

# Wales Peatland Action through the National Peatland Action Programme 2025-2030



**Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru**  
**Natural Resources Wales**



**Llywodraeth Cymru**  
**Welsh Government**



# Introduction

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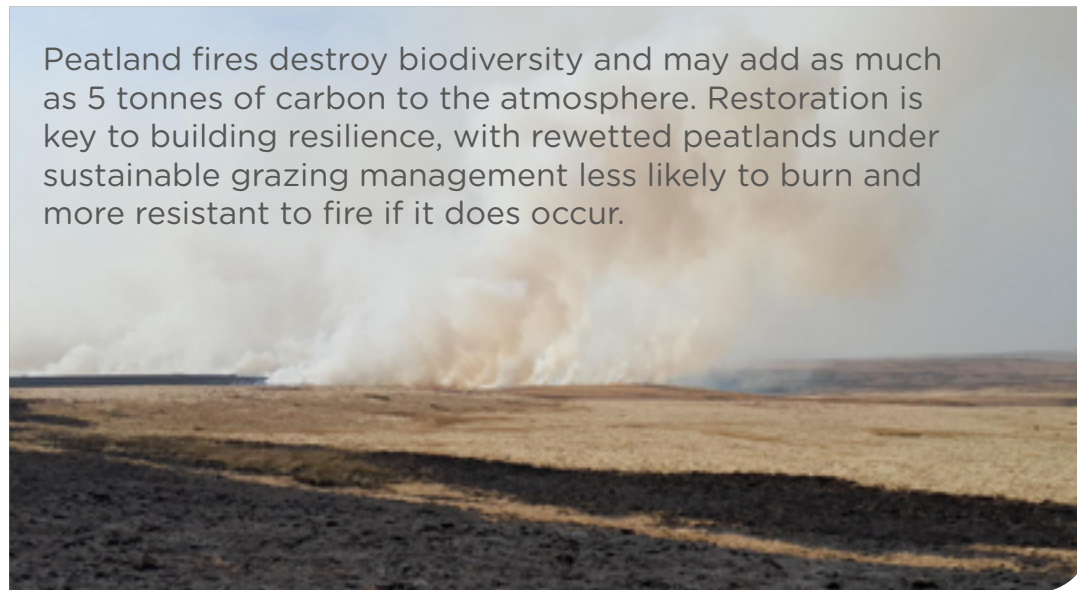
Peatlands are some of the most extraordinary places in Wales and are vital for nature and climate. They are home to rare plants and animals that need protecting and they store more carbon than any other type of land in Wales, making them central to efforts to mitigate climate change.

