

**REPORT OF THE CONSERVATION OFFICER AND CONSERVATION POLICY OFFICER**

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**SUBJECT: CONSERVATION LAND MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

Purpose of Report

The NPA's Corporate Plan Outcome 1(b.) is that "the area of land managed for conservation in partnership with the NPA increases by an average of 5% a year".

This report gives an overview of the NPA's progress on the corporate plan outcome for conservation land management, and includes an overview of the contribution made by conservation management agreements.

Defining the target

The NPA works with landowners, partner organisations and graziers to safeguard or restore nature conservation value. This is primarily achieved through:

- management for conservation on land which the NPA owns or leases,
- management agreements made under Section 39 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as Amended)
- enabling grazing for conservation
- providing practical management assistance and advice to landowners
- management agreements made under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 i.e. land used primarily for conservation objectives following the grant of a related planning permission

Sites in all these categories have been included in the definition of 'land managed for conservation', and a selection of photos illustrating some of the categories is included at Annex 1. In managing land for nature conservation officers also seek to contribute more widely to National Park purposes and Corporate Plan outcomes.

The baseline for Outcome 1(b) is taken to be land managed for nature conservation (together with other management goals) prior to April 2011.

The NPA also contributes to woodland management across Pembrokeshire through support of the Coed Cymru (Pembrokeshire) Officer. Officers have accounted for this land area separately (discussed below).

The NPA makes many other practical area-based contributions to nature conservation which are not included in this outcome (e.g. schools tree-planting schemes, wildflower planting), together with non area-based initiatives (e.g. provision of nest-boxes).

### Progress on the target

The target has been achieved (5.3% by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012).

The following table summarises the contributions by area made by the different aspects of the NPA's work. (Officers will explain in more detail how the totals are calculated at the meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2012.)

	<b>Baseline (pre-April 2011) - hectares</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 - 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012 (new hectareage)</b>	<b>Contribution to increase</b>
NPA-owned and -leased sites	532.24	5.42	8.08%
Management agreements	401.668	50.1	74.72%
Other sites with NPA lead	331.85	11.53	17.20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1265.75</b>	<b>67.05</b>	
<b>Increase from baseline:</b>			<b>5.30%</b>

Members will appreciate that the area of managed land, and therefore the 5% target, is only an indirect measure of the NPA's performance, since not all land areas managed for nature conservation are equal in terms of their nature conservation value. However, wildlife outcomes are dynamic and affected by many factors beyond the NPA's control, so, although area is a blunt measure, it does give a useful measure of aggregate conservation effort at an NPA level.

In terms of the quality of land management (that is, the impacts and results of management), management agreement sites are monitored annually for wildlife outcomes and for compliance with agreement conditions. For NPA-owned and -leased sites of nature conservation importance, officers in Park Direction are commencing a review of existing site management planning and monitoring arrangements, as conservation land management passes to the Delivery department.

The NPA provides approximately 25% of the funding for, and accommodates, the Coed Cymru Officer (Pembrokeshire) post. The Coed Cymru Officer's role, which has recently become vacant, includes management of Cilrhedyn Woodland Centre and preparation and support of woodland conservation management plans under Welsh Government's Better Woodland for Wales scheme (and its predecessor, the Woodland Grant Scheme). The area covered by these management plans is included below for information. However, because the NPA is only one of the funding partners, we have not attributed any of this area as contributing to the baseline or to the 5% target increase at this point.

	<b>Baseline (2004 – March 2011)</b>	<b>April 2011 - March 2012</b>
Coed Cymru	270.58	207.76
<b>Increase from baseline:</b>		<b>76.78%</b>

Members will note the considerable addition to the area covered by woodland management plans over the year 2011/12. This was due to a flurry of applications (including some large sites) as the current scheme came to an end without there

being an immediate successor. (While Better Woodlands for Wales is now closed to new entrants, a Glastir Woodland Management Scheme is anticipated in the future, and a Glastir Woodland Creation Grant is available now.)

### Future resourcing

The budget for the NPA's Section 39 management agreements is increasing from £58,000 in 2011/12, to £66,000 in 2012/13, £73,000 in 2013/14 and £80,000 in 2014/15. This phased increase in the budget will allow officers to sign up new areas of land over the next three years. However, land managers can also be assisted without the need for formal management agreements, and this type of approach may make an increasing contribution to land management area in future.

With the increase in the budget for conservation management agreements, officer time may become a limiting factor; to help make the most of available resources, and to enable conservation officers to help bring potential sites forward, a simple checklist will be used to help evaluate new nature conservation sites. This checklist is included at Annex 2 for information. The goal remains the identification of areas of land which will, individually and in combination with existing sites, achieve the best results for biodiversity. While biodiversity is of course the primary driver for conservation management agreements, cultural heritage, access and landscape are also taken into account at an early stage, in order to add as much value to the management agreements as possible.

