

Priority research questions in global peatland science

Corresponding Author: Dr Alice Milner

This file contains all editorial decision letters in order by version, followed by all author rebuttals in order by version.

Version 0:

Decision Letter:

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Dear Dr Milner,

Your manuscript titled "Priority research questions in global peatland science" has now been seen by 3 reviewers, and we include their comments at the end of this message. They find your work of interest, but some important points are raised. We are interested in the possibility of publishing your study in Communications Earth & Environment, but would like to consider your responses to these concerns and assess a revised manuscript before we make a final decision on publication.

We therefore invite you to revise and resubmit your manuscript, along with a point-by-point response that takes into account the points raised. Please highlight all changes in the manuscript text file.

Please submit your point-by-point responses as a separate file, distinct from your cover letter where you can add responses to the Editors' comments that you do not want to be made available to the reviewers. Word files are preferred. We recommend that any figures, tables or graphs that are included in the response to reviewers are also included in the main article or Supplementary Information.

We are committed to providing a fair and constructive peer-review process. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you wish to discuss the revision in more detail.

Please use the following link to submit your revised manuscript, point-by-point response to the referees' comments (which should be in a separate document to any cover letter), a tracked-changes version of the manuscript (as a PDF file) and the completed checklist:

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We hope to receive your revised paper within six weeks; please let us know if you aren't able to submit it within this time so that we can discuss how best to proceed. If we don't hear from you, and the revision process takes significantly longer, we may close your file. In this event, we will still be happy to reconsider your paper at a later date, as long as nothing similar has been accepted for publication at Communications Earth & Environment or published elsewhere in the meantime.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or would like to discuss these revisions further. We look forward to seeing the revised manuscript and thank you for the opportunity to review your work.

Best regards,

Somaparna Ghosh, PhD
Associate Editor,
Communications Earth & Environment
Consulting Editor,
Communications Sustainability

We ask that you ensure your manuscript complies with our editorial policies. Please ensure that the following formatting requirements are met, and any checklist relevant to your research is completed and uploaded as a Related Manuscript file type with the revised article.

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- If applicable, a statement regarding data available with restrictions
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REVIEWER COMMENTS:

Reviewer #1 (Remarks to the Author):

This manuscript identifies 50 priority research questions in global peatland science, using a systematic and transparently documented survey method, allowing to assess the degree to which the results represent variations across for instance regions, perspective and discipline. Overall, I think the 50 questions are well thought through, and particularly welcome the irreversible change/tipping point and resilience questions.

The manuscript serves both as a very concise, well-referenced "must know" document about peatlands, both in presenting known facts on top of each of the five theme clusters, as well as in displaying the gaps in knowledge and research through the identified priority questions.

Undoubtedly, the preparation of this manuscript has already brought together the global community dealing with peatlands, and the clear and concise way the results are presented certainly holds the promise that the field can, over the next decade, consolidate efforts to advance knowledge.

Furthermore, funders will probably be grateful for such a document, as it allows them to cross-check overall relevance, and whether research proposals cover central or rather specific topics, and if they can contribute to the community efforts over all.

I recommend publication.

Reviewer #2 (Remarks to the Author):

General Comments

The paper presents an interesting and timely analysis of research priorities for peatlands based on a global survey of 467 participants from 54 countries. The topic is relevant, and the manuscript is generally well written and well structured. However, several points could be clarified and further developed to strengthen the paper's contribution and contextual grounding. Especially, prioritization of the 50 Questions is unclear. How were the 50 questions prioritized? The paper is titled "Priority Research Questions," but all 50 seem to carry equal weight. A clearer explanation of the prioritization process or ranking criteria would improve transparency. Additionally, regional differentiation could strengthen the paper: the relative importance of questions likely varies across contexts (e.g., UK vs. Indonesia). Highlighting such heterogeneity would make the results more actionable for policymakers and researchers.

Specific Comments

Line 144:

The authors state that "peatlands have historically received less scientific and policy attention than ecosystems such as forests or coral reefs."

It would be useful to elaborate why this is the case. Possible reasons may include the limited visibility of peatlands, their perceived lower economic importance, historical lack of awareness of their climate relevance, and the uneven geographical distribution of peatlands.

Line 162:

Please clarify what is meant by "a simple survey." What makes it "simple"? Does it refer to the number of questions, the survey design, or the type of data collected?

Line 179:

It is unclear why 467 people submitted 1,106 responses. Does this mean that respondents could submit multiple questions? Please explain how the data were processed to avoid overrepresentation.

