



FARMLAND BIODIVERSITY GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE

23 OCTOBER 2006

Terms of Reference Farmland Biodiversity Group

Need for a Farmland Group

Thirty seven Northern Ireland Habitat Action Plans (HAPs) have been published for priority habitats requiring conservation action within the region. They are an integral part of the government's commitment to the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Strategy and establish challenging targets. Government cannot deliver this commitment alone, hence it is recognised there is a need for partnership with a range of stakeholders including the industry and environmental NGOs.

The Farmland Group is intended to meet this need and will adopt the successful model already established by 4 other Biodiversity Groups covering habitats ranging from woodland to marine.

Environmental Remit

The following 9 HAPs will be the responsibility of the Farmland Group:-

- Hedgerows
- Cereal field margins
- Lowland meadows
- Upland hay meadows
- Lowland calcareous grassland
- Lowland dry acid grassland
- Purple moor-grass and rush pastures
- Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh
- Limestone pavements

Full detail on each is given on the Department of the Environment's Environment and Heritage Service website

http://www.ehsni.gov.uk/natural/biodiversity/hap_ni.shtml

Where appropriate a link will be made to relevant Species Action Plans (SAPs), such as Irish Hare, corncrake, skylark etc.

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Objectives of the Group

The overarching objective is the delivery of the NI Biodiversity Strategy targets as set by published HAPs for farmed land. Each HAP seeks to maintain, enhance and increase each habitat type.

The group will therefore:-

- Provide a forum for government and stakeholders, facilitating discussion/negotiation on topics of common interest.
- Integrate farmland HAPs into a single coherent work programme. Associated Species Action Plan (SAP) targets will also be included as appropriate.
 - i. Develop SMART targets for the work programme. These will be regularly reviewed and updated.
 - ii. Allocate tasks associated with HAP/SAP delivery appropriately.
- Co-ordinate all the following activities for farmland HAPs
 - i. Best practice development.
 - ii. Monitoring and evaluation.
 - iii. Communication development.
 - advice and guidance to government and landowners.
 - presentation of achievements.
 - education and knowledge sharing.
 - liaison with UK and ROI.
- Identify and support appropriate research.

Administration

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's (DARD) Environmental Policy Branch will chair and provide secretariat services for the Farmland Biodiversity Group. Appropriate terms of reference will be agreed from the outset but can be amended as the group sees fit.

Each representative will be expected to meet their own costs of membership. It is envisaged that the Group will meet biannually and field trips will be arranged as appropriate.

Structure

Membership is drawn from the following organisations but may be expanded as the group sees fit.

DARD – Environmental Policy Branch

DARD – Countryside Management Branch

DOE, EHS – Natural Heritage

Agri-Food and Business Institute

UFU

NIAPA

FWAG

WWF

**Terms of Reference
Farmland Biodiversity Group**

UWT
NT
RSPB
NI Biodiversity Group
QUB, Quercus

DRAFT