



RESPECT

LAND USE *for* NET ZERO >>>

Webinar: Advancing a Just Transition for
Scotland's Peatlands

Professor Jill Robbie and Dr Miranda Geelhoed



UK Research
and Innovation



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Department for
Energy Security
& Net Zero



Department for
Science, Innovation,
& Technology



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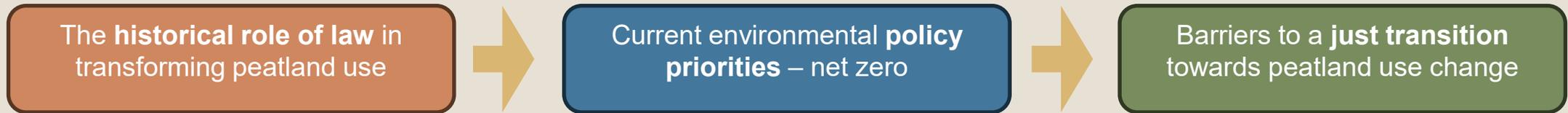
Rapid Engagement with Stressed Peatland Environments and Communities in Transformation - RESPECT

- **Aim: “To produce data, methods, landholder tools and proposals for governance reforms to change agricultural practices on peatland and contribute to the UK’s net zero target.”**
- **Key questions:**
 - Where should peatland restoration take place?
 - How should restoration be implemented based on the social capacities of land stakeholders?
 - How can landholders be supported in their decision-making?
- **Key outputs:**
 - Stakeholder engagement
 - Peatland Triage Tool
 - Reform proposals

Law, policy & governance

Based on the research by Miranda Geelhoed, Jill Robbie and Larissa A. Naylor

What has been the role of law and policy in shaping the use and management of agricultural peatlands in Scotland, and what are the key barriers to realising a just transition to net zero?



Leadburn, community-led peatland restoration, Miranda Geelhoed

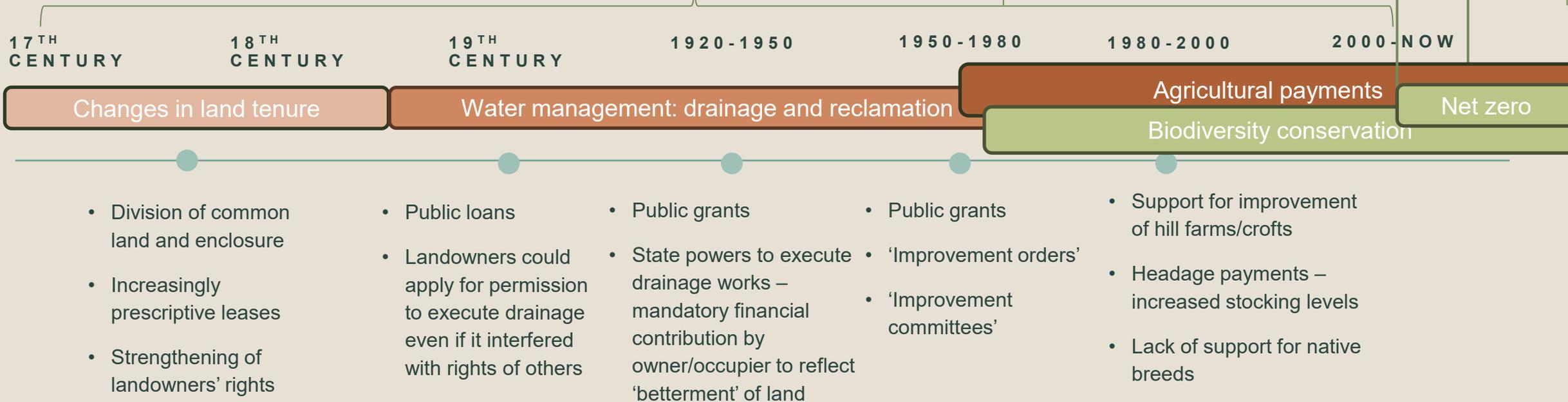
Too wet to farm, too dry to fish

Aim: to protect/consERVE/restore peatlands for their ecological functions

Net zero by 2050 (2009)/2045 (2019)

