

# 2012

## Strategic Nature Area Landscape Mapping Project Field trial - CORDIALE project Part 2 – Umborne Community Grassland Project



European Regional Development Fund  
The European Union, investing in your future



Fonds européen de développement régional  
L'union Européenne investit dans votre avenir

P Youngman

CORDIALE was selected under the European Cross-border Cooperation Programme INTERREG IV A France (Channel) - England, co-funded by the ERDF.

## **CORDIALE LANDSCAPE MAPPING FIELD TRAIL**

### **Strategic Nature Areas Part 2 – Umborne Community Grassland Project**

#### **Summary**

The Umborne Valley Strategic Nature Area spans two AONB's and forms part of the wider Coastal Combes and Valleys Biodiversity Delivery Area.

Within the Umborne Valley is a fragmented mosaic of unimproved neutral and marshy grassland. Most of these have evaded botanical survey and so their true quality has not been confirmed. Anecdotally however it is known that some are botanically very rich whilst in others diversity could be enhanced with appropriate management.

Individually the landowners botanically rich holdings fall below the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agreement guidance level of 10ha and the more basic Entry Level Stewardship (ELS) will fail to ensure enhancement potential.

Our vision is to create a robust landscape of botanically rich grasslands connected and linked by improved grassland habitat, hedgerows and woodland edges. These will support a wide diversity of insect and bird life as well as the existing Bechstein's, Barbastelle and Horseshoe bats that already occupy the valley.

To fulfil the conservation potential of this valley we will need to:-

- Meet and establish a relationship with each landowner and confirm interest in a cooperative approach
- To explore mechanism to allow co-operative action to encourage joint enterprise
- Survey rich areas and areas with potential to be linking habitats
- To access funds to facilitate the above actions

A co-operative approach that proves to be successful within the Umborne could act as a blueprint for other small river valleys or SNAs, where original Phase 1 surveys carried out in the 1980's present an inaccurate picture of habitat value and where individual holdings fall below the HLS guidance levels.

**The Umborne  
Valley Community  
Grassland area**



# 1 Background

1.1 CORDIALE was selected under the European Cross-border Cooperation Programme INTERREG IVA France (Channel) - England, co-funded by the ERDF.

1.2 CORDIALE deals with sustainable landscape management in SW UK / Finistère and Basse-Normandie. Its objectives are:

- To build deeper understanding of the distinctive character of landscapes in the cross-border region.
- To inspire stakeholders and communities to engage with their landscapes.
- To demonstrate the multiple functional benefits provided by adapted and resilient landscape management.
- To support integrated decision-making.

1.3 The CORDIALE bid document is available from:

[www.southwestlandscapes.org.uk/CrossBorderBid.asp](http://www.southwestlandscapes.org.uk/CrossBorderBid.asp)

1.4 The project has 9 partners: Devon County Council (Lead partner), South West Protected Landscapes (SWPL), Parc Naturel Régional d'Armorique, Parc Naturel Régional des Marais du Cotentin et du Bessin, University of Plymouth, North Devon AONB, Tamar Valley AONB, Chambre d'agriculture du Finistère, CIVAM Finistère.

1.5 The project has three key areas of activity (3 studios):

- 1- Landscape Mapping
- 2- Sustainable agriculture
- 3- Traditional buildings

1.6 These areas of activity are all considered in the context of threats and opportunities from climate and socio-economic change.

The project is organised in 4 phases:

. Phase 1: Research

Objective: To assess the techniques currently used by partners in managing protected landscapes.

Main outputs: 3 research reports (1 per studio) with case studies.

. Phase 2: Exchange and training

Objective: enact a programme of exchanges between partners and communities and develop education and training resources so that partners can develop their own professional skills and the skills and knowledge of their communities in landscape management.

### . Phase 3: Development

Objective: to run pilot projects and field trials that develop methodologies and techniques for managing adapted and resilient landscapes.

The field trials will:

- use best practice from cross-border partners in order to develop common methodologies for landscape management - combining the best of both French and English practice,
- develop improved communication techniques and new land management methodologies to share with wider communities in the region

### . Phase 4: Dissemination

Objective: to use the lessons from the initial research, the training materials developed, and the development phase (field trials) to prepare and publish a landscape management toolkit that creates a common standard of management guidelines to improve management techniques, practices and monitoring.

