

## Wood Energy Task Group Minutes

Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2008  
10am – 1pm, Wharton Golf Club, Bewdley

### Present

Andy Grundy (chair), Heartwoods  
Ken Smith, Ken Smith forestry contractor  
Ewan Bent, Midlands Woodfuel Ltd  
John Davis, Confor/Gloucestershire Woodfuels  
Clare Fildes, Mike Kelly, Shropshire Hills AONB  
Phil Ridley, Walford & N Shropshire College  
Sara Roberts, WMRA  
Jo Pooler, Worcestershire CC  
Tony Link, Wyre Forest DC  
Nick Monether, Greenfields Consulting  
John Iles, Bewdley Development Trust  
Stephanie Roux, FC Research  
Angela Duignan, Bill Heslegrave, Ian Hickman, Steve Cresswell, Simon West, FC

### Apologies

Bede Howell, Bede Howell Forestry  
Chris Day, CJDay Associates  
Cathy Meredith, Herefordshire Rural Hub  
John Blessington, Shropshire CC

### Minutes of last meeting

AG invited comments, none forthcoming, taken as true record

#### 1. FC national perspective

- AD outlined her role and invited feedback on issues relating to woodfuel in the West Midlands, particularly where there were barriers and what could be done to address them
- IH asked about BEC role – this would be strengthened and remit widened
- JI asked about certainty for investors – there was currently a second round of consultations on the Heat Obligation and Govt had announced a step change in renewables via a Renewables Strategy
- SW raised issues picked up from stakeholders that grants could create uncertainty and that there was currently a proliferation of grants for biomass – grants are still needed in key areas
- JD noted the implications of the EU renewables directive (UK required to move from 1½ % to 15% renewables by 2020) and current DBERR consultation

**Action: AG to co-ordinate response on behalf of group**

#### 2. Round table update

- Picked up under previous item

#### 3. Grow With Wyre project

- IH gave an overview of the project, including the limit to FC production other than pump priming/show casing/demo role –eg WM FC production c 70kt pa or only 2½ Eccleshall power stations, but exciting to have a new market
- Woodfuel is 1 of 17 projects in GWW which will look at supply issues, low carbon advice and installation of 6 boilers and a central wood chip store
- Other work happening in the region includes setting up another woodchip store on Cannock Chase linked to the AWM funded Stropshire project (Staffs CC)

#### 4. Wyre Pathfinder project

- AG gave an update on recent activity including Woodfuel Champion training, a number of advisory visits by WFCs and a successful awareness raising event as part of Discover Bewdley – this yielded a number of issues:
  - oil prices are a key driver
  - still resistance to wood heat due to capital cost, uncertainty and not push button
  - local communities need a lot of hand-holding
  - disproportionate cost at small scale
- New Wyre WIG has experienced excellent take up with almost all the £70k over 2 years committed and 300ha woodland
- JI noted GWW low carbon community aspirations (Bewdley, Pound green, Callow Hill) and setting up Bewdley Energy Company, learning from Danish community ownership model
- There was a wide-ranging discussion on the opportunities for woodheat in new build as against refurb – former mainly with Housing Associations eg 90 houses in Ludlow (S Shrops HA) and 400 houses in Dursley in SW heated by district heating
- Need for awareness raising amongst key professionals/decision makers  
**Action: Heartwoods to arrange awareness raising events for planners/local members**

#### 5. Biomass Assessment Tool

- SR outlined progress on developing this software tool, which interfaces existing yield models and will allow input of stand characteristics (eg top height, desired product assortment) and will then give a product breakdown, including woodfuel element
- BAT will be aimed at ‘average users’ ie will not require specialist technical knowledge and will be linked to some standard models to cover the variety of woods
- SR outlined recent trials being undertaken in the Wyre on natural regen from coppice using specialised harvesting head (Narva) motor manual chainsaw and brushcutter that would be subject of site visits later
- Initial results flagged up problems with bespoke equipment, so looking to investigate alternatives such as modification of agricultural machinery

#### 6. RDPE – AWM

- SW outlined the approach:
- Each RDA has a Regional Implementation Plan which FC has been involved in drafting and agreeing
- WM RIP sets out the regional priorities which are: Food & Drink, Tourism, Livestock (national) & Environmental Technologies
- Each priority has been developed into an action plan and subsequent delivery model
- ET focuses on: Bioenergy supply chains; New environmental products and services (eg low carbon); Recycling & Waste and Training/Knowledge Transfer
- The delivery model focuses on key strategic projects and a package of grants
- The key projects under Bioenergy supply chains are: Heartwoods (capacity building, feasibility); BioenergyWM (training/KT); Certainly Wood (strategic investment in processing) and others in development eg Woodworks2
- Grants for less than £62k will be available to individual businesses from October, grants for collaborative projects can be applied for now, but you need to speak to AWM
- Grants are for collection, processing, storage, supply & utilisation equipment and facilities which support the woodfuel supply chain (ie chipping, handling, transport equipment and storage facilities and boilers and ancillary equipment)
- There was a need to involve Business Link in supporting delivery of advice

## **7. RDPE - woodfuel supply chain project**

- BH outlined the strategy process, changes of goalpost and ongoing negotiations with AWM
- A full application would be submitted by end July
- AG outlined the links with the Rural Hubs, Business Link & BioenergyWM and that the focus was on supply chain facilitation and advice, including signposting to funding
- SW noted that the project had been included in Mick Lavertys (AWM CE) announcement at the recent RRZ conference so would happen

## **8. Woodworks2**

- PR outlined this follow on to the successful Woodworks project which finished in Jan
- He was still getting requests for training which might be funded through the Enterprise Works VTS
- Most training was FMOC type
- SC raised the issue of need for simple machine operator training to enable existing machine operators (agric, construction) to get a feel for how they might be able to operate in woodfuel/forestry

## **9. AOB**

- AD outlined the need for feedback to her on issues for support and regional activity
- SR raised the issue of funding and that this should be wider than just RDPE and whether there was sufficient capacity in Heartwoods
- AD noted that the RDPE mid term review was due to start in Oct 08 but that evidence was required to influence Defra/RDAs on whether the real priorities were being met – this needed to be articulated in a way that RDAs could relate to

## **Site visits**

### **1. Wyre forest harvesting trial**

- Richard Boles/SR introduced the c0.5ha coppice regen site that had been worked using mechanised (Narva head) & motor manual (chainsaw, brushcutter) methods
- The material was extracted and stored at roadside for drying and chipping
- Initial analysis suggests all methods are very expensive, the mechanised system being the most costly and suffering problems of snagging/hydraulics damage
- There was a wide-ranging discussion on what was required to bring forestry material to the market – this maybe the equivalent of £30+/t compared with the current price of £20+/t
- There was a need to identify where material could come from (easy wins) bearing in mind FC were unable to offer any significant subsidy

### **2. Stan Howes Arboriculture depot**

- Farm based arb/landscape contractor diversified out of agric contracting
- 3½ employees producing 1000t/yr of split logs, kindling & chips
- 100+ customers, 60 outlets mainly within 35 mile radius
- 50% material arb waste, 50% bought in (roundwood)
- demand has recently increased substantially (fuel price)