delivered, water impacts, climate impacts. Lack of monitoring and reporting undermines efforts.
- Reiterated the three areas needing improvement - financing, strategic planning and monitoring and reporting.

d) **Peat perspectives – the next chapter for policy -** presented by Judith Stuart, Defra

- This presentation only covers Defra policies
- The 5 Natural England peat pilots have tested out the ideas of the peat strategy. They have identified outstanding issues with the planned approach and learning opportunities.
- Key findings were presented
    - Uplands – differing land use objectives are an overriding issue for initiating restoration
    - Uplands – need for long term assurances on post restoration site management
    - Uplands – need to account for different forms of tenancy agreements

    - Uplands – need to find easier and more efficient ways to evidence the benefits of peatland restoration
    - Arable farmland – need to realise change at a scale greater than individual farm holdings to be efficient and achieve sufficient rate of change
    - Arable farmland – landscape scale approach to water management is needed
    - Arable farmland – need peat mapping to direct funding to achieve greatest rates of greenhouse gas reduction and soil protection
    - Arable farmland – landowners and managers need support with expertise and economic incentives to make changes
- Common themes were the need for mapping, research and monitoring, knowledge of peat extent and depth, rates of carbon loss, subsidence and greenhouse gas emissions
- A work programme is underway to deliver the England Peat Strategy which Defra hope to announce this year. There has been stakeholder engagement and integration of feedback. The ambition of the Strategy is "All our peatland to meet the needs of wildlife, people and the planet" and will focus on Restore, reduce and protect.
- Restore – will focus on where this is cost-effective to do this to achieve many natural capital outcomes
- Reduce – where it's not economically viable to fully restore peat, we should reduce damage to peat. The proposed lowland agricultural peat taskforce to be started up in next couple of months will be a key element in making recommendations for getting drained agricultural peatland onto a more sustainable footing. Will include actions any farmer could take as well as exploring more innovative solutions including paludiculture.
- Protect –will phase out most damaging remaining practices, possibly through regulation, with consultation on measures
- Foresee a mixture of public and private investment supporting further peatland restoration.
- Outlined forthcoming government funds for peatlands - nature for climate fund, nature recovery fund and green recovery fund
- The Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund will also help organisations become financially resilient and increase funding levels, stimulating a pipeline of projects generating revenue through ecosystem services, attracting private investment. There is a survey for anyone interested in helping shape this fund.
- The forthcoming Environmental Land Management scheme is a key strand of government funding for peat management, founded on the principle of public money for public goods. It is intended to help achieve the goals of the 25 YEP and net zero emissions goal. Defra is working with a range of stakeholders to collaboratively design the new scheme so it is fit for purpose.
- Currently a programme of tests and trials is being run. Then in 2021 a National pilot will test and refine the scheme before it is launched in 2024.
- Explained the different tiers and where peatland management could fit into these. It is envisaged that Tier 3 would be the main home for peatland restoration as it focuses on large scale ambitious projects looking at big environmental challenges. However, there are opportunities within the other tiers as well, e.g. for paludiculture within Tier 1.

e) **How the farming sector can reach net carbon zero and what help is needed** – presented by Adam Briggs, National Farmers Union

- The presentation focussed on 3 areas – NFU's ambitions for net zero carbon; discussion of the issues around peat; engagement with farmers

