

Draft Minutes from: Wales Grassland and Heathland Ecosystem Group (G&H ESG)

Meeting 5: 2nd March 2010 – Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Shrewsbury.

Present:

Carrie Rimes CCW (CR)

Stuart Smith CCW (SS)

Charles Morgan PONT (CM)

Helen Buckingham NT (HB)

Juliet Hynes WBP (JH)

Julian Jones RWT & WTW (JJ)

Jan Sherry CCW (JS)

Ivy Berkshire Flora locale (IB)

Sion Brackenbury Gower Commons and C&C of Swansea (SB)

Caroline Wilson SNP (CW)

Apologies:

Richard Evans WAG (RE)

Dave Lamacraft RSPB (DL)

Trevor Dines Plantlife (TD)

Mike Howe Pembrokeshire National Park (MH)

| Item | Discussion | Action | Progress |
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| 1. Apologies | See above | | |
| 2. Minute from previous meeting, updates on actions | Due to limited time available to cover the agenda, action updates will be done via email. | 1. all send updates on actions from meeting 4 to JH | |

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| not covered below | | | |
| 3. Draft Lowland Heath Action Plan | <p>There has been a general criticism that a lot of the action plans don't have enough actual action on the ground, e.g work on SSSIs. Once the CCW actions database is ready we will be able to get a printout of all the actions for each habitat. We should then be able to identify where actions are missing or need adjusting, and look for generic problems within or across habitats.</p> <p>Outcome 21 group need to keep an overview of who is implementing the actions from the CCW actions database. They should also assess costings in terms of Section 15 agreements needed to implement the actions database actions.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. HB, put together list of issues that need to go to the next Outcome 21 meeting and brief Reg (RSPB rep) as HB unable to attend. 3. JS and SS, add actions into plans to include work on non-statutory sites, possibly target of 2020 to achieve favourable condition within priority areas and 2026 outside of priority areas. 4. change wording action 3 Glastir to "develop scheme" WAG | |
| | <p>Was agreed that in terms of the environment Strategy Wales Outcome 21 target of getting all sites (including non-statutory) into favourable condition by 2026 it is important to work on the 2nd tier sites as well as the SSSIs as, for example, many commons groups won't touch Glastir. We need to include action for second tier site in the action plan so that grant funders realise that they are equally important.</p> <p>Was suggested that we could identify key priority areas for each habitat and associated species, based around the Glastir maps and</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. JS discuss with David Parker 6. All- use next G&H meeting to start looking at mapping. Need to get as much data together for this meeting as possible. | |

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| | <p>Jim Latham’s connectivity work and this could feed into the Networked Environment Regions (NER) work. Develop overall map for Wales then breakdown to LABP area to help them focus work priorities. Also need to coordinate across ESGs so that prioritisation across all habitats and species are agreed for each LBAP area. Include Statutory and Non-statutory sites and feed into strategic planning (NER and Natural Environment Framework – just announced by the Minister). It is key to get the species people involved too.</p> | <p>7. JJ make available maps held by wildlife Trusts.</p> | |
| | <p>Policy issues from G&H group. –</p> <p>When is next policy cycle for G&H to feed into, have previous issues raised been addressed? Are there still issues to be followed up, are there any new ones to add?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ WBP need to chase up phase 1 remote sensing data ▪ New issue - Commons councils will be able to manage vegetation on their land. ESGs need to input into Commons councils system, this is currently about 2 years away from commencing. May be implications for management on conservation sites. <p>This group should keep an eye on the next Rural Development Plan review to feed in when appropriate – would be good to get grazing schemes written in and small sites that won’t qualify for Glastir , may make them eligible for funding.</p> | <p>8. JH, check when our next policy cycle is and check status of previous issues</p> <p>9. policy action – if remote sensing no good for grasslands, need to suggest ways of improving the data e.g. funding ground truthing</p> <p>10. SB word question for policy group on commons Councils issues and pass JH who will forward it to policy group to possibly raise at their next meeting in May.</p> | |
| <p>4. Draft Lowland</p> | <p>Action 1 would now be covered by priority maps, the compile local</p> | <p>11. SS and CR make agreed</p> | |

