

**Task Group for Trees, Woods and Forest Biodiversity
Eleventh Meeting: 10am – 1pm, Wednesday 27th January 2010**

Minutes

In Attendance: Simon Barker (SB), Chris Hastie (CH), Rebecca Lashley (RB), David Lovelace (DL), Justin Milward (JM), Sara Roberts (SR), Martin Sutton (MS), Simon West (SW), Judith Webb (JW), Helen Woodman (HW), Gaynor Abel (GA *minutes*)

Apologies: Greg Jones, Tony Fleming

1. Minutes of last meeting

Action Point 2.1 – GA reported that she was waiting on others to place the biodiversity case studies on the Growing our Future (GoF) website. CORRECTION – Credenhill has been published at http://www.growingourfuture.org/wmff/case_studies.htm

Action Point 2.2 – JM and James Cartwright identified that the Wildlife Trust's Wood Pasture Scheme is not suitable as a biodiversity case study.

Action Point 2.3 - will be picked up under agenda item 3.

Action Point 2.4 – HW did not recall the follow up from JM. They will discuss further.

Action Point 2.5 – also carried forward.

Action Point 3.1 – This has not moved much further forward. JM has asked Jill Butler (WT member of the Parkland and Woodpasture Group) to follow up at the meeting next week.

Action Point 3.2 – carried forward as nothing has come out as yet.

Action Point 3.3 – SB did find out, but nothing to report of significance.

Action Point 4.1 – carried forward as GJ not in attendance today.

Action Point 5.1 - will be picked up under agenda item 5.

Action Point 6.1 – Actioned

Action Point 7.1 – CORRECTION *JM to contact Kate Merry...* Actioned - SR followed up also and offered slot on agenda at June or November Woodland & Forestry Forum

Action Point 7.2 – the national and regional discrepancy has now been addressed and JE has analysis in hand.

Action Point 7.3 – Actioned.

SW attended the Regional Environment Priorities workshop and there will be a wash-up teleconference next Friday. There will also be a DAG (Defra Agenda Group) meeting next week. Comments will be incorporated and published in due course.

2. Future Role of Task Group

WMBP are no longer able to support the group, which was part of the original terms of reference for this group. JM asked if the logical role was to become a delivery group for the RFF. It was agreed that, as the RFF is well aligned with the WM Biodiversity Strategy, the remit of this group will not change. SW said that we should however be aware of slight risk of losing tree and woodland priorities within the WM Biodiversity Strategy, which could be counterbalanced through good representation on the steering group and partnership. This group will need to be active in WMBP direction. SR questioned representation of the group as a result of loss of WMBP, i.e. also losing Natural England (NE) input.

*Action Point 2.1 – **JM** to formally ask Amanda Pearce if representative from NE could attend Trees, Woods and Forest Biodiversity TG meetings*

3. Exemplar Case Studies

SR presented current list of potential case studies offered under the different RFF themes. Many satisfy some or all of the biodiversity targets as well as their own. SR has also prepared a version of DL's Native Woodland Restoration in Herefordshire (NWRH) case study using the template for completion/addition or logos etc. One criticism from the consultation has been that thematic list does not represent the multi-benefits of forestry and as such a 'Fully-Integrated Woodland Management' theme has been created to show best examples of cross-referenced case studies. A matrix was also suggested to show how the case studies meet a variety of objectives.

- SW pointed out that Wyre HLF has been identified for Biodiversity benefits/outcomes.
 - JW said a Wood Pasture case study would be a good opportunity to establish its importance in the region. This could show project work in progress. SB mentioned an area in Staffordshire that Stephanie Wickison manages as a possible source.
 - The inclusion of traditional orchards was also discussed, as comes under farm landscapes in the UKBAP. However as they are referenced in the RFF, it was felt they should included.
 - SB happy to do a Brockhampton case study and Moorcroft Wood in South Shropshire
 - Croft Restoration was also considered, but it was felt this is purely aspirational at present. Will keep a watch and consider as the project gets momentum.
 - HW suggested Piper's Hill, which can be updated as it progresses.
 - CH also identified one for the future
- JW identified the National Forest as an area for potential case studies.

