PEATBOGS AND CARBON, A CRITICAL SYNTHESIS TO INFORM POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN OCEANIC PEATBOG CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION IN THE CONTEXT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Output number: 01
Output type: Report (Portfolio)
Output Year: 2010


ISSN/ISBN: DOI: 
Is duplicate? No 
Is interdisciplinary? Yes 
Geography, Environmental Studies 
Pending publication? No 

No. Co-authors: 0 
Cross-ref? UoA17 
Double-weight? No 

Research group: ERG - Environmental Research Group
1 DESCRIPTION, PICTURES and DRAWINGS

2 EVIDENCE OF IMPACT


2.3 IUCN (2010) UK Peatland Commission of Inquiry, report downloadable at www.iucn-uk-peatlandprogramme.org/commission/findings

2.4 Brooks, Stuart, Chair. IUCN UK Committee (2013) ‘Critical assessment of Peatlands and carbon management’, Reference letter on behalf of R A Lindsay, 22 January

2.5 Joint Environment Ministers (2013) ‘Securing benefits from UK peatlands’ Joint Ministerial letter making commitments to peatland conservation and restoration, 5 February

2.6 Moxey, Andrew, Chair, Pareto consulting (2013), Reference letter on behalf of R A Lindsay, 23 January


2.11 Lindsay, R.A., 2010. UK Peatlands: Habitat restoration delivering ecosystem benefits. Host and keynote speaker at IUCN/DEFRA Side-Event at Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) 10th Conference of Parties, October 2010, Nagoya, Japan


3 LECTURES, WORKSHOPS and STRATEGY

Selection of lectures between 2008-2013

4 BIBLIOGRAPHY


4.8 Shetland Times (2013), ‘Peatland expert to give lecture’, The Shetland Times, 12 August


This critical research review has underpinned key policy developments concerning peatland management in the UK and in the wider global community. The review was commissioned by RSPB Scotland with funding from Scottish Natural Heritage, Countryside Council for Wales, Natural England and the Forestry Commission. It was commissioned to bring clarity to policy discussions about the role of peat bog carbon flux and the potential relationship with climate change. Existing scientific literature appeared contradictory and confusing, leaving policy-makers unsure about how to proceed in terms of peat bogs and carbon. The review re-assessed and evaluated many research sites, sometimes in the field, and also re-analysed much published literature in the light of these re-assessments. The review revealed that confusion and contradiction in the scientific literature has arisen because researchers have not described their research sites appropriately. The review assembled a wide range of figures concerning peat bogs and carbon flux, and subsequently underpinned establishment and establishment of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) UK Peatland Programme in 2009. It was used as the core briefing document for the IUCN’s UK Peatland Programmes Commission of Inquiry on Peatlands and underpins subsequent Ministerial announcements concerning peatland restoration (see RO 2). The review has also informed the UK Committee on Climate Change in terms of peatland ecosystem responses. It also formed the basis of a keynote presentation made by Mr Lindsay on behalf of the IUCN UK Peatland Programme to a DEFRA-sponsored Side Event at COP10 of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya, Japan, following which peatlands were confirmed as key ecosystems within the CBD Aichi Targets and Strategic Plan 2011-2020. The review also assisted the decision-making process to include peatlands as part of the carbon-accounting process for the Kyoto Protocol.
2 EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

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R A Lindsay was invited by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to speak about the international significance of peatlands at a presentation made to Mr Peter de Haan and the Peter de Haan Charitable Trust. As a result of the presentation, the PDH Trust provided £400,000 over a three year period to support establishment of the IUCN UK Peatland Programme. The need for such a programme was highlighted by R A Lindsay’s RO.1, which then underpinned the establishment and objectives of the programme. The letter from Mr Stuart Brooks, Chair of the IUCN UK National Committee points to the part played by Lindsay’s report in establishing the IUCN programme.


2.3 IUCN (2010) UK Peatland Commission of Inquiry, report downloadable at www.iucn-uk-peatlandprogramme.org/commission/findings

2.4 Brooks, Stuart, Chair, IUCN UK Committee (2013): ‘Critical assessment of Peatlands and carbon management’ - Reference letter on behalf of R A Lindsay, 22 January

One of the key things to emerge from R A Lindsay’s RO.1 Report was the scale of confusion which existed about peatlands across a whole range of sectors, including the scientific literature. The first act of the IUCN UK Peatland Programme was thus to establish a Commission into Peatlands in order to bring clarity to the peatland debate.

Critical Assessment of Peatlands and Carbon Management

I am writing to give an outline account of the very positive impact which has been achieved by Mr Richard Lindsay’s commissioned work on peatlands. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is a global organisation providing an influential and authoritative voice for nature conservation and helping build dialogue across the public and private sector. The IUCN UK Peatland Programme promotes peatland restoration and conservation, through partnerships, strong science, sound policy and effective practice.

The important role of peatlands in relation to climate change has been highlighted at a level by the United Nations following publication of an Assessment on Peatlands in 2007. Around that time a major gathering of peatland interests in policy and carbon science (London Conference) failed to agree on the carbon benefits of peatland management and highlighted a need for consensus on the science to enable stronger policy and action to conserve peatlands.