- Agriculture contributes to 10% of UK GHG emissions.
- The Committee on Climate Change report made recommendations on land management technique changes e.g. increasing trees, low carbon practices such as reducing fertiliser use, restoring peat, planting energy crops, reducing waste and consumption of the most carbon-intensive foods
- NFU responded by setting out discussion document on how the sector could be net zero by 2040
- Three key areas - improve efficiency (productivity and reducing emissions); increase and manage carbon storage on farms; boosting land-based renewable energy production/CCUS (carbon capture, utilisation and storage)
- Document is to help farmers to positively engage as well as influence policy and supply chain
- Land use sector is one that has the potential to absorb carbon – if there is money in releasing carbon, there must be money in combatting this
- The current situation is that farmers are on the defensive - feel that they are being blamed – need a different approach and an indicator of how much financial return C reduction will bring to the industry
- Peat – feel that approaches to improved peatland management in the uplands such as reducing livestock density would be easier to achieve than the challenge of lowland areas where we are talking about very productive land growing high value crops
- Many lowland peat farmers are not participating in government support schemes currently e.g. countryside stewardship so the opportunity cost to overcome and change activity will be massive. Massive but key challenge is how to motivate and engage these farmers.
- e.g. in the Fens, which cover 4% of England's farmed area, over 7% of England's total agricultural output is produced
- Agriculture sector is getting mixed messages – e.g. support the trend to eat more plant based products but need to remove the land these are grown on from production
- Solution could be focussing on the difference between sustainable management of peatland and restoration – i.e. reducing the impact of current practices e.g. tree planting, minimum/zero till, cover crops, peat alternative products
- One issue is that everyone sits in separate silos looking at the issue from their point of view only and there is not a lot of joined up thinking
- There are easy wins – which can be demonstrated and help to take everyone with them – less environmentally damaging but also economically rewarding solutions
- To help, we need to engage positively with landowners – move from blaming them for being the problems to asking how we can help and support.
- Focus on things that deliver for peatland and sustainability and farmer returns; funding is key for delivery; biodiversity net gain could play a part as well as private funds; engagement with the supply chain is a major factor e.g. horticultural producers.
- Recommends being realistic and clear with farmers Be realistic about ambition and be clear on which land types/areas are going to take which approach – sustainable management or restoration.

5) Breakout group findings

(nb these also include comments/points added through the chat function)

Barriers/Gaps

Barriers	Policy Gaps	Issues/Questions
It can be hard for a land manager to see the financial benefits of restoring peat	There is no current agri-environment scheme financial mechanism to support action on peat	How will existing countryside stewardship continue to be funded through ELM?
	No long term support for land managers with healthy peatlands to maintain them in this condition	
Sometimes see peatlands as just a carbon issue.	England peat strategy should focus on the whole ecology and function of peatlands not just the peat itself – to ensure that opportunities to realise the wider benefits of peatlands, such as biodiversity, are not missed.	Could be damaging if not recognised
	No clear hierarchy of priorities for peat. No way to resolve conflicting land uses at present	There is conflict between targets for forestry, renewables and peatlands – could encourage inappropriate activity on peatland and conflicting land management options e.g. strategic locations for wind farms and forestry. Windfarm construction on peat is damaging.
	Need for immediate action - need to reduce and limit damage taking place on peatlands	Turf production needs to be addressed as it is highly unsustainable
Land managers are not clear or confident yet on policy/government direction and are reluctant to take action	There is not a strong enough signal of commitment from government to encourage change	
Responsibility for /clear coordination of peatland areas – this doesn't exist in every area e.g. no one in charge of the West Pennine Moors	There is a need for an equivalent organisation to the Forestry Commission for peatlands with a clear remit and goals	

Different organisations have responsibility for different ecosystem services (e.g. Environment Agency for flood management, water quality, Natural England for biodiversity) but there is no one organisation for peat which provides many ecosystem services	Responsibilities need to be clearer for peatlands	No one team is responsible for peatlands – 10% of someone's problem, or 100% of nobody's problem!
	UK regulatory mechanism for managing peat – clear standards, guidance, rules, mechanisms	
Complexity in land ownership e.g. tenanting the land to farming or game sports activities. Uncertainty over who gets paid – the tenant or the land-owner?		Paying farmers for carbon stored in peat soils is OK but 49% of upland farms are tenanted - who gets the money? What happens on common land, which often houses large areas of peat, but the soil is considered to be the landowners but the commoners have grazing rights? If it is the landowner who has the carbon responsibility, what about the impact of sporting tenants on the peat resource??
		If a tenant received some payment for carbon/peat management then the landlord could claw this back in the rent depending on the tenancy agreement etc
Association of Drainage Authorities – this is a very influential organisation in lobbying and members pay into it – this can skew the situation with respect to wanting to reduce/stop drainage of peatlands		
Not enough evidence available on the benefits resulting from what restoration/intervention has been done – how effective are the measures taken?	Need a policy to provide guidance on the best way of environmentally managing peatlands	Better evidence base /guidance needed

