

Minutes of the Wales Biodiversity Enclosed Farmland Ecosystem Group (EFEG)

7 July 2010 Forestry Commission Conference Room, Government Buildings,
Dolgellau
11am – 3.30pm

Chair: Caryn Le Roux (CLR) (Welsh Assembly Government)

Present: Catherine Shellswell (CS) (Plantlife)
Charles Morgan (CM) (Pori Natur a Threftadaeth)
Hilary Miller (HM) (Countryside Council for Wales)
Clare Burrows (CB) (Countryside Council for Wales)
Dave Lamacraft (DL) (RSPB)
Gethin Davies (GD) (Snowdonia National Park)

Minutes: Frances Gillett (FG) (Welsh Assembly Government)

Apologies: Rosie Carmicheal (Carmarthenshire County Council)

1. Introduction

CLR briefly reviewed group's remit, and how it fits into the BAP system.

A UK Lowland Farmland group has been convened by JNCC to act as a collation group for the BAP targets for farmland in England and the Devolved Administrations (DAs). Current thinking is that Wales' targets should continue to feed in to the UK targets on BARS at the moment.

The Biodiversity Reporting and Information Group and the Biodiversity Research Advisory Group's roles were described, as they fit into the system under the UK Steering Committee for the BAP process.

The Ecosystem Group Chairs also meet twice a year. Agendas and minutes can be found at: http://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/bap_in_wales-27.aspx and scroll down to Chairs meetings.

The last meeting, held on 27 April included discussions on the forthcoming Natural Environment Framework (NEF), Environment Strategy targets, and the review of the Trunk Road Estate BAP (TREBAP), which would need some updating with respect to hedgerows. Following on from this meeting CLR had received some 'Roadside Trees and Hedges' advisory leaflets from the DET. This was reviewed by the group.

GD noted that the leaflet 'laid down the law' which can encourage more underground unsympathetic management by landowners. HM keen to see sympathetic management of trees. GD noted that this is costly. CLR acknowledged that a pragmatic approach is needed.

Arising from this discussion it was agreed that there is a need for this group to undertake a Communications role, whether through a Task and Finish group, Subgroup or lead individual. However the need for more group members is

essential to enable more action to be undertaken. Due to the lack of personnel in this group it was decided to assign lead individuals.

CLR agreed to take on the Communication role.

2. Minutes and Action points from last meeting

These were confirmed and all actions either completed or carried forward and dealt with in this meeting.

- **CLR** updated on the situation with regard to R and D. Defra have an R and D workstream which includes biodiversity, and the UK HAP groups have been successful in getting research funded through this method. WAG have a Policy Officer, part of whose role it is to make links with these research programmes. She is currently working with WBP to put a process in place for the EGs to feed ideas up to Defra, or to comment on research proposals.
This should give us a chance to suggest projects for R and D and have a more proactive approach.

CB to take on the role of R&D lead and look through research projects and pull out projects relevant to the EFEG for comment.

CLR to chase up future process for R and D and how we would structure a bid.

- Populating WBP website with EFEG resources

CLR to action by the next meeting.

- Policy issues – re reviewing TPO legislation

CS to talk to Ray Woods and Alan Hale to pull together list of trees and lichens (section 42 species) that could benefit from extended TPO legislation.

CLR to circulate 'protection through policy and legislation' document for information.

- WAG small grants for conservation action – Trefrane project was funded through the EFEG last year. The grant is likely to be available again this autumn.

CLR to ask National Trust for a summary report on the Trefrane project.

ALL to prepare for future £8000 four month projects possibilities.

CLR to circulate spec when available.

- Species link – still awaiting sign posting for actions.

DL to follow up on species sign posting and assess what is relevant for EFEG.

3. UK objectives and targets for Wales: matters arising

The current targets for Wales remain as on BARS.

The 'old' UK HAP groups continue to meet as technical fora – but not sure how long this will continue as no formal remit within the current BAP structure.

- Hedgerows
- Arable Field Margins

Neither of these have been attended by group members recently. However they do have communications and R&D subgroups we need to keep a watching brief on. (NB Hedgerow HAP group is known as hedgelink)

CB to continue to attend as possible, CLR to keep watching brief on minutes.

- Traditional Orchards

HM gave an update on Traditional Orchards. The HAP steering group have published a 'working document' on the HAP. It can be seen on their website www.orchardnetwork.org.uk 51% of orchards in England in favourable condition. No further with getting funds for mapping orchards. Monmouthshire has funds for PTES compatible survey projects. CCW could use volunteers to survey and use technical resources to create maps if someone else takes a lead.

GD noted that Snowdonia National Park are working with Bangor University on an orchards project, where surveys will be undertaken. HM requested that any survey work done uses PTES method, as we need to promote a common methodology for consistent data gathering.

