

**Wales Biodiversity Partnership Lowland Grassland and Heathland Group
Meeting**

Aberystwyth University

24th June 2014

DRAFT MINUTES

Attendees

Helen Buckingham (Chair)	HB	NT
Sion Brackenbury	SB	Commons Vision
Gareth Griffiths	GG	AU
Mike Hayes	MH	Phoenix Ecology
Bryn Jones	BJ	NT
Liz Jones	LJ	NRW
Geriant Jones	GJ	Pembrokeshire Coast NPA
Sinead Lynch	SL	Bumblebee CT
Dave Rogerson	DR	WG
Jan Sherry	JS	NRW
Stuart Smith	SS	NRW
Amy Vanstone	AV	RSPB
John Warren	JW	AU
Caroline Wilson	CW	Snowdonia NPA
Holly York	HY	WBP

Apologies

Arwel Williams	WG
Colin Cheesman	Plantlife
John Healey	Bangor University
Julian Jones	WTW
Nick & Kyra Somersford	

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies (Chair)

HB extended a warm welcome to all attendees.

2. Actions and minutes from the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and will be published on the WBP website. The majority of actions from November's meeting have now been completed, with the remaining outstanding actions either covered by agenda items (Actions 4, 17) or on-going.

Action 1. WBP (HY) to upload the agreed Minutes from the previous meeting to the WBP website

3. LGHEG Work Plan 2014-17

Group discussed and updated the Work Plan

Habitat and Site Management

- [Support the development of the second tier sites system as part of the South East Wales REF Project. Depending on outcomes facilitate adoption across other LBAPS:](#) Ongoing support to LWS SE Wales REF project (WBP attends partnership meetings & sits on the Steering Group). The project has focused on grassland sites and is progressing well. **Action 2.** Invite Laura Dell/Andy Karran to November LGHEG meeting to outline project progress.
- [Start SOMM HLF Project \(grassland grazing project for West Wales\):](#) Save Our Magnificent Meadows (SOMM) HLF Project update provided – the project is up and running with a focus on existing coastal floodplain areas and restoring grassland. The project has two members of staff and has received NRW funding.
- [Develop a grazing scheme to deliver across limestone grassland, and priority grasslands and heathlands in North East Wales:](#) Concern for sites becoming abandoned particularly those outside agri-environment schemes and those with absent landowners. Ideally needs to be picked up by a local group. **Action 3.** HY/JS to contact lead to get full update
- [Address issues with heather and burning in Wales:](#) – meeting required with Davey Martyn to discuss matter. **Action 4.** JS to contact Davey Martyn/Caryn Le Roux to arrange meeting. SB: Pilot controlled burning training course developed in partnership with the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service. Two pilot courses were run in North and South Wales in '13.
- [Land management demonstration days for pollinators:](#) - Several land engagement days run by LWS SE Wales REF project. Bumblebee Trust will potentially run land management days for pollinators in 2015. Useful to link this with WG Pollinator Action Plan and tie in with potential advanced Glastir management days. **Action 5.** JS to contact Arfon Griffiths.

Habitat Creation and Restoration

- Develop Llyn Coastal Connectivity Project following results of ERD funded scoping study on Llyn: Project has been put forward as a Nature Fund project. **Action 6. All to circulate Nature Fund projects as developed.**
- Other activities relating to habitat creation & restoration pending further information, reports or pending outcomes.

Information and Databases

- Develop pictorial and outcome/process driven advice/guidance to show pictorially sward characteristics under favourable and unfavourable conditions for foraging chough: RSPB intending to have a new Conservation Officer who will update species guides.
- Annual review Priority Action Maps for grassland & heathland to guide conservation effort at a national and local level and ensure updates are transferred to BARS: No updates required at present.
- Compile and maintain a reference list of heathland and grassland management and heathland creation information sources and identify any gaps: Produce reference list and summaries & put on WBP website later this year, once Nature Fund projects are known.

Communications – Advisory

- UK grassland forum: Update provided at June meeting on the forum – a group set up to discuss the ways to maintain and increase the area of semi-natural grassland.
- Trial the Ecosystem Approach Framework developed by WG, on one of the Heathland and Grassland Projects: Trehill case study discussed at June meeting as an example of ecosystem approach - NT/NRW to write a summary of Trehill Farm case study, including where we are and lessons learnt. Unfortunately a lack of funding for repeated surveys. Potential location for group field visit next year.
- Continue programme of workshops: Limestone grassland in North Wales workshop planned for June was cancelled due to workloads, plan to hold this in spring/summer 2015. A Waxcap workshop is being planned for late October 2014. **Action 7. JS/HY to liaise with GG and Dave Lamacraft (Plantlife)**
- LGHEG meetings: June meeting and field visit to Pwllpeiran Upland Platform looking at the Brignant grassland plots (established in 1994 to investigate the effects on sward biodiversity of grazing and cutting strategies).
- Work with Plantlife to provide advice & guidance on non-native meadow plantings for pollinators: **Action 8. HB to follow up**

Research

- Continue research into hay meadow management & restoration at Elan Valley: update provided at June meeting. The 10 year Elan Valley Meadow Project set up in 2004 to address the management of the existing species-rich grasslands and their potential expansion, as well as some small-scale supporting studies has come to an end. The project was managed and implemented by a partnership made up of Elan Valley Trust, NRW (CCW) and independent ecological consultants. A report is available for circulation. **Action 9. SS to**

contact Elan Valley Trust to discuss potential follow up. Propose a case for long-term meadow survey, perhaps to NRW & WBP

- Identify evidence gaps in partnership with Academics and Chairs Group to inform targeted research, by supporting MSc/PhD research in defined areas: LGHEG representative (HY) attended Evidence Gaps Launch in April. Ongoing support to project by members of group to identify evidence gaps.

