Herefordshire Meadows Protocol on Narrow- leaved and Corky-fruited Water-dropwort

Context:

This protocol has been produced in response to the increased number of recordings of Corky-fruited water-dropwort (CFWD) within the county since 2018 and the implications this may have on floodplain meadow habitats in the county and existing populations of narrow-leaved water-dropwort (NLWD).

Since 2019 Herefordshire Meadows has been carrying out active restoration of lowland meadow and floodplain meadow habitats within Herefordshire. Due to limited availability of donor floodplain meadow seed in the county, donor seed has been acquired from the River Severn floodplain and at least one donor site contains CFWD.

Background:

Narrow-leaved water-dropwort *Oenanthe silaifolia* – a perennial herb of damp grassland which receives floodwater in winter, especially where water lies for longer periods. It normally grows in hay meadows and may occur abundantly in lammas meadows. It is eliminated by even quite modest agricultural intensification.

The species is present in good numbers on the Lugg Meadows SSSI and is recognised as being a long-term native to the River Wye catchment (see fig 1 below).

Corky-fruited water-dropwort *Oenanthe pimpinelloides* – a tuberous perennial herb of hay meadows and pastures. It grows on both damp and dry grasslands. Native to southern Britain but historically the range only extended to the lower Severn catchment and *not* into the Wye catchment. Likely to have first arrived on hay cutting machinery and now spreading widely.

Risk level:

There is no indication that the two species can hybridise, nor that CFWD outcompetes NLWD. The ecological risk is therefore minimal. The risk posed is an erosion of the distinctiveness of Herefordshire's floodplain meadows.

Protocol:

- Herefordshire Meadows Advisory Team will be trained to enable them to confidently identify the two plants.
- Herefordshire Meadows will ensure that no donor seed containing CFWD is introduced to sites with known populations of NLWD.
- Landowners will be advised in advance if their donor seed is coming from a site which contains CFWD and be given a copy of this information sheet so they can make an informed choice as to whether they would like to go ahead with the restoration works using the chosen donor seed.

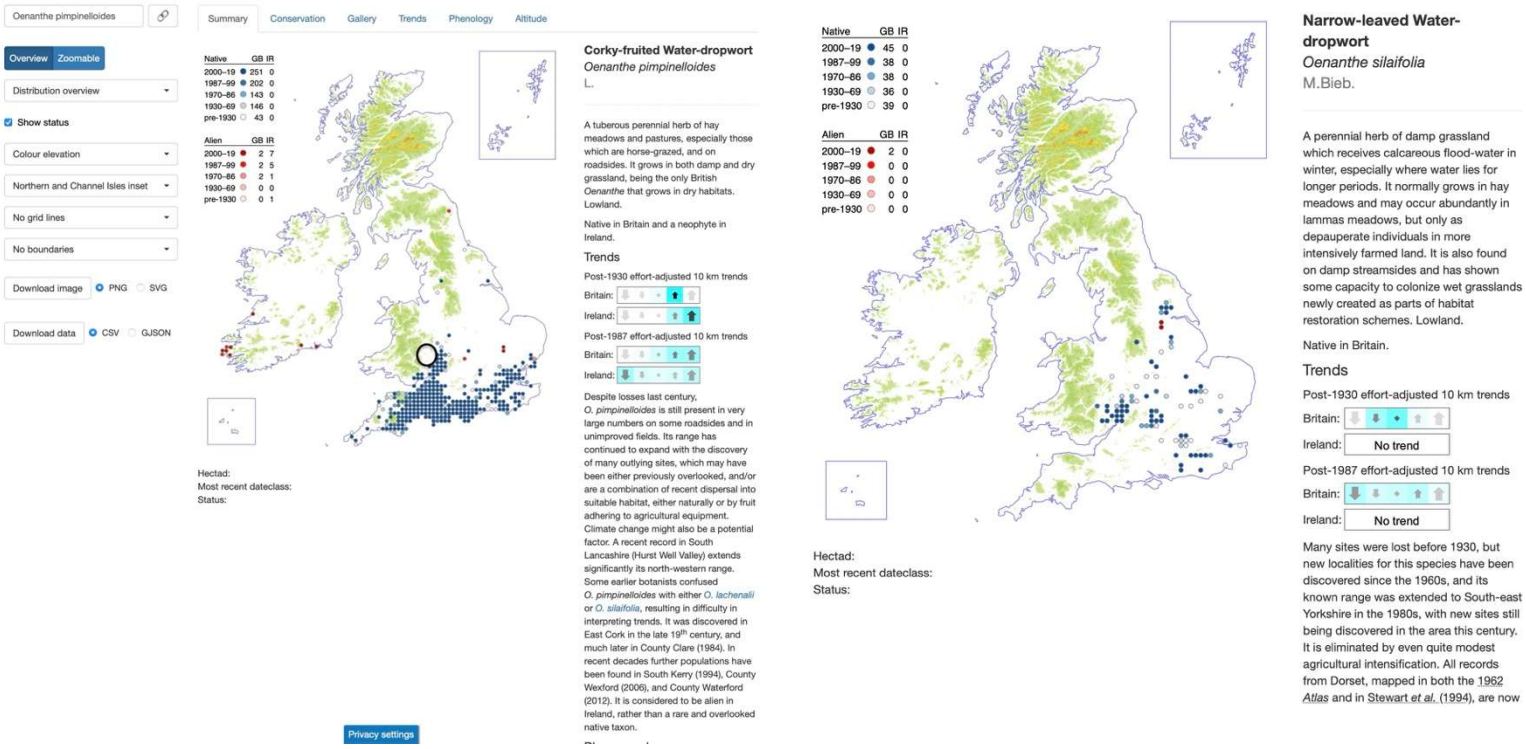

Fig 1. Maps showing historic distribution of CFWD (L) and NLWD (R)