

Meeting Summary for NFCA May Meet-Up

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Meeting Attendees

Anna Lehmann, Ben Hart, Brady Stevens, Bruce Howard, EKN, Dan Bass, David Elliott, Ed Heather-Hayes (Fife Coast and Countryside Trust), Freddie Ryan, Garance Wood-Moulin - IUCN UK Peatland Programme, Ida Bailey, Isabel Milligan, jeremyleggett, John Goffin, Julia McCarthy, Lindsay Mackinlay, Future Forest Company, Luke Baldwin, Patrick Jean-Martel, Paul Sizeland, Rachael Kershaw, FFC, Sam Welsh, Sarah Brownlie - Wilder Carbon, Simon Herko, Stuart Bond, Toby Parkes, Umar Farooq

Quick recap

The team discussed the development of a new code for issuing high-quality nature credits and the potential benefits of nature restoration for communities. They also addressed the challenges of carbon credits, the need for fairer market mechanisms, and the importance of community involvement in decision-making processes. Lastly, they explored the commercialization of carbon credits, the potential of land acquisition for rewilding projects, and the need for a certification system to define project benefits.

Next steps

- CreditNature will continue developing the code, including guidance on demonstrating eligibility, structuring nature restoration activities, ensuring compliance, and providing templates and protocols for registration and credit issuance.
- CreditNature will explore models for NARIA as a service, focusing on how metrics can have value beyond being credited, such as KPIs for sustainability-linked bonds and funds, and measuring supply chain impacts and risks.
- CreditNature will collaborate with the Government to design a code that aligns with Scottish policy objectives, taking inspiration from existing standards like BSI Flex principles, carbon codes, and international standards like PV.Nature.
- Peatland Code will run a session at the June NFCA on outcomes of their recent consultation.
- FIRNS partners will develop a community benefits certification process that is adaptable to different community contexts, involves community input and feedback, and explores integration with existing frameworks and natural capital models. Certification to be hosted by the NFCA (through Fife Coast & Countryside Trust)
- The NFCA will also explore the development of a screening tool or mechanism to assist early-stage projects in engaging with communities and setting the right direction.
- NFCA members are invited to contribute to a common database, connected with the Community Benefit Standard of a 'bucket of benefits' and 'basket of metrics'
- Wildlife Works will share international best practices on community involvement, benefit sharing, community-based monitoring, and land use planning, emphasizing the importance of addressing community concerns and building trust.
- Nature Broking to lead a breakout session at June NFCA on how fit-for-purpose UK codes are for commercial trading and the degree to which they have any bias in their support land acquisition models versus alternative arrangements.

- Nattergal will present their work on best practice community engagement at the June NFCA.

Developing High-Quality Nature Credits Code

Dan Bass from CreditNature discussed the development of a new code to issue high-quality nature credits in collaboration with the government, which will include guidelines for project developers and a system for converting metrics into certificates for funding projects. The team also addressed potential issues such as double counting, transparency, and the possibility of NARIA as a service.

The financial flow into projects, plans for incorporating community benefits, and the creation of nature-based enterprises were also discussed. Questions were addressed regarding the pricing of certificates, return on investment models, and the challenge of achieving permanence.

Peatland Carbon Code Consultation and Plugin Development

Garance reported on the recent public consultation for version 2.1 of the Peatland carbon code, highlighting the aim to gather feedback for a more substantial update, version 3, planned for next year. She also shared that there had been some feedback on the biodiversity aspect but not specifically on the carbon side. The outcomes of the consultation are pending, and Garance mentioned ongoing changes to comply with Icbcm and an accreditation process with the International Carbon Offset Reduction Alliance. Ed then announced the successful progress of a community benefits plugin development project, with funding secured for its operationalization, and the establishment of a draft standards group to begin the standard development process in the coming weeks.

Nature Restoration, Carbon Credits, and Community Engagement

Ed Heather-Hayes from Fife Coast & Countryside Trust discussed the potential benefits of nature restoration for communities, emphasizing the need for improved access to nature and the possibility of funding green health partnerships and school engagement programs. Anna then shared concerns about the potential pushback from communities and media regarding carbon credits and the need for fairer market mechanisms. She suggested building community buy-in and defining quality and community-centered rights through early and inclusive conversations. Ed welcomed Anna's insights and noted the need for a scoring system to evaluate the discussed points.

Highlands Community Challenges and Opportunities

Jeremy Leggett from Highlands Rewilding discussed the unique challenges and opportunities presented by the Highlands community, highlighting the importance of affordable housing and the potential for community-led land management. Simon then outlined the phase one approach, emphasizing the need for a community benefit metric and the potential for a certification system to demonstrate social value. Stuart expressed interest in exploring best practices globally, and Julia shared insights on the regulatory environment in the US. The team also considered the possibility of developing a certification system that could be integrated into existing and emerging codes.

Balancing Community Involvement and Nature Restoration

Anna Lehmann from Wildlife Works discussed best practice tools for community involvement, including for benefit sharing and land use planning. Toby raised concerns about potential negative impacts on nature from increased community presence. Ed emphasized balancing nature restoration with community needs through co-designed management plans. John Goffin from Kana noted the UK's unique land ownership structure and voluntary carbon market as forward-looking. Simon from NFCA said he would consider using Nature Scot's natural capital tool for measuring wider community benefits, as suggested by Freddie from Rethink Carbon, and involving Freddie in this process. Sam

Welsh from Forest Carbon highlighted potential delays from community decision-making processes and complexities around corporate land acquisition.

Communication, Carbon Credits, and Rewilding Debate

Anna emphasized the importance of clear communication and early information sharing in the development process to avoid delays and build trust. The team, including Luke Baldwin from Nature Broking, Ed, John, and Ben Hart from Nattergal, engaged in an in-depth discussion about the commercialization of carbon credits and codes, questioning its fit for purpose in terms of business sale. The team also debated the potential of land acquisition for rewilding and nature restoration projects, with Ben advocating for a balance between certification and attractiveness to investors. The need for a certification system to define project benefits was identified as a key takeaway from the meeting.