

Draft Minutes from: Wales Grassland and Heathland Ecosystem Group

Meeting 2: 1st May 2009 – Video Conference CCW Plas Penrhos Bangor, CCW Aberystwyth and CCW Cardiff St Melons.

Present:

Bangor

Dave Lamacraft RSPB

Caroline Wilson SNP

Carrie Rimes CCW

Stuart Smith CCW

Charles Morgan PONT

Jan Sherry CCW

Helen Buckingham NT

Trevor Dines Plantlife

Aberystwyth

Richard Evans WAG

Cardiff St Melons

Gemma Bode GWT

Juliet Hynes WBP

Ivy Berkshire Flora locale

Apologies:

Sheila Spence Field Mycologist

Chris Tucker FCW

Nick and Kyra Somerfield FUW

Item	Discussion	Action	Progress
1. Apologies	See above		
2. Minute from previous meeting, updates on actions not covered below	<p>Progress of actions entered on Minutes from meeting 1. Outstanding actions below:</p> <p>A1. Membership, if Bethan Cox can't suggest anyone from Pembs LBAP, try Mike Howe Pembs Nat Park, or Sion Brackenbury, Gower for Heathland contribution.</p>	1. JH follow up heathland representation on group	Emailed Mike and Sion, Sion Brackenbury accepted, Emails to Mike didn't get through
	A2. Grassland and Heathland Terms of Ref , updated terms of ref been circulated to group	2. All- Any more comments on updated terms of Ref to Juliet please	Complete
	Forestry- Heathland restoration article in latest edition of British Wildlife.		
	A22. Open Habitats Policy – Want policy group to get open habitats policy project resurrected	3. Pass to policy group	Complete -Included on policy issues template
	A 23. Meadows under 3 ha – Ivy wanted to flag up this as really important issue. Hilary from AGAP already worked out a lot for Anglesey, around 40ha, Need to start a Wales Wide funding scheme. Fits in with work on 2 nd tier sites that had been suggested at WBP.	4. JS, flag up as major issue at Policy Group meeting on Tues (5 th May).	Complete -Raised at Policy Group – template for identifying and prioritising policy actions been developed, use this to indicate which are the most

		5. Carrie/Stuart, work small meadows into grasslands action plan, can discuss at our next G&H group meeting	pressing policy issues for our habitats
	UK Funding – Magnificent Meadows, Donna Radley is the project officer. If have potential projects then need to contact her. We should collate ideas and send to Donna within next few months.	6. CR – circulate different options from Donna 7. JH then circulate to LBAPS and Wildlife Trusts With a deadline to get back to us with project ideas before our next G&H meeting	
	A 27. Plant-link Cymru looking at roadside verges, tring to keep track of what is happening with them with a view to producing Wales Wide road verge management guidance.	8. JH forward Powys road verge update to Trevor Dines	Complete and more recent update also forwarded.
	A 31. England Lowland Farmland Group meeting today (1 st May). Hopefully will provide some info on how these HAPs will push forward at UK level. Soeone from the Wales Farmland Group, and Carrie and Stuart from this group, will represent us on UK Lowland Farmland Group. England Farmland group keen to push for individual UK habitat groups, with coordinated effort could all push for this.	9. CR and JS talk to Wales Farmland Group and draft outline of what we would like to see happen at UK level. Then discuss with Diana Reynolds. Carrie also find out what England group decided.	Progressing this at present should be done by meeting
3. Axis 2.	Axis 2 all up in the air until the minister makes her decision on which of the 3 options to go for. Very tight timescale. Entry level scheme has to be decided next week, has to be with EU by end of June. Higher level scheme has a bit more time.		

	<p>Entry level prescriptions need to be really simple, e.g. asking them not to do things or making simple changes such as not cutting silage at the same height to add variability to the field.</p> <p>Heathland – only 10-15% lowland heathland lies within statutory sites (SSSIs). Agri environment has potential to encompass much of the rest. Don't currently have figures for heathland under Wildlife Trust, National Trust or other potentially protective ownership (although note NT land may still have tenant farmers). Heathland restoration is hard and costly so tends to be done through specific projects rather than Tir gofal. Tir Gofal better for achieving condition of existing sites.</p> <p>CM – need to look at being outcome driven, has been looking at putting together guidance consisting of pictorial outcomes that farmer would be trying to achieve. RE agreed this was a good idea but as part of EU regs still have to have prescriptions behind them so difficult to implement.</p> <p>Suggestions for Entry level Heathland prescriptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No agricultural improvement of heathland. ▪ Limit the amount of grazing (could provide visual guide for grazier on how heathland should look) more detail on variable grazing patterns e.g. heavy grazing in spring, lighter in winter. ▪ Burning <p>Higher level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Site specific variable grazing pattern throughout year, – need to supply more guidance and get this info out to Agri env. project officers. 		
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Different grazing stock – make clear difference between different types of grazing from different grazing animals. Could give extra points if committed to using the right type of grazing animal. The extra cattle grazing premium in Tir Gofal did appeal to farmers, could extend to other stock types e.g. native breed ponies. ▪ Capital works = restoration e.g. scrub clearance, management of very old heather, cattle grids, troughs, traffic management on commons e.g. signs. ▪ Cutting and burning ▪ Ditch and ephemeral pool management ▪ More movement of stock from site to site – higher level support for TB testing and facilities for this. <p>Lowland grassland – Less than 5% of all unimproved lowland grassland in Wales in on SSSI, although there is variation between the different forms (about 40% of unimproved neutral and unimproved calcareous is on SSSI).</p> <p>Grasslands – entry level: Entry level problem is that farmer won't necessarily know what type of grassland they have. Maybe could assess whether improved/unimproved/ wet/dry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A requirement to graze areas of marshy grassland with heavy livestock (cattle/ponies) would have significant benefits across Wales. ▪ No NPK or FYM on improved grassland could be entry level but relies on farmer being able to identify grassland state. 	<p>10. JS/CR check what has already been done in England as not point reinventing the wheel.</p> <p>11. CR – circulate FYM paper from IGER Pentwyn experiments.</p> <p>11. DL Draft up Axis 2 prescription suggestions and circulate to those attending Policy Group meeting on Tuesday.</p>	<p>Progressing this at present should be done by meeting</p>
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	<p>Higher level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Grazing stock type ▪ Grazing level ▪ Other major issue is enrichment, though still need to maintain productivity on hay meadows so Farmyard Manure (FYM) and liming prescriptions are important. ▪ Current Tir Gofal prescriptions for lowland grasslands are mostly appropriate. <p>Biodiversity may not be high on the entry level agenda.</p> <p>WBP need to raise the point that everyone should have been involved in Axis 2 prescriptions earlier.</p>	12. JH raise lack of time to input to Axis 2. at next WBP team meeting	Been brought to Diana Reynold's and Dai Harris's attention by a number of people.
4. Heathland Action Plan	<p>Agreed that targets should be re-jigged to fit the 4 standard target types: Maintain Extent, Achieve Condition, Restoration, Expansion.</p> <p>Need a decision making methodology for habitat creation areas, a strategic framework for Wales identifying potential sites; what would most benefit biodiversity 100 years down the line. All Wales, all habitats, who would lead, need to take this to WBP. Need to draw together all the current connectivity projects.</p>	13. Forward to policy group and WBP	Complete- added to policy issues template
	Suggested actions template	14. TD advise all groups to add an extra column to record	