The work commissioned from Richard Lindsay on Peatlands and Carbon provided a critical insight into the reasons behind the confusing and apparently conflicting science and identified ways forward to help to build consensus. This work provided the catalyst for the development of the IUCN UK Peatland Programme whose work, included objectives to address the science issues raised in Mr Lindsay’s report.1

With Mr Lindsay as an expert advisor to the IUCN UK PIP, a Commission of Inquiry on peatlands was established, with patrons, Prof Andrew Watson, Lord Jamie Lindsay and Sir Graham Wynne. A series of scientific reviews were undertaken2 and Mr Lindsay’s work was used as briefing to all review teams to help establish a common understanding on peatland definitions, form and function. As a result, the review teams overcome many of the earlier confusions in interpreting peatland science and provided greater clarity and consensus which enabled stronger recommendations from the Inquiry. The work of the Inquiry has enabled representation to be made in Parliament in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the House of Lords which has been followed up by Government Ministerial statements, policies and funding in support of peatlands.

22nd January 2013

Mr Lindsay’s work was also taken to the International Convention on Biological Diversity (IOPP) in Japan where peatlands and their climate change role were subsequently highlighted in the Strategic plan for 2011 - 2020. The work was also used as a basis for presentations made by the IUCN UK Peatland Programme at several international climate change conventions under the Kyoto Protocol, the most direct impact being that the UK was able to provide a strong consensus message about peatlands and climate change benefits which previously would have been difficult, given the apparently conflicting evidence. With peatlands firmly included in the carbon accounting for the Kyoto Protocol, Mr Lindsay’s work has been being further revealed in providing valuable background for UK scientists who are developing the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) guidance on peatland rewetting. Mr Lindsay’s work helps in interpreting the variety of carbon maps arising from peatlands which will enable agreed values that could have huge benefits in securing carbon funding for peatland restoration.

Mr Lindsay’s work also has an important benefit in the public affairs work of the IUCN UK Peatland Programme. Previously the apparent contradictions in the science made it difficult to convey a compelling case for peatland conservation and restoration. Several briefings and media stories have now been produced which help overcome such confusions. Current work is underway to develop Mr Lindsay’s report into a series of briefings for a more widespread audience of peatland managers and policy makers.

Mr Lindsay has also had an impact in individual site protection where his analyses has allowed robust evidence to be presented by statutory bodies and NGOs in addressing potentially damaging planning developments. These include the Lewis windfarm proposal on Islay, which was subsequently refused by Scottish Government. Further beneficial impact is also likely in that Mr Lindsay’s report is available to consultants and advisors to developers helping interpret the science at an early stage and reduce lengthy and costly arguments at the Inquiry.

In conclusion, Mr Lindsay’s work has provided an immensely important catalyst in securing action across a wide range of public, science and practice activities aimed at restoring and conserving peatlands. The further strength in the work is that it continues to be used as a foundation for both interpreting the science and in framing new research activity.

Yours faithfully,

Stuart Brooks
Chair, IUCN UK National Commission

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4 http://www.unep-gef.org/News/Press/2011/18/Peatlands(1)201112

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1 News item [http://www.iucn.org/indicators/attach/white_309f_peatlands.pdf]
We welcome the publication of the IUCN UK Peatland Programme Commission of Inquiry on Peatlands. The UK’s peatland habitats are of importance for wildlife and biodiversity, landscape values and economic, including leisure, activities. The Commission of Inquiry has drawn public attention to the value of our peatlands.

Recognising the impact of peatland use on the condition of our peatland ecosystems, this letter outlines the actions and intentions of Delta, the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Executive to achieve our collective aim of enhancing the natural capital of UK peatlands.

Policy co-ordination

The UK, together with the British Overseas Territories, supports internationally important peatland habitats and species including some of the finest examples of Atlantic blanket bog in the world. Conserving and restoring peatlands (blanket bogs, raised bogs and fens) makes an important contribution to the UK’s biodiversity objectives. As one of our major wetland types, peatlands have a potentially significant role in contributing to water quality and quantity benefits. The importance of peatlands in terms of climate change mitigation through conserving the carbon stocks and enhancing sequestration makes a strong case for improving the condition of our peatlands.

We recognise the wide ranging importance of peatlands and the need for co-ordinated Government action across biodiversity, climate change, water, heritage and land use. Whilst acknowledging that further research is required, action can be and is being taken.
Following COP10 of the CGB and agreement on the Aichi Targets, Lindsay was subsequently invited to contribute to a DEFRA/UNEP workshop which sought to identify appropriate indicators for the various Aichi Targets.
Based on his RO.1 Report, Lindsay was commissioned by the IUCN-UK Peatland Programme to host and speak at a DEFRA-sponsored Side Event at COP10 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to push for specific recognition of peatlands within the CBD Strategic Plan. Lindsay invited every official delegation to the event, with supporting briefing leaflet. Lindsay’s presentation drew on the issues highlighted in his RO.1 Report, as well as the work of the IUCN-UK Peatland Programme in promoting peatland restoration. The Strategic Plan and Aichi Targets for Biodiversity were finally agreed after intense negotiation, and peatlands explicitly feature in these Aichi targets.


3 WORKSHOPS, LECTURES and STRATEGY

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3.1 Lindsay, R.A. (2013), Course Leader, Shetland training course, Shetland Amenity Trust - Shetland, Lerwick, August

3.2 Lindsay, R.A. (2013), Contributor. Participation in MoorFutures Workshop - Moore Foundation, Berlin, January

3.3 Lindsay, R.A. (2013), Contributor. Participation in DEFRA-sponsored workshop to develop UK Peatland Code – held in parallel with MoorFutures workshop, Berlin, January


3.8 Lindsay, R.A. (2009), ‘Peat and Slope Stability’, presentation to Thames Valley Regional and Engineering Groups of the Geological Society, University of Reading, March

3.10 Lindsay, R.A. (2008), ‘Windfarms on Peat: scale of impacts’, presentation to European Parliament’s Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development Intergroup, Brussels, April
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4.8 Shetland Times (2013), ‘Peatland expert to give lecture’, The Shetland Times, 12 August.

