

West Midlands RFF Social Forestry Task Group Meeting

Tuesday 24 February 2009 at 10am
Forestry Commission, Worcester - Room 106

1 Introductions

Welcome to Katie Eastaugh previously Project Officer for Herefordshire Sustain Project, who returns to work after maternity leave. She will be taking forward the social forestry agenda for Small Woods Association (SWA).

In attendance: Gaynor Abel (GA) – *taking minutes*, Janet Armstrong (JA), Rebecca Banks, (RBa), Ros Burnley (RB), Katie Eastaugh (KA), Sara Roberts (SR), Judy Walker (JWk), John Winterbourne (JW),

2 Apologies

Sue Anderson, Jason Maclean, Justin Milward, Louise Mills, Kate Tudge. Simon West

3 Action points from last meeting:

Practitioner database

Action Point 3.1 – Thank you to JA, whom supplied SR with a wealth of Groundwork examples, including contact details. Still waiting on FEI information from Susannah Podmore

WM Wildlife Trust (WT) has appointed three posts to develop Black Country Living Landscape projects, which include community health programmes.

Evaluation: Update: JWk

- Working on evaluation framework
- Set milestones in each category to measure progress in any programme
- Have found an online assessment, which works quite well and are looking to see a similar evaluation tool can be developed to include the employability element.
- The scheme is being piloted as it is now.
- Timeline – pilot will be completed by the end of March for feedback, at which time should know if funds are available to employ someone to develop the online assessment tool. Discussing with Claudia Carter at Forest Research, who is working on online assessment schemes.
- Next steps – to finalise scheme before wider circulation, offer to those on database to continue and widen trial of scheme, produce a West Midlands wide report.

Action Point 3.2 – JWk agreed Methusula already discussed at earlier meeting, no further action.

Good practice handbook and case studies

ACTION POINT- Programme Group have agreed to use of case studies template by group - GA to circulate. Suggestion that addition of 'outcomes' to template should be followed up

ACTION POINT - JM will raise at the Biodiversity Task Group meeting on 13th January, but it did not receive much discussion.

Biodiversity tg are also putting together three or four case studies, e.g. Credenhill, looking at biodiversity and the multi-benefits accrued (economic, social & community benefits).

E&LB 14-19 Diploma

Action Point 4.1: Walford & North Shropshire were invited to this meeting and were thought would attend. *Carry forward invites to next meeting*

- Wolverhampton Environment Centre has 480 pupils in the 14-19 group.
- Poor take up of some diplomas such as construction and manufacturing could be down to economics and availability of placements. Forestry now has an opportunity to fill this gap, as the land-based sector is more resilient due to an economic lag. Food & drink, woodfuel and small roundwood are also holding up well.
- As part of ELBD, students can take a levels.
- 14-19 diplomas equivalent to A levels and secure UCAS points
- 80/20% classroom/practical ratio.
- West Midlands is a pilot for FC and Simon West (SW) has sent details out asking for offer of placements and also made contact with schools. Unsure if this has progressed any further. *ACTION POINT – SW to update tg.* JWK asked if there is another way to do this – have someone face to face with sector, potential employees/placement providers.
- Holme Lacy not doing a formal ELBD but similar courses.

ACTION POINT – JWK to discuss how to progress pilot with Bill Heslegrave (BH).

ACTION POINT – INVITE Brian Kedward to next meeting.

ACTION POINT – RB to circulate list of consortia/priority areas

ACTION POINT – JWK to make enquiries with colleges to see if part of consortia, including those not providing ELBDs, but might wish to.

Funding

Action point 6.1 – carried forward

Action Point 6.2 – carry forward to item 4

Action Point 6.3 – ongoing.

Funding remaining open beyond February to carry forward to 09/10.

ACTION POINT JWK to discuss possibility on Social Forestry WIG with BH for 10/11 business plan and how to shape bids for Social Forestry Commission

ACTION POINT – GB to provide funding overview from EWGS monitoring spreadsheet

ACTION POINT – JW to circulate grant information appropriate to some social forestry projects

4 Progress on good practice guide: Discussion on outline

- A. Why – a lot of research findings need to be pulled together, with links to relevant reports.
- B. How – this section is more difficult. It is aimed at those seeking connections to fund forestry programmes or seeking to develop new programmes. It could be split in two sections:
 - i. How to develop
 - ii. How to access
 - iii. Other points of contact (support for parts A and B)
- C. Case Studies – As discussed should have at least three from, Wildlife Trust, Groundwork WM and Forest of Mercia (FoM). Hoping to get case studies to cover each of the four elements.

ACTION POINT RBa to put together a case study from a FoM education project

How to use this guide – originally this was envisaged as an internal document for those providing training and for woodland owners wishing to provide facilities.

ACTION POINT – extend this section to include owners and those wishing to establish social forestry projects

Recommendations

- A desk exercise should be completed to gather all information so far sources, research reports information etc.
- Section A to include all 4 elements: social skills & physical health, emotional/neural health, health & wellbeing, employability.
- Section B should include 'type' and 'size' of group
- Re-order B sub-sections as follows: move section i. to after section vi. trainers and service providers **or** B. Developing an activity programme, C. Service providers, D case Studies
- Appendix – suggestion that WM pilot evaluation be included and web link to existing health survey online (change once new evaluation tool developed).
- Need to start considering funding for publication. JWk said would work best as a web-based resource, but could publish summary for circulation/printing.

5 Volunteering

Action Point 7.1 – Woodland Trust have no students in the region. Groundwork WM already has student, Katherine who has a degree in land management, on placement with them. A new student could be based a Groundwork or SWA can offer office space, where JWk would lead.

ACTION POINT – JA to return to Nikki Davis to see if have an available student.

There is an enormous increase in volunteering activity within the region and SFTG considered including in remit. There are lots of providers of these opportunities noted and within case studies, e.g. FoM, Malvern Hills AONB. There is a lot written on good practice already, therefore decided tg will not specifically address

6 Social Enterprises

Wye Wood and SWA in process of setting up activities. Need to make link between social and commercial forestry more positive - potential for social forestry programmes to offer input to sector/industry. There are well-supported gangs to deliver benefits, especially from volunteers. Worcester City Council has such a gang from the probation service, working in woodlands within the county. Attracting new entrants to sector career is one benefit. Economic benefits also need to be made. Reduction in skilled labour coming from Europe could be hook for promotion.

7 AOB

RB has a questionnaire for employers to see if there is training provision that they want. JWk asked how to find work of SWA for example fits with RDPE bid. Action Plans 3 & 4 show how allocated spend related to bids against priorities. LANTRA have bid under skills funding to support applicants through process, claims and programme overview to deliver cross sector/geographical coverage. They are still in process with AWM to achieve this.

ACTION POINT - GA to circulate questionnaire

FC were involved in setting regional priorities in production of Regional Implementation Plans (RIPs) together with AWM, NE as RDPE Partners Group. SR suggested taking back to via group via BH to explain delay in delivery due to LANTRA not yet being appointed as the delivery mechanism is hindering sector work.

AWM are holding a RDPE Stakeholder event at Stoneleigh at the end of March

8 Date of next meeting or future communication

5th June – 10:00 at FC Worcester, Room 107, Spur 1