



Big Tree Plant Assessment Panel

Venue: Groundwork London, Morley Street

Date and time: Wednesday 1st May 2013 10.00am – 4.00pm

1. Attendees:

(Chair) Peter Wilkinson (PW)	- The Next Field Ltd
Nerys Jones (NJ)	- Strategic Greenspace Consultant
Tony Kirkham (TK)	- Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
Alison Millward (AM)	- Alison Millward Associates Ltd
Hannah Clay (HC)	- Groundwork London
Mark Durk (MD)	- Forestry Commission
Tim Hughes (TH)	- Defra
Laura Williams (LW)	- Groundwork London

1. PW introduced the meeting and a brief round of introductions was held.

2. a. Progress to Date

MD provided a summary of the latest status of progress with approvals, including grant amounts and number of trees committed through the Scheme. It was highlighted that the number of trees planted in 2012/13 would be lower than anticipated due to a number of unforeseeable factors, but especially linked to poor weather over the planting season. GWL will be carrying out quarterly risk assessments in order to manage risk and promote successful delivery. MD confirmed that the Project Board are satisfied with the BTP application process and the projects that are being approved.

b. Social Research into Groups' Engagement with BTP

TH briefed the Panel on the outcomes of Defra's social research carried out by the Silvanus Trust. The results of the research have been largely positive although it was suggested that there was only a moderate level of applicant participation and that the involvement from BTP funded applicants was lower than anticipated. TH to circulate the interim draft report.

c. Interim Feedback

MD clarified that if all projects recommended for approval by GWL were funded then there would be a shortfall of trees planted using this round as the final of the Scheme. Therefore, it had been agreed that there will be another round of applications which will be publicised through targeted marketing. The Panel confirmed they are content to sit for another round. MD confirmed that the 103,000 delivered by TCV and KBT prior to the Grant Scheme starting reduces pressure and increases flexibility in meeting project costs.

d. Guidance to Panel

MD provided an update following the circulation of the Forestry Commission paper on the latest guidance to the panel based on the current achievements through the Scheme. The agreed approach was to assess projects in order of lowest unit costs, those projects scoring highest against the range of agreed criteria for quality (i.e. including deprivation and community engagement) and approve applications on condition of cost reduction where it is practicable and to be sympathetic to projects in rural areas having low costs per tree where deprivation may be more subjective.

It was noted that the next meeting in August 2013 will be the final grants round of the Scheme.

3. Applications

All potential for conflicts of interest were highlighted when discussing and approving applications. It was also noted that all decisions would be ratified by Dominic Driver, of Forestry Commission, following the meeting.

4. Summary of Decisions

HC provided an update following the Panel decisions which highlighted the reduction in the overall unit cost to the scheme.

5. Date of next meeting

During week commencing 7th October 2013 (grants deadline on 30th August 2013)