

**West Midlands Task Group for Trees, Woods and Forest Biodiversity
- Woodpasture & Parkland : scoping meeting**

**Thursday 3rd July 2008
At GOWM, Birmingham**

MINUTES OF MEETING

1. Present

Justin Milward (Chair) - Woodland Trust
Suzanne Perry – Natural England (WAPIS)
Helen Woodman - Worcs Wildlife Trust
Simon Barker - National Trust
David Lovelace - Herefordshire Native Wood Restoration
Chris Mayes – Herefordshire Council
Stephanie Wickison – Staffordshire County Council
Craig Slawson – Staffordshire Ecological Records
David Lowe – Warks County Council
Fran Griffith – Herefordshire Trust for Nature Conservation
Jeff Edwards – Regional Biodiversity Coordinator

Apologies

Bill Heslegrave - Forestry Commission
Jez Bretherton – Natural England
Sara Roberts – RFF Delivery Plan Manager
Nikki Williams – Ancient Tree Hunt
Sian Atkinson – Woodland Trust

2. Introduction

- Justin Milward explained that the scoping meeting had initially been prompted by frustration in the Task Group at the lack of data to sensibly inform the regional iteration of the recently revised Woodpasture/Parkland HAP targets. This generated a desire to attempt to coordinate existing county/local data into a West Midlands regional audit. At the same time, the Task Group became aware of the revamped WAPIS project.
- Suzanne Perry is looking at delivery of the Woodpasture/Parkland HAP, for which a provisional inventory of the resource is a prerequisite. As WAPIS is already in existence, it seemed sensible to proceed with this existing database and Just Ecology have been carrying out some case studies, eg Kent, Warwickshire, Cumbria, Thames & Chilterns. There is some £15,000 available to progress the WAPIS data collection project, but it has to be spent in this financial year.

3. Regional data

Those present outlined the data of which they were aware –

- National Trust - have digital datasets showing all their parkland, which often include woodpasture
- Herefordshire : David Lovelace - has a veteran tree project. It is thought clusters of veteran trees are also important as identifying areas of Woodpasture.
- Worcestershire – Has a veteran tree survey which has highlighted areas of wood pasture and parkland. The county has also been working on a habitat inventory.
- Hereford and Worcestershire Historic Gardens Group – Have plotted all locations on the GIS
- Staffordshire - Staffs Wildlife Trust carried out a survey in 1999 of all Woodpasture and parkland, this is held by the record centre. The County have a Historic Landscape Characterisation plan which has identified all parkland, not sure about woodpasture.
- Wye Valley AONB have carried out a Veteran Tree Survey.
- The Ancient Tree Hunt has already been providing data to WAPIS.
- Warwickshire has data but paper based, so there would be a cost in providing it.
- Other thoughts – don't forget FC records; Shropshire CC have records too.

4. Discussion

- Although 'Parkland' definition is more straightforward, some debate over definition of 'Woodpasture' and methodology used to identify sites. Use of Historic Landscape Characterisation, aerial photos, lichen/saproxyllic data.
- There was an extensive debate about whether the available funding should focus on (a) developing guidelines for the **process** of accurately identifying Woodpasture/Parkland (ie a rule base), for subsequent rolling out across the region or elsewhere or (b) simply **collecting** the data from as many sources as possible across the region (ie spatial info). There was some concern that the data needs to accurately reflect what is actually on the ground now, rather than simply constituting a historic number-collecting exercise irrespective of data quality (Chris Mayes, David Lovelace). Ideally any process guidelines developed would be tested at parish level (say one parish in each West Mids county). However Suzanne Perry cautioned that her baseline remit is that she has to end up with blobs on a map: refining the process would have to be additional to this basic task.
- **The point was therefore made that it might be possible to do both a) and b) but it would require additional funding to NE's £15,000.**
- As Staffs CC had put together regional datasets for FC's Woodland Opportunities Map initiative, it might be possible to re-use their skills – Stephanie Wickison to investigate (Stephanie has subsequently reported that Shona Frost has confirmed that Staffs CC might be able to put the data together).

5. Actions

- Suzanne Perry to prepare a draft brief for a WM project by 28th July, with an agreed brief to subsequently go out to tender to consultants inc local biological records offices. The draft brief will be submitted to this 'Sub-group' with a request for comments by 8th August and a follow up meeting to agree the brief on 12th August (open to all who want/are able to come). Suzanne Perry, Jeff Edwards and Justin Milward to lead on taking this forward.

- Justin Milward to investigate additional funding from Sara Roberts/FC and Woodland Trust.

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