

Task Group for Trees, Woods and Forest Biodiversity
Tenth Meeting: 10am, Tuesday 20th October 2009

In Attendance: Simon Barker (SB), Jeff Edwards (JE), Greg Jones (GJ), Rebecca Lashley (RB), Justin Milward (JM), Sara Roberts (SR), Simon West (SW), Gaynor Abel (GA)

Apologies: Chris Hastie, David Lovelace, Amanda Pearce, Stephanie Wickison, Tony Fleming

1. Minutes of last meeting

AP 2.1 – actioned.

AP2.2 – picked up in agenda item 2.

AP 2.3 – Stephanie Wickison has indicated that the Woodland Officer for Staffordshire Wildlife Trust is happy to put something together for their Wood Pasture scheme that they have worked on, but is concerned that at this time it is not necessarily demonstrating good practice.

AP 2.4 – actioned.

AP 6.1 – actioned.

AP 6.2 ? – actioned.

AP 7.1 – actioned.

AP 7.2 – picked up in agenda item 7.

AP 7.3 – SW suggested that for Orchards and Grow with Wyre, the best person to invite is John Iles. Bob Griffiths and Louise Sutherland from FC were also suggested. This action was carried forward to the next meeting.

AP 7.5 – Woodland BIG and the Regional Biodiversity Integration Group is picked up under agenda item 5.

2. Exemplar case studies

The Credenhill case study is complete and will be put on the Growing Our Future (GoF) website and may be used for the RFF refresh also.

*Action Point 2.1 – **GA** to place case studies on GoF website.*

*Action Point 2.2 – **JM** to contact James Cartwright, Woodland Officer at Staffordshire Wildlife Trust about their Wood Pasture Scheme or other possibly biodiversity case studies.*

David Lovelace (DL) has placed details of the project on Native Woodland Restoration in Herefordshire 2006 – 2009 on the Internet at <http://www.bosci.net/project.html>. It is a little wordy and would need refinement for this task group's purposes.

*Action Point 2.3 – **JM** to ask DL to produce as a case study, using the template.*

*Action Point 2.4 – **SR** to ask DL about progress on the case study for Queen's Wood, at Dymock.*

SR asked if there was a case study for Worcestershire, with links to other themes, e.g. social forestry and biodiversity.

The Wildlife Trust's site at Grafton was suggested, which links deer management and biodiversity. GJ said he would be behind this, but that the Wildlife Trust may be cautious due to previous negative publicity on deer control.

*Action Point 2.4 – **JM** to follow up with Helen Woodman.*

JE suggested SWA's Coppice Projects, e.g. Wenlock Edge and Aconbury.

*Action Point 2.5 – **JM** to follow up with Judy Walker.*

Dinmore was discussed, but was dismissed as has already been widely publicised as a successful project. It also has a unique set of events that contributed to its success, which are not necessarily relevant to other areas.

GJ also suggested the Lower Wye Valley, providing the site was just inside the West Midlands area.

RL suggested the Malvern Coppice Network.

SR circulated a list of potential case studies for the RFF. She pointed out that most under trees and woodland cover, wood energy and forest industry also link to biodiversity.

Action Point 2.6 – This task group to pick these up when more advanced.

3. Parkland/Woodpasture – update

The report from NE and WM Biodiversity partnership is still not formally published.

There is a query on the habitat extent figure for RSS targets:

- ◆ Should it all be classified as BAP habitat?
- ◆ Should it all be a target for HLS?

Suzanne Perry (NE) holds the view that the data captured is wider than simply BAP habitat. JE to ascertain which sites should be on the list.

A meeting of local BAP Coordinators yesterday reconfirmed these targets should indicate sites rather than hectares (ha) within the West Midlands. Although the national guidance is to have sites, Bill Butcher who ran the contract, was keen to keep the data in ha.

The data gained is inclusive and captures any fairly large area of trees on grassland. Clarification will need to be gained at site level.

JE presented this at the last meeting and has the GIS layers. The ha figure leans towards capture of parklands of a particular size and may omit some wood pasture as a result. However this was a pilot project and has highlighted issues in capturing data, i.e. site versus ha. More pilots may be run next year, but there is no more money to progress this at present.

*Action Point 3.1 – **JE** to investigate how the information may be refined to suit requirements with Suzanne Perry.*

*Action Point 3.2 – **JE** to find out what came out of the Wood pasture Conference held last week in Staffordshire and report to task group.*

Issues surrounding Parkland and Wood Pasture will be on the agenda of the recent UK HAP meeting at Reading, coordinated by Suzanne Perry.

*Action Point 3.3 – **SB** to find out what was discussed and any outcomes.*

4. Ancient Woodland sub-group: Shropshire Hills project

SW provided an update of the project.

- ◆ Brian Barker has now been appointed as Woodland Officer at Shropshire Hills AONB, funded by Shropshire County Council.
- ◆ He has a good knowledge of the industry and is already making contact with small woodland owners of PAWS under threat.
- ◆ He has also met with SWA, Heartwoods and the Wildlife Trust. There may be an opportunity to link with Heartwoods Woodfuel Project in the future, creating long-term sustainable local markets.
- ◆ The work is noted in the Regional Development Plan under the work of Shropshire Hills AONB, rather than standing on its own.

GJ noticed a mention in the local paper about the Wildlife Trust's concern for SSSI PAWS in relation to a Shropshire Hills AONB project in its northern region to reintroduce fallow deer. The project has not progressed, but these issues should be re-considered if it goes ahead.

*Action Point 4.1 – **GJ** to follow up with Brian Barker*

5. Regional Development Plan (RDP)/review of WM Biodiversity Strategy/woodland priorities

JE provided an update.

- ◆ There are concerns regarding Woodland Priorities under England Biodiversity Strategy Delivery Framework – 'Securing Biodiversity', in terms of lack of clarity of priorities for delivery. Under Regional Biodiversity Plans, targets are to 2015 and conversation with BIGs (Biodiversity Integration Groups) in terms of species priorities will form part of that.
- ◆ The RDP is more advanced in the region than in some other and a draft has been produced. It will be signed off and taken forward to the national team to discuss species integration.
- ◆ 18 priority habitats/landscape scale projects were identified at a recent workshop and seven of these would deliver against woodland targets. A further seven would deliver against wood pasture/parkland targets. Spatial distribution of these needs to be sorted to let LBAPs know and find partners to assist with delivery.
- ◆ Although woodland restoration is a priority in the WM Biodiversity Strategy, woodland creation is not. PAWS restoration is seen as greater priority for BAP partners. National guidance of 1% increase in woodland creation per annum focuses around extending existing habitats and providing buffering and links between habitats. This percentage is undefined in the WM RDP, although new wording in the summary is more helpful, as the England priorities for woodland creation are pitched differently from the region.

- ♦ The WM Biodiversity Strategy, which was produced in May 2005, is due for renewal. It will be renewed online as a two or three page glossy document to identify priorities and will make reference to the RDP.
- ♦ The 'Growing Resource' economic study is also being updated.

JM asked if work still needs to be done to link WOM with the Regional Biodiversity MMap. Amanda Pearce and SW were looking at this, but there is currently no resource to progress. Clare Edwards of NE had been identified to work this up. The services of GIS are available, but the task group would need to identify what work they should do. Both RDP and National BIG targets are working on shorter-term priorities than WOM.

Action Point 5.1 – JM, JE and SW to have a teleconference and follow up by email to progress this.

JE suggested the GIS unit might attend the next meeting to demonstrate work that could be done.

6. RFF refresh

SR provided an update. After the last meeting a small group had a teleconference under the theme 'enhancing biodiversity'. Draft topic papers were produced for each theme. SR circulated the ones for 'enhancing biodiversity', 'climate change' and 'woodland cover' prior to this meeting, for input from the group. The draft topic papers will be presented at the Regional Woodland and Forestry Forum on 15th December. It will then go to consultation by wider stakeholders before being published in March 2010. Actions will follow in a separate document and sit alongside a three-year rolling delivery plan.

Action Point 6.1 – comment back to SR as soon as possible. Preferably by the first week in November and prior to the meeting of the Delivery Plan Steering Group on November 13th. **ALL**

JE commented under EB1 that it should make reference to the England Biodiversity Strategy Delivery Framework and the Regional Development Plan.

SR pointed out that deer management is picked up elsewhere, but majors under the 'trees, woods and forest industry' theme. GJ agreed that no one theme can be seen in isolation.

SB said raising awareness of orchards and hedgerows in terms of regional identity was good. However there is a query that under BIG, the delivery element falls more into Lowland Farmland than woodland. The Orchard HAP is about traditional orchards and not all orchards. A traditional orchard survey is being funded by NE at present and is considering landscape scale areas for creation. It was suggested amending under EB5 to indicate traditional orchards.

7. AOB

Orchards – It was hoped that Kate Berry of the Traditional Orchard HAP Group may attend the next meeting. After discussion it was felt that more value to her and the group would be to present at a larger group, such as the Regional Woodland and Forestry Forum.

*Action Point 7.1 – **JM** to contact Karen Berry to say the Forum will invite her at some point next year, possibly June 2010 (the project only runs until March 2011).*

This task group originally picked up orchards as no one else was doing so at the time. Parkland/Wood pasture and orchards are still under discussion for inclusion by Woodland BIG and may form part of the RFF. It is now felt that other people are eading on orchards.

- ◆ The West Mids Biodiversity Partnership had asked for a note on what this task group does and JM has supplied this. To be discussed further at next meeting.
- ◆ GJ provided an update on his work for the Deer Initiative.
 - The Deer Initiative is a private company whose funding comes for FC, NE, Defra and other sources. There are five Deer Liaison Officers in England and one in Wales. They also sub-contract to deer management advisors.
 - GJ's patch covers the whole of Central England. In the Lower Wye Valley the focus is on landscape scale management and includes a day each month for each landowner to look at the deer population. The Mortimer area includes Downton Gorge and has fewer SSSIs. There are landscape scale management days here too. Nine SSSIs with imminent deer threat have been identified, including Woolhope and Dinmore. Patrick Faulkner is working in these areas.
 - There is a Deer Initiative Conference in and around Stoneleigh in 2010.
 - The UK National Deer-Vehicle-Collisions Project was set up in 2003 through The Deer Initiative, with lead funding for the study coming from the Highways Agency and the Scottish Executive. The main aims of the project for the first three years were to assess for the first time the true nationwide scale and geographical distribution of the problem, and build a database to help identify hot spots and priority areas for mitigation. The Highways Agency are now funding a revival of the 'Deer Aware' campaign.
- ◆ RB highlighted an issue to be addressed under the RSS, as to the target figures for woodland. The National Inventory LBAP proposals for woodland are less than the regional figure being presented. For *Maintain, Restore and Expand* targets the combined figures for LBAPs fall short on all three targets. JM explained that Bill Butcher had taken the National Inventory figure and removed non-native broadleaf from the target. Bill compared this to other work and the figures were the same. JE has discussed with SW regarding national figures and GIS layer.

*Action Point 7.2 – **JE** to analyse per LBAP to identify where discrepancies lie.*

- ◆ JM will add discussion about value of this task group and whether to hold less meeting or meet for specific issues only to the next meeting agenda.
- ◆ Amanda Pearce has now taken a step back from work with this group, since her change of role to Senior Stakeholder for Partnership and Advocacy at Natural England, West Midlands. JE is happy to be the NE contact for the group.
- ◆ Audrey McGrath circulated and email to inform of the work of Paul Cobbing, the Environmental Priorities Workshop and PSA28 target – Healthy, Natural Environment.

*Action Point 7.3 – **JM** to provide comment by 15th November*

8. Date of next meeting

Date to be set in week commencing 25th January 2010.