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FACT, working together to deliver practical land management



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Nature conservation in the United Kingdom is carried out by a large number of government, non-government, charitable and other organisations as well as many land owning individuals in the private sector each with their own specific remit for different parts of what collectively delivers management of wildlife and the countryside.

THE CONTEXT

The organisations have increasingly been working more closely together in discussions to deliver strategies and policies that when implemented can deliver co-ordinated action to achieve what has now come to be regarded as essential - that of environmentally sensitive and sustainable land management practices.

However, working together at the level of practical land managers - (the 'dirty boots / hands-on' practitioners) - who are required to implement those same policies and strategies, was less obvious and active, not perhaps within organisations but certainly between organisations. For example, staff working in the Governments statutory nature conservation advisory body for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the Nature Conservancy Council, experienced considerable difficulties in maintaining close links after separation into country organisations in 1991. The Joint Nature Conservation Committee set up at the time of the dissolution was required to concentrate on UK wide strategy and policy work and less on grass-roots delivery of practical management. The move towards regionalisation within the UK, whilst having obvious benefits, does act as a constraint to close networking between staff. At the same time we all appreciate that wildlife and nature do not recognise country or regional boundaries drawn on a map.

There was therefore an obvious gap, which needed to be filled in order to put in place effective co-operation between staff scattered across the UK at the practical delivery end of nature conservation management. FACT - the Forum for the Application of Conservation Techniques - was formed in December 1996 and has been working ever since to improve co-operation and liaison between land managers. Its remit has been to firstly identify widespread generic constraints that are preventing the practical implementation of sustainable land management, fol-

lowed by working together to discuss ways of overcoming the problems by development of new techniques and the exchange of best practise ideas.

FACT MEMBERS:

Association of National Park Authorities • Butterfly Conservation • Countryside Agency • Countryside Council for Wales • English Heritage • English Nature • Environment Agency • Environment & Heritage Service Northern Ireland • Farming and Rural Conservation Agency • Forestry Commission • Game Conservancy Trust • Ministry of Defence • National Trust • Royal Agricultural College • Royal Society for the Protection of Birds • Scottish Natural Heritage • Wildlife Trusts Partnerships • Woodland Trust

Corresponding Members

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers • Duchas, National Park & Wildlife Service (Ireland) • Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group

MANY PROGRAMS

The Fact «parent» project and the «family» projects.

The «parent» project is co-ordinated by representatives from land management departments of over 20 organisations in the UK who are involved in practical wildlife management and meet twice yearly as the 'FACT Steering Group'. Their remit is also to look into the future to ensure early identification of potential constraints. Separately identified 'problems' - the 'family' projects - are set free with their own Working Committees to develop appropriate solutions and to draw in representatives from any other organisation(s) who may have an appropriate interest or remit to help to deliver solutions. The targeting of family projects has been wide ranging in furtherance of an all embracing or 'holistic' approach to problem solving.

Co-ordination and resources were initially provided mainly by English Nature but many other organisations have donated staff time, trial or development sites, and also more recently financial contributions to the development or production of specific products from any of the family projects. Some of the 'family' projects are described here below.

Grazing Animals Project — GAP —. GAP was formed to aid the development of conservation grazing throughout the United Kingdom. The Project was founded in 1997 especially to remove constraints (=problems) acting against the delivery of grazing and also to improve the 'quality' of grazing. Current initiatives include:

- networking by holding regional site meetings and running an advisory network.
- information exchange by production of a quarterly



Practical Solution

Equipments, Techniques
and ideas for Wildlife
management

Newsletter "GAP News" including the 'Grazelots' advertising facility, and by contributing to training courses.

- resolving constraints by analysis and identification followed by targeted work to eliminate them.
- development of 'Regional Grazing Schemes' which coordinate grazing delivery at the local level.

Other outputs from GAP include:

- An analysis of conservation grazing projects "Towards sustainable grazing for biodiversity: an analysis of conservation grazing projects and their constraints" (1999). Results, discussion and implications of a questionnaire completed by 120 grazing managers reporting on grazing in the UK and the problems they were experiencing.
- A "Breed Profiles Handbook" as a reference collection of the attributes of livestock breeds used for conservation grazing in the UK. (Due to be published in summer 2001).
- A "Guide to Animal Welfare in Nature Conservation Grazing" as guidance to grazing managers in the UK on welfare standards and a risk assessment procedure for ensuring livestock are properly managed on conservation sites. (Due to be published in summer 2001).

The 'Euro-grazer' (grandchild) Project (as part of GAP). The work of GAP whilst originally being centred on the UK has recently dipped a toe into Europe through being active in Eurosite - especially in helping to develop the 'Eurograzer' Project. This is to improve communications between European grazing groups and to work together on generic problems in delivering sustainable grazing.

OTHERS REALISATIONS

Machinery Ring Information Pack. Originally developed for the shared use of machinery by farmers, machinery rings have great potential for the provision of equipment in conservation land management. This free information pack explains what machinery rings are and how they operate. It also provides contact points for the existing rings and gives guidance on setting up a new ring, including advice on obtaining insurance cover.

Practical Solutions Handbook A handbook with illustrated examples of machinery, tools, equipment, and management techniques have been developed or adapted to address particular land management problems such as weed control, scrub control, and grazing. The advantages and limitations of each are detailed together with references to further information and contact details for manufacturers or suppli-

ers. The handbook is of use to land managers who have management problems for which they are seeking alternative solutions, and especially for those who are searching for economical, environment-friendly, and sustainable options on their sites.

'Eco-Lots' - a web-site for adverts about sustainable countryside management www.ecolots.co.uk is a new website, which went live in mid June 2001. The web-site is the result of a merger between the two parents - Eco-Ads and WoodLots - popular 'exchange and mart' magazines. The offspring, the 'Eco-Lots website', carries adverts relevant and helpful to the environmentally sensitive and sustainable management of land and wildlife. It creates a service focussed on countryside management and helps to deliver some of the objectives set out in recent UK agri-environment, rural and regional initiatives.

HOW TO FIND THE PRODUCTS AND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT FACT

The leaflet "*Sustainable land management: the FACTS*" and a quarterly magazine "*Enact*" with current information about Fact is available from Tony Robinson - one of the authors of this article.

"*Towards sustainable grazing for biodiversity - an analysis of conservation grazing projects and their constraints*" and "*Machinery Ring Information Pack*" are available free-of-charge from - The Enquiry Service, English Nature, Northminster House, PETERBOROUGH, PE1 1UA. Tel: +44(0)1733 455100.

"*Practical Solutions Handbook*" £12 per copy (£15 for CD ROM) from - English Nature, PO BOX 1995, WETHERBY, West Yorkshire, LS23 7XX, United Kingdom. Tel: +44(0)870 1214177. Fax: +44(0)870 1214178. E-mail: english-nature@twoten.press.net. An expanded Second Edition with 200 pages is due to become available by the end of summer 2001.

Further details of the Grazing Animals Project, publications, and to get on the mailing list are available from the GAP office, 7A Friars Quay, NORWICH, NR3 1ES, United Kingdom. Tel: +44(0)1603 756070. E-mail: grazinganimalsproject@dial.pipex.com

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