



Lowland Grassland HAP Group Meeting 18th October 2007, DWT Office, Belper.

Present:

Dan Abrahams (Natural England), **Chair**
Kieron Huston (Derbyshire Wildlife Trust)
Gareth Wilson (Amscott - local agents to HA)
Tam Percy (Amscott – local agents to HA)
Debbie Court (LD Biodiversity Partnership) **Note taker**

1. Apologies:

Nick Smith (Derbyshire Wildlife Trust)
Gemma Gregory (Derbyshire County Council)
Beverley Rhodes (Derby City Council)
Tim Brooks (Groundwork Derby and Derbyshire)
Carl Hawke (National Trust)

2. Matters arising

Debbie to send round the spreadsheet providing background to target progress
Dan to send DC and DWT HLS and CSS GIS layers for cross-referencing

Action: Debbie

Action: Dan

It was decided to rearrange the summer visit to coincide with next meeting

3. Value In Meadows Project update

In Nick's absence Kieron reported on progress since last meeting:

- Working with owners to submit 2-3 HLS applications
- Gained additional funding from Esmee Fairburn Foundation
- Looking for funding post April 2008
- Looking at possibility of extending project area for the future to include Bolsover and the coalfields.

4. Wild About Grassland Project update

Kieron reported that since the last meeting the Project has:

- Liaised with the local groups attached to the LNRs within the bid and carried out practical days
- Carried out more practical work at Chase Road grassland
- Worked with the owner of Spinnyford brook to fence the site so it can be grazed.
- Cleared scrub at Breadsall Railway Cutting SSSI and looking at possibilities for grazing
- Continued to work on grassland creation/restoration at Belper Parks LNR
- Continued to work on new interpretation boards for Wessington Green LNR and Duffield Millenium Meadow

Debbie asked Tim and Kieron to let her know of any small-scale capital projects on sites which could be submitted for any NE underspend.

Action: Tim/Kieron

5. Heathland

a) Ashover Heathland SITA application

Debbie reported that the Derbyshire County Council application to SITA landfill tax had been successful. The project will restore a total of 7.164ha of heathland on three DCC countryside sites (Eddlestow Lot, Highoredish and The Fabric) all are Local Wildlife Sites and are notified for their heathland interest. The project costs £21,500 and will be for 3 years. Debbie circulated a draft outline for the leaflet. Any comments should be sent to Annie Cooper by the end of the month.

Action: All

b) Black Rocks heathland project

The 7ha area of plantation which had been felled by the Forestry Commission was now beginning to regenerate with heathland. It is now fenced and cattle will be introduced to graze it soon.

c) Carvers Rocks

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust had continued to work on the heathland on site to extend it. They had submitted a funding bid recently to extend the area and create further heathland.

6. National Grassland Inventory

Kieron reported that DWT had now revised the GIS semi-natural grassland layer adding a field for neutral, acid and calcareous. They had recently submitted this to ADAS for inclusion in the grassland Inventory. Kieron will send round a copy of the layers to NE, DCC and other partners as appropriate.

Action: Kieron

Calculations had revealed that there had been some additions and losses to the grassland resource with an overall loss of 50ha (Details attached to the minutes). A distinction had also been made between unimproved and semi-improved grassland.

Dan had done some initial analysis of the data comparing it with resources in other East Midland LBAP areas. It appears that a quarter of all species-rich grassland in the region is within the Peak Fringe area!

The National Grassland Inventory should be available as an online download from Christmas with an additional layer of semi-improved grassland for partners only to access rather than the general public.

7. HLS

Dan reported that they had one HLS application this window. Next window (December) was looking quite busy with 3 or 4 Value In Meadows applications, Ogston Reservoir, and potentially some DCC applications.

Natural England is currently recruiting another member of staff for Lowland Derbyshire to help with HLS and SSSIs.

8. Road Verges

Tam and Gareth reported that they had carried out some NVC surveys on 3 road verge sites under their management (Kingsway roundabout, Jct 29 Meadow and a verge near Findern) Gareth said he would pass this information onto Kieron.

Action: Gareth

Road verge signs were up on the Jct 29 meadow and Gareth agreed to put signs up on the other two.

Action: Gareth

Debbie reported that posts and signs had been erected on all road verge reserves in Derbyshire (inside and outside Peak District), and management prescriptions had been written for all sites by DWT. The project was launched at Owl Bar in July. However, several sites had not been managed according to the prescription and it had been revealed that the contractors at the districts had not been made aware of the project. Kieron had spoken to the Bolsover contact and agreed the management of 2 of the 3 Bolsover sites. Progress elsewhere was patchy. It was agreed that Debbie should convene a meeting to discuss management with the contactors rather than the DCC Highway area managers

Action: Debbie

9. Monitoring and BARS

Debbie said that she will be feeding the information from the Annual Report for 2006/7 onto BARS. She was also waiting to hear from DWT and Natural England on how they wanted to report on BARS. Debbie will come and do a BARS session for DWT.

Action: Debbie

Debbie to set Tam up as a BARs user for Amcott to report on grassland work.

Action: Debbie

10. Partner updates

Derbyshire County Council had submitted a bid to SITA to diversify species-poor grassland on some of the coalfield sites such as Poulter Country Park and Pleasley Country Park.

Debbie had recently finished a draft Biodiversity audit of DCC Countryside Service Sites. This highlighted the areas of BAP habitat owned and managed by the Countryside Service with an accompanying series of GIS layers. Debbie to send Kieron a copy.

Action: Debbie

Dan had found that there are currently 200 Countryside Stewardship Schemes still valid within Lowland Derbyshire. A brief look at some of them had shown that not many of them were achieving real BAP action, especially for species-rich grassland. As the agreements come to an end Dan, and colleagues, will actively pursue HLS agreements with those which qualify and will achieve BAP action.

Kieron has nearly finished the Local Wildlife Site Condition Assessment report. The findings will stimulate debate for future DWT and BAP projects.

Dan reported on the Moss Valley Project which is taking a landscape approach to conservation management. A number of non- Local Wildlife Site grassland sites had been surveyed during the summer. The survey also identified a number of species-poor grassland which could be restored to species-rich grasslands through HLS. Natural England's Farm Business Unit had funded FWAG to do some advisory visits to encourage targeted landowners to go into HLS/ELS and EWGS.

Debbie circulated a note from the recent UK LBAP conference. The UK Grassland HAP leads had reported that Plantlife were about to recruit a funding officer to help small grassland projects get funding.

11. Date of next meeting.

After some discussion it was agreed to have a summer visit with the next meeting on **24th June 2008 10am – 4pm.**

Debbie Court
19th October 2007.