

**Fifteenth Meeting of the Upland Ecosystem Group  
IBERS  
Aberystwyth  
17 Nov 2014**

**Present:** Charles Morgan (RSPB), Jan Sherry (Natural Resources Wales), Mariecia Fraser (IBERS), Steve Chambers (WG), Dafydd Roberts (SNPA), Julia Korn (Natural Resources Wales), Joe Daggart (NT), Peter Dennis (Aberystwyth Aberystwyth), Dafydd Roberts (SNPA), Philip Hollington (Bangor University).

**Apologies:** Bev Lewis (Brecknock WT) Simon Thorpe (Heather Trust), Peter Jones (Natural Resources Wales), Helen Buckingham (National Trust) Sian Whitehead (Natural Resources Wales, John Farrar (Bangor University)

**1. ACTIONS OUTSTANDING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

**a) Upland framework review:**

JS updated the group and discussed possibility looking at this again using the North Wales Moors as a pilot area linking to connectivity mapping and in the context of the Environment Bill (National Natural resource Policy and area natural resource management statements. Also would be beneficial to explore the Upland Framework in relation to the Cambrian mountains and the work done through Polyscape.

**Actions**

**JS to discuss with Ruth Jenkins and see if we can agree steer to review the Upland frame in the context of new policies and make sure it is used to inform future upland management.**

**PH to ask TP for an update on Polyscape and its potential to inform any future review of the Upland Framework**

**CM to look at the Upland Framework in the context of the North Wales Moors once commitment to the approach received from NRW.**

**b) Montane heath: Final report circulated by JS**

JS provided an update. NT are trialling grids to place over areas of Montane to protect it from grazing. JS will update at the next meeting. Other initiatives to control grazing where fencing is not an option include fenceless fencing (Peter Dennis is involved in a trial in Epping Forest) and closed shepherding e.g. at Hafod y Llan.

**c) Upland Ecosystem Group work programme**

Work programme currently only sparsely updated. All groups require some steer from the Wales Biodiversity Strategy Board (WBSB) on what is expected in terms of priorities for the groups and also reporting processes.

**Action**

**JK to raise links between Ecosystem and Species groups and the WBSB and also reporting requirements at the Chairs meeting on Thursday 20 November.**

**d) Regional workshop – Cambrian mountains.**

The uplands has received significant amounts of funding through the Nature Fund. CM suggested that a workshop be organised to bring together all the different groups and collaborations that have received funding. Local BAP Partnerships could also be invited. The aim could be to improve clarity on who is doing what and where and also to seek opportunities to continue activity stimulated by Nature Fund. The important of monitoring was also discussed.

**Action**

**CM to take a lead on organising through the Upland Ecosystem Group once confirmation received from WG that they can provide a budget and would support the event.**

The minutes from the fourteenth meeting were agreed.

**Action**

**JK to arrange translation and send to Sean McHugh to put on the WBP website**

## **2. EVIDENCE UPDATE**

**U2 – More detailed information is required on how vegetation structure and composition affects upland bird and invertebrate abundance and how such findings can be translated into management guidance.**

Lead – Sian Whitehead

It was agreed that this was no longer a priority

**U3 - Can upland habitats be restored by livestock grazing alone or is pre-grazing mechanical management necessary?**

Lead – Charles Morgan with the support of Mariecia Frazer

**Action: CM to complete proposal**

**U5 –Is ecological genetics providing information that will help us understand better which species are most vulnerable to fragmentation of habitats and how important is genetic variability?**

Action from previous meeting – CM to speak to Trevor Dines to define properly and establish the priority of this research gap?

**Action: JS to discuss further with Barbara Jones (ex- CCW**

Needs clarification before decision on proposal is made

**U6 - Lack of hard data on drivers of the decline of Golden Plover and other upland waders.**

Linked to U2 and in part picked up in the presentation today.