Evidence gaps compared to carbon – need more evidence-based methods so an economic case can be made – collective approach needed.		
The horticulture industry is nervous about adopting peat-free products as they are so reliant on the use of peat – there is concern over yields and additional costs of food production – lack of knowledge on how peat alternatives affect productivity levels – need research	No plan for helping transition away from using peat – need to overcome barriers such as lack of research, capital costs, increased risks, lower productivity.	Be prepared to subsidise reduction in productivity from switching to non-peat products (**if** this is in fact the case)
Peat-free products for horticulture – perception that quality and quantity not there yet. Also there is high demand at the moment with popularity of gardening – concern that unable to maintain supply if too quick a shift to alternative products.	No dependable income to enable alternatives?	Cost is issue – need high quality at acceptable cost.
Lack of research into peat-free alternatives for horticulture		Turf production on peat is even worse than extraction for horticulture
	No information/encouragement to use/gain from biodiversity gains from improvements of SSSIs? How to "sell" it?	
No way currently to quantify "value" (financially) across different land uses to pay farmers for public goods	This is recognised - Treasury want the numbers for accounting	Under development through ELM?
National natural capital mapping is fraught with difficulty - a long way to go		
History of changes in the removal of drainage in the farming sector is that this is a very controversial area – a big cultural change and challenge to switch from food to non-food production	Need a link to policies/projections on food production /food waste reduction? Need to be transparent and provide reassurance that impact of change has been thought through and that policies are joined up.	
High yield/income, particularly in lowlands is a barrier – issue of economic returns	Need greater incentives for change. Need to prioritise actions e.g. certain areas for food	A field's yield in the Fens, in monetary terms, is double that of a field anywhere else in the UK. Highly productive e.g. potatoes £5000 per

	production and use paludiculture where it can sustain an area in a productive way	hectare profit, and wheat at £1000 per hectare profit. However, these high value soils are being lost and farming them is non-sustainable
		Need to address issue of high yield land and how to address sustainable management and practicalities including farmer engagement there
The term paludiculture can put people off as not familiar		
Not enough evidence-based methods on paludiculture – may not be ready for everyone or anywhere		
Farmers perspective that there are too many ideas/changes – not clear, constantly fire-fighting.		Farmers have too much to deal with, too busy.
Peatlands GHG emissions are hidden – not visible, not well known about	Evidence for benefits of restoration and paludiculture to CO_2 emissions should be set out clearly	
The thought of permanent land use change is daunting to farmers and creates barriers. Memories of previous bad experiences e.g. promotion of cultivation of oil seed rape was not a success		
Current lack of trust and communication between farmers and environmentalists/NGOs. Lack of engagement - ambitions being set without input from farmers or dealing with practicalities or costs, or showing benefits to farmers	Consultation with farmers and clear information on practicalities/costs/benefits	Farmers feel talked down to. Need to be talked to on their terms.
Barriers between policy makers and farmers. Not understanding farmers' current problems, let alone moving from current to new support systems.		Need direct engagement with agricultural businesses

Can't see a reliable, dependable source of income for landowners under proposed changes	Monetisation of carbon and ecosystem services (paying for true costs of impacts)	How can we value carbon? We would need to attach a value related to the negative impacts of climate change not just a market value. It needs to be more fundamental.
No market for carbon – needs to be a return that is better than current return.	System for goods and ecosystem services incentives needed.	At the moment, high value crops (those which go direct to retailer), even if there are challenges such as flooded land, have enough of a return to make it worthwhile. They were supported under CAP – this could all change? But will ELM Tier 3 be set at a high enough rate of compensation?
County level documents are out of date on climate change. Difficult balance in agricultural areas – how protect food chains and businesses as move out of EU.	Renewed and refreshed local policies	
Agriculture is not within the remit of Local Authority planning system – so drivers need to come from elsewhere for farming support/change		
Government funding often only funds capital investment costs not covering costs of planning and managing landscape-scale projects. Can limit the ambition of peatland partnerships if there is a lack of capacity to deliver.	Lack of recognition of funding gaps from funders/government or action to address these	

