

Woodland Opportunities Mapping
Thursday 21st February 2008
FC Worcester – Room 107

In attendance: Jeff Edwards, Bill Heslegrave, Nigel Jones, Justin Milward, Amanda Pearce, Steve Potter, Sara Roberts, Amanda Smith

Apologies: Jeremy Bretherton

1. Current position

Simon West (SW) has taken up secondment to AWM since the last meeting.

How/who by maps being used:

- Woodland Officers are using with EWGS applications, though difficult to analyse any practical difference in planting approvals.
- Used in respect of recent disputed case with landscape character issues. The application is situated in a sensitive area and the applicants were advised as such and asked to provide necessary further detail.
- Referred to and used with Natural England (NE) and FC joint working.
- Some Local Authorities are using it
- Worcestershire is referring to map as part of development of Woodland Guidance.
- East Staffordshire Green Infrastructure Strategy refers to WOM, but did not use directly in the production of it.

Launch of Version 2 suggested in last minutes, but issues in consistency still to be resolved (See item 2). Shropshire County Council has been asked to carry out work on this and BH meeting them to discuss this and possible bird map on 19th March.

Landscape for Living (LfL) update – Biodiversity Vision map has been published in recent prospectus. Technical work highlighted issues, as the map shows graduation by LDUs, but does not use all local data sets. At the workshop in early December, each region outlined opportunities on their maps. Further consideration of its use is required. WOM maps were not presented at this. Baseline information for both LfL and WOM Ancient Woodland maps are the same.

ACTION POINT 1.1 – JE to set a meeting to look at both LfL and WOM maps together.

Woodland Trust Update – PAWs restoration has not moved further forward, due to Andy Sharkey being unwell. Tim Hodges leading on it. No specific project as yet.

ACTION POINT 1.2 – Invite Tim Hodges to next meeting.

2. WOM consistency

Dan Wrench from Shropshire CC was to take this on, but has had difficulty in terms of his capacity. BH has arranged a meeting for 19th March to take this forward. Consistency of approach will be addressed, predominantly in terms of the Biodiversity Theme Map. AS said the HLC Group would have scope for this if there were potential funding.

ACTION POINT 2.1 - BH to contact Andy Wigley directly before the 15th May.

A Memorandum of Agreement could resolve confusion over the status of WOM. FC and NE would need to do further work before achieving this.

3. The WOM in relation to Biodiversity Action Plan Targets

National targets to 2015 – woodland planting a lower priority than other regional habitats, though PAWs is a higher priority. NE have considered national targets in two approaches for this:

1. Areas with largest amounts of woodland having the greater target
2. Areas with largest amounts of woodland having the smaller target

Targets have not been climate change proofed. Two targets in terms of RSS. It could be proofed to 2026 and these taken to the RSS Review, but we have to meet 2015 targets. BH is putting together a RSS Phase 3 Woodland sub-group. Initial meeting to be arranged.

Staffordshire have been working on a functional habitat approach and are unable to engage with others in this at present.

ACTION POINT 3.1 – NJ to follow up on Habitat Creativity Map with Roger Catchpole.

4. WOM in relation to Woodland Creation targets

There are no current plans to progress the development of regional scoring for EWGS, but rather stick with the 6 regional score points system for now. National debates on HLS & EWGS are ongoing, in terms of both funding available and regional priorities. For EWGS a major priority is SSSI work and in the West Midlands deer management forms a major part of this. A Woodland Improvement Grant focusing on SSSI work in the Wyre has been approved.

There are some issues over local authorities seeing red/sensitive areas as no go for planting. Problems can occur where it is not clear-cut at site level, so what each local authority means by sensitive needs to be clarified. Staffordshire has defined some LDUs as not applicable for planting new woodland.

BH presented WOM nationally within FC, but it is up to each region how to take this forward. There is still the aspiration of tighter regional scoring.

ACTION POINT 4.1 - BH & NJ to progress with FC & NE and bring in local authorities for greater clarity.

5. Birds theme

FC has for some time held data on priority bird species for conservation associated both closely and more loosely with the West Midlands. There are maps for thirty or so species, with clear differences shown in terms of their distribution.

The maps are constructed using point data, so will need to consider the data behind it to align with GIS. BH is proposing to discuss the production of a county pilot for a WOM bird map with Shropshire County Council on 19th March, with the aim of targeting where woodland management and creation could be adapted to make a

significant difference for certain key species in certain locations. NJ pointed out that for farmland birds groups of 5 or more bird species were used to define priority areas and for wetland birds groups of 3 or more. Farmland bird priority areas are only used at present for HLS targeting.

6. Future work

Covered by action points.

7. Next steps

AP suggested establishing how LfL may be involved and might consider the regional map at the next steering group meeting on 20th March.

AS will feedback outcomes and actions from this meeting to HLC group.

Inspiration for WOM and LfL is to take maps forward to influence policies within RSS Phase 3 revision. There is a need to establish if this will be acceptable, or if monitoring indicators are difficult to achieve they may refer back to RFF and Regional Biodiversity Plan.

Ownership and use of WOM needs to continue to be progressed, especially Ancient Woodland/PAWs map

ACTION POINT 7.1 – Draft MoA or Concordat should be done.

One map for Woodland Creation Priority and PAWs restoration might be considered with links to buffering and habitat network development

ACTION POINT 7.2 - SP to produce a merged map of Woodland Creation Priority and PAWs restoration to consider this approach initially.

7. Date of Next meeting

To be arranged