

**Task Group for Trees, Woods and Forest Biodiversity Meeting**  
**Thurs 13<sup>th</sup> May 2010 - 10am – 1pm**

**In Attendance:** Simon Barker, Tony Fleming, Rebecca Lashley, Justin Milward, Sara Roberts, Martin Sutton, Helen Woodman, Simon West, Gaynor Abel

**Apologies:** Chris Hastie, Greg Jones, David Lovelace, Judith Webb

**1. Minutes of last meeting**

AP 2.1 – JM has had communication with Amanda Pearce (AP) and Jeff Edwards regarding Natural England attendance at this group's meetings. They cannot commit to every meeting and can only offer sporadic attendance. SR feels this is unfortunate and will follow up with AP on Wednesday. Internal applicants from FC and NE are sought for a post to deliver ETWF. This is a national post, which will be based at Bristol.

*Action Point 1.1 – **SR** to follow up with Natural England at a regional level*

*Action Point 1.2 - Invite post holder for ETWF Delivery to the next meeting/when appointed.* **JM**

All other action points will be picked up within the agenda for this meeting.

**2. Regional Forestry Framework refresh**

SR thanked all those who have contributed to the process, which is now complete. The Growing Our Future website has been updated accordingly. The refresh brings the framework up to date, consolidating themes down from eleven to nine and providing the right steer for the development of the 2010-13 Delivery Plan.

SR circulated a page relating to Enhancing Biodiversity. The table on the back shows the cross-references between themes.

Population of the delivery plan has started, linked to the work on the Economic Baseline Study for the Forestry Sector carried out by Lockhart Garratt and Eskogen on behalf of AWM looking at economic return and the delivery of benefits to the industry.

*Action Point 2.1 – Comment to SR by the end of May for delivery/launch of the Delivery Plan at the Forum on 30<sup>th</sup> June.* **ALL**

SR also circulated a first draft of a manifesto for the RFF, with 9 key points linked to each theme for comment. 'We need...' has been used rather than 'We will...' to encourage engagement, as suggested by the RFF Delivery Plan Steering Group

*Action Point 2.2 – Comment to SR by mid-June at the latest.* **ALL**

All agreed the manifesto was a useful tool and that it should be kept to one page. A strapline could be included to direct people to the GoF website.

MS asked about including measurable targets. The North West RFF Manifesto sets a target to double woodland cover and we could include that. SR agreed that planting targets and the Low-Carbon Transition Plan ought to be included.

It is important also to recognise that the RFF has a 50-year vision for forestry in the region.

MS asked about incentives to plant trees and suggested asking AWM to fund front-end production of woodfuel as well as making market investments. SW thinks this should be possible with AWM or its successor.

*Action Point 2.3 – GA to send out the papers SR presented as part of this agenda item to all.*

### **3. Exemplar Case Studies for RFF**

SR thanked all for their contributions. There are now 19 case studies. These now sit under the various thematic headings on the GoF website. The biodiversity case studies are Credenhill Park Wood, Pipe Hall Farm & Doderhill Common and Walcot. Those still pending are, Queens Wood, Native Woodland Restoration for Herefordshire and Woodland Projects that had been awarded SITA funding

More case studies can be added as time goes on. This item will remain on the agenda so that any additions may be brought to the group for approval. SB agreed to complete a study on Orchard Production that has economic links.

### **4. Opportunity Mapping – coordinating woodland and biodiversity**

Last year Jeff Edwards (JE) brought a series of maps to the meeting that linked Landscapes for Living and delivery of tree and woodland habitat action plan targets. The aspiration at the time was to create a map, which covered both these topics and their targets. A sub-group was formed to carry out this work and develop the Woodland Opportunities Map (WOM) accordingly. Landscapes for Living had 16 regional projects and the questions of whether developing this would be a useful tool and add anything to mapping in the region was raised.

SW presented a map developed by the G&R Manager for FC, Ewan Calcott, which is intended to prioritise grant funding for additional contributions. Birmingham is not included and neither are parts of the Vale of Evesham, following consultation with Worcestershire County Council. The West Midland Ancient Landscape Restoration Areas indicated are for planting also, to buffer and join up areas in the landscape. Urban areas are highlighted for a GI approach, which is a smaller, less landscape-scale approach. MS felt that FC needs to look at more focussed targeting linked to planting an extra funding, which would then see real change.

In the WOM ancient Woodland Landscapes & Ancient Woodland Restoration Areas (PAWS) in SW's paper the circles give location indication of pasture and parkland from the inventory work.

SR suggested combining these maps. TF agreed, but suppressing the green colour and bringing forward other elements to the eye. Further explanation of what the areas mean would also be useful.

RL asked if SW had used the current data from the parkland and pasture inventory, as this still needs work doing on it. Bill Butcher's data is better than the audit data at present.

