

A small amount of information has been redacted under Regulation 10(4)(e) (internal communications). This exception is subject to the 'public interest test'. Therefore, taking account of all the circumstances of this case, we have considered if the public interest in disclosing the information outweighs the public interest in applying the exception. We have found that, on balance, the public interest lies in favour of upholding the exception. We recognise that there is some public interest in releasing the information as part of an open, transparent and accountable government. However, this is outweighed by the greater public interest in allowing Scottish Government officials and ministers a private space to share free and frank views for the purpose of deliberation on any given policy.

Additionally, a small amount of information has been redacted from the documents disclosed under Regulation 11(2) - Personal Data as it contains personal information and disclosing it would contravene the data protection principles in Article 5(1) of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and in Section 34(1) of the Data Protection Act 2018. This exception is not subject to the 'public interest test'.

Briefing for visit to Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) managed peatland restoration site in the Atholl Estate

What	Minister for Climate Action visit to Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) managed peatland restoration site in the Atholl Estate.
Where	Meeting at: Atholl Estates Office, Blair Atholl, Pitlochry PH18 5TH Further travel from meeting point to restoration site is 45 minutes by 4x4 and will be facilitated by Atholl Estates ***Outdoor clothing required, appropriate for the weather on the day. Especially footwear with ankle support due to uneven ground.
When	Monday 12 August 2024 12:45–15:45 (3 hours)
Key message(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Scottish Government has committed £250 million over 10 years to restore 250,000 hectares of degraded peatlands by 2030. • Healthy peatlands have a central role in mitigating and adapting to the linked climate and nature emergencies. • Protecting, managing and restoring Scotland’s peatlands through rewetting and other techniques enhances the resilience of these ecosystems and helps them adapt to the changing climate. • Through supporting good, green jobs in the rural economy, our investment will also play a part in Scotland’s Just Transition to net zero by 2045.
Who	Grant Moir , Chief Executive Officer, CNPA - TBC Andy Ford , Director of Nature & Climate Change, CNPA - TBC Sandy Bremner , Board Convenor, CNPA [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] , Peatland Programme Manager, CNPA [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] , Head of Rural and Conservation, Atholl Estates Bertie Troughton , Director, Atholl Estates Andrew Bruce Wootton , CEO, Atholl Estates
Why	An opportunity to visit a Scottish Government funded peatland restoration site, engage with stakeholders and view the project site and understand how sites like this are approached and restoration is achieved.
Supporting official	[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] , Project Support Officer, Peatland Restoration Delivery, Nature Division. Mob: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
Briefing contents	Annex A: Maps and Directions Annex B: Agenda



