

# Shared Island Initiative PEATLAND PROGRAMME



Shared Island Initiative

## CASE STUDY

### Targeted Contractor Training in Uist, Scotland

Uist is an island chain off the west coast of Scotland forming part of the Outer Hebrides, with a significant portion of peatland under crofting tenure. Large areas are held under Common Grazings (CG) whereby multiple crofters have rights to graze their livestock. The CGs are managed by an elected committee who must all agree prior to carrying out certain activities, such as peatland restoration.

Uist can only be reached by ferry, making travel and logistics from mainland Scotland highly weather dependent and expensive. This leads to reliance on the local workforce where experience in undertaking specialist restoration techniques and access to specialist equipment, such as low ground pressure machinery, is scarce.

**Peatland ACTION recognised a need to train local excavator operators in peatland restoration techniques to reduce dependency on mainland-based contractors, helping to support the local economy.** Beyond employment opportunities, peatland restoration also provides benefits to crofting communities, tackling the impacts of climate change, minimising stock loss, improving access and supporting grazing.

## METHODS & APPROACH

Focusing on Cheesebay CG, North Uist – Peatland ACTION collaborated with the Scottish Ministers Rural Payments and Inspections Division (RPID) who own and manage the site, to **design and deliver local training utilising RPID's connections to liaise and build support with the tenant and CG.**

An experienced mainland-based contractor was recruited to undertake the practical on-site training. Through demonstrations and hands-on learning, trainees gained experience in peatland restoration techniques and understanding of the requirements of successful restoration activities.

Peatland ACTION also delivered classroom sessions on funding and support available for peatland restoration in Scotland, the importance and benefits of restoration and safety on site, as well as overseeing works on the ground and overall quality control.



**Image 1:** Demonstration of hag reprofiling during contractor training in Uist © Mairi MacCormick / Peatland ACTION



**Image 2:** Trainees, Trainers, RPID and NatureScot Peatland ACTION staff during contractor training in Uist © Mairi MacCormick / Peatland ACTION

## RESULTS

Over five days in November 2025, four contractors were successfully trained, building skills and experience suitable to undertake future potential peatland restoration projects in their locality. With potential future projects in the pipeline, this development opportunity has **empowered a local workforce to diversify their skills and add experience of specialist peatland works.**

This island-focused learning has supported the peatland restoration sector in this region and supported the wider industry with further experienced machine operators within the Outer Hebrides. Contractors were also invited to apply for funding from Highlands and Islands Enterprise - Peatland Restoration Fund to help towards the purchase of equipment to modify excavators for peatland restoration.

## KEY LESSONS

With a considerable increase in applications for peatland restoration in Scotland, **there is a national need to train contractors in peatland restoration techniques** for these potential projects.

This training course also attracted applicants from other islands, such as Shetland, indicating a strong demand from other Scottish islands and highlighting similar targeted training support is needed across the country. In areas which are difficult to reach, having an interested and experienced local workforce to deliver work on the ground will support Scotland's ambitious targets to restore degraded peatlands while ensuring benefits for people and nature can also be delivered in geographically challenging areas.

**TO FIND OUT MORE, VISIT:**  
[www.nature.scot/peatlandaction](http://www.nature.scot/peatlandaction)

Peatland ACTION on YouTube: <https://t.ly/U1y7I>

