

THE CONTRIBUTION OF WELSH AGRI-ENVIRONMENT SCHEMES TO
BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND LOCAL HABITAT ACTION PLAN TARGETS

Baptiste Roland, June - August 2005

Abstract:

This document presents the results of an assessment of four Welsh agri-environment schemes on HAPs of North West Wales and makes key recommendations.

After a brief description of Tir Gofal, Environmentally Sensitive Area Scheme (ESA), Organic Aid Scheme and Habitats Scheme, a methodology to assess each scheme was created. It compares claims and results of monitoring surveys with 20 LBAP's habitat targets. A specific scale was created to evaluate each of the four scheme's contribution to the achievement of HAP targets.

Results show that a Tir Gofal type scheme with option agreement and Organic Farming are good ways to meet HAP targets.

Arable field margins and ancient and/or species rich hedgerow targets and hay meadow and lowland heathland habitat targets are almost met. But further improvements for other habitats like blanket bog, fen and reedbed, mudflad, coastal sand dunes, cloddiau, limestone pavement, river and lake have to be pursued.

Overgrazing of upland and moorland habitat, drainage and particularly sheep dip, fertilisers and pesticides have to be managed in better ways. On this last point, Tir Gofal should be inspired by some Organic Farming measures.

The key recommendations for Welsh biodiversity and agri-environment issues are detailed in part three:

To build more biodiversity friendly Tir Gofal measures, address the main threats to biodiversity posed by farming; focus on grazing rate, cropping system and farming input sources.

- A survey of Tir Gofal monitoring inspired by ESA monitoring work should be published rapidly. Based on it, the schemes may be improved. This provides knowledge of Welsh habitat status.
- Promote awareness to present and also future farmers with specific biodiversity training sessions.
- Continue to encourage, support, advise and aid farmers to join Tir Gofal.
- Introduce adaptable and flexible prescriptions into Tir Gofal to focus on LBAP delivery. In order to increase the value of the scheme for biodiversity,

modifications of the existing measures to aid the better protection of specific local habitats or/and extend and develop the existing local biodiversity schemes (FWAG Farm BAP , Ceredigion Biodiversity Enhancement and the future Natur Gwynedd Implementation Scheme) into other areas. That means improved funding for these local voluntary initiatives.

- Tailor local and appropriate land management to deliver HAP Targets.
- But, the local suitable measures should not limited to specific habitats but applied and controlled at the landscape level and not only at the farm scale.

Finally this report could be used as a reference document for LBAPs of North West Wales.