

Knowledge Exchange Workshop, James Hutton Institute

The future of alpine ecosystems in the UK

31st January 2018

Background

Alpine ecosystems in the UK, as elsewhere, are at the forefront of climate change impacts. The distributions of alpine plant communities and their associated soils are strongly influenced by climate and are considered highly vulnerable to change. Long term monitoring of alpine vegetation has revealed substantial upward shifts and changes in composition over recent decades, which have been linked to a warming climate. Changes of this magnitude have the potential to have major impacts on the structure and functioning of ecosystems within the existing alpine habitat mosaic and also to alter the future distribution of habitats and their associated species across the alpine landscape.

Aim of the workshop

The workshop aims to bring together representatives from the diverse community of scientists, land managers, NGOs and statutory bodies involved in the conservation and management of alpine ecosystems in the UK. We aim to facilitate the formation of new links and collaborations within this group and to collectively consider the priorities for new research to support the conservation of alpine habitats in the UK. By the end of the workshop we intend to have answers to the following questions:

- 1. What are top 5 most important outstanding questions in the management of UK alpine ecosystems and why?**
- 2. What research is required to address these questions (and how might it be funded)?**

Programme

Morning: a series of short talks introducing the alpine system, current research activities and setting the scene for afternoon discussions.

10:00 – 10:30 Arrival and refreshments

10:30 – 10:35 Welcome to the workshop (Andy Taylor)

10:35 – 11:00 Round the table introductions –who, what and where.

11:00 – 11:30 What do we know about change in alpine systems and its drivers? (Andrea Britton)
20 mins plus 10 discussion

11:30 – 12:00 Future scenarios for alpine ecosystems in the UK – where will we be in 50-100 years? (Phil Wookey) 20 mins plus 10 discussion

12:00 – 12:35 ***Restoration and conservation of alpine ecosystems – scientific and on-the-ground perspectives.***

Current research initiatives – 20 mins

Andy Taylor, Andrea Britton, Sarah Woodin, Becky Yahr, Rob Mills, Rob Brooker, Rene van der Wal.

Alpine conservation in Scotland – (Dave Genney, SNH) 5 mins

Alpine conservation in Wales – (Barbara Jones) 5 mins

Alpine conservation in England – (Simon Webb – NE) 5 mins

Afternoon: Group discussion (facilitator: Alison Hester) – *what are the future priorities for research to support conservation/policy in the UK?*

13.30 – 13:45 Summary of where we are at from the morning offerings – Alison/Andy

13:45 – 14:45 Discuss, synthesise and prioritise the top 5 questions from all participants' choice of the most important outstanding questions in the management of UK alpine ecosystems

14:45 – 15:00 Tea break

15:00 – 16:00 Discussion on what research is required to address the top 5 questions identified above and how it might be funded.

16:00 – 16:15 Sum up, agree next steps and close.