*Action Point 3.1 – **SB** to work up Brockhampton and Moorcroft Wood case studies*

*Action Point 3.2 – **HW** to work up Piper's Hill case study*

*Action Point 3.3 – **DL** to complete both Queen's Wood & NWRH case studies*

*Action Point 3.4 – **GA** to circulate current template*

*Action Point 3.5 – **SR** to contact Sam Latterway – Biodiversity Officer for the National Forest regarding potential case studies.*

*Action Point 3.6 – contact information of how to get case study template to be placed on the GoF website. **GA***

*Action Point 3.7 – **all case studies required by SR by end February***

4. Regional Forestry Framework refresh – update

A small thematic sub-group looked at the objectives for biodiversity. Responses to consultation on the paper produced are still coming in, therefore are not all translated to

the latest version, which SR presented. The sub-group text is in black, and the blues and reds are additional suggested amendments. The text '*... along with other themes,*' makes the point about multi-faceted targets achieved.

NE has given its response. They have indicated that they are not happy with the 1st sentence, paragraph two and asked that it be removed. After discussion all agreed this was a statement of fact and would diminish the importance of biodiversity if it were removed. All agreed not to accept this amendment.

NE asked for the addition to the 2nd sentence, paragraph two – '*widely supported by...and the Regional Biodiversity Delivery Plan*'. The Group felt that it did not fully support this and that it could be seen as a get out clause for those wishing to disengage with the RFF. All agreed not to accept this addition.

MS suggested an amendment to the 3rd sentence, paragraph one – '*providing a rich habitat for a growing number of species.*' It was agreed by all to amend this to – '*... a wide range and number of species.*'

SB asked for an acknowledgment of ancient trees in the body text. It was agreed to insert this in the 2nd sentence, paragraph one – '*...habitats such as ancient woodlands, ancient trees, woodpasture & parkland...*'

GOWM has for the first time offered a response to this from the Sustainable Futures Team. This is a step change and very positive, especially in trying to embed woodland targets into the new integrated Regional Strategy for the West Midlands.

The next step will be to publish the refreshed RFF by 19th April. The thematic sub-groups will then work up the Delivery Plan. The RFF Delivery Plan Task Group decided this would happen a little later this year, in time for the Regional Woodland and Forestry Forum in June.

Action Point 4.1 – SR put a call for members to join the biodiversity sub-group to work up a first draft of the delivery plan before this group meets again in May. Volunteers to indicate to GA.

ALL

5. Opportunity Mapping – coordinating woodland and biodiversity – report back from subgroup

JE produced a series of maps, which have been driven partly by the Regional Development Plan (RDP) and concerns over recommendations for woodland creation and concern regarding national and regional alignment of the native woodland HAP resource. Growth points have been added to the earlier maps, showing the 10 Woodland Network Priorities and PAWS overlapping Landscape Scale Projects. These do not directly relate to Integrated Biodiversity Delivery Areas (IBDAs), but could feed into the process. A further map produced identifies the 18 RDP landscape scale projects in relation to the priority woodland areas (networks and PAWS areas combined as 1 layer). Some major areas of importance are missed out of the landscape scale projects (Wyre Forest and Mortimer Forest for example).

The National Biodiversity Integration Group (BIG), whose remit is the Natural England Integrated Biodiversity Strategy, is tasked with funding 20 priority landscape-scale

Integrated Biodiversity Areas (IBDAs), where 80% of biodiversity targets will be reached. That will be two plus per region. There is concern if 80% of targets are focussed in the 20 chosen areas, what will happen to other important habitats, and also will the choices made affect HLS funding allocation. Assurance that this will not mean 80% of funding will go to these areas has been given. There will be *'enhanced business as usual everywhere else'*.

