

# Scotland's Peatland Standard - Draft

## NatureScot Consultation

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in Scotland. For information only England, Northern Ireland and Wales.

### 1. Executive Summary

NatureScot has launched a consultation on the draft [Scotland's Peatland Standard](#), which is intended to establish a consistent framework for protecting, managing and restoring peatlands across Scotland.

The proposed standard aims to support high-quality peatland restoration and provide greater consistency in project design, delivery, monitoring, and reporting. It is expected to support [Scotland's wider objectives](#) around climate change, biodiversity, and land management.

Peatland restoration is an increasingly significant issue for local authorities, particularly in relation to climate adaptation, carbon reduction, flood management, biodiversity, and land use planning.

APSE encourages member authorities to engage with this consultation to ensure that the standard is practical, proportionate, and reflective of local delivery experience.

Responses are due by **Friday 28<sup>th</sup> August 2026**.

[Click here](#) to read the draft in full.

[Click here](#) to submit your response.

### 2. Overview

The consultation seeks views on the proposed Scotland's Peatland Standard, which is intended to provide a national framework for peatland protection, management and restoration activities. The draft standard aims to:

- Promote consistency and best practice across peatland projects.
- Support confidence in the quality and outcomes of restoration work.
- Improve approaches to monitoring, reporting and verification.
- Support alignment with wider environmental and climate objectives.

The standard is expected to apply across a range of peatland restoration activities and may inform future approaches to funding, assessment, and project delivery. The consultation also considers how the standard should operate in practice, including governance, implementation, and ongoing review arrangements.

## Policy context and rationale

Peatlands are recognised as a nationally important environmental asset, playing a significant role in carbon storage, biodiversity, water management, and climate resilience.

Scotland is home to more than 60% of the UK's total peatlands, covering roughly a quarter of Scotland's land area, however most peatland areas are currently degraded. Restoring peatlands has therefore become a key component of Scotland's climate and nature strategies, including commitments to achieve net zero emissions and halt biodiversity loss.

The standard builds on existing peatland restoration programmes such as the [Peatland ACTION Five-Year Partnership Plan 2025-2030](#) and wider Scottish Government policy such as the [National Environment \(Scotland\) Act 2026](#) which sets legally binding targets to halt biodiversity loss, the [National Planning Framework 4](#) which embeds tackling climate change and protecting nature in all future planning decisions, and [Scotland's draft Climate Change Plan 2026-2040](#) which outlines over 150 actions to achieve net zero emissions by 2040, including a commitment to protect, manage and restore 400,000 hectares of degraded peatlands over the next decade.

It also reflects increasing interest in developing consistent standards and frameworks to support confidence in environmental restoration activity. The proposed standard seeks to provide a more structured and transparent approach to peatland restoration, supporting improved environmental outcomes and long-term stewardship.

## Why local authorities should engage

Local authorities have an important role in supporting environmental sustainability, climate adaptation, and land management within their areas.

Engagement is important because:

- Councils are involved in climate change and biodiversity strategies.
- They have responsibilities linked to land use planning and environmental management.
- Peatland restoration can contribute to flood mitigation and natural climate resilience measures.
- Local authorities may work in partnership on restoration and nature-based projects.

The development of a national peatland standard may influence future funding expectations, project delivery requirements, and approaches to environmental monitoring and reporting.

Local authority engagement will help ensure that the standard is practical, deliverable, and aligned with wider local environmental objectives and land management activity.

### 3. Consultation Questions

The consultation questions are categorised as follows:

Topic	Questions
About you	4
Navigation	4
Ambition	6
Adding Value	8
Usability	8
Completeness	2
Context	2
Balance	2
Concluding question	1

The consultation questions are available in full below:

1. Which of the following best describes you?  
Landowner; Land manager or agent; Contractor; Environmental adviser or consultant;  
Funder or investor; Regulator – agency or local authority; Researcher or academic;  
Individual stakeholder; Other (Please specify).
2. What is your area of business?  
Farming or crofting; Forestry or woodland management; Sporting management;  
Development; Conservation; Other (Please specify)
3. Which country do you live or work in?  
Scotland; England, Wales or Northern Ireland; Rest of the world
4. If you would be willing for us to contact you to discuss or clarify your responses and to notify you when the summary report is available on the webpage, please provide your email address in the box below.
5. How clear is the purpose and scope of Scotland's Peatland Standard?  
Very clear; Acceptable; Neutral; Needs work; Not clear
6. Please use this text box for any other feedback you want to provide regarding the navigation.

7. How accessible is the overall structure and presentation of Scotland's Peatland Standard?  
Very accessible; Acceptable; Neutral; Needs work; Not clear
8. Please use this text box to provide any further feedback on the accessibility, structure and presentation of Scotland's Peatland Standard.
9. Are the objectives for the three activity pathways (protection, management, and restoration) capturing the ambition for caring for Scotland's peatlands?  
Yes; Partially; No
10. Please use this text box to provide any additional feedback on the objectives for the three activity pathways.
11. Does the Standard provide the technical information and mechanisms to work to the standards described and support continual improvement? (all chapters)  
Yes; Partially; No
12. Please use this text box for any other feedback you want to provide regarding the ambition of the Standard providing the technical information and mechanisms to work to the standards described and support continual improvement?
13. Does Scotland's Peatland Standard provide a technical framework for leadership in caring for peatlands? (all chapters)
14. Please use this text box for any other feedback you want to provide regarding the ambition of the Standard providing leadership in caring for peatlands in a technical sense.
15. Do the seven Universal Principles and six Activity Pathway Specific Principles provide an effective way to help decision making in achieving the objectives of each activity pathway (Chapter 4)?  
Yes; Partially; No

16. Please use this text box to tell us if there is another mechanism that Scotland's Peatland Standard could use to do this?