250,000 ha restored by 2030 (2018)

Aim: to allow for or boost agricultural production on peatlands



Flanders Moss, Miranda Geelhoed

Challenges for a just peatland transition

Lack of an integrated peatland policy approach

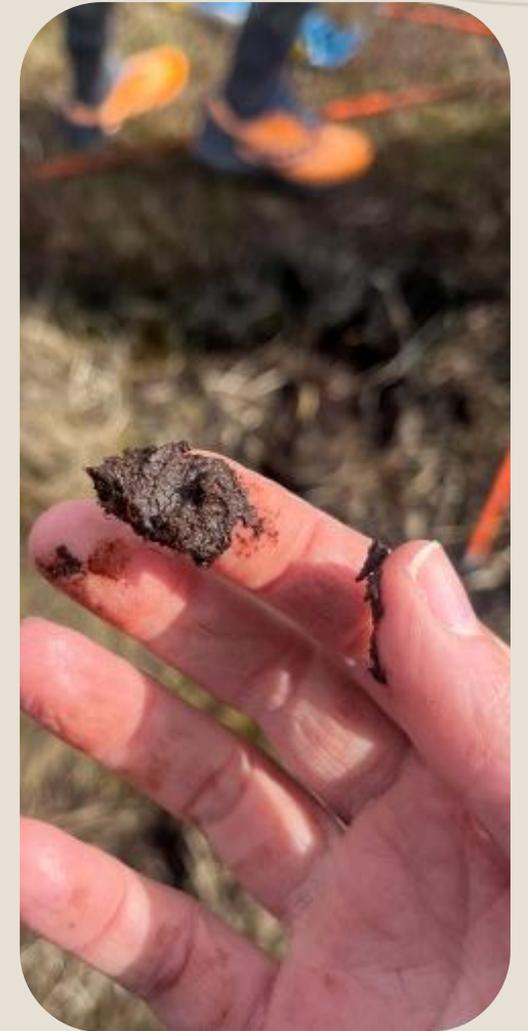
e.g., (food) production, biodiversity, climate mitigation/adaptation, water, energy, rural development, community wealth building, land reform etc.

Lack of a **strategic and inclusive approach** to managing land use trade offs



Questions to ask when analysing land use change through a justice lens:

Who is able to participate in decisions on peatland use?
How are risks and benefits in the transition of agricultural peatlands shared?



Peat, Miranda Geelhoed



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**LAND USE *for*
NET ZERO >>>**

Thank you



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BEN INGLIS-GRANT

Former Peatland ACTION Officer with UOC.

More inclusive governance for our peatlands?



NatureScot
NàdarAlba
Peatland
ACTION



Carloway Estate Trust

What are the issues on the ground?



- Much of Scotland's peatland in degraded or eroding condition
- Contributing factors
- Confusing policy landscape
- Funding and financial - risks vs rewards
- Communication and knowledge sharing
- Capacity and Technical Shortages
- Social and Cultural Resistance



Peatland restoration recognized in the SG Climate Change Plan and in Peatland ACTION five-year partnership plan

Peatland ACTION is a Scottish Government funded programme of projects helping to restore damaged peatlands

Working across Scotland to deliver 400,000 hectares of restored peatland by 2040

To date, over 90,000 hectares put on the pathway to restoration in Scotland

Peatlands in good health are valuable carbon stores and have many benefits for people and nature.

