



Marches

Ecology

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9th January 2013

Our Ref: C210-CoxFreeman-Letter-090113-TK

Dear Alan

Re – Proposed Grassland Management Regime at Rowan Foods Ltd, Ash Road South, Wrexham Industrial Estate

Introduction

Marches Ecology was commissioned by Cox Freeman Ltd to review management of the grassland areas located within the Rowan Foods Ltd site, Ash Road South, Wrexham Industrial Estate (approximate OS Grid Ref. SJ 378 502). The aims of this review were largely as follows:

- to briefly characterise the existing grassland resource and identify areas where a change in the management regime is likely to prove beneficial for wildlife.
- to identify areas to which this new management should be applied on a plan and provide details of the new management regime.

The requirement for this 'biodiversity statement' was identified by Emma Broad (Biodiversity Officer, Wrexham County Borough Council) during pre-application consultation. Further to this Emma confirmed that the 'biodiversity statement' should incorporate a plan of the site showing the proposed grassland management regime in each area along with a covering letter. This letter and the associated plan are therefore provided in support of a planning application (Planning Ref. P/2012/0879). It does not form part of any required ecological mitigation or compensation measures due to the proposed development but is rather offered as (biodiversity) enhancement.

The proposed development briefly concerns three extensions to the existing Rowan Foods Ltd premises on Ash Road South. Further information is provided in the Design and Access Statement¹ submitted as part of the planning application. The proposed extensions are presented on a Cox Freeman Ltd plan entitled '*Proposed Site Plan*' Dwg. no. 2002 P 106A, dated 14/12/12.

¹ Cox Freeman Ltd (2012). *Proposed Extensions, Rowan Foods, Wrexham - Design and Access Statement*. Ref. 2002/1.03/LA Revision A.

Site Survey

A brief walkover survey of the site was conducted on 7th January 2013 by Tom Knight of Marches Ecology. The weather was cloudy, with some light rain and a light breeze. The survey focussed on all areas of existing grassland within the Rowan Foods Ltd site. The area considered is shown on the Cox Freeman Ltd plan entitled '*Proposed Site Plan*' Dwg. no. 2002 P 106A, dated 14/12/12; being that located within the red line boundary.

Existing Resource

Existing areas of grassland are limited to the site periphery but are located along the western, southern and eastern site boundaries. The most extensive areas of grassland are located along the western boundary and close to the site vehicular access off Ash Road South.

The composition of this grassland varies greatly across the site. At the present time it is largely managed as short, amenity grassland being cut as and when required during the growing season. This has resulted in most of the sward being approximately 0.05 to 0.15 m high. A narrow strip of unmanaged grassland is located on the slope adjacent to the stream corridor along the eastern boundary. While most of the resource is regularly managed and can be described as amenity grassland it is invariably species-rich and could also be categorised as unimproved neutral grassland.

The long strip of grassland along the western boundary is probably the most species-rich and diverse. It also includes small areas of damp/marshy grassland along with dry neutral grassland communities. The northern half of this area is more tussocky and may be subject to a different management regime (possibly being cut with a strimmer rather than a mower). In the drier areas this grassland is often dominated by *Festuca rubra* (Red Fescue) with abundant *Holcus lanatus* (Yorkshire-fog), frequent *Trifolium repens* (White Clover), *Ranunculus repens* (Creeping Buttercup), locally frequent *Carex nigra* (Common Sedge), *Lolium perenne* (Perennial Rye-grass), occasional *Leucanthemum vulgare* (Oxeye Daisy) and various other grasses/ forbs. In damper areas *Carex nigra* (Common Sedge) is more prevalent with *Juncus inflexus* (Hard Rush), *Carex otrubae* (False Fox-sedge) and *Trifolium pratense* (Red Clover). The tussocky area includes a number of coarse-leaved grasses such as *Dactylis glomerata* (Cock's-foot) and *Deschampsia cespitosa* (Tufted Hair-grass). A small number of locally scarce² plants such as *Helminthotheca echioides* (Bristly Ox-tongue) and *Senecio erucifolius* (Hoary Ragwort) are present.

The photo below shows the grassland close to the western site boundary; view from approximately north/ northeast to south/ southwest.

