Forestry Commission England

Woodland Carbon Task Force News

January 2013

Dear All

Happy New Year, and here's looking forward to the government's response to the Independent Panel on Forestry, due very soon.

Most of us have been facing up to the unpleasant reality of Chalara reaching our shores. More about this within the news snippets and leads to social media. While the impacts will probably be devastating it does give us another wake up call to the importance of biosecurity and the need to mitigate risks to individual species and to grasp the opportunity to further diversify the species we use.

Good news, though, in the fact that recent changes to the EWGS Woodland Creation Grant have helped increase applications five-fold.

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Chalara FRAXback Conference in Vilnius Lithuania

John attended this pan-European conference about the impacts of Chalara in each country. This was a meeting of scientists with few practitioners. The biggest thing he fed back was the view that we should not rush to try to take physical actions. There is no immediacy to take actions in the field; in truth much may be beyond our ability to influence. What we must not miss is the opportunity to capture resilience where it happens. Counsel was to take measured judgments listening to experience from other countries.

It is worth remembering that the formation of the English Channel after the last ice age has left us with fewer species than other European countries. Ash has become more important to us than other countries. This may offer us an opportunity to diversify the broadleaf species we use, especially if we can use more than those from the near continent.

Radio 4 featured the Lithuanian conference and interviewed John Weir for a look towards the future. The interview can be heard at
http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006r4wn

Current advice, informed by continental experiences, can be found on the Forestry Commission website http://www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara

Sector working together on resilience

The Tree species / provenance diversification Linked-in[1] site on forestry and adaptation now has 113 members from across the sector. Another 112 people have signed up to use Forest Research's upgraded, climate ready Ecological Site Classification decision support system during the past quarter.

A site based example of high quality, active engagement by forestry practitioners was provided by a recent site visit to an ash dominated woodland SSSI. The private forestry consultants, Natural England, and FC England colleagues had a constructive discussion about the implications of *Chalara* on the management plan.

[1] Membership by invitation, ask John if you want to join.

Woodland Creation

During the summer of 2012 we increased, simplified and targeted the woodland creation grant rates. The following tables and charts indicate that the money has been sufficient to encourage a step-change in the number of applications.

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Enhanced grants

Woodland Creation Grant	Broadleaf rate / ha	Conifer Rate / ha
New woodland – meeting UK Forestry Standard and delivering public benefit	**£2,800**	**£2,200**
New woodland – delivering **Additional Priorities**	**£3,800** (£2,800 + £1,000 AC)	**£3,200** (£2,200 + £1,000 AC)
New woodland – delivering **Key Priorities**	**£4,800** (2,800 + £2,000 AC)	**£4,200** (2,200 + £2,000 AC)
Special broadleaf – supporting low density planting where that meets objectives*	**£1,700**	N/A

* Provided the total grant contribution does not exceed 80% of the cost

Farm Woodland Payments (FWP)

Type of owner / land use / location	Rate per hectare per year
Farmer on arable land in the lowlands	**£300**
Farmer on other improved land in the lowlands	**£200**
Farmer on unimproved land, or land in the uplands	**£60**
Non-farmer	**One of the above or €150, whichever is lower**