Pre-restoration (May 2019)



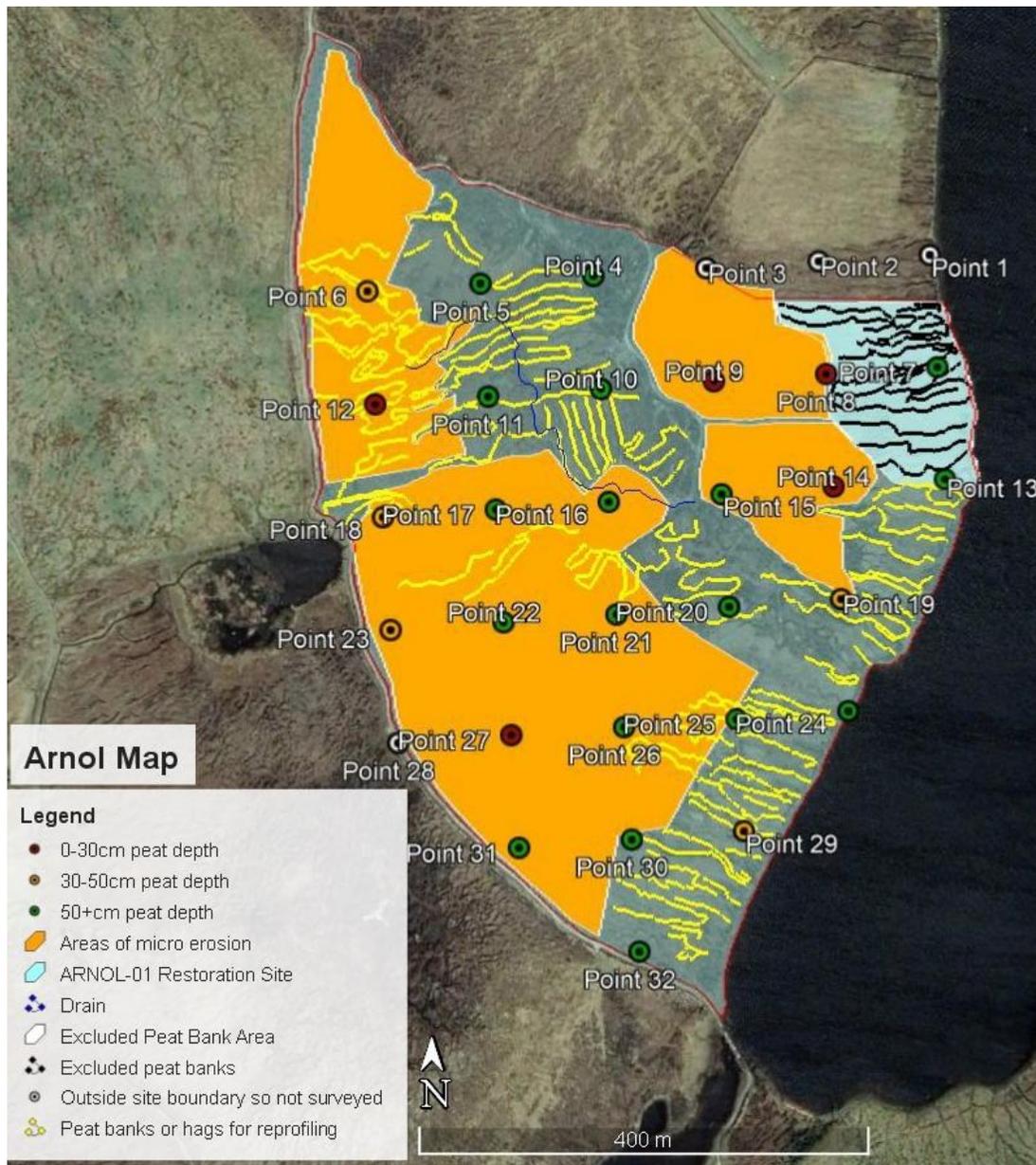
Post-restoration (November 2019)



