



BETTER WOODLANDS FOR WALES STAKEHOLDER GROUP

6th meeting on 6th November 2009 Broneirion, Llandinam, Powys

1. Present

Andrew Bronwin	CLA
Meriel Robson	WEL
Ian Halfpenny	CADW
Hilary Miller	CCW
David Edwards	ICF
David Jenkins	Coed Cymru
Phil Morgan	CCFG
Richard Siddons	FC Wales
Rachel Chamberlain	FC Wales
Kevin Taylor	FC Wales
Alison Evans	FC Wales

2. Apologies

Phil Johnson	CONFOR
Rosie Carmichael	WLGA
Dr Kathryn Roberts	CADW

3. Minutes/ Actions arising from the last meeting:

GIS fees

Martyn Potton (MP) has reviewed GIS fees paid to Management Planners, to better reflect the time spent on data capture. Proposed fees were presented to the Stakeholders. **Action** Confirmed figures will be published on the BWW internet site in early December by **Alison Evans (AE) and MP** will contact all planners to explain the new payment system.

Invasive species

Andrew Bronwin (AB) asked how the new guidance document on 'Historic parks and gardens' was progressing. **Action Andy Wright (AW)** to contact **AB** to give an update.



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Historic environment

Ian Halfpenny (IH) reported back on behalf of CADW that meetings with **MP** had taken place regarding the 500 metre independent buffer around SAMs (Scheduled Ancient Monuments).

CCW Habitat regulations (external)

External guidance has now been published in the online BWW reference library.

CADW & Interpretation of data

Rachel Chamberlain (RC) has been in contact with CADW and there will be a slot available for them to give training at the next Management Planner update training sessions in spring 2010. CCW will also give training at the same sessions **Action AE** to liaise with CADW and CCW to arrange suitable dates for the training sessions.

Land registration

AB reported that the process of land registration seems to be working more smoothly. **David Edwards (DE)** and **David Jenkins (DJ)** said there could still be problems with complicated ownership issues

Kevin Taylor (KT) is liaising with WAG to help make changes and improvements to further speed up the process.

Action: Any particular problems with land registration should be reported to **KT**

4. Operational issues

Scheme statistics

RC updated the group with BWW scheme statistics. 1274 cases have entered the scheme to date and are at Foundation stage or beyond. Of these, 608 cases have been approved. They total 21,557 ha with an average scheme size of 35.46 ha.

Committed funds

	Budget	Committed	Committed	Paid	Paid
09/10	£3,060,000	£3,002,665	98%	£879,195	29%
10/11	£3,340,000	£3,433,492	106%		

RC presented the figures for committed funds 09/10 and 10/11. FCW is over committed for 10/11 but historically a percentage of approved work does not go ahead. If we need more funding the Director Wales has indicated he would support a bid for this.

A discussion followed about the approach to BWW amendments to claim years. Should we be building in restrictions such as the number of years we will allow operations to be rolled forward?

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AB said that the private sector and owners need to take more responsibility and commit to work in a particular year. **Phil Morgan (PM)** thought that BWW had been too accommodating and should have tighter rules on claim years. **RC** replied that BWW had been as flexible as possible to date because FCW recognised the delays caused by the new CRN and Land registration processes. Should FCW change their approach to changes in claim year amendments and have a 'use it or lose it' policy to work not done and claimed in the approved year? **DE** preferred the 'use it or lose it' approach as it was a simple and straightforward rule and allowed Management Planners to be firm with clients. **DJ** said this could cause problems for small schemes where a Management Planner only draws up a scheme but doesn't act as an agent for work to be carried out. Owners of small woodlands don't always fully understand their responsibilities. On balance **RS** thought that BWW needs some flexibility to move operations from one year to another but there must be a clear message to owners and Planners to minimise number of amendments to claim years

Action: RS requested suggestions from the group as to how to let owners know in a strong and clear manner the reasons for not moving work forward year after year. There is a need for a penalty for doing so, but some flexibility needs to be kept in the system

Staff update

Nick Fackrell is the new Woodland officer for Monmouthshire, replacing Andy J Wright. We have made some small boundary changes between Nick's area and Alan Hubbuck's area so that work in urban areas is more evenly distributed between them. A new map of Woodland officer areas is on the BWW website and the land information search has also been revised.

Simon Mead is back at work and although he is unable to do site visits at the moment, he is picking up casework.

Peter Jones will be off from the end of November for a knee operation. He is liaising with his regular planners to ensure that any disruption is minimal.

Kay Williams has replaced Chris Botting as Regulatory Case manager, dealing with grant reclaims and alleged illegal felling.

Data capture

DJ said that Coed Cymru had to use the 'Map info' GIS system provided by local authorities. It seemed to be out of sync with the 'Mastermap' system used by FCW. The difference in the two systems caused error messages. **Action: MP** to look at problems with planners in December.

Features and factors

PM reported problems with the amount of detail required by Woodland officers for BWW plans. Is it all necessary?

