

Draft Soil Strategy & Peat project

Judith Stuart
Soils Policy

Outline

- Draft Soil strategy for England: A consultation document
- Peat project
- Proposed Soil Framework Directive

Draft Soil Strategy for England: A consultation document

A strategy not an action plan

- Set future policy direction without constraints of pre-agreeing all of the steps to achieving it
- Work flexibly with partners to achieve best solutions for soil
- Adapt to emerging priorities
- Provide a guide to stakeholders for how their own activities can contribute to achieving our goals

Vision

Our vision is that England's soils will be protected and managed to optimise the varied functions (or ecosystem services) that they perform for society in keeping with the principles of sustainable development and in the context of a changing climate

Objectives (1)

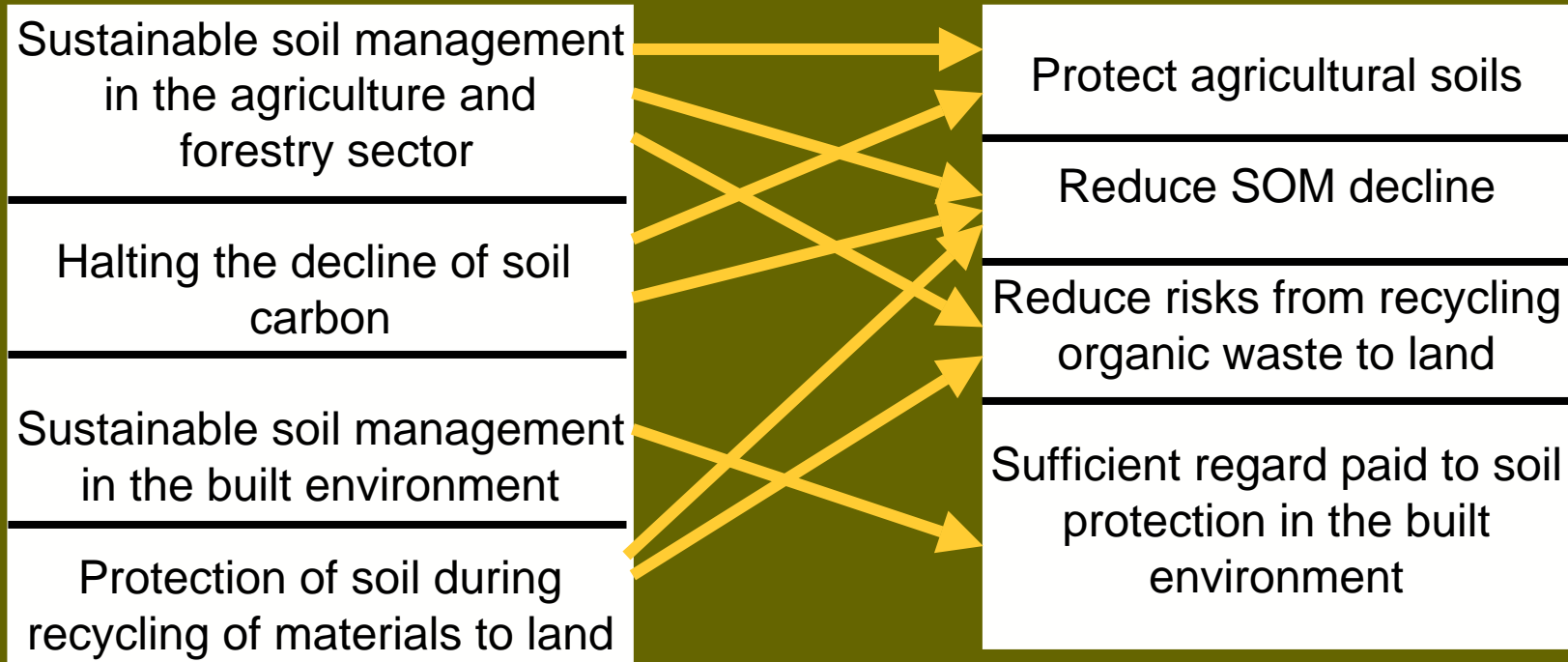
- Ensure that measures for the protection of soil functions in respect of agricultural and forest soils are effective, targeted and proportionate, and take into account future pressures including our changing climate and that any adverse impacts of soil management on air, water, biodiversity and greenhouse gas emissions are minimised.
- Reduce the rate of soil organic matter decline and protect habitats based on organic soils, such as peat bogs, to maintain our carbon stores (to mitigate climate change) and soil quality.

Objectives (2)

- Establish the degree of risk from putting organic materials to land on human, animal and plant health and the environment and seek to keep these risks at an acceptable level.
- Ensure that the construction industry and planning authorities take sufficient account of the need to protect soil resources, and ensure soils are able to fulfil as many as possible of their functions, especially storing, transporting and filtering water.