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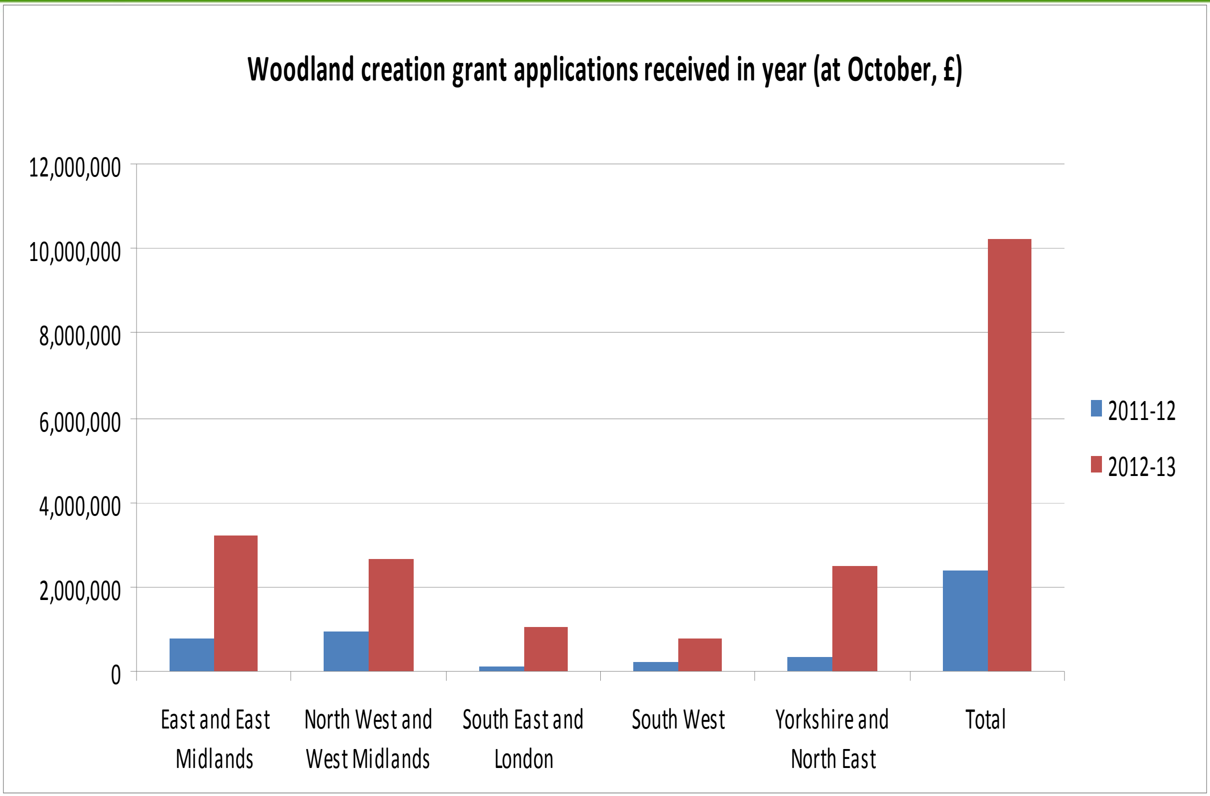
Landowners are joining in



2 08/01/2013 **Forestry Commission's contribution**

Woodland Potential Consultation

An output from the WCTF was the development of a Woodland Potential Calculator web based strategic planning tool. A consultation on woodland creation in each of Natural England's National Charater Areas was due to close on 31st December, but the consultation period has been extended to 31st March 2013 to seek further input, with options to provide a more qualitative and simpler response. Further details, including a summary of responses to date, will be available by mid-January on the FC website at: http://www.forestry.gov.uk/england-wpcresponse. The WCTF has published a commentary on the initial consultation phase, following its meeting on 13th December.

The Woodland Carbon Task Force acknowledges the hard work that individuals and organisations have put into responding to the woodland potential consultation. The results rightly recognise that some areas of the country have little potential for new woodland planting. We welcome the identification of areas of the country where there may be significant potential for woodland creation. In most National Character Areas, there has been an overwhelming view that native woodland should be created – for the range of purposes laid out in the consultation document. While the response has been gratifying, the Task Force feels that responses from a broader range of organisations and more individuals with strong views to allow us to evaluate where we need to focus our efforts to achieve the aspiration for a more wooded landscape as laid out by the Independent Panel on Forestry. We welcome the collation of initial results and the decision to keep the consultation open as a forum for future discussion of woodland potential consultation. We hope that more organisations and individuals will feel able to provide a direct response to the main consultation question, using the simplified framework that has been developed by the Forestry Commission.

