

BETTER WOODLANDS FOR WALES STAKEHOLDER GROUP

7th meeting on 7th May 2010 Broneirion, Llandinam, Powys

1. Present

Andrew Bronwin	CLA
Eryl Roberts	WEL
Hilary Miller	CCW
David V Edwards	ICF
Phil Johnson(Tilhill)	Confor
David Jenkins	Coed Cymru
Phil Morgan	CCFG
Neill Scott	Management planner forum
Richard Siddons	FC Wales
Rachel Chamberlain	FC Wales
Patrick Green	FC Wales
Kevin Taylor	FC Wales
Alison Evans	FC Wales

2. Apologies

Dr Kathryn Roberts	CADW
Daniel Rowlands	SRD-PRD

Eryl Roberts representing WEL and Neill Scott representing the management planner forum were welcomed as new members of the BWW stakeholder group.

Action AE to contact WAG representative

3. Minutes/ Actions arising from the last meeting:

Minutes from the last meeting were agreed.

The following Action points from the November meeting were discussed.

Revised GIS fees document

All planner fees are now included in the revised grant guide document on the BWW web site.

Invasive species. Woodland officer Stuart Gray and Liz Whittle from CADW are working on a guidance document. **Action AE** will publish on web once completed.



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CADW & CCW interpretation of data Both organisations have given presentations at the planner update training sessions run throughout May.

Land registration HM asked if there was any improvement in getting CRN issued. **KT** said that there was no new information from WAG but that the general approach was to make the system simpler.

Operational Issues - Amendments

A reminder to planners to ensure that cases for amendment are thought through carefully as it has an impact on the BWW budget.

Data capture/ GIS mapping

A series of meetings with planners has resolved most issues. Guidance has been produced on different mapping systems (in BWW reference library). **PM** said there are still some incompatibilities. **Action PG** said this is an on-going issue and FCW are working with Rob Marsh to identify errors and problems in using different systems. Martyn Potton is also working with WAG staff.

Features and factors PG told the meeting that the ongoing BWW streamlining project is addressing the issue of cutting down the amount of detail required for plans.

Citizen's Charter & plans approved. AB said that the Charter could have an adverse effect on getting plans through the system. Woodland officers don't want to start the clock ticking so delay looking at plans until consultation is done. **PG** is recommending that woodland officers engage with the planners early on, to resolve possible problems at the beginning of the process. **Action AE** will send a table of approved plans per management planner to all stakeholders

GLOS analysis PG to respond in operational update.

First steps This scheme has been suspended whilst the grant review takes place.

Phytophthora outbreak RS to give update.

4 Strategic review of grants

RS summarised the grant review which began a few months ago. This is linked to the mid-term review of the Rural Development Plan (RDP). **RS** is in discussion with the Department of Rural Affairs (DRA) to develop grant options. The priorities are to ensure that there are a broad range of grants, that grants are accessible to all woodland owners (not just farmers), and that there is a range of service providers.

DJ asked if there were proposals to look at a forestry package within Axis 1. **RS** said it was possible but no decisions have yet been made.

AB said that the practical implications of FCW integrating with WAG were serious for the private sector. There was no consultation process or mechanism to feed through FCW to WAG. **RS** recommended that the sector needed to use their own organisations to make representation. **NS** noted that the new agri-environmental Glastir scheme seemed to be moving away from woodland activities. **RS** replied that at the 'All Wales' level of

Glastir, woodland activities could not be used to score points. Once in Glastir the 'Targeted' element would grant aid operations such as planting fencing, and woodland management activities. **AB** was concerned at a perceived lack of joined-up thinking in putting policy together. Who is addressing and advising WAG? **RS** replied that FCW advises the Minister on how to develop an integrated grant scheme which will deliver the Minister's Woodland Strategy. A discussion followed on new BWW grant rates and how they can encourage more planting. New grant rates will have to be independently verified before they can be announced.

NS circulated a Woodland Creation Review document put together by the management planner forum.

5 New woodland creation

RC gave an update on the 6-month woodland creation project which she is leading. Under the new Glastir arrangements announced by Elin Jones in March, farmers would receive a capital grant to establish permanent woodland on lower grade agricultural land, together with annual maintenance and income foregone payments for up to 15 years after planting. This funding will be delivered through BWW until 2012, after which it will be delivered by WAG through Glastir.