² In accordance with: Green, J.A. (2006). *The Flowering Plants of Denbighshire – A Botanical Checklist for VC50*. Powlsons Ltd, Colwyn Bay.



The grassland along the southern site boundary, but west of the vehicular site access, is moderately species-rich. It is also often particularly short, to approximately 0.05 m. A number of basal rosettes of an orchid (thought to be *Ophrys apifera* Bee Orchid) along with a cluster of *Primula veris* (Cowslip) plants were recorded near the office building.

On the eastern side of the site there is unmanaged grassland on a slope by the boundary. The sward is up to 1.2 m high. It is dominated by *Dactylis glomerata* (Cock's-foot) and *Festuca rubra* (Red Fescue) with locally frequent *Elytrigia repens* (Common Couch), *Arrhenatherum elatius* (False Oat-grass) with frequent *Heracleum sphondylium* (Hogweed) and *Centaurea nigra* (Common Knapweed). The adjacent strip of grassland to the immediate west is regularly managed but also retains a moderate species richness.

The photo below shows part of the grassland close to the eastern site boundary; view from approximately south to north. The unmanaged grassland is located on the slope on the right side of the picture.



Proposed Management Regime

It is suggested that the strip along the eastern boundary is left unmanaged to strengthen the potential wildlife corridor along the stream while the grassland on the western side of the site is managed to promote floristic richness and other wildlife. The width of the unmanaged grassland along the eastern boundary would be extended in places while maintaining well managed edges around areas of hard-standing, buildings, *etc.* The area of grassland to be included in the new management regime on the western side of the site would be located so as to incorporate a sufficient stand-off from the food production buildings along with well managed edges around hard-standing, *etc.* Short grassland is required in close proximity to the food production buildings so as to deter vermin. The area of grassland around the office building (from which the Orchids were noted) is also included in the new management regime.

The attached plan presents the approximate areas of the site to which the proposed management regimes will be applied. It should be noted that in all areas there will be some requirement for more intensive management, *e.g.* strimming around boreholes, *etc.*

The areas and applicable management are as follows (refer to attached plan):

- Amenity grassland (shown as yellow on the plan). These areas will be intensively managed so that the sward remains at approximately 0.05 m to 0.1 m in height. The existing management regime will be applied. The amenity grassland is largely located at the site entrance, near buildings and around the edges of hard-standing.
- Unmanaged grassland (shown as orange on the plan). The grassland in this area will not be subject to any management. The unmanaged grassland is located in a strip along the eastern side of the site. Any requirement to control scrub in this area would be reviewed in the future.
- Species-rich neutral grassland (shown as red on the plan). The species-rich neutral grassland will be managed for the benefit of floristic richness through active management. It is largely located along the western edge of the site. This management regime essentially proposes a reduction in the number of cuts undertaken along with a change in the timing of those cuts. It also requires that all cut material should be removed, ideally a day or two after cutting (to allow seed to drop). The cuttings could be left in a pile on site, perhaps near the scrub in the northern corner if this does not pose any problems with operation of the site.

This grassland should be cut once a year in late August/ September. A second cut could be undertaken in September/ October if required to produce an appropriate sward height. This second cut could alternatively be undertaken in early spring, but this must be before nesting birds may be present (*e.g.* February).

- Woodland/ scrub (shown as green on the plan). This area is shown for information only and will not be subject to management.

To minimise impacts on wildlife that might inhabit the grassland areas the cutting blades on mowing equipment should be set no lower than 10 cm above ground level. This should also be applied when using a strimmer.

Commitment

Rowan Foods Ltd is committed to implementing the proposed grassland management regime as detailed in this letter and attached plan in order to enhance the wildlife value of their site. However Rowan Foods Ltd reserve the right to review the success or otherwise of the proposed management in terms of the primary purpose/ business of the site (e.g. food production). Should the change in grassland management result in any detrimental impacts on this primary purpose then the management regime would be amended to address such issues.

Should you require any further information with regards the above proposed grassland management regime please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "TKnight". The letters are cursive and slightly slanted.

