

AGRI-ENVIRONMENT SCHEMES

ENVIRONMENTAL AND ACCESS BENEFITS OF TIR GOFAL

1. This paper has been prepared in response to a request by the Committee for a report on the effectiveness of the environmental and access provisions of Tir Gofal. It also reports on progress on the future development of agri-environment schemes in Wales in the context of the CAP Mid Term Review.

Background

2. Tir Gofal opened in May 1999 and is run on behalf of the Assembly by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW). Tir Gofal's main aim is to encourage farmers to farm in a more sustainable and environmentally friendly way. Its objectives are:

- improve, restore and create wildlife habitats;
- protect and restore characteristic rural landscapes;
- protect and conserve historic and archaeological features;
- provide for public access to the countryside.

3. Tir Gofal is widely regarded as one of the best agri-environment schemes in the EU. Its major benefits are that it is a whole farm, whole country scheme not restricted to one sector of the farming community or to specific geographical areas. Significantly, the prescriptions on which Tir Gofal scheme are structured around UK BAP priority habitats.

4. Since its inception, 3400 farmers or landowners have applied to join Tir Gofal. As of May 2002, 815 agreements are in place representing just under 3% of the agricultural holdings in Wales. A further 185 are in the process of negotiation. CCW aim to have the 1100 applications currently being processed cleared by December 2003. If the majority of these applications become agreements 7.5% of holdings in Wales will be participants in the scheme.

Environmental Benefits Delivered to Date

5. Tir Gofal agreements now protect 4,480 hectares of semi natural broad-leaved woodland, 11,126 hectares of upland, coastal and lowland heath and 12,799 hectares of unimproved grassland. Over 16,000 hectares of open access is under agreement, 882 kilometres of public rights of way are being maintained and nearly 400 hectares of new broad-leaved woodland have been planted. Over 800 kilometres of hedgerow have been or are being restored as are 167 kilometres of stone wall, slate fences and earth banks. In addition, 2005 historic points are protected by Tir Gofal agreements. In total 77,000 hectares of farmland in Wales are managed under Tir Gofal agreements.

6. A spreadsheet showing detail of outputs by Tir Gofal prescription is at **Annex A**.

7. From the forgoing, it is clear that Tir Gofal has made significant improvements to the farmed

environment in Wales. As more farms join the scheme cumulative effects of nearby or adjoining farms of participating in Tir Gofal will become more apparent. This is particularly important in the case of bird species, small mammals and insects such as marsh fritillary. One of the measures being introduced following last year's stocktake is a system to make it easier for groups of farmers to submit a group applications. This too, should help develop the wider scale environmental positive deliveries of the scheme.

Ecological Benefits

8. At this stage in the life of an agri-environmental scheme it is not possible give a detailed report of its environmental effectiveness from a strict ecological viewpoint. Detailed ecological monitoring of farms in Tir Gofal has commenced but changes at this level take time to show through. Reversion from improved grassland towards a more traditional hay meadow type of grassland, can take easily take ten years. Similarly, bird populations take time to re-establish themselves. However, baseline samples of habitats on farms who have joined the scheme are being collected; baselines for new farms joining the scheme will be collected shortly after their agreement commences. The monitoring, which will be undertaken by qualified ecologists, will be quadrat based botanical surveys with revisits after three years. Over time, this will enable a picture to be built up of the effectiveness of Tir Gofal at a fairly detailed level. As the scheme develops and more farms enter the scheme, wider scale surveys of, for example, bird or small mammal populations may be undertaken.

Socio-economic Benefits

9. CCW are intending to analyse expenditure profiles in order to estimate the socio-economic benefits of Tir Gofal. This work will be undertaken in house; the results are expected to be available in the Autumn.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRI-ENVIRONMENT SCHEMES IN WALES

10. In February, an Agri-Environment Working Group, one of three CAP Reform working groups established as part of the *Farming for the Future* action plan met for the first time. The Terms of Reference of the Group were:

To make recommendations to the CAP Mid Term Review Steering Group on appropriate arrangements for agri-environmental payments in Wales following CAP reform, having regard in particular to:

- the potential for introducing an environmental element to future payments under Pillar 1;
- the basis for agri-environmental payments under Pillar 2 - in particular, whether income forgone remains an appropriate basis for the calculation;
- the extent to which agri-environmental payments under Pillar 2 should be redesigned to reduce the extent to which they are perceived as "elitist" and unavailable to a significant proportion of farmers;
- the future role of Tir Gofal, as amended following the stocktake and subject to any further amendments which may be necessary;
- the compatibility of the Organic Farming Scheme with proposals for new arrangements;

- the role which part-farm agri-environmental schemes might play in the future.

