

Peatland Code Guidance



**PEATLAND
CODE**



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About the Peatland Code

The Peatland Code is a scheme to support the restoration of UK peatlands. It provides a funding mechanism for peatland projects to access carbon markets, whilst offering assurances to carbon buyers that any scheme they are investing in has been validated and verified to deliver the climate benefits it promises.

Land managers can use the Peatland Code to generate new income streams for peatland restoration. Used alongside government agri-environment schemes, which would typically only pay for limited restoration activities, the additional funding can be used to restore, manage, and maintain peatlands in an improved condition in the long-term.

With 80% of the UK's peatlands currently modified or damaged, the Peatland Code offers an exciting way to capture and store billions of tonnes of carbon, helping to combat climate change whilst also improving water quality and preventing biodiversity loss.

Soil Association Certification have been authorised by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) UK Peatland Programme to validate Peatland Code projects.

With over 20 years' experience across multiple land-management sectors, including agriculture and forestry, Soil Association Certification can act as a trusted partner to support your Peatland Code project.

The Peatland Code Process

To take the first step to Peatland Code Validation/Verification you will first need to register your project on the UK Land Carbon Registry. This must be done before the start of any restoration work.

Approval of a project against the Peatland Code Standard then follows a three-stage process:

1. Project Plan Validation
2. Restoration Validation
3. Verification

Project Plan Validation should be achieved within three years of registration on the UK Land Carbon Registry.

Restoration Validation shall take place within one year of finishing the restoration work (the project 'Start Date').



Validation overview

There are 2 stages of Validation:

Project Plan Validation

This is a desk-based assessment of the restoration plan and the greenhouse gas assertion against the requirements of the Peatland Code.

Project Plan Validation ideally takes place before* the implementation of the peatland restoration plan and will consist of a review of the documentation to determine if the Peatland Code requirements have been met.

Once the validator is satisfied that the project has met all Peatland Code requirements a validation statement shall be issued and the project will be listed on the UK Land Carbon Registry as 'Validated'. The Validation Statement will expire 3 years from the date of issue.

*If needed, restoration can start prior to completion of project plan validation. In this instance, the risk of not achieving project plan validation, or of having to reduce project area due to eligibility requirements, is for the project (as additional baseline evidence cannot be collected once restoration work is underway). Project plan validation should be achieved as soon as possible and before finishing the restoration.

Restoration Validation

This is an evaluation of the restoration activities against the validated restoration plan. This will take place within one year of the completion of the restoration activities ('Start Date').

A Validator will attend the site to assess if the project has delivered the planned restoration work. The expected emissions reductions will be adjusted if necessary.



Required Evidence for Project Plan Validation

Key project documents

The following documents and information need to be provided to Soil Association Certification before a Validation can commence.

Templates for key project documents can be found on the IUCN website.

- Project Design Document
- Additionality Calculator
- Emissions Calculator
- Risk Assessment
- Map(s) of site including grid reference
- Restoration Management and Monitoring Plan(s)
- Peat depth survey following the Peatland Code Field Protocol
- Signed Landowner & Project Developer Commitment Statement

Supporting project documents and information

- Drone imagery/georeferenced photographs
- Shapefiles to support the mapping
- Proof of land ownership for the duration of the project
- Proof of any grant funding
- Stakeholder consultation outcomes

Required Evidence for Restoration Validation

Key project documents

The following documents and information need to be provided to Soil Association Certification before the Restoration Validation can commence.

Templates for certain documents can be found on the IUCN website.

- Final Restoration Report
- Emissions Calculator (optional)

If diverged from the validated restoration plan, the following documents need to be adjusted accordingly & resubmitted:

- Project Design Document
- Additionality Calculator
- Emissions Calculator
- Map(s) of site including grid reference

Supporting project documents

- Drone imagery/georeferenced photographs to support the Final Report
- Shapefiles, GeoPDFs to support Final Report
- Proof of any grant funding
- Proof of any stakeholder consultation outcomes

What to expect at Validation

Requesting a quote and signing contracts

Before you contact us for a formal quote, please ensure that:

- a) Project stage on S&P Global is set to 'Under Development' (for Project Plan Validation) or 'Validated' (for Restoration Validation) and
- b) Soil Association Certification has been selected as your chosen Validation Body.

Contact us for a quote with enough time to ensure sufficient time to complete the Validation and address any issues that may come up during the Validation process. You can do this by registering for our portal (please contact us on peatlandcode@soilassociation.org for details on how to register) and requesting a quote on there.

The quote will be valid & fixed for three (3) months provided that all Key Documents required for the Validation have been returned to us. If we have not received these after three (3) months from sending the quote, then we will requote for the project. Projects which have not commenced Validation within nine (9) months will receive a revised Fees and Charges Schedule to current prices.

For your first project with Soil Association Certification:

When approaching us for your first Validation, we require you to sign two documents: the SA Cert Client Contract and the Fees and Charges Schedule for the specific project or group scheme.

