

Task Group for Trees, Woods and Forest Biodiversity

Sixth Meeting – 10am, Friday 12th September 2008

Forestry Commission, Worcester
Spur 8 Conference Room

Present

Simon Barker (SB), Gaynor Birbeck (in attendance), Jeff Edwards (JE), Andy Grundy (AG), Rebecca Lashley (RB), David Lovelace (DL), Justin Milward (JM), Helen Woodman (HW)

Apologies

Jeز Bretherton, Bill Heslegrave, Simon West, Richard Thomason

1. Minutes of last meeting

Quite a lot will be picked up in the agenda: case studies, woodland creation, wood pasture

ACTION progress: Justin to contact Mike Wilkinson and Charlotte Reeves to identify new NE rep – Mike Wilkinson has moved on and Charlotte Reeves no longer forestry rep. This is now Amanda Pearce, who may attend in future instead of Jeff.

ACTION: JM to contact Amanda Pearce

2. Exemplar case studies

Idea to put on either Growing Our Future (GoF) website and link on Forestry Commission West Midlands pages www.forestry.gov.uk/westmidlands – or vice versa

- *Edge Wood* needs updating. It is within six projects that Richard Thomason is working on.
- *Credenhill Wood* - JM expressed difficulty in minimising content for this. Simon West sent comments: Who is the target audience? 3 pages maximum/2 better; bullet points
- Stephanie Wickison is now on maternity leave, so no progress on *Needwood*.
- DL presented half-side summary for *Queen's Wood* with area photograph of clear fell taken on 10th June and Forest Design Plan. FC has committed to 100% PAWS restoration.

JM proposed 2 pages maximum, plus photos/plans. AG suggested Executive Summary approach, with a more detailed technical document available also. Contact details for further information should also be included, with emphasis that these are projects that partners are undertaking.

ACTION: JM, AG & DL to liaise over final content and with GB to upload to FC and GoF websites. Content could be further amended as necessary.

3. Native Woodland HAP targets

- Query of the regional BAP targets - WM response went back to Natural England (NE) via JE, with no response as yet. Targets will be reviewed for Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). JE suggested continuing with targets currently given – these are useful as a lobbying tool, as they set minimum targets, especially for those not yet met.
- It is hoped that restoration targets will be met through FC estate work.
- Wood pasture & parkland targets are challenging – 60 sites for restoration and 18 new creations. These are unlikely to be met and need further consideration once the inventory is complete.

- NE leading on Biodiversity Strategy Delivery. The proposed framework has an eco-system approach, with actions for species within HAPs, plus special measures for those species that do not fit. The species list will be available this November and the regional Delivery Plan produced. There is no guidance yet regarding the scope of this. Each region will probably prioritise differently and wood pasture could be the focus in this region.

4. Parkland/Woodpasture – Update on project progress

Sub-group meeting was held on 3rd July to look at this project and audit. Suzanne Perry (SP) attended as national NE lead. Scope was agreed and a brief for tender to project drawn up. This has gone out to potential consultants.

A spatial map is required and there are three elements:

1. Collection of data
2. Analysis of methodology for data collection
3. Case study analysis of sites/ground truthing – ideally one per county.

If the whole region cannot be done, some counties would be given higher priority than others would, as some have better audits. Staffordshire and Warwickshire may be omitted from this pilot as a consequence.

Tenders should be back by 16th October. SP has a small window to make a decision and issue contract. The steering group will need to be formalised and lead on delivery, providing guidance to the consultants. JE asked if any nominees from the group would like to assist in the process. Jill Butler, Tim Dixon, Chris Mayes and Helen Woodman (HW) all assisted in finalising the brief. Sian Atkinson would like to be included in selection. HW is not able to be involved at this stage due to other work priorities. SB would like to be kept informed of progress and contribute at a later stage. DL said he would be happy to be involved if needed.

ACTION: JE to email alert to attendees of the sub-group of time frame and role of group for the project.

5. Next Task Group initiative

Bill Heslegrave previously suggested a sub-group be formed to carry forward Keeper's of Time (KoT) Action Guidance – possibly producing a regional focus leaflet or a restoration project or FC/task group led workshop for landowners and agents. This fits with this task group's original aims.

ACTION: Follow up when KoT guidance published.

Simon West previously highlighted Orchards again and JM agreed appropriate to group, as in spirit of landscape scale management. Whilst orchards belong with wood pasture biologically, on a practical level they are more aligned to farmland HAPs, in common with grassland and hedgerows. Orchards also fit with HLS and are a key habitat-linking feature. SB attended UK HAP Group meeting Feb/March this year in Peterborough. They are tasked with taking forward orchards and will meet in November to start this - National Trust and NE leading jointly. Definitions differ at County and Country level and this will need to be formalised.

ACTION: SB to seek representative to attend task group meeting - providing an update after the summit conference and discussing delivery.

There are a few orchard projects in the region at present. These include People's Trust for Endangered Species Initiative (Countdown 2010 project), who are seeking volunteers for ground-truthing, element of Wyre Forest Landscapes Project and Small Woods Association/Bulmer's Project in Herefordshire. JE questioned what value group could add at a regional level. HW suggested delivery and management might be the remit.

NIWT 2 is about to come out – project to resource what is happening on the ground via agents. Extracting spatial data at county level is not possible. Forest Research have suggested that NIWT2 could be improved in terms of markets and volumes, and are running a pilot with South West Woodland Renaissance Group/ funded by South West RDA, to gain bespoke ‘top up’ information from regional partners.

ACTION – SR to find out more about the ‘top up’ facility and the argument for support from RDA.

JM suggested looking at Wet Woodland in connection with River Basin Management Plans for opportunities, in terms of management and woodland creation. This fits with RFF element. He distributed Woodland Trust leaflet – *Woodland Actions for Biodiversity and their role in Water Management*. DL raised concerns about altering historical land-use and upstream implications and impacts downstream

ACTION – to flag for later discussion

6. AOB

Phase 3 RSS has Quality of Environment as a major review element.

- The Forestry sub-group for this is revising text and policy, and working on better monitoring indicators. A series of options will go out to consultation. However due to delays to Phase 2 (Housing) this will be June or July next year. Bill Heslegrave produced a draft policy paper for the Quality of Environment Group and together with task group will now produce options for this.
- Wider environment headings include biodiversity. A meeting of the biodiversity options sub-group will be held next Tuesday Sept 16. One element is to contract a review of targets (Annex b in old RSS). Resilient landscapes for climate change will also be an element. The key will be pulling together best data for baseline and is dependent on ability to translate back to priority habitats. A regional workshop on RSS targets will be held on 22nd September, where consultants will present proposals.

NE are organising a series of roadshows for NE and FC staff once ETWF Delivery Plan is published, to consider alignment with existing strategies and business plans. It will then be rolled-out to regional stakeholders.

AG provided update on SITA project. Condition Assessment now an accredited Open Network Course at Green Wood Centre. Three woodlands, each with its own specialist interest, have been used for baseline surveys/volunteer assessment. Richard Thomason is tying up networks of coppicing in the region to target sites. It is not known what needs to be coppiced at a regional level. Butterfly Conservation has identified FC Public Forest Estate for management of lepidoptera, including coppicing. JM suggested coppicing as workshop topic linked to Ancient Woodlands sub-group.

APF International Machinery Exhibition (ConFor) is at Cannock Chase next week – Thursday to Saturday. On the Friday the seminar tent will focus on biomass.

ACTION – AG to send details – this has been done

Date of Next meeting – 2nd or 3rd week in January. GB to trawl for availability.