Actions/Enablers

Enabler	Action	Suggestion
	Incentivise reducing drainage to reduce movement of sediment loads	Flip model of drainage boards to something equivalent for peat management – payment opportunity for benefits? – an Association of peat re-wetting boards?
Peatland should be a theme in its own right in the Environment Agency – needs separate responsibility		
Peat should be recognised as a multi-benefit resource – focus on carbon, biodiversity, water quality and flood risk		Ensure we consider biodiversity aspects of peat too
	Strong signal of commitment needed NOW from government would give practitioners confidence to act	
Leaving EU does not mean we lose drivers to act, we still have UN/International commitments	There are still opportunities for the UK to get involved and cooperate on work across the EU	Important for UK to still be involved in the EU Decade for Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030)
	Trees, windfarms and peat must all be optimised - not compromising each other	
	Provide support for the horticulture industry to move to being peat-free	
Biodiversity Net Gain		
Accessible or shared repositories for information – e.g. national or local nature partnerships	Creation of data hubs to share knowledge with academics and practitioners e.g. eyes on the bog – long term data sets based on citizen science repository	These could act as informed or informing bodies for policy
Long term roadmap for peatland management		
	Engage local non-land management community – needs to be involved and informed to ensure peatlands valued and protected.	
EA withdrawing maintenance of drainage and change to future drainage strategy programme		

Trials of paludiculture	Look at long-term viability of paludiculture that farmers WANT to adopt (instead of being encouraged/told to adopt)	
Education, guidance, case-studies for farmers/landowners are needed for paludiculture	Need to look what would work at farm level (as well as alternative options).	e.g. Example site in Germany of rewetting meadows, used sheep grazing for biodiversity through CAP payments. Sheep chosen for their light weight and for food production to continue; and grazing promoted the habitat for ground nesting birds.
Sharing knowledge and skills with plant growers	Need direct conversations with growers e.g. with growers' groups	Sphagnum as a peat-free product works well. Beadamoss product already developed for large scale and are working with peat-free businesses. Peat-free trials with growers and suppliers helps attitudes to change. Beadamoss working on new 3 year project to bring paludiculture work to commercial scale, working with farmers. Also working on quantifying the technical advantages of using Sphagnum in peat-free mixes, as it has similar qualities to peat
Pioneer farmers lead change through demonstrating alternative practices and benefits	ID measures that farmers can take NOW to reduce soil loss and emissions e.g. start with seasonal re-wetting	Need to find a middle ground in agricultural practices
		Protection of peat is obviously a consideration for long term agricultural production so there is an opportunity for sustainability as a focus
Significant climate change act/climate budget targets will contribute to change		In the lowlands, local authorities own tens of thousands of hectares in county farms – could be organisations to trial carbon farming if they have a net-zero pledge
Getting evidence together is vital and convening land managers and stakeholders	Need to break down barriers between policy makers and farmers,	

	Salford CC could promote no peat use in horticulture and make public noises about doing the right thing on peat	
Dependable source of income for farmers needed	Need to start action now through Countryside Stewardship, not wait for ELM	Will ELM deliver?
Compensation payments and additional grants where land value/loss of income are high		
Sphagnum moss could be a high value crop for lowlands		There could be a fit due to the public goods that will be delivered such as reduced GHG emissions.
Clear funding stream or incentive to manage sustainably – will motivate farmers	Monetise carbon and ecosystem services	
Investment Readiness fund – could this include funding engagement work with NFU members?		This has worked well in the Broads, but we would benefit from more resource for this major block
	Need to start bringing together groups and organisations to get ready for effective collaboration and partnership working. Do this now while we are developing the evidence bases for ecosystem service outcomes and getting the balance of priorities correct (lots of good practice examples of this e.g. Scotland, Duchy of Cornwall, Duchy of Lancaster, Grosvenor Estates, Moors for the Future	
	In developing local approaches, need to engage all sectors, determine priorities for local areas and strike a balance between economics and environmental protection.	

6) Q&A and notes from chat

Q: Is the comparison to emissions from aviation at a global or UK level?

A: Global. Direct emissions from aviation amount to about 2% of the world's emissions, while emissions from peatlands are around 5% globally.

Q: Is there any update on the Peatland Code?

A: There have been discussions but no definitive answer presently

Q: Paludiculture – what is NFU view on the potential for this?

