

Highlights

Created the Peatland Water Sanctuary™ programme; fully funded \$4.4million large-scale series of peatland restoration and watershed conservation projects

Innovative nature-based solution to tackle the issue of water scarcity and quality, aiming to restore a minimum of 2,600ha by 2040; twice as much peat as the business consumes

Since 2021, they have restored 306 hectares of habitat across 5 diverse sites in Scotland, with a further 470 hectares in restoration or advanced planning



Suntory Global Spirits

Suntory Global Spirits (SGS), based in Glasgow with multiple sites across Scotland, and their parent company, Suntory Holdings, are a world leading global company producing premium spirits. Their Peatland Water Sanctuary™ programme is a large-scale series of peatland restoration and watershed conservation projects.

The business is investing over \$4 million to replenish peatland across Scotland, improving water retention and quality, supporting carbon sequestration, and enhancing biodiversity. This approach enables the Scottish sites to apply the Japanese 'Mizu to Ikuru' (living with water) philosophy of the parent company.

SGS actively engage with others; particularly within the Scotch Whisky sector. They have leadership roles in the Scotch Whisky Association's Peat Expert Group, Scotch Whisky Research Institute's Peat Working Group, and the Peat Supply Chain Group which comprises representatives from SWA, SWRI and the Maltsters' Association of Great Britain. Their focus is on awareness, education, and incentivising action to become involved in restoration, which has resulted in collaborative discussions with other distillers.

Category description: Nature Rich Scotland

The Nature Rich Scotland Award recognises organisations who have adopted nature-based solutions to tackle environmental and social challenges, whilst delivering benefits.

They are also collaborating with a variety of other organisations to deliver partnership projects to meet their Peatland Water Sanctuary™ goals, including with Forestry and Land Scotland, RSPB, James Hutton Institute, and private landowners, delivering benefits for all partners. At their Ardmore Distillery, the long-term aim is to create a blended habitat on Forestry and Land Scotland land, with removal of Sitka spruce, mulching, and levelling. The first areas of the project development are now rewetting, and sphagnum moss is returning. The project has been expanded to cover a wider area than the distillery springs to provide wider benefits.

Since formally launching at COP26 in 2021, SGS have restored 306 hectares of habitat across 5 diverse sites in Scotland, with a further 470 hectares in restoration or advanced planning. A wide range of methods are being used, including water table measurements, eDNA sampling, water quality reporting and water use reporting. Their collaboration with the James Hutton Institute and specialist consultants on their Ardmore pilot project site has provided open access data to allow for knowledge sharing and learning around these methods.

At their project site at Airds Moss in Southwest Scotland, their work in collaboration with RSPB has restored 66 hectares to date, with plans to restore a further 83 hectares by 2026. As a result, redshank and lapwing numbers are increasing, and they hope that hen harrier and other bird species will return soon.



On Islay, peatland restoration training has been delivered in partnership with NatureScot and the Crichton Carbon Centre, helping to develop local contractor skills to provide them with year-round employment, working on peat extraction and restoration at various times of the year. Further engagement with RSPB in this area, for projects at the Oa and Loch Gruinart, has enabled RSPB to fund development work around creation of diverse types of wetland habitat, not just peatland, providing wider nature benefits.

By investing in nature-based solutions, Suntory are having a direct impact on water availability and quality at their distilleries, which ensures the long-term viability of their business in the future. This is particularly important given the predicted increased risk of drought in Northeast Scotland in future years, which is a significant risk to the distilling sector.

Quote from the company:

“We are honoured that Peatland Water Sanctuary™ has been recognised with a VIBES Award. As we enter our fourth year of the programme, Peatland Water Sanctuary™ is making remarkable progress at our project sites across Scotland. We are thrilled to see the return of healthy watersheds and thriving biodiversity, with thanks to the collaborative efforts and support from our conservation partners and industry experts. With nature and water being core to our business and our communities, we are committed to protecting the environment in which we operate and to further advancing our peatland restoration work and advocacy in years to come.”