Priority work areas

Soil strategy objectives



Consultation

- Consultation document to be published shortly
- Seeking stakeholder views on:
 - Vision & objectives
 - Priority work areas & exclusions
 - Approach, evidence & measures of success

Halting the decline in soil carbon priority work area

- Soils are a major reservoir of carbon
- Some evidence of loss
- Headline indicator SFFS: “to halt the decline in soil organic matter in vulnerable agricultural soils by 2025, whilst maintaining, as a minimum, the soil organic matter of other agricultural soils, taking into account the impacts of climate change”

Work on peat

- Lots of government and agency activity
 - Policy areas: biodiversity, soils, agriculture, uplands, climate change, flood management, water quality, air quality
- Need for better co-ordination
- Move towards an ecosystem approach

Peat project: Protecting and enhancing peat soils and the habitats they support

Project Aim

To facilitate and co-ordinate activity within Defra, EA, FC and NE to protect and enhance peat soils and the habitats they support, using appropriate policy levers and management options.

Project scope

The project **will** cover:

- All peat soils in England (may expand to UK)
- Upland & lowland peat based habitats & lowland peat soils used for arable & grassland production
- Peat extracted for horticultural use from both domestic & imported sources

Phase I

- Present to end 2009
- Co-ordinate existing activity
- Identify targets for future practical restoration & the levers and tools to achieve this for multiple environmental outcomes

Objectives (1)

1. To determine the status of peat soils in order to identify and start to address priority targets for action.
2. To co-ordinate Defra, EA, FC and NE work on peat soils. To liaise with Devolved Administrations.
3. To determine cost effective and practical management options.

Objectives (2)

4. To determine suitable policy levers to protect and restore peat soils.
5. To reduce the horticultural use of peat and promote peat alternatives.
6. To influence domestic and international policy relating to peat use and management.

Outcomes	Targets
Retain & enhance stores C	<i>halt decline of soil C by 2025 (SFFS) & reduce GHG emissions</i>
Protect & enhance peat based habitats & biodiversity	<i>95% of England's SSSIs in favourable or recovering condition by 2010 (PSA); habitats maintained & improved by 2015 (UK HAP)</i>
Reduce horticultural use of peat	<i>90% of UK soil improver & growing media peat free by 2010 (UK HAP)</i>
Reduce flood risk within catchments containing peat soils	
Improve water quality	<i>reduce DOC & sediment levels (WFD)</i>

Work strands

1. Factual basis
2. Policy framework
3. Evident base
4. Horticultural use of peat
5. Communication

Work Strand 1: Factual basis

- To locate & assess the quality of peat soils & determine areas of peat requiring restoration
 - Status of peat soil
 - Motivation of land owners
 - Prioritised list of peat soil areas for future actions

Work Strand 2: Policy Framework

- To assess the policy framework, develop policy levers & influence domestic & international policy
 - Review policy framework
 - Co-ordinate policy & delivery activity
 - Develop new levers where appropriate

Potential for carbon trading

- Interest in land management carbon trading projects including peat
- Early days with lots of unanswered questions
- Opportunity: help us identify questions & answer them
- Barriers to be addressed: quantifying emissions and verifying savings

Work Strand 3: Evidence base

- To review available evidence, identify gaps to be addressed & lessons to be learned
 - Review of practical restoration projects
 - Future vision for peat soils
 - Develop advice products

UK Compendium of peat restoration and management projects

- To gather evidence and expertise from practitioners
- What practical work has been undertaken
- What lessons have been learnt that need to be shared
- What techniques can be recommended

UK Compendium (2)

- New project, contract about to be awarded
- Run until the end of March
- Will be contacting practitioners/project managers for their input
- Stakeholder workshop in February/March

Work Strand 4: Lowland Raised Bog HAP target on horticultural use of peat

- To take forward the work on reducing the horticultural use of peat
 - Quantify the biodiversity benefits
 - Identify and establish the carbon case
 - Work with suppliers and retailers
 - Education

Work Strand 5: Communication

- Developing & implementing a communication strategy
 - Web pages
 - Information sharing
 - Education

Stakeholder involvement

- Range of workshops and opportunities to input
- Two way process
- Project partners
- Feedback on plans

EU Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection and Proposed Soil Framework Directive

Soil threats

- Soil erosion
- Organic matter decline (concentration and stock)
- Compaction
- Salinisation
- Acidification
- Landslides
- Soil contamination
- Soil sealing
- (Soil biodiversity loss)

SFD - Main elements

- Measures to address soil erosion, organic matter decline, compaction, salinisation, acidification & landslides
 - Identify risk areas
 - Develop programme of measures and targets
- Measures to address soil contamination
- Measures on soil sealing
- Awareness raising, reporting & exchange of information

Peat project
peat@defra.gsi.gov.uk

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soils@defra.gsi.gov.uk