

Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy to 2040 launched

To: Northern Ireland

For info: All local authorities in UK

1 Summary

On 18 September 2025, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) unveiled Northern Ireland's first Peatland Strategy, approved by the Executive, covering the period to 2040.¹ The strategy aims to address dual crises of biodiversity loss and climate change by setting out a framework for conserving, restoring, and better managing peatlands across Northern Ireland. It includes five strategic objectives and 26 actions focused on improving carbon storage, biodiversity, water quality, flood risk management, and delivering nature-based solutions.

2 Background

Peatlands make up about 12% of Northern Ireland's land area. These habitats have high potential both for carbon sequestration and for supporting biodiversity, including species under threat such as the hen harrier, curlew, and golden plover. Restored and well-managed peatlands also contribute to enhanced water quality and reduced flood risk.

The strategy has been supported through funding tied to the Environment Fund, Shared Island, and PEACEPLUS programmes, extending to 2028.

3 Key Elements of the Strategy

- Five strategic objectives: spanning conservation, restoration, management and sustainable use.
- 26 specific actions to deliver these objectives.
- Funding commitments: approximately £7.8 million allocated via Environment Fund and Shared Island to restore around 1,000 hectares of peatland and prepare plans for a further 5,000-6,000 hectares up to 2028.

¹ <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/news/minister-muir-launches-northern-ireland-peatland-strategy-2040>

- In addition, PEACEPLUS funding of roughly €40 million has been awarded for nature projects, including major peatland restoration across about 12,500 hectares by 2028.

4 Implication for councils

Councils will have important roles to play in delivering many parts of the Peatland Strategy. They will need to engage with DAERA and other stakeholders in planning and implementing restoration and management work at local level. This includes aligning local land management policies and planning frameworks with the strategy's objectives.

There will also be opportunities and responsibilities around source funding, especially where local councils can apply for or support applications tied to the Environment Fund, Shared Island, PEACEPLUS or other environmental and climate funding streams. Councils may need to build capacity in peatland ecology, restoration practices and habitat management to support the 26 action areas.

Councils might also need to consider implications on planning permissions, environmental impact assessments and local development plans to ensure peatland protection is embedded.

5 APSE comment

The Peatland Strategy to 2040 represents a significant step for Northern Ireland in meeting environmental and climate commitments. It offers councils a strong policy framework and access to funding that can drive positive change, especially in rural areas.

However, there are challenges. Restoring and managing peatlands at scale is technically complex, can require long timescales and must balance competing land uses. Councils will need to secure technical expertise and community buy-in.

APSE receives queries on peat free alternatives from our member councils. We source responses to these queries by circulating them to our extensive UK-wide network of parks professionals. If you belong to an APSE member council and have any peatland queries – or any queries relating to grounds maintenance – the APSE network may have the answers. Connect with the APSE network and get involved with our Network Queries service [here](#).

All APSE members can sign up to APSE's Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance Network, which is an online network providing four learning events across the year, with expert speakers from across the parks and greenspace sector. You can sign up to the network using [this link](#).

Matt Ellis, Principal Advisor

Email: mellis@apse.org.uk

Sign up for APSE membership to enjoy a whole range of benefits

APSE member authorities have access to a range of membership resources to assist in delivering council services. This includes our regular network meetings, specifically designed to bring together elected members, directors, managers and heads of service, together with trade union representatives to discuss service specific issues, innovation and new ways of delivering continuous improvement. The networks are an excellent forum for sharing ideas and discussing topical service issues with colleagues from other councils throughout the UK.

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 contacts for your service area please email enquiries@apse.org.uk.

Our national networks include:-

- FM and Building Cleaning
- Catering (School Meals)
- Cemeteries and Crematoria
- Highways and Street Lighting
- Housing, Construction and Building Maintenance
- Social Value, Procurement and Commercialisation Network
- Parks, Horticulture and Grounds Maintenance
- Renewables and Climate Change
- Roads, Highways and Street Lighting
- Sports and Leisure Management
- Vehicle Maintenance and Transport
- Veterans and Military Champions Network
- Local Government Reorganisation Network
- Waste Management, Refuse Collection and Street Cleansing

Visit www.apse.org.uk for more details.



Association for Public Service Excellence
3rd floor,
Trafford House,
Chester Road, Manchester M32 0RS.
telephone: 0161 772 1810
fax: 0161 772 1811
web: www.apse.org.uk

NEW MUNICIPALISM
Delivering for local people and local economies