



Draft Minutes - Grassland and Heathland Ecosystem Group Meeting - 06th December 2010
CCW Plas Penrhos, Bangor/by phone

Attendees

Jan Sherry	JS	CCW
Trevor Dines	TD	Plantlife
Alys Edwards (by phone)	AE	WBP
Stuart Smith	SS	CCW
Carrie Rimes	CR	CCW
Charles Morgan (by phone)	CM	PONT
Caroline Wilson	CW	Snowdonia National Park

Apologies

Dave Lamacraft	DL	RSPB
Helen Buckingham	HB	National Trust

At the beginning of the meeting it was noted that the remit of the group, in relation to the mapping exercise, had now become too large, encompassing too many habitats and would benefit from being split into two task and finish groups looking at grassland and heathland sites in order to finalise the mapping exercise.

Agenda Item 1 - Agreeing priority mapping

The group agreed that key sites would be listed within each of the areas mapped.

Anglesey coastal heathlands and grassland

Problem on all sites is grazing

JS informed the group that these sites are made up of existing heathlands or maritime grassland sites. TD noted that there are also inland records of *Ranunculus tripartitus*

ACTION 1. JS and TD to discuss whether chough records are correct with DL

ACTION 2. TD to check coastal sites maps for inclusion of *Ranunculus tripartitus* and *camomile*, and discuss inclusion of another lichen with JS.



Some sites are being targeted for AGAP projects. Neither the WREN nor HLF bids have yet been submitted. AGAP can cover as much work on north Anglesey as possible - CM stated that there was currently £100,000 available under the loose infrastructure heading which needed to be spent. HB and Hilary Kehoe will be looking at project on National Trust sites in the next few weeks.

Key Sites

JS stated that Trewilmot SSSI is key for Anglesey and ranges in north east; Llancarw and Penrhyn Mawr

Gwydir Forest - Calaminarian

Potential for restoration, although needs a broader approach. Land is owned by Forestry Commission Wales (FCW) and management needed is the removal of conifers. Grazing is required on some sites although major problem is off road vehicle use. Some sites have been fenced and this has proved effective.

It was greed that a map of desired areas for conifer removal would be extremely useful however lack of data on soil contamination makes this difficult.

Discuss site management with FCW, and possibly Alan Hale or Ray Woods.

Meeting should be sought with local and national experts and FCW to see if anything could be done to expand existing sites. More species survey/monitoring work is also needed looking at lichens and bryophytes (local CCW staff are aware of this need).

ACTION 3. SS to arrange meeting next spring with Calaminarian grassland experts, CCW and FCW.

Two areas of work need to be focussed on

1. Work on existing areas (species survey/monitoring).
2. Restoration work and identifying appropriate areas.

TD noted that the Species Expert Group (SEG) have completed the same process and identified these sites as priority areas for lichens. Follow up possibility of a joint project.

ACTION 4. Need s42 list of species for this site. Stuart to discuss with Alan Hale and obtain Steve Chambers 1994 report for the site.

Ceredigion Coast

At present action areas only include National Trust sites and need input from other organisations to complete, including input on key species such as chough and marsh fritillary.

Key issue is grazing. Many are un-grazed or under-grazed
Key species are chough and pearl-bordered fritillary

ACTION 5. SS to add additional grassland sites to map.



Sites need to be discussed with Jenny Higgins (CCW Regional Team) and Ceredigion LBAP to input any local priority sites.

May lead into WWGAS as grazing is a key issue - lack of arable along coast is a key concern.

Mwnt- area for arable focus

Need to liaise with SEG and other ecosystem groups and coordinate projects. Additional key species need to be added in

North Wales Limestone

Map has been refined to focus on areas of existing habitat.

Other s42 species around the Great Orme - pulling out list of key species required.

A key issue is under grazing. No concerted effort to tackle these sites. Invasive species are also a big problem on limestone grassland requiring control of both native and non-native invasives.

Conwy sites could go for WREN funding but would need encouragement through Conwy LBAP

ACTION 6. SS to pick out key sites and priorities.

Need to work thorough to see what needs doing and include costings with input from CM.

Gower Coast - (maps not included)

ACTION 7. Jan to circulate maps

Gower Coast

Identify best bits of limestone grassland and heathland - focus efforts on 1&2

Key issues is grazing (across whole Gower, including the commons)

Key species -good records for juniper, Vascular plant assemblage for Gower coast, s42
Clinopodium and juniper

Coastal footpath is an issue, movement of heavy stock away from footpath due to conflict with PROW

ACTION 8. HB to arrange meeting next on Gower next year looking at condition maps and way forward.

ACTION 9. TD to send JS data from SEG for inclusion in Gower maps.

ACTION 10. SS to add any grassland sites missed, directly into JS's map. TD to draw up new map.



