

Upland Peatland Restoration - ensuring a developing consensus

Draft Terms of Reference for a Board Upland Peatland working group

At its meeting on 24 September 2014 Natural England Board considered a paper from the Executive setting out progress on evidence, guidance and stakeholder consensus relating to some of the issues that require resolution for upland peatland restoration. In noting positive progress with stakeholder dialogue, and approving the direction of travel of the consensus approach, the Board required a greater degree of comfort and clarity around the way in which evidence will be used to inform guidance, and translate into agreed practice.

A small working group was set up with to ensure Board comfort and clarity around the proposed approach and the outcomes NE seeks to deliver with stakeholder support in the uplands. The group comprises Board members Julia Aglionby (Chair) & Andy Clements, with Guy Thompson, Alan Law & Tim Hill from the Executive.

Terms of Reference

Timescale: Points 1-3 by January 2015 Board meeting with Points 4-5 ongoing with 6 month reviews.

1. Establish scope and findings of the evidence review to date and summarise for the Board
2. Ensure there is common agreement on the breadth and quality of evidence needed and that the gaps and weaknesses are identified and explicitly considered in developing guidance
3. Provide assurance for the process for bringing together evidence and other fact finding appraisals to inform guidance and practice e.g. agreed findings from Bogathon
4. Establish next steps for NE Board approval.
5. Ensure we meet NE's commitments for stakeholder engagement and ownership of outcomes both in the collation of evidence and the development of guidance
6. Provide ongoing Board oversight to the Executive's implementation of the consensus approach across Areas and Directorates

In undertaking this work, the group expects to:

- note that we should not stall the development of guidance due to gaps in research but will move forward collectively incorporating practice based evidence agreed with stakeholders
- highlight areas where research or data collection is most needed to fill key evidence gaps
- agree the excellent progress made in recent weeks;
- consider whether the current culture within all relevant staff is aligned with the consensus approach and what support and training would assist staff to take ownership of that approach;
- work with the external and internal evidence and guidance including the Upland Evidence Review, the National Upland Outcomes framework and relevant socio-economic research;
- ensure that the seven contextual points made by Alan Law at the Board meeting are agreed and effectively communicated at all stages.

The work of this group will support and provide quality assurance for:

- the Executive's narrative on taking forward the agreed strategy for the January 2015 NE Board;
- the linking of the Upland Evidence Review and other data for the development of guidance