

Draft Minutes from: Wales Grassland and Heathland Ecosystem Group

Meeting 1: 25th February 2009 - Banw Room, Ladywell House, Newtown, Powys

Present:

Dave Lamacraft RSPB
Caroline Wilson SNP
Carrie Rimes CCW
Gemma Bode GWT
Stuart Smith CCW
Charles Morgan PONT
Jan Sherry CCW
Helen Buckingham NT

Apologies:

Sheila Spence Field Mycologist
Christ Tucker FCW
Ivy Berkshire Flora locale
Steven Bladwell RSPB
Trevor Dines Plantlife

| Item | Discussion | Action | Progress |
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| 1. Confirm membership | Group needs more farming community representation, Axis 2, and LBAP coordinator from Pembs due to large heathland resource | 1. JH - Approach NFU, FUW, FWAG. Also John Westlake from Axis 2 review, someone from Tir Gofal, Clandice Brown or Eleri Wynn suggested but approach them | |

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| | | through Ann Humble. LBAP coordinators are being approached through WBP but Bethan Cox from Pembs should be approached for this group | |
| 2. Terms of Reference | <p>Some bullet points under point 1 of terms and conditions to be changed.</p> <p>Could add to WBP terms of reference a point about WBP overseeing monitoring.</p> | <p>2. JH Changes to Terms of Ref:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Item 1</i> - Remove marine targets as not relevant. • <i>Change bullet point 4 under item 1</i>- Identifying monitoring needs and recommending monitoring priorities to enable... • <i>Change bullet point 8 Item 1</i> – Support and enable engagement with local partnerships. • <i>Change bullet point 9 Item 1</i> – Produce and coordinate Wales wide advice/guidance. • <i>Add</i> – report back to WBP on annual basis | |
| 3. Identify priority actions using | Targets 4 and 5 - Would like to know how much is under restoration and how much has | 3. Group: produce advice notes on monitoring transition from | |

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| <p>existing HAP actions as guidance - Grasslands</p> | <p>successfully been restored. For example at what point does a grassland or heathland restoration project switch to an achieve condition target. This is a monitoring nightmare.</p> | <p>restoration to achieve condition.</p> <p>4. Policy Group: Guidance to work out transition between being restored and restored could go into Axis 2, Policy group develop this as part of pilot for Axis 2.</p> | |
| | <p>Restoration sites need to be carefully chosen to avoid habitat losses of other habitats</p> | <p>5. Policy Group: Future Agri environment schemes need to thoroughly think through guidance for sites that are appropriate for restoration.</p> | |
| | <p>Target 5 – reestablishment on arable land may be inappropriate as arable losses have driven the losses of farmland birds. May be able to identify areas where arable losses are acceptable. Concentrate on changing improved grassland to either species rich grassland or arable.</p> | <p>6. Change to – “where appropriate arable” Carrie to confirm new wording</p> | |
| | <p>Purple moor/ rush –main effort is to achieve condition; restoration target still required particularly for conifer removal, but re-establishment generally not practical, although probably worth keeping in low re-establishment target in case patches need linking up.</p> | <p>7. Carrie, put in appropriately low target for re-establishment of PMGRP</p> | |

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| | Worth assigning NVC types to the different habitats for reference | 8. Carrie add extra NVC column | |
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| 3. Identify priority actions using existing HAP actions as guidance - Lowland Heathland | Just single habitat but may need to be split up into different heathland types: wet heath, dry heath, calcareous heath, sand dune heath (this might be under coastal group) | | |
| | No restoration target, Jan thought achieve condition target was actually restoration. This needs sorting out to match the 4 standard BAP target types so compatible with BARS. | 9. Jan and Juliet look into Heathland target classifications | |
| | Latest Countryside survey recorded 9000ha, Jan doesn't think 3000ha has been lost, more likely been included in upland heath | 10. Jan obtaining data set to check | |
| | Losses not being recorded | 11. WBP Support team need to encourage LBAPs to record losses. | |
| | Need register of where there have been applications for EIAs to keep track of losses | 12. Policy group look into register of EIAs | |
| | Losses are a knowledge gap | 13. This group could organise a sample survey for Wales heathland | |
| | EIA (Agriculture) Regulations complaint | 14. Juliet send letter round to group | |
| | Only a small proportion of SSSI and all SACs have had recent condition monitoring (only about 10% total heathland is designated) | | |

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| | condition of non-statutory sites is knowledge gap | | |
| | Target 4 could do similar thing for Wales as RSPB did in England. Target 5 again work needs to be done to get data for Wales | 15. Dave approach Nigel Webb for methodology from HEAP project | |
| 4. Targets/Actions Plans for new BAP habitats - Calaminarian Grassland | New HAP doesn't currently have action plan or targets, may need different approach from other grasslands. Established on heavy metal contaminated mine sites and contaminated river shingles. | | |
| | Report from Aberystwyth University looking at deposits of shingle by flood waters from mine, water management implications | 16. Jan send report to Stuart | |
| | Lleyn peninsular – for a few small sites here | 17. Dave send information on sites to Stuart | |
| | Could start drafting targets; Stuart has quite good information on this habitat in Wales, already knows all the best sites (the best 4 are SAC). Stuart will bring info to the next meeting. There are sure to be other small sites we don't know about, e.g. Dave's Lleyn sites, so worth asking LBAPs to get more complete picture. | 18. Dave start working out area of this grassland in Wales, contact LBAPS to ask if they have any sites. | |
| | Also need to consider UK context for target setting | 19. Stuart and Carrie, discuss at UK level. | |
| Policy issues | See actions 4, 5 & 12 above | 20. Pass to policy group | |
| | Axis 2 review need way of supporting more cattle grazing on these sites. | 21. Pass to policy group | |
| | Forestry commission should have developed policy on open habitats | 22. Chris Tucker find out what has happened so far, need an | |