1.7 This contract will help deliver one of the field trials and is therefore part of phase 3.

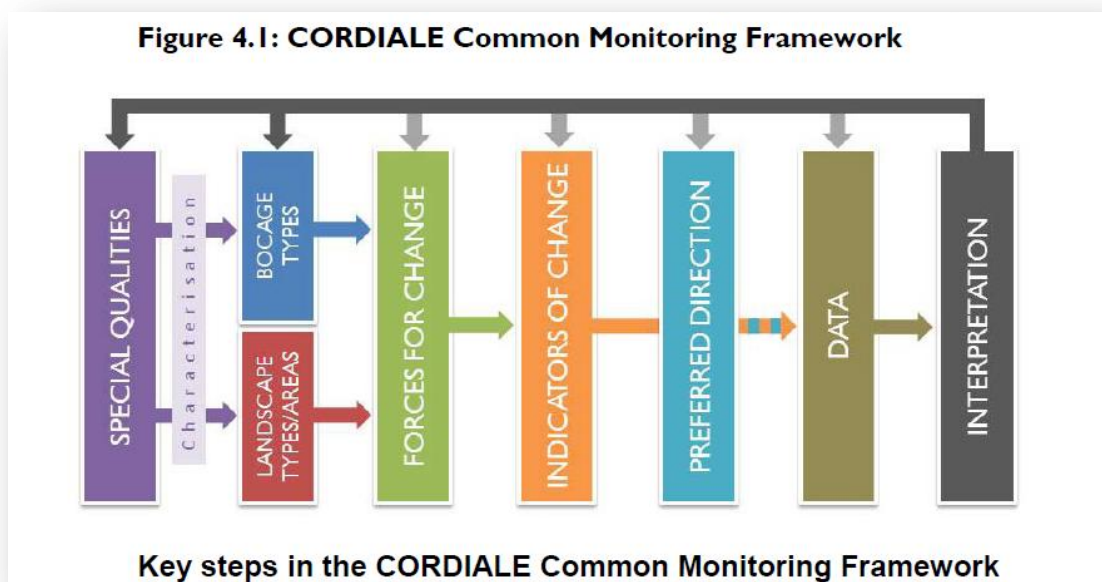
1.8 On behalf of Devon CC, East Devon AONB is overseeing this contract to deliver a CORDIALE field trial activity within the AONB. We are seeking a competent consultant with a track record of producing high quality landscape scale biodiversity GIS work.

1.9 East Devon AONB is part of SWPLF and is one of 5 AONBs in Devon that are participating in the CORDIALE project – Tamar and North Devon AONBs being full partners. The AONB was designated in 1963 with the aim of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area and while doing so, take into account the needs of rural communities and industries. As with the other protected landscapes of England, Wales & Northern Ireland (48 other AONBs and 12 National Parks) its aims are implemented through a statutory Management Plan<sup>1</sup>; the CORDIALE project is identified as a key action in the AONB Management Plan.

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.eastdevonaonb.org.uk/index.php?page=aonb-management-plan>

### 3 Cordiale Framework



2.1 This project will implement the first stage in the CORDIALE common monitoring framework as identified above, by confirming the special qualities of the AONB in the form of the SNA's. By following the above process as identified in the RESEARCH phase of CORDIALE, this will enable forces for change and indicators to be developed and preferred actions proposed for their conservation and enhancement.



2.2 The project forms part of the Landscape Mapping component of the CORDIALE programme, which has the following aims, objectives and outcomes:

**Aim:**

To produce a common methodology for understanding, recording and celebrating landscape value and the impacts of climate change on our future landscapes

**Objectives:**

1. To develop understanding of how landscape value is recorded and in particular to catalogue the range of data being captured by AONBs and PNRs in the cross border region,

2. To improve and develop techniques and skills in the capture, storage and display of landscape data, by sharing experience and expertise in the cross-border region
3. To develop a shared understanding of how the impacts of climate change on landscape value are understood and represented as a data layer/ map form,
4. To develop expertise in the communication of landscape data to local communities and stakeholders through cross border field trails,
5. To share methodologies for data capture and communication to the Protected Landscape network across Europe,
6. To increase public awareness in the cross-border region of value of landscapes and the necessity to adapt land management to the impacts of climate change.

