

Briefing Note

1 Actions From Last and Previous Meeting

<p>Actions from previous meeting Action 6. Eamon to convene a telephone conference involving Land and Customer Registration and FC staff, along with Woodland Trust to discuss issues. FC to seek an owner with recent registration experience. Aim to convene before the end of September, sooner if possible</p>	<p>See Action 1 below</p>
<p>Actions from last meeting Action 1. Steve to seek nominations from FC staff, AFG members and owners with large and small enterprises.</p>	<p>Two nominations from within AFG and two FC staff "volunteered". Decided not to take this forward at the time. Can meeting update as to whether RLR and customer registration is still an issue and confirm whether this action is still relevant. <i>Action 1. AFG members to confirm whether there is a need for the telephone conference to take place, and if so confirm nominations.</i></p>
<p>Action 2. AFG Members should continue to give feedback either to the Phytophthora Management Group, or to this forum, on any aspects of the disease management.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Action 3. AFG Andrew asked that all members provide evidence where they could of 100 – 200 hectare woodlands, where the cost of certification was seen as possibly discouraging owners from managing their woodland.</p>	<p>No feedback received to date.</p>
<p>Action 4. Steve and Craig to ensure the forest track guidance includes sections on grant aid and planning implications.</p>	<p>Work in progress. Ewan Calcott, the G&R Manager for West Midlands is currently working on the guidance to accompany the Wood fuel WIG. Ewan will ensure that relevant guidance is included as requested. Training will be provided towards the end of summer into autumn.</p>
<p>Action 5. Andrew to send interim thinking regarding future FC roles to AFG members for them to review / comment on.</p>	<p>This information was published as part of the PFE consultation exercise.</p>
<p>Action 6. Craig will send out revised EWGS Term's and Conditions within the next month for AFG members to review and feedback on.</p>	<p>Not actioned. See G&R update paper</p>
<p>Action 7. AFG members to provide feedback to Craig on redrafted leaflet "Funding for Farm</p>	<p>Completed and document published January 2011</p>

<i>Woodlands"</i>	
Action 8. <i>Craig to correct WPG rates in the "Funding for Farm Woodlands" booklet and add a small section on woodfuel.</i>	Completed and document published January 2011
Action 9.	Drafting error in minutes. No action 9.
Action 10. <i>AFG members are invited to comment on the issues and ideas raised in the WCG paper with Craig on a 1:1 basis</i>	Closed. Comments received from some members. See grants update paper
Action 11. <i>AFG members to feed thoughts back to Mike Render as soon as possible with regards Arm Length Body review paper.</i>	Ongoing
Action 12. <i>Mike R / Andrew to set up base camp facility on the website in order for individuals to feedback on the ALB review</i>	Not progressed
Action 13. <i>Andrew Depending on feedback on base camp, Andrew to decide whether the next AFG meeting should take place in February or May. Notify members as soon as a decision has been taken</i>	Not progressed. Date of meeting self explanatory!

2 National Office Staffing Update

Marion Pick, the final member of staff associated with the Cambridge office left the FC at the end of March. Marion's work has been absorbed into the Farm Woodland process centres and the National Team in Bristol. Update on the current staffing situation in main agenda.

3 UKFS

Publishing of the revised UKFS has been further delayed. Expected publication date is now set for June, assuming that there are no issues raised in the meantime.

4 Felling of larch species during the Winter

The current operations note 23 remained in force until the 1st May. Regions should now be managing the backlog of held felling licence applications involving larch removal, and processing any new cases as normal. Restocking guidance remains in force for the time being. The results of the first fly over exercises are just starting to come in. To date these flights have concentrated mainly on the SW and neighbouring regions, but by the time of this meeting will also be covering North England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The results of all these flights will be analysed in due course and the Operations note will be reviewed and amended as necessary. For full details of the current note go to [Operations Note 23](#).

5 Finance update

For 11/12 we are now only taking new applications for Woodland Creation and Woodland Planning Grants, the new Wood fuel Grant and there is provision for Woodland Regeneration Grant applications for Phytophthora affected areas in the South West Region.