The SA Cert Client Contract is an agreement between SA Cert and the Project Developer, while the Fees and Charges Schedule links the Project Developer to the project or group scheme under assessment.

Once the SA Cert Client Contract is signed, it applies to all future projects or group schemes and does not need to be re-signed unless there are changes to the Project Developer's company information or modifications to the SA Cert Client Contract itself. However, the Project Developer must sign the Fees and Charges Schedule for each individual project or group scheme Validation requested from SA Cert.

Where the landowner will be paying the invoice directly, they will also need to sign a client contract and Fees and Charges Schedule

Submission of Key Documents

To initiate the Validation process, after SA Cert have received the signed contractual documents, you will need to submit the required documentation to us (listed above) onto our Climate and Landscape Portal. Full instructions on how to do this will be provided to you.

Appraisal of Key Documents by Validator

Upon receipt of your documents a Validator will be instructed to initiate an appraisal of your project/group scheme. They will assess Key and Supporting documentation to ensure that the project/group scheme meets the requirements of the Peatland Code standard. If, during this initial appraisal, the Validator identifies any errors, omissions, or misstatements, or believes further evidence is required to prove compliance to the Standards, you will be requested to correct the issues, answer any questions, and provide additional evidence as required.

To ensure a smooth Validation we request that you respond to any Validator queries within 30 days. If you can't respond within the specified timeframe, then please inform the Validator. Once you believe you have addressed all comments, updated documents, and supplied additional evidence, the Validator will review your amendments and confirm whether comments have been satisfactorily resolved.

Repeat these steps until all comments raised by the Validator have been resolved. The project will then be sent for Review by a second Validator.

During Restoration Validation

Along with the appraisal of the key documents, a site visit is required at Restoration Validation. The Validator will attend the site to assess if the project has delivered the planned restoration work and assess whether any resulting impact on peatland has been achieved.

Independent Review

Following the Validation assessment, an independent Reviewer will provide a second assessment of the documents and raise any additional issues they identify. The Validator is expected to resolve any issues found by the Reviewer, which may require further input from you as the Project Developer to address the comment(s). Once the Reviewer's comments are satisfactorily resolved, IUCN will carry out their check of the documents.

Scheme Owner (IUCN) Review

The IUCN will review the Key Documents to check for completeness and consistency. If during this appraisal, they identify any errors or believe further evidence is required, they will ask our Reviewer to correct the issues. As a result, you may be contacted by the Validator again to provide further clarification on any points raised by IUCN. Once they are satisfied the Key Documents are fully compliant, they will confirm with the Reviewer and Soil Association Certification.

Validation Statement

Once the Scheme Owner (IUCN) have confirmed they have completed their review of the key documents, the Validation Statement will be created and sent to an internal member of SA Cert for approval. This statement summarises the key information about your project/group scheme, including the Project Name, ID number, Net Area, and expected emissions reduction.

Completion of the Validation

Once we have received this final approval of the statement, the Key Documents and the Statement are uploaded to the UK Land Carbon Registry. IUCN and S&P Global will conduct final reviews of the uploaded documents and compare with what is recorded in the project details on the Registry before your project is officially validated.

Top tips for all Project Developers preparing for Validation

Early preparation

Contact SA Cert as soon as possible in advance of the Validation deadline to ensure sufficient time to complete the entire audit process.

Consistency

It is important to ensure all project details are accurate and consistent when supplying us with the initial information. The information held within your project documents must not differ between documents.

Key information which is often overlooked:

- Landowner or PD details for contracts – ensure all information is provided including phone numbers and email addresses
- Key Project Dates
- Project/Group Names/Group
- Member names
- ID numbers
- Data such as PIUs or cashflow results copied across different documents

As a Validation and Verification Body (VVB), we are unable to provide any type of consultancy services to Project Developers; including completion of Key or Supporting Documents or providing project specific advice, as this would impair our impartiality and ability to assess the project/group scheme. However, should you require advice or assistance on this, then please contact the IUCN peatlandcode@iucn.org.uk, who are happy to help.

Efficiency

To ensure a smooth Validation process, please factor in sufficient time to answering queries from the Validator and Reviewer and respond in a timely manner (no later than 30 days) to make any adjustments required or providing requested documentation. This will aid you in meeting the project Validation deadline in good time.

Key Dates

Date		Definition
Registration Date		This is the date the project is approved by the Peatland Secretariat (IUCN) and S&P Global - when a project moves from 'Draft' to 'Under Development' status on the UK Land Carbon Registry.
Implementation Date		Date work begins onsite
Start Date		<p>The day restoration works are complete.</p> <p>Carbon sequestration is claimed from the start date.</p>
Validation Deadline		The deadline to have the project validated is 3 years after the registration date
Restoration Validation Deadline		One year from the start date.
Project End Date		The project start date + project duration (e.g. if start date is 01/04/2023 and duration is 100 years then end date is 31/03/2113).