Floodplain Meadows Radnor/Wrexham

This currently represents a small amount of habitat - and the group agreed they were happy with the approach taken, prioritising grassland re-establishment - could be targeted through Glastir. SS informed the group that this habitat was already partially included in Glastir maps although maps do not have this level of detail.

Work is currently being done in England by the Floodplain Meadow Partnership, who do cross boarder work. Any projects should involve them.

ACTION 11. SS to look at Montgomeryshire floodplain meadow and add in.

Habitats need to be looked at in more detail.

Unimproved Neutral Grasslands

It was noted that this habitat is spread throughout Wales therefore not possible to cover under one project. Look at 6 projects, including 2 species based project. Clustering needs more work - discuss with Jim Latham

The question was posed whether the group was happy to have network as target area rather than sites and it was agreed that this was a good approach.

Need to input trunk road agency data.

ACTION 12. AE to discuss TREBAP data with Len Wyatt from trunk road agency.

1. Ceredigion - Need to involve LBAPs in assessing site condition.

2. Elan Valley Meadows - Already ongoing grazing project with Elan Valley Trust. ? Include project as 2nd priority project

ACTION 13. SS to send map to Ray Woods for comment

3. Gwent - Important area for MG5 in Wales. Shril carder bee present and opportunity for restoration of MG5 and improving connectivity between Gwent level and Monmouthshire meadows.

Areas to focus on need to be determined by Mike Howe. And it was suggested that this should/could go to the SEG as species project.

ACTION 14. SS to pass both Shril carder bee maps to Mike Howe

4. Meirionnydd - Species area rather than good cluster of habitat. TD noted that this was more of a priority project due to the isolated population which is vulnerable to disappearance.

Need to determine site condition - Work up as project with Snowdonia National Park identifying opportunities for restoration.

ACTION 15. SS to send CW map list of potential sites

ACTION 16. JS to send maps to Rod Gritten, in order to identify any other potential sites.



5. Castlemartin ranges - Shrill carder bee - grassland project fringes Pembrokeshire coastal area. Not too many issues - site is ranker than would like and undermanaged - all MOD land. Once it has been notified need to focus on improving management

Not too much of a priority for MG5. As it's being notified focus should be on extending range of shrill carder bee north.

6. South Wales Valleys Grasslands - Richard Wistow (RCT) possible restoration of MG5 area (2nd level priority area)

7. Llyn Peninsula - Whole suite of sites where grazing is an issue. Some work is being done by AGAP.

Priority sites on the Llyn include;

Cilan head- difficult to resolve Cilan through work with Hilary and HLF, would need a dedicated programme - problem with graziers;

Mynydd Tir Cymen - looking at shepherded grazing;

Menartha - also not grazed but potentially could be

Marshy grassland site Castell.... (?)

Sites to the east which are mainly chough with very little grazing, other sites on top of the Llyn are less of a priority.

Llanelog - site has an absentee landlord who is not involved in the management of common. National Trust would like to graze the site although landlord is not keen.

Bethesdin common - almost no heather left at all, needs heathland restoration project.

Bardsey -possible problem with too much heathland management.

Priority sites are Cilan, Bethesdin and Mynydd Tir Cymen

Need to ensure species are correct.

ACTION 17. TD to send list of species to JS for inclusion

Pembrokeshire Coastal Heathlands

ACTION 18. JS to check if Dale has been included

Pembrokeshire is still included in West Wales Grazing Animal Scheme (WWGAS), although at present does not include Preseli. Geraint in NT is working to include Preseli in WWGAS. Currently not enough stock to cover all sites now included in Grazing Animals Project.

Castlemartin - do we want MG5 project or just shrill carder bee?

ACTION 19. HB to discuss the above with Tudd - what are the key sites? Are there some sites where we have no previous records?

ACTION 20. TD to discuss key sites with Steven Evans

ACTION 21. JS to review species list with CM - If not enough info available HB to circulate maps to Tudd for comment.

ACTION 22. HB to approach Geraint (Pemb NP) for Preseli Project area brief

Ceredigion Shingle (no maps)

ACTION 23. JS to circulate maps.

Key actions - grazing, shrub clearance and preventing river being stabilised (EA are talking about doing work on the Rhaidol)

Marshy grassland - not yet completed. Jim needs to do cluster analysis based on MG24

ACTION 24. CW to send March fritillary records for Dolgellau to SS

Fridd (no maps) needs to be progressed rapidly

Habitat important for birds and fungi. Good fridd sites present in Snowdonia, Berwyn, Brecon Beacons National Park.

It was agreed that it would be useful to try and draw up a project for Fridd - starting with Snowdonia as most looked at area (work done previously by John Hawthorn)

ACTION 25. CW to confirm whether or not Snowdonia National Park can lead on putting together Fridd maps. If so, CW and Kate to put together initial maps of best Fridd sites in Snowdonia and circulate to all for species input.

ACTION 26. SS to discuss priority areas for grassland fungi with Ray Woods.

ACTION 27. JS to send CCW Fridd layer to CW.

