

Press release: New £10 million fund to restore peatland

A £10 million grant scheme to restore England's iconic peatlands has been launched by the Government today.

Peatlands cover 11 per cent of England's landscape and provide a fantastic habitat for a wide range of birds such as the merlin, dunlin and golden plover.

They also provide 70 per cent of our drinking water and reduce greenhouse gases by locking away at least 3.2 billion tonnes of CO₂.

The £10 million will be available for wildlife trust and charity projects to re-wet mosses, bring back missing plants and restore a thriving habitat to our peatlands across the country. This is in addition to the £4 million Defra has already allocated to existing Natural England peatland restoration schemes in England.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

Peatlands are an iconic aspect of the English landscape which are not only a haven for wildlife but also provide us with clean water and help reduce greenhouse emissions.

This funding will help restore thousands of hectares of this precious habitat to its natural state and is a key part of our ambition to be the first generation to leave the natural environment in a better state than we found it.

Natural England Chairman Andrew Sells said:

Peatlands are one of the most important resources in England for wildlife and people. They are our answer to tropical rainforests, storing hundreds of thousands of tonnes of carbon a year, providing clean drinking water, beautiful landscapes and valuable wildlife habitats, as well as reducing the risk of flooding.

This investment will support practical restoration initiatives such as rewetting and seeding with Sphagnum mosses, an essential ingredient in restoring our peatlands for future generations.

In addition to this, plants and animals unique to this habitat, including the white-faced darter dragonfly and round-leaved sundew,

will be better protected for years to come.

The funding will be available for projects that restore upland and lowland peatlands to their natural state, increasing their capacity to prevent carbon entering the atmosphere, reduce flood risk by slowing the flow of rain water and create habitats for vulnerable wildlife.

The scheme will open in May and funding will target sites with the greatest potential for greenhouse gas reduction. Projects that deliver better value for money and maximise environmental benefits will be favoured for funding.

Funding will be available for three years from April 2018 as part of Defra's £100 million of capital funding for direct investment in projects that support the natural environment. More details, including how to bid for grants, will be provided when the scheme opens for bids.