

JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

A PURPLE PERSPECTIVE
Newsletter of the Lowland Heathland
Lead Co-ordination Network
Issue 3 : February 2008

What is the Lowland Heathland Lead Co-ordination network?

The Lowland Heathland Lead Co-ordination Network (LCN) is responsible for undertaking the 'special functions' of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) in relation to lowland heathlands. It also provides secretariat support for the UK Lowland Heathland Habitat Action Plan steering group. It involves specialist staff from all three country agencies (Countryside Council for Wales, Natural England and Scottish Natural Heritage), the Environment and Heritage Service (Northern Ireland) and the JNCC support unit.

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1. Editorial

Welcome to the third newsletter of the Lowland Heathland Lead Co-ordination Network (LCN), and thank you to all those who have contributed. This is my first issue as the new Lowland Heathland LCN support officer and I hope you will find plenty of interest.

You may have heard that a reorganisation of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is going ahead. A revised UK BAP list of priority habitats and species was approved by the Governments of all four UK administrations and published on 28 August 2007. The new list contains 65 habitats and 1149 species, and supersedes the previous list of 49 habitats and 577 species.

We are now nearing the end of a six-month consultation process to identify some 1-6 key actions needed for each of the priority species; this exercise was due to conclude on 1 February 2008.

It is anticipated that the recommended changes will be implemented during 2008. The main implications of these changes are that UK wide umbrella groups will be established to devise policy and strategies for a group of habitats, which will also include the species that depend on those habitats. Delivery of the agreed targets will be the responsibility of the separate country groups.

At the same time JNCC and the country agencies are taking a fresh look at how all the inter-agency groups (including the lowland heathland LCN) operate. In the short term this will include the adoption of a generic framework for all LCNs, but other, possibly more radical changes are still being discussed for the medium to long term. More on all this in a future issue.

Elsewhere in this newsletter JNCC seeks information for a national surveillance project, CCW summarises two scientific projects, and Isabel Alonso, Lowland Heathland LCN Chair provides a description of the European Heathland conference held in Norway in the summer of 2007.

Suzanne Perry
Lowland Heathland LCN support

1. News update

JNCC budgets are being reduced and the LCN programme is one of the three areas which will shoulder the bulk of the budget reductions. Added to this, JNCC is undertaking a review of how its inter-agency groups work. This review has implications for the way the LCNs will work in future. The Chief Scientists Group and the JNCC Committee will be presented with a discussion document, which will recommend some changes to the way inter-agency work is delivered.

This review has presented an opportunity for the LCNs to consider how their work is delivered. A generic framework document is being developed, its aim being to encourage greater collaboration and proactive working between the habitat LCNs. It is not an

action plan, but provides context for LCN working. This is very much work in progress, but the final paper will form an appendix to the inter-agency working groups review.

The generic framework paper was discussed at some length when the LCN officers and JNCC reps gathered for a meeting in Scotland at the beginning of February. 6 priority projects were proposed which will prompt new collaborative work between LCNs or with other inter-agency groups. Project 'champions' are now developing the rationale and scope for the priority projects. Climate change is considered to be a cross-cutting theme which should be included in the scope of all the projects under consideration. Progress reports will appear in future newsletters.

Heather and Grass Burning Regulations and Code revised in England

The new Heather and Grass Burning Regulations and Code for England were published in August 2007. This will help farmers and landowners who use burning as a land management tool to carry out their activities responsibly and to help protect the environment. Natural England became responsible for encouraging good burning practice in line with the Code, and for administering the new Regulations, when they came into force on 1 October 2007.

The code sets a new industry standard for burning. Breaches of the Regulations could attract fines of up to £1,000 and future burning may be more restricted.

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/planning/farming-wildlife/burning/default.htm>

Similar guidelines are already available for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/11/20194/46113>

<http://www.countryside.wales.gov.uk/fe/master.asp?n1=366&n2=679&n3=149>

http://www.ruralni.gov.uk/index/environment/countryside_management_main/pubs/cmbpress/cmbpress06/heather_burning_season_ends-3.htm

2. Projects and reports

The potential for heathland restoration and re-creation techniques to cause deleterious impacts to the soil and the historic environment: A review

Heathland re-creation or restoration is now being carried out across the UK after decades of neglect. Restoration techniques usually require some ground preparation to optimise the establishment of the characteristic vegetation.