Representativeness of Respondents:

The main contributors were from the United Kingdom (80), China (53), Russia (39), Canada (33), and the United States (30), together accounting for about 50% of all respondents. I wonder how representative this distribution is.

For context:

- The European Union contributes roughly 17% of global organic soil emissions, with major emitters being Finland, Germany, Poland, and Sweden. Yet, these countries appear underrepresented in your sample.
- Indonesia is the largest global peatland emitter, but its representation seems limited.
- The UK, while providing the largest share of respondents, is not among the top ten peatland emission countries.

In Figure 2b, you use peatland area as the reference variable. However, the UK is relatively minor in terms of peatland extent (as shown by its light color). If you used a peatland emissions map instead, would Figures 2a and 2b still look similar?

Respondent Identification:

How were respondents identified and recruited?

You mention that 67% identified as researchers—could you provide more detail on their disciplinary backgrounds (e.g., ecology, policy, economics, hydrology)? This would help readers assess the diversity of perspectives represented.

Themes and Knowledge Gaps:

The results are organized into five thematic areas with corresponding research questions. While this structure is clear, the paper only lists the questions without assessing to what extent these have already been addressed in existing literature. For instance, "How much carbon do peatlands store globally?" already has a well-established answer (see UNEP Global Peatlands Assessment 2022). A short reflection on which questions are already answered versus still unresolved would enhance the scientific value.

Theme 1 – Global Focus vs. Local Context:

Theme 1 adopts a global perspective, yet peatlands are highly context-specific ecosystems. Local ecological, socio-economic, and policy conditions vary greatly.

I wonder whether the limited local attention might be a key reason peatlands historically received less recognition in science and policy. The global lens is useful, but understanding local heterogeneity could be essential for actionable insights.

Theme 3 – Restoration:

Theme 3 attracted the largest number of questions, reflecting a strong need for evidence-based guidance for restoration. This is indeed crucial, as it links directly to implementation.

However, many questions (e.g., 17–19) refer to identifying the "most effective" designs, techniques, or outcomes. Without considering local contexts, such "best" solutions risk remaining theoretical. I recommend emphasizing that restoration effectiveness is highly site-dependent.

Theme 5 – Generality of Questions:

Several questions under Theme 5 are very broad (e.g., "What strategies are most effective for conserving undisturbed

peatlands, and should protection be increased?"). It might be helpful to specify these further or link them to particular regions, pressures, or policy frameworks.

Overall Assessment

The paper is well executed and addresses an important topic. However, its contribution would be clearer if the authors:

1. Clarify representativeness and methodology (sampling, multiple responses, disciplines).
2. Reflect on existing knowledge versus genuine gaps.
3. Discuss local versus global perspectives more explicitly.
4. Explain how the 50 questions were prioritized and how regional differences might affect priorities.

Reviewer #3 (Remarks to the Author):

This manuscript presents the efforts of a large community of researchers and other stakeholders interested in the science, conservation, and management of peatlands. It generally achieves its objectives of making the case the peatlands are important and of demonstrating a consensus regarding important research and management questions that merit attention. It carefully and thoroughly describes the methodology used to solicit and distill expert opinions. Indeed, this example, which is thoroughly described in the supplemental material, may serve as an example for future studies of expert opinions on other topics.

Regarding the recommendations, they all make sense, and it wouldn't be appropriate for me as a reviewer to second guess what the experts conveyed through this survey process. However, I must say that 50 recommendations are a lot, even though the authors have distilled this list down from a larger initial number. It may be sad and discouraging to acknowledge that most policy makers and even potential funders may have neither the time nor the inclination to read through all 50 recommendations, let alone appreciate the differences among them, which are sometimes nuanced or further prioritize which among them should be pursued where funding is limiting.

On line 243 the authors mention the "top 10" questions that are shown in the supplemental file (although I see only 7 questions in Supplementary Table 2). Perhaps these top 7 or 10 questions could be labeled with an asterisk in the main text to bring some attention to them. I would avoid making these designations too blatant, such as putting them in bold font, because that would sort of invite all readers to read only those as a shortcut. But something a bit more subtle, like an asterisk, could serve the purpose of highlighting a few priorities while not distracting too much from other questions that also merit consideration.

This assumes that the questions most frequently asked are, indeed, the highest priorities. At present, the manuscript presents all 50 questions as priorities, but that begs the question of whether a subset of the 50 could be further prioritized. I would encourage the authors to consider whether further prioritization could be achieved, either by highlighting a subset of the 50 or perhaps by further aggregating some of them into higher level priority statements. A more concise take-home message could make the publication more effective.