11. Membership is widely drawn; those represented include the Farming Unions, the CLBA, the Soil Association, Organic Centre Wales, Wales Wildlife Link, the Young Farmers Clubs, CCW, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission and the National Parks.

12. The group has met on three occasions; the following is a summary of the main issues discussed and represents the Group's developing thinking:

- an integrated, tiered approach providing an entry-level environmental scheme with limited payments accessible to all farmers, higher-level schemes with greater environmental obligations, and a highest tier accessible to those proposing collaborative ventures (e.g. on a river catchment basis);
- the entry-level scheme to be based on the main elements of the whole-farm section of Tir Gofal (and provisionally to be titled Tir Gofal Level 1);
- higher-level schemes to be (a) the remainder of Tir Gofal; (b) the Organic Farming Scheme; (c) possibly – subject to more detailed evaluation of costs and benefits – a countryside grants scheme on a part-farm basis (but underpinned by the whole-farm nature of the entry-level scheme);
- appropriate additional rewards for co-operative ventures.

13. Preliminary costings are estimated at £14-£17m a year for the entry-level scheme including additional payments for mixed farming; and around £5.5m for the countryside grants scheme and co-operative ventures. There would also be additional administrative costs of perhaps £0.5m per annum, though these would be kept to a minimum in the design of the entry-level scheme, which would be based on existing records and would not involve expensive project officer visits. It is anticipated that such a scheme could only be funded from an increase in the rate of modulation of direct subsidy receipts, assuming that this were to be proposed and accepted.

14. There is clearly a lot more work to be done on the scheme including more modelling on the impact on farmers, which varies substantially depending on the assumptions made on losses from the modulation process and the extent of gains through the entry-level scheme.

Action

15. The Committee is invited to note the paper.

ANNEX 1

Prescription Code	Description	Area SUM
10A	SEMI-IMPROVED GRASSLAND - Haymeadow	1253.70
10B	SEMI-IMPROVED GRASSLAND - Grazed	7488.63
11	MARSHY GRASSLAND	3998.24

12A	BLANKET BOG	3367.76
12B	LOWLAND RAISED BOG	94.52
13	REEDBEDS, SWAMPS AND FENS	2312.01
14(10A)	COASTAL GRAZING MARSH AND FLOODPLAIN GRASSLAND - Semi- improved Grass Haymeadow	8.25
14(10B)	COASTAL GRAZING MARSH AND FLOODPLAIN GRASSLAND - Semi-improved Grass Grazing	122.49
14(11)	COASTAL GRAZING MARSH AND FLOODPLAIN GRASSLAND - Marshy Grassland	80.87
14(13)	COASTAL GRAZING MARSH AND FLOODPLAIN GRASSLAND - Reedbed, Swamp and Fen	5.46
14(15B)	COASTAL GRAZING MARSH AND FLOODPLAIN GRASSLAND -Saltmarsh Breeding Birds	3.30
14(1A)	COASTAL GRAZING MARSH AND FLOODPLAIN GRASSLAND - Woodland Stock Exclusion	9.15
14(1C)	COASTAL GRAZING MARSH AND FLOODPLAIN GRASSLAND - Woodland Existing Grazing	.41
14(2)	COASTAL GRAZING MARSH AND FLOODPLAIN GRASSLAND - Scrub	.74
14(8B)	COASTAL GRAZING MARSH AND FLOODPLAIN GRASSLAND - Neutral Grassland Grazing	47.08
14(A)	COASTAL GRAZING MARSH AND FLOODPLAIN GRASSLAND - Improved Grazing	531.11
15A	SALTMARSH - Short Turf	85.23
15B	SALTMARSH - Breeding Birds	97.20
15C	SALTMARSH - Existing Ungrazed Saltmarsh	5.66
16A	COASTAL CLIFF SLOPE - Grazed	122.25
16B	COASTAL CLIFF SLOPE - Ungrazed	30.71
17	SAND DUNE	15.48
18	HEDGEROW RESTORATION	808213.80
19A	DRY STONE WALL RESTORATION	132984.98
19B	STONE FACED EARTH BANK RESTORATION	9131.70
19C	EARTH BANK RESTORATION	21581.00
19D.1	SLATE FENCE - Resetting	1812.00
19D.2	SLATE FENCE - Erection of a New Fence	260.00
19E	SUPPLEMENT FOR IMPORTING STONE	2082.20
1A	BROAD LEAVED WOODLAND - Stock Exclusion	3003.58
1B	BROAD LEAVED WOODLAND - Lightly Grazed	703.18
1C	BROAD LEAVED WOODLAND - Grazed	774.00
2	SCRUB	405.92