Undertaking such work in inappropriate locations or incorrect soil management could lead to a loss in soil organic matter, degradation of soil structure, loss of carbon, increased erosion risk, off-site water quality impacts and/or damage to archaeological remains.

Some restoration projects have suffered delays as a result of adhering to existing soil protection policies, in other cases the protection of archaeological remains or soil conservation were considered late or not at all in the project.

A report will be produced in the near future which will present draft guidance for nature conservation managers, who may not have technical knowledge of soil and archaeological issues, pointing out the aspects that need to be considered before going ahead with projects in future.

'England's neglected heathlands'

Natural England has published the first survey of its kind in England to analyse the condition of heathlands outside of legally protected sites. The poor condition of lowland heathland across England is putting many endangered species at greater risk of extinction.

The study found that all 104 surveyed sites were in poor condition and did not meet the standards set for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). Even those areas receiving payments for conservation management through agri-environment schemes were not up to the grade, although many did show signs of recovery.

104 sites across England were surveyed as part of this research project. Lowland heathland is a priority habitat under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan which sets targets to maintain the extent of all existing lowland heathland, improve the management of these sites and encourage the re-establishment of new sites.

A random sample of English non-SSSI lowland heathland stands, both inside and outside agri-environment agreements, was surveyed during 2005 and 2006, to provide baseline information on condition. English Nature, the Rural Development Service (both now part of Natural England), Defra, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) commissioned this survey. A [summary of the report \[PDF, 33Kb\]](#) and the [full report \[PDF, 1.4Mb\]](#) are available.

For further information on the UK's Biodiversity Action Plan, visit www.ukbap.org.uk

Restoration of lowland heathland in Wales

Jones, D. L. et al. (2007) Restoration of Lowland Heathland: Management of *Ulex gallii* on the Llŷn peninsula as part of the Cadw'r Lliw yn Llŷn Project. 2007. CCW Science Report No 791.

The main objective of this study was to determine the effect of burning, soil stripping and mowing on vegetation regeneration and soil quality in two coastal heath habitats chosen as study sites to represent two heathland management situations in Llŷn. The site at Mynydd Tir-y-cwmwd to the south of Llanbedrog has been ungrazed for some considerable period (possibly 20-30 years plus) whilst Trwyn Bychestyn, to the south of Aberdaron, has been heavily grazed by sheep until recent years and now receives light sheep grazing.

Surveys and experiments were carried out on these sites that involved burning, stripping and mowing of the *Ulex gallii*-*Calluna vulgaris* heathland. The effects of these treatments were monitored over a two-year period between 2004 and 2006. At each site, three replicated blocks of each treatment were identified alongside relatively mature blocks which were not burnt, stripped or mown. Within each block, vegetation species diversity and percentage ground cover was assessed in a number of replicated quadrats. In addition, soil samples were taken to assess the size of the soil seed bank and various aspects of soil quality. Soil quality indicators included measurements of available nutrients (P, Ca, K, Na, NO₃⁻, NH₄⁺, dissolved organic nitrogen (DON) amino acids, etc), chemical markers (organic matter, EC, pH, dissolved organic carbon (DOC) etc) and soil physical parameters (moisture content, temperature, water infiltration rate, litter depth etc).

The overall aim of this study was to enable management decisions to be made as to which is the most appropriate strategy in the restoration of dry heath on the Llŷn peninsula, currently dominated by *U. gallii*. From the results of the study, it might be concluded that stripping all the vegetation and litter from the heathland is the most effective way to increase the proportion of ericaceous shrubs compared to *U. gallii*. This treatment had the greatest amount of heather regeneration and the least vigorous re-sprouting of gorse. It also reduced some of the nutrient capital of the soil, counteracting any possible nutrient enrichment that may threaten the heathland community (e.g. anthropogenic N deposition).