HM to email PTES survey details to GD, for passing on to the SNP Orchard project.

GD noted that landowners receiving funds through the Project would be required to attend Orchard Management Training.

HM to investigate link/input to this training.

- **Standard survey methods**

Following on from this there was a discussion of standard survey methods that EFEG want to promote as part of our action plans.

Hedgerows - CLR had received a comment from Rosie Carmichael re concern that the hedgelink Hedgerow Survey may be too complex for volunteers to carry out. CB had been involved in the production of the original Hedgerow Survey, and she agreed to discuss this/look into simplifying the process. (NB OPAL – open air laboratories, will be promoting a volunteer hedgerow survey in Autumn 2010, and have been discussing methodology with hedgelink).

CB to discuss concerns with RC and review Hedgerow Survey methodology.

CS to find and send cut down version of hedgerow survey method to CB.

Traditional Orchards – PTES have developed a straightforward methodology for use by volunteers which EFEG also propose to promote.

HM to circulate details of the PTES survey methodology to the group and to CB.

AFM – surveys more specialist, probably wouldn't be carried out by volunteers. Also less of this habitat. However there should be a monitoring method for future use in Glastir and ADAS have done some work on an arable field margin survey method for the AFM HAP steering group.

CLR to talk to James Skates about Glastir monitoring.

CB to look into ADAS research work.

CB and DL to look at arable field margins survey methods when they look at the Action Plan.

FG stated that we should ensure that survey results are fed back into one system.

CLR to enter this into action plans.

- **Communications**

The LBAP workshops highlighted that we need to improve group communications with LBAPs. HM suggested we should feed into the WBP/LBAP annual conference in September. We could co-ordinate other EG chairs to attend LBAP conference with a poster highlighting our purposes and contacts.

CLR to talk to Julia Korn about WBP Conference.

Diana Reynolds had said that there may be money available for printing hedgerow leaflets that had been produced by hedgelinek.

CLR to follow this up.

Future actions to include production of web pages, and possibly a conference/seminar, but most important to speak to people face to face about our priorities.

4. Action Plans

CLR outlined progress so far. Draft plans have been drawn up for Hedgerows and Traditional Orchards, and these were discussed at an EFEG subgroup meeting in May. Most of our actions concern strategic aims such as communications, research, policy etc. The plans had been shown to LBAP reps at workshops held in May, with some useful feedback. There is a need for overarching actions for habitat maintenance, management and restoration, that will allow LBAPs to feed their actions into these plans, and allow us to collate their reporting.

There is as yet no plan for Arable Field Margins.

There was various discussion of actions to include in the plans: e.g. invite local authority contractors to training sessions, encouraging LBAP officers to get LAs to plant more hedgerows.

DL to develop AFM action plan with input from CB and CS.

ALL to look at action plans and provide input before end July. Also volunteers for leading on actions welcome.

CLR to incorporate further feedback into Hedgerow and Traditional Orchard plans, and forward to WBP for consultation.

There was also discussion of prioritising actions for specific areas/species. Also indicator species such as lichens in hedgerows and orchard species.

(NB since the meeting this has gained prominence and will be discussed at the next meeting.)

CS to list arable field margin species and location/arable species list for Wales (unsprayed crops).

5. Glastir update

All Wales Element fiche has gone to Europe. Farmer training is underway. Concern was expressed about the quality of this training.

FG to send CB and CS David Morris and Laura Griffiths email addresses for CB/Ray Woods to inform of inaccuracies in IBERS/FWAG training.

Targeted Element maps finalised but will be revised yearly. CB will suggest June.

Technical guidance produced for farmers was thought reasonable although some photos need changing. Inaccurate technical details have been fed back on.

Group members once more expressed concern that there isn't sufficient PO resource to deal with TE of Glastir. CS gave anecdotal feedback regarding difficulties experienced in England through lack of PO input.

CM to talk to Spencer Conlon, Gary Haggaty and Diana Reynolds re POs.

CLR to explore routes for lobbying regarding PO issue – policy group?

6. Policy update

No progress since last meeting, although various issues are being explored. Policy group due to meet next with a remit for Enclosed Farmland on 21 October so will need to update before then.

7. Natural Environment Framework

CLR gave a brief background to the NEF and a discussion followed. Concerns were expressed regarding its basis on evidence, and the failure to recognise successful work in the past.

The formal consultation will be launched at the WBP conference in September.

CLR to raise concerns over NEF with Nia Evans/Diana Reynolds.

8. AOB

FG to get Sean McHugh to put action points and minutes thus far onto WBP website.

9. Date of next meeting

10 November in Aberystwyth was proposed.