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| <p>Grassland action plans</p> | <p>inventories action could also be combined with the maps.</p> <p>Flood meadow action should be linked to the Wetland ESG – need to work out where we could allow expansion of flood plain meadows, should include the Environment Agency.</p> <p>Still remains a question of when does restoration become achieve condition. DEFRA are just starting a project on grassland milestones of progress. Sion suggested it’s easier to monitor a reduction in negative indicator species rather than a increase in positive species. Glastir officers may be able to do this.</p> <p>Carrie suggested the action plan lacked restoration and recreation actions. Priority mapping should help suggest areas that this could take place. The Majority of restoration action should come through Glastir so need an action in the plan based around this.</p> <p>Currently difficult to report on success of increasing patch size and restoration/recreation next to established patches.</p> <p>Recording of habitat losses – grassland has “no loss” target so any losses of established priority grassland habitat needs to be recognised. Three main areas of loss possible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SSSI loss should be reported by CCW on actions database, but database doesn’t record habitat area so losses won’t be easily recorded and won’t be transferred across to BARS. Would have to be recorded additionally in BARS by adding maintain extent action goal to each action. ▪ Losses through development control – local authority | <p>changes to grassland action plan.</p> <p>12. SS and JS in the action plans under delivery agents change Landowners to landowners/legal occupiers</p> <p>13. SS and CR make sure the group is kept informed about the DEFRA milestones project outcomes and inform LBAPs when appropriate.</p> <p>14. JH discuss recording of patch size and location next to existing patched, with the BARS support team</p> <p>15. policy action – WAG need to identify those farms not transferring from Tir Gofal into Glastir as it is likely these will create loss of habitat condition issues.</p> | |
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| | <p>responsibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agricultural losses should be covered by EIA, though some slip through EIA loophole. WAG needs to record and make these public. | | |
| | <p>As much of the grassland action would be duplicated for each grassland priority habitat the group agreed that there should be one joint action plan for Lowland Grasslands. The spreadsheet needs to be adapted to list all of the individual grassland habitats where an action applied to all grasslands.</p> | <p>16. SS, adapt spreadsheet to work for joint Lowland Grassland action plan.</p> | |
| | <p>Both the Lowland Heathland and the Lowland Grassland action plans will be updated and then circulate to the group by the end of this week (5th March) any comments should be returned by Tues 9th March so that the plans can be submitted by Weds 10th March</p> | <p>17. SS and JS, circulate updated action plans to the group by Friday (5th).</p> <p>18. All – comments back by next Tuesday (9th)</p> | |
| <p>5. Update on Gower projects</p> | <p>Sion Brackenbury provided an update on 3 initiatives covering lowland heathland, lowland grassland, farmland and a bit of upland habitat.</p> <p>Biodiversity in Common: a project to restore and reconnect 1063ha of priority habitats with particular emphasis on the management for Marsh Fritillary Butterfly, Shrill Carder Bee and High Brown Fritillary. The project is based on common land and is being led by the graziers association with support from PONT. The project is located to the North of the M4 at Sarn in Bridgend. The project has reached the final stage of the Biffaward process, following an indicative application and presentation to the award panel.</p> <p>Cefn Drum/Craig Fawr Building Our Biodiversity: a landscape</p> | | |