It was agreed that this was no longer a priority

**U8 – We need a clearer understanding of how the interactions between land management, such as herbivores grazing, can alter the critical N deposition threshold for sensitive upland habitats being taken forward by JNCC.**

JNCC coordinating a project on behalf of the four countries look at identifying indicators of nitrogen deposition damage in vegetation. Simon Bareham is the lead in NRW. There may be a need to develop a proposal around this research need.

**Action to revisit this research priority once the JNCC project has reported.**

**U9 – What are the best options (economically and environmentally) for wintering cattle in areas with above average rainfall? REWORD**

Lead Charles Morgan with Mariecia Fraser

**Action: CM to reword this priority and write the research proposal.**

**U10 – What quality and quantity of native woodland restoration is needed in and around the uplands.**

A decision on this is postponed until the next meeting and following the end of the BTO/RSPB Resilient Ecosystem Fund (REF) project on the ffridd has reported.

**U26 – What are the key upland land management adaptations required under the best current climate change scenarios.**

Need to know factors that we can't control to help target the resource in the long term.

**Lead John Farrar**

**Action JF to write proposal**

**Process for signing off research proposals:**

**All proposals to be written and sent to Charles Morgan**

**Charles to circulate to the group for comment**

**Once agreed Charles to sign off and send to Tracey Lovering**

**General Evidence Actions**

**JK to invite RSPN and BTO to present the finding of the REF funded ffridd survey at the next Upland meeting**

**JK to ask Tracey Lovering about ensuring feedback to Ecosystem Groups when a research proposal is taken forward. Summary reports and /or policy notes would be useful – is this a role for the Wales Environment Research Hub?**

**Phil Hollington to send out the web link for RELU**

**3. FUNDING**

JK updated on progress with the 2 relevant REF projects and said that the aim was to complete a report on the 2.5 years of ecosystem resilience funding from Welsh Government and publish an article in Natur Cymru.

**Action: CM to seek reports/feedback from Upland projects funded by the Nature Fund for the Upland Ecosystem Group.**

**4. Hen Harrier Day**

The group agreed that an event that explore different approaches to management for upland birds might be useful as long as it included estate management for shooting as well as examples from the conservation sector. It should be a joint day with the CLA perhaps run through the Upland Ecosystem group.

**Action: CM to develop the idea and seek support from the CLA.**

**Action: All to put forward ideas to CCM to help with day development including potential locations.**

**5. Nature Recovery Plan Consultation – Upland Ecosystem group response**

The group focused on the ambition and goals and then on key messages.

A number of ideas were recorded on a flip chart to inform the response.

**Action:**

**All to send any comments on the other questions in the consultation to CM by next Tues (25 Nov)**

**CM to write the response and circulate for comment**

**CM to sign off final version and submit by December 3<sup>rd</sup>.**

**AoB**

**Phytophthora – ask JS for update**

JS and members of her team are meeting with Leeds university to discuss Wilderness mapping

**Action JS to report back at the next meeting**

### **Courses**

As requested at the meeting, details of **Bangor University M-level distance learning** can be found at <http://www.atp-pasture.org.uk/en/>

#### **Modules of particular interest might be**

- Uplands (January): <http://www.atp-pasture.org.uk/en/study-options/distance-learning-modules/upland-farming-systems>
- Ecosystem services (September 2015): <http://www.atp-pasture.org.uk/en/study-options/distance-learning-modules/agro-ecosystems-services-assessment-distance-learning-description>
- Soil management (September 2015) <http://www.atp-pasture.org.uk/en/study-options/distance-learning-modules/soil-management>

If you have any questions or want any more details please let me know, or phone Marty Spittle on 01970 621562

- The annual **Plas Tan y Bwlch** course ‘**An Ecosystem Approach for Biodiversity and human well-being**’ will be held from February 3 -5 2015. The cost for the 3 days is £340 (includes accommodation and meals)

### **Actions**

**PH to circulate info on the Masters modules (Done)**

**JK to circulate the programme for Plas**

**Date/location for next meeting**

**Pwllpeiran Aberystwyth (7,8, 9 July)**

**Action MF to confirm**

**DRAFT 21 Nov 2014**