



Biodiversity South West sector working group for  
**Woodlands and Forestry**

Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> October  
 RSPB Offices, Keble House, Southernhay Gardens, Exeter

Minutes

Present: Justin Milward (Woodland Trust – Chair), Colin Hawke (Cornwall County Council), Helen Booker (RSPB), Steve Russell (Wiltshire County Council), Naomi Brookes (Biodiversity South West), Simon Tame (Natural England), Neil Sherwood (Biodiversity South West), Mick Bracken (Devon County Council), Matthew Woodcock (Forestry Commission), Gavin Bloomfield (RSPB), Brian Muelaner (National Trust).

<b>1. Apologies</b>	<b>Action s</b>
Mark Durk (Forestry Commission)	
<b>2. Group Structure – recap from January meeting and work priorities identified</b>	
<p>The action table for the Woodland and Forestry group was discussed to identify where issues were not being addressed either in the Regional Forestry Framework or the Ancient Woodland Working Group and which could be picked up by this group. These are identified as woodland, parkland, orchards and veteran trees (although veteran trees do have a group that covers them). This group will identify those actions to take forward that are not being addressed by other groups, and ensure biodiversity issues are represented in other groups.</p> <p>There is a need to formalise links with the RFF implementation group in order to share information and perhaps provide support and identify biodiversity actions that may be missed by RFF and feedback on our activities. Matthew Woodcock sits on both groups and will develop these links and feedback to this group.</p> <p>Naomi Brookes gave an update on the Biodiversity South West refreshed work programme that the Woodland and Forestry group fed into in February (work programme attached). The need to link in with the Water and Wetlands and the Maritime and Coastal groups was identified. Item 3.5 in the Biodiversity South West draft outline Work Programme Priorities 2007 – 2009 relates to Woods and Forests. The priorities identified in this section are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open ground</li> <li>• Landowner contacts</li> <li>• Pests and diseases</li> <li>• Water Framework Directive/Water</li> <li>• Nature Map – implementation</li> <li>• Ancient trees – parkland, wood pasture and orchards</li> </ul>	<b>MW</b>

<b>3. Moving forward the programme of actions and priorities</b>	
<p>The implementation plan for the group was discussed. Landowner contacts identified as a priority for this group is actually being followed up by RFF steering group so will not be pursued by this group.</p> <p><u>Objective 1: Protect native woodland from unnecessary damage</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Some specific actions for this group need to be pulled out for this more generic objective. This will be focus at future meeting.</u></li> <li>• The intensification of agriculture within woodlands was identified as a planning issue, although it was felt that planning was not picking this issue up.</li> <li>• The deer management group would continue to deal with deer issues, but the Woodlands and Forestry Group should keep an eye on this and feed in where necessary. Concern was expressed about the spread of different species of deer. MW will also link into Deer Management Group and feedback into this group on their activities.</li> <li>• Lobbying for funds was identified as an important issue, the Woodland and Forestry group needs to define what this part of the plan specifically means.</li> </ul> <p><u>Objective 2: Enhance, extend and restore the existing native woodland resource</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting better management should also include open ground and orchard management. It was agreed that we find best practice examples of what is already happening and bring them to the next Woodlands and Forestry group meeting. Examples should be no more than two sides of A4 paper. These case studies could also be used on the new Biodiversity South West website (currently in development) which will have an interactive Nature Map.</li> <li>• There is a need for this group to take a regional overview of initiatives in order to identify gaps etc.</li> <li>• Reversing fragmentation is a priority.</li> <li>• This group needs to link to the Ancient Woodland Priority Group. The Ancient Woodland inventory is not being updated MW bought experience from SE where this has been achieved on a district basis. MW will liaise with the Ancient Woodland Working Group to see if a similar can be used and will update this group.</li> <li>•</li> </ul> <p><u>Objective 3: Manage non-native woodland to improve biodiversity in the wider landscape</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group identified need to identify the key species which are indicative of how woodlands are doing in the region and what the gaps in activity are. Need to identify priority habitats and species. Topic for next meeting.</li> <li>•</li> <li>• Mark Durk is the link to the RFF custodians group which is setting up a group through Natural England (led by Roger Griffin), to take forward action on woodland management (?) ST will liaise and feedback to this group on their progress.</li> </ul>	<p><b>JM</b></p> <p><b>MW</b></p> <p><b>All</b></p> <p><b>MW</b></p> <p><b>ALL</b></p> <p><b>ST</b></p>

<p><u>Objective 4: Realise the broader social and economic benefits of woodland biodiversity</u></p> <p>There were several questions raised in this section -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there plans for a regional health strategy? NB to find out. MB will investigate the South West Forests Woods for Health Programme to see if this is progressing.</li> <li>• Are each county linking in with their LAAs? NB to find out.</li> </ul> <p>The group should advocate native coppice and where <u>not</u> to plant. Nature Map should be used when deciding where to plant and what to plant. The economic benefits of woodland and their biodiversity benefits (even in commercial woodland). Group should maintain a view about Energy crops as this does include native species. This could become an issue and the wood fuel agenda will certainly play a role.</p> <p>Access to woodland was discussed and how access should be managed. People with dogs accessing woodland have an effect on biodiversity. Identifying the most 'robust' areas for access and linking in education would be beneficial. The level of access needs to be managed, but allowing access is a priority because of the public funds involved.</p> <p><u>Overall</u> For the next meeting the group need to be specific on the issues to push forward.</p>	<p><b>NB</b> <b>MB</b> <b>NB</b></p>
<p><b>4. Woodlands and Climate Change</b></p>	
<p>Biodiversity South West and South West Climate Change Impacts Partnership (SWCCIP) will be organising a workshop on climate change in May 2008. Nature Map is an excellent advocacy tool and will be 'risk assessed' in regard to climate change.</p> <p>The Woodlands and Forestry group could help the climate change elements of this work by providing specific examples and drawing out key messages. A specific meeting on climate change was suggested.</p> <p>The England Trees and Wood Strategy have just been released. MW will ask Mark Broadmeadow for any key messages from this.</p>	<p><b>NB</b> <b>MW</b></p>
<p><b>5. Woodland Birds</b></p>	
<p>Helen Booker gave a presentation on woodland birds. There has been a sharp decline in woodland bird populations, especially in long distance migrants. Western oak woods have been identified as being specifically important. The South West is particularly important for woodland birds, although numbers are declining in the region. Threats to woodland birds include the absence of management, contradicting advice of land owners, increased deer grazing and the height of undergrowth beneath trees. HB will provide a copy of map and species management (<a href="http://www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/projects/targeting/targeting_maps.asp">http://www.rspb.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/projects/targeting/targeting_maps.asp</a>) to NB to circulate to group. (Attached)</p>	<p><b>HB/NB</b></p>

<b>6. Updates and round table discussion – forthcoming opportunities and consultations.</b>	
The Woodland Trust is conducting an ‘ancient tree hunt’ that everyone can get involved in. Details available on their website.	
Colin Hawke said that he would be interested in being involved in the Orchards HAP if one were to be regionally developed.	
<b>7. A.O.B.</b>	
Justin Milward will find out the Regional Forestry Framework actions and report back to the group.	<b>JM</b>
It was suggested that future meetings concentrate on one topic per meeting.	<b>JM</b>
<b>8. Date of next meeting</b>	
The meeting will be held in the week commencing 4 <sup>th</sup> February 2008. A specific day will be circulated nearer the time.	