A: Will provide an opportunity for some farmers. Farmers will look at returns; also they tend to be quite conservative. Need a few leaders to make the change and demonstrate the approach, skills required and returns.

Q: Recently a fen farmer made the point that buyers demanding low emissions products could be a major influence – what views does Adam have?

A: Agree that supply chain could be a major influencer e.g. Arla is encouraging suppliers to improve practices, McDonalds encourages greater efficiency from suppliers, Brewdog beer is zero carbon. Policy pressure is one thing, monetary incentives are another and supply chain incentivisation is also a very strong influencer/change-maker. Change needs to be a no-brainer for farmers.

<u>Other Notes/information recorded from the chat session:</u>

- Windfarm construction on peatlands has expanded enormously, with very considerable impacts on the peatland habitat. Windfarm developments in Shetland, for example, are currently tearing the Shetland community apart (see, for example, online Shetland News), while places such as the Monadhliaths are now described as surrounded by a 'ring of steel'. Actual construction methods commonly differ significantly (and are far more damaging) than are set out in the consented application. In Ireland, the Irish Government is currently being fined 15,000 Euros per day until it cleans up the impacts of a huge peatslide caused in 2003 by windfarm road construction.
- There has been significant funding committed to delivering peatland restoration by governments across the UK over the next few years, which is great. This funding is often limited to 'capital' investment in the habitat but fails to recognise the real costs of planning and managing these landscape-scale projects. It can limit the ambitions of peatland partnership if there is a lack of capacity to deliver. How do we get greater recognition of these costs from the funding organisations/governments?
- We need to be wary of Peat strategy rather than Peatland strategy - focus on protecting just peat misses biodiversity importance
- We (Beadamoss) have just been awarded a new 3 year Sphagnum Farming project to bring our initial paludiculture work to a commercial scale, working alongside farmers searching for land uses which generate income (the Sphagnum will be sold for use as a peat-replacement in horticulture) but to also protect their fenland/peatland soils (which the Sphagnum allows).
- On the Natural Capital Asset mapping, Defra is looking to invest into this, we are waiting for confirmation on the outcome of the spending review. However, Defra has received £5m to start piloting a new Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment Programme

- Good point about dependable source of income for farmers. Can ELM do this?
- We do not have the luxury of waiting to see if ELM can pay - surely we need to look at how we can use existing mechanisms to kickstart action in Countryside Stewardship
- It can't just be a financial problem with the market valuing different elements i.e. how can we value carbon? we would need to attach a value related to negative impacts of climate change not just a market value. It needs to be more fundamental.
- The incentives are good but the land value in the lowlands remains a barrier, so compensation payments and additional grants are required. I wonder if Tier 3 payments will be enough.
- In terms of Tier 1 paludiculture, Sphagnum farming would offer a high value crop so for lowlands we hope this could be a credible/viable option?
- Nothing is agreed yet, but it fits due to the public goods that will be delivered such as reduced GHG emissions.
- Could the IRF include the engagement work with NFU members. This has worked well in the Broads, but we would benefit from more resource for this major block
- About UN/FAO best practices and monitoring task forces here; https://www.eurosite.org/other-news/new-task-forces-to-support-the-un-restoration-decade/
- Quick thought for Policy options for instant implementation - in the Lowlands Local Councils own 10,000s ha of land in County Farms - Potentially organisations to push to trial carbon farming if they have a net-zero pledge
- Re horticulture sector, please also remember impact of turf production as highlighted in the report on the GM Peat Pilot
- For those not aware of the GM peat pilot findings, turf production was found to be the highest emitting land use on Chat Moss
- Turf production is something we need to address very quickly as it is unsustainable
- There is still some turf growing in West Lancs.
- A note that at the current predicted rate of emissions the carbon in some of Manchester's peatlands will be lost in circa 100 years - i.e. no peatland left
- Can I urge more research into peat free alternatives for amateur horticulture please? I've been using them for years with very mixed results.
- Yes, the quality of peat-free is difficult due to technical capabilities. Beadamoss is working on quantifying the technical advantages of using Sphagnum in peat-free mixes, as it has similar qualities to peat, working with Melcourt Industries (who produce great peat-free products already - recommend them if you're struggling to find good quality products).
- There is a body of work in bringing groups and organisations together to get ready for effective collaboration and partnership working. This should be done whilst we are developing the evidence bases for the ecosystem service outcomes and also getting the balance of priorities correct.
- Opportunity to take discussion forward at IUCN 2020 Virtual Conference 9-12 November - details will be out shortly
- Paying farmers for carbon stored in peat soils is OK but 49% of upland farms are tenanted - who gets the money - the farmer or the landowner? What happens on common land, which often houses large areas of peat. If it is the landowner, what about the impact of sporting tenants on the peat resource??
- I'm not sure re who gets the carbon rights/payments, how does it work with grazing rights?
- Commons rightsholders usually only have the right to remove vegetation by grazing in the uplands. The landowner of the common has ownership of the soil and minerals.

