

**Fourteenth Meeting of the group
Craflwyn, Nant Gwynant
8 July 2014**

Present: Charles Morgan (RSPB), Jan Sherry (Natural Resources Wales), Mariecia Fraser (Aberystwyth University), Sian Whitehead (Natural Resources Wales) Steve Chambers (WG), Dafydd Roberts (SNPA), Julia Korn (Natural Resources Wales), Tracey Lovering (Wales Biodiversity Partnership). Joe Daggart (NT), Peter Dennis (IBERS Aberystwyth), John Farrar (Bangor University), Amy Vanstone RSPB), Martin Clift (RSPB).

Apologies: Bev Lewis (Brecknock WT) Simon Thorpe (Heather Trust), Peter Jones (Natural Resources Wales), Helen Buckingham (National Trust), Mike Jenkins (Natural Resources Wales), Matthew Carroll (PHD Student), Alison (Ceredigion Council)

1. Actions Outstanding from previous meeting

a) Upland framework review:

JS/DR to start review initially focusing on Futurescape area (North Wales Moors) and Snowdonia Juniper area. [Carried Forward](#)

Action: [CM to circulate Futurescapes Business Plan and to explore how to improve communication.](#)

b) Montane heath: Final report circulated by JS

JS and SC to meet to discuss taking this forward

c) Upland Ecosystem Group work programme

CM to review the work programme and circulate

[The work programme will be a major item on the agenda for the next meeting which will be after the launch of the Nature recovery Plan consultation \(which should provide greater steer\).](#)

d) CM to contact Cambrian Mountains project to discuss a workshop to be held in May.

[The announcement of then nature Fund and the Cambrian mountains as a Nature Action Zone \(as well as others in the Uplands\) has superseded this. The Upland Group will discuss where to locate the next regional workshop later in the year when there is a better understanding of collaborations and activities in the Nature Action Zones.](#)

Action: [CM to contact Alan Davies \(Natural Resources Wales\) and Clive Faulkner \(Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trusts to discuss any potential Nature Fund ideas in the uplands.](#)

2. Evidence Update

Action: JK to invite Peter Jones (Natural Resources Wales) to speak about the Peatland Action Plan at the next meeting.

U1 – Are all current upland management practices maintaining soil quality?
Proposal completed

U2 – More detailed information is required on how vegetation structure and composition affects upland bird and invertebrate abundance and how such findings can be translated into management guidance.

Lead – Sian Whitehead

This is picked up in part in the presentation today on the work of Matthew Carroll and of Dr Peter Dennis.

U3 - Can upland habitats be restored by livestock grazing alone or is pre-grazing mechanical management necessary?

Lead – Charles Morgan with the support of Mariecia Frazer

On-going

U5 –Is ecological genetics providing information that will help us understand better which species are most vulnerable to fragmentation of habitats and how important is genetic variability?

Action from previous meeting – CM to speak to Trevor Dines to define properly and establish the priority of this research gap?

Action today: CM to discuss further with Barbara Jones (ex- CCW) who now sits on the National Trust Conservation Committee.

Needs clarification before decision on proposal is made

U6 - Lack of hard data on drivers of the decline of Golden Plover and other upland waders.

Linked to U2 and in part picked up in the presentation today.

U8 – We need a clearer understanding of how the interactions between land management, such as herbivores grazing, can alter the critical N deposition threshold for sensitive upland habitats being taken forward by JNCC. Simon Bareham is the lead in Natural Resources Wales.

This project is being coordinated by JNCC on behalf of the 4 UK countries and is looking at the effects of nitrogen deposition on different habitats. Queries have been raised as to whether it is possible to establish which attributes were as a result of nitrogen deposition and which were as a result of other factors. JNCC will produce the report.

Action: JS to talk to Simon Bareham about nitrogen run off data and reword this research gap to better reflect need to look at run off.

Other research mentioned included the Global repeated Experiment (Carly Stephens and research by Stephanie McGovan carried out in Snowdonia – ‘Increased inorganic nitrogen leaching from a mountain grassland ecosystem following grazing removal: a hangover of past intensive land-use?’

Action: PD to circulate link to global research

Wait for JNCC report before deciding on priority or adapting words

No proposal required at the moment.

U9 – What are the best options (economically and environmentally) for wintering cattle in areas with above average rainfall? REWORD

Lead Charles Morgan with Mariecia Fraser

Needs rewording before proposal is written - On-going

U10 – What quality and quantity of native woodland restoration is needed in and around the uplands.