Annex B

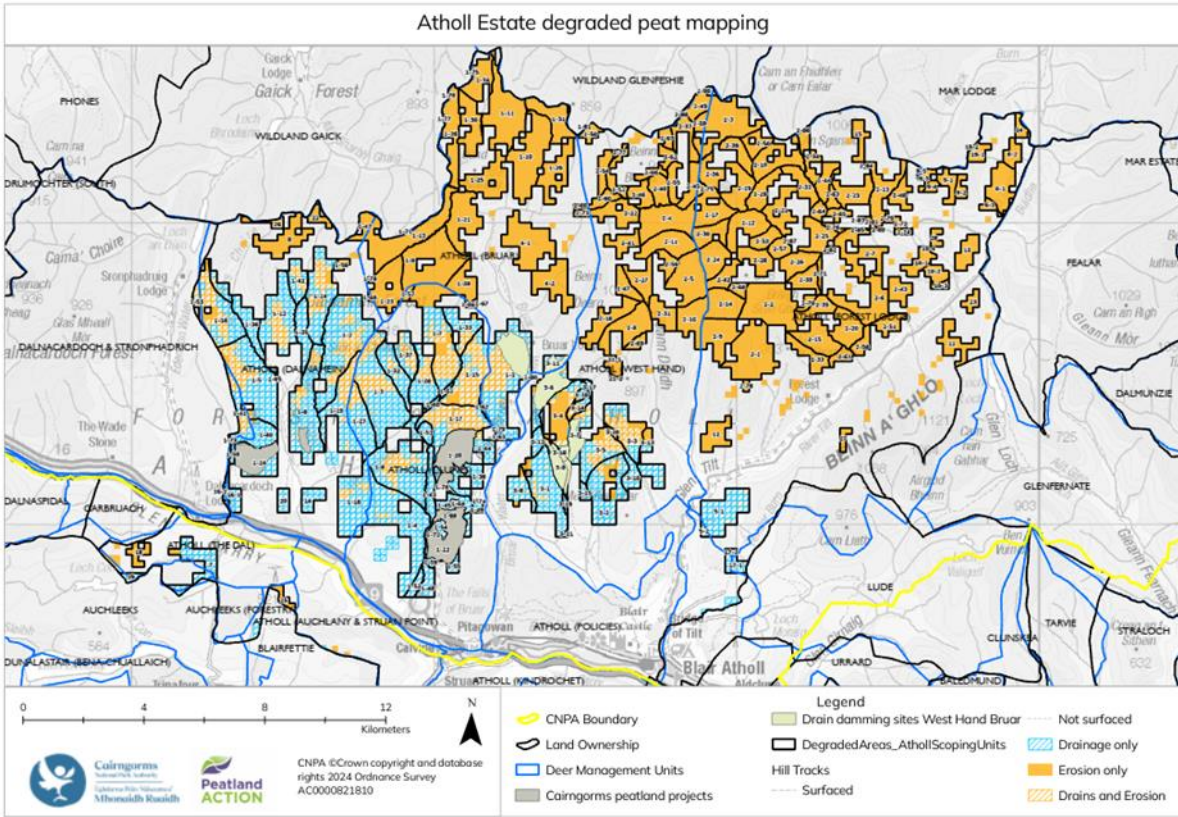
Agenda

12:45	Meet CNPA and Atholl Estate Teams at the Estate Office (welcome, use of facilities, transfer into 4 x 4 vehicles).
13:00-13:45	Travel to site (45 minutes)
13:45-13:50	Arrive at peatland restoration project site at Glen Bruar (facilities, cup of tea/coffee)
13:50-14:50	Walk to the peatland project site, see the drain network and discuss how sites like this are approached and restoration is achieved.
15:00-15:45	Travel to Estate Office (45 minutes)
15:45	Depart from Estate Office

Background on restoration site/Atholl estate

Atholl estate covers an area of 40,269 ha and contains approximately 8,950 ha of degraded peatland. It is estimated 5,200 ha are affected by erosion and 5,690 ha are affected by drainage ditches. In 2021-2022 there were c250 ha of drain blocking completed, in 2023 there were 76 ha completed, and in 2024 CNPA hope to deliver 329 ha of drain blocking work.





Annex C

Attendees / Biographies

<p>[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]</p>	<p>Andy Ford, Director of Nature and Climate Change, CNPA</p> <p>Andy is the Director of Nature and Climate Change at the Cairngorms National Park Authority. Since graduating with a degree in ecology from Sunderland University, Andy has over 30 years' experience working in countryside management. He worked as a ranger and nature reserve manager in Scotland, England and West Africa before joining the CNPA in 2005, becoming Director in 2021</p>
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[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]	<p>Grant Moir, Chief Executive Officer, CNPA</p> <p>Grant Moir joined the Cairngorms National Park Authority as Chief Executive in March 2013. He is a graduate of Aberdeen University and worked with the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority for seven years where he held the post of Director of Conservation and Visitor Experience. Prior to that he was in the Rural Affairs Department of the Scottish Executive. Grant hails from Perthshire.</p>
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[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]	<p>Sandy Bremner, Board Convenor, CNPA</p> <p>Sandy Bremner is Chair of the River Dee Trust, who are delivering one of the biggest nature-restoration projects in the Cairngorms. He has a strong focus on working with communities, and a determination that nature and people should thrive at a time of major challenges for both. Sandy's work on nature conservation follows a career as an award-winning journalist and broadcaster, living in North East Scotland. Sandy led a successful campaign to enhance national grant aid for river-restoration projects to help ecosystems and communities.</p>
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[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]	<p>[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)], Peatland ACTION Project Officer, CNPA</p> <p>[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]</p>
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[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]	<p>[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)], Head of Rural and Conservation, Atholl Estates</p> <p>[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]</p>
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[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]	<p>Bertie Troughton, Director, Atholl Estates</p> <p>Bertie has been the Director of Atholl Estates since 2019. The estate is home to an extensive and diverse range of wildlife and has played a progressive role in the history of Scottish forestry, a role which it continues to develop. Bertie also has a range of global business interests predominantly within the dry bulk shipping sector.</p>
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[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]	<p>Andrew Bruce Wootton, CEO, Atholl Estates</p> <p>Andrew has been CEO of Atholl Estates since 2000</p>
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Background Briefing - Peatlands

