

In the Bog – the Ecology, Landscape, Archaeology and Heritage of Peatlands

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<http://www.iufro.org/science/divisions/division-9/90000/90300/90301/>
Meeting website: <http://www.ukeconet.org>

The conference held on 3rd to 5th September, in Sheffield Showroom & Workstation, Sheffield UK, brought together speakers and poster presentations from a range of disciplines, backgrounds and countries to examine the fascinating ecologies, heritage, histories and functions of peat bogs across the world. Raising often neglected topics and aspects of peat resources, the meeting addressed key paradigms in peatland research from restoration for landscape and ecosystem functions to the generally neglected histories and heritage in the bogs. Peat environments provide major ecosystem services but they also provide unique archives of human usage and of past climates.

The presentations covered a range of disciplines, and gave a global perspective to the ecology, landscape, archaeology and heritage of peatlands. From a description of tropical peatlands and the multiple threats they face from deforestation and agricultural plantations; climatic effects on temperate peatlands through lack of rainfall and the anthropogenic effects on these landscapes over millennia; to monitoring vegetation changes on peatland restoration schemes. This broad span of topics facilitated some interesting discussions and challenged thinking for both delegates and speakers alike. The inter-disciplinary nature of the conference brought together historians, ecologists, archaeologists, land-managers, peatland-restoration specialists and climate-change scientists. Many of whom agreed that they seldom talk to each other and know little of each other's work – this conference was seen by them as an 'eye-opener'.

The fragile nature of Peatland ecosystems across the world was highlighted continually. They are facing multiple indirect and direct threats which would not only destroy their individual integrity but could have far-reaching implications for global climatic environmental changes. They are often under-valued and sometimes un-recognized and affected by Governmental economic and social policies that do not fully take into account their contribution to a range of ecosystem services.

Cross-disciplinary studies and research are key to furthering the understanding of these systems and bringing them to the notice of the general public as well as academics and practitioners.

Through this conference and the exchange of views and ideas there are already several potential new areas of support, workshops and collaborative projects being discussed. One of which is to hold an annual informal low-cost 'Peatlands' network meeting to exchange updates, ideas and research



Poster presentation session (photo by Chris Percy)



Field visit to Ramsley Moor in the Derbyshire Peak District, UK.
(photo by Christine Handley)

and to help coordinate activities and future directions. A fuller report of the key presentations and the abstract list can be found on the www.ukeconet.org website. Proceedings from the conference will be published later in the year. Some of the themes from this year's conference are being picked up and expanded for further presentations at next year's September conference in Sheffield, Wilder by Design II.

Summary of Conference Presentations & Discussions:
<http://www.iufro.org/science/divisions/division-9/90000/90300/90301/activities/>