24A	UNSPRAYED CEREAL, RAPE AND LINSEED CROPS - Existing arable land	572.96
24B	UNSPRAYED CEREAL, RAPE AND LINSEED CROPS - Conversion from improved grassland	178.77
25A	RETENTION OF WINTER STUBBLES IN CEREAL, RAPE AND LINSEED CROPS - After a conventionallly grown crop	111.16
25B	RETENTION OF WINTER STUBBLES IN CEREAL, RAPE AND LINSEED CROPS - After an unsprayed crop	521.47
26	SPRING SOWN CEREALS UNDERSOWN WITH GRASSES AND LEGUMES	509.38
27	UNSPRAYED ROOT CROPS FOLLOWED BY WINTER GRAZING	599.33
28	ROUGH GRASS MARGIN ALONGSIDE CEREAL AND ROOT CROPS	14.00
29	UNCROPPED FALLOW MARGINS ALONGSIDE ARABLE AND ROOT CROPS	20.67
30	ESTABLISHMENT OF WILDLIFE COVER CROPS	72.27
31A.1	CONVERT ARABLE LAND TO GRASSLAND - Light Grazing on Imrpoved Land	10.31
31B.1	CONVERT ARABLE LAND TO GRASSLAND - Semi Improved Haymeadow	45.50
31B.2	CONVERT ARABLE LAND TO GRASSLAND - Semi Improved Haymeadow on Historic Sites	4.68
31C.1	CONVERT ARABLE LAND TO GRASSLAND - Semi Improved Grazed Pasture	108.11
31C.2	CONVERT ARABLE LAND TO GRASSLAND - Semi Improved Grazed Pasture on Historic Sites	4.76
32A.1	CONVERSION OF IMPROVED GRASSLAND TO SEMI- IMPROVED GRASSLAND - Parkland to Haymeadow	33.99
32A.2	CONVERSION OF IMPROVED GRASSLAND TO SEMI- IMPROVED GRASSLAND - Other Improved Land to Hay	674.44
32A.3	CONVERSION OF IMPROVED GRASSLAND TO SEMI- IMPROVED GRASSLAND - Other Improved Land to Hay on Historic Sites	41.11
32B.1	CONVERSION OF IMPROVED GRASSLAND TO SEMI- IMPROVED GRASSLAND - Parkland to Pasture	45.80
32B.2.1	CONVERSION OF IMPROVED GRASSLAND TO SEMI- IMPROVED GRASSLAND - Grazing Marsh/Lapwing	43.73
32B.2.2	CONVERSION OF IMPROVED GRASSLAND TO SEMI- IMPROVED GRASSLAND - Grazing Marsh / Lapwing and Wildfowl	31.06
32B.3	CONVERSION OF IMPROVED GRASSLAND TO SEMI- IMPROVED GRASSLAND - Other Improved Land to Pasture	863.14