- A hypothetical this but there is precedent - assuming a tenant received some payment for carbon/peat management then the landlord could claw this back in the rent depending on the tenancy agreement etc
- There are good practice examples of landlords allowing tenants crofters etc access to carbon rights (in Scotland)
- Duchy of Cornwall working with commoners also. The Duchy of Cornwall are doing home farm natural capital plans - they will roll this out on to the common land that they own in 2022.
- Will the Duchy of Cornwall work link to the Duchy of Lancaster/ Duke of Westminster?
- Duchy of Lancaster and Grosvenor Estates both working positively on peatland/moorland management in Forest of Bowland.
- The Duchy of Lancaster and Duchy of Cornwall are separate entities but they do share a lot of management strategies
- There is a fabulous Duchy of Cornwall land agent, Tom Stratton, down here in Devon who is leading the way for peatland restoration - really inspiring.
- Reminder that there is also the Lancashire Peat Partnership as a forum for involvement

7) Next steps for Care-Peat policy work

Niall O'Brolchain from National University of Ireland, Galway outlined the next steps in terms of the policy workstream of Care-Peat. The reports from this workshop and other partner workshops (there is one for each country) will be brought together, compared and learnt from. They will be used to develop a policy brief identifying key areas for future policy to develop to enable restoration of peatlands.

Niall aims to set up an EU workshop in Brussels on a European wide basis to seek comments on this from EU policy makers (including from the UK) and MEPS

While the UK is very proactive on peatland policy, there is still a need to work with other EU countries/organisations.

Care-Peat is also developing business cases in a number of areas that could support peatland restoration including carbon and blue credits, carbon farming and paludiculture and co-existence with renewable energy generation.

LWT and MMU will run further stakeholder events under Care-Peat in 2021 so there will be further opportunities to get involved and find out more.

8) Further Links

Care-peat project site https://www.nweurope.eu/projects/project-search/care-peat-carbon-loss-reduction-from-peatlands-an-integrated-approach/

Lancashire Wildlife Trust Care-Peat page https://www.lancswt.org.uk/our-work/projects/care-peat-partnership

Email sjohnson@lancswt.org.uk

Manchester Metropolitan University Care-Peat page https://www.mmu.ac.uk/ecology-and-environment/our-expertise/conservation-ecology-and-environmental-biology-/current-projects/

Email cfield@mmu.ac.uk

NUIG contact: niall.obrolchain@nuigalway.ie

Beadamoss site http://www.beadamoss.co.uk/

Emails: neal@microprop.co.uk / jacqueline@beadamoss.co.uk

Care-Peat policy report https://www.nweurope.eu/projects/project-search/care-peat-carbon-loss-reduction-from-peatlands-an-integrated-approach/news/report-on-peatland-policies-and-strategies-in-north-west-europe/

UN Decade of Restoration https://www.eurosite.org/other-news/new-task-forces-to-support-the-un-restoration-decade/

IUCN 2020 conference https://www.iucn-uk-peatlandprogramme.org/events/iucn-uk-peatland-programme-conference-2020-peatlands-strategy-action

National Farmers Union net zero goal https://www.nfuonline.com/nfu-online/business/regulation/achieving-net-zero-farmings-2040-goal/

Peatland code https://www.iucn-uk-peatlandprogramme.org/funding-finance/peatland-code