A review of National Vegetation Classification survey data in Wales

Sherry, J. (2007). Lowland heathland in Wales - a review and assessment of National Vegetation Classification survey data 1993-2002. CCW Staff Science Report 07/3/1.

The report is a review of our current understanding of the lowland heathland resource in Wales. It focuses on NVC survey work undertaken between 1993 and 2002 as part of the Lowland Heathland Survey and is supplemented by work carried out as part of the Lowland Grassland Survey.

The lowland heathland resource is divided into two main categories:

- 1) Dry and Maritime Heath;
- 2) Humid and Wet Heath.

Six communities are covered in the Dry and Maritime Heath category;

- H8** *Calluna vulgaris*-*Ulex gallii* heath;
- H7** *Calluna vulgaris*-*Scilla verna* heath;
- H12** *Calluna vulgaris*-*Vaccinium myrtillus* heath;
- H10** *Calluna vulgaris*-*Erica cinerea* heath;
- Calcareous Grass Heath;
- Shingle Heath.

Three communities are covered in the Humid and Wet Heath category;

- H4** *Ulex gallii*-*Agrostis curtisii* humid heath;
- M15** *Scirpus cespitosus*-*Erica tetralix* wet heath;
- M16** *Erica tetralix*-*Sphagnum compactum* wet heath.

The distribution of each NVC community and sub-community is mapped and the vegetation is described with reference to the published NVC data. The community and sub-community accounts identify any local or regional floristic features and highlight areas where the vegetation does not correspond well with the published data. In particular the problem of classifying humid and wet heathland in Wales is explored in some detail.

The report identifies gaps in our current knowledge of the lowland heathland resource and draws attention to lowland heathland types which are poorly represented in the existing network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest in Wales.

3. Request for information

Heathland species autecology: searching for information

Where do you find all the information on the needs of those species strongly associated with heathlands? Whilst Google will supply pages of apparently useful information if you search on a species like nightjar, adder, silver-spotted skipper, etc., this only shows some of the data that exists. Much more is likely to exist in unpublished papers, reports and studies. The need for this information to be made more widely available is more pressing than ever given the revisions to the UK BAP list of priority species, and the need to integrate the requirements of such species more closely with action for their particular habitat. Furthermore, managers of heathland sites and heathland advisors in the country conservation agencies (and elsewhere) would like to have some idea of the quality and reliability of the information.

To this end, the lowland heathland LCN is establishing a database of studies on species strongly associated with lowland heathland, and would be pleased to hear of any relevant studies - particularly those unlikely to be accessible via web searches.

If you are able to help, please send the basic information on any studies to the lowland heathland LCN via Suzanne Perry (Suzanne.perry@naturalengland.org.uk) in the following format:

Scientific name of species

Date of report/ study

Brief summary of work - what studied, locations, methods, summary outcomes.

Contact details to access the information, including any weblinks.

4. UK Favourable Conservation Status Report

Article 17 report to Europe (Favourable Conservation Status)

Under Article 17 of the EC Habitats and Species Directive, all EU member states have to report at 6 yearly intervals on their implementation of the Directive. A significant part of this work is reporting on the conservation status of those species and habitats

specifically protected under the Directive (listed under Annexes II, IV and V, and Annex I respectively). The second such report for the UK since the inception of the Directive was produced by the UK in early 2008, and should be available to view from the JNCC website by the end of March 2008.

Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) of a habitat is defined in Article 1(e) of the Directive as when:

- i. Its natural range and areas it covers within that range are stable or increasing, and;
- ii. The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and
- iii. The conservation status of its typical species is favourable as defined in Article 1(i).

The format for the reports is set out by the EC. When reporting on habitats, the following 4 parameters are used, relative to their known or inferred status in 1994:

- **Range** (defined by the outer limits of the extent of occurrence of the habitat; includes assessment of trend in range since 1994);
- **Extent** (includes assessment of trend in area since 1994);
- **Specific structure and functions** (assessed based on the main pressures affecting that habitat, information on the habitat condition and the status of any typical species associated with the habitat);
- **Future prospects** (for all the above parameters).

