



National Parks England's Key Points for the England Peat Strategy

(August 2020)

1. The Strategy should include a commitment to restore or at the very least sustainably manage all deep peat habitats so that they are sequestering carbon once again. As a priority we must protect those areas of intact functioning peatlands, as not all peatlands can or should be restored to functioning blanket bog.
2. As a network of National Parks we are committed to restoring a minimum of 45,000 ha of peatland over the next 10 years as part of wider plans for nature recovery. We look to Government and other partners for support in this ambition.
3. National Park Authorities (NPAs) and the Broads Authority have been involved in some of the biggest landscape management schemes in the country over the past 10 years. National Parks England (NPE) believes National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are critical strategic locations where partnerships can work together on large scale peatland restoration projects and should be prioritised in the Strategy and Nature Climate Fund.
4. The Strategy should have more concrete targets post 2025, and a clearer trajectory for peatland emissions. There is currently a big gap between 2025 and 2050.
5. We look for clarity over what is meant by 'more sustainable management' of peat in the final Strategy. This needs to be more carefully defined in order to support the setting of targets and achievable and measurable outcomes.
6. The Strategy should value peat habitat for its ability to preserve the historic environment and past environments as well as the cultural services it provides to society.
7. Whilst welcoming the objective to bring 75 % of SSSIs into favourable condition, NPE is concerned to ensure plans are also put in place for the remaining 25% and for the large areas of non-SSSI peatland which is found in protected landscapes.
8. The Peat Strategy needs to recognise that it is people who deliver peatland restoration. Capital funding alone is not enough to achieve peatland restoration. It requires proper engagement of landowners, farmers and commoners to achieve their buy-in and active support. Providing enough lead in time and support to engage, inspire, and give confidence to applicants should be an important feature of the Nature Climate Fund.
9. The Peat Strategy should facilitate learning, networking, and knowledge sharing between science, policy makers and land managers. It will be important to be able to demonstrate the successful application of restoration science and practice to land managers and investors so that all involved understand and are able to communicate the many benefits from peat restoration.

10. There needs to be continuity in funding for the Nature Climate Fund. Contractors are reluctant to invest in skills and machinery without seeing long term opportunities for work. A series of short-term projects with gaps in between will not build the momentum necessary to deliver the long term outcomes required. The Nature Climate Fund will need to incentivise long term investment in machinery and skills in the private sector.
11. NPAs, the Broads Authority and AONB Partnerships should be included in the eligibility criteria for the Nature Climate Fund, and able to bid for peat restoration projects within their areas. As local experts, providing funding to National Parks, for example, for peatland restoration will help develop and retain expertise and local knowledge, and cultivate long-term relationships with landowners and managers.
12. The Nature Climate Fund could provide a vital boost to the delivery of the Net Zero with Nature programme in National Parks. This is an exciting range of shovel ready projects that NPAs and the Broads Authority are hoping to take forward with private sector backing. Public funding through the Nature for Climate Fund would help them to secure private match funding, scale up, and achieve more – more quickly.
13. The future Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELMS) will be a vital mechanism for achieving the Peat Strategy objectives. Future ELM schemes should ensure that the value of peatlands is recognised and rewarded in land management agreements. There should be a clearly communicated presumption in favour of peatland restoration in ELMS, if land holders have peatland, rather than it just being an option.
14. A lowland carbon calculator is required. We advocate adapting the 'Site Emissions Tool by 'Carbon Connect' to calculate GHG emissions from lowlands, rather than repeating and commissioning a separate calculation tool.
15. National Park Management Plans (and their equivalents in AONBs) should be used to set the scene, articulate the goals for peat restoration and be the organising framework for working with land managers, communities and agencies to co-design and deliver the action required.
16. Defra should provide a small amount of funding to assist the facilitation and administration of local and regional peat partnerships to help ensure peatland work is effectively coordinated.
17. There needs to be strong synergy between the goals and mechanisms in the Peat and Tree Strategies. Both need to reinforce the 'Right Tree in the Right Place' concept to ensure historical damage to peatlands caused by a drive to deliver planting targets is not repeated.
18. Reducing the risk of wildfires is essential. This needs a National Wildfire Strategy; national co-ordination in times of high risk of wildfire (eg. through national weather reports that highlight wildfire risk like UV and pollen levels); and ongoing support for Wildfire Partnerships that can plan and coordinate activities locally.
19. The phasing out of burning on deep peat should be completed as quickly as possible in all places where there is no overriding conservation objective that is served by burning.

If you would like to receive a copy of National Parks England's full response to the Defra consultation on its Peat Strategy, please email enquiries@nationalparksengland.org.uk