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Decision Letter:

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Dear Dr Milner,

Your manuscript titled "Priority research questions in global peatland science" has now been seen by our reviewers, whose comments appear below. In light of their advice we are delighted to say that we are happy, in principle, to publish a suitably revised version in Communications Earth & Environment.

We therefore invite you to revise your paper one last time to address the remaining concerns of our reviewers. At the same time we ask that you edit your manuscript to comply with our format requirements and to maximise the accessibility and therefore the impact of your work.

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We hope to hear from you within two weeks; please let us know if you need more time.

Best regards,

Somaparna Ghosh, PhD
Associate Editor,
Communications Earth & Environment
Consulting Editor,
Communications Sustainability

REVIEWERS' COMMENTS:

Reviewer #1 (Remarks to the Author):

The authors have well addressed the comments of the other two reviewers.

Reviewer #2 (Remarks to the Author):

I am satisfied with the revision. Thank you for considering my comments.

Reviewer #3 (Remarks to the Author):

The authors have adequately addressed all of my concerns.

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Priority research questions in global peatland science

Response to reviewers

Reviewer #1

Comment 1: This manuscript identifies 50 priority research questions in global peatland science, using a systematic and transparently documented survey method, allowing to assess the degree to which the results represent variations across for instance regions, perspective and discipline. Overall, I think the 50 questions are well thought through, and particularly welcome the irreversible change/tipping point and resilience questions.

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Undoubtedly, the preparation of this manuscript has already brought together the global community dealing with peatlands, and the clear and concise way the results are presented certainly holds the promise that the field can, over the next decade, consolidate efforts to advance knowledge.

Furthermore, funders will probably be grateful for such a document, as it allows them to cross-check overall relevance, and whether research proposals cover central or rather specific topics, and if they can contribute to the community efforts over all. I recommend publication.

Response 1: We thank Reviewer 1 for their very positive assessment of our work and for recognising the value of a systematic, transparently documented approach to identifying priority research questions in global peatland science. We are pleased that the reviewer finds the questions well-conceived and that the thematic summaries are in themselves a useful resource for the community, which is what we had hoped they would be. We also appreciate the reviewer's recognition of the manuscript's potential to help coordinate future research efforts and to inform funding decisions, which was our intention for this global effort.

Reviewer #2

Comment 1: The paper presents an interesting and timely analysis of research priorities for peatlands based on a global survey of 467 participants from 54 countries. The topic is relevant, and the manuscript is generally well written and well structured. However, several points could be clarified and further developed to strengthen the paper's contribution and contextual grounding. Especially, prioritization of the 50 Questions is unclear. How were the 50 questions prioritized? The paper is titled "Priority Research Questions," but all 50 seem to carry equal weight. A clearer explanation of the prioritization process or ranking criteria would improve transparency.

Response 1: We thank Reviewer 2 for their positive evaluation of the manuscript and for their constructive suggestions to improve clarity and usefulness.

We agree that it could be clearer in the main text that the 50 questions are the highest ranked questions from the prioritisation process and were subsequently ordered by theme. This thematic grouping was intentional to make the priorities easier to interpret and use, allowing readers to navigate topics of interest, compare related questions side-by-side and identify clusters of research needs relevant to particular policy or management contexts. We have clarified this in the Methods (Lines 689-692). In addition, as outlined in our response to Reviewer 3, we now mark the top ranked questions with asterisks to guide time-pressed policymakers and funders, without detracting from the full list.

Comment 2: Additionally, regional differentiation could strengthen the paper: the relative importance of questions likely varies across contexts (e.g., UK vs. Indonesia). Highlighting such heterogeneity would make the results more actionable for policymakers and researchers.

Response 2: We agree that the relative importance of questions will vary regionally. Our survey was designed at a global scale, and sample sizes for some regions are too small to support statistically robust regional reprioritisation, and this is something that would be better addressed by future region-specific exercises using our approach as a guide. We now emphasise in the Discussion (Lines 581-594) that, while the questions were deliberately generalised to be globally applicable, their relevance and urgency will differ among contexts (e.g., boreal vs temperate vs tropical peatlands and different governance settings). The full question set in Supplementary Dataset 1 preserves locally-framed variants, which could support adaptation and re-weighting of the priorities in regional or national exercises.