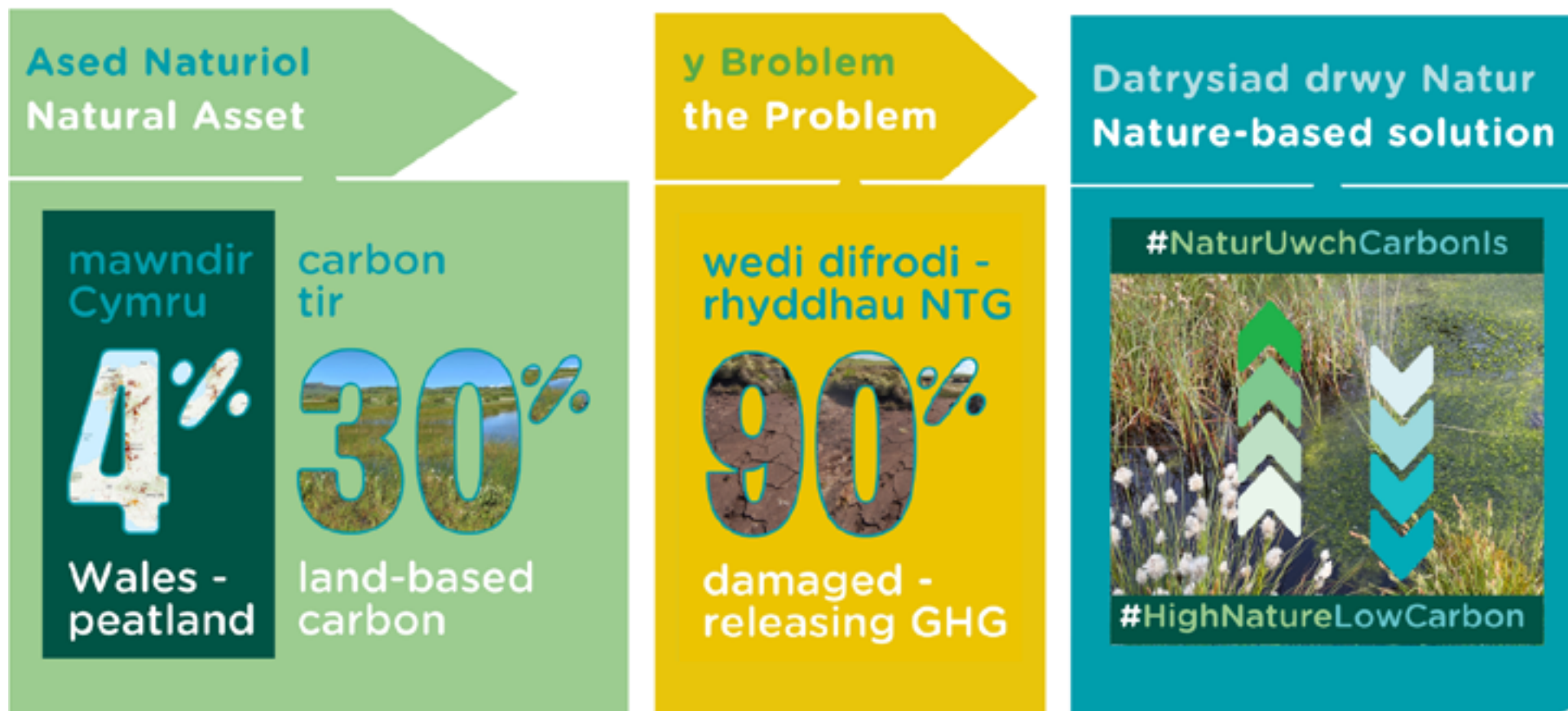
Healthy peatlands control greenhouse gas emissions, improve water quality, and regulate water flow into rivers and streams, helping to reduce flood risk. They also act as natural firebreaks, making landscapes more resilient to wildfires.

Sadly, today in Wales **around 90% of our peatlands are in poor condition**. Damaged peat releases carbon, degrades water quality, and loses its ability to support wildlife. Without urgent action, we risk losing one of our most effective natural resources to tackle climate change and restore wildlife. That's why restoring peatlands is a national priority, as a nature-based solution to a wide range of issues.



Peatland fires destroy biodiversity and may add as much as 5 tonnes of carbon to the atmosphere. Restoration is key to building resilience, with rewetted peatlands under sustainable grazing management less likely to burn and more resistant to fire if it does occur.





A wide range of Welsh Government policy recognises the critical role of peatland restoration and protection in delivering nature recovery and ecological resilience, decarbonisation, and climate change adaptation. The case for continuing and expanding the Programme has been accepted and embedded in the Sustainable Land Management Indicators and Targets, the Welsh Government's Biodiversity Action Plan, and the latest **Climate Change Adaptation Plan**.

The **National Peatland Action Programme (NPAP)**, funded by the Welsh Government and led by Natural Resources Wales (NRW), is Wales's flagship initiative to restore peatlands and coordinate action – tackling climate change and biodiversity loss together by improving the health of these habitats.

NPAP works in partnership with landowners and land managers to bring these remarkable landscapes back to life by creating the conditions for nature to flourish.



Southern Damselfly  
*Coenagrion mercurial*



Dwarf Stonewort  
*Nitella tenuissima*



Photo: RC Gallon

Jumping spider  
*Heliophanus dampfi*

In its first five years, and under the banner of Wales Peatland Action, over 3,600 hectares of peatland were brought into active restoration. This was made possible through strong evidence, joint action, shared expertise, and a deep commitment to restoring and protecting our bogs and fens.

