

**Task Group for Trees, Woods and Forest Biodiversity**  
**Ninth Meeting : 2pm – 4.30pm, Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2009**

Forestry Commission, Room 107, Government Buildings Block B, Whittington Road,  
Worcester WR5 2FR

**In Attendance:** Simon Barker (SB), Hannah Cockerill (HC), Tony Fleming (TF), Dave Keeley (DK), Rebecca Lashley (RL), Justin Milward (JM) , Anthony Ravenscroft (AR), Sara Roberts (SR), Martin Sutton (MS), Simon West (SW), Stephanie Wickison (SWk), Gaynor Abel (GA)

**Apologies:** Jeff Edwards, Ian Hickman, Amanda Pearce, Helen Woodman

Welcome to Hannah Cockerill, on FC's Graduate Training Scheme, who is assisting with the RFF Refresh.

**1. Minutes of last meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2009**

Action 3.1: Case Studies – covered by agenda

Action 5.1: RSS Task & Finish Group – JM had been part of this Group reviewing and refreshing QE8. This was now out for consultation and the Group would re-convene to consider responses in the autumn

Action 7.1: Ancient Woodland Sub-Group – progress report at next meeting

Action 7.2 – Presentation from the last meeting had been circulated

Action 8.1 & 8.2 – WOM postponed. Will pick up in agenda.

Action Point 9.1: Woodland Birds WIG – progress report will be given at next meeting

**2. Exemplar case studies**

JM presented current version of Credenhill case study, now inserted into the FC template. Uncertainty regarding the 'quotes' section, which was designed for contented customers/client group - FC's Tim Yarnell was suggested as a good source.

For all case studies need to make sure that users can access underpinning evidence, e.g. Dymock report – link to more detail. Could have logo of main partner in case study instead of FC as appropriate. RL suggested that not enough credit for the study came across in the text.

- The idea is for each to have a particular character or theme from RFF that show linkages to biodiversity.
- Edge Hill case study has now been published for SWA. This has a strong economic theme.
- TF suggested a Wye area project – public access site.
- Dudley MBC offered to look at a couple of sites, e.g. Wren's Nest, Saltwater
- There is still an aim to have these on the Growing Our Future Website to gain a wider audience and possibly link the FC regional webpages ([www.forestry.gov.uk/westmidlands](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/westmidlands)).

*Action Point 2.1 – **JM** to produce a further draft of Credenhill case study, making biodiversity linkages more explicit.*

*Action Point 2.2 – **JM** to encourage David Lovelace to work up the case study for Dymock/Queenswood.*

*Action Point 2.3 – **SWk** to discuss possible case study with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust.*

*Action Point 2.4 – **GA** to forward case study template with Minutes.*

### **3. Parkland/Woodpasture**

The TG led an audit of this last year alongside NE and the WM Biodiversity Partnership. These findings are still with NE to be quality assured and have gone into assisting with the RSS Biodiversity targeting process. The report is published, but not yet publicly available. To extend this work countrywide, other regions could use this. This TG felt should the report highlight regional exemplars as part of the project.

*Action Point 3.1 – Regional exemplars to be followed up with JE*

**JM**

*Action Point 3.2 – Carry forward to next meeting and include Inventory and Best practice.*

### **4. Ancient Woodland sub-group: Shropshire Hills AW pilot**

Shropshire County Council has agreed to employ a Project Officer to continue the work of the Shropshire Hills AW pilot through the SHAONB. 19 applications were received for the post and four or five applicants were shortlisted. Interviews will be at the end of July. The appointee will run the pilot and outreach, providing information of grant schemes and hand-holding support to small woodland owners and farmers; and look at market development to target PAWS, e.g. mobile sawmills. The post was advertised as flexible Part-time or Full-time, and is funded for two years. The main funding partners are The Woodland Trust, Forestry Commission and Shropshire County Council.

The main drive of the Ancient Woodland sub-group is to address the critical nature of Ancient Woodland and SSSI sites. Replication across the region is an aspiration for the pilot project. NE is also involved in the sub-group. Take up of HLS has not been as good as it could be.

### **5. Opportunity Mapping for Woodland: integration discussion**

This agenda item has been postponed and carried forward to the next meeting, as neither Jeff Edwards (JE) or Amanda Pearce (AP) were able to attend today. SW outlined some details. Further to JE's presentation on developing habitat priorities to the next level and combining data to indicate key areas, this has yet to be progressed. SW suggested a map type format of combined data sets could be brought to the next meeting.

### **6. RSS/RFF revisions/refresh**

**6.1** RSS: The Consultation on the RSS Phase Three Revision Policy Options has begun and the deadline for comment is the 14<sup>th</sup> August. JW asked if this TG should respond to the Forestry and Woodland Section with Options and Leads. The Regional Woodland & Forestry Forum did brainstorm this prior to (BH) Bill Heslegrave's submission, but yet to hear further details. SR explained that the Phase Three revision is an update of existing policy and tackles an eclectic mix of subjects. She suggested individuals from this TG look at the Forestry and Woodland and Biodiversity in the Quality of Environment (QoE) Section. Once the consultation responses have been received this TG will look at what needs to go into the actual text.

However, WMRA do not believe that the Phase Three Revision process will go fully to the end for public consultation, due to changes in Local and Regional Government structure. The Government have asked for a stock take meeting early September to consider how best to proceed with RSS Phase Three. It is important to ensure that outcomes from this revision shape future documents and strategy. This will include QoE and highlight that it should have been embedded earlier and not left to the Phase Three revision. There has been a lot of suggestion that the expansion of Biodiversity Partnership targets in RSS has been too ambitious, notably Staffordshire and Black Country. There is still an opportunity to comment on this and JE is the lead contact. Targets for 2026 are aspirational and therefore being more ambitious is preferable.