**Deliverables / Outcomes:**

1. Database of landscape mapping approaches across the Manche region
2. Exchange visits and training events
3. Teaching materials from training events
4. A common methodology for mapping landscape value and climate change impacts (toolkit)
5. Wider public awareness and access to landscape data via the Manche Landscape Atlas

2.3 We will share the methodologies and experience with other partners in CORDIALE through field trials exchange and by making the results of this work available on the CORDIALE web site. The approaches taken will offer opportunities for partners in the CORDIALE project to consider replicating in their areas.

2.4 The results of this work will be available to integrate with the Atlas and toolkit for the CORDIALE project.

## 3 The Main Tasks

- Identifying and recruiting landowners
  - Landowner liaison
  - Exploring mechanisms
- Botanical Survey
- Communicating opportunities
  - Reports/ public meetings
- Applications for environmental stewardship

### 3.1 Identifying and recruiting landowners

- Make contact with landowners in person to explain the purposes of the survey and gain verbal permission for its completion.
- Compile contact list of land ownership/ tenancy to include Name, Address, Telephone number., email where possible
- Endeavour to obtain owner /tenant names of neighbouring land holdings
- Engage in conversation to ascertain their interest in agri-environment schemes and their awareness of the importance of the Umborne Valley for biodiversity.
- Indicate ownership data spatially on maps

### 3.2 Undertake botanical survey

Survey methods will be based on established standard Phase 1 and Phase 2 protocols. Some modifications to these will be necessary in order to gather information required to determine habitat condition for bats and to determine habitat condition within FEP (Farm Environment Plan) criteria and suitability for entry into HLS. All information will be collected in a way that can contribute to any subsequent FEP.

All properties for which permission is given will be surveyed to Phase 1 level. This will give basic information on broad habitat types present including field boundaries and water features. A brief descriptive note will be recorded for all hedgerows, assessing their potential value for bats and other specialist organisms.

Grasslands will be assessed initially as “improved”, “semi-improved” or “unimproved” then as the appropriate BAP grassland type (in practice the only types likely to be encountered in the Umborne Valley are G03 Lowland Meadow and G07 Purple moor-grass and Rush Pasture). Small areas of woodlands and other habitat types will also be recorded according to FEP guidelines where they

form part of the farmland mosaic. An NVC (National Vegetation Classification) sub-community type will be assigned to all stands of semi-natural vegetation where possible.

Phase 2 survey will be carried out for all stands over 0.1ha of unimproved grassland, species-rich semi-improved grassland and other habitats of conservation value. A full species list of all vascular plants, terrestrial bryophytes and lichens will be collected with abundances on the Dafor scale, and representative 2m X 2m quadrats will be recorded with abundances of all vascular plants, terrestrial bryophytes and lichens on the Domin scale. NVC sub-communities will be determined. Stands under 0.1 ha will be noted.

A FEP-standard condition assessment will be carried out for all semi-improved and unimproved grasslands

### 3.3 Communicating opportunities

A report will be produced for each property to include a description, species lists and quadrat data, map and photographs. These will be supplied to all owners and tenants.

A full report on the whole survey will be produced. This will provide data on the areas of UKBAP habitat types within the survey area and will determine the potential for individual and group applications to Higher Level Stewardship.

### 3.4 Applications for environmental stewardship

If there is sufficient area of UKBAP priority habitat (eg Lowland Meadow or Purple Moor-Grass and Rush Pasture) in the survey area and sufficient interest among landowners/tenants, a meeting will be held to discuss a group HLS application to Natural England.

## 4 Related work

- **Dorset AONB CORDIALE project.** – Contact Tom Munro 01305 228237
- **Tamar Biodiversity contract** – Biodiversity Opportunity mapping Contact 01822 835030
- **East Devon AONB** – Wildscapes, Parish Biodiversity Audits– contact Pete Youngman 01404 46663
- **Natural England** – Blackdowns NCA statement - Colin Maddison ([NCProfiles@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:NCProfiles@naturalengland.org.uk))
- **Devon County Council** – Local Nature Partnership development – Sarah Jennings - 01392 383871

Opportunities to share field trial will be seized and be fully integrated in the main outcomes of CORDIALE (exchange or training / atlas or toolkit).