Comment 3: Specific Comments: Line 144: The authors state that "peatlands have historically received less scientific and policy attention than ecosystems such as forests or coral reefs." It would be useful to elaborate why this is the case. Possible reasons may include the limited visibility of peatlands, their perceived lower economic importance, historical lack of awareness of their climate relevance, and the uneven geographical distribution of peatlands.

Response 3: The reviewer makes a helpful suggestion and we agree that elaborating on why peatlands have historically received less attention will improve the context for the manuscript. We also agree with their ideas and in the revised Introduction (Lines 147-156) we briefly outline several contributing factors. It clarifies why peatlands have lagged behind other ecosystems in scientific and policy agendas, and underlines the need for coordinated research prioritisation.

Comment: Line 162: Please clarify what is meant by "a simple survey." What makes it "simple"? Does it refer to the number of questions, the survey design, or the type of data collected?

Response: We now refer to this as a “survey” to avoid confusion. We also clarify in the Methods (Lines 650-652) that the survey consisted of a single open-ended question asking respondents to submit their priority question(s) for peatland research, alongside a small set of demographic questions about the respondent.

Comment 4: Line 179: It is unclear why 467 people submitted 1,106 responses. Does this mean that respondents could submit multiple questions? Please explain how the data were processed to avoid overrepresentation.

Response 4: Yes, respondents could submit more than one question, which explains why 467 respondents generated 1106 entries. The survey was designed to gather as many priority questions as possible, so we did not limit respondents to a single question. The 1106 entries include individual questions as well as shorter keyword-style responses and comments and is an indicator of the strong engagement with the survey. All entries were screened using predefined inclusion criteria and all questions that met these criteria were retained, irrespective of how many questions a given respondent submitted. Multiple questions from the same respondent were treated in exactly the same way as questions from different respondents and were not given additional weight. Potential overrepresentation by very active contributors was addressed qualitatively through amalgamation of similar or overlapping questions across all submissions, and the subsequent prioritisation was carried out in a separate expert-voting step based solely on question content, not respondent identity. Supplementary Figure 1 already presented the number of questions that respondents submitted to the survey and we now clarify this process further in the main text Methods (Lines 664-665, 674-676) and Supplementary Information (Lines 130-131), and remove the reference to 1106 in the main text Introduction (Line 189) to avoid any confusion.

Comment 5: Representativeness of Respondents: The main contributors were from the United Kingdom (80), China (53), Russia (39), Canada (33), and the United States (30), together accounting for about 50% of all respondents. I wonder how representative this distribution is. For context:

- *The European Union contributes roughly 17% of global organic soil emissions, with major emitters being Finland, Germany, Poland, and Sweden. Yet, these countries appear underrepresented in your sample.*
- *Indonesia is the largest global peatland emitter, but its representation seems limited.*
- *The UK, while providing the largest share of respondents, is not among the top ten peatland emission countries.*

In Figure 2b, you use peatland area as the reference variable. However, the UK is relatively minor in terms of peatland extent (as shown by its light color). If you used a peatland emissions map instead, would Figures 2a and 2b still look similar?

Response 5: We thank the reviewer for this comment. Our survey was designed as a community-based exercise rather than a sampling framework proportional to peatland extent or emissions. We agree that the resulting distribution of respondents is not fully representative in either respect and we make this clear in the text (Lines 556 onwards). We now distinguish more clearly between respondents' country of residence and the peatland regions they work on. Country-level summaries (Fig. 2) refer to residency, while a separate survey question captured peatland work regions. As noted in the Results (Lines 199-203) and shown in new Supplementary Table 3 (Line 483 and text Lines 457-481), many Europe- and North America-based respondents also work beyond their regions of residency, across the Americas, Africa and Asia. Peatlands in parts of Africa outside the Congo Basin and in Oceania remain under-represented, which we highlight in the manuscript. We have added a note to the Discussion to state explicitly that our respondent distribution does not match peatland area with over- and under-representation in some regions (Line 562). We also highlight the need for complementary, region-specific prioritisation exercises (Lines 585-589).

In Fig. 2, we used peatland area, derived from a global peatland extent model to illustrate where peatlands are likely present. We did not construct a comparable map of peatland greenhouse gas emissions. Benchmarking against emissions rather than area would likely accentuate the underrepresentation of some high-emitting countries (e.g., Indonesia, parts of the EU). The priorities identified should therefore be interpreted as reflecting the views of those who responded, rather than as an emissions-weighted representation of all peatland regions or a global consensus. We provide additional information in the Supplementary Methods (Lines 110-113).