32B.4	CONVERSION OF IMPROVED GRASSLAND TO SEMI-IMPROVED GRASSLAND - Other Improved Land to Pasture on Historic Sites	5.66
33	BUFFER ZONES ON IMPROVED LAND ADJACENT TO PONDS, LAKES AND STREAMS AND FIELD DITCHES	159.47
34A	MANAGE IMPROVED GRASSLAND FOR BREEDING LAPWING AND/OR OVERWINTERING WILDFOWL - Breeding Lapwing	232.99
34B	MANAGE IMPROVED GRASSLAND FOR BREEDING LAPWING AND/OR OVERWINTERING WILDFOWL - Overwintering Wildfowl	42.00
35A	CONVERSION OF SEMI-IMPROVED GRASSLAND TO UNIMPROVED GRASSLAND - Neutral Grazed	251.56
35B	CONVERSION OF SEMI-IMPROVED GRASSLAND TO UNIMPROVED GRASSLAND - Acid/Limestone Grazed	91.58
35C	CONVERSION OF SEMI-IMPROVED GRASSLAND TO UNIMPROVED GRASSLAND - Acid/Limestone Haycrop	71.61
35D	CONVERSION OF SEMI-IMPROVED GRASSLAND TO UNIMPROVED GRASSLAND - Neutral Haycrop	567.41
36A	INCREASED WATER LEVELS ON SUITABLE HABITATS AND FEATURES - Improved Land Managed for Conversion to Semi-Improved	9.20
36B	INCREASED WATER LEVELS ON SUITABLE HABITATS AND FEATURES - Marshy Grassland	52.74
36C.1	INCREASED WATER LEVELS ON SUITABLE HABITATS AND FEATURES - Improved Grazing Marsh/Lapwing	11.58
36C.2	INCREASED WATER LEVELS ON SUITABLE HABITATS AND FEATURES - Improved Grazing Marsh/Wildfowl	13.05
37A	ESTABLISHMENT OF BROADLEAVED WOODLAND - Establishment Payment	114.96
37B	ESTABLISHMENT OF BROADLEAVED WOODLAND - Restore Plantations	72.43
37C	ESTABLISHMENT OF BROADLEAVED WOODLAND - Plant New Woodland	259.01
37D	ESTABLISHMENT OF BROADLEAVED WOODLAND - Natural Regeneration	67.52
38	ESTABLISHMENT OF STREAMSIDE CORRIDORS	103.03
39	ESTABLISH NEW REEDBEDS AND OTHER SWAMPS	1.31
3A(O)	ORCHARDS - Semi-improved Grassland	19.97
3A(P)	PARKLAND - Semi-improved	350.47
3B(O)	ORCHARDS - Improved Grassland	23.05
3B(P)	PARKLAND - Improved	637.69
3C	PARKLAND - Arable	281.08

4	HIGH MOUNTAIN HEATH	241.45
40A	ESTABLISH HEATHLAND VEGETATION ON ACID GRASSLAND- Acit Grassland	3180.24
42B	ESTABLISH NEW SALTMARSHES - New Coastal Reedbed on Grazing Saltmarsh	4.86
44A	CREATE NEW PERMISSIVE ACCESS - Footpaths Lump Sum per Annum	196.00
44A.1	CREATE NEW PERMISSIVE ACCESS - Footpaths	202502.30
44B	CREATE NEW PERMISSIVE ACCESS - Bridlepaths and Cyclepaths Lump Sum per annum	18.00
44B.1	CREATE NEW PERMISSIVE ACCESS - Bridlepaths and Cyclepaths	17362.00
44C	CREATE NEW PERMISSIVE ACCESS - Disabled Access Lump Sum per Annum	5.00
44C.1	CREATE NEW PERMISSIVE ACCESS - Disabled access	2350.00
44D	CREATE NEW PERMISSIVE ACCESS AREAS - Permissive Access Lump Sum Payment	87.00
44D.1	CREATE NEW PERMISSIVE ACCESS AREAS - Permissive Access Area Project	1289.15
44E	ACCESS FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES	111.82
45B	HEATHER MANAGEMENT - Restoration by Seed and Mulch	.15
47	PRUNING ORCHARD TREES	276.00
48	POLLARDING	129.00
49	DITCH CASTING	8849.00
5	UPLAND HEATH	10304.68
50.1	BRACKEN MANAGEMENT - Mechanical	1082.08
50.2	BRACKEN MANAGEMENT - Chemical	803.76
50.3	BRACKEN MANAGEMENT - Ground spraying	192.20
50.4	BRACKEN MANAGEMENT - Non-intervention	3.44
51	RHODODENDRON CONTROL	32.36
52	INVASIVE SPECIES CONTROL	19.79
53A	SCRUB CLEARANCE - Mechanical Cutting	34.79
53B	SCRUB CLEARANCE - Hand cutting	81.01
54	TURF STRIPPING FOR CREATING NEW HABITATS	.89
55	PROVISION OF SPECIES-RICH SEED MIXTURES	80.47
56A	CREATION AND RESTORATION OF PONDS - Creation up to 100 sq m Surface Area	20024.39
56B	CREATION AND RESTORATION OF PONDS - Creation over 100 sq m Surface Area	38130.00
56C	CREATION AND RESTORATION OF PONDS - Restoration of Ponds	37557.89

