

EIA (T) 006 / 2008, Bwlch Castell, Cilcennin.

The Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) (Wales) Regulations 2007

Record of vegetation assessment on 8th April 2008

Location: Site Grid Reference SN 532590
Land at Bwlch Castell, Cilcennin, Lampeter.

Case No: EIA (T) 006/2008

Field nos.: SN 5359: 0708, 2406 and 3597.

Landowner: Mr R Evans, Blaenberllan, Cilcennin, Lampeter, Ceredigion.

CRN no.: A0025256

Present: Nigel Sharp and Kathleen Carroll (both Welsh Assembly Govt, EPWRD) with Mr Evans.

Reason for

Inspection: An anonymous tip-off was received in early January 2008 that trees were being uprooted on an area of rough land. A site visit was made by RIW on 9/1/08 to check what had been done (see referral report form). It was obvious that the works (tree clearance, hedge tidying, ditch clearance) may be followed by ploughing and reseedling, so the tenant was contacted to discuss an EIA screening application. A TSD visit was made on 8/4/08 to establish whether any of the works already carried out constituted a breach of the EIA Regulations.

Additional information collated prior to the visit:

The digitised Phase 1 map for Wales and aerial photograph were consulted. Phase 1 depicts the land in question as predominantly marshy grassland with a band of heathland along the north western end. The aerial photographs (which were taken in 2001 and 2006) show the vegetation to contrast markedly from the surrounding green (improved) fields, as they have much more structure and a brownish tinge with scrubby trees. This would support the conclusion that the area is semi-natural marshy grassland.

Discussion with landowner

Mr Evans explained that he had cleaned out existing ditches in December 2007 and he had burnt an area of gorse scrub in field SN 5359: 0708 in January 2008. He had also grubbed out a number of scrubby trees (mainly willows) in the south eastern half of this block of land. He will eventually plough and reseed all the fields in this block in stages, but he is not planning to make a start until next year (2009).

Assessment methodology

Part of the area in question was walked in order to gain an idea of the works carried out and of the type of land involved. Several photographs of the vegetation/damage were taken.

Description of the site

1. Ditch clearance

A ditch along the roadside boundary of 0708 and 2406 and one along the south eastern boundary of 0708 have both been cleaned out to quite an extensive width and depth. Having consulted the map and aerial photograph it is highly likely that both were already in existence so that the work can be considered routine.

2. Gorse burning / scrub clearance

The burning of the (western) gorse took place during the winter (outside the bird-nesting season) and did not involve any more extensive works such as removal of the roots. Therefore this work can be considered routine. Similarly, the grubbing and burning of the sparse willow scrub can be considered routine tidying up of land since it was not followed by other work such as reseeding.

Conclusions and recommendations

The vegetation on this site is definitely semi-natural and uncultivated so that there is no doubt that it falls within the EIA Regulations. I did not make a detailed examination of the land but most of the lower-lying areas are marshy grassland of some ecological interest with patches of wet heath. The drier stand of western gorse (marked as heath on Phase 1) at the north western end is rather less interesting and less diverse. Both the ditch clearance and the scrub removal constitute routine agricultural works that are outside the EIA Regulations. The ditches are now particularly wide and deep, but since they were obviously not new ones it makes sense to consider the work routine.

My summary conclusion is that none of the works constitute an EIA breach, but this report will be routinely forwarded to RIW for information.

Nigel Sharp
EPWRD
St. Asaph
06/05/08

Summary information for RIW	
Are the works definitely a project and therefore no doubt an EIA breach?	No, the work carried out is routine and therefore outside the EIA Regs.
Deliberate / unintentional	N/A
Extent (i.e. is effect limited to this farm only)	N/A
Severity (low = <1 ha, medium = 1-5ha, high = >5ha)	N/A
Is the damage rectifiable or permanent?	N/A
Comments. Farmer helpful and will submit a screening application if he decides to plough and reseed any of the fields in this block of land.	