



Minutes - Grassland and Heathland Ecosystem Group Meeting - 22nd June 2012

Welsh Government Offices, Llandrindod Wells

Attending:

Apologies:

Helen Buckingham (Chair)	HB	National Trust	Jan Sherry	JS	CCW
Alys Edwards (Secretariat)	AE	WBP	Nick Somerfield	NS	FUW
Stuart Smith	SS	CCW	Kyra Somerfield	KS	FUW
Sion Brackenbury	SB	Commons Vision	Trevor Dines	TD	Plantlife
Charles Morgan	CM	PONT	Caroline Wilson	CW	SNPA
Stuart Smith	SS	CCW	Jane Hodges	JH	PCNPA
Kathleen Carroll	KC	WAG	John Warren	JW	Aberystwyth University
Dave Lamacraft	DL	RSPB	Gareth Griffiths	GG	Aberystwyth University
Julian Jones	JJ	WTW	Arwel Williams	AW	Welsh Government
Geraint Jones	GJ	PCNPA	Sinead Lynch	SL	BBCT
Liz Jones	LJ	EAW/LBAPs			
Bryn Jones	BJ	National Trust			

Helen Buckingham welcomed attendees to the meeting and thanked them for their on-going support for the WBP Lowland Grassland and Heathland Ecosystem Group. Liz Jones (EAW), Bryn Jones (NT) and Geraint Jones (PCNPA) were welcomed to their first meeting.

1. Minutes and actions from previous meetings

A number of actions from the previous meeting remain outstanding and these will need to be carried forward through sub groups and/or added to the agenda for discussion at the November meeting.

2. Ecosystem Resilience and Diversity (ERD) Funding Update

The Welsh Government (WG) ERD fund has now closed for applications for this financial year. A panel will be considering applications made on the 05th-06th July 2012. Applicants will be informed of the outcome in the week following the panel meeting. Attendees agreed it would be useful to work with partners to develop detailed projects in the WBP priority areas, should this fund be available for 2013/14.

ACTION 1. AE to add development of project template and next steps to the agenda for November's meeting.

ACTION 2. AE to ask Julia Korn if examples of best practice from previous ERD projects can be shared to support development of future projects

Sion Brackenbury informed the group that a combined project with the Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service (MWWFRS) had been submitted for the ERD Grant Fund, focussing on how sites which fall outside of priority mapping areas, but which are key for connectivity, are addressed. Attendees agreed that a greater level of detail was required for the mapping, in order that site important for connectivity are captured and prioritised (this is captured in the CCW Level 2 mapping, however this has not been shared widely at present). The need to progress the species/ habitat association work and ensure this is inputted into the priority mapping work was also highlighted, as this may enable priority mapping work to pick up some additional connectivity issues and enable a greater range of sites (key for connectivity) to access external funding.

Sion also reported that a Pembrokeshire Fire Group is currently being established along same lines as Gower group, using the Pembrokeshire Sustainable Agriculture Group to build membership. The group is working to implement fire plans etc. and will be seeking to access money through arson reduction funds.

3. Update from sub-group meetings

Sion provided an update on the Heather and Grass Burning sub group meeting, following the meeting a number of actions have been carried forward including training run with the South and Wales Fire Service (SWFS) on the Borange and work with graziers to legitimise burning. A meeting has also been held with chief fire officer and chief police officer in the area in order to seek increased support.

Work has also taken place on data availability. To date fire load data has been overlaid with phase one data to assess biodiversity impact, with associated risk maps developed and the location of fire breaks shared with the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) via remote GIS terminals.

Welsh Government has since agreed to allowed burns out of season, outside of designated sites. This work is being trialled from September 2012 – April 2013.

ACTION 1. KC to ask Welsh Government to feedback on outcomes of trial burning work at summer meeting 2013

Sion informed the group that Commons Vision are currently undertaking work with Fera around phytophthora in the uplands. Fera are developing their own priority mapping for areas where controlled burning will take place and it is important that the WBP priority mapping is shared in advance of these areas being decided upon.

ACTION 2. HB and CM to consider inviting Keith Walters (FERA), who leads national phytophthora project to talk to the Lowland Grassland and Heathland/Upland Groups regarding this work

ACTION 3. SB to email Keith Walters contact details to CM and HB

A video on biosecurity measures for phytophthora has been produced by Fera and is available at the following link;

<http://www.fera.defra.gov.uk/plants/plantHealth/pestsDiseases/phytophthora/video.cfm>

ACTION 4. AE to discuss possibility of inclusion of a workshop session on phytophthora at the WBP conference with Sean McHugh

Sion provided a brief update on his work assessing the environmental impact of biodiversity management, looking at how bracken/scrub control to achieve favourable condition can be detrimental through a life cycle analysis of the work conducted and exploring ways to offset the impacts of the work.

ACTION 5. AE to add update on Sion Brackenbury's work as agenda item for winter meeting.

ACTION 6. AE to suggest adding WBP conference agenda as standing item at all WBP Wales-level group meetings

Charles Morgan provided an update on the successful Saving Our Magnificent Meadows (SOMM) project bid. A Plantlife project manager has now been employed and the project is currently awaiting confirmation of the CCW contribution. The final project submitted an amended list of sites from the National Trust, Wildlife Trusts, and Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire and includes community and education work. The site information will be costed by November and an application will be submitted to WREN for match funding for the HLF bid.

4. LGHEG Work plan: discussion and next step

It was agreed the LGHEG work plan needed greater focus on achievable actions and this should be discussed in detail at Novembers meeting. In the meantime a subgroup meeting will be established in order to take forward the species/habitat association work.

ACTION 7. AE to arrange sub group meeting in the Autumn to discuss review of priority areas and species/habitat integration work

ACTION 8. AE to contact Mo Morgan in Nature regarding agricultural course content and feedback

ACTION 9. DL to request that the SEG focusses on grassland species association as next habitat so that the LGHEG can progress this work and investigate how we might amalgamate these two mapping processes

ACTION 10. DL to pass dates for completion to AE so sub-group meeting can be arranged

ACTION 11. AE to draft document detailing potential workshops/best practice days and circulate for comment

ACTION 12. ALL to update workshop document with list of potential outcomes

5. Evidence Gaps

Attendees agreed that evidence gaps should be reviewed following the WBP Academics workshop, to be held on the 11th September 2012 in the National Museum, Cardiff.

ACTION 13. AE to add evidence gaps to the agenda for November's meeting following academics workshop in September.

ACTION 14. AE to ask Tracey Lovering for the final version of evidence gaps spread sheet and circulate to the WBP groups

6. AOB

Charles informed the group that PONT and Butterfly Conservation Trust (BCT) will be undertaking studies of marshy grassland on the Llyn peninsula and Harlech, using money from the Water Framework Directive (WFD) pot. The project will include scoping of up to 40 sites to potentially write up larger project bid to implement an ecosystem services project.

ACTION 15. CM to update the group on progress of this project at November meeting

ACTION 16. HB to contact Mike Alexander and John Rodwell regarding a grassland management workshop for next summer's annual meeting

ACTION 17. AE to scope for date/location for next meeting