- Peatlands cover over 2 million hectares (or 25%) of Scotland and are of national and global significance. 60% of all UK peatlands are found in Scotland, and our blanket bog represents around 10% of the global total.
- Healthy peatlands have a central role in mitigating and adapting to the linked climate and nature emergencies. In good condition, peatlands provide multiple co-benefits: capturing and storing carbon, supporting nature, reducing flood risk, improving water quality and providing places that can support physical and mental wellbeing.
- But it has been estimated that around three quarters of our peatlands are degraded through drainage, extraction, overgrazing, burning, afforestation and development. Degraded peat offers fewer benefits and emits carbon, now accounting for around 15% [6.3 MtCO₂e/yr in 2021] of Scotland's total net emissions and worsening the climate emergency.
- Protecting, managing and restoring Scotland's peatlands through rewetting and other techniques enhances the resilience of these ecosystems and helps them adapt to the changing climate.
- Strong, protected, biodiverse ecosystems also help people adapt to climate change by providing nature-based solutions to climate-linked risks including flooding, drought, heatwaves, and wildfires – all of which will continue to increase as we feel the impacts of climate change in Scotland. This dual role of peatlands in tackling the linked climate and nature emergencies underpins our significant investment in peatland restoration.
- The Scottish Government has committed £250 million over 10 years to restore 250,000 hectares of degraded peatlands by 2030. We estimate that approximately 75,000 ha have been restored to date, leaving another 175,000 ha left to restore over the next 6 years requiring current annual restoration rates to more than treble.
- The previous First Minister's policy prospectus '*New Leadership - A Fresh Start*', published on 18 April 2023, commits to reaching 110,000 hectares by 2026.

Peatland Restoration

- Scottish Government funded Peatland ACTION programme restored a record high of 10,360 hectares of damaged peatland in 2023/24.
- The Scottish Government funds five direct delivery partners to carry out peatland restoration projects through the Peatland ACTION partnership - NatureScot, Forestry and Land Scotland, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority and Scottish Water.
- Peatland ACTION are restoring these degraded landscapes through a combination of different interventions such as re-wetting the land by installing dams to block drains and smoothing ploughed ridges and furrows or removing trees and reducing grazing intensity as appropriate for a given site.
- Through supporting good, green jobs in the rural economy, our investment will also play a part in Scotland's Just Transition to net zero by 2045.
- Our 10,700 ha target for 2023-24 represented a 40% increase over the 7,500 ha restored in 2022-23, which itself was a 35% increase over the 5,400 ha restored in 2021-22.
- This growth rate in restoration is welcome and promising, but we are still behind the pace required to meet our climate change plan commitment on emissions from degraded peatland.

- We are working hard with our delivery partners through the Peatland ACTION partnership to tackle the many barriers to upscaling peatland restoration in this relatively young sector and a detailed delivery improvement plan is in place and aims to accelerate rates of restoration, focusing on increasing sector capacity, addressing key bottlenecks and attracting private finance.