Each parameter can be assessed as favourable; unfavourable-inadequate; or unfavourable-bad. Where the parameter is judged to be in one of the two unfavourable categories, a trend for each parameter can also be given, either improving or deteriorating. The overall status of the habitat or species is taken as the worst of any of these judgements

Although this is the second such report by the UK, it is the first to include such assessments. It required extensive data gathering by JNCC staff together with the country agencies, non-governmental organisations and many others. The results from the past 6 years of Common Standards Monitoring (CSM) on the UK network of protected sites have been a key component of the habitat reports. However, the conservation status assessments are for the entire resource and so information from outside the protected sites network has also been used, although this is often sparse.

The UK report to Europe on all 167 Habitats Directive 'features' (78 habitats, 89 species) is still being finalised so the assessments given below - for the 4 heathland types listed on Annex II of the Directive which occur in the UK - should be regarded as provisional.

Habitats H4030 and H4010 are much more widespread in the UK uplands, whilst H4020 and H4040 are only known from England. The full UK definitions for each habitat type are available from: http://www.jncc.gov.uk/Publications/JNCC312/UK_habitat_list.asp:

EC Annex I type	Parameter			
	Range	Area	Specific structure and function	Overall conclusion
H4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i>	(FV) - Favourable	(FV) - Favourable	(U2-) - Bad and deteriorating	(U2+) - Bad but improving
H4020 Temperate Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i>	(FV) - Favourable	(U1) - Inadequate	(U2+) - Bad but improving	(XX) - Unknown
H4030 European dry heaths	(FV) - Favourable	(FV) - Favourable	(U2-) - Bad and deteriorating	(U2+) - Bad but improving
H4040 Dry Atlantic coastal heaths with <i>Erica vagans</i>	(FV) - Favourable	(FV) - Favourable	(FV) - Favourable	(FV) - Favourable

This list will be finalised during 2008 and the UK report and assessments should then be available through the JNCC website.

For further information on the Article 17 report please contact james.williams@jncc.gov.uk.

Towards a surveillance strategy for the UK?

Two years ago JNCC produced a paper which outlined the state of UK biodiversity surveillance. As a result, the systematic surveillance of UK terrestrial habitats was identified as a priority for enhancement. Reviews of past surveillance activity for particular habitats, including the reporting required for the Habitats Directive mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter, have shown that current information is inadequate for obtaining any reliable picture of stock and change of habitats for all but the coarsest levels of discrimination. Furthermore, whilst the demand for information from surveillance to support both UK biodiversity policy and action is high and increasing, the resources available for surveillance are not.

To assist the process of addressing these needs JNCC is currently developing a surveillance strategy proposal. Ultimately, the aim of this work is to construct a cohesive framework of biodiversity surveillance and monitoring across the UK, which will provide the evidence base required to demonstrate delivery on strategic objectives for biodiversity conservation.

The strategy identifies 3 objectives for biodiversity surveillance:

- **Measuring the overall goals set for biodiversity in the UK and country strategies**

The country strategies, supported by '*Conserving Biodiversity - the UK Approach 2007*' are aiming to achieve their vision of biodiversity as part of healthy, functioning ecosystems, and they set the immediate cross cutting goal of halting biodiversity loss. The first objective of this strategy is that surveillance should provide enough evidence on status of and trends in biodiversity to allow these top level visions and goals to be assessed.

- **Detecting the impacts of pressures on biodiversity through changes in status, to help set measures and strategies for action**

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment identified the key pressures that drive the global decline in biodiversity: namely habitat transformation, pollution, over exploitation and climate change. New drivers for these pressures will emerge as we change the way we use the environment through our response to climate change, fuel and food security and changes in our economy. Surveillance should help detect decline in the status of biodiversity, contribute to understanding the reasons, and contribute to predicting future vulnerabilities. Hence the second objective of this strategy is to provide the evidence to help develop effective remedial measures and strategies to address the pressures and their main drivers.

- **Assessing the status of the wide range of species and habitats covered by the sum of the policy, legislative and international conservation commitments**

Legislative and policy commitments operate at international scales: e.g.: Convention on Migratory Species, Convention on Biodiversity; at European scales e.g.: Habitats and Birds Directives; and within the UK and its countries e.g.: Wildlife and Countryside Act, UK and country biodiversity strategies. Many of these instruments identify species and habitats of concern, and the sum of the commitments is a substantial list of declining or vulnerable habitats and species. The third objective of this strategy is that surveillance should provide a cost effective means of measuring the status and trends of these 'priority' species and habitats.

