

King Charles, peatland restoration and 'green' finance - what's going on at Delnadamph

Description



Looking across muirburn to part of the peatland at the Feithe on the Delnadamph Estate October 2020

A week ago the Ferret ([see here](#)) exposed how the Tulchan Estate, on the northern boundary of the Cairngorms National Park, was being funded both to restore damaged peatland and to burn moorland in the same small area. A similar scandal is happening on King Charles's grouse shooting estate, Delnadamph, on the upper reaches of the River Don.

While I have not been able to establish whether Prince Charles, as he then was, has ever received subsidy for the extensive muirburn on his estate at Delnadamph, in June the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) advertised a contract ([see here](#)) worth Â£100,000 to restore peatland on the high

ground in the photo above. This was for is the first part of a three phase project known as the Feithe.

Balmoral Estate, which manages Delnadamph, then submitted a Prior Notification for the work in July to Aberdeenshire Council ([see here](#)). The CNPA, who had a conflict of interest because they were funding the application, responded saying they would not call in the Prior Notification because it "does not raise issues of significance for the aims of the National Park". You can judge the truth of that from what follows. The Prior Notification was then quickly given the go-ahead .

There are some excellent photos illustrating the work required in the documents advertising the contract . These tell a tale.

Repairing the damage caused by Prince Charles's mis-management of the land

Damage from ATVs is to be restored where it is causing or is likely to lead to erosion due to the creation of artificial water pathways.



This damage to the peat by All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) is clearly recent and has been caused by how Balmoral and King Charles have been managing the Delnadamph estate. Given Royal responsibility, why then is the Cairngorms National Park Authority helping to restore the damage and using public money to do so? Had the CNPA controlled the use of ATVs on sensitive ground, as I have been calling them to do for years through their conservation byelaw making powers ([see here](#)), the damage would never have happened.



Horrific and irresponsible How about grouse moors keeping vehicles on roads instead of exhorting walkers to "keep to the path"?

Instead of King Charles being fined for wilful damage to the land he owns, the public is paying to restore it. One wonders whether the CNPA has now, as a condition of public funding, entered any legal agreement with King Charles to ensure that the estate stops driving ATVs over peat bog? From my walk over Brown Cow Hill two years ago ([see here](#)), there were signs of ATV damage everywhere. Are ATVs still driving willy nilly over Brown Cow Hill? Recent photos would be welcome. And if so, are the public going to be asked to restore that land too in three or four years time?

Bare patches left from turf removal for butts. These patches are to have the vegetation scratched in to repair them.



Most of the ATV damage is a consequence of the peatland at Delnadamph being abused for the purpose of grouse shooting (there are almost no deer on the estate as they are fenced out). In my 2020 post I commented on the damaging impact of vegetation being removed to create grouse butts, feeding stations etc. It seems that the CNPA now agrees. I never anticipated, however, that the CNPA would react like subjects, not citizens, and be mugs enough to help pay to repair for the damage caused by King Charles's sporting management.

The line of grouse butts on site are in active use and will be protected with a 5m buffer. Note some of them sit in line with grips that are to be restored. Work should avoid rendering the butts inaccessible.



Note the bare peat on the right of the ditch by the grouse butt

While the peatland restoration work will involve blocking up moor grips - drains in the peat many of which were funded with public money - the contact documentation shows that no work will be allowed to restore the damage that has been caused by the creation of the grouse butts or their continued use. While grips will be restored, because thought damaging to peat bogs, the similar ditchline between butts and bare patches will be preserved to allow grouse shooting to continue. If drainage of peat and bare peat surfaces are as damaging as is often claimed, this appears bonkers! It

helps discredit everything that is being done by the CNPA in the name of Peatland Action.

Grips that have been altered by an early restoration attempt to fill them in with a screw leveller. These sections have bare peat, can be down to the mineral and have hags along their edges. We describe them as being in eroding condition in our documentation.



