



Scotland's contribution to UN Climate Summit

Leadership in peatland restoration

Damage to the natural environment degrades our natural resource base upon which we all rely, but when ecosystems are conserved and restored nature gives back valuable services to society and the economy. Natural sequestration of carbon in peatlands is one of these services. Peatlands cover around one fifth of Scotland's land area¹, and equate to around 80% of the UK's peatland resource. Peatlands globally, which cover only 3% of the Earth's land surface, contain twice as much carbon as the world's forests². The carbon stored in Scotland's deep peat is at least 3000 million tonnes - twenty times as much carbon stored in the whole of the UK's forest biomass³. **There is therefore huge potential for Scotland to set an international example for peatland restoration in helping to meet climate targets.** A loss of only 5% of the carbon stored in peat would equate to the UK's total annual anthropogenic green house gas emissions. On the other hand, healthy peatlands, and those that have been restored and enhanced, can make a positive contribution to tackling climate change.

RSPB Scotland is a leading member of Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS) and we support the briefing submitted separately by SCCS.

Two years ago the UN Climate Summit in Copenhagen was a major disappointment, but last year the talks in Cancun rebuilt faith in the multilateral climate process by taking some positive steps in the right direction. Scotland is in a strong position to work with colleagues from the UK, the EU and elsewhere to help secure outcomes that can drive further progress. RSPB Scotland, along with our SCCS partners, and colleagues from BirdLife International⁴, see it as key that Governments should:

- **Agree a 2nd commitment period for the Kyoto Protocol (KP).** Unless this is done, the current commitment period, during which countries must reduce their emissions, will come to an end and nothing will take its place, leaving us with no global targets for emissions reductions.
- **Agree a mandate for negotiating a fair, ambitious and binding deal that will come into force by 2015.** This would replace the KP system with a better deal that is binding and include emission reduction requirements for all of those countries not currently in the KP.
- **Make progress on saving tropical forests.** This is year 1 of a 2 year negotiation on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD). Tropical forests are being felled at a rate of about 13 million hectares per year and account for about 17% of all emissions worldwide, more than the annual emissions from the entire European Union. That means we can't meet our global climate goals – let alone our biodiversity goals – without stopping the destruction of tropical forests. Solid and positive developments are required on a number of fronts, including: establishing baselines against which a country's performance is assessed; a system to implement the biodiversity safeguards; and proper monitoring, reporting and verification.
- **Sew up the carbon accounting loopholes for land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF⁵).** Accounting for emissions from LULUCF has long been a problem in the global climate negotiations.

¹ http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20Realising%20the%20benefits%20of%20peatlands_tcm9-282611.pdf

² <http://www.iucn-uk-peatlandprogramme.org/sites/all/files/IUCN%20UK%20Commission%20of%20Inquiry%20on%20Peatlands%20Full%20Report%20spv%20web.pdf>

³ http://www.iucn-uk-peatlandprogramme.org/sites/all/files/091201BriefingPeatlands_andClimateChange.pdf

⁴ <http://www.birdlife.org/index.html>

⁵ <http://www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/policy/climatechange/action/landuse.aspx>

Flaws in the proposals, such as allowing developed countries to ignore emissions from forest management, will mean that many emissions are never accounted for. Durban will finally see these rules agreed, and we need an outcome that ensures that emissions from this sector are fully accounted for, so that loopholes do not undermine the overall deal.

- **Agree wetland rewetting and drainage principles.** These cover peatland restoration (below).

Accounting rules for restoring peatlands

Peatlands are now enjoying a welcome and prominent place as part of the debate around reducing carbon emissions, with support at Scottish, UK and EU level for furthering action in this area, and have been identified as a priority for action under international agreements⁶. It is now widely accepted that peatlands are a huge store of carbon. Under the Kyoto Protocol, Annex 1 parties are committed to account for LULUCF activities in the 'first commitment period' (2008-2012). Land use activities which result in emissions or removals are included under Article 3.3 (afforestation, reforestation and deforestation) for mandatory reporting, and Article 3.4 (forest management, cropland management, grazing land management and revegetation) for voluntary reporting. Possible modifications to the LULUCF rules would include a specific new accounting activity for 'rewetting and drainage' which would allow the emissions benefits of peatland rewetting to be accounted for. **While the IPCC are still working on guidance on this matter, we believe it is possible to secure agreement on the principles at Durban, and we encourage the Scottish Government delegation at Durban to promote wider support for these proposals.**

Notwithstanding the need for international agreement, according to current proposals, all peatland restoration activity since 1990 will be eligible for accounting under LULUCF rules when agreed. This means that early action on peatland restoration, now, will be beneficial in helping make greater savings against climate change targets from 2012 onwards. A clear statement of intent by the Scottish Government that it will support and help fund peatland restoration, linked to Durban and the IPCC visit to Scotland in early 2012⁷, would be a great example to set and would help to build relationships with other countries which share these interests.

This month the IUCN Commission of Inquiry on Peatlands⁸ reported its findings and concluded that much of the UK's peatlands have been damaged, with severe consequences for biodiversity and valuable ecosystem services, and a significant amount of carbon is leaking into the atmosphere from drained and deteriorating peatlands. As a priority, the Scottish Government delegation to the UN Climate Summit in Durban should therefore seek to promote wider support for the 'rewetting and drainage' activity within the LULUCF negotiations. **Securing agreement on 'rewetting and drainage' principles at Durban would make a significant contribution to advancing action on climate change and, furthermore, set an example to other countries that Government can – and does – support peatland restoration as part of its approach to meeting emissions reduction targets.**

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tackling the problems that threaten our environment. Nature is amazing - help us keep it that way.*

⁶ Global agreements such as the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands include obligations and opportunities for countries to maintain and restore peatlands.

⁷ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2011/10/28175557>

⁸ <http://www.iucn-uk-peatlandprogramme.org/commission/findings>