

**South West Regional Biodiversity Partnership
Woodland and Forestry Working Group Minutes**

Tuesday 10th October, Natural England Offices, Renslade House, Exeter

Present: Mark Durk - Chair (Forestry Commission), Naomi Brookes (SWRBP), Mark Robins (RSPB), Justin Milward (Woodland Trust), Steve Russell (Wilts County Council Woodland BAP), Matthew Low (Natural England), Brian Muelaner (National Trust), Colin Hawke (Cornwall County Council), Helen Booker (RSPB), Roger Griffin (Natural England), John Wilding (Clinton Devon Estates)

1. Apologies	Actions
Lynne Kenderdine (Devon Wildlife Trust), Jim Skelton (South West Forest)	
2. Minutes and Matters arising	
Minutes from last meeting were not reviewed due to the length of time between meetings. The last meeting focused on Nature Map and habitat review targets to submit into the Regional Spatial Strategy, these have now been submitted.	
3. Updates – Nature Map and Report on Ancient Woodland Priority Work Areas	
<p>The first iteration of Nature Map (NM) has now been published in its final form. Adoption and implementation is going ahead at a county level. A Development Plan has been produced and works now concentrating on rolling this out locally. Communications are key- there has been work developing tools. NM is available as a download on the SW Observatory website (http://www.swenvo.org.uk/nature_map/index.asp). NM and the reviewed habitat targets are in Draft Regional Spatial Strategy. The technical underpinning to NM caused concern and this will continue to be discussed. Focus now is to bring all conservationists and sectors on board as NM provides a rational for targeting limited funding for conservation work.</p> <p>Ancient Woodland Working Group produced Ancient Woodland Priority Areas (AWPA) map which identifies priority areas at a landscape scale. Kevin Watts developed maps. Identifies those priority Ancient Woodlands that offer best opportunities for enhancement and connectivity at a landscape scale. 11-12 key area identified. 4 of these areas have been targeted in 06/07 and trial running to target FC Woodland Improvement Grant in these areas. Up to 80% of costs of work will be funded as opposed to 50% in other areas. This does not exclude areas outside of these applying for grants but they will have to show a landscape level approach. See www.forestry.gov.uk/england-swe The AWPA and NM do show good overlay. There was then a discussion about this map and the wider implications of targeted funding.</p>	
4. Moving Forward the Programme of Actions	
<p>Habitat targets, including for native woodland, have been included in RSS and these set some quite ambitious targets which can not be met by FC alone. Group needs to identify what is happening to implement these from other organisations, what's going well and what's not and what indicators needed to monitor progress. Group agreed it needed to see a way forward toward what needed to implement BIP.</p> <p>A discussion about how the BIP and the Regional Woodlands and Forestry Framework (RWFF) matched and the possibility of overlap in the objectives and targets for each was considered. The number of groups working on woodland implementation work in the region was also outlined; there is an Ancient Woodland Group which is a very focused group, RWFF Delivery Group, RWFF Custodians Group (which meets yearly) and this BIP working group.</p> <p>The group decided that although there are many groups operating and discussing woodland and forestry in the region the RWFF groups did not report back directly on biodiversity and had a much broader remit. The BIP and the RWFF have not been aligned, so much of the reporting on targets against RWFF will match BIP but not reported against BIP. Although members of this group did sit on RWFF-Group, no one takes</p>	

<p>biodiversity message to the RWFF Group. It was thought that this BIP Working Group could take on actions that do not match in both documents and report against these to the RWFF. Before this can be considered further the objectives and actions in the BIP and RWFF need to be compared and contrasted. Once this has been completed it will be clearer where there is cross over and gaps and therefore what the focus of this BIP Working Group might be. MD, JM, RG and NB were tasked with comparing and contrasting BIP and WFF. They are then to report back to the group. The group can then agree what needs to be delivered and how. It was decided that this group would 'enable actions' to be brought about more effectively to achieve BIP and RWFF.</p> <p>A discussion was then held about monitoring and how the group would monitor action and the difficulties of achieving this and room for duplication in reporting systems such as BARS. Decided that just enough information was needed so that group could present answers using indicators/traffic light system. A qualitative approach will be taken using local knowledge. Actions need to be decided before indicators can be set. Actions table will be distilled by NB after compare and contrast exercise complete. All to fill in table and report back on action being undertaken in their area before next meeting. Once this is complete the group can ask if this action is helping to achieve or likely to achieve targets in BIP. Further action can then be decided. Targets/indicators also need aligning with the RSS.</p> <p>The rest of the items under this agenda heading will be addressed after above action carried out.</p>	<p>NB, MD, RG, JM</p> <p>NB ALL</p>
<p>5. Structure – how to integrate this group into Ancient Woodland Working Group and RWFF Delivery Group</p>	
<p>This was discussed throughout previous agenda item. However, brief discussion also concluded that there does not need to be overlap with the Ancient Woodland Working Group as BIP group could concentrate on other, non-ancient woodland.</p>	
<p>6. Request for briefing/feedback prior to the RWFF Custodians Meeting</p>	
<p>Group gave MR a quick brief snapshot on action that is being undertaken to implement biodiversity element of RWFF.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	
<p>There was some discussion about current projects that are proving successful outside of FC Ancient Woodland work. The group felt that sharing good practice was important part of its remit. JW to ask Charlie Plough, Head of Countryside Services in East Devon District Council if he can provide a brief on the East Devon Ancient Tree Project and an idea of funding application submitted to HLF. This has been a successful project which obtained HLF monies. This can then be circulated. CH to forward details about The Woodlands Heritage Champions Project, a national ancient woodland project, to NB to circulate to group.</p> <p>Communication was also briefly discussed and the possibility of a communication gap. The BIP website has a role to play in addressing this.</p>	<p>JW</p> <p>CH NB</p>
<p>10. AOB & Date of next meeting</p>	
<p>The Regional Implementation Plan for the SW to deliver the Rural Development Plan for England is being written at the moment. Concern about how the forestry and woodlands sector will engage with this and its delivery.</p> <p>Question raised of how to address the issue of where opportunities for woodland expansion come into conflict with other existing semi-natural habitats. Group felt that neither habitat should take precedence and that alternative sites should be sought where conflict arose.</p> <p>Cornwall has undertaken a Landscape Characterisation Project. Other areas have also completed these. In future group to invite specialist to a meeting to discuss how this applies to woodland.</p>	
<p>Date of next meeting to be set in new year after compare and contrast exercise complete.</p>	<p>NB/MD</p>