57	TREATMENT OF ERODED HISTORICAL SITES	265.00
58A	BUNDS AND SLUICES - Soil	47.00
58B	BUNDS AND SLUICES - Timber	37.00
59	WATER TROUGHS	609.00
6	LOWLAND AND COASTAL HEATH	581.86
60	PIPING FOR WATER SUPPLY	65068.00
61	BARN OWL NEST BOXES	242.00
62	OTHER NEST BOXES	4795.00
63	TREES AND SHRUBS (Supply and Plant)	25554.00
64	SPIRAL RABBIT GUARDS	7612.00
65A	TREE SHELTERS AND GUARDS - Tree shelters (1.8 m high for cattle)	734.00
65B	TREE SHELTERS AND GUARDS - Tree shelters (0.6 m high)	15003.00
65C	TREE SHELTERS AND GUARDS - Orchard Tree plus Guard and Stake	1954.00
66	GRAZING MARSH BRIDGE	14.00
67	BADGER GATE	115.00
68	WATER GATE	25.00
69	OTTER HOLT	56.00
70	HARD SURFACING TO ALLEVIATE SEDIMENTATION OF WATER FEATURES	873.00
71	HARD SURFACING FOR FEEDING PADS TO ALLEVIATE SEDIMENTATION	127.00
72	CULVERTS	145.00
73	PARKLAND TREE STOCK GUARDS	1324.00
74A	POST AND RAIL FENCING - Softwood	3852.00
74B	POST AND RAIL FENCING - Hardwood	2328.00
75	HARD SURFACING FOR RE-ALIGNING TRACKS	501.00
76	TRADITIONAL FARM BUILDINGS	368.00
77A	BRIDLE GATE - Softwood	171.00
77B	BRIDLE GATE - Hardwood	78.00
78A	KISSING GATE - Softwood	20.00
78B	KISSING GATE - Hardwood	25.00
79	GATE FOR ACCESS FOR DISABLED PEOPLE	1.00
7A	UNIMPROVED ACID GRASSLAND - Enclosed Lowland	4962.43
7B1	UNIMPROVED ACID GRASSLAND - Unenclosed, 200 ha or less	5958.22
7B2	UNIMPROVED ACID GRASSLAND - Unenclosed, above 200 ha and less than 500 ha	1013.17
7B3	UNIMPROVED ACID GRASSLAND - Unenclosed over 500ha	46.69
7C1	UNIMPROVED ACID GRASSLAND - Commons, 200 ha or less	206.15

80	STONE STEP OR THROUGH STILE	4.00
81	WOODEN STILE	568.00
82	LADDER STILE	76.00
83A	HARD SURFACING - Footpath (1 m wide)	504.00
83B	HARD SURFACING - Path for the Disabled (1.2 m wide)	1190.00
83C	HARD SURFACING - Bridleway (3 m wide)	350.00
84	FOOTBRIDGE	53.00
85A	BENCH SEAT - Softwood	40.00
85B	BENCH SEAT - Hardwood	27.00
86A	POSTS FOR SIGNS, WAYMARKS AND BOARDS - Softwood	680.00
86B	POSTS FOR SIGNS, WAYMARKS AND BOARDS - Hardwood	218.00
87	HARDSTANDING FOR CARPARKS	1296.00
88A.1	FENCING - Post and Wire - (Softwood)	2542399.20
88A.2	FENCING - Post and Wire - (Hardwood)	28941.00
88B	FENCING - Supplement for Stock Netting	2518022.30
88C	FENCING - Top Wiring for Stone Walls	32246.74
88D	FENCING - Electric Fencing	4397.00
88E.1	FENCING - Rabbit Fencing (Softwood)	3472.00
89A.1	GATES - Softwood	4599.00
89A.2	GATES - Hardwood	2714.00
8A	UNIMPROVED NEUTRAL GRASSLAND - Haymeadow	108.48
8B	UNIMPROVED NEUTRAL GRASSLAND - Grazed	444.54
9	UNIMPROVED LIMESTONE GRASSLAND	62.71
90A	SPECIAL PROJECTS	.09
90B	Special Projects	163.00
IMP	Improved	27245.63
TG1	Tree Guards (10 trees and over)	391.47
TG2	Tree Guards (under 10 trees)	386.00
WF1	0-20	13879.68
WF2	21-50	13978.08
WF3	51-100	14435.49
WF4	101-410	33871.11