Initially JNCC are putting together a framework of existing species and habitat surveillance schemes. This information will help in identifying modifications required to cover gaps in existing coverage, and to get a better balance of surveillance effort across the 3 objectives identified in the strategy.

For lowland heathlands and other terrestrial habitats JNCC will be consulting widely over forthcoming months to ensure we have all the relevant information on existing surveillance effort. We are also suggesting a framework involving integration of satellite and aerial remote sensing; sample surveys of habitat condition; and relevant species trends for informing on habitat status/condition to assist in addressing the current deficiencies. JNCC are currently looking at what might be achievable for a variety of habitats from different forms of remote sensing by engaging with other

initiatives such as the forthcoming new Land Cover Map, as well as examining other work relevant to different components of this framework.

For any further information on JNCCs strategic surveillance work please contact mark.crick@jncc.gov.uk.

5. BAP refreshment

The need to refresh and reinvigorate the BAP process has been discussed during the last couple of years at various levels, even ministers have been involved. The main drivers for the change of the HAP delivery have been:

- i. recognising the increased role of country strategies;
- ii. linking species to habitats in a single set of "plans" and
- iii. the need to clarify relations among groups involved in BAP at national, regional and local level and to improve the communications among them.

The Lowland Heathland HAP group has been actively involved as an example of how the process is working in practice.

It is acknowledged that in many aspects the BAP process has worked well: by raising awareness and bringing partners together leading to improved delivery; by protecting BAP habitats/species wherever they occur, not just in statutory sites; by helping funders (eg SITA Trust, Heritage Lottery Fund) to target resources and lever in funding; aiming to restore, not just conserve. However, there are also weaknesses in the current process including the lack of an ecosystem approach; the lack of clarity regarding roles, responsibilities and accountability; and sometimes poor communication at all levels.

A meeting of a sub-group of the LH HAP took place on the 17th December 2007 primarily to discuss two main challenges: integrating habitat and species conservation and linking UK-National-Regional-Local delivery into a chain of activity.

The precise structures for BAP administration in England are not yet finalised. There are likely to be a series of broad "biotope" groups which oversee action relating to habitats and species. In addition there are likely to be lead partner "roles" for species/species groups although it is undecided how this might function. The landscape scale approach still needs to be captured more clearly at regional and local level, almost certainly through a map based approach.

The group identified a series of requirements for lowland heathland conservation, of which the following were considered a high priority:

- **UK Strategic Statement - Country Strategies:** A clear statement of the country role is required if we are to disentangle the work required at International, Country, Regional and Local levels and set up a clear process and the responsibilities of groups, agencies, etc.

- **Revised Vision / Strategic Statement for Heathlands:** The heathland vision developed by the LH HAP group in 2004 needs to be updated to take fuller account of those species which use heathlands. We also need to feed into local visions for heathlands and find ways of reflecting geographical range and variation, and in turn how this is reflected in local landscape character.
- **Fund raising:** Recognising that traditional resources are decreasing, a central point should be available within the BAP administration to advise the BAP community about what funding opportunities are available, develop these opportunities and assist with writing funding applications. The most attractive projects for funding will be those able to identify how they relate to the larger goals and drivers at country, UK and International levels.
- **Integrated habitat and species conservation:** The plan to integrate species and habitat conservation needs to embrace some ecological realities: relatively few plants and animals are strictly heathland species, but many use the variety of "sub-habitats" (e.g. scrub, seasonal pools) that heathland provides or exploit the wider habitat mosaics. However, many species do not identify closely to any specific habitat. In practice, the integration of habitat and species will mainly be carried out at a local level with a landscape scale approach. Guidance about habitat management, which is more sensitive to species conservation requirements, is needed - including advice about landscapes scale conservation action. In targeting habitat creation needs it will be important to reflect the species conservation requirements.
- **Data systems:** Data systems need to match the BAP needs. We need to be able to monitor change in heathland status (both extent and condition). Updating of the heathland inventory should be a first step. Regional data is required, given the pivotal role of Regional Spatial Strategies along with the fact that planning of agri-environment scheme priorities currently takes place at Regional scale. There is also a need to report on International targets (e.g. favourable conservation status) and how these are being met.
- **Policy and Legislation:** Currently HAP groups have limited options to influence policy and legislation. Given that many policies will impact on a range of habitats and species, the BAP community should work closer over policy issues. A mechanism for catalysing such collaboration is required, as well as a forum to which recommendations relating to policy can be taken. Although many policy and domestic legislation issues will be country specific, there is a need for UK collaboration over EU and International legislation, as well as a benefit from sharing of experience ideas and resources.

