

**Title: West Wales Grazing Animals Scheme (WWGAS)**

**Produced by: The Pori Natur a Threftadaeth (PONT) Coordinator working with representatives of the WBP Heathland and Grassland Ecosystem Group and the WBP Wetland Ecosystem Group.**

***Background***

Inappropriate (usually lack of) grazing management, drainage and cultural enrichment are the predominant causes of unfavourable condition of habitats of the Welsh pastoral lowland landscape. Conventional section 15 and agri-environment provision have only met with limited success, partly because of the lack of suitable grazing stock, expertise and infrastructure. A new focussed approach is needed which addresses both the capacity of owner/occupiers to deliver favourable management, and the resources needed to achieve this.

The WWGAS proposal has been developed by members of the Grassland and Heathland Ecosystem Group and Lowland Wetland Ecosystem Group established by WBP as part of the new framework for BAP delivery in Wales, representing PONT, the National Trust (NT), the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). The proposal has been based on the example of the wholly externally funded Anglesey Grazing Animals Project, coordinated by PONT, which is delivering grazing management of sites on Ynys Mon. Information and maps to start to develop WWGAS have been sourced from the CCW Special Sites Database and from the on the ground knowledge of the CCW West Wales Survey Teams. It appears from the initial scoping exercise, that West Wales (Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire) have clusters of sites that could be tackled using a regional Local Grazing Scheme approach. The representatives who have developed the proposed scheme and the whole Grassland and Heathland Ecosystem Group (when briefed on the scheme at their most recent meeting) identified the delivery of WWGAS as a key priority to deliver Welsh Assembly Government Wales Environmental Strategy Outcome 21 targets.

The draft proposal was recently discussed at a meeting attended by the PONT Coordinator, the NT Wales Conservation Advisor, the CCW Peatlands Specialist, the CCW Support Team Manager West Wales and the CCW Regional Land Agent West Wales. A further meeting was held between the PONT Coordinator and representatives of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park and the NT in Pembrokeshire. Successful project implementation would result in favourable management being achieved for a substantial component of the lowland priority habitat and dependent priority species resource of south-west Wales

***Plan/Proposals***

The overall goal of the proposed 5 year scheme would be to contribute to bringing between 300-3000 hectares (amount dependant on final scheme size, number of site clusters to be tackled) of identified wetland, grassland and heathland, statutory and non-statutory, protected sites within Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Ceredigion into a favourable recovering conservation status, in line with the Wales Environment Strategy Outcome 21 target of 95% of SSSI's by 2015, and to contribute to priority species targets and commitments, such as Wales Environment Strategy Outcome 19 and Section 42 species.

**A summary of results would be:**

1. Sites damaged by lack of appropriate grazing management to be brought into favourable management by appropriate grazing regimes, via the development of a regional local grazing

- scheme and associated actions, utilising the skills and knowledge of local farmers, graziers and local communities.
2. Sites damaged by drainage to be restored by the re-establishment of their natural hydrology, to move BAP habitats and species into a favourable recovering conservation status.
  3. Sites damaged by nutrient enrichment to be restored by removal of pollution sources, sympathetic catchment management and remediation of damage, to move BAP habitats and species into a favourable recovering conservation status.
  4. Sites to contribute to habitat connectivity.
  5. Sites to have increased resilience to climate change.
  6. Sites to maximise their contribution toward management for ecosystem services i.e. carbon and water.
  7. The rationale and reasoning behind sustainable agricultural management of special sites within Wales, is communicated to local communities and individuals in West Wales, so linking livestock, food and land management.
  8. Best practice methods of site management by grazing are disseminated to the land management community within Wales and Europe.
  9. Provision of habitat conditions required by priority BAP species associated with wetland, heathland and grassland within the scheme area.

**There are some assumptions that have been taken as read - these are:**

- CCW Special Sites Database can provide a level of baseline information:-  
Site / Compartment / Status / Grid Ref / Manager /Area (ha) approx / Habitats / Notes
- To build upon the information supplied by the Special Sites Database, CCW staff can provide further information:-  
Agreement in place / Agreement delivering ideal management / Established grazing? / Adequate grazing? / Preferred grazing season / Preferred grazing stock / Summer LSU required (approx) / Winter LSU required (approx) / Infrastructure requirements
- External funding can be found to fund the scheme.
- Throughout the course of the scheme, liaison/communication between CCW local staff and project staff is excellent, with project staff having access to CCW computer / GIS / office resources at least one day per week.
- CCW Section 15 agreement money is available to fund infrastructure and tailored agreements to deliver habitats and species moving toward a favourable conservation status and communication/relationship between project staff and CCW land agents is excellent.
- Site management is via outcome focused non-prescriptive management techniques, easily understood by graziers, farmers and landowners.
- Work on a significant number of sites is not undermined by uncooperative site owners.
- The identified special feature/s of any site is the CCW priority for management, so enabling the site's special feature/s to achieve a favourable conservation status.

**Currently work is:**

1. Looking at developing more clarity on the potential site clusters to work on in West Wales, so as to identify the staff and practical resources required to deliver the identified results.
2. Investigating sources of external funding to deliver the scheme.
3. Awaiting support from CCW Western Region, and if that is forthcoming, a mechanism to engage regional staff as their knowledge and expertise is integral to the proposed scheme.
4. Once CCW support is forthcoming, beginning work to inform and develop working relationships with other potential scheme partners.

**Action Requested**

- Approve us to carry on as suggested above

YES/NO