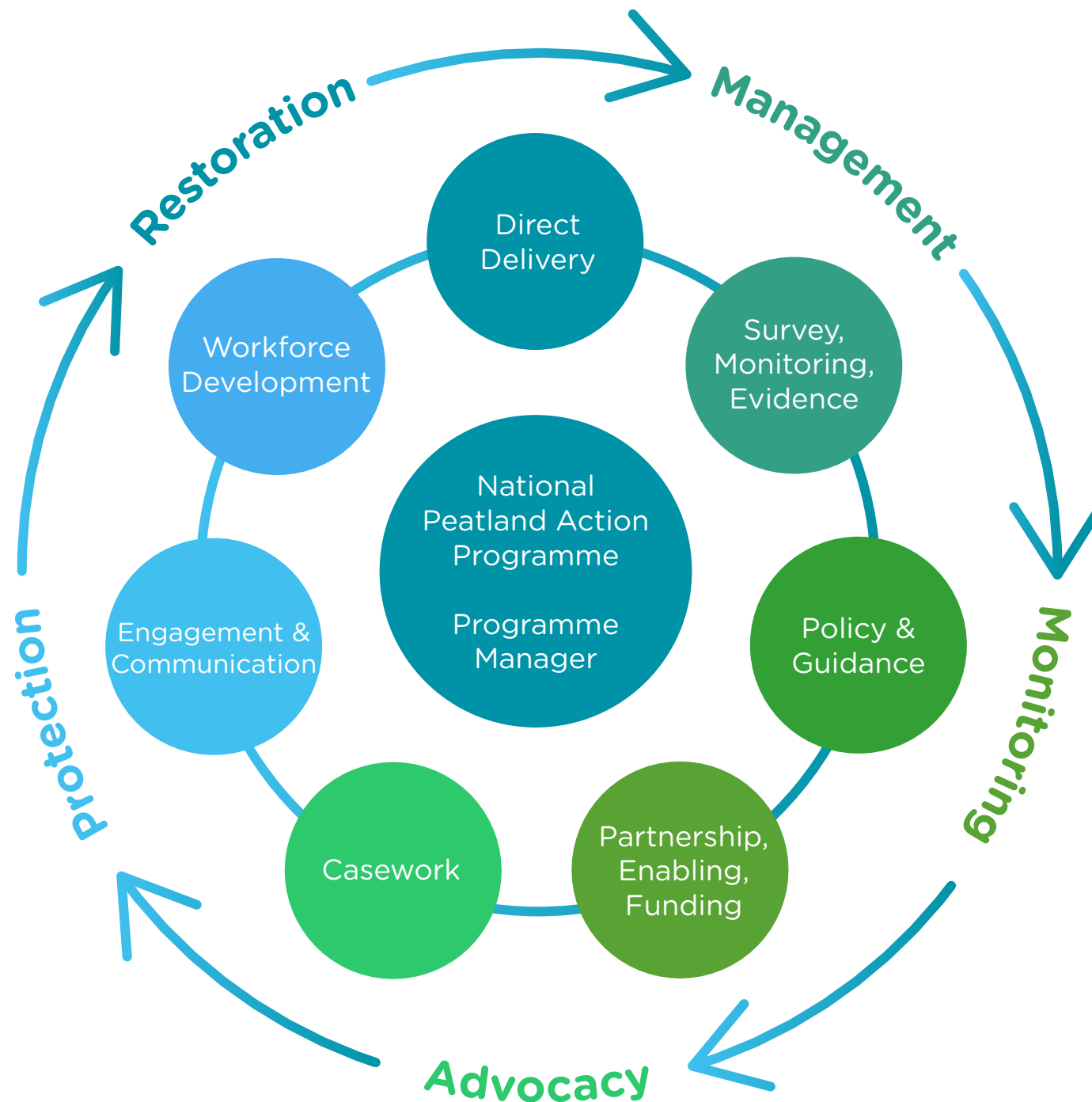
Now, we're entering a new phase, one of **greater pace and scale**. This document sets out our priorities for the next five years: not only to restore more peatland, but to take the wider actions needed to protect and maintain these landscapes for the benefit of people, wildlife, and the climate. **As we upscale, NPAP's goal is that by 2030 we'll have the capacity to restore 1,800 hectares of peatland every year and keep delivering at that scale.** Healthy peatlands are a win for wildlife, climate, and water. They're not just part of our natural heritage, they're vital for the future of Wales.