Loch Orasaigh

- In partnership with: Soval Estate, Ranish Common Grazings and Scottish Water
- Important drinking water catchment feeding Stornoway and surrounding areas
- First restoration site in Outer Hebrides
- Also completed Phase 2, and Phase 3 currently in development
- Restoration works completed in 2019-2021
- 40 hectares

Arnol



- In partnership with: Urras Bharabhais Ltd, Arnol Common Grazings and Cal Max
- Restoration works completed in 2020-21
- 28 hectares
- c20km of peat reprofiling
- 200-300 peat dams
- Working closely with common grazing committee and individual peat cutters key to success

Peatland ACTION

Website:

<https://www.nature.scot/climate-change/nature-based-solutions/peatland-action-project>

What next?

- Future Research and Opportunities



NatureScot
NàdarAlba
Peatland
ACTION

U **Urras** 
C **Oighreachd**
Chàrlabhaigh
Carloway Estate Trust



Tóchar

Athchóiriú Bogach Lár na Tíre
Midlands Wetland Restoration

The path to restoration

Tóchar: A Path from the Past, A Future for Wetlands

RESPECT Webinar, Advancing a Just Transition for Scotland's Peatlands, 4th February 2026

Shirley Clerkin, Tóchar Project Manager, National Parks and Wildlife Service



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Eastern and Midland
Regional Assembly



NPWS

An tSeirbhís Páirceanna
Náisiúnta agus Fiadhúlra
National Parks and Wildlife
Service

PRIORITY 2.1

SUPPORT THE RESTORATION AND REHABILITATION OF DEGRADED PEATLANDS

Enabling regions and people to address the social, employment, economic and environmental impacts of the transition towards the Union's 2030 targets for energy and climate and a climate-neutral economy of the Union by 2050, based on the Paris Agreement.

2.1 Primarily active or moderately degraded peatlands (in private ownership and some public ownership) which have not been subject to recent peat harvesting that require some level of management, either to prevent further degradation or to improve and enhance their conservation condition and biodiversity value.

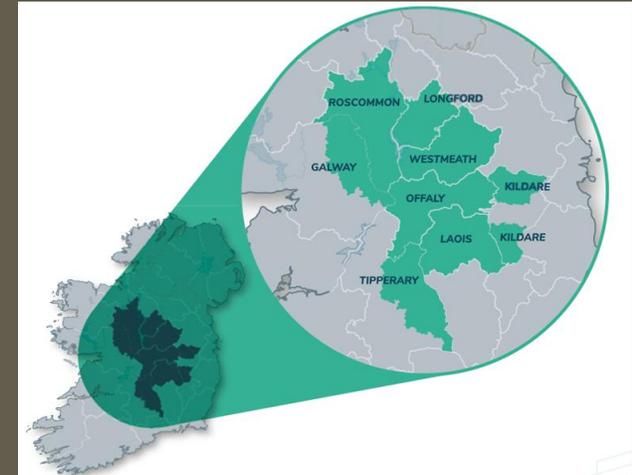
Just Transition principles:

Leaving no one behind.

Social justice,
environmental justice,
economic justice.

Repair of environment.

Paradigm shift from
Extraction to
Restoration



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Just Transition: The paradigm shift