Unfortunately, it is not clear who made this early attempt to restore some grips or how the work was financed. Perhaps the CNPA got involved at Delndamph because they decided the Balmoral Estate Management Team were not competent to oversee any restoration work?

The specification for the current repair work by frontline staff seems very thorough – all credit to them – but because of that it seems likely that the questions that I have raised here have occurred to them too. It would be interested to know if any of them tried to whistle blow and, if not, why not? The CNPA Board should establish who was responsible for the decisions at both Tulchan and Delnadamph and instigate a review of their procedures for approving projects.

The wider public interest question is why would the CNPA agree to restore a small amount of King Charles land while he continues to manage most of the estate as grouse moor, with all the destruction that entails?

How the work is being financed

The contract notice states – ‘The projects will be funded through a mix of Peatland ACTION and Peatland Code’. Peatland Action refers to the £250m the Scottish Government has allocated to spend on peat over the next ten years which for most of the Cairngorms National Park (excepting the Monadhliath) is disbursed through the CNPA. Peatland Action monies are currently underspent,, which probably explains why the CNPA is funding projects at Tulchan and Delnadamph. Basically they will be under pressure to ensure the Scottish Government can claim to be meeting its climate change targets. This is box ticking, not conservation.

– ‘Peatland Code’ is the jargon for green finance, private investment in carbon credits which is being used to offset their failures to reduce carbon emissions elsewhere and for speculative purposes. These – ‘green’ finance schemes are now registered on the UK Land Carbon Registry and there is an entry for Delnadamph ([see here](#)):

Delnadamph: Site 1 – The Fèithe (ID: 1040000)

Account Holder

Palladium International Ltd

Description

Restoration of the peatland habitat on the first of several sites on the Delnadamph Estate in the Cairngorms National Park. This first site is dominated by artificial ditches with some bare peat and a hagg/gully system.

Project Documents

[Export All Documents](#) 

-  (PC) Carbon Calculations
-  (PC) Map of Site

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| Category | Standard | Project Type |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Carbon | UK Peatland Code | Peatland Restoration |
| Aberdeenshire, Ballater, Scotland | | |

Palladium is the organisation that has entered a partnership with UK National Parks called Revere. This was announced just before COP26 last year and is being used to introduce green finance into National Parks ([see here](#)). NatureScot is now apparently trying to legitimise that with its proposals in its recent consultation that would turn National Parks into vehicles for green finance ([see here](#)).

How much Peatland Action and how much Palladium are contributing is unclear but unless King Charles is directing funding through them, it appears he is contributing nothing to restore the damage

he has caused. King Charles is one of the richest people in Britain who has just inherited much of his mother's wealth tax free. That he appears to be contributing nothing to this scheme is further evidence of royal hypocrisy about the climate and nature emergencies ([see here](#) for example).

Whatever Palladium have catalysed in terms of private finance, their investment is a classic case of greenwashing. Pretend to restore some peatland to absorb carbon but ignore all the muirburn below! That land being mismanaged in this way can attract carbon credits, shows what a sham the whole scheme is.

While Palladium has 75 offices all across the world ([see here](#)), their newsletter is issued from Level 11, Office 1102, One by Omniyat, Business Bay, P.O. Box 75654, Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The UAE is the third largest oil producing country in Opec and just this year announced it is to ramp up oil production. This fits with how Palladium describes itself, which appears to be another classic case of greenwashing. Palladium helps leaders increase their bottom line through sustainable and profitable business strategies but also wants to make the world a better place. All the evidence suggests the two objectives are not compatible.

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What needs to happen

The Green Minister responsible for National Parks, Lorna Slater, should go and take a look at what is going on at Delnadamph she could exercise her rights of access and visit informally without any officials or landowners and then re-think the whole approach that our National Parks are taking to both peatland restoration and green finance.

Category

1. Cairngorms

Tags

1. climate change
2. conservation
3. landed estates
4. NatureScot
5. peatland restoration
6. planning
7. Scottish Government

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