The woodland creation project will examine BWW's design and assess if adequate resources are in place. It will identify the changes that need to happen to increase woodland planting in Wales and start putting these changes into practice. Feedback from the stakeholder group is welcome. Looking at using project officers (from the active management planner list) to deliver the scheme. As farmers own most of the land suitable for tree planting in Wales, their involvement is essential to expand the country's woodland cover. It is vital that BWW is able to engage with a wider group of landowners, particularly in agriculture. CCW and FCW are drawing up maps to identify undesignated agricultural land which can be planted without consultation. Designated land would have to go through BWW consultation process. Planted land will be eligible for ILP and the Single Payment. **DJ** asked if payments for fencing could be recalculated, as on a small scheme costs are high. **RS** replied that the woodland creation grant won't include a fencing payment, that will be paid separately. It has to follow the Glastir fencing rate. **AB** said that the project should learn the lessons from the Challenge Fund grant where there have been problems with follow-up maintenance of planting schemes. It is critical that this is carried out to make sure woodland creation is successful in the long term.

6 Operational issues

Scheme statistics and stakeholder reports

As at 30/4/10 there were 814 approved cases in GLOS and the average size of case is 37 ha.

£3.5m has been spent in 09/10 on WGS and BWW

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94% of committed BWW grant was claimed. Committed funds for 10/11 -£4.36m and in 11/12 - £1.97m.

PG handed out a more detailed sheet to stakeholders on areas approved in BWW. **HM** said that there were potentially a lot of useful statistics missing from the report. **PG** responded that unfortunately it was proving difficult to extract some of this data from GLOS. **Action PG** will ask the BWW support team to continue work on a range of useful business queries for reports before the next stakeholder meeting.

Citizen's Charter September 09-April 10

Data capture stage (pre-management plan) 36% were within CC. Most delays were caused by the cross-checking process.

Approval stage 58% were within CC. This is up from 52% in previous quarter and 38% from the period before that.

Staff update

Liz Watt has been appointed as a new woodland officer support and will start in mid-June.

Martyn Potton now manages the GLOS support staff

Woodland officer Alan Hubbuck is due to return from secondment in August 2010

Technical services manager Carol Jones has returned to work at Clawdd Newydd

Planner standards

FCW have identified 10 planners who were trained over 2 years ago and who have no approved plans. **Action PG** will be writing to inform them that they must have an approved plan by the end of the calendar year or they will be removed from list of active planners.

BWW Streamlining

Management planners have been given training in the streamlining processes to date at the May update training. PAWS and CCF specialist assessments have been removed. Ecological and community assessments will be asked for on a case by case basis. Some detail from the foundation plan and management plan has been simplified or removed. Stakeholder reports have been removed from the process, planners continue to list stakeholders who will be contracted during plan implementation. Applicant will not need to sign the foundation plan. **NS** said that guidance is needed for woodland officers and planners in the new process so that they were all working from the same place **RS** replied that Andy Wright and PG would be looking at consistency from all the woodland officers in their dealings with planners. An information note on the streamlining process will be published in the BWW reference library. **Action AE** to publish and inform planners

AB queried some of the business rules for BWW. **PG** said that everything in the rules is based on FCW best practice and their main purpose was to be silviculturally sound. BWW rules have to be comprehensive but they cannot cover every possible scenario. All the planners are told about changes to the business rules through e-mails, the technical bulletin and update training sessions. **Action Planners** are to write to **PG** if they think

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that any of the business rules are silviculturally unsound and he will answer on that basis.

7 GLOS update

Release 24 (March 2010) – contract map improvements enabling penalties to be applied.
Release 25 (June 2010) – automatic x-checks for amendments. Proposed WIG cost calculator upload has been delayed due to technical problems.

Release 26 (September 2010) - new planting grants, BWW streamlining

Release 27 (Dec/Jan 2011) -possible WIG cost calculator upload.

8 AOB

AB and **PE** said there was a problem with paper amendments going missing
Action Planners to send in specific cases to **PG**. The technical services team workload may affect the speed at which amendments are done.

AB asked is there is a prioritised queue of work for TS team? Action PG to speak to team about work priorities. **RS** noted the lack of a logging system for problems.

Update on Phytophthora Ramorum

RS updated the group on the outbreak of Phytophthora ramorum found in larch in SW England. Helicopter surveys in spring 2010 found more infected stands. Wales have been offered free helicopter surveys, to focus in on SE Wales. FCW will keep all its stakeholders informed of developments and ask that everyone keeps the subject in their minds whilst out and about. FCW are halfway through training all their operational staff on signs and symptoms of the disease and bio-security measures are in place. FCW will arrange free training for the sector, possibly through Confor. **Action AE** will keep stakeholders informed.

9. Date of next meeting

5 November 2010 - change of venue to National office, Llanbadarn Fawr, Aberystwyth