### Species in Peril and other key species with a strong peatland association



Insects	292
Spiders & allies	20
Mosses & Liverworts	13
Vascular Plants	9
Fungi	8
Birds	7
Stoneworts	4
Gastropod Molluscs	2
Lichens	1
Bivalve Molluscs	1
Crustaceans	1
Springtails	1
Total	359

Through restoration, monitoring, and advocacy, the National Peatland Action Programme is helping peatlands thrive – supporting nature, water quality, and progress towards Net Zero.



An aerial photograph of a peatland landscape. The terrain is a mosaic of green vegetation and dark, winding water channels. The water channels form a complex, interconnected network across the landscape. The vegetation appears to be a mix of mosses and small plants, typical of peatland environments. The overall color palette is dominated by greens and blues, with some brownish tones in the vegetation.

# Peatland restoration

# Peatland restoration

Peatland restoration is the process of repairing damaged peatlands so that they can once again support wildlife, store carbon, and regulate greenhouse gas emissions and water. Restoration typically involves rewetting drained areas, reducing erosion, restoring and managing vegetation, and restoring peatlands that were previously forested. Restoration is wholly dependent on close collaboration with landowners, and ongoing monitoring to track progress is essential. Together these actions help revive this vital ecosystem and secure its long-term resilience.

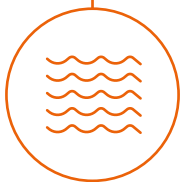
Programme expansion from 2025 onwards ensures that the design and implementation reflect the following key principles and priority action themes:

## NPAP's approach



### **Building ecosystem resilience**

Building resilience will be at the forefront of everything NPAP does. Acting at appropriate scales will be critical to this, together with restoring hydrological regimes and ensuring sustainable management is effective in reducing fuel load and hence fire risk, whilst also maintaining vegetation.



### **Working at appropriate scales**

Restoration design will reflect natural hydrological units and wherever possible entire peatlands will reflect the often fundamental importance of processes acting beyond the wetland margins, often at a whole catchment scale.



### **Integrating the needs in restoration of priority peatland species**

Over 350 Species in Peril have a strong association with peatlands and we will incorporate specific measures for species through site selection, the design, and phasing of restoration actions.

# Our focus

**Our restoration work in Wales focuses on six priority action themes:**

**Peat erosion** is widespread and will worsen with climate change. It damages wildlife habitats and ancient stored carbon, adding sediment and colouration to water courses.

Between 2020 and 2025, NPAP and partners developed successful landscape-scale restoration approaches to address erosion. This will continue and expand to climate-proof peatlands from damaging erosion.



It takes nature around 1,000 years to build just one metre of peat – 1mm per year!

**Peatland drainage** lowers peatland water tables and causes loss of key species, peat oxidation, and water discolouration.

The successful large-scale bunding and ditch blocking techniques, developed in the first five years, will be employed more extensively to restore peatland function and reduce fire risk.



**Sustainable management of upland peatlands** is needed to tackle dominant species such as Purple Moor-grass, *Molinia*, which leads to species loss and increased fire risk.