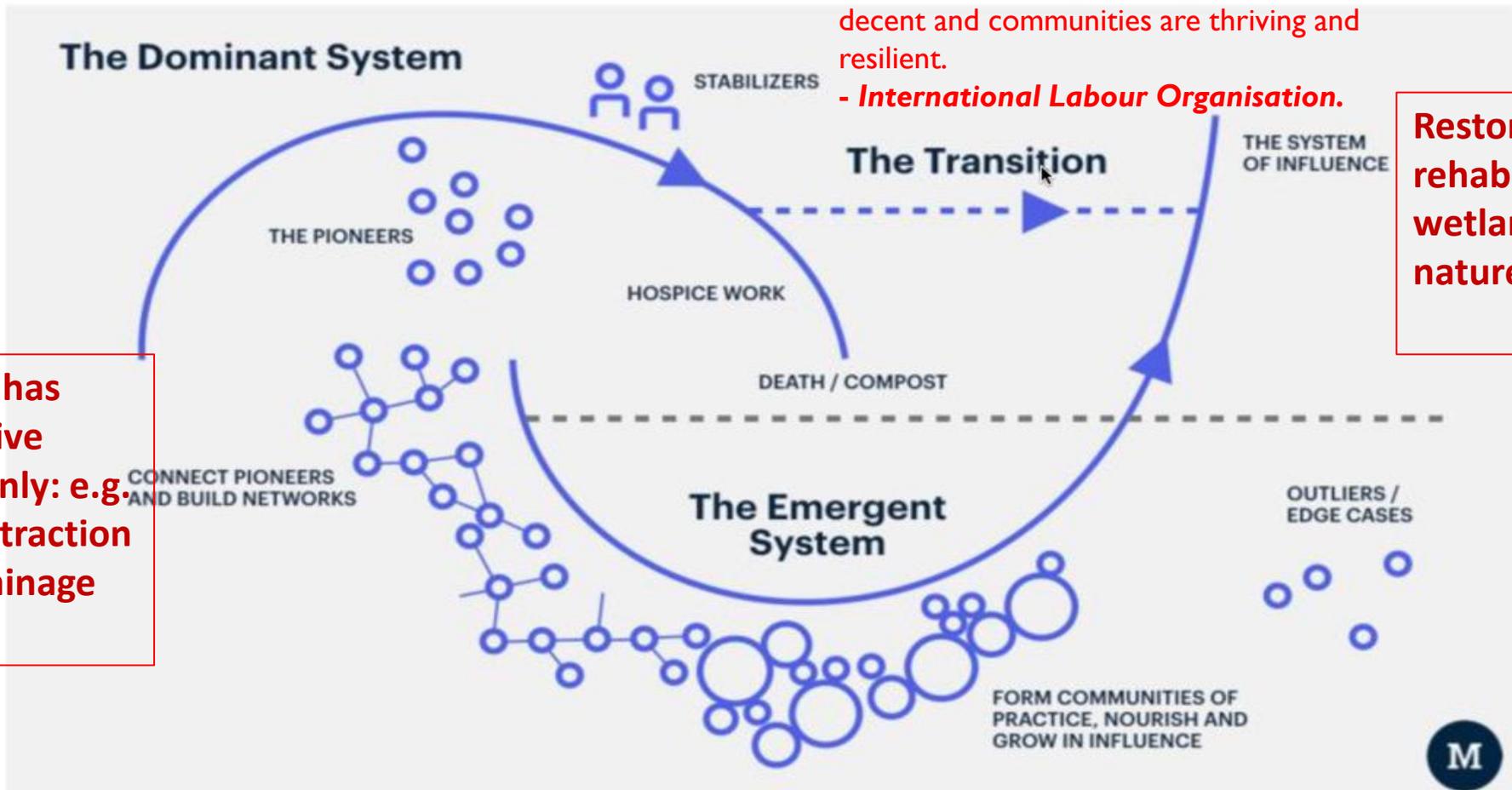
“New stories never begin in the heart of establishment – they start in the margins the grow and grow.” – Polly Higgins (1968 -2019) (author, lawyer, environmental advocate.)

Just Transition is a bridge from now to a future where all jobs are green and decent and communities are thriving and resilient.

- International Labour Organisation.

Restoration and rehabilitation of wetlands and nature

Nature has extractive value only: e.g. Peat extraction and drainage



SUPPORTING A TRANSITION, JUSTLY AND PRACTICALLY

- **Identify the Old System's Decline:** Recognise the cracks and inefficiencies in the current model.
- **Spot the Pioneers:** Find those already experimenting with new solutions.
- **Build the New Network:** Connect pioneers to form a community of practice, supporting their growth.
- **Support the Transition:** Engage "hospice workers" to manage the decline of the old system and ease grief.
- **Illuminate & Shift:** Tell the stories of the new system's success to encourage wider adoption, shifting resources and attention.

