

GROWING OUR FUTURE

BRIEFING WEST MIDLANDS WOODLAND & FORESTRY FORUM May 2008 Issue 6

Woodland & Forestry Forum

The date of our next Forum has been changed. It will now be on **WEDNESDAY 16 JULY** at Stoneleigh, Warwickshire. For the first time it will be an all-day event with presentations giving a flavour of the range of projects and activities to do with trees and woodland across the region and beyond

Monitoring Deadline - REMINDER

The West Midlands Regional Forestry Framework's Delivery Plan is ongoing and the 2007-2008 monitoring point was 31 March 2008. Please complete the forms so that we can use the opportunity to refresh and update the Plan for 2008-2011.

DEADLINE: 19 May 2008

England's Trees Woods & Forestry Delivery Plan

The FC worked with partners to respond to the working draft and a number of key issues were raised. The draft Delivery Plan has just been issued by FC nationally and has been distributed to partners including many in the West Midlands. If you have not received a copy and would like the opportunity to contribute a response, please contact Bill Heslegrave at FC Worcester.

Woodland Opportunities Mapping WOM

At the last meeting in February, the potential for WOM and the Landscapes for Living Maps was recognised in terms of influencing the Regional Spatial Strategy Revision Phase 3. Developing WOM further in relation to woodland creation, habitat creativity and a woodland birds theme was discussed.

The latest WOM maps have currently been put to use: Woodland Officers are using them with EWGS applications; they are referred to with NE and FC joint-working; and a number of local authorities are using them. There are still issues in consistency, predominantly in terms of biodiversity, and further work is being carried out.

Woodland & Forest Industries Wood Energy Task Group

A joint meeting of the two Task Groups was held in March getting updates on RDPE, Wood Energy, and the Wyre Woodfuel Pathfinder Project.

The Groups had earlier endorsed the concept paper for the regional RDPE Woodfuel Supply Chain bid and this had seemingly been well received by AWM. However AWM has now limited project applications to three measures only and this may well mean splitting into two or more projects.

The consensus from the meeting was that landowner engagement and supply chain development could best be served by a large strategic project that can provide the

support and resources on the ground where and when they are needed. A small group of stakeholders are seeking to meet with AWM to discuss the issues and concerns possible.

Workforce Development Group

Graham Taylor, together with Judy Walker and the Small Woods Association has been developing an apprenticeship programme for attracting new people into forestry and woodland work. At the same time, with the highly successful VTS programme coming to an end, talks have been held with CLA, the Colleges, and Green Wood Centre staff about a successor training programme which would support the growing Woodfuel sector and supply chain development.

A review of the Treework National Occupational Standards and NVQ/SVQ Qualification Structure has been undertaken with a number of gaps being highlighted. Many of those in the workforce are multi-skilled and multi-talented and the relevance of whole VQs is still questionable. Further work by Lantra and small task groups is now being carried out. Meanwhile the LSC will shortly be publishing their review of the training provision for the land-based and environmental industries.

Social Forestry – New Task Group

With the mandate to progress agreed at the last Steering Group Meeting, the draft terms of reference have been drawn up together with a potential list of members. It is hoped that FC England's Helen Townsend will attend the inaugural meeting.

Trees Woods & Forestry Biodiversity

The Task Group met in April appraising the West Midlands of Native Woodland HAP targets. With the 2015 targets and given that the start date for the woodland targets is 1998, it was felt that the targets for woodlands, wood pasture and parklands were achievable.

Exemplar case studies are still being sought highlighting best practice promoting ongoing vigilance, protection and sensitive management of Ancient Woodlands, Semi-Natural Woodlands and Veteran Trees and which creates/has created habitat networks and increase semi-natural woodland cover.

Enriching Nature

SITA Enriching Nature Fund has awarded just over £400,000 in the past year to new West Midlands biodiversity projects. These include:

- Needwood Forest: creation of a new pasture woodland
- Credenhill Park Wood: establishment of wood pasture and re-establishing natural woodland
- Woodland Species Restoration Project: establishing new regional coppice and managing four woodlands as exemplars
- Herefordshire Wood White: Managing and monitoring a number of Forestry Commission woodlands to ensure the survival of this nationally scarce butterfly.

