

Regional Woodland & Forestry Forum Social Forestry Task Group

Meeting of 2nd September 2009
at Forestry Commission, Worcester

1. Welcome and Introductions

In attendance:

Gaynor Abel (GA) – *taking minutes*, Phil Beardmore (PB), Hannah Cockerill (HC), Katie Eastaugh (KE) Clare Neale (CN), Sara Roberts, Louise Sutherland (LS), Judy Walker (JWk), John Winterbourne (JW),

Apologies

Ros Burnley, Rebecca Roberts,

Welcome to Phil Beardmore, Groundwork WM Regional Biodiversity Coordinator and Louise Sutherland, Forestry Commission Grow with Wyre Coordinator.

2. Actions of last meeting

AP 2.2 – JWk has had a lot of discussion with Robert Dunn around the pilot apprenticeship scheme, but the Consortia bid in Herefordshire for the ELBD is still undefined, despite some progress.

*Action Point 2.1 – **CN** to provide an update on this before the next meeting*

AP 2.5 – wait for JW

AP 2.7 – JWk has emailed Ros Burnley to get this information and is waiting on a response.

AP 3.4 should be Brian Kempton (BK) and this TG would like to invite him to discuss the Wolverhampton Education Centre at a future meeting.

*Action Point 2.2 – **PB** to extend invitation to BK.*

Groundwork need to establish the representation at this meeting. This should be achieved as the Black Country devolves into a new regional structure, which should be settled by October and roles are more clearly defined.

There are no official course numbers for Consortiums confirmed as yet and approval does not necessarily mean running diplomas this year. Depending on student numbers, consortia may decide to postpone delivery for another year. This should become clearer in October.

There is some concern that universities may not accept Diplomas without one or more A levels to go with it. We don't have a breakdown of this picture at present. DCHF have indicated that 80% of universities will accept the diploma as entry to university. Delivery means that there is a choice to broaden programme at GCSE level and take core subjects alongside diploma modules. Post GCSE there is an option to take more GCSEs or A levels, or focus on a more vocational course.

Future Jobs Funding

Small Woods Association has bid separately to this for Telford and has 30 places to offer. Groundwork WM has an allocation of 1,000 placements to deliver. The contract has yet to be signed and Janet and Heather are busily looking for partners. The focus is on unemployed 18 to 24 year olds, but may also be unemployed graduates and offers a six-month employment programme. Delivery partners can pay more than the minimum wage if able to. It is also open to keep individuals on further than six months. Anyone wishing to know more should get in touch with Janet.

14 to 19 Diploma

SW has had this as his remit. He has provided all the connections with the necessary material and will email out to all schools next week. This has also been placed on an appropriate website. SW has had a great deal of positive feedback. There is some concern that there will not be the resources to review and update the information. CN agreed that the document is very helpful and would be keen to see how it unfolds and realisation of numbers for forestry. It is on the Lantra website for diploma support.

Action Point 2.3 - SR to find out about take up.

Angela North (AN) has worked with three local Consortia who are keen on this diploma. CN had another idea to raise the profile of the forestry diploma as follows:

1. As part of the diploma students have to do a project at level one, two and three. Lantra is the lead organisation and in partnership has been asked to propose a project brief. This group could make a proposal and provide good practice examples and ideas of how students could carry out a project report, e.g. design, presentation. The different levels within the diploma will to some extent dictate this.
2. A new network of Diploma Employer Champions has been set up of about 150 employers nationwide to promote the diploma to other employers and provide support for delivery. CN is looking for land-based champions. It would not be imperative for any champions to attend x number of events each year. The network provides a half-day introduction to the role.
3. AN sits on a group, Line of Learning Regional Networks, set up to promote good practice in the region. They are developing the idea further to form a steering group and are seeking employer representation in this. It would be a national SG and influence how things operate at a local level.

CN is happy to discuss in more detail. JWk pointed out that quite a few employers that SW contacted were keen to get involved further and suggested that four of five could be approached as potential champions also.

SWA are shy or investing in diplomas at a national level and are more interested in apprenticeships.

SR suggested that two projects could be developed further. Phil Ridley and Jim Waterson would both be excellent choice to discuss ideas for this.

Social Forestry WIG

SR thinks there is a need to focus on fostering of social inclusion for WIG and should be more focused rather than broadened. JW is unsure if this will be a national or regional decision. This wig will be the succession grant to the FS WIG and there should be no problem with the availability of funds. In Scotland this is a challenge fund, but in the West Midlands it will be allocated on a first come first served basis. All agreed that this was best as panels for challenge funds add to the burden of delivery of grants. It will probably run in 2010-2011 and will be a three-year programme funds permitting. The funds are clear for the first year, but may need to be reassessed in years two and three.

JWk sent JW a list of possible criteria for the grant as follows:

- ◆ Target over 14s
- ◆ Not for schools
- ◆ Strong partnerships with reporting agencies
- ◆ Equipment and staff training
- ◆ Taster sessions
- ◆ Site safety and set up costs
- ◆ Evaluation

JW also thought of insurance, but it was pointed out that grants do not usually fund this. The money however for the grant is not co-financed and so there will be more

flexibility in how it is spent. JW is keen to do a detailed piece of work to look at what can and cannot be funded.

KE highlighted that links with reforming partners may be off-putting to applicants and suggested possible promotion through care farms; e.g. Houghton Project. It would also be an opportunity to extend their activities. In Scotland a requirement is a good strong element of community support.

Action Point 2.4 – JW to ask Ewan Calcott how the Social Forestry Grant is run in other regions.

3. Funding Opportunities

SR asked if anything was known about care farm funding. AWM has invested the set up of these, in particular Worcestershire to promote the ethos. It is operated on a county by county basis. She asked if social forestry could tap into that.

Action Point 3.1 – KE to find out more detail and discuss regional social forestry opportunities with AWM.

4. Apprenticeships feedback

SWA's apprenticeship pilot has four apprentices. Two will work in the Wyre Forest employed by SWA and two with private land owners, one of which with the Duchy. There had been some hope that FC could offer some employment, but the means of promoting the pilot and recruitment did not meet FC regulations and standards for open and fair competition. The apprentices will be employed from 11th September.

Experience from the pilot will feed into the apprenticeship framework and a second trial is envisaged next year. RDPE Landskills Programme and Sanshaw Family Trust are the primary funders.

SR suggested re-advertising to meet FC recruitment standards and to have six students, instead of four.

5. Good Practice Guide

A Revised Version has been produced. A few changes should be mentioned. Firstly that Forest School has been taken out. JWk sees social forestry addressing needs of older children (over 14) and adults. All agreed that the guide works best as it is now, with forest schools omitted.

SR strongly advised the guide on costs be rewritten to make it clear that these are not a budget, but indicative.

JW offered his assistance to provide more detail on tree protection and felling permissions.

As the guide will be web-based it was discussed for national application on FC website with Helen Townsend was suggested. GA suggested application on the regional pages would be most appropriate.

6. Evaluation and pilot feedback

QBE – SWA response to needs of funders and itself to gather real evidence/proof that organisations will accept of individual's journey towards improvements in social skills, health, employability etc. QBA was developed to measure how far a programme takes an individual along this journey and measures improvement. There are four measures, A to D to set the baseline and track progress. The QBA is designed to measure milestones in the following areas:

- ◆ Maintaining emotional wellbeing
- ◆ Education and employability

Comparisons with other programmes can be made. CN asked if there are common criteria to other sectors.

SF36 is used for health as a self-reporting document and is generally accepted by most health professionals. It does have a social element, i.e. the effect of poor health on social interaction. The QBA has been put together by SWA to include employability in respect of health and social interaction and is a work in progress. However a generally accepted monitoring element has yet to be found. The first trial group of people are going through. It could also be trialled as part of the Social Forestry WIG. It would then be possible to compare the cost of projects to show best value for money.

Wye Wood are now hitting problems with delivery for changing objectives. LSP as funders have a duty to co-operate and share information. LS suggested that it is necessary to be specific to a group to get any measure. KE explained that the problem with Wye Wood is that people are not referred, but are signposted to the programme.

Young offenders at Tick Wood are not yet using QBS. This is partly due to the SF36 focus on health and is therefore more appropriate to Wye Wood.

Only significant activity of a week or more is worth measuring.

JWk will try it at the next Work in the Woods week, which will be at Much Wenlock.

JWk presented a paper on the initial feedback.

PB explained that Groundwork does not have a unified approach to evaluation and that the funding source for programmes and courses set different requirements for feedback. He said he would be happy to consider QBS for some GroundworkWM projects. However he cannot offer a social forestry project on which to run it.

*Action Point 6.1 – **PB** will discuss the use of QBS with Heather at GroundworkWM*

*Action Point 6.2 – **KE** to liaise with **LS** on use of QBS for Grow with Wyre Projects.*

7. AOB

JWk asked whether the TG wished to keep going as the three tasks it set itself are almost complete. It was decided to hold at least one more meeting to finalise these tasks. After this continuation with a different set of tasks and amend the Terms of Reference will also be discussed.

SR is in the throws of the RFF refresh and its alignment with national and high level regional strategies. SR explained the process for this. A meeting subsequent to this was held to look at the RFF refresh in relation to social forestry.

8. Date of next meeting

13th January 2009 - 10:00 at FC Worcester