### Exit strategy

Sites do not remain on the NPA's books for ever. Owned and leased sites are regularly evaluated, to establish whether management goals could be achieved through other means. Some former management agreement and grazing network sites (amounting to approximately 78ha) are now managed for nature conservation by the landowners, with little or no NPA involvement. The NPA has been able to pass conservation management over to the landowner or to a partner organisation on a further 80ha of sites. Where the NPA has been previously involved, and sites are still managed for nature conservation, sites have been retained in the calculation of the baseline.

### New opportunities

The strength of the NPA's programme is that it offers part-farm support and works extremely flexibly according to land managers' wishes and according to the nature of the site itself. In all of the NPA's work, officers ensure that there is no double-funding, and landowners are encouraged to register with other agri-environment schemes if possible.

2013 sees the transition from the Tir Gofal agri-environment scheme to Glastir. Both are whole-farm schemes. We understand that around 1,700 holdings have so far signed up to Glastir across Wales, which compares to around 3,000 currently in Tir Gofal. It is therefore possible that some land managers currently in Tir Gofal will be interested in working with the NPA as Tir Gofal comes to an end (although, conversely, not all entrants to Glastir will have been in Tir Gofal).

Officers are always considering new ways to influence land management, and are currently looking at payment options which will encourage landowners to allow the NPA to manage areas of land on their behalf (as opposed to the standard approach of paying landowners to manage their own land). Officers are also considering a targeted payment scheme for creation and management of features such as hedgerows, which could make a key contribution to habitat connectivity.

In some instances officers seek to influence land management outside the National Park boundary, in an effort to assist conservation within the Park. The nature of the National Park boundary - a coastal ribbon - means that action taken outside the Park can help achieve conservation goals within it, as well as contributing more widely to Pembrokeshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan goals, and to habitat connectivity across the county.

#### Financial considerations

This interim report has no financial implications at this time.

#### Action

**Members are invited to NOTE the above report.**

*For further information, please contact Michel Regelous on 01646 624827 or Julie Garlick on 01646 624873.*

## Annex 1 - Photos



Above: A typical agriculturally-improved grassland: nutrient-rich, species-poor, grazed intensively, with multiple forage cuts in the bird breeding season.



Above: Restored, organically certified hay-meadows in the NPA's ownership at St David's Airfield.





Ponies grazing coastal slopes.



A management agreement site in the north of the Park.





Penlan in 1997.



Penlan during restoration, showing rapid heathland regeneration and a possible Bronze Age hut circle (inside fence).

## Annex2

### Site selection checklist for new PCNPA conservation management agreement and assistance sites

Site details
Site name/grid reference
Landowner name
Contact name (if different)
Map of potential agreement site (link to workspace)
Site area
PCNPA officer name
Date of visit

Nature conservation interest, risks and potential
Site in or affecting a nature conservation designation? (e.g. could buffer or provide added resilience to designated or significant areas)
<a href="#">Habitats Directive Annex 1 habitats historical presence/presence/potential</a>
<a href="#">Habitats Directive Annex 2 species historical presence/presence/potential</a>
UK/Wales/LBAP habitats/species presence/potential
Habitats/species locally scarce or at risk
Connectivity/in-combination potential (e.g. stepping stone/contiguous area/corridor)
Risks to nature conservation interest without our intervention (e.g. alternative uses, invasive species, hydrological regime)
Expected outcomes (Year 1, Year 2 etc relate to target habitats, species and management results)

Context
In other agri-environment/woodland scheme?
Suitable for/landowner willing to enter national agri-environment scheme?
Watercourses/waterbodies
Other designations (SAMs, historic landscape, parks and gardens, GCR/RIGS, TPO)
Boundary features, veteran trees
Other considerations/constraints (e.g. buried archeology, buildings/ruins)
Brief description of previous management if known
Brief overall description of current state, uses, risks and nature conservation potential

Management options
Description of potential assistance (Year 1, Year 2 etc.)
Options for delivery (e.g. other partners, referral)
Estimated costs (time, materials, monitoring)
Consents required
Exit strategy/continuity of management
Other comments



<b>Recommendations</b>
Officer recommendation
Priority or reserve
Consultations required
Consultations undertaken
Date

<b>Added value</b>
Historic environment significance
Cultural significance
Access/recreation potential (e.g. existing PROW, statutory duty met, opportunities for improved access)
Opportunities for raising awareness
Landscape
Complementary business benefits (e.g. green tourism, local produce)