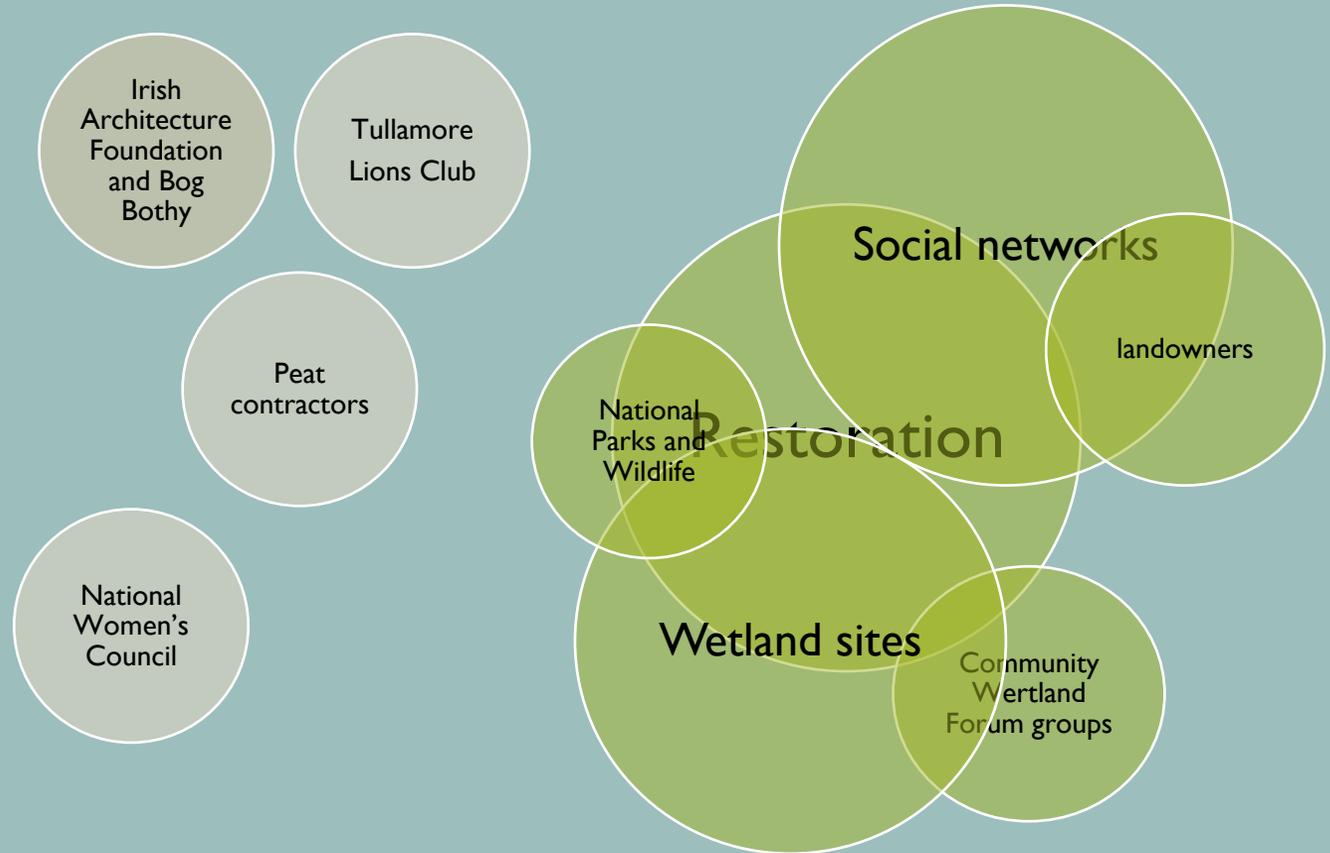
IDENTIFY THE OLD SYSTEM'S DECLINE: RECOGNISE THE CRACKS AND INEFFICIENCIES IN THE CURRENT MODE.