Needs rewording before prioritisation – John Farrar to lead.

U13 - Determining the role of predation in limiting the densities of upland breeding birds - literature review.

Lead – Sian Whirehead.

This has been done before and review documents are available.

No proposal needed

U24 – What are the grazing preferences of free-ranging livestock species and breeds in the uplands?

Lead – Mariecia Fraser.

Proposal Completed

U26 – What are the key upland land management adaptations required under the best current climate change scenarios.

Need to know factors that we can't control to help target the resource in the long term.

Lead John Farrar

Proposal on-going

General action carried forward: JK to group similar evidence gaps on upland waders.

Actions: CM to circulate information on RSPB research proposals

3. Nature Fund

- Elenydd Partnership - RSPB
- Elan Valley – tenant farmer
- Berwyn and Migneint – SNPA
- North Wales Futurescape - RSPB
- **Action:** CM to circulate RSPB projects relevant to the Uplands.

4. PRESENTATION

Influences of climate, moisture and drainage on Golden Plover populations – Matthew Carroll (Presented by Dr Peter Dennis)

Powerpoint provided.

Action: PD to check what the blue dots on the map on the second slide represent

Action: PD to check if the powerpoint can be circulated.

The following points were made

1. The model used had decreased rainfall as a driving factor.....links to warming (check JF point)
2. linked to that it appears to assume that 5 climate change patterns and a warmer climate will result in drier habitat (upland bogs), the assumption is warmer +

drier. PD explained that the pattern is for longer, drier periods with shorter periods of heavier rain, so overall drier conditions.

3. Habitat moisture is one factor, however other factors resulting from extreme weather could have direct impacts e.g. on chick mortality.
4. Micro-niche adaptation to climate change is also important. Vegetation height and humidity is also dependent on vegetation structure.

5. PRESENTATION

Recent research and overviews of factors affecting upland waders/ground nesting bird species. Dr Peeter Dennis

6. Update on RSPB Golder Plover work

The Important Upland Bird Area (IUBA) project provides a framework for guiding management for priority bird species on five upland sites in Wales (Hiraethog, Ruabon, Berwyn, Migneint & Elenydd). As part of the IUBA, management zones to focus management for golden plover (based on previous breeding records, and suitable habitat) have been produced for all five sites. The IUBA is being used to promote appropriate management for golden plover and monitor the affects of management through the following projects/actions:

- Golden plover management on Ruabon: working with private landowners and NRW to undertake mechanical cutting for golden plover and curlew.
- Golden plover management on Hiraethog: REF funded project, in partnership with SNPA , Dwr Cymru, working with commons association, landowners and NRW to undertake mechanical cutting for golden plover, and ditch blocking for curlew. NRW strategic partnership funded work inc other Golden Plover and associated blanket bog condition improvement work.
- Monitoring of golden plover, using O'Brien & Smith, methodology for surveying upland waders, is being undertaken on both sites.
- Monitoring of vegetation, following Common Standards Monitoring guidance and advice from NRW staff, is being undertaken on both sites.
- Continuing to promote appropriate management for golden plover, working with partners, within the IUBA framework and all the five upland sites.

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7. Snowdonia National park Authority - PRESENTATIONS

Resilient Ecosystem Fund - Eryri and Hiraethog Project – Gethin Davies
 HLF – Landscape Partnership Project – Carneddau and Ogwen – Rhys Owen
 Rhododendron Strategy – on-going Rhododendron clearance – Carwyn ap Myrddin.

Afternoon field visit to Bryn Bedd/Maes Ysgboriau, Castell and top of Coed yr Eryr – rhododendron clearance, Llundy – heathland management and Craflwyn – hydro power development.

Date of next meeting (tba in November)

Venue – IBERS, Aberystwyth.

NATURE RECOVERY PLAN - Additional information

Welsh Government are currently writing the Nature recovery Plan which will be Wales' first Biodiversity Strategy. It will consist of:

- A high level action plan which will include high level outcomes/objectives and measures.
- An Evidence Plan
- An annual work plan
- A public facing document
- Plus other documents?

The timeframe is

- Next draft of the High level action plan circulated soon to Wales Biodiversity Strategy Board members
- July 28 – annual work plan consultation
- Mid August – Sign off of consultation documents at Wales Biodiversity Strategy Board Meeting
- Sept 10 – Launch of public consultation by Minister at Wales Biodiversity Partnership conference (for 3 months)
- Spring – Launch of Nature Recovery Plan

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