Work on IBDAs started in September and concern that these do not fit with woodland priorities as raised at the National BIG. JE sits on the Woodland BIG.

Action Point 5.1 – Feed into IBDA consultation when possible

ALL

SW asked if this group wished to add to the WM Ancient Woodland Priority Map. Conflicts between it and the WOM Woodland Creation Priority Map were identified. In the 18 landscape scale projects in relation to the priority woodland areas map, some areas were identified as very aspirational, e.g. Hay to Hereford. SW suggested that the maps JE has produced could be used to inform the Regional Development Plan, the new Strategy for the West Midlands and funding bodies, and asked if it was better to have imperfect maps (something) rather than nothing. MS believes a gapping exercise is essential. JW asked if a species sweep had been done, or if entirely habitat focused. Mandate was given for JE, JM and SW to continue to develop this woodland opportunity map.

Action Point 5.2 – SW to produce a one-page brief for feedback to JE on the maps

SW/ALL

6. AOB/brief updates –

- Regional Biodiversity Strategy - Regional Delivery Plan
JE has not been able to refine, but will send around another draft for sign-off by the end of March
- Ancient Woodland sub-group – Shropshire Hills AONB
The sub-group met last week. Brian Barker has made contact with ancient woodland owners, both those engaging with PAWS and those who are not. Engagement is proving difficult as small woodland owners tend to be farmers and woodland priorities for management need to be established. SR suggested looking at how Woodfuel East approaches this. JW said there is also a project in the Cotswolds, which is run by a seconded member of FC staff, where the target group and project aims might be similar.
- Woodpasture/Parkland audit project
Jill Butler is still looking into unlocking the use of the data database from this project. All the data from the West Midlands has been provided to the LBAPs, although this is not very usable in its current format. Concerns regarding accuracy and truthing requirements have been raised with Suzanne Perry and both she and JE are looking into resolving these issues.
- WM Regional Woodland & Forestry Forum
The main theme for the next meeting on 30th June will be Biodiversity. This will link to the International Year of Biodiversity, IBDAs and a long-standing offer from the Butterfly Conservation Trust to give a presentation. Climate change and plant health, Open

Habitats and Traditional Orchards are also being considered as agenda items. It is intended to be an all day meeting, possibly with a site visit. Suggestions for venues and/or presentations to JW. Group members suggested the Wyre Forest.

- **WM PSA 28 workshop**

JM and SW recently attended this workshop run by AWM and GOWM and led by the Defra Agenda Group (DAG). The government PSA target 28 to improve SSSIs is part of DAGs remit. The group looks at the eco-system definition of environment and looks at hooks and opportunities for its member's agendas under biodiversity, landscape, soil, water and air.

The Environment Agency is leading the Water Sub-Group and this includes considering woodlands role in water alleviation. SW sits on the group. They are seeking a key landowner to trial woodland creation in relation to this.

- **WM Health & Well-being Partnership – Environment Conference**

This is being held in Birmingham at BVSC on 8th March. Paul Fisher of the Health Protection Agency is leading. See <http://www.wmpho.org.uk/news/events.aspx?id=2791> for further details

- DL outlined how he came to this group by virtue of the PAWS Restoration Project for Herefordshire and the Queens Wood case study. Alongside monitoring and PAWS restoration, he is involved in revising the National Inventory for Herefordshire by looking at 1840s tithe maps. 55% of Herefordshire has been looked at and includes new candidates for Ancient Woodland classification. Mid-Sussex Weald area is the only other to be looking at this in relation to the 1840s tithe maps. DL presented some area maps. Blue indicates potential AW and green current AW. Some areas have been removed from the inventory during this process. This has resulted in a net increase of 1000 ha. All details will be presented at Hellens Barn, Much Marcle, in Herefordshire at a Conference on the 14th April. Further details will follow

7. Date of next meeting - Thursday 13th May

This will be held at Block B Government Buildings, Whittington Road, Worcester. It will commence 10:00 in Room 107.