

Task Group for Trees, Woods and Forest Biodiversity

**Wednesday 16 January
At GOWM, Birmingham**

MINUTES OF MEETING

1. Present

Justin Milward (Chair), Woodland Trust
Andy Grundy, Heartwoods
Helen Woodman, Worcs Wildlife Trust
Amanda Pearce, Forestry Commission
Simon Barker, National Trust
Chris Hastie, Warwick DC
Sara Roberts, RFF Delivery Plan Manager
Richard Thomason (dep. Judy Walker), Small Woods Association, Greenwood Centre
Martin Sutton, Telford & Wrekin BC
Amanda Barton – Herefordshire Council
David Lovelace, Herefordshire Native Wood Restoration

Apologies

Bill Heslegrave, Forestry Commission
Jeff Edwards, West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership
Judith Webb, ConFor
Chris Hogarth, NE
David Jam, Deer Initiative
Stephanie Wickison, Staffs CC

2. Minutes of last Meeting – 1st October 2007

No comments.

3. Taking forward the October 2007 Workshop on Parkland/Wood Pasture and Veteran Trees

- It was agreed that the lack of baseline data on habitat extent is the key drawback to progress.

Action: JM to check with Jeff Edwards re Data and Monitoring Group on whether they are collating any parkland/wood pasture etc data. Also check on whether it is a priority habitat.

- It was felt that there may be data already collected at county level but needs to be coordinated.

Action: Local Authority Task Group reps to check their own area's position: Worcs – HW, Herefordshire – DL, Warks – CH, JM to organise Shrops (Dan Wrench) and Staffs (SW). Also check Jez Bretherton re historic data and Woodland Trust's Ancient Tree Hunt data – JM.

- Also agreed that Orchard habitats should not be forgotten: there was a feeling that if this Task Group does not cover them, no one else will.
- [Post-meeting Notes: a) CH circulated a note from Natural England stating that they have contracted Just Ecology Environmental Consultancy Ltd to

further develop the WAPIS (Wood Pasture and Parkland Information System) across England, and will be contacting partners for information. b) Stephanie Wickison, Staffs CC, emailed to ask how regional targets would be distributed across counties, and raised the need to direct higher targets through the Woodland Opportunity Map and LfL work. Also for targets to be fed into RSS Annex.].

4. Exemplar case studies

- Andy Grundy circulated a new summary template. It was agreed that this was an acceptable format and would be placed on the Heartwoods website. Individual case studies should follow this format and be supplied direct to AG so they can be loaded with a minimum of extra work. The four case studies are to be agreed by the Group as a whole, and should offer a geographical and ownership spread.
- We now need 4 case studies: suggestions to be brought to next meeting to demonstrate quantifiable enhancement. All to bring suggestions.

Action: Private sector – DL, Wyre Forest – AG, FE (Rob Guest or Ian Hickman) – AP, SITA – AP, Wenlock Edge – SB, WM Biodiversity Partnership case studies (Jeff Edwards) – JM.

5. Regional Targets

- Jeff Edwards submitted a '*Draft Paper regarding the target setting for Woodlands, Woodpasture and Parkland for the West Midlands*'. These 2015 targets were produced by NE. Given that the start date for the woodland targets is 1998, it was felt that the targets for expansion of native woodland were achievable, based on current WGS and ES achievements (Table 3 of Paper).
- The Group was unable to confirm the restoration targets as (a) there was no comparable historic trend data to assess against, and (b) it was unclear whether 'restoration' is marked by commencement or completion of what may be a gradual project carried out over time. It was noted that the targets could be affected by i) the age class distribution of PAWS in WM and ii) the success of the woodfuel initiative.

Action: Re (a) AP to check with FC/FE as to whether any historic public/private sector restoration data is available. Re (b), JM to check with Jeff Edwards re definition.

- It was agreed that the Group could not confirm the parkland and woodpasture targets because there is no baseline data. You cannot forecast restoration if you don't know how much you have got in the first place. Links with item 3 above – need for a regional project to collate the total extent of parkland and woodpasture in the WM.

Action: JM to feed back to Jeff Edwards.

6. Any Other Business

- Bill Heslegrave sent a request for members wanting to get involved in a Sub-group to work on updating the Woodland & Forestry policy in the WM RSS Phase 3 review. Offers from JM, CH, AM, AG and MS.

Action: JM to report back to BH.

- SR outlined Lantra's role as the Sector Skills Council for the environment - based industries. The Group welcomed Lantra's support and interest through hosting this meeting and providing the opportunity to discuss regional skills issues. For too long, the industry has needed increased investment in skills and business development and the Group highlighted a number of regional skills issues and employers needs.

Action: SR to report back to Lantra.

7. Next meeting

- RT offered to give an update on the Small Woods Association
- Date of next meeting to be in week beginning 7th April.