Comment 6: Respondent Identification: How were respondents identified and recruited? You mention that 67% identified as researchers—could you provide more detail on their disciplinary backgrounds (e.g., ecology, policy, economics, hydrology)? This would help readers assess the diversity of perspectives represented.

Response 6: Respondents were identified and recruited through an open, anonymous online survey that we disseminated via international peatland and wetland networks, professional societies, mailing lists, social media and key regional contacts who were asked to circulate the invitation within their own networks (the Methods and Supplementary Methods includes full details). Participation was therefore based on self-selection rather than a predefined sampling frame. We provided a breakdown by sector, years' experience, age and gender in Supplementary Figure 2. We did not ask respondents to assign themselves to a specific discipline but we did collect free-text job titles, which provide an indication of the backgrounds represented (primarily environmental and natural sciences; Supplementary Results, Lines 441-455) and we have briefly summarised this in the main Results (Lines 207-210). Given the design of the survey and the information collected, we feel that more detailed disciplinary analysis would not be appropriate.

Comment 7: Themes and Knowledge Gaps: The results are organized into five thematic areas with corresponding research questions. While this structure is clear, the paper only lists the questions without assessing to what extent these have already been addressed in existing literature. For instance, "How much carbon do peatlands store globally?" already has a well-established answer (see UNEP Global Peatlands Assessment 2022). A short reflection on which questions are already answered versus still unresolved would enhance the scientific value.

Response 7: We thank the reviewer for this comment. Our primary aim was to identify and prioritise research questions viewed by the community as the most important for peatland science and policy over the coming decade. We agree that some reflection on existing knowledge is useful. In the revised Discussion we now explicitly note that the 50 questions span a continuum from topics with relatively mature evidence bases to those that remain conceptually and empirically under-developed, and that in some cases respondents are proposing refinement, regionalisation or synthesis of existing knowledge and its translation into policy rather than the absence of prior work (Lines 581-594). In this same section we also now explicitly position the 50 questions as a community-defined research agenda against which progress can be tracked, and as a framework that can be used for more formal assessments of the literature for particular questions or themes, rather than implying that all 50 questions are entirely unanswered.

Comment 8: Theme 1 – Global Focus vs. Local Context: Theme 1 adopts a global perspective, yet peatlands are highly context-specific ecosystems. Local ecological, socio-economic, and policy conditions vary greatly. I wonder whether the limited local attention might be a key reason peatlands historically received less recognition in science and policy. The global lens is useful, but

understanding local heterogeneity could be essential for actionable insights.

Response 8: We agree that peatlands are highly context-specific systems and that local ecological, socio-economic and policy conditions strongly shape their dynamics and how they are recognised in science and policy. Our intention was not to downplay local heterogeneity, but to frame questions at a global level that could underpin international climate and biodiversity targets (for example), or to have wide relevance across multiple contexts. Many questions submitted were local in scope but the processing inevitably masks complexity and local nuances: very localised questions were either combined with similar questions from other locales or they were not selected as priorities by the invited experts. We highlight this in the Theme 1 introduction (Lines 260-263). By providing the full list of questions (Supplementary Dataset 1), our hope is that it will encourage the peatland community in all regions to explore these themes through a local lens to better understand this heterogeneity.

Comment 9: Theme 3 – Restoration: Theme 3 attracted the largest number of questions, reflecting a strong need for evidence-based guidance for restoration. This is indeed crucial, as it links directly to implementation. However, many questions (e.g., 17–19) refer to identifying the “most effective” designs, techniques, or outcomes. Without considering local contexts, such “best” solutions risk remaining theoretical. I recommend emphasizing that restoration effectiveness is highly site-dependent.

Response 9: We agree that restoration effectiveness is highly site- and context-dependent, and that “best” solutions cannot be defined independently of local ecological, socio-economic and governance conditions. Our intention in Theme 3 was not to imply globally uniform “optimal” techniques, but to highlight the need for comparative evidence that can inform context-specific choices. We now make this explicit in the introduction to Theme 3 and emphasise that actionable restoration guidance must be tailored to peatland type, degradation history, landuse, climate and policy setting, and that global priorities need to be implemented through locally adapted restoration strategies (Lines 365-370).

Comment 10: Theme 5 – Generality of Questions: Several questions under Theme 5 are very broad (e.g., “What strategies are most effective for conserving undisturbed peatlands, and should protection be increased?”). It might be helpful to specify these further or link them to particular regions, pressures, or policy frameworks.

