

# Peatland and Uplands Biodiversity Delivery Group

## Work Programme

2009 – 2012

Last updated 12<sup>th</sup> March 2009



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## Introduction

The Peatland & Uplands Biodiversity Delivery Group (BDG) is one of five BDGs established to help deliver the commitments for priority habitats and species within the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy. Each BDG is a partnership of key stakeholders working together towards the biodiversity targets for habitats and species. Further details for this and other BDGs can be found at <http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk>

The Peatland & Uplands Biodiversity Delivery Group addresses the following priority habitats in Northern Ireland which are the subject of Habitat Action Plans (HAPs); lowland raised bog, blanket bog, lowland heathland, upland heathland and montane heath. New UK priority habitats which will be addressed by the group include inland rock outcrops and scree habitats, mountain heaths and willow scrub and upland flushes, fens and swamps. In addition, actions for priority species associated with these habitats will also be addressed by the group.

This work programme sets out work that the Peatland & Uplands BDG members will carry out over the next three years. It is reviewed annually.

### Work Programme structure

The 'key tasks' have been derived from a collation exercise carried out in 2006 to bring together 'actions' from individual habitat action plans into this higher level, integrated, work programme for the BDG. Many of these key tasks are ongoing, such as 1.2 *Designate further peatland & upland sites as required* or 2.1 *Monitoring and report on the condition of SAC/ASSI selection features* or 3.9 *Develop an inventory of extent, location and condition of peatland & upland habitats*. These are included in the work programme because they are important but are not always given a SMART timeframe because there are other systems in place to take these forward. Other key tasks are very broadly expressed for example 5.1 *Further promote Peatlands Park as the flagship for achieving Peatlands education through a wide variety of media and as a restoration site* or 5.3 *Provide opportunities, where appropriate, for public access to and enjoyment of peatlands and uplands*.

A 'comment' has been added to some key tasks to outline the context or state of progress.

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## SITE DESIGNATION

**Objective 1:** Designate all priority peatland and upland habitats that meet the scientific criteria required for ASSI designation, by 2012 and identify locally important sites as Sites of Local Nature Conservation Interest (SLNCIs) in Development Plans.

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Key Tasks		Lead Partner / Partners	Timeframe	Comments / Update
1.1	Review the coverage of peatland and upland habitats within the SAC/ASSI/NNR series	NIEA	On-going	
1.2	Designate further peatland & upland sites as required	NIEA	On-going	<i>NIEA has a target of designating additional 25 sites per year over the next 3 years</i>
1.3	Identify all peatland and upland 'Local Wildlife Sites' throughout Northern Ireland	NIEA	2011	<i>This can be used to inform a) the selection of SLNCIs, b) development control and c) other Government regulation activity.</i>
1.4	Identify SLNCIs in Development Plans.	Planning Service / NIEA / NGOs / District Councils	In line with Area Plan programme	

## MANAGEMENT OF DESIGNATED SITES

**Objective 2:** Maintain favourable condition or improve the conservation condition towards favourable, of 95% of the features underlying the designation of internationally important wildlife sites and Areas of Special Scientific Interest by 2013.

Key Tasks		Lead Partner / Partners	Timeframe	Comments / Update
2.1	Monitor and report on the condition of SAC/ASSI site selection features.	NIEA	On-going.	<i>NIEA has a rolling monitoring programme</i>
2.2	Restore peatland and upland SACs/ASSIs which are not in favourable condition.	NIEA / DARD	On-going	<i>NIEA and DARD use MOSS and NICMS respectively to deliver management on designated sites. A "Remedies Programme", similar to that used by Natural England, is currently being developed by NIEA, and this will contribute to this Task.</i>

## MANAGEMENT OF PEATLAND AND UPLANDS IN THE WIDER COUNTRYSIDE

**Objective 3:** *Main tain the current extent and overall distribution of peatland and uplands currently in favourable condition and improve the condition of those areas of peatland and uplands which are degraded but readily res to rable by 2010 and in troduce management regimes to improve the condition of the remaining sites by 2015.*

### Agriculture

Key Tasks		Lead Partner / Partners	Timeframe	Comments / Update
3.1	Produce habitat classifications, definitions and indicators for peatland and upland habitats	NIEA	2010	
3.2	Ensure that the agri- environment scheme monitoring programme can contribute to reporting on peatland and upland habitats	DARD / AFBI / NIEA	On-going	
3.3	Produce definitions of "favourable condition", "unfavourable condition" and "unfavourable recovering" for peatland and upland habitats for the wider countryside.	NIEA / DARD / AFBI	2010	A workshop was held in 2008. Definitions will be further informed by NICS2007/8.
3.4	Review and amend, if necessary, the efficacy of Codes of Good Practice for Peat Cutting.	DARD / NIEA	2010	
3.5	Review existing guidance on peatland and upland habitat management.	ALL	2010	

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### Catchment Management

Key Tasks		Lead Partner / Partners	Timeframe	Comments / Update
3.6	Ensure that peatland and upland habitats are fully included in the development and delivery of River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs).	NIEA	On-going	Three RBMPs, covering the whole of Northern Ireland, are currently out for public consultation with a closing date for responses of 22 <sup>nd</sup> June 2009.