JM outlined the position on IBDA's. Natural England are slightly pulling back from the process. WMBAP are proposing that IBDA's should be used as exemplars rather than priority areas. SW and JM agreed that they do not need to be factored in to WOM development.

SW and SB discussed conflicts in prioritising and funding multiple aspirations within the landscape. Explanation of how woodland fits within a semi-natural landscape needs to be made.

All agreed the PAWs target is very useful to have.

MS suggested that there needs to be policy discussion on its use.

*Action Point 4.1 – SW to combine both maps and re-present to the group.*

## **5. AOB/brief updates –**

JM asked whether, if WOM and the RFF refresh were removed, there would continue to be a point to this Group meeting. The SIRS workshop in May could generate a reason to meet. Meeting at least once more was agreed, at which point the Group may decide to recommend sitting back for six months until any specific issues requiring its input are raised.

### RDP/IBDA's

JM has spoken with Colin Raven regarding this. WMBAP decided to carry on with developing RDP for delivery of targets as discussed and are proposing that IBDA's be used as exemplar rather than priority areas. This has been put to Natural England. Draft IBDA's have yet to be signed off.

### Ancient Woodland sub-group – Shropshire Hills AONB

The Woodland Officer (WO for the Woodland Project at SHAONB, Brian Barker (BB)), has been in post for approximately nine months. Contact has been made with 28 woodland owners of whom 19 are owners of Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) resulting in:

- 20 woodland visits.
- 4 Management Plans covering 63 hectares of woodland, of which 32 hectares are PAWS woodland and the remaining 31 hectares to be partially converted to broadleaved woodland.
- 5 more Management Plans to prepare covering 60 hectares of woodland.
- 1 Felling Licence application.
- 9 English Woodland Grant Scheme applications to prepare.
- 12 hectares of woodland marked ready for thinning.

7 more woodland owners have made contact and are awaiting visits.

Advice has been given to 3 woodland owners on woodfuel procurement.

In addition 20 businesses have been visited with reports prepared through the Woodland Enterprise Grant scheme resulting in £6,350 of income.

Overall there is growing interest in bringing woodland back into management. The initial focus of the project on PAWS woodland has been broadened to include other types of woodland in order to make the optimum use of the Project Officer capacity..

Forestry Commission WGS applications are being held up at present as owners are not registered on the Rural Land Registry and are experiencing problems and delays in obtaining the necessary registration. It is a condition of all WGS application that owners must be registered.

MS pointed out that income from timber is still tax-free.

#### Woodpasture/Parkland audit project

RL informed the group that there is still a lot of concern about the quality of the data from this project and Natural England (NE) is fairly embarrassed by the outcome. LBAPs were given the data sets about three months ago and RL put together comments from Worcestershire and Warwickshire LBAPs indicating they are not suitable in their current form. Suzanne is still keen to find funds to put together a further project to refine the data. These are not yet available. South West Region are currently carrying out their own project using a new consultant.

*Action Point 5.1 – **JM** to draft a letter to NE requesting the project should be funded for conclusion in a satisfactory way and run this past **RL**.*

SR suggested JM discuss this with Jeff Edwards beforehand to give him the heads up, as it is not a personal issue. She also suggested that partnership could be enlisted to find other funding sources, e.g. SITA.

#### WM Regional Woodland & Forestry Forum

The next meeting will be on 30<sup>th</sup> June at Moccas Hill Wood and Moccas Park by kind permission of Woodland Trust and Natural England respectively. The new FC Chair, Pam Warhust will be attending. The day will start early will brunch at 09:30. Paul Cobbing, Chair of the England Biodiversity Group, will open the day at the top of the hill and the party will wend its way through a series of stops to the bottom and should take three to four hours. During the day delegates will be able to look at the commercial woodland block, historical and archaeological sites and parkland restoration, woodland creation, climate change and plant health, as well as the challenges of deer and grey squirrel management and butterfly/moth conservation. The number will be between 30 and 40 attendees.

It was suggested to SR that a series of such events might be set up to go out to the counties and sub-regions.

SW stated that deer are emerging as a significant threat to biodiversity. FC wants to see and increase focus to combat this and address deer at a landscape scale. This is currently in part met by the Deer Initiative, through funding from FC, NE and Defra. He appealed to anyone who knows of further funding sources to support this work to come forward.

SB attended a conference on the Future of British Wildlife at Reading recently and the issue of deer was raised, especially regarding butterfly habitats. He produced a summary of the key messages for his colleagues and could circulate to the group.

TF – English Heritage are carrying out a Survey of Hill Top Forts in Shropshire and Herefordshire.

Wild Pigs are considered a menace in the Forest of Dean. HW suggested there could be a market for boar meat as there is for deer.

SR – the 2009 RFF Monitoring process is underway.

**6. Date of next meeting**

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> September at FC Worcester