Response 10: We thank the reviewer for this observation. This point was something that we discussed extensively in drafting the manuscript and links to discussion above about global vs local, general vs specific questions. Many survey submissions were specific to particular regions, pressures or policy settings and were amalgamated to avoid a much longer and more repetitive list. The general questions can be understood at both large/global scale as well as small/local scale, considering different contexts rather than implying single universal optimal solutions or settings. The more local and sector-specific questions are retained in Supplementary Dataset 1. Our revisions in response to the reviewer’s comments above have helped clarify this more clearly throughout the manuscript and we do not add another specific point to Theme 5 to avoid repetition.

Comment 11: Overall Assessment

The paper is well executed and addresses an important topic. However, its contribution would be clearer if the authors:

- 1. Clarify representativeness and methodology (sampling, multiple responses, disciplines).*
- 2. Reflect on existing knowledge versus genuine gaps.*

3. Discuss local versus global perspectives more explicitly.

4. Explain how the 50 questions were prioritized and how regional differences might affect priorities.

Response 11: We thank Reviewer 2 again for their thoughtful and constructive comments, which have helped us to clarify and strengthen the manuscript. As outlined above, we have addressed these changes in the revised manuscript text and have (1) clarified the survey design, sampling and processing of responses and added detail on respondent roles and inferred disciplines, (2) added reflection on where priority questions sit along a continuum from relatively well-studied topics to more fundamental knowledge gaps, (3) more clearly discussed how global and local perspectives interact across themes, emphasising context-specific framing of the questions, (4) better signposted our description of the prioritisation process and commented on how regional differences may shape the perceived priorities.

Reviewer #3

Comment 1: This manuscript presents the efforts of a large community of researchers and other stakeholders interested in the science, conservation, and management of peatlands. It generally achieves its objectives of making the case the peatlands are important and of demonstrating a consensus regarding important research and management questions that merit attention. It carefully and thoroughly describes the methodology used to solicit and distill expert opinions. Indeed, this example, which is thoroughly described in the supplemental material, may serve as an example for future studies of expert opinions on other topics.

Regarding the recommendations, they all make sense, and it wouldn't be appropriate for me as a reviewer to second guess what the experts conveyed through this survey process. However, I must say that 50 recommendations are a lot, even though the authors have distilled this list down from a larger initial number. It may be sad and discouraging to acknowledge that most policy makers and even potential funders may have neither the time nor the inclination to read through all 50 recommendations, let alone appreciate the differences among them, which are sometimes nuanced or further prioritize which among them should be pursued where funding is limiting.

On line 243 the authors mention the "top 10" questions that are shown in the supplemental file (although I see only 7 questions in Supplementary Table 2). Perhaps these top 7 or 10 questions could be labeled with an asterisk in the main text to bring some attention to them. I would avoid making these designations too blatant, such as putting them in bold font, because that would sort of invite all readers to read only those as a shortcut. But something a bit more subtle, like an asterisk, could serve the purpose of highlighting a few priorities while not distracting too much from other questions that also merit consideration.

This assumes that the questions most frequently asked are, indeed, the highest priorities. At present, the manuscript presents all 50 questions as priorities, but that begs the question of whether a subset of the 50 could be further prioritized. I would encourage the authors to consider whether further prioritization could be achieved, either by highlighting a subset of the 50 or perhaps by further aggregating some of them into higher level priority statements. A more concise take-home message could make the publication more effective.

Response 1: We thank Reviewer 3 for their positive assessment of the manuscript and for recognising the value of the community-led process and detailed methodological description. We appreciate the reviewer's thoughtful suggestions on how to strengthen the take-home message and make the list of questions more usable for policymakers, funders and other non-specialist audiences. We had extensive discussions within the author team about how many questions to present from the full prioritised list, and whether to further aggregate questions into higher-level priority statements.

Our intention was to balance inclusiveness of the community input with a list that remains useful to the global community and comparable to other priority setting exercises. We agree, however, that additional marking of the highest-priority questions is helpful. In the revised manuscript we therefore (1) retain the thematic structure, which already helps readers navigate to areas of interest and, as Reviewer 1 noted, "serves as a very concise well-referenced "must know" document about peatlands", and (2) now mark the top-voted questions from the expert prioritisation with an asterisk as the reviewer suggests. This subtly highlights a smaller subset of questions without detracting from the wider set of 50.

In the original version, we referred to a "top 10" of the most frequently submitted questions but only listed seven in Supplementary Table 2. We have now corrected this mistake and made it clear that we list the questions that were submitted by 10 or more people, and thank the reviewer for spotting it.