For more information on the Forestry Framework, the Woodland & Forestry Forum or the Task Groups:

Contact: Sara Roberts, Tel 0121 352 5278 or Email s.roberts@wma.gov.uk

Website: www.growingourfuture.org

Green Infrastructure Planning

The regional agenda in terms of green infrastructure for both rural and urban areas is moving on and there is need to have some central co-ordination and a lead for the important work ahead. Meanwhile, both Forestry Commission and Natural England amongst others are very much involved, for example, the work on green infrastructure is progressing well in East Staffordshire/Burton where FCE are assisting in the development of a green infrastructure strategy includes the forestry exemplar pilot.

Work on the environmental and green infrastructure is also progressing in the Black Country linked to the Joint Core Strategy, including the possible development of a PBRS system based on the FC model developed in the NW as part of Newlands. A steering group led by the Black Country Consortium and including FC, NE, EA, Groundwork and others is in place. Engagement with AWM is being developed.

Job Profiles Consultation

This Lantra project is designed to record the full range of job roles and associated knowledge of everyone working in the trees and timber industry. The on-line consultation is available at www.lantra.co.uk/jobconsult and you are encouraged to select the draft job profiles together with the list of knowledge and skills and make any comments.

Wye Wood Project - Congratulations

This project, developed through the Herefordshire Sustain Project, was highly commended in the Healthy Communities category in the Sustainable Communities awards in February 2008. For more details, please contact katelawes@smallwoods.or.uk

Orchard Rejuvenation

Grantscape has awarded £294,000 to the Wyre Forest Landscape Partnership Scheme for rejuvenating traditional orchards, special trees and hedgerows. This project sits within "Grow with Wyre" and will fund 100% of its biodiversity elements including fragmented and neglected traditional orchards and veteran trees.

RSS Phase 3

The Project Plan for the Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Three Revision can be seen on the website at www.wmra.gov.uk/rssphase3. Phase 3 covers quality of environment issues including trees, woodlands and forests. A small task group led by the Forestry Commission will be convened on 12 May for refreshing and updating if necessary the text, the policies and the monitoring indicators.

Regional Economic Strategy: Connecting to Success

The Woodland & Forestry Forum's response to the consultation on the Delivery Framework was completed. We included the important messages about supporting the land-based industries, supply chain development and local home-grown markets. We stressed the sector's strength in its green credentials and the contribution that can be made to the recovery of economically lagging rural areas. Equally, we stressed the importance of green infrastructure and increased tree cover as a way of increasing property values, reducing the cost of healthcare, lowering the MUA heat island effects providing the potential for maintaining and enhancing city centre economic activity.

Cross-border Opportunities

Following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding by the Welsh Assembly Government and the West Midlands Regional Assembly the Environment Topic Group has now been established.

At the first meeting, a number of issues were discussed, with ideas and opportunities for closer collaboration. These included woodland management incentives/grants; environmental technology-wood fuel supply chain developments; environment-related recreation and tourism; conservation of key species and habitats; application of UK conservation and EU habitat regulations; climate change action plans; invasive species and deer management; timber transport.

England Forest Industries Partnership (EFIP) West Midlands Project

The project to develop a regional report of the Jaako Poyry Study of the Woodland & Forestry Sector in England is nearing completion. The Consultants, Judith Webb Associates will provide a regional interpretation of the England study, including interpretation against regional priorities. We also had the good fortune in having a Master's Degree student for one month work placement carrying out an in-depth business health survey of woodland and forestry businesses either based or working in the West Midlands and this has added considerably to the integrity of the evidence base.

In addition the project is set to inform EFIP's approach to its own action planning and test the approach for replication in other English regions.

Forestry Commission Website

This new regional website provides information about trees, woods and forests in the West Midlands at the click of a button. The new site allows visitors to explore the exciting range of opportunities offered by the Forestry Commission across the West Midlands including, places to go, activities to do, interactive maps and in-depth information about the region's forests and woodlands.

There is also key information on the English Woodland Grant Scheme, felling licences, forestry sector events, the Regional Forestry Framework and educational programmes and resources. Not forgetting Little Acorns – the page designed especially for the region's kids, with discounts, competitions and fun downloads: www.forestry.gov.uk/westmidlands

Dates for your diary

28 April 2008	West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership Conference
29 May 2008	Tree Management for Public Safety (RGS, Hyde Park)
9-11 July 2008	AONB Conference (Harper Adams University College)
16 July 2008	Woodland & Forestry Forum Meeting (Warwickshire)
18-20 September	APF Forestry Exhibition (Cannock Chase)
November 2008	Woodland & Forestry Forum Meeting (Shropshire)

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