## Monitoring

Key Tasks		Lead Partner / Partners	Timeframe	Comments / Update
3.7	Monitor and report on the condition of peatland and uplands in the wider countryside.	NIEA	2010	NIC S2007/8 will inform wider countryside reporting
3.8	Ensure that the condition of peatland and upland habitats is reported through the Northern Ireland Countryside Survey (2007).	NIEA	2009	
3.9	Develop an inventory of the extent and condition of peatland and upland habitats.	NIEA	2010	

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## Research

Key Tasks		Lead Partner / Partners	Timeframe	Comments / Update
3.10	Identify research priorities for peatland and upland habitats.	ALL	2010	Current (2009) DEFRA Peat Project will help identify priorities.

## Forestry

Key Tasks		Lead Partner / Partners	Timeframe	Comments / Update
3.11	Ensure no afforestation on peatland and upland sites.	Forest Service	On-going	
3.12	Ensure that the development and implementation of forest policies continue to protect and enhance the management of peatland and upland habitats.	Forest Service	On-going	

## Planning Policy

Key Tasks	Lead Partner / Partners	Timeframe	Comments / Update
3.13	PNRD (Planning & Natural Resources Division, DOE) / NIEA	2010	

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## Development Control

Key Tasks	Lead Partner / Partners	Timeframe	Comments / Update
3.14	Planning Service / NIEA / DARD / District Councils	2010	
3.15	Planning Service / NIEA	2010	
3.16	ALL	2010	

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## Peat extraction

Key Tasks	Lead Partner / Partners	Timeframe	Comments / Update
3.17	NIEA	2011	Requirement for assessment will be informed by D EFR A Peat Project (2009)
3.18	Planning Service / NIEA	On-going	

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## PEAT USE AND ALTERNATIVES

**Objective 4:** *Seek to have a minimum of 90% of the peat product market requirements for soil improvers and growing media to be supplied by non-peat material by 2010.*

**NOTE:** 90% of the total market for soil improver and growing media to be peat free in the UK by 2010. (Target 4: UK Lowland Raised Bog HAP)

Key Tasks		Lead Partner / Partners	Timeframe	Comments / Update
4.1	Reduce the use of horticultural peat in the management of the government estate to less than 10%.	ALL	2010	
4.2	Reduce the use of all peat products on the government estate by 95%.	ALL	2012	
4.3	Phase out the use of all peat products on the government estate by 2010.	ALL	2010	
4.4	Produce guidance and advice to minimise the use of peat for horticulture and fuel.	ALL	2010	
4.5	Encourage greater use of peat and peat alternative products for growing media and soil improvers.	ALL	2009	Use of alternatives now >50% in the UK. Further information will be available from the current DEFRA Peat Project.
4.6	Identify the research requirements to contribute to the development of peat alternatives in Northern Ireland.	ALL	2010	Will be informed by DEFRA Peat Project (2009)

## RAISING AWARENESS

**Objective 5:** *Improve understanding and increase the awareness of peatland issues amongst the public, landowners and stakeholders.*

Key Tasks		Lead Partner / Partners	Timeframe	Comments / Update
5.1	Further promote Peatlands Park as the flagship for achieving Peatlands education through a wide variety of media and as a restoration site.	NIEA	On-going	
5.2	Review and update the peatlands website and CD Rom	NIEA	2009	
5.3	Provide opportunities, where appropriate, for public access to and enjoyment of peatlands and uplands.	ALL	On-going	

## IMPLEMENTATION

**Objective 6:** *Ensure that this work programme is implemented and reviewed.*

Key Tasks	Lead Partner / Partners	Timeframe	Comments / Update	
6.1	Review work programme and progress on an annual basis.	ALL	Annually	Progress review to be provided in 2010
6.2	Review terms of reference on an annual basis.	NIEA	Annually	
6.3	Establish a Lowlands Wetland Group as a sub-group of the Wetlands BDG and Peatlands and Upland BDG	NIEA	2009	
6.4	Publish a Northern Ireland Peatland Policy.	PNRD (Planning & Natural Resources Division, DOE)	2010	
6.5	Review the Northern Ireland Peatland Policy.	PNRD (Planning & Natural Resources Division, DOE)	2011	
6.6	Provide representation from the Peatland and Upland BDG on relevant UK Biodiversity Habitat Groups	NIEA	Annually	
6.7	Establish further links and develop existing links with Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland to take forward the aims of the work programme.	ALL	On-going	
6.8	Incorporate new UK Habitat Action Plans to this work programme	ALL	2010	New UK priority habitats include Inland rock outcrop and scree habitats, Mountain heath and scrub and Upland flushes, fens and swamps.
6.9	Incorporate relevant priority species to this work programme	ALL	2010	A process is underway through the Priority Species BDG to add NI priority species to the revised UK list and to 'signpost' how these will be managed.

3.14	Produce a Planning Policy Statement on mineral development to include policies and guidance on peatland and upland habitats.	Planning Service / DRD	<b>To be confirmed</b>
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