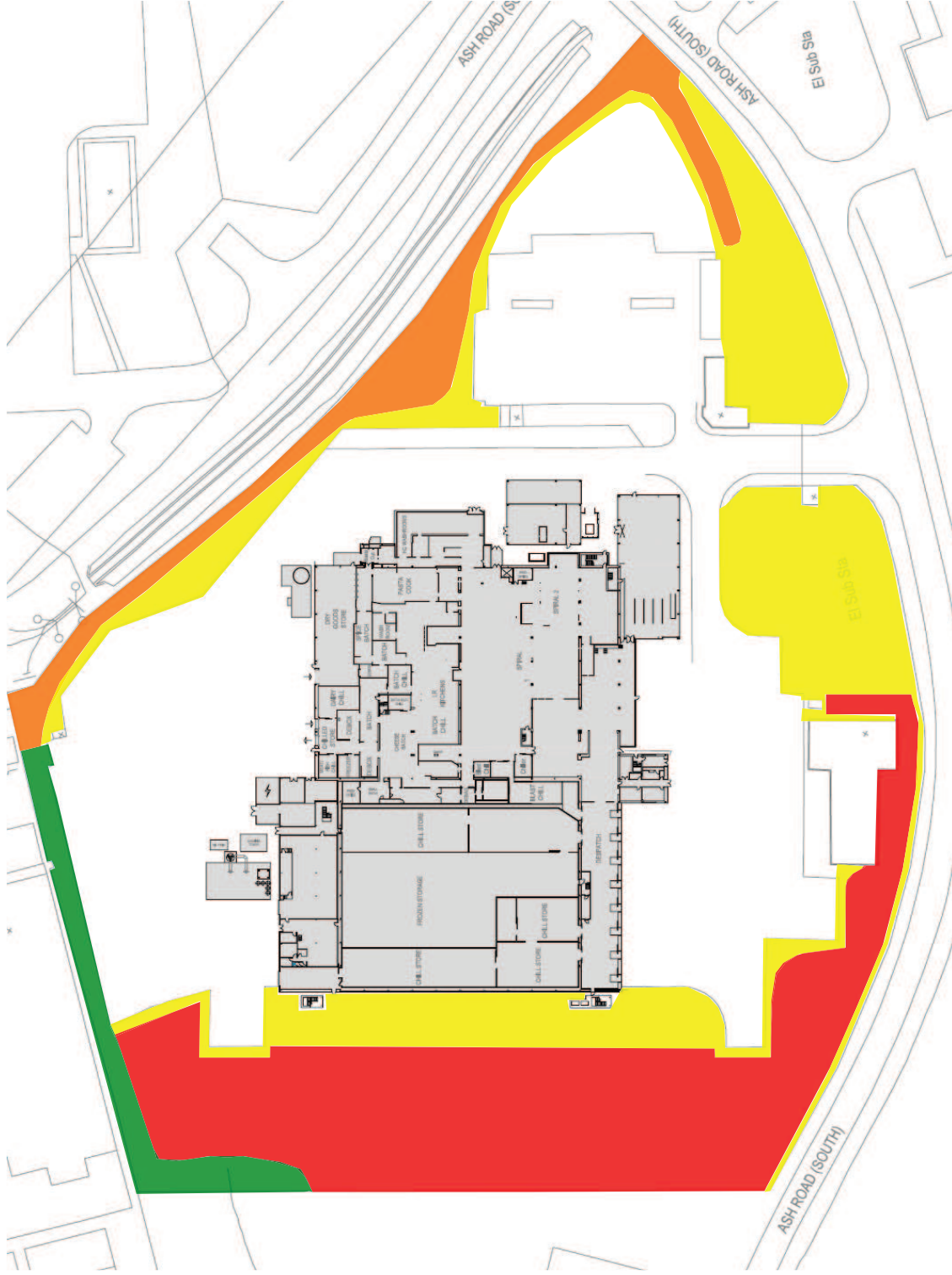
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N
 Not to scale.

Base mapping from a Cox Freeman Ltd plan entitled 'Rowan Foods – Existing Site Plan' (Drawing No. 2002_P_102, dated Nov 2012).

Key

- Amenity grassland
- Unmanaged grassland
- Species-rich neutral grassland
- Woodland/ scrub (unmanaged)

Marches Ecology

C210 Proposed Grassland Management Regime at Rowan Foods Ltd, Ash Road South, Wrexham Industrial Estate

Drawn by: ME
 Checked by: TK
 Date: 09.01.13