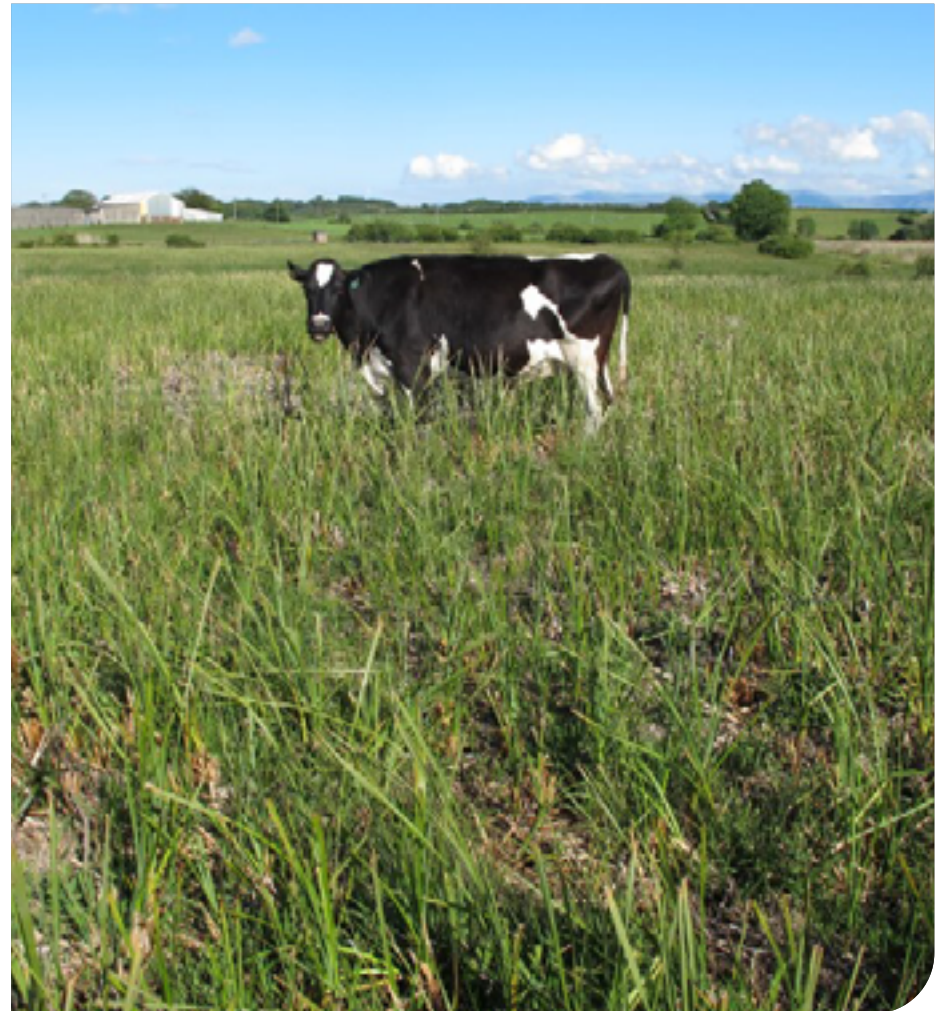
NPAP will work with partners to achieve appropriate grazing and water-level regimes and secure a viable future for our most extensive areas of peatland as places important for nature, carbon, water, and people.



It takes nature around 1,000 years to build just one metre of peat – 1mm per year!

**Sustainable management of lowland peatlands** is essential to tackle lack of management, excess nutrients, and lowered water tables.

NPAP's expanded plan focuses on lowland bogs and fens, reflecting their particular significance for biodiversity, stored carbon, and water quality benefits.



**Restoration of afforested peatlands** represents the biggest opportunity to increase the areas of healthy peatland in landscapes that were drained and planted as recently as 50 years ago.

Strong partnership working has developed across formerly afforested peatlands which will continue and expand. A strong focus is on building resilience by working at scale to include rewetted peatland in the landscape.

**Our most heavily modified peatlands** release the highest levels of greenhouse gases, and they can affect nearby semi-natural habitat.

NPAP will work with landowners and managers to better understand heavily modified peatlands and explore future management options that support both environmental goals and land stewardship.



To reach our ambitious target of restoring **1,800 hectares of peatland per year**, we're building skills, investing in partnerships, and driving more action on the ground to deliver our six priority action themes.

