



Lowland Grassland HAP Group Meeting 20th March 2007, DWT Office, Bakewell.

Present:

Dan Abrahams (Natural England), **Chair**
Kieron Huston (Derbyshire Wildlife Trust)
Nick Smith (Derbyshire Wildlife Trust)
Debbie Court (LD Biodiversity Partnership) **Note taker**

1. Apologies:

Gemma Gregory (Derbyshire County Council)
Beverley Rhodes (Derby City Council)
Tim Brooks (Groundwork Derby and Derbyshire)
Carl Hawke (National Trust)
Gareth Wilson (Amscott - local agents to HA)

2. Progress towards the Grassland HAP.

Discussion took place over how far we are towards the grassland targets. Debbie agreed to have a look at this. It will also be informed by the Derbyshire Wildlife Sites Condition Assessment report due summer 2007.

Action: Debbie

Debbie went through the actions in the HAP making notes on progress following discussion. This will be entered onto BARS.

Action: Debbie

3. Value In Meadows Project update

Nick reported that since November 2006 the Project has:

- Followed up the 43 contacts made last year, providing advice. This has led to the submission of one HLS application and 2 ELS applications.
- Bought some plug plants for Duffield Meadow and wildflower seed from Emersgate.
- Working with the Peak District Environmental Mark to extend the boundary of the scheme and product marketing.
- Following the lack of response from graziers trying to work up a possible DWT grazing scheme with either a DWT 'flying flock' or a landowner with a flying flock.
- Trying to rethink the Project in light of the lack of success with HLS applications.
- Successfully submitted all claims and added information to BARS.
- Submitted an application for one year to the Esmee Fairburn Foundation for matchfunding for the Countdown 2010 money.

4. Wild About Grassland Project update

Kieron reported that since November 2006 the Project has:

- Liaised with the local groups attached to the LNRs within the bid and carried out practical days
- Carried out 3 days 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
- Planted 1600 plug plants at Duffield Millenium Meadow
- Started trail pit for grassland creation/restoration at Belper Parks LNR
- Begun some photo and botanical monitoring
- Written site management statements for all sites involved in the project
- Started work on new interpretation boards for Wessington Green LNR and Duffield Millenium Meadow

5. Ashover Heathland SITA application

Debbie reported that she had been working with Derbyshire County Council to submit a SITA landfill tax application. 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. The project will have the following main outcomes:

- Restore heathland through bracken control and scrub tree removal (59% of the LBAP target)

- Secure future management for the sites by acquisition of a reciprocating cutter (an attachment for DCC tractor). This will be available for use by other through the machinery ring.
- Produce a leaflet highlighting biodiversity value of heathland with a map showing local heathland sites available to visit (most are open access)
- Work with local community and volunteers on practical tasks.
- Botanical monitoring on the sites.

The group gave its support for the application.

6. Changes to EIA Regulations

Dan informed the Group that the EIA (Grassland) Regulations have now been revised. This was deemed necessary following a test case. Natural England has a team of 3-4 people who will administer the EIA Regulations for the whole of England. The Regulations define what is meant by semi-natural. It now only applies to land over 2ha in size.

Contact for EIA unit: 0800 0282140 eia.England@naturalengland.org.uk
EIA Unit, Natural England, Government Buildings, Block 3, Burhill Road, Westbury On Trym, Bristol, BS10 6NJ.

The document (Guidance on EIA (Agriculture) (England) (No. 2) Regulations 2006 revised Feb 2007 can be found at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/environment/land-use/eia/pdf/guidance-regs06-rev070213.pdf>.

7. HLS

Dan reported that the Natural England's vision for HLS was highlighted in Helen Philip's speech to the NFU on 27th February 2007. It is likely that the application to the scheme may be subject to invitation only. Dan said that he would look to the Grassland HAP Group to provide him with information on which sites should be invited to apply. They will be still be work for those helping applicants submit FEPs etc. It is now NE policy to carry out pre-application visits for HLS applications. The ELS system may possibly have a scoring mechanism. Funding for 2007/8 was still uncertain due to the need for a decision to be agreed at a European level. This is unlikely to be resolved before June but Natural England will still accept and process applications but not sign contracts until the issue is resolved.

Dan said he had a digitised version of ELS boundaries. This would be very useful for DWT and Debbie. Dan to send GIS layers asap.

Action: Dan

8. Road Verges

Debbie reported that there had been little progress on the road verge project since last meeting. Martin Smith (DCC Local Transport) has a capital budget (90801) entitled "Environmental Mitigation Measures", for which there is an allocated sum of £150,000. He is inviting tenders for small-scale projects such as road verge management. Debbie said that she has spoken the Peak District about putting in a joint bid for the Road Verge Reserve Project. Bids need to be submitted by the end of May.

Action: Debbie

The Highways Agency had erected the Road Verge Signs at the Junction 29 meadow. Gareth is looking into the management on the grasslands at Kingsway and J29 in order to move over from the standard wildflower grasscut and on to a more tailored prescription. At the moment he thinks that the site at Kingway (Derby) would benefit from a more traditional hay cut whereas J29 needs something tailored more towards orchid species.

9. Monitoring and BARS

Debbie said that she is now starting work on the Annual Report for 2006/7. Information will be gathered from a variety of sources – HAP group meetings minutes, LBAP partners, local groups. Maps of sites will be sent to 'Friends Of' and LBAP partners without mapping facilities so they can annotate these for Debbie to digitise and work out ha of work achieved etc.

10. Partner updates

Derbyshire County Council has been grazing the meadow on the Rowthorne Trial and parts of Pleasley Pit Country Park.

The Forestry Commission has fenced and started to graze the 7ha areas of heathland creation on Black Rocks.

At the recent Local Wildlife Sites Panel meeting a number of grassland sites were designated Local Wildlife Sites. Kieron reported that the Amber Valley LWS Register is now ready and will be distributed at the end of the month.

11. Date of next meeting.

After some discussion it was agreed to have a summer visit to look at some of the grassland sites that have been worked on through the Value in Meadows and Wild About Grassland Projects. It was agreed to hold it on **28th June**. Kieron to arrange details. **Action: Kieron**

Date of next indoor meeting 17th October 2007 2pm at DWT Office, Belper

Debbie Court
23rd March 2007.