

# WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT PEATLANDS? THE TRUTH BEHIND THE BOG

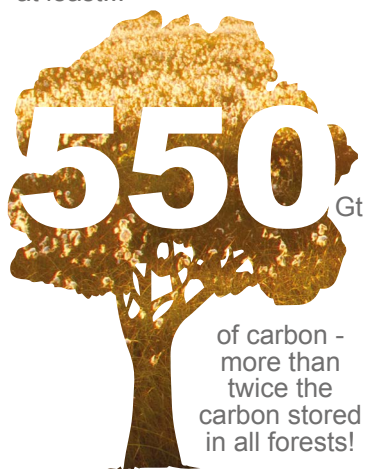


# WHAT ARE PEATLANDS?

Peatlands are wetland landscapes that are characterised by waterlogged organic soils made of dead and decaying plants. They may not sound or look much on first glance, but dig a little deeper into the facts and figures and you'll be amazed how this unique habitat functions and at the services it provides.

Also known as: moors, bogs, mires, peat swamp forests, permafrost tundra, peat moss, muskegs, fens...

Global peatlands contain at least...



Blanket bogs and lowland raised bogs are globally threatened; the UK has

13%

of the world's blanket bogs.

Peat contains

90%

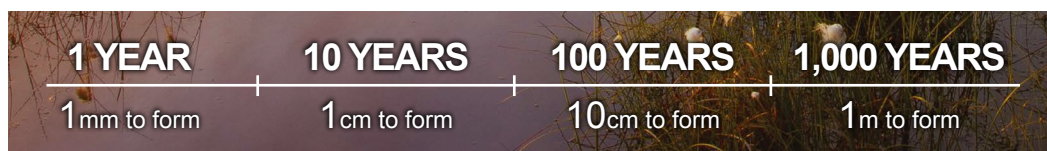
water - its key component, *Sphagnum*, is able to hold 20 times more water than it weighs.



Multi-coloured carpets of *Sphagnum* form the building blocks of peatlands - its slow decomposition under waterlogged conditions forms dark brown peat soils.

There are three main types of peatlands in the UK: blanket bog, raised bog and fenland.

Peat (a soil made of dead and decaying plants) forms at a very slow rate:



# WHERE DO YOU FIND PEATLANDS?

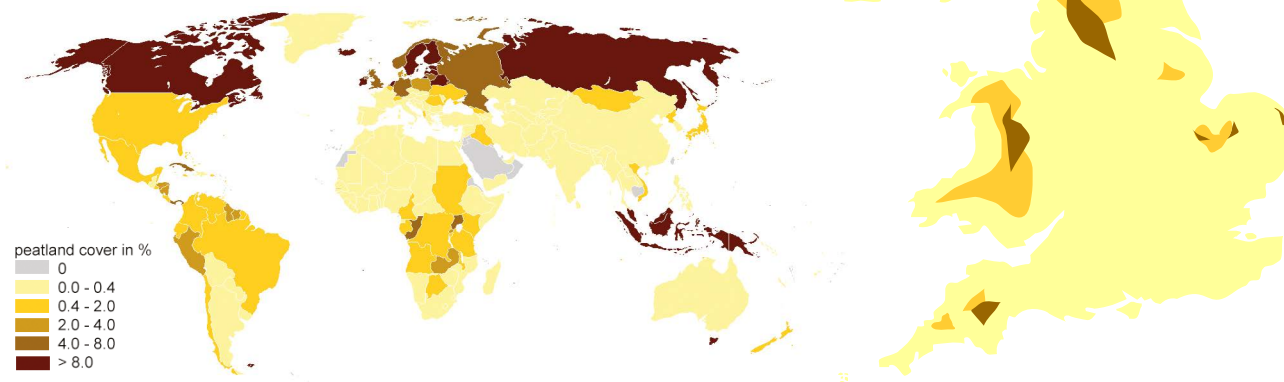
Peatlands are found in 175 countries worldwide and span across all continents, from naturally forested peatlands in Europe and tropical peat swamp forests in South East Asia, to vast permafrost areas of Russia and Canada, and high mountain peatlands in the Andes and Himalayas.

The UK is one of the world's top ten countries in terms of peatland area, covering two million hectares. 60% of the UK's peatland is in Scotland.

The UK's peatlands store over three billion tonnes of carbon, around the same amount as all the forest in the UK, France and Germany put together.

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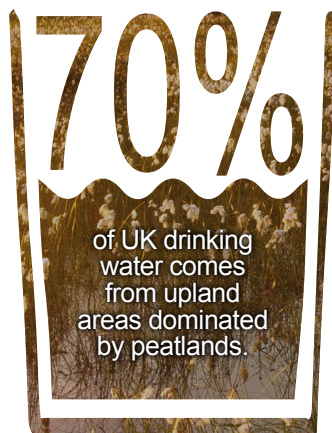
The largest peatlands are thought to include Hudson Bay Lowland and Mackenzie River Valley in Canada, and West Siberian Lowland in Russia.





# WHY ARE THEY SO AMAZING?

Peatlands are not only beautiful, dramatic landscapes, full of inspiring wildlife, but also provide us with some very useful services, vital to our own survival. Their protection is necessary to avoid adverse economic and environmental impacts.