Policy and Legislation

- Compile a list of policy drivers which influence the condition/management for grassland and heathland for the Chairs Group Review and update information on a nine month cycle: Review list not required as yet - Annual review of policy drivers expected in Dec-Feb 15.

Survey and Monitoring

- Provide training to LBAPs in grassland and heathland monitoring: Limestone grassland in North Wales workshop planned for June was cancelled due to workloads, plan to hold this in spring/summer 2015.
- Collate and report information on EIA regulations/ cross compliance and any loss of BAP Priority Lowland grassland and heathland and report on BARS: WG EIA (Agriculture) Team are still keen to add the EIA successes to BARS. WG are working on the process for Tir Gofal/Glastir data to be provided on BARS, with the progress going well. Once successful, see what can be learnt from process and focus on EIA data.
- Produce management guidance for uncommon grassland vascular plants using information from Scarce Grassland Plants Project: Scarce Grassland Plants Project requires more funding (~£4K) to complete
- Other activities relating to survey and monitoring pending further information, reports or pending outcomes.

Funding

- Provide technical advice identifying and ranking national priorities for action including prioritising REF grassland and heathland projects: Ensure outputs of successful REF projects are shared in June/Aug15 meeting, including update on Carmarthenshire County Council REF project. A project on the restoration of heathlands, grasslands and bogs in North Carmarthenshire. The programme involves fire control, water management, public engagement and peat profiling.

Action 10. HY write a summary of work plan progress for feedback at chairs meeting in mid-July

Action 11. Group member to attend WBP Chairs meeting (if HB or JS are unable to attend the date being decided)

4. Nature Fund Update

The Nature Fund will focus on 7 geographical 'Nature Action Zones' areas (exceptional projects outside of these will be considered). The priorities for investment focus on action to improve river catchments, on marine ecosystem, for local environment, to release the potential in our upland areas and to stimulate innovation. Over 460 ideas for the fund were received. A series of Nature Action Zone workshop events are being held across Wales in June & July. Full details are available [here](#). Uncertainty over time period expected for projects and use of Evidence Gaps for deciding projects. Group to ensure relevant Evidence Gaps are on the register and up to-date.

REF update: REF projects proceeding well. Reallocation of money to a grassland and heathland REF project in and around Swansea, with County & City of Swansea (CCS) due to underspend.

Action 12. All – ensure relevant Evidence Gaps are on the register and up to-date.

Action 13. Potential Sub-group meeting on EGs

5. Future structure of Wales Biodiversity

Wales Biodiversity Strategy Board (WBSB) has set up a series of workshops and meetings to progress the development of the Nature Recovery Plan, with a view for consultation at the end of July and launch at the WBP Conference (10th & 11th September).

Group decided to provide a joint response to the NRP in August.

Difficult to know future structure of WBP until NRP launched.

Action 14. HY to circulate Nature Recovery Plan consultation to group (likely to be end of July)

Action 15. HY to collate members responses to NRP for a WBP LGHEG Group response (with input from JS & HB)

6. Update on mine waste mitigation to grassland using INNS derived biocarbons (SB)

Historical Mine waste mitigation project – ongoing research programme in north Swansea investigating mitigation options using amended biochar and bracken composts on an area of historical mine spoil. Supported by Swansea University. Research to date has included pot trails and field plots.

7. Any Other Business

SB updates: City and County of Swansea (CCS) Building our Biodiversity Project has recommenced Principle activities include bracken control, rhododendron management and

grassland restoration. An urban commons project has been developed with CCS for restoration of urban commons. The project is based upon improving connectivity between grassland/heathland sites. Principle activities include scrub control, INNS management, investigation of alternative grazing management options and LCA.

Phase two delivery has commenced on the Gower Landscape Project. Works planned which include options for increasing the areas under arable crops and the establishment of a grazing hub.

Future Meetings:

Waxcap workshop - plan for end of October.

Group meeting - Winter (end of November) meeting to be arranged. Group decided on location as possibly Newtown.

Action 7. JS/HY to liaise with GG and Dave Lamacraft re waxcap workshop

Action 16. HY arrange date of next meeting (end of november).

Action 2. HY to invite LWS SE Wales Project to present at November meeting

Site Visit: Afternoon site visit to Pwllpeiran Upland Platform, to look at the Brignant grassland plots, established in 1994 to test the effectiveness of different extensification managements when applied to upland-fringe pasture.



Our thanks to Mike Hayes, Gareth Griffiths, John Davies and team at Pwllpeiran.