MS asked if there is a clear focus on where woodland planting will be in the region for biodiversity and access. FC are getting more money for Woodland Creation, mostly broadleaf planting and small areas. Maps indicating targeted funds for public access are available on the website. MS suggested these could be used in the RSS Phase Three revision. ETWF raises the profile of responsibility for individual/street trees and FC is continuing to urge NE Green Infrastructure Plans for Growth Points to be joined up.

The RSS Task Group will meet shortly after the response deadline

**6.2** WMRFF is nearly five years on from its original publication in October 2004 and is now being carefully looked at to see if it is still 'fit for purpose'; and how it aligns with ETWF, RSS and the WMES (West Midlands Economic Strategy). SR, BH and Nic Cole are meeting tomorrow to discuss embedding in new strategies. SR carried out an exercise with FC WM Regional staff recently to look at alignment and the results were very promising. HC is doing a piece of work focusing on alignment with ETWF. The first part was a desk study and was followed by a proofing exercise. She presented papers on this.

HC's next task is to set up a series of small sub-groups from existing task groups, one for Climate Change and one for Urban Trees to examine and consider this in more detail. Chris Blakeley has been asked to head up the Climate Change Group. JM and SWk are happy to volunteer for a Biodiversity SG. JE and AP should also be included.

*Action Point 6.1 – Further volunteers to let SR or GA know.*

**ALL**

A draft of the refreshed RFF should be ready for the November meeting of the Regional Woodland & Forestry Forum and for publication in April 2010 following public/stakeholder consultation. A web-based version is being considered rather than a paper document. MS said that the refresh was also an opportunity for promoting good news/best practice exemplars.

The TG considered the Biodiversity theme and noted that it had already changed over the life of the framework, with items removed where covered by other areas of the document.

SR circulated a document on the synergies with the Regional Biodiversity Strategy and how closer alignment could be achieved.

*Action Point 6.2 – Suggestions/feedback for this to SR by mid September.* **ALL**

**6.3** MS asked where Local Authorities were with LDFs (Local Development Frameworks). GOWM keep a masterplan record of this. BH and Ewan Calcott are looking at engagement with the process for FC. Green Infrastructure is having more currency in core strategies and is seen by FC as a key into the LDF process.

The Black Country Consortium have set up an Environmental Forum and BH is attending tomorrow – possible feedback at next meeting.

## **7. AOB**

### **7.1 – Orchards**

The HAP Group has almost reached a consensus on defining traditional orchards. Regionally more can be done alongside woodland pasture in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. There is an Orchard Topic Group as part of Herefordshire Sustain and a fair amount of local activity across the region. There is a new community orchard in the Telford area. Possible sources for funding for this are: Countdown 2010 grant, BIG Lottery Local Food Grant. John Iles (Grow with Wyre) can signpost this.

*Action Point 7.1 - GA to send MS contact details for John Iles.*

**GA**

Kate Merry approached JE on doing a presentation to the TG on this. Orchards are in RFF as an important habitat, so JM suggested to put this on agenda at the next meeting.

*Action Point 7.2 – Invite Kate Merry to next meeting.*

**JE**

Grow with Wyre is linked with heritage and has several orchard projects. Could possibly have a presentation from them also.

*Action Point 7.3 – Invite appropriate person to discuss project or projects linked to orchards as part of Grow with Wyre.*

**SW**

*Action Point 7.4 – Carry forward as main agenda item for the next meeting, when a decision/plan on how to take this forward or not will be made.*

**JM/ALL**

### **7.2 - Life+ bid**

This is a direct fund from Europe. It is only at 50% with 50% match funded. This could be cash or kind. There is a regional initiative to make an application bid to the Life+ fund. This is being led by JE and Shropshire Wildlife Trust and SW sits on the task group. There will be a workshop at the end of July, but the majority considered that the September 2009 deadline was too tight. A later (2010) application will be worked up to look at and could consider:

- Natura 2000 Site
- Biodiversity (general)
- Education

The priority is to work up a regionally co-ordinated programme with projects that are relatively under-represented at present. There will be opportunities to feed in and add projects to the bid. A lead organisation for delivery will have to be found. SWA, SHAONB and Shropshire Wildlife Trust are looking to put in proposals of their own. The latter's bid will be urban in nature.

For capital assets – could consider the Natural Assets Fund, which is up to 90%. Economic benefits need to be stressed as AWM funded. Nigel King is the NE contact.

**7.3 - Woodland BIG (Biodiversity Integration Group) meeting – landscape scale projects** Priorities for wooded landscapes in the West Midlands need to be established

and links made to the Living Landscapes Opportunities Map. JE is the national lead. Needs more discussion at a national level on landscape-scale projects.

*Action Point 7.5 - Carry forward as agenda item for next meeting*

#### **7.4 – Public Forest Estate Study**

The public consultation on this study can be found on the website at [www.forestry.gov.uk/england-estatestudy](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/england-estatestudy). The consultation ends on the 28<sup>th</sup> September and includes regional stakeholder events; in this region on the 9<sup>th</sup> September at Penkrige. Details can be acquired from GA.

#### **8. Round Table**

Progress report from SR - tabled

SB – Traditional Orchard Projects – 1<sup>st</sup> newsletter, SB can forward as a pdf.

#### **9. Date of next meeting**

Late September or early October - GA will circulate a range of possible dates.