It was agreed that this level of mapping needs to be finished and circulated to CCW species staff and LBAPs for comment as soon as possible.

Deadline for completion of maps is Friday 14th January 2011 (excluding the 2 new habitats).

ACTION 28. AE to upload maps to WBP website for comment

ACTION 29. AE to circulate to LBAPs for comment.

ACTION 30. AE to ask WTW and RSPB to circulate to colleagues for comment

Agenda Item 2 - Natural Environment Framework Response

The group agreed to develop a brief response (based on NATUR response) to the NEF focusing on key issues.

Key issues

- Concurrent work streams - not working to an end point, no vision of end product
- Work streams should be sequential
- Wording of NERC needs to be strengthened (have regard vs. enhance)
- Over emphasis on statutory sites (Lawton report)
- Lack of evidence on how we deliver ecosystem services
- Make case for changing WAG funding system
- A lot of good work already ongoing - existing work which is successful should be continued.

Examples of these successes;

- AGAP project (good example of what can be achieved with little funding)
- Heathland work on the Llyn
- Notification of sites
- Monmouthshire meadows - community cooperation
- Tomorrows Heathland Heritage
- Grassland Grant scheme (CCW/PONT)
- Examples from outside Wales e.g. Salisbury plain, Culm grassland work, Hay Time Project.

ACTION 31. AE to forward LBAPs paper on wildlife legislation to JS

ACTION 32. CW to circulate National Parks NEF response

ACTION 33. JS to circulate NATUR response, pulling out key messages and send to HB for approval/comment

ACTION 34. All to send comments to JS

Agenda Item 3 - Ecosystem Grants

The current deadline for submission of project proposals is the 7th January. It was noted that this timescale was too short to develop detailed proposals. Therefore it may be best to submit a small number of proposals in the first instance with longer aspirational list. TD informed the group that the Species Expert Group has also developed a list of projects and it may be possible to dovetail with this.

JS commented that the fund is likely to be administered by CCW in the future and will need to be developed. Julia Korn has a meeting with CCW partnership group to discuss in the near future and it was suggested that NGOs should be encouraged to discuss development of this fund with both CCW and WAG (Diana Reynolds) and shape the direction that the grant scheme is taking

Existing projects should not be shoehorned to fit the funding available - smaller bids need to focus on critical work.

At present there are two projects for consideration, with a third project expected.

Project 1 - Cefn Drum and Graig Fawr, Building Our Biodiversity

£10k requested for work on the N.E side of Swansea covering 2 area of common land of approximately 789ha, also being considered by the upland group.

The group agreed more information was needed on specific sites but in principle the group was supportive of this bid.

ACTION 35. CM to circulate project plan to JS and SS

Project 2 - Cwm Colhuw Nature Reserve Sustainable Grazing Project

Proposal submitted by Liz Stewart (Vale of Glamorgan Council)

£2.25k requested in total to establish a grazing scheme adjacent to a SSSI on the Glamorgan Heritage Coast.

The group agreed that further information was needed, specifically whether or not a grazier was confirmed subject to funding bid being successful, but again, in principle was supportive of the bid.

ACTION 36. AE to contact Liz for further information

JS noted that a third proposal was expected from the RSPB focussing on heathland management at Southstack -CM informed the group that AGAP still had some money that was unspent, so this work could possibly be done under AGAP.

ACTION 37. JS to discuss with Hilary and RSPB

ACTION 38. AE to discuss possibility of NT submitting further proposals with HB

Agenda Item 4 - CCW Recreational Vulnerability Mapping

Work being done by Sophie Lake of Footprint Ecology, using a grid system over a map of Wales within a GIS and scoring each cell according to its vulnerability to recreational disturbance, specifically physical damage, contamination (mostly dog fouling), and fire.

SS has been working through the tables provided by Sophie. A discussion follows focusing on the various categories and perceived impacts and SS agreed he was happy to complete and send to Sophie.

ACTION 39. SS to complete tables incorporating comments received and forward to Sophie and cc HB

Agenda Item 5 - Update on WWGAS

CR informed the group that the Grassland Trust was the UK lead for the project and a good HLF bid had come through, the application was going in across the whole of the UK and included a number of projects the pre-application has been submitted and the first stage would take place between now and February - although the overall cost was a constraint

A meeting for all interested parties will take place on the 06th January 2011. The group agreed it was important for a good attendance at the January meeting

Project encompasses Carmarthen, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire although to date the focus has been on Carmarthenshire. CR informed the group that at present LIFE money find the Carmarthen officer and this bid will supply the funding for Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire officers

Targets will be finalised at the January meeting.

ACTION 40. CM to circulate draft project proposal - based on PONT running the project on Wales

ACTION 41. CM to send list of sites drawn up by Andrew Tuddington to SS and JS

Date of next meeting - either the 09th or 02 February 2011.

ACTION 42. AE to discuss with Helen and circulate possible dates