**What action are we taking?**



# What action are we taking?

## Increasing staff capacity for restoration planning & delivery

To scale up restoration, we're investing in staff capacity, both within NPAP and through support to partners. This enables us to plan and deliver more work on the ground, while strengthening collaboration across the sector.

Dedicated delivery teams are being established to:

- build a robust pipeline of restoration projects through evidence-based site selection and planning.
- drive NPAP-led restoration with technical consistency and high standards.
- provide enhanced support to partners, helping grow sector-wide capacity and improve restoration outcomes.

This joined-up approach ensures high-quality delivery and lays the foundation for a more collaborative and capable restoration workforce across Wales.



# Developing the contractor workforce

Delivering restoration at scale depends on a strong, skilled groundworks contractor network. The digger operators and site operators are central to turning plans into action, shaping landscapes, and restoring peatlands.

To support this, NPAP has appointed a Workforce Development Officer to build lasting relationships with the sector, inform procurement through real business insight, and identify training needs. This role will help grow skills, expand capacity, and ensure contractors are ready to deliver high-quality restoration across Wales.

NPAP has also developed an eight-year open framework to secure contractor resources for large-scale peatland restoration projects. It focuses on hydrological restoration, vegetation clearance, and site preparation. The framework is designed for delivery but also for building long-term capacity and partnerships. It includes a tendering option that supports new contractors with training and progression, ensuring skills development and sector resilience.



# Funding others to deliver restoration

A collaborative approach and delivering through others are key in the NPAP upscale. The main funding options to support this are:

- **Strategic Allocated Funding (SAF)** is one of NPAP's core funding mechanisms, designed to support the delivery of NRW priority work through strategic partners who work on a landscape scale. As part of NPAP's upscale commitment to provide greater certainty for partners, funding was increased and a new grant strategy covering 2025-2028 was introduced. This shift to a three-year funding term, enables longer-term planning and delivery for Wales Peatland Action partners.
- A competitive **Peatland Restoration Grant**, open at regular intervals, is another key funding mechanism under NPAP. It supports both the **development** and **delivery** of peatland restoration projects across Wales and is open to a wide range of applicants, including private landowners, public bodies, and voluntary organisations.



# Taking the evidence-led approach

NPAP upscale allows greater capacity to anchor the Programme and the wider Wales Peatland Action restoration approach with solid monitoring, evidencing, and reporting. Dedicated Monitoring, Evidence and Data teams will coordinate and drive the capability of the sector. On an on-going basis, the **Wales Peatland Data Map** shares the Programme delivery progress and evidence layers with the public.

## Integrating with other initiatives

As appropriate, NPAP will continue to contribute, support, or integrate with other initiatives. For example, NPAP will:

- plan capacity to provide expert support and in some cases delivery capacity for other key initiatives, including the SFS, the Nature Networks Programme, and Ffermio Bro.
- explore green finance options such as with the UK Peatland Code and other Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) initiatives.
- dovetail the approach with other Wales, UK, and global initiatives where it applies to peatland, such as the focus on Species in Peril in Wales and the IUCN Peatland Programme in the UK and beyond.



# Protecting and effective management of peatland

Protecting peatlands from further loss, damage, and deterioration is a critical complement to restoration. As NPAP scales up, we're increasing our capacity to support this work – providing more staff in advisory roles, expanding national expertise, and offering strategic advice to government.

## Managing peatlands for the future

Protecting peatlands from further degradation is a cornerstone of NPAP. As the national advisor to government and the home of peatland expertise in Wales, NPAP plays a central role in shaping and informing land-management strategies.

This includes contributing to the development of the SFS and other initiatives that influence how land is used and cared for. NPAP is actively involved in discussions and decision-making, ensuring peatland priorities are embedded in policy and practice. From grazing regimes to hydrological interventions, effective management helps peatlands continue to store carbon, support wildlife, and deliver essential ecosystem services for generations to come



## Supporting peatland protection through the development planning system

Development pressure is an increasing challenge for peat soils and habitats. To help address this, NPAP provides technical expertise to support NRW statutory responses to planning applications and development plans. We also provide guidance and training.

