

## THE TIR GOFAL SCORING AND RANKING SYSTEM

### BACKGROUND

All applications to join Tir Gofal in 1999 were subject to a system of scoring and ranking to determine which applications would be selected to receive initial visits by Project Officers. This paper describes the system, including the scores used.

A scoring and ranking system was requested by the Secretary of State as a means of selecting applications on the basis of 'best environmental value'. At the same time, the system was required to ensure a satisfactory geographical spread across Wales of successful applications, and to be fair in terms of the opportunity for farms of all sizes and types to join the scheme.

The scoring system was devised for the Welsh Office and Steering Group by FRCA with guidance from CCW, who would operate the system. The designers were concerned to ensure that all four of the scheme objectives (landscape, historic environment, biodiversity and public access) were given due weight.

Early versions of the scoring system were tested using data from real farms, including members of Environmentally Sensitive Area schemes. The results were carefully analysed to ensure that while the system was recording 'best environmental value' there were no major anomalies or discriminatory effects against (for example) one type or size of farm. Adjustments were made and the system refined to include some of the 'weighting' and 'modulation' devices set out below.

The two most important ones are that all scores are 'modulated' for farm size to ensure that large farms have no inbuilt advantage; secondly, organic farms would be given a fixed number of additional points in recognition of the environmental benefits associated with organic farming. Finally, and to ensure a 'spread' of farms across Wales for 'demonstration purposes', the ranking process was refined so that the 5 highest scoring applications in each of CCW's 17 Districts would be selected for visits.

The resulting system was approved by the Secretary of State and subsequently by the European Commission "STAR" Committee in approving Tir Gofal under the EU legislation.

### HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS.

The scoring system devised comprises a system of points awarded for a range of habitats and features. No points are awarded where there is already a legal requirement concerning a feature on the applicant's land, (that Public Rights of Way are maintained, for example), or for designations such as SSSIs. Points are generally awarded on a per hectare or a per metre basis depending on the type of feature, although access and historic features are allocated an absolute score.

Scoring is based entirely on information provided by the applicant, although in some cases, minor discrepancies or anomalies are checked with the farmer by the administrative staff entering the details. All application details are entered into a Wales-wide database by staff based at CCW's local offices. A computer programme was created which uses the application details for each farm, and the scores and weightings set out below, to automatically calculate the score for that application. It then places all applications in rank order and indicates the 5 highest scoring application per CCW District at the same time.

Once ranked all applications are allocated to 'tranches' so that they can be visited in rank order by project officers. The first 'tranche' consisted of the 5 highest scored applications per District, plus a further group of the very highest scoring applications across Wales.

## THE SCORING SYSTEM EXPLAINED

Point scores were allocated to 'environmental features' using the weighting factors set out in the attached table. The method used for calculating the final score varies according to the type of feature under consideration viz:

Category A features - a set number of points is awarded for the feature

Category B features - points are calculated using  $\frac{\text{Area of Habitat} \times \text{Weighting Factor}}{\text{Area of Enclosed Land on Holding}}$

Category C features - points are calculated using  $\frac{\text{Area of Habitat} \times \text{Weighting Factor}}{\text{Area of All Land on the Holding}}$

Having completed all individual calculations, these are added together to obtain the final score.

## TABLE OF HABITATS AND FEATURES

Type of Habitat or Feature	Category	Weighting Factor or Points Awarded
<b>1. WHOLE FARM SECTION:</b>		
Average field size <2 ha	A	6 points
Average field size 2-5ha	A	4 points
Average field size >5 ha	A	2 points
(Note that only the fields surrounded by traditional boundaries are used in the above calculation)		
Scheduled Ancient Monument (1 only)	A	4 points
Scheduled Ancient Monument (2 or more)	A	6 points
Non-designated Historic or Archaeological Features:		
1 only	A	1 point
2- 5	A	2 points
6 or more	A	3 points
Traditional Farm Building (1 only)	A	2 points
Traditional Farm Building (2 or more)	A	5 points
Rock Outcrops (1 or more)	A	1 point
Rivers and/or streams (1 or more)	A	2 points
Ponds and or lakes (1 or more)	A	2 points
<b>2. EXISTING HABITATS:</b>		
Broadleaved woodland	B	Weighting 200
Parkland	B	Weighting 100
Unimproved grassland on open hill	C	Weighting 50
Unimproved heathland on open hill	C	Weighting 100
Unimproved enclosed land	B	Weighting 200

Type of Feature or Habitat	Category	Weighting Factor or Points Awarded
Semi-improved enclosed land	B	Weighting 100
Coastal land	B	Weighting 200

### 3. ENHANCEMENT OF EXISTING FEATURES

Restoration of field boundaries		
50- 499 metres over 5 years	A	5 points
500-999 metres over 5 years	A	8 points
>1000 metres over 5 years	A	10 points
Restoration of archaeological or historic features (1 or more)	A	10 points
Conversion of improved to semi-improved grassland or semi-improved grassland to unimproved grassland	B	Weighting 100
Introducing a buffer zone next to watercourses	B	1 point per 100 metres

### 4. CREATION OF NEW HABITATS:

Increasing water levels to benefit wildlife or archaeological sites	B	Weighting 200
Establishing new broadleaved woodlands by planting or natural regeneration on suitable sites	B	Weighting 400
Establishing New Heathland	B	Weighting 400
Establishing New Coastal Features	B	Weighting 400
Establishing New Wetlands	B	Weighting 400
Establishing New Streamside Corridors	B	2 points per 100 metres

Type of Feature or Habitat	Category	Weighting Factor or points Awarded
<b>5. ARABLE OPTIONS:</b>		
Converting improved grassland to unsprayed root crops or unsprayed spring cereals plus stubble	B	Weighting 400
Growing cereals , oil seed rape or linseed without pesticides on existing arable land	B	Weighting 100
Retaining winter stubbles until 1st March	B	Weighting 100
Growing undersown spring cereals without insecticides	B	Weighting 300
Growing unsprayed root crops followed by grazing after 15 October	B	Weighting 300
Establishing rough grass or fallow margins in arable fields	B	Weighting 300
Growing a wildlife cover crop	B	Weighting 300
Converting arable land to grassland	B	Weighting 400

#### 6. PROVISION OF NEW PUBLIC ACCESS ON ENCLOSED LAND:

New footpaths, bridlepaths, cycle paths or routes for disabled people	A	8 points
New Access Areas	A	8 points
Access for Educational Purposes	A	8 points

#### 7. ORGANIC FARMING:

Land being farmed organically or in conversion	A	25 points
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#### USE OF THE SCORES AND RANKING IN FUTURE

The system described above was that used in 1999. There is no guarantee that this will be used again in the second or subsequent years of the Scheme. In particular, the device for ensuring a 'geographic spread' of successful applications across Wales may be considered to have served its purpose and can now be discontinued. However, the scores used in 1999 do reflect the priority given to certain habitats and features in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, and to other government priorities which Tir Gofal addresses.