Peatland Restoration Funding

Public funding

- Within Scottish Government, public funding for peatland management and restoration derives primarily from the Directorate for Environment and Forestry (ENFOR – our £250 million commitment to 2030 delivered primarily through the Peatland Action partnership) and the Directorate for Agriculture and the Rural Economy (ARE – primarily through agri-environment schemes within the SRDP, in particular the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme (AECS).
- At current restoration costs, scaling up the current approach of public sector funded restoration to meet the 250,000 target would cost approximately £385 million - £65 million per year, coupled with sustained growth in the pipeline of restoration projects.
- Through ENFOR, the 2023-24 peatland budget was the highest to date at £30m which is 26% increase over 2022-23. In 2024-25, the capital allocation for peatland restoration is £20.4 million, unchanged from 2023-24 in real terms when considering programme underspend despite an increasing and robust pipeline of restoration projects now in place.
- Increasing the annual capital allocation in future years is essential if we are to have any hope of getting close to the target of putting 250,000 hectares on the road to recovery by 2030.
- This will enable multi-year, large scale projects to be planned and delivered, boosting restoration rates and increasing the confidence of contractors to invest in machinery, jobs, training and skills.
- Our investment sends a clear message to delivery partners, including landowners and contractors, that we are absolutely committed to this important activity in the long term.
- Increasing capital investment on its own will only take us so far in terms of realising the potential carbon savings from restoring our peatlands. It is therefore imperative that we continue to leverage additional resources and generate efficiencies in terms of carbon savings generated by managing our peatlands better.

Private finance

- The Scottish Government has ambitious targets for peatland restoration. However, at the present rate of restoration, and within the bounds of currently committed government resources, Scotland will not meet these targets.
- A key constraint is the finance gap between required spending and committed or planned spending associated with restoring degraded peatlands.
- Responsible private investment has been identified as an important approach that could help to overcome financial barriers to peatland restoration, whilst providing value for money in public expenditure and support for other economic, social and community benefits. However, this is dependent on appropriate structuring of financial mechanisms and wider policy development.
- We have formed a dedicated workstream that seeks to increase levels of private finance into peatland restoration through the development of blended finance approaches, which seek to use public money to “crowd-in” greater levels of responsible private investment.

Peatland code

- The Peatland Code was published in 2017. It is operated by the IUCN UK Peatland Programme. This UK-wide initiative is a voluntary certification standard for UK peatland projects wishing to market the carbon benefits of peatland restoration. It provides assurance that the carbon benefits being sold are real, quantifiable, additional and permanent.
- A shared carbon registry has been set up in 2020 for the Woodland Carbon and Peatland Codes to reduce complexity in the carbon market and facilitate increased private sector investment in nature-based solutions to tackle greenhouse gas emissions and improve wellbeing.
- There is a potentially significant appetite (in the hundreds of £millions) from private investors to fund peatland restoration in return for carbon credits but there are barriers to be overcome to unlock this.
- The Code is the main mechanism to attract this investment. However, there are few examples of that happening yet in Scotland (or in the wider UK) and the carbon market is still immature.
- A small number of projects have been validated and others are going through the approval process, listed on the peatland code registry.
- We are working with Scottish Forestry and IUCN-UK to boost the contribution of the Woodland Carbon Code and Peatland Code towards investment in a low carbon economy.
- Across the UK, around 78% of current projects registered to the PC are in Scotland (see table below).

Uptake of Peatland Codes in Scotland and the UK

Code	Number of registered projects		Total area of projects (hectares)
	UK	Scotland	Scotland
Peatland Code ¹	274	214	26,935

¹ Peatland Code numbers correct as of 31 May 2024.

Official: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)], Peatland Unit, Nature Division



Background Briefing – Biodiversity

[REDACTED: OUT OF SCOPE]
[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

Minister for Higher & Further Education, Minister for Veterans
Minister for Climate Action

Land and Nature Apprenticeships

This note sets out the background for the land and nature apprenticeships issues that are due to be discussed at a meeting on 28 November at 2pm.

The Land and Nature apprenticeship framework has been reviewed over the past 2 years. The related qualifications were reviewed as part of this process [REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

These qualifications are important for ensuring there is a skilled workforce to implement Scottish Government policies. Particularly around peatland restoration and deer management.

[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 10(4)(e)]

Officials will provide a further update following the meeting scheduled on 11 December.

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] and [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]
Apprenticeship Policy Team and Wildlife Management Team
27 November 2024