NPAP ensures that the value of peatlands is recognised and considered in decision-making. This informed approach supports the protection of landscapes that have taken millennia to form – and which are essential to Wales's climate and nature goals. Every planning decision that considers peat is an opportunity to safeguard these irreplaceable habitats, and NPAP provides the evidence, advice, and support required.

## Policy with purpose: shaping the future of peatlands

Peatlands sit at the intersection of climate, biodiversity, and land-use policy. Yet, current policy blockers are hindering progress. NPAP is actively working to resolve these issues, ensuring that peatlands are not just protected in theory, but in practice.

From influencing climate mitigation strategies to embedding peatland priorities in nature recovery plans, policy advice is a powerful tool in the peatland protection arsenal.







# Evidence, monitoring and reporting

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Evidence, monitoring, and reporting are essential to ensure peatland restoration, rehabilitation and protection efforts are effective, accountable, and adaptive.

We have additional staff to do this work and a dedicated team for monitoring. This specialism supports policy, funding decisions, and scientific understanding, while demonstrating wider benefits like carbon storage, biodiversity, and water quality.

NPAP's evidence work is organised into four key themes:



## Theme 1 Mapping Peatlands

Developing the Peatlands of Wales Map to track distribution, depth, condition, and ecosystem services



## Theme 2 Understanding Pressures

Identifying threats, pressures, and losses to guide targeted interventions



## Theme 3 Targeting Action

Designing protection and restoration efforts for maximum environmental and social benefits



## Theme 4 Collaborative Working

Sharing knowledge and resources with partners across the UK

## Key areas to develop in the short term:

- Develop a costed multi-year plan for updating the **Peatlands of Wales Map** and reporting metrics.
- Develop a comprehensive evidence strategy.
- Develop a collaborative monitoring plan for Wales.

A group of about ten people, including men and women of various ages, are standing in a field of tall, dry grass. They are all looking towards a distant, rolling hill under a blue sky with scattered clouds. The people are dressed in casual outdoor clothing, including hats and long-sleeved shirts. The field is filled with tall, golden-brown grass and some small white flowers. A large, semi-transparent teal banner is overlaid on the lower half of the image, containing the text "Wider engagement and accountability". A large, semi-transparent grey arrow points upwards and to the right, starting from the bottom left and ending near the top right. In the bottom right corner, there is a large, semi-transparent grey icon of a person standing next to a bar chart with five bars of increasing height.

## Wider engagement and accountability

# Wider engagement and accountability

## Partnership approach

Partnership is key for peatland protection, restoration, and management, so NPAP leads with coordination. Landowners are the guardians of the valuable 4% of Wales that is peatland. Together we can move forward to restore damaged peatland which releases harmful greenhouse gases. Once restored, peatland will again become a carbon sink, a valuable habitat to rare species, and a landscape that helps lessen the risks of flood and fire spread. Partnerships we need for success involve landowners and land managers, delivery agencies, restoration practitioners, contractors, evidencing experts, as well as Welsh Government as funder and policy lead, and NRW in managing and enabling.