- BnM shift from extraction to renewables and rehabilitation
- Electricity stations, briquette factories closure
- Change in livelihoods and job security
- Peat is no longer economic driver & emigration preventer for region.
- Decline in biodiversity – reports on species and protected areas.
- 2020 - Sudden closure of BnM bogs caused 380 voluntary redundancies.
- 2019-2021 – 1000 employees and contractors were directly impacted.
- 2019-2021- 560 employees left or redeployed due to ESB station closures.
- 2018- Littleton Briquette Factory closure – 125 jobs.

Article 17 Reports					
Code	habitat/species	2019 status	2019 trend	2025 status	2025 trend
7140	Transition mire	Bad	Stable	Bad	Deteriorating
7210	Cladium fens	Inadequate	Stable	Bad	Deteriorating
7220	Petrifying springs	Inadequate	Deteriorating	Inadequate	Stable
7230	Alkaline fens	Bad	Deteriorating	Bad	Deteriorating
91D0	Bog Woodland	Favourable		Bad	Deteriorating
1013	Vertigo geyeri	Bad	Deteriorating	Bad	Deteriorating
1014	Vertigo angustior	Inadequate	Deteriorating	Bad	Deteriorating
1016	Vertigo moulinsiana	Inadequate	Deteriorating	Inadequate	Deteriorating

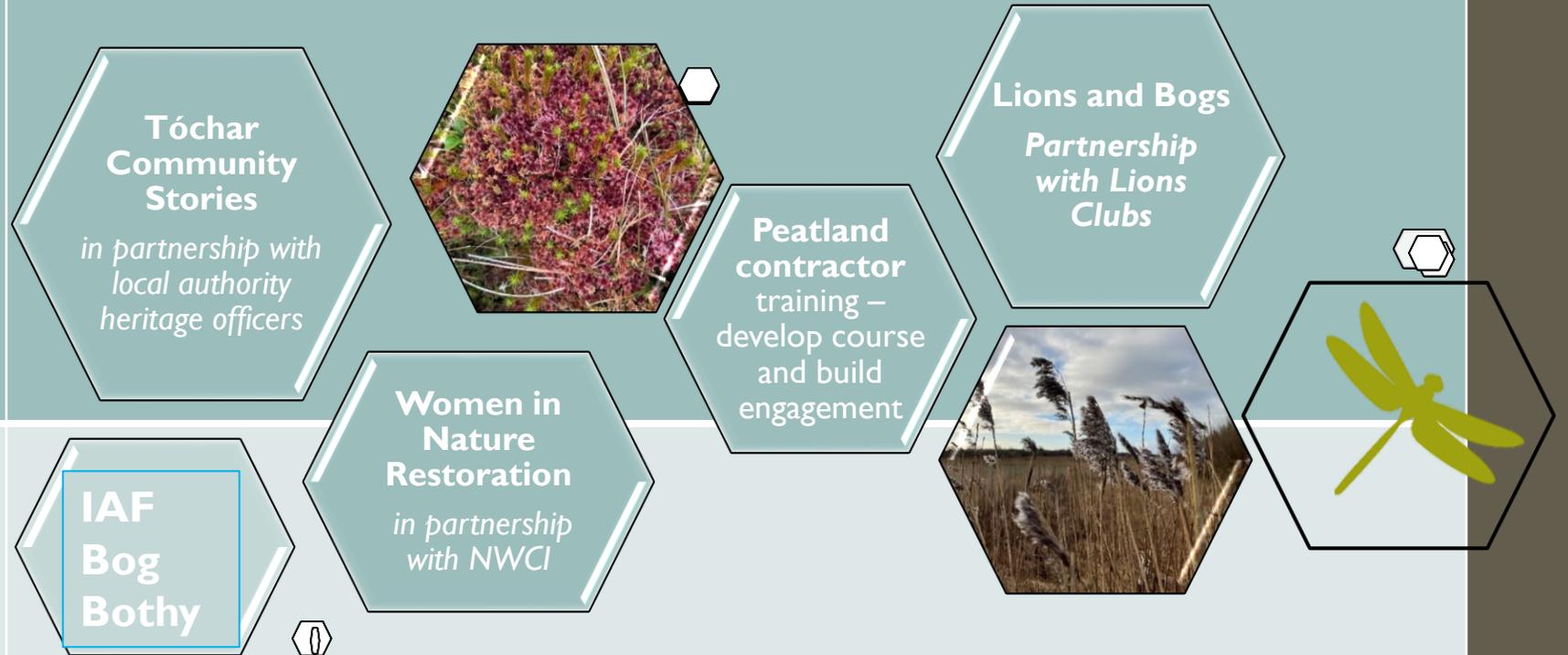
Spot the Pioneers:

Find those already
experimenting with new
solutions



Build the New Network:

Connect pioneers to form a community of practice, supporting their growth.



Support the Transition:

Engage "hospice workers" to manage the decline of the old system and ease grief.

Illuminate & Shift:

Tell the stories of the new system's success to encourage wider adoption, shifting resources and attention

Stories are stickier than facts

Power lies in their **ability to explain**.

Ideas presented as **stories imprint** on our brains more easily.

Growing body of scientific evidence that **stories engage areas of the brain responsible for attitudes and behaviour**.

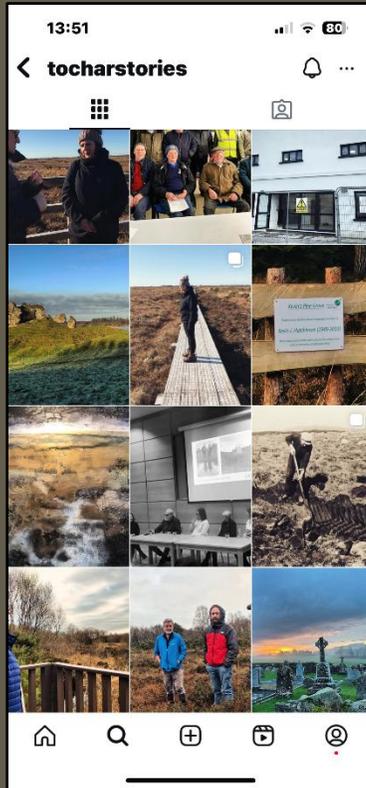
- *“As you hear a story unfold, your brain waves actually start to synchronise with the teller...the greater the listener’s comprehension, the more closely the brain waves patterns mirror those of the storyteller.”*

- Renken, Elena – How stories connect and persuade us.

TÓCHAR COMMUNITY STORIES

• @tocharstories

• Cultural custodianship project to bring to the fore our relationships with wetlands and landscape with an eye to the future.



TÓCHAR RESTORATION PATHWAYS AND ENTRY POINTS

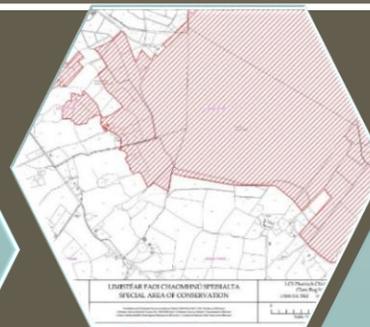
Fens
Restoration
Project

36 wetlands
1,472 Ha.



Pollards-
town Fen
226 Ha.

Lions
Clubs +
Wetlands



Slieve
Blooms
Forest to
bog

Open Call
12 sites
1,600 Ha.



THANK YOU

@wetlandrestoration @tocharstories

www.tocharwetlands.ie