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| | | overarching strategy | |
| | Lack of funding for non-statutory comprehensive wildlife sites system across Wales. Agri environment only accessible if own over 3ha, lots of lowland meadows owned by people with less than 3ha. Only limited funding from Flora locale. In Mons huge proportion of MG5 grasslands owned by small landowners and this is a similar picture in many other areas; together these areas would contribute hugely to BAP targets. Can CCW grant scheme target priorities in LBAP areas e.g. MG5 management in Mons. Almost need contractor who is set up with correct equipment to hay cut in small fields with small gates. Need to locate contractor who will prioritise small field cutting: On Anglesey Hilary Kehoe form AGAP looking into this | 23.Pass to policy group 24. Flag up issue with Elinor CCW who's looking into grant Scheme | |
| | Any other policy actions | 25.Send to Juliet J.hynes@welshwildlife.org | |
| 6.Funding: identify available funding and what is currently being tapped into. | Dave RSPB – South Stack large heathland resource, Ramsey Island coastal heath, mostly managed through NT and CCW work so not much resource expenditure from RSPB | | |
| | Caroline – Will have a think and send stuff through for Snowdonia, used to have grassland monitoring project but unlikely to be continued due to staff restructuring | | |
| | Carrie – Saving our Magnificent Meadows | | |

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| | <p>funding support group – Donna Radley (Donna.Radley@plantlife.org.uk) drawing up inventory of all grassland projects in the UK, looking into grassland funding framework. Could be a significant source of funding in future.</p> | | |
| | <p>Stuart – CCW directly funds a few other projects e.g. Mynydd Mawr marsh fritillary, North Wales limestone grassland sites, as well as directly funding work on statutory sites.</p> | | |
| | <p>Gemma – lots of ongoing grassland restoration – Wyeswood common project got large amount of funding from CCW. Ongoing monitoring from wildflower seed application – group suggested would be good to see a report from this. FC have heathland restoration on Trelleck plateau taken off top 6” soil, fenced and grazed. Site is next to Clem bog SSSI where Welsh turtle dove last bred.</p> | <p>26. Gemma will gather info from other Wildlife Trusts</p> | |
| | <p>Charles – PONT working with site owners to get grazing work with statutory agencies. Anglesey, 300ha over 3yrs; woodland trust Wentwood; Penmynmawr; Lleyn grazing grassland sites. Heathland, wrote commons scheme for forgotten landscapes project. BBNP haymeadow harvesting. Ivy from Flora locale runs grant scheme for meadows with 10 yr commitment PONT grant scheme for meadows has 5yr commitment . Powys have roadside verges</p> | <p>27. Check progress of Powys roadside verges project.</p> | |

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| | project. | | |
| | Jan – Tomorrows heathland heritage finished. Lleyn heathland project; Gowers life in Common, broader than habitat based involved getting commoners on board, now coming to end. Pembs looking at heathland beef project. No new large scale projects for heathland. | | |
| | PONT trying to identify funding, from charitable trust funding, to buy stock then lease them to landowner/farmer. Farmer would put x stock on land for x period to produce biodiversity gain. Can breed and sell stock as long as herd size is kept the same. | | |
| | Management on conservation bodies own land needs to be a bit more joined up. This group should hopefully facilitate this. | 28. CCW pull in PONT more on SSSIs | |
| | Agri environment schemes should also be a major source of funding. Important to get some involvement in the Agri pilot. Start thinking about how we might want to change existing prescriptions. Feed into Axis 2 review. All, look at comments already made by members of this group to the axis 2 review. Bring to the next meeting so we can coordinate approach for these habitats. | 29. Dave bring along examples for species. 30. All circulate summary of relevant responses before next meeting | |
| | NT central money been funding hay meadows project for last 4 years, was supposed to get management right for tenanted land. Also to double resource to 150ha of flower rich | | |

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| | grassland. Not as successful as hoped but do have money for coming year. Would like to be more joined up with other organisations and grassland projects. | | |
| 7. Communication with UK groups | Could send one person from this group to each UK group on a rotating basis. | 31. Feed back to JNCC through WBP that we would like to maintain the Current UK Habitat groups. | |
| 8. Species signposting | Agreed that we would delay this until the next meeting - when Trevor can join us. | | |
| 9. Next meeting | <p>We agreed that at our next meeting we would cover the following:</p> <p>1. Axis 2 review The next meeting will review the main issues and agree a response to WBP Policy group for grassland and heathlands. Dave Lamacraft will lead on this - he will circulate a draft outline of key issues before the next meeting.</p> <p>2. Strategic plan for heathlands and grasslands in Wales At our next meeting we will agree a draft strategic plan for both habitats - To prepare for this : Prioritise targets and key action for the grassland and heathland HAPs.</p> | | |

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| | <p>Carrie, Stuart and Jan will circulate revised lists before the meeting. Species signposting Trevor will circulate papers and lead on this at the next meeting. Linked to above we will agree priorities and actions.</p> <p>Key issues to consider when developing the plan: Existing use of resources - how do we develop joined up and effective ways of delivery How do we report - use of BARS Use of existing information - key bird areas, special plant areas etc</p> | | |
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