## Coordinating groups

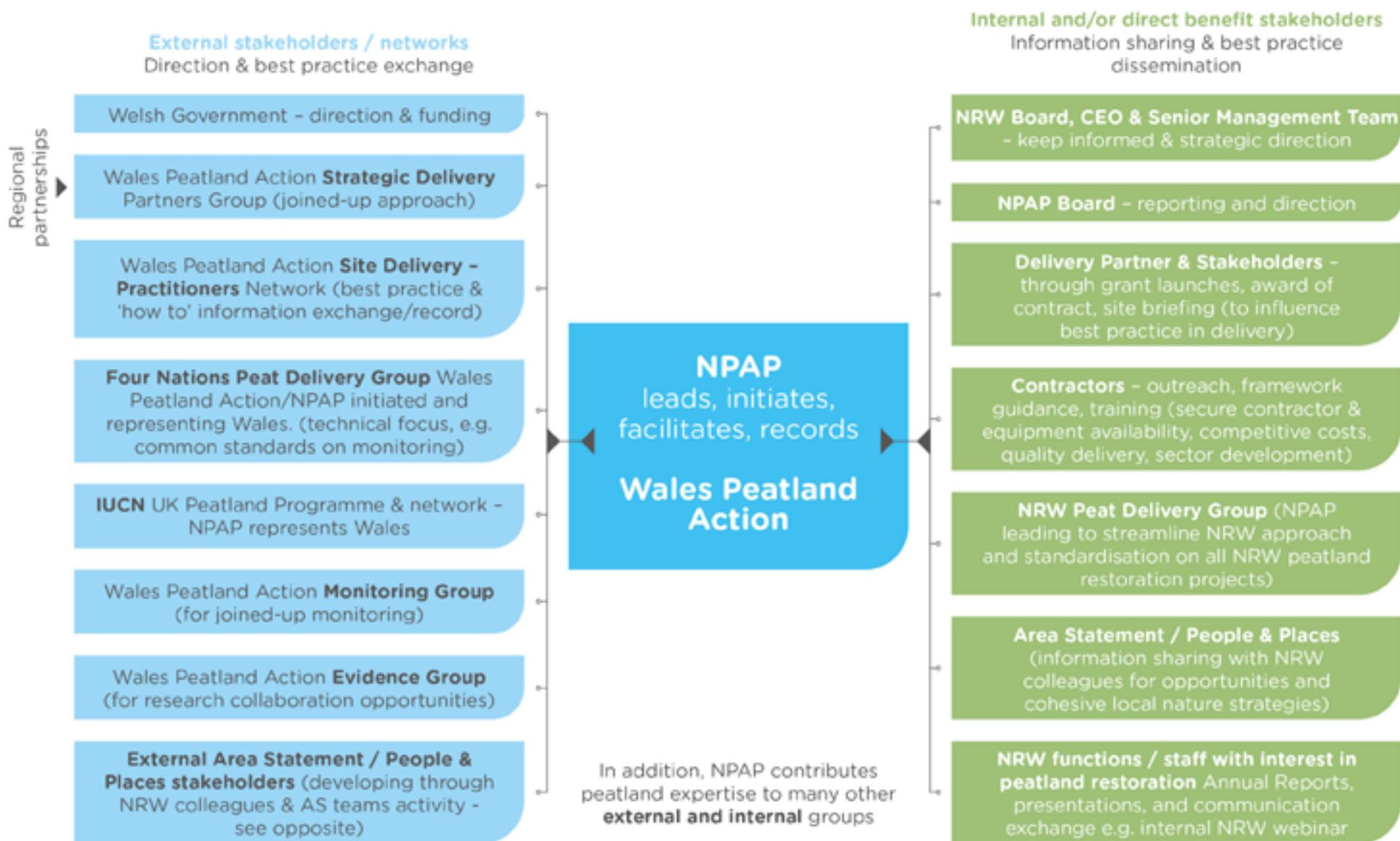
Strategic partnership groups will coordinate effectively, target issues, and accelerate the restoration with transparent processes. NPAP coordinates these Wales Peatland Action groups to: improve the restoration delivery, accelerate the scale of restoration, refine monitoring and evidence gathering, and protect and maintain healthy peatland.

## Informing and engaging

Public support through accurate information dissemination has been important to the Programme. NPAP with Wales Peatland Action partners will continue to highlight restoration opportunities and report accurately with transparency on all processes.



# NPAP as a Wales Peatland Action hub





## Conclusion

The National Peatland Action Programme is entering a transformative phase defined by ambition, collaboration, and scale. As we build the capacity to restore 1,800 hectares of peatland annually, our commitment to protecting and revitalising these vital landscapes remains unwavering.

The principles and priority themes outlined in this document set the foundation for action, but they are only the beginning. As new teams settle into roles and partnerships strengthen, more detailed delivery plans and targeted actions will follow. These will ensure that NPAP continues to evolve responsively, guided by evidence, expertise, and the shared goal of securing a resilient future for Wales's peatlands.