Budget	Scheme	Grant Type	2009/10 Spend	2010/11 Spend	2011/12 Plan	2012/13 Plan
RDPE	WGS		1,689	1,003	462	101
		FWS/FWPS	9,279	9,941	8,950	8,500
	EWGS	WAG	38	57	96	92
		WPG	158	449	471	461
		WMG	2,005	2,242	1,951	2,427
		WIG	4,455	7,116	8,948	8,748
		WRG	-	1,031	1,463	1,930
		WCG	2,518	4,050	5,921	5,573
		FWP	1,158	1,621	2,300	2,730
		Woodfuel	-	-	2,000	3,500
EWGS Total		10,332	16,566	23,150	25,461	
RDPE Total			21,300	27,510	32,562	34,062
Headroom against Plan at 31/03/11			-	-	-	11,461
Total Commitments at 31/03/11 (gross of Fallout)			-	-	35,888	19,101
Overall Fallout predicted			-	-	10%	10%
Non RDPE	WGS/Old Schemes		1,491	323	88	80
	EWGS	WMG	156	231	528	400
		Forest School	137	126	50	0
		WRG	1,146	472	329	150
EWGS Total		1,439	829	907	550	
Non RDPE Total			2,930	1,152	995	630
Grand Total			24,230	28,662	33,557	34,692

Ben Walker,
Management Accountant, G&R

6 Phytophthora management 2011

We have implemented changes to the administration process for Phytophthora management as of 16th April 2011. The National Office Regulations team in Bristol will be responsible for the management of the disease database, liaising with regional and disease management team staff, and be first port of call for the industry and members of the public wishing to report potential incidences of disease. They will also be responsible for the issuing and ongoing management of the Plant Health Notices.

Contact details for the team are:

Dedicated telephone : 0117 372 1070

Email: plant_health_england@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

(Note that there is an underscore where the gaps in address are).

Technical advice on disease management and latest developments can be sought from Ben Jones and the dedicated disease management team, or Forest Research.

Contact details are:

Ben Jones: 01392 834224

07721 042813

Email: ben.jones@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Joan Webber (FR): 01420 526241

Email: joan.webber@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

In addition the Technical Services unit (field teams working for Forest Research), will be undertaking most of the initial site visits, where symptoms and field samples are noted and gathered. Forest Research will continue to be used for laboratory testing, but it is likely that we will be looking to issue more Notices based on suspicion of disease rather than confirmed presence. This is because timely management of the disease spread is essential. The time taken for diagnostic tests to show results and the likely demand on FR resource, can delay the issuing of a Notice by up to a month, although new, faster DNA testing techniques are now being utilised whenever possible.

Regional Woodland Officers will continue to be responsible for the second field visit which involves dealing direct with the owner or agent of a site, discussing the results of the initial survey and agreeing what work is required, the extent and the timescale for removal of the trees. Regional staff will remain the first point of contact for owners and agents wherever possible.

The intention of these changes is to reduce the impact of disease management on regional staff, so that "business as usual" can continue.

The role of Bruce Rothie as Phytophthora Project Manager and the OMT group remain unchanged.

7 European Protected Species (EPS) and Phytophthora

FC National office staff, are currently working with NE colleagues to introduce a streamlined process for managing EPS interest, whilst also undertaking disease management measures. We are conscious that most work up to the present time has probably been undertaken with minimal thought being given to the effect on EPS. The purpose of a streamlined process will be to ensure owners and agents minimise the risk to themselves of breaching the legislation. It will also ensure that we demonstrate that the industry is being responsible in its approach to management of the disease, whilst also managing the biodiversity interest of the sites themselves.

We are looking to implement an "organisational licence" for PFE land, and a "class licence" for private woodland owners. Although these are basically very similar, the basis behind the class licence is that applicants must be registered with NE. At the moment the intention is to adopt the current "approved agent" list that is being used in

the SW region, and from which owners can select an agent to manage (and receive payment from the FC) the removal of infected, or suspected infected larch. Further guidance will be provided, which will deal with the sympathetic felling of trees and any mitigating actions identified that will be required to reduce the impact on EP species that may be present on a site. Provided agents work to this guidance, they will be able to download a licence to cover the work from the Internet. They will need no other formal approval for the work, unless the guidance cannot be adhered to. In what is thought will be very exceptional circumstances, it might be necessary for an owner or their agent to formally apply for a full EPS licence. NE have confirmed that they will fast stream all such requests for a licence.

The actual process is currently being thought through by NE staff. The hope is that we will have a process in place ready for when we begin issuing new Statutory Plant Health Notices, probably in the next two or three weeks.

Further details will be made available as soon as possible. This process and use of approved agents will obviously be reviewed and both updated as we become more aware of the disease situation over the coming weeks.

