



Agenda Item 6

24<sup>th</sup> September 2010

WNC 29.10

## **WOODLANDS FOR WALES POLICY POSITION: Biodiversity**

### **Purpose**

1. To present to the National Committee for comment and approval the final DRAFT of the *Woodlands for Wales* Policy Position on Biodiversity.

### **Background**

2. The purpose and process for developing Policy Positions in support of *Woodlands for Wales* has been previously discussed and agreed. Some of the key points are shown at Appendix 1.
3. This Policy Position is for Biodiversity and is framed to set out the aspects of policy relevant for developing programmes specific to woodland biodiversity and trees. The Agenda for Action reflects the *Woodlands for Wales* Action Plan.
4. This is the final Policy Position to be tabled from the suite of eight:
  - Welsh woodlands - their extent, nature and character **[agreed March 2010]**;
  - Water and Soils **[agreed July 2009]**;
  - Biodiversity**[tabled]**;
  - Landscape, culture and heritage **[agreed November 2009]**;
  - Economic development & enterprise **[agreed July 2010]**;
  - Education, Learning and skills **[agreed November 2009]**;
  - Community involvement **[agreed September 2009]**;
  - Health & well-being **[agreed July 2009]**.

### **Recent progress**

5. Although, to date, there has been no formal external liaison on this policy position the components of the document have been subject to many years of liaison across a large number of organisations and established 'umbrella' and UK Biodiversity Action Plan groups. For example, the UK Native Woodland Habitat Action Plan Group have developed the targets for native woodland and determined habitat condition criteria. The Wales Environment Strategy Outcome 21 working group oversee an established management approach to bring protected sites in favourable management. Although

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there has been no formal agreement of the prioritised woodland 'section 42' species, the Woodland Ecosystem Group<sup>1</sup> have been involved in development for some time and formal adoption is recommended. The Woodland Ecosystem Group will have considered this FINAL DRAFT document on 23<sup>rd</sup> September. Pertinent issues raised from liaison on previous policy positions have been incorporated. Further formalised liaison will take place after the National Committee meeting. In addition, FCWMB members were invited to make comments on this FINAL DRAFT and have recommended approval to the Committee.

## **Context**

6. The failure to meet the 2010 international target to halt the loss of biodiversity has seen a rapid appraisal of the existing approaches to biodiversity action at a global, European and UK level. The Environment Council agreed in March 2010 to a new long-term vision and mid-term headline target for biodiversity in the EU which will underpin the new EU biodiversity strategy to be developed in 2010; *'To halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, restore them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.'* The forthcoming Nagoya Conference of the Parties (Convention on Biological Diversity) will consider how to take forward a new global framework on biodiversity.
7. In Wales the launch of the public consultation of a *'A Living Wales'* towards a Natural Environment Framework on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2010 advocates an ecosystems approach to biodiversity action with decision making for optimal ecosystem service delivery. Priority biodiversity action has been traditionally based upon threat, rarity, scarcity and preserving the best examples of 'typical' habitats under a suite of legal measures and regulation. Whilst the conservation of the iconic (value) and scarce (need) is acknowledged, it seeks to promote the wider value of ecosystem structure, function and the 'common' – a balance which sustainable forest management has been seeking for some time. Indeed, a healthy and resilient woodland ecosystem is a central principle and outcome sought from *Woodlands for Wales*.
8. The governance and development process for a *Natural Environment Framework* has identified a number of tensions. Biodiversity action is organised around established local delivery networks which often comes into conflict with strategic level prioritisation. Often this results as demand for 'all inclusive' delivery, little focus and

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<sup>1</sup> The Woodland Ecosystem Group form part of the Wales Biodiversity Partnership Governance with members including Wildlife Trusts, RSPB, Woodland Trust, Countryside Council for Wales and is chaired by FCW

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hence outcome failure. The term biodiversity is not an easily communicated term with a definition rooted in scientific principle not shared between audiences. The inherent difficulty of defining and resourcing a monitoring framework around the favourable condition of protected sites and habitats has seen a shift of focus towards securing favourable management. This could be interpreted as less outcome focussed but is intended to improve the overall ecological condition of land and sea resources – a move towards the wider value of ecosystem structure and function - and hence more equitable provision of the services those ecosystems can offer.

## **Financial Implications**

9. Affordability will manifest itself in two ways. Firstly, between programmes ('How much) and secondly through business planning ('When'). Agreeing this resource allocation is the role of the Corporate / Business Plans. However because of our attempts to improve alignment from policy through to delivery, all those involved in setting policy or undertaking the corporate 'translation' need to take into account resource issues.

## **Risk Analysis**

10.

| <b>Risk Component</b>  | <b>Risk Type:<br/>Economic<br/>Reputational<br/>Env. &amp; Social</b> | <b>Impact /<br/>Likelihood<br/>Score</b> | <b>Risk<br/>Score</b> | <b>Controls</b>                                     |
|--|---|--|-----------------------|---|
| <b>That we do not achieve better strategic alignment</b>                           | <b>Reputational</b>   | <b>5 / 3</b>                             | <b>15</b>             | <b>Development of effective processes</b>           |
| <b>That the 'outputs' are not useful</b>   | <b>Reputational</b>   | <b>3 / 4</b>                             | <b>12</b>             | <b>Development of effective processes</b>           |
| <b>That the 'outputs' are not used</b>   | <b>Reputational</b>   | <b>4 / 4</b>                             | <b>16</b>             | <b>Effective governance &amp; people management</b> |
| <b>Risk Score 0 – 5 Insignificant / 6 – 10 Low / 11 – 20 Medium / 21 – 25 High</b> |   |  |                       |   |

## **Communications**

11. The Policy Positions will be published on the WAG and FC websites and will be used by the Policy Team in taking forward with partners many of the tasks identified in the 'Agenda for Action' sections, as well as for continual development of the *Woodlands for Wales* Action Plan.

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## **Recommendation**

12. The committee is asked to comment on and approve the content of this FINAL DRAFT Policy Position.

**Clive Thomas and Michelle van-Velzen  
Policy and Programme Development Team  
September 2010**

## Appendix 1

Key aspects of Policy Positions in support of *Woodlands for Wales*:

- These Positions are a policy tool for setting down the detailed evidence and also to enable some strategic spatial analysis (if applicable) to be done. They are effectively appendices to the strategy itself and help to link to the Action Planning necessary for delivering the strategy.
- They deal with the 'why' and introduce the 'what and how' via the 'Agenda for Action' section. They are a vital component for developing the rationale for FC corporate responses (programmes) to the revised *Woodlands for Wales*. Through the development of the Action Plan for the strategy, we will seek to influence their use in a similar way by other delivery partners. As such, the main audience for Policy Positions is the FC Wales Policy team, as well as a wider policy/strategy/audit stakeholder audience.
- Some WSAP members have input to the specific work on the Policy Positions, whilst the wider process of revising the strategy has informed their development as well.
- As these Policy Positions are in support of the revised *Woodlands for Wales* strategy and its associated Action Plan, they should be presented as such.
- A number of the Policy Positions, along with the FC Wales Corporate Programmes developed from the 'Agendas for Action', will be of interest externally to stakeholders and will merit the production of a publication. However these publications are separate to both the Policy Positions and the Corporate Programmes.