		action progress until the groups have been set up on BARS.	
	<p>Actions on the table were discussed, Jan made changes during the meeting</p> <p>Achieve condition grazing actions need to be added to the list, advice notes need to go with these actions</p> <p>– should identify coding system for advice notes.</p>	<p>15. JS – circulate updated table to the group.</p> <p>16. JS add grazing actions to list and draft/locate advice notes</p> <p>17. JH set up coding system for advice notes that will work on BARS.</p>	
	Jan has funding for 3 year condition assessment of heathland in Snowdonia	18. JS email spec to the group	Complete
	Samples being collected from potential <i>Phythoptera</i> hosts	19. JS email JH a note to go on WBP website.	
	Grassland action plan	20. All - any actions for the grassland plan, get them to Carrie before the next G&H meeting	
	<p>Calaminarian grasslands – full description on JNCC and UK BAP website. Stuart gave short presentation on Calaminarian grasslands. Are some possibilities of new sites with quarrying activities going on.</p> <p>In Snowdonia, some of the potential calaminarian sites are SSSIs which are not also SACs.</p>	<p>21. CW send details of these sites to Stuart</p> <p>22. All, ask people to look for potential calaminarian sites and send them to Stuart, JH contact</p>	LBAPs been emailed, 2 replies forwarded to Stuart

		LBAPs.	
5. Species signposting	<p>Wales Species Expert Group (SEG) are assigning lead partners to each of the species. Also developing species target and actions template, will eventually be targets and actions at a welsh level for all species; 1st tranche of these will be available hopefully around June.</p> <p>Stuart mentioned an ongoing CCW project with BSBI and CEH investigating the characteristics of UK threatened grassland plant species. It is intended to produce a guidance book in due course.</p>	23. TD, JS – Send round the habitats/species action list from the signposting exercise to the G&H group	Done
6. Wales wide grazing scheme verbal update	<p>CM – Wales Wide grazing: section 15 and agri environment schemes haven't delivered grazing so trying to establish these scheme. Will not be all Wales in one go, not able to say which area will be first until that area has been told. Should increase biodiversity gain on SSSIs to help achieve Outcome 21 targets. Will develop a number of regional grazing schemes. Will know more by next G&H meeting and should be able to circulate something before hand.</p>	24. CM – circulate info on Wales wide grazing scheme progress before next G&H meeting	Paper to Note for WBPSG8 Click here for link to document
7. AOB	<p>Important Plant Areas (IPAs); these have been judged on international criteria. Out of 155 UK sites, 23 are in Wales. Will be publicity campaign soon. See Plantlife website for more.</p> <p>Habitat expansion schemes – Woodland Trust “plant an acre” and</p>	25. HB talk to chair of	

	<p>Million Ponds; need to ensure sites are properly assessed for suitability and not achieving one priority habitat at the expense of another</p>	<p>woodland ecosystem group</p> <p>26. JH bring up at next WBP team meeting – need criteria for when it’s OK to change one habitat to another. Good if on the right site. Potentially invite appropriate project officers to a meeting</p> <p>27. JH bring to attention of the LBAPs</p>	<p>Brought up at meeting – part of policy group action</p> <p>Done – included in key messages for LBAP coordinators, May 09</p>
8. Date of next meeting	<p>Friday 3rd July Hopefully CCW office, Ladywell House, Newtown</p> <p>Discussion points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Axis 2 higher tier ▪ Grassland action plan ▪ Species action plans 	28. JH to confirm venue	Board room, Y Llanfra, Aberystwyth. 3rd July 10.30am – 3.30pm
Additional action carried forward from previous meeting	A9 - need to establish differences between UK targets and standard target types and advise all ESG appropriately	29. JH and JS	ongoing
	A10 - Latest Countryside survey recorded 9000ha, Jan doesn’t think 3000ha has been lost, more likely been included in upland heath	30. JS	have the area data for upland and lowland heath and