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| | <p>level project located to the north of Swansea. The purpose of the project is to restore maintain and achieve condition over a total area of 789ha of priority habitat, reduce fragmentation and promote landscape level connectivity. Priority habitats included are Upland Dry Heath, Upland Wet Heath, Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture. An application to WREN under the Biodiversity Action Fund.</p> <p>Valleys Regional Park LIFE+ Biodiversity application. 8500ha of potential biodiversity gain over an area extending from West Swansea to Torfaen. Involving Commoners Associations, Forestry Commission and Landowners. Combination of priority upland and lowland habitat. Project has to demonstrate innovation or demonstration and tackle problems of a European significance. The principal of the project is to have a number of demonstration sites across the South Wales Valleys with each site dealing with particular issues e.g. fire. Project being led by PONT with a submission date of September 2010.</p> <p>SB offered to give detailed presentation on any of the project at later meetings if desired.</p> | | |
| <p>6. Update on Glastir</p> | <p>The entry level scheme is now looking for extremely simple outcome e.g. sward height but this is too simple, Jan responded saying the outcomes suggested are really simple to monitor anyway.</p> <p>Higher level scheme consultation closes on Friday (5th March), earlier than originally expected. Key things Dave Lamacraft suggested needed to be raised are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Training provision should not be piecemeal through | <p>19. All – if your organisation has an opportunity to comment on Glastir then do so – more details on these topics of objection available from Dave Lamacraft.</p> <p>20. JJ get Glastir onto agenda of WEL meeting, get</p> | <p>CM- inputted comments based on those JS supplied to via the Farmland ecosystem group</p> |

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| | <p>ESGs should be proper WAG coordinated training scheme for officers. ESGs would then be willing to input into this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Carbon prescription is in favour on tree planting (non-natives – fast growing deciduous or conifers) on Bracken slopes and organo-mineral soils which is a huge implication for loss of grassland and heathland areas. Restoration of blanket bog to sequester carbon would be far more appropriate. No carbon budgeting has been done to show that there would be any benefit from inappropriate tree planting. <p>There is a Wales Environment Link meeting on 17th March chaired by Madeleine Havard, Julian suggested should use this meeting to produce an official objection, to what is happening with Glastir, as an NGO collective.</p> | <p>Madeleine to talk to the RSPB about the issues mentioned.</p> | |
| <p>7. Welsh wild plant seminar report</p> | <p>Ivy's project ends at the end of this month.</p> <p>The seminar produced a number of recommendations that Flora Locale (FL) thought should be taken forward.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Try to increase use of native welsh stock in Development control plantings – should identify more welsh suppliers (some available on FL website). Also case studies available on FL website. ▪ Monitoring of DC work – work with other orgs to seek funding to develop monitoring guidelines – JH suggested IB looked at Caerphilly who are hoping to do some Ecological monitoring of DC conditions. ▪ Greenspace toolkit – CCW have developed a toolkit which is available for use.. <p>There were also a number of issues for WBP and WAG which</p> | <p>21. All- let Flora Locale know of any more suppliers of local provenance seed or plant stock</p> <p>22. All- let FL know of any additional case studies</p> <p>23. IB – summarise the issues to go to the policy group and circulate to the G&H group.</p> | |

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| | could be taken to the policy group | | |
| 8. Update on WWGAS project | <p>Large meeting held with CCW offices to discuss details of the project, unfortunately no Pembs CCW officer in attendance. Local CCW teams inputted into the lists, the spreadsheets are now being refined and will be finalised by end April. Suggested another meeting at end of May as need to keep up impetus: Stuart will talk to Carmarthenshire Jan - Ceredigion and Helen - Pembrokeshire. Need to think about what needs to be achieved at the May meeting.</p> <p>Gower needs to be involved, whether linking into WWGAS project or a different one</p> | <p>24. CM arrange WWGAS meeting for end of May</p> <p>25. HB circulate notes from last meeting</p> <p>26. HB send out reminder (end of March) that spreadsheets need to be finalised by end of April</p> <p>27. CM organise a Gower meeting</p> | <p>CM – in process</p> <p>CM – in process</p> |
| 9. Date of next meeting | Need to move date from 24 th June. Week beginning 12 th July suggested | 28. JH check which dates DL and TD can attend as important they are included in mapping meeting | |