Isabel Alonso
Natural England

6. News from UK Lowland Heathland HAP Group

New Forest Meeting

In October the UK Lowland HAP Steering Group meeting was kindly hosted by the Forestry Commission at Lyndhurst in the New Forest. On the first afternoon a field trip was made to Pig Bush and Rowbarrow near Lyndhurst to look at management work undertaken by FC. Those of us not well acquainted with the New Forest were surprised by the extent of open heathland under the Commission's care. The group were shown burning management undertaken by the Commission and discussed the impact of the burning programme on the floristic composition of the vegetation and on key animal species. Where vegetation had been purposely left unburnt for species conservation (i.e. herps) the heathland was developing a nice uneven-aged structure which provided a contrasting habitat to that of the managed heath. The group also looked at a wetland restoration project where the Commission had significantly reduced the flow of water on an area of previously drained mire through the use of dams, as a result of which the mire vegetation is recovering. Despite the success of the project the Commission had been unable to proceed with work downstream because of concerns about the impact of the work on the grazing quality of adjacent "lawns".

The UK Lowland Heathland HAP meeting was held on the second day at the Forestry Commission's office in Lyndhurst. Key agenda items were the proposed linkage of Species Action Plans and Habitat Action Plans in the revised BAP (species signposting), Ecosystems Services and the future of the UK BAP.

The habitat-species linkage sub-group, established at the previous UK HAP meeting, reported on the work they had been carrying out on a selection of heathland species. The group found that species habitat relationships are complex so that the concept of "heathland species" is a somewhat imprecise way of describing the ecology of species which often use a variety of habitats. Some priority species found on heathlands can be better understood if the micro features they require are considered (e.g. bare ground, seasonal pools, scrub). Heathland fragmentation is clearly another important ecological issue - many heathland species are poor dispersers, and small fragments of heath cannot support long term all the micro features their current species may require. The overall feeling was that the issue required careful consideration by UK BAP and that if the proposal to link habitats and species is taken forward there needs to be clear guidance and better links between species specialists and the habitat groups to ensure species needs are not overlooked.

The evaluation of ecosystems services is increasingly being viewed by government and others as a means by which the environment can be valued against other interests. There is a concern that the ecosystem services agenda could lead to a devaluing of heathland as a conservation priority, despite the exceptional international importance of UK heathlands. This is particularly a problem if the focus is on high profile issues such as carbon sequestration and flood amelioration rather than on the "value" of biodiversity per se. The group felt that capturing the biodiversity, cultural and landscape value of heathlands is unlikely to be amenable to simple economic analysis and a methodologically flawed analysis could lead to inappropriate results. It was agreed that the group would communicate these concerns to Defra.

The future of the UK BAP and how it relates to the devolved Country Groups, National HAP and SAP Steering groups and ultimately the LBAPs is currently under discussion. Over the years the Lowland Heathland Steering Group has been very active in trying to affect change to the BAP process. More than ten years after BAP was initiated, the roles and remits of different parts of the UK BAP process, and how they interact with each other is unclear. Much of the BAP delivery is carried out at grassroots level by the LBAPs. Communication and exchange of information between this level and the UK BAP, Country Groups and HAP and SAP Groups is often poor and the LBAP officers find it difficult to see how they fit into the "bigger picture". Similarly there appears to be no clear way for the UK HAP and SAP Steering Groups to feed recommendations into high level policy decision-making processes (e.g. agri-environment schemes) or to influence the BAP research programme. Following a brief discussion at this meeting it was agreed to hold a workshop in December 2007 to determine the groups input to the current debate. The aims of the workshop, identified in a paper by Dr Tony Gent from the Herpetological Conservation Trust, were to:

- Identify the role and remit of the Lowland Heathland HAP Steering Group, and to suggest a 'generic role' for other such SGs
- Suggest roles for other existing elements of the BAP structures (e.g. Species Groups, Local BAP structures, UK SC) and other potential structures necessary for achieving Heathland HAP objectives, and suggesting general conclusions that could come from this.
- Provide suggestions for more effective BAP delivery

In doing this, the workshop needed to assess what outputs the Lowland Heathland Steering Group should produce, what inputs are needed from others in order for the Group to do this work and what framework is required to ensure the effective flow of information, policy recommendations, management advice etc. between different levels of the BAP process. This was obviously a difficult task and there were lengthy discussions covering a whole range of BAP issues. The outcomes of the workshop are currently being compiled and will be communicated to the relevant individuals in JNCC and the Country Agencies. Any further development will be reported in subsequent Newsletters. The Lowland Heathland HAP Steering Group and Lead Co-ordination Network would be pleased to receive any suggestions as to any improvements that can be made to improve the implementation of Lowland Heathland Habitat Action Plans.

Jan Sherry
CCW

7. 10th European Heathland Workshop

24th June- 1st July 2007 Central to Northern Norway

In 1998 the European Heathland Network visited the southern Norwegian heathlands. In 2007, 75 heathland enthusiasts from nine European countries met again in Norway to discuss "Threats, management and conservation of European heathlands". Attendees

included academics, policy makers, site managers, representatives from local authorities, VCOs, other European networks (eg European Fire in Nature Conservation) and education and interpretation centres.

Norway is not an EU member and as their heathlands are not protected by the Habitats Directive and land use changes, they are being lost through abandonment. Journalists were also among the participants because the Norwegian hosts are interested in promoting and raising awareness about their heathlands.

The conference included two full days of plenary sessions. The range of presentations and posters was diverse and included:

- ecological issues in relation with the habitat and some characteristic species;
- historical perspectives, both from archaeological and pollen studies;
- developing sustainable local industries in cultural landscapes such as heaths;
- threats from atmospheric deposition of nitrogen, invasive species or fragmentation;
- restoration techniques and their impacts; grazing management.

The site visits were arranged along the Norwegian coast, from Trondheim to the Lofoten Islands, north of the Arctic circle. We travelled more than 900 km, most of them on boat to visit a number of islands with a significant cover of heathland and a diverse history. The use of Norwegian coastal heaths (grazing, turf cutting, plant gathering) was traditionally complemented with fishing and summer farms but such uses are now being abandoned.

We visited working farms; abandoned heathland areas; sites with military history. Some of these sites are now actively managed, mostly by sheep grazing, after some years without any management. In Vega we visited a "calcareous rich heath" with over 40 plant species per meter sq. This is a UNESCO World Heritage site because of the traditional management of the eider ducks and the heathlands. The Lofoten Islands, characterised by their glacial landscape, mountains, sheltered inlets and seashores have a past linked to farming, and specially cod fishing. Here, again, archaeological findings have been an important part of understanding the heaths and their history.

We made as much as we could of the midnight sun, and during the long conference days we exchanged research results and ideas, and discussed conservation problems. As usual, some embryonic international projects emerged, as well as proposals to maintain the links in-between meetings, which only take place every other year. Natural England supports the network, among other things, by hosting the European Heathlands webpage.

More information on the conference can be found at www.heathlands2007.uib.no



The EHN members in the Lofoten islands



Tarva coastal heathlands



Kalvøya Heaths



Replica stone age tools found in Borgan Island



Calcareous rich heath in Vega

Isabel Alonso
Natural England

8. Forthcoming meetings

1 April 2008: Lowland Heathland HAP group meeting. Peterborough.

2 April 2008: Lowland Heathland LCN group meeting, Peterborough

9. LCN contacts

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