17. Are the requirements for Protection in the Standard complete and proportionate (Chapter 6)? Please rate below.

1 (incomplete); 2; 3; 4; 5 (complete)

18. Please use this text box to explain why you gave this rating.

19. Are the requirements for Management in the Standard complete and proportionate (Chapter 7)? Please rate below.

1 (incomplete); 2; 3; 4; 5 (complete)

20. Please use this text box to explain why you gave this rating.

21. Are the requirements for Restoration in the Standard complete and proportionate (Chapter 8)? Please rate below.

1 (incomplete); 2; 3; 4; 5 (complete)

22. Please use this text box to explain why you gave this rating.

23. How useful is the background information on peat formation, its ecology and function (Chapter 2)? Please rate below.

1 (not useful at all); 2; 3; 4; 5 (very useful)

24. Please use this text box to explain why you gave this rating.

25. Will the Standard help you make operational decisions related to peatland protection, management and restoration (Chapter 9)? Please rate below.

1 (not helpful at all); 2; 3; 4; 5 (very helpful)

26. Please use this text box to explain why you gave this rating.

27. Chapter 9 and the Annex H, contain the detailed checklist, requirements and guidance for Organising your Operational activity. Should these remain split between Chapter 9 and the Annex H, or should all of this information be included in the main document, or all in the annex, or as stand-alone supplementary guidance?

Yes, remain split between Chapter 9 and Annex H as the balance is good;

No, move all of the information from Annex H into Chapter 9;

No, move all of the information from Chapter 9 into Annex H;

Move and contain all information as stand-alone supplementary guidance;

Other (please specify)

28. Please use this text box to tell us why you selected this option.

29. Will the Standard help you assess outcomes of peatland activities (Chapter 10)?

Yes; Partially; No

30. Please use this text box to tell us why you selected this option.

31. How complete is the standard? Please rate below.

1 (incomplete); 2; 3; 4; 5 (complete)

32. Please use this text box to tell us what gaps need to be addressed and if further material needs to be added to the Standard or provided in supplementary guidance?

33. Given that peatland protection, management and restoration is undertaken alongside other land use activities, please rate how likely is the Standard to lead to unintended consequences on this wider work? Please rate below.

1 (have unintended consequences); 2; 3; 4; 5 (supports/complements wider work)

34. Please use this text box to tell us what the unintended consequences might be?

35. Overall, has Scotland's Peatland Standard achieved a balance between providing technical information, and a helpful way of making technical decisions? Please rate below.

1 (skewed); 2; 3; 4; 5 (balanced)

36. Please use this text box to provide your comments on the balance of Scotland's Peatland Standard.

37. Please use this text box for any final comments that you wish to share on the draft Scotland's Peatland Standard.

## 4. APSE Comment

APSE encourages all member authorities to engage with this consultation and provide responses based on their experience of environmental management, climate adaptation and nature-based solutions.

Peatland restoration is becoming an increasingly important component of Scotland's approach to addressing climate change and biodiversity loss. According to [estimations from the Scottish Wildlife Trust](#), Scotland's peatlands currently store more than 1.6 billion tonnes of carbon, underlining their significance as a national environmental asset and the importance of effective restoration and long-term management.

Local authorities are playing an increasing role in delivering climate resilience and environmental improvement at a local level, including through land use management, flood mitigation, and biodiversity initiatives. The development of a consistent national standard therefore has important implications for future partnership working, project delivery, and environmental reporting.

This consultation provides an opportunity to address any issues with the draft early and support the development of a decision making framework which promotes consistency, transparency and improved outcomes for peatlands across Scotland.

Discussions on the way forward with peatland protection and restoration as well as the sharing of best practice continues to take place in APSE Scotland's Parks, Grounds and Street

Services and our Scotland Climate Change and Renewables Networks. An APSE member authority, Calderdale Council, provided an excellent presentation at our January Scotland Climate Change and Renewables Network which covered their [Calderdale Sphagnum Project](#). All of our Network meetings are free to attend for APSE members, with previous presentations available online [here](#) and upcoming meetings listed [here](#).

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Networks are a free service included as part of your authority's membership of APSE and all end with an informal lunch to facilitate networking with peers in other councils. If you do not currently receive details about APSE network meetings and would like to be added to our list of our contacts for your service area please email [enquiries@apse.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@apse.org.uk)

Our national networks include:

- FM and Building cleaning
- Catering (School Meals)
- Cemeteries and Crematoria
- Local Government Reorganisation Network
- Highways and Street Lighting
- Housing, Construction and Building Maintenance
- Local Authority Social Value, Procurement and Commercialisation
- Parks, Horticulture and Ground Maintenance
- Recovery and Renewal
- Renewables and Climate Change
- Roads, highways and street lighting
- Sports and Leisure Management
- Vehicle Maintenance and Transport
- Waste Management, Refuse Collection and Street Cleansing
- Armed Forces and Veterans Network

Visit [www.apse.org.uk](http://www.apse.org.uk) for more detail



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