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Action: RS will look at the business rules to decide how much detail is required. **PM** to give **RC** specific examples of BWW cases in question.

Citizen's Charter

RC commented on the figures for July to September 2009. Compared with the April to June figures, Initial approval time remained the same at 95% within target. Foundation plan approval times have dropped by 2% to 55% within target but the time taken to reach Management Plan approval had gone up from 38% to 52% within target. **RC** also said that Management planners should prioritise their work to get 09/10 plans through the system first. The quality of plan standards submitted should also be reviewed. **DE** asked if any planners had been taken off the list. **RC** - Not to date. **DE** suggested that a league table of plans approved by planner should be published again in the Technical newsletter.

Action: AE to include this in Technical newsletter from 2010

AB suggested that not all the targets in the Citizen's charter are sensible or achievable.

Action: RS Consult with stakeholders to investigate and review targets.

5. GLOS update

RC handed out a table of the main changes and fixes which will be made to GLOS to ensure that the system is compliant with the Rural Development Plan and works effectively. The table showed changes which will affect Management Planners and included an expected release date.

DJ asked about progress with getting useful information from GLOS, for example the area of PAWS restoration. **Hilary Miller (HM)** said that information on outputs and details of exactly what is being funded by BWW would be very useful.

Action: RC will send out a request to all Stakeholders in November for the type of analysis that would be useful to them. She will then see if we have the resources to set up business queries to pull the information out of GLOS (Grants and Licences on-line system).

6. BWW Grants and re-alignment

KT gave a presentation firstly setting out the Woodlands for Wales' priorities as set out in the WAG Woodland Strategy. There will be a data gathering and collation exercise to be presented to the FCW management board by March 2010 to ensure that BWW grants are re-aligned to deliver the Woodlands for Wales priorities - responding to climate change, improving environmental quality, woodlands for people and developing a competitive and integrated forest sector. There will be a complete review of standard costs for BWW new planting and re-stocking rates. FCW will also seek modification to

the Rural Development Plan in order to amend the woodland creation grant rates. The target delivery is mid 2010.

DJ, AB, HM and **DE** stated that rates for new planting would have to increase for FCW to meet the woodland creation targets. **AB** said that Challenge funds had been successful in the past as a method of increasing new planting. **DJ** thought that there was an appetite for shelterbelts and small mosaic planting. Areas were relatively small but soon mounted up. BWW rates need to be higher than Glastir rates. **RS** said that the aim was to work together with Glastir project officers to get more planting done on farms. Although there is a limit to the rates that FCW can offer for new planting, they will use all tools at their disposal to incentivise planting, including the new 'First Steps' scheme.

7. First Steps

KT gave a presentation on the 'First Steps' scheme, aimed at contributing to the target of 1500ha of new woodland over the next three years. There will be a funding limit of £5,000 per beneficiary. Grant will be £1800/ha. Stock fencing will be funded at the same £/metre rate as BWW and Tir Gofal. Lower threshold 0.05ha and new planting is to be on Improved land only (as per EIA agricultural definition). Trees must be maintained for 10 years and achieve a stocking density of 1600 trees/ha. Preferred approach is delivery by an external partner and this will go to tender. The target for launching the scheme is 1 April 2010.

Feedback from the Stakeholder group was positive. **KT** told the group that there would be a 6 week consultation period. As well as the Stakeholders contribution to this, **KT** asked for suggestions for other consultees

8. AOB

DJ had a BWW scheme where the Woodland officer had asked for a deer assessment but said that BWW will only pay for this if all owners of neighbouring woods also had an assessment. **DJ** felt that it was not Coed Cymru's role to approach all the neighbours. **RS** agreed that it was not part of the role of a management planner to approach neighbouring owners. He also replied that there was a problem with woodlands split into multi-ownership, but that a concerted effort was necessary in cases where there were problems with deer.

DE requested that FCW staff inspecting woodlands after claims had been submitted contact the agent, so that they could be accompanied if there were health and safety issues. **RC** replied that inspectors could give up to 48 hours notice, so that health and safety issues could be brought to their attention. However in order to do their job properly they needed to do inspections alone. If there was a new BWW application

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where the owner/agent wanted to go on site with the Woodland officer, they should make this clear to the Woodland officer and it could be arranged.

DE also asked if they could get an acknowledgement of amendments received. **RC** replied that unfortunately GLOS did not flag up amendments to the Technical services team. A fix to this problem is on the list for the GLOS updates. The planner should e-mail the bww.ts team to let them know that an amendment has been submitted online. The e-mail would then be acknowledged.

RS told the group about an outbreak of *Phytophthora ramorum* found in Japanese larch woodlands in north and south Devon. *Rhododendron ponticum* could no longer be seen as the main vector of the disease. Secondary infection was found in the understorey, affecting broadleaves. **Action:** bio-security procedures will be put in place for FCW staff visiting all woodlands. **RS** will be producing a briefing note for the stakeholders as soon as possible.

9. Date of next meetings 7 May 2010