

## RWFF Implementation Plan event, Exeter 12<sup>th</sup> March 2009

### Notes from **Natural Environment** theme groups

Facilitator: Naomi Brookes, Biodiversity SW  
Scribe: Steve Colderick, Forestry Commission

#### Morning:

Ben Bunting - EA, Richard Nicholson - Poole BC, Michelle Osbourn - Somerset WT, David Blake - Cranborne AONB, Colin Hawke - CornwallCC, Roger Griffin - NE, Rupert Lane - Dartmoor NP,

#### Afternoon:

Mike Moser – Regional Advisory Committee,  
Justin Milward - WT, Simon Lee - NE, Becca Eastman - SWCCIP, Andrew Player - Crown Estates, Alistair Wright - Wrights Sawmill, Steve Minton – Forest Enterprise, Gavin Bloomfield - RSPB.

In red: Comments not ascribed to either group – from post it notes on objectives sheet

#### **1. What are the priorities for action over next 3 years to achieve RWFF objectives?**

Need to raise awareness that active management is usually good, neglect isn't always good.

Woods where minimum or no intervention should be identified so they are left alone.

**Veteran trees** – OK we're mapping them, but how can we use HLS to protect them? ELS? Protect by not carrying out operations within drip line?

County Veteran Tree projects are running in Cornwall and Dorset. In Cornwall the project is getting people to map veterans but not recording protection.

We need to know they are being protected.

Need to raise awareness/profile of ancient trees.

**Water Framework Directive** – concerned we're not on top of resource protection – we're not doing enough to promote the benefits of ecosystem services. However, there is some movement towards resource protection – encouraging tree planting on erodible soils in Catchment Sensitive Farming Areas, pilot scheme to re-wet and tree planting in upper catchment areas.

We need evidence gathering of ecosystem services.

Need more examples – there are good examples from Warwickshire

People miss the less obvious ones – eg bees pollinate crops, so we need holes in old trees to house bee colonies.

Many of the Biodiversity objectives could sit under other themes.

**The threat of Phytophthora** needs a co-ordinated approach, and harness the work to bring other biodiversity benefits.

This extends to other threats – **other invasive species**. Do we have any exemplars of invasive/exotic species removal? Yes, plenty!

Grey squirrels are a big threat to the investment made in the SWF – can we promote squirrel control, possibly on the back of existing deer management networks?

Present or increased deer impact is/will adversely affect progress in SW Woodland

Need to increase levels of access for health benefits.

**GI** links to the rural environment as well as urban – it should extend seamlessly from urban into rural. Town dwellers sometimes find the countryside uninviting – “are we allowed to go there?”

Need to make the link between **sustainable woodfuel** supplies and good ecological practice.

Is the resource needed for woodfuel in the right place and is there enough of it?

What is the capacity to supply markets?

Will there be a shortfall of timber supplies in the future?

No more loss of **Ancient Woodland**.

We can replace lost woodland with new native woodland, albeit not the same value.

We aren't seeing the large woodland creation programmes of the 90's, but woodland creation is more targeted – e.g strengthening habitat networks in Ancient Woodland Priority Areas (AWPAs). FC is not chasing large planting programmes per se.

This approach improves connectivity – resistance/adaptation to climate change.

**Landscape scale working** brings robustness, one can be less precious about small areas within a larger habitat matrix.

Can we have targeted grants to assist **woodland birds** as done in other English Regions?

FC approach is to work on a landscape scale within the AWPAs to manage the broad habitat rather than for individual species (no surprise that distribution maps of woodland red data bird species have a strong match to AWPAs)

Can we raise the profile/awareness of the importance of Ancient Woodlands to the public?

A big threat will be that there will be a big demand to return woodland to food production. We import food, and we import timber, it is a case of finding a balance.

Can we have a multi-agency e-mail newsletter?

Open habitats – need to spearhead delivery from non-native plantations. Identify priority sites on the public estate.

Don't forget value of street trees in urban context.

2. **Of these which are the top 5?** (from flipcharts, am and pm groups)

- i) Communications/advocacy/training
- ii) Landscape scale working – including training (see 7 below)
- iii) Ecosystem services
- iv) Invasive species/pests/diseases
- v) Urban/GI
- i) [Ancient woodland and sustainability](#)
- ii) [Wood products and Natural environment benefits](#)
- iii) [Joined up e-newsletter](#)
- iv) [Climate change adaptation](#)

**3. Who will carry them out, and how?** – not covered

**4. How will progress be measured?**

Set targets for, for example, wet woodland creation?  
 Ecosystem services don't lend themselves to being measured.  
 Benefits of Ecosystem Services are long term – can be 20 years.  
 Could measure reduced water temperatures as a result of appropriate (tree) shading of waterways.  
 How about a leaflet on Ecosystem Services?  
 Use PSA to get Local Govt to adopt sound practice.

**5. How will progress be reported to the Delivery Group, by whom?** - not covered

**6. Communication – do actions cover this?** See e-newsletter comment

**7. Anything missing?**

Working on a landscape scale doesn't seem to have a high profile.  
 Landscape scale isn't necessarily big – can be one or two properties.  
 Difficult getting landowners working on a landscape scale.  
 Landscape can be one owner.  
 Some LA's have done landscape Character Assessments, could be used as a tool.  
 Most LCA's have a good fit with Nature Map, but each county has used its own protocol, not all the same.  
 Broadly speaking the guidance is there, the training to use it hasn't been so forthcoming. Training in this area should be a new action.

[Has damage occurred to ancient woodlands as a result of unlicensed felling due to the increased demand for firewood? Not aware of any though it is possible. It is possible for woodlands to be damaged without breaking the law.](#)

[Should there be more regulation?  
 Would firewood extraction be more responsibly carried out if there were "community" schemes to secure sustainable sources? Could such a scheme be piloted?](#)