

Minutes of the Inaugural meeting of the Wales Biodiversity Lowland Farmland Group.

Technium, Y Lanfa, Aberystwyth, 2 February 2009.

Chair: Caryn Le Roux (Welsh Assembly Government)

Present: Gethin Davies (Snowdonia National Park Authority)
Charles Grisedale (Cambrian Lapwing Recovery Trust)
Claire Burrows (Countryside Council for Wales)
Jonathon Hughes (Pembrokeshire National Trust)
Clive Faulkner (Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust)
Hillary Miller (Countryside Council for Wales)

Apologies: Charles Morgan (Pori Natur a Threftadaeth)

Minutes: Sian Hughes (Welsh Assembly Government)

1. Introductions

1.1 The chair opened the meeting at 11:00 and provided an overview of the Biodiversity Action Plan and the role of the group.

2. Group membership

2.1 Membership of the group was reviewed and it was suggested that NFU/FUW be encouraged to attend, and that the Carmarthenshire County Council Ecologist, Rosie Carmichael, be invited to join the group, as she has expertise on the Hedgerow Regulations.

Action – Caryn to contact Rosie

3. Review UK objectives and targets for Wales:

The definitions of each priority habitat can be found at:

<http://www.ukbap.org.uk/library/UKBAPPriorityHabitatDescriptionsfinalAllhabitats20081022.pdf>

A review of the targets in Wales, their current achievement and comments made at this meeting is available separately.

- **Hedgerows**

3.1 Claire Burrows introduced hedgerows, their BAP definition and targets. She informed the group that there was a big increase in Target 7 (T7 - improve the condition of the hedgerow tree population by increasing numbers of young trees (1-4 years) in Great Britain to 40,000 by 2010 and 80,000 by 2015 (not including N. Ireland).

Action - Caryn to clarify the reported amount of hedgerows

3.2 The group commented that T1 (Maintain the net extent of hedgerows across the UK) and T8 (Achieve a net increase in the length of hedgerows of an average of 800km per year in Great Britain to 2010 and 2015 (not including N. Ireland)) overlapped and were possibly contradictory.

3.3 Claire asked the group how we could achieve T4 (Achieve favourable condition of 243,000 km (35%) of hedgerows by 2010 and 348,000 km (50%) by 2015 (not including N. Ireland)). The group suggested it could be achieved through grazing, stock proofing, trimming and education, although annual trimming enforcement monitoring is an issue within agri-environment schemes.

3.4 The group felt that T5 (Reverse the unfavourable condition of over-managed hedgerows across the UK by reducing the proportion of land managers who trim most of their hedges annually to 60% by 2010 (applicable to England only)) cannot be monitored, therefore should we have the target in Wales?

3.5 Claire informed the group that we may struggle to meet the targets relating to veteran trees due to changes in climate. When a veteran tree is lost, associated biodiversity is lost also.

- **Arable Field Margins**

3.6 Claire then introduced the definitions and targets for Arable Field Margins. She informed the group that the definitions changed in 2005 and that condition monitoring of Tir Gofal is needed.

Action: Caryn to check details of the Tir Gofal monitoring contract recently let.

3.7 The group felt that T2 (Expand the area of margins providing wild bird seed to 20.8kha by 2010) was a worrying target, and that T4 (Extend the area of permanent grass margins to 27kha by 2010) was not necessarily worth doing everywhere. It should be targeted - for example bumblebee habitat grassland should be restored before arable field margins. The group felt that they needed to look at what could be done with limited resources, and liaise with the Grassland Ecosystems group.

3.8 The group felt that there was a conflict between birds and plants on arable land, in agri-environment settings it is down to the project officers to decide what benefits most.

- **Orchards**

3.9 Hilary Miller introduced the definitions and targets for orchards. Informing the group that it would cause duplication if it was done on a country basis, therefore Natural England is the lead.

3.10 Hilary informed the group that as of yet there are no agreed targets, and we probably don't know what orchards we already have. Although it is estimated that there is 840ha of orchard, with 440ha of that being traditional (taken from OS data).

4. Actions for Policy Group and

5. Actions for Farmland Group

4.1 The group provided input to a discussions paper for each topic that will be passed to the Policy Group.

Action - Sian to draft issues papers, to be available at next meeting.

6. Funding sources

6.1 The need for funding for monitoring would be flagged up to the WBP Policy group, and the possibility of Heritage Lottery Funding was discussed.

7. Knowledge Transfer/Communications

7.1 A paper from the UK Habitat Steering Group for Hedgerows was circulated, on **Key messages: The importance of hedgerows**. A brief discussion of the needs for KT took place, highlighting making links with the Farming Connect programme.

8. Links to LBAPs

8.1 Further discussion needed.

9. AOB

9.1 Claire flagged up the need to put a work programme in place. This will be started at the next meeting.

Caryn closed the meeting at 15:00