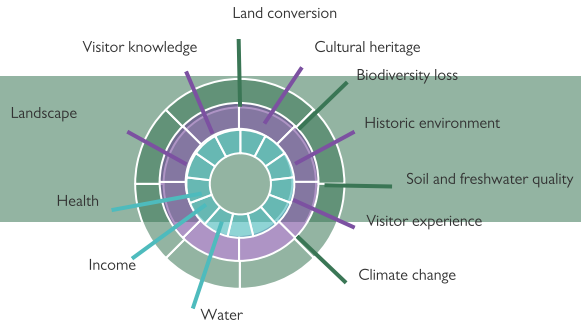
This plan champions the restoration of Peatland across the Park for its ecological value and for the contribution towards climate change reversal.

We will deliver the Brecon Beacons National Park peatland restoration strategy and assist with those of our partners.

Peatland supports many important habitats and species. They are an important natural resource for carbon storage and capture, the regulation of greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity and water regulation. Approximately 12% of the National Park is peatland.

Supporting the Strategy provides a key multifunctional and integrated opportunity to respond to the biodiversity and climate crises.

PEATLAND



Why is this important

The Park's peatlands – upland blanket bogs (where underlying peat is at least 40 cm deep), wet heath, lowland raised bogs, valley mires and fens – are mainly in an unfavourable ecological condition as a consequence of a range of historic pressures including overgrazing, repeated damage by fire, atmospheric pollution and 'fertilisation' by pollutants, trampling (livestock and human pressures), erosion (livestock and human pressures including illegal off-road vehicle use, fire and pollution), and afforestation for commercial plantations.

Most of the blanket bogs include significant expanses of grass-dominated vegetation, especially purple moor-grass, which is neither representative of healthy blanket bog nor the desired vegetation for ecology, for livestock, for resilience to arson and wildfires or for water retention and quality. Areas that appear to be extensive upland rough, wet grasslands are frequently degraded blanket bog and degraded wet heath.

The National Park is also characterised by a high density and extent of heavily eroded, broken (peat haggs) and gullied deep peat, with some areas possessing signs of historic drainage (moorland 'grips'). In terms of greenhouse gas emissions, these heavily eroded and draining peatlands are the most urgent areas to restore in the short term. The grass-dominated blanket bogs and wet heaths, as well as afforested peatlands, also require restoration over the longer term.

Where they are yet to be restored, peatland environments across the National Park are in need of urgent action to reverse habitat loss and poor condition so that they can be of greater benefit to nature and people.

The multiple benefits that healthy and functioning peatlands provide, where they are already rich in biodiversity, include:

- CO2 sequestration
- Healthy carbon and oxygen cycles
- Water quality improvement
- Water infiltration into the landscape
- Flood risk amelioration
- Soil ecology conservation
- Rich and varied nature
- Landscape connectivity
- Recreation; and
- Human health and wellbeing
- Preservation of the Historic Environment

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Where does this policy apply

The estimated 15,922 hectares of peatlands in the Park fall into three main geographic blocks or peatland delivery areas in the west, centre and east of the Park and which are suitable for integrated land management programmes:

- Black mountains
- Mynydd Du and Western Great Forest and Tawe headwaters
- Eastern Great Forest - Manor Penderyn - Taf Central Beacons (and Mynydd Llangynidr - Mynydd Llangatwg)

How will the policy be implemented

The NPA has been active in a range of peatland restoration projects including the Welsh Peatlands Project, the Black Mountains Land Use Partnership, the Waun Fignen Felen bog restoration project, current site-based restoration projects, a range of upland path restoration projects benefiting blanket bog, and several projects benefiting lowland raised bogs. The NPA also supports applied research benefiting blanket and raised bogs and wet heath. The NPA is preparing the Peatlands Restoration Strategy as well as site conservation protocols for the historic environment. Through our partnerships we will advocate for the restoration of afforested peatlands and wet heath.

Providing advice and assistance to landowners to maximise opportunities to restore their peatlands, by:

- Implementing restoration plans for eroded and drained peatlands;
- Restoring grass-dominated blanket bogs to healthy peatlands;
- Managing lowland raised bogs, valley mires and fens for high nature value;
- Avoiding burning and eliminating arson and wildfires on blanket bog;
- Helping landowners to develop their own restoration ideas and plans

How will we measure progress

To monitor progress will require the definition of Favourable Conservation Status of peatlands in the Brecon Beacons National Park and periodic monitoring of their condition.

We will recognise progress as an increase in areas of peatland restored, and phases of restoration achieved.

We will recognise progress through the validation of projects against the Peatland Code.

Outcomes from the work being undertaken will be shared widely to help form a robust body of evidence to contribute to future management and restoration design and prioritisation.

What does success look like

By 2032 all bare, eroded and drained peatland will be protected and restored.

By 2042 there will be increased landscape resilience as a result of water retention.

Between 2,656 and 486,648 tones CO2 equivalent will have been sequestered.

Sustainable land management will have been introduced resulting in:

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- Right livestock grazing levels of hill cattle and sheep, and shepherding in the uplands;
- Low intensity mixed grazing and fuel load management to mitigate against the high vulnerability of blanket bogs to arson-related wildfires;
- Intervention measures by the emergency services, and public information to eliminate arson-related wildfires.

Through the implementation of the strategy we will also have

- Eliminated illegal off-road vehicle use in the uplands
- Achieved biodiversity targets for habitats and indicator species
- Safeguarded the historic upland environment
- Secured funding for the Peatland Restoration Strategy and ensuing Programme.