**£1.5m**



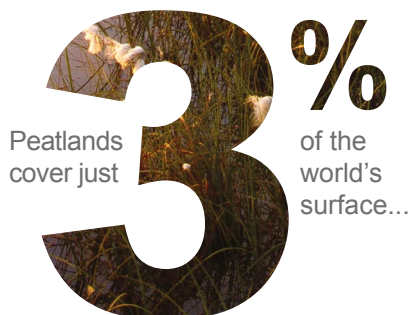
Peatland vegetation slows the flow of rainfall, helping to prevent flooding in local towns and villages.

Peatlands are wonderful places for wildlife, they are home to:



Hunting birds of prey including the threatened hen harrier, quartering the ground.

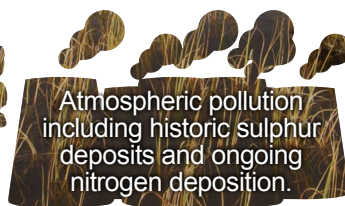
Weird and wonderful plants like the insect-eating sundew.



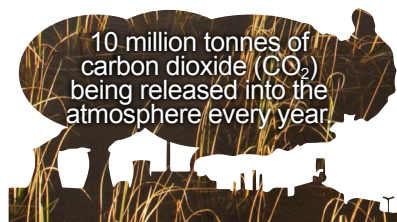
# BIG PROBLEM WORKABLE SOLUTION

Globally, 25% of peatlands have been destroyed, whilst in the UK at least 80% are damaged, despite the majority being identified as of international importance under EU legislation.

Damage has been caused by:



Damaged UK peatlands mean:



## WE NEED TO ACT NOW

Peatland restoration is vital if we are to avoid serious environmental, economic and social harm. If we do not act now important natural capital stands to erode away: clean drinking water, carbon storage, flood mitigation, wildlife habitat, rural jobs. The list goes on. Damaged peatlands will also continue to release harmful CO<sub>2</sub> contributing to catastrophic climate change. The solution is in our grasp, we need to grab it.

**PEATLAND  
CODE** 

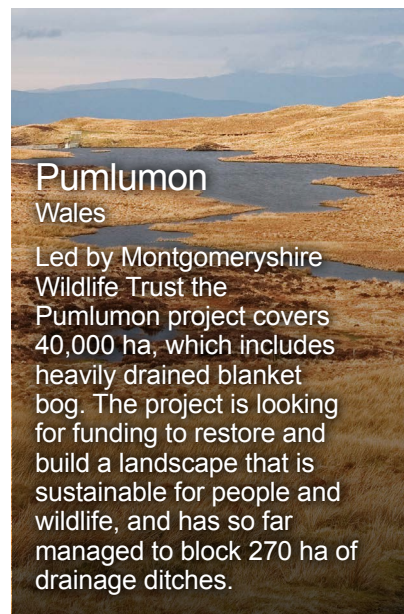
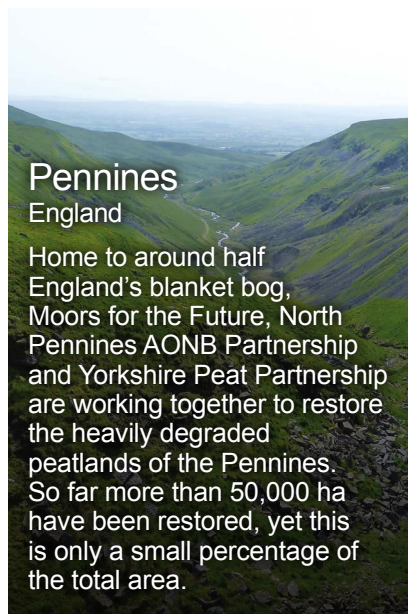
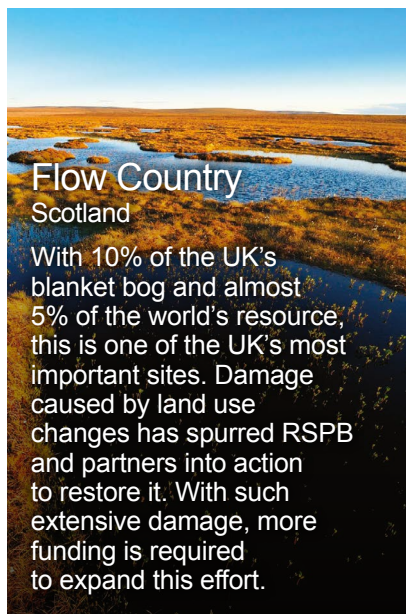
A major new funding initiative to complement public funding for peatlands by attracting investment from the private sector. Benefits of restoration, particularly carbon savings, verified via stringent set of standards.



# RESTORATION IN THE UK

Work has begun, but there is a long way to go. Secure, long term funding is essential – necessary for our wellbeing, economy and wildlife, and in the long term saving money as problems are resolved before peatland condition deteriorates further.

The UK has considerable expertise in peatland restoration, with several projects completed and on the go. Projects, such as those highlighted here, are essential to restoring our lowland and upland peatlands to a fully functioning condition.



**The Peatland Challenge:** 1,000,000 ha of UK peatlands in good condition or in restoration by 2020.



The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) UK Peatland Programme exists to promote peatland restoration in the UK and advocates the multiple benefits of peatlands through partnerships, strong science, sound policy and effective practice.

[www.iucn-uk-peatlandprogramme.org](http://www.iucn-uk-peatlandprogramme.org)

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