

WBP UPLANDS ECOSYSTEM GROUP

ACTIONS FROM MEETING – 24th June 2010

WAG offices, Newtown

Present

Barbara Jones (CCW & Chair), Steve Chambers (WAG), Joe Daggett (NT), Gareth Ellis (BBNPA), Rhys Evans (NT), Clive Faulkner (Monts Wildlife Trust), Dave Lamacraft (RSPB), Jim Latham (CCW), Bev Lewis (Brecknock Wildlife Trust), Mark Malins (FC), Charles Morgan (PONT), Dafydd Roberts (SNPA), Jan Sherry (CCW), Reg Thorpe (RSPB), Sian Whitehead (CCW)

Apologies

Helen Buckingham (NT), Mike Jenkins (EAW), Chris Tucker (FCW), Simon Thorpe (Heather Trust)

This meeting was convened mainly to discuss the prioritisation of biodiversity conservation in the Welsh uplands. However, few issues were discussed beforehand:-

- 1) **Natural Environment Framework for Wales** – the need for the Ecosystem groups to keep abreast of developments with this and to comment on the narratives was stressed. JS to collate comments from members of the group whilst BJ was on leave.
- 2) **New UK upland HAPs** – three HAPS have been produced for the new upland BAP habitats:- Montane heaths and willow scrub, Inland rock and scree habitats and Upland flushes, fens and swamp. These plans give the background to these habitats, their status & distribution in the UK, component Annex 1 and NVC communities, current factors affecting their condition, links with other action plans and species and finally, generic UK objectives for these habitats. These objectives need to be translated into focussed action plans for Wales and the Upland Ecosystem group will start this process in the coming months.
- 3) The production of **Glastir** technical guidance for applicants was briefly discussed and the need for the group to input to this.
- 4) The group was asked for contributions to the next edition of the upland newsletter '**Looking to the Hills**' produced by the UK Upland Lead network.
- 5) **Prioritisation of action for biodiversity in the Welsh uplands.**
The aim of this major agenda item was to start to provide a clear strategic view of our biodiversity resource and future goals at a local, regional and national scale and to coordinate information so that clear priorities for different aspects of biodiversity in different places can be identified. The meeting aimed to start the process of outlining where and what are the main habitats & species in the uplands which we should be focussing on in the next few years. What are the main priorities in terms of conservation management in the Welsh uplands? What site based projects/issues are urgently needed to improve the condition of habitats in the Welsh uplands. This could involve reconciliation of potentially competing requirements.

This should start to provide a priority list for LBAPs, NGOs and statutory bodies for action in the uplands and help to focus resources onto the most urgent requirements. It will also support the implementation of the Natural Environment Framework which may direct much of our biodiversity work in the coming years.

Each member of the group briefly identified their main priorities and these ranged from very clear site based projects to more general issues aimed at tackling generic problems for biodiversity in the Welsh uplands. From this, a few common issues were identified including restoration of blanket bog on specific sites, linking management to stop decline of threatened birds to blanket bog restoration, urgent protection of montane grassland and heath, woodland protection and expansion in the uplands and tackling the issue of common land management for biodiversity.

Utilising the experience of the members of the group, the 10 most urgent issues/projects were identified. There was some discussion as to whether a whole site should be named as a focus for management. This approach was argued to be important as it would follow the landscape/catchment scale approach which is important in conservation and links in with the ecosystem services approach. However, it was concluded that in this instance, if this approach was followed, then naming 10 major upland sites would effectively just name the large upland SSSIs in Wales and take us no further in identifying important projects/issues. It was argued that we need an approach which focusses on the possibility of threat/loss of habitats and species and on projects within sites to act as 'seeds' to show that there are problems and demonstrate to surrounding landowners that action is possible and what can be done. Also there is more likelihood of action being undertaken if these project is more tightly defined (particularly in these times of very limited resources) and if biodiversity gain is demonstrated through such projects, then further action is also more likely.

The identification of these most urgent issues does not mean that we can be complacent about other priorities in the uplands. There is a great deal which needs to be done for biodiversity in the Welsh uplands and this is just the tip of the iceberg. Once one of these is undertaken, there are many more waiting to take its place on the list.

The 10 most urgent projects were:-

- 'Rescue'/restoration of the most damaged montane habitat in Eryri (BJ)
- Restoration management of two golden plover sites on the Elenydd, integrating management for this species in with wider measures for the restoration of blanket bog on the site. (RT & JD)
- Restoration of degraded blanket bog on Mynydd Du. (GE)
- Restoration and expansion of valley side woodlands in the Nant Gwynant in Eryri. (RE)
- Management for curlew on Hiraethog. (DL)
- Eradication/containment of Rhododendron in Eryri. (DR & JS)
- Management for Twite at its only site in Wales. (DL) (NOW WITH LOWLAND GROUP)
- Limestone pavement management on Ogof Ffynnon Ddu (GE)
- Permanent removal of goats from Cwm Idwal. (RE)
- Removal of invading conifer on the Berwyn (RT in consultation with Arfon Hughes and MM?)

A second tier list was discussed which included issues such as continuing the Conwy blanket bog management project on the Migneint (HB), restoration of blanket bog and heath on Hatterall ridge in the Black Mountains (GE), cattle grazing introduction and expansion on Pumlumon for heath management (CF), Water vole on the Migneint (DR/JM) and juniper in Eryri (BJ). However, it was thought that more work needs to be done on identifying these projects and a wider consultation undertaken.

ACTION:- Members of the group will now provide a brief (<500 words) summary of each project/issue, together with a map (in Mapinfo) and **send these to Barbara Jones by the end of July**

The next meeting to progress this will be held on the 8th December at CCWs offices in Newtown.