Woodland Carbon Code

- There are now 89 UK projects registered with the Code, of which 22 have been validated. Together, these 89 projects will create over 3000 hectares of woodland and sequester 1.4 Million tonnes of carbon dioxide over their lifetime (up to 100 years).
- The recent Chalara outbreak has raised some concerns; of the validated projects, 12% of the area is Ash. However we are confident that the combination of safeguards we have in place mean there is little risk that predicted saleable carbon will not be fulfilled over project lifetimes: We ensure that the predictions of carbon uptake are conservative; that each project contributes 15%-40% of their predicted carbon to a Woodland Carbon Code 'buffer', in case of any losses - only the remaining 60-85% is saleable; that projects are required to replant should losses occur, and; these projects are still in their early stages so beating-up is still to take place. More on Management of Risks and Permanence: http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-8J5B82
- We are currently piloting a 'Group certification scheme' where a number of projects can come together to undergo certification as one. 5 groups of projects are assisting us with this process. The group scheme will provide project managers/developers with savings in the cost of certification (the processes known as validation and verification). This process will be open to all from April 2013. http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-8HZTXR
- From July 2013, the **Markit Environmental Registry** will provide a Project and Carbon Unit Register for the Woodland Carbon Code. The Register's 'Request for Information' Platform will be available for Woodland Carbon Code projects to offer carbon units (tonnes of CO2) within a project for sale. When they are introduced these services will give much greater visibility and transparency to UK woodland carbon projects and the carbon units generated by them. http://www.markit.com/en/products/environmental/markit-environmental-registry.page
- An Operational Guidance Booklet on the Woodland Carbon Code has been drafted. This will help all FC staff understand the Woodland Carbon Code and give them the knowledge to explain its benefits and how it works to those considering investing in or planting new woodland.

Climate change in the news: is it no longer an issue?

You may have come across the news story on the 9th January that said – depending on what newspaper you read or television/radio station you watch/listen to – that climate change had slowed or that climate sceptics had been proved right! The reality is that the work of the Met Office, on which the news story was based on, concludes that the global increase in temperature by 2017 (compared to the baseline) will be slightly lower that previous estimates (the increase falling from 0.54 to 0.43 degrees), due to natural cycles and lower sea surface temperatures. These conclusions are from their decadal forecasts that are updated on an annual basis. This does not mean a change to longer term climate projections and, indeed, the conclusions to the work include the statement '*The latest decadal forecast, issued in December 2012, show that the Earth is expected to maintain the record warmth that has been observed over the last decade, and* *furthermore a substantial proportion of the forecasts show that new record global temperatures may be reached in the next 5 years*. The work does not diminish the risk that climate change poses, nor the urgency to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the future climate change. Further details of the research are available at: http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/news/releases/archive/2013/decadal-forecasts.

A comparison of the real story with the way it was presented by some elements of the media makes for interesting reading – see: http://www.express.co.uk/posts/view/369564/Surprise-global-warming-not-as-bad-as-we-thought

National Forest Inventory (NFI) report on standing volume of hardwoods

An NFI report entitled 'preliminary estimates of quantities of broadleaved species in British woodlands, with special focus on ash' was published on 21st December. The report gives preliminary estimates, based on results from the NFI sample squares, of the area, number of trees and standing volume, for individual broadleaf species, complementing the equivalent report for softwoods published earlier in 2012. Key findings include:

- The estimated stocked area of broadleaves within Great Britain is 1.3 million hectares of which 142 thousand hectares is ash, or 11% of all broadleaves and 5% of all species (both conifer and broadleaves).
- There are approximately 1.4 billion broadleaved trees in British woodlands of over 0.5 hectares, of which ash trees are estimated to number 126 million.
- In addition, there are an estimated 4.2 billion broadleaved seedlings and saplings in British private sector woodlands, of which ash constitutes an estimated 39%.
- Total broadleaved standing volume in all woodlands of over 0.5 hectares in Great Britain is estimated to be 240 million m3 obs. For England the estimate is 182 million m3; for Scotland 34 million m3; and for Wales 24 million m3.
- Total broadleaved standing volume on the private sector estate is estimated to be 227 million m3 and for the Forestry Commission estate is estimated to be 13 million m3.
- Ash accounts for approximately 14% of total broadleaved standing volume in Great Britain.
- Ash tends to be younger and marginally smaller than broadleaved species as a whole.
- Most broadleaved standing volume is contained within stands of trees ranging from 10-60 cm mean diameter at breast height (dbh), while for ash standing volume is mostly found in stands with lower mean dbh.

Renewable Heat Incentive

The Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) is proving highly effective in delivering increased woodfuel capacity. Since the scheme was launched in July, 516 installations have been approved in England (63 since 20th December!) with an installed capacity of 114 MW and an annual requirement of 85,000 green tonnes of woodfuel (value of just over £5 million). The RHI will be extended to domestic boilers in summer 2013, and the increased demand for woodfuel is likely to drive markets in woodland creation as well as woodland management. Daily updates on scheme uptake are available from: https://rhi.ofgem.gov.uk/Public/ExternalReportDetail.aspx?RP=RHIPublicReport

EU regulations on carbon accounting

EU Member states have finally agreed 'compromise text' for regulations on a mