

**West Midlands RFF
Social Forestry Task Group Meeting
Friday 31st October 2008
Forestry Commission Worcester**

1 Introductions

Janet Armstrong (JA), Sarah Blackwell (SB), Justin Milward (JM), Richard Nyirenda (RN), Phil Tidey (PT), Sara Roberts (SR), Helen Townsend (HT), Judy Walker (JWK), John Winterbourne (JW), In attendance: Gaynor Birbeck (GB)

2 Apologies

Sue Anderson, Becky Banks, Ros Burnley, Carrie Hallam, Chris Hogarth, Jason Maclean, Susannah Podmore, Kate Tudge, Jim Waterson, Simon West, Gordon Wyatt

3 Progress on action points from last meeting:

Practitioner database

This is an evolving document/database. Listed are the broad spectrum of primary receivers, from Jo public to patient care, volunteers and unemployed. Specific activities and evaluation are noted. Evaluation is primary, but not robust enough yet to give great detail. FE have many different interventions, yet to be tabulated, so only half a dozen or so are included at present. The National Trust have different things on each estate and have promised SR can look at their activities, or discuss with individual state managers. SR has yet to look at Wildlife Trust Black Country Living Landscapes work. The database makes up the target audience for the handbook, which will show what is happening/good practice elsewhere. It will also be used to influence government policy to recognise value working with disadvantaged or alienated individuals in this setting, to help them turn their lives around.

ACTION POINT – SA to send Groundwork activity to SR as soon as possible.

Evaluation

PT has been working on developing a tool to measure social investment programmes. Phil Noble of Hill Hope Wood has considered qualitative benefit analysis and identified four programme dimensions. Observational data will record how far travelled to assess the effectiveness of the programme – will measure the percentage of participants moving by a pre-determined number of levels, e.g. moving up two levels. Each deliverer will set indicators for measuring each level from a suite of options. This will allow for flexibility in the process. It will seek to harmonise for similar clients in order to evaluate the success of the programme. It is the first model of its kind assessing programmes rather than individuals. Cost benefit analysis will be possible. SWA retain the copyright, but need to spread evaluation tool as wide as possible.

Accreditation was dismissed initially and reconsidered at this meeting. Some concern for this was raised, as success is very individual, personal and subjective. However the evaluation is behaviour base rather than feeling based monitoring. Wye Wood are one of the pilot projects to use this monitoring.

The Draft monitoring system will be piloted through SWA and Hill Hope Wood, followed by a final version after Christmas. Pilot programmes should run at two different centres by three different groups of practitioners. By the next meeting of this group will be able to hand out to those on the database/request feedback.

HT explained a bit about Methuselah as paper/PowerPoint copy circulated by Jason Maclean. This is a tool FC are developing to capture qualitative data on the impact of improved greenspace over a longer period of time. It considers changes to site and communities and how these interact and measures change in people rather than the amount of public access woodland in any given area. It is a software tool and is backed up by different data capture methods, for use by site managers of major greenspace interventions. It identifies some 100 proxy-indicators, which can be selected/omitted. It will then generate a model showing the

positive and negative impacts over a period of time. 1-5 CSR indicator sites are also collecting data for the back end of Methuselah. Birches Valley at Cannock is one of five sites piloting its use nationally.

ACTION POINT – to invite those from FR involved in its development to attend and discuss Methuselah at the next meeting – either Keiron Doick (Urban Greenspace Centre) or Jake Morris (Social Forestry).

Good practice handbook and case studies

Kate Tudge has revised the Wye Wood Case Study & Woodlife Project. Decided to use the FC case study template and include a section for effectiveness/programmes and lessons learnt section. JA, JM and RN all agreed to work up case studies. The latter to reproduce Walking to Health, Dudley in this format.

ACTION POINT- HT to get template from Programme Group and GB to circulate

ACTION POINT - JM will raise subject at the next Biodiversity Task Group meeting on 13th January.

- Contact target audience to find out what they would want from the handbook
- Case studies – ensure sufficient client groups are covered, range of deliveries, agency, third sector and regional/geographic diversity.
- Consider putting on website www.growingourfuture.org, possibly with online resource database. North West Region have done similar on their RFF website www.iwood.org.uk
- Include a section on evaluation within the handbook.

4 14-19 Environmental and Land Based Diploma (ELB) West Midlands Pilot

The government has decided to offer 14 to 19 year-olds an alternative route to GCSEs in the form of a sector-based diploma. These will offer traditional education in a sector context and include elements of literacy and numeracy. There will also be explanation of job opportunities/careers advice given. One of the main requirements is the outcome of students to be fit and ready for employment, although many may go in to higher education. One subject area is Environmental and Land-based learning (ELB). This includes agriculture and livestock farming, veterinary practice, conservation management and forestry. The two areas which would include forestry are the ELB diploma and the Sport & Leisure Diploma. LANTRA are leading on ELB diplomas and working groups will work up curriculum to be delivered by thirty or so consortiums nationally. The two consortiums guaranteed in this region are Hereford College of Technology – Holme Lacy Campus and the Wolverhampton Environment Centre. Walford College, Shropshire is also likely to confirm. They should be ready to offer courses to students in September 2009. There are more opportunities for consortiums to apply through gateways and Sport & Leisure diplomas will open in 2010.

FC are keen to produce a prospectus for consortiums of what the forestry sector can give to students and by this manage expectations. The West Midlands are piloting this prospectus and Simon West is leading. He has put together a 'next steps' note asking for this group's endorsement to carry forward. The next step is to invite core employees and discuss the prospectus.

The aim is to see which major employers might contribute and what they might be prepared to offer. Groundwork WM are offering NVQ Level 1 & 2 in Sustainable Development and horticulture, together with school-based and short qualifications. There is not a strong forestry component in the Black Country, but there is potential to develop this. SWA have seen a boom in woodfuel and market for woodfuel and chip supplies. Opportunities here are often self-employment and micro-businesses. They are looking to develop a third-year diploma/apprenticeship

ACTION AGREED – SFTG endorsed next steps and noted worth inviting colleges: Harper Adams, Holme Lacy, Moreton Morrell, Rod Baston and Walford & North Shropshire.

ACTION POINTS

- SA to discuss possibilities with Brian Wilson
- JM to liaise with Operations side of Woodland Trust
- SW to set date for meeting in December

5 Accreditation

There is no formal definition of social forestry. All agreed that it is a forestry intervention, which has a social outcome. Forestry encompasses trees, woods and forests and would include wood pasture, open space management, community forests and possibly urban parks.

HT advised that accreditation of social forestry would be difficult as the vehicles and outcomes are diverse. For social forestry it may be possible to look at commonality and what could be done/best practice rather than accreditation, although some trainers or qualifications might be accredited.

Forest Schools for example have difficulty in this, as it is a process or approach rather than a prescribed route. However the Institute of Outdoor Learning (IOA) will support them to improve standards and a 'learning outside the classroom' badge is being developed. Self-assessment toolkit is a large part of Forest School.

6 Funding

- Possibility of developing guidance on delivery of additional funding discussed with Groundwork this week.
- Access to Nature and LSC offer funds for training for projects, but with constraints.
- Social Forestry can be a little intangible for LAA targets.
- Regional funding might be possible, e.g. North East are doing a Social Forestry WIG.
- WIG for access has links to social forestry.

ACTION POINT – to discuss possibility on Social Forestry WIG with BH for 10/11 business plan

ACTION POINT – consider including a funding element in the Good Practice handbook

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

7 Any other business

Next year

- SFTG will look at better capturing data on working with the third sector and volunteers. FC are looking at targeted volunteering to raise capacity and SFTG could look at this at a regional level. Natural England have responsibility within Defra for this area with strategy/policy coming from them. The UK Biodiversity Strategy includes a volunteer element.
- Social Enterprise – nothing happening nationally and no activity against it in the ETWF Delivery Plan
- Possibility that a student could pull together the Good Practice Guide including elements of: Accreditation, Funding, Must do-should do-could do and Social Enterprise

ACTION POINT – JM & JA to find out if either the Woodland Trust or Groundwork WM have a student who might do this.

8 Date of next meeting or future communication

ACTION POINT – GB to circulate dates for early February