

Pori Natur a Threftadaeth Ltd. (PONT) Anglesey Grazing Animals Partnership (AGAP) Case Study

Key Points

- AGAP is a strategic approach to grazing management on wildlife-rich sites but has had much wider landscape-scale impacts across Anglesey.
- Within 3 years the project has exceed original targets for site management (28 sites), engagement of landowners/graziers (35 individuals/organisations) and the promotion of sustainable grazing (512 ha under improved grazing management).
- The project has developed a branding for wildlife friendly produce and has established an active marketing group with 27 farmers across Anglesey.
- Farmers have received training in butchery and marketing to help them diversify and make their farm businesses more sustainable.
- A trailer for transporting produce has been purchased and the need for a chilled hanging unit is currently being addressed. These will help in the marketing and selling of branded produce.
- AGAP has developed training and promotional material and has held or attended more than 20 events to highlight the need for appropriate grazing of wildlife habitats.
- AGAP and PONT have drawn down more than £120,000 for the project and have recently secured more than £180,000 for a further 3 years work.
- The project is an example of working at an ecosystem level and links to the Welsh Government's Natural Environment Framework and the Food Strategy for Wales.



1. What is AGAP?

The Anglesey Grazing Animals Partnership (AGAP) is a local grazing scheme working to link land of wildlife and conservation interest with graziers and farmers who can supply suitable grazing stock for the benefit of the wildlife, the landscape and the cultural heritage of Ynys Môn.

Established in 2008, AGAP has introduced and supported grazing on 28 sites across Anglesey totaling over 500 hectares. The project helps farmers, organisations and landowners to establish sustainable grazing on wildlife-rich sites on Anglesey.

Produce from wildlife-rich sites is sold under the AGAP quality standard into local markets and in London. Farmers and producers are supported through the AGAP marketing scheme from field to plate. Produce is island born and bred, grazed to benefit wildlife, fed locally sourced feed and prepared for sale on the island.

1. How does AGAP Operate?

Nineteen sites covering approximately 300 hectares were targeted for enhanced grazing management at the start of the project in 2008. The original list included sites of international (SAC and SPA), national (SSSI) and local (non-designated Wildlife Sites) importance covering a range of priority habitats such as dry, wet and maritime heath, hay meadow, maritime grassland, marsh and fen.

Over the last 3 years AGAP has operated by assisting site owners and graziers through the provision of grant funding for capital work, advice on livestock and grazing regimes, a livestock leasing scheme and a marketing initiative to promote the sale of products from wildlife sites. Additionally, on designated sites, AGAP has facilitated the uptake of Section 15 Management Agreements with CCW to support positive conservation management.

At each site the AGAP Project Officer has carefully matched the grazing regime and livestock type to the needs of specific habitats and species to maximize biodiversity benefit. The use of rare and traditional breeds has been encouraged as these hardy, sure-footed animals can thrive on unimproved land. This has the dual benefit of improving the land for wildlife whilst preserving these rare and vulnerable breeds.

Throughout the project AGAP has provided advice and support to landowners with land holdings outside the original site list and, through the marketing schemes, has worked with farmer across Anglesey.

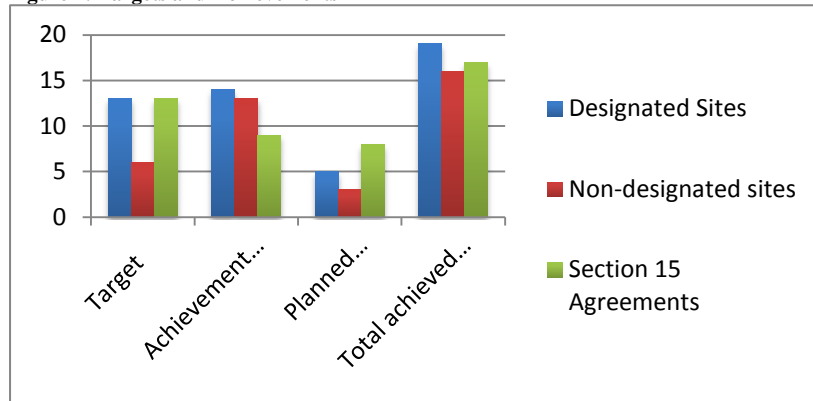
2. AGAP's Achievements

3.1 Sites, Habitats and Species



Figure 1 below shows the original project targets, the achievements of the project from 2008 to June 2011 and planned work between June and September 2011. The original targets of up to 19 sites and 300 hectares have been exceeded with grazing enhancement on 28 sites covering over 500 hectares. It is envisaged that the target for Section 15 Agreements will be met and exceeded by September 2011.

Figure 1: Targets and Achievements



Heathland and wetlands have been a major focus for the work of AGAP guided by the Anglesey Heathland Strategy and developing vision for wetlands on the island. Enhanced grazing management has been delivered on 15 heathland sites and 7 wetland sites including 2 fens, and 5 mires/marshy grasslands. Priority BAP species which have benefitted from the work include lesser butterfly orchid, chough, silver studded-blue butterfly and three-lobed water-crowfoot.

Work on heathland and wetland sites has included, improving infrastructure such as fencing and site access to aid the management of livestock, vegetation management such as heather cutting and scrub clearance and improved signage and rights of way work particularly on the coast. Novel solutions to challenging problems have been developed such as the grazing scheme on South Stack, the only close-shepherded sheep flock in Wales. Stock leasing of Carneddau ponies, Dexter cattle and Hebridean sheep by AGAP/PONT has greatly increased the ability of landowners and graziers to manage difficult sites.



3.2 Working with the Farming Community

Reduced grazing and even abandonment of wildlife-rich habitats is recognised as a significant problem in much of lowland Wales. Management of these habitats will only become sustainable in the long-term if it can be shown to contribute to the local farming economy. It is essential therefore to work with the agricultural community to maximize the benefits of managing wildlife habitat for landowners and graziers. Throughout the project AGAP has worked closely with local farmers and farming unions to establish close links through site work, training and marketing.

Key achievements are:

- Thirty-five graziers, farmers and landowners have agreed to be included on the AGAP grazing database, all of whom have been visited, worked with or spoken to at events. As a result of this contact it is estimated that 1,000 hectares of land has benefited from increased understanding of grazing management for wildlife' this figure is additional to the 500 hectares managed directly as a result of the project.

- As part of the Marketing Strategy a brand has been developed under which produce including red meat, (lamb, mutton and beef) honey, hay, wool and game is marketed. Butchers at Valley and Holyhead are currently working closely with AGAP to market branded red meat The wildlife friendly farming criteria, which have been developed for the brand, are being accepted by similar groups throughout Wales. A unified approach could have a significant benefit in promoting Wildlife Friendly Produce to farmers and the general public.



- A marketing group has been established with 27 members. The group has a constitution and a managing committee as well as a standards group, consisting of CCW representatives, grassland specialist, a farmer, meat trade representative and Menter Môn. During 2011 the marketing group members have started selling meat through a box scheme and are looking into value added produce.

- Coleg Penraig Food Technology Centre has provided training to farmers in marketing, butchery and food hygiene, which will improve the farmer's ability to diversify and improve sustainability.



- A trailer for carcass and produce deliveries, funded by the Axis 4 rural development plan, has been purchased through Menter Môn. AGAP is currently working with Menter Môn and Agrisgôp to purchase a chilled storage unit for hanging beef and lamb. It is hoped that two part time jobs through the marketing group (butcher and marketing coordinator/ administrator.) will be supported once the unit is operational.



- AGAP and PONT have developed a close shepherding grazing training module, which has been accepted by LANTRA the land-based training industry education

body. Other training hosted included two stock lookers courses and a FWAG demonstration day.

3.3 Public Engagement and Awareness Raising

AGAP has held or participated in a number of events to promote and demonstrate sustainable grazing for wildlife, these include:

- Sponsorship of the Welsh Black Class at the winter and summer Anglesey Shows annually since 2008
- An event to consult the public on conservation grazing at Holyhead
- A shearing event held at RSPB South Stack
- Talk and display for Anglesey Slow Food Group
- Springwatch events at RSPB South Stack in 2010 and 2011
- Presentation at PONT marketing event
- Liaison with various conservation and community groups (Gwynedd Bird Group, NWWT, WI, YFC etc.)



4. Funding

PONT/AGAP have been successful at drawing-down funding for sites work, marketing and training from a range of sources:

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation Initial Funding	£99,350
Sustainable Development Fund	£45,000
Environment Agency	£ 5,000
WAG/WBP Biodiversity Grant	£ 7,900
Environment Wales Biodiversity grant funding 2 projects	£19,592
WAG Mentor a Busnes Grant	£2,500
Agrisgôp	£900
Enhancement of Grassland Grant (CCW)	£4,100

The project has also facilitated the signing of Section 15 Management Agreements with CCW covering £74,000 of site works and management payments.

PONT has secured a further £173,538 for a second phase AGAP project which is proposed to run until 2014.

3. Grazing Schemes and the Natural Environment Framework

Lowland Wales is a pastoral landscape shaped by centuries of agricultural management. Whilst much of this landscape has now been improved for intensive agricultural production there remain significant areas of semi-natural habitat rich in wildlife. These areas are important for providing supporting services such as pollination and nutrient cycling and regulating services such as water management and the storage of carbon in peat and organo-mineral soils. The management of semi-natural habitats is therefore crucial for ensuring the long-term health of lowland ecosystems and grazing is a key element of this management. AGAP has shown that grazing needs to be tackled at a strategic level, linking designated and undesignated sites across the landscape thereby improving connectivity both from the wildlife perspective but also from an agricultural perspective by engaging farmers and graziers in joint initiatives and encouraging the sharing of best practice. The impact of AGAP is seen well beyond the boundaries of individual sites and has far-reaching benefits to a range of ecosystem services including food production, public access and biodiversity.

Additionally the approach taken by AGAP has shown that sustainable management of wildlife habitats can have added benefits to the local economy through marketing and branding of produce. It also has wider reaching community benefits by fostering greater cooperation and understanding between farmers, local retailers and consumers.

The AGAP project contributes to the Welsh Government's Natural Environment Framework "*a Living Wales*" by demonstrating an ecosystem approach to tackling key factors i.e. lack of grazing, at a strategic level. It also has strong links to the Welsh Government Food Strategy "*Food for Wales, Food from Wales*" which emphasises the development of sustainable food chains that have ecological efficiency at their heart and contributes to the strategy's aim of producing stronger Welsh branding.

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