8 e business update

e business

In response to discussions at previous AFG meeting and as part of the on-going need to continually improve customer service and efficiency, the National Office team has initiated a pilot project seeking to analyse, review and increase the external use of systems to support the application of grants.

Currently the external GLOS system is used to support around 10% of applications from landowners and agents and there is a common belief that this could be significantly increased.

A pilot project, initially within the South West region, was launched early in 2011. The first stage comprising of discussions at the regional office and a visit to an agent to help to identify any barriers and improvements that may help encourage wider use of the GLOS system is now complete.

From these meetings the key themes that emerged were that:

- there are a couple of areas of the GLOS system itself that may be barriers to encouraging wider external use
- there are some improvements to GLOS that could really help make the process smoother and encourage wider take up
- Some additional support and training is required to help establish greater confidence in the way the system is used

In response to these key themes, a requirements specification has been drafted and initial changes to the GLOS system itself are to be developed for release 30 currently scheduled for September 2011. It was hoped to deliver these changes earlier than September but now will be delivered after some important IS infrastructure improvements in June.

Initial improvements will include:

- Features to carry across work areas from one case to another.
- Enhancements to support upload of work areas from a spreadsheet.
- Clear visibility of FC case comments to help identify the current status of an application.
- Improved options to cut and paste details from other documents such as Word.
- Ability to complete the application gradually and submit only when required.
- Provision of a case report prior to submission allowing users to print what they have done so far.

In parallel to systems development, a programme of work including training (likely to be seminars) and support processes will be developed to encourage wider use and help to make ebusiness a much more automatic choice for agents and landowners moving forward. Initially, this will be focused in the South West then rolled out later in the fiscal year.

It is anticipated that the arrangements relating to Woodfuel applications will also drive an increased use of external use of GLOS for applications and this can continue as normal in advance of the changes mentioned above.

Andy Goodsir
Development Manager

9 Inspection and annual payments round 2011

Title I inspections (all annual farm woodland payments and management grant) and Title II inspections (all other payments other than "old" state aid schemes) have now been identified for the 2011/12 claim year. These have been successfully loaded into GLOS so that cases are flagged up for inspection during the claim administration process. We have extended the use of satellite imagery, for remote sensing and for the first time we will be using this process to remotely inspect approximately 30 woodland creation sites, due second instalment, established through EWGS. These are now five years old and will be readily identified using infra red imagery (we hope!). Unfortunately we cannot extend the use of such imagery for existing woodland management, other than checking presence and extent of any tree felling work.

10 Timber Procurement – Category B protocol

The new functionality in GLOS linking management plans to subsequent work proposals under new schemes is proving very effective. This provides the paper trail necessary to help demonstrate legality and sustainability of the work. You are reminded that all such cases benefit from 10 year felling approval, and the flexibility that this builds into woodland management.

11 Phytophthora Disease Management Update

Aerial surveys have commenced across S&SW England and Wales from the 18 April and 5 flights have been completed to date. The flights have been used to monitor progress of felling on existing sites under Notice and to search for new sites of suspicious symptoms. All these sites were photographed. In addition felling licence applications for larch made during last winter have been checked for possible signs of infection. An ongoing programme of flights is planned for the remainder of May to investigate other geographic areas - more in Wales, NW England, W Scotland and Northern Ireland.

From the first 3 flights across S&SW England 128 new areas were identified with dead or dying larch trees. On some sites only a single dead tree may have been observed and it is likely that many of these sites will prove to be causes other than *P.ramorum*, but this will not become clear until ground visits have been made. In general the amount of symptoms has not been as extensive as observed in 2010, and the sites of most concern from initial observation tend to be close to sites of existing known infection - in effect we are seeing an enlargement of sites and coalescence of existing clusters on infection but a limited number of new outbreaks more distant from known infections. The pattern in Wales is very similar, but we do need to wait until site investigations have been completed before a true picture of infection is clear.

Current activity is deployment of plant health inspectors to suspect sites (and these have been prioritised according to degree of concern and more isolated frontier sites first) to determine the cause of symptoms observed from the helicopter and, if necessary, take foliar or bark samples for laboratory testing. Statutory Notices will be issued where infection by *P.ramorum* is strongly suspected. With the greatest risk of sporulation from infected larch being in the autumn we will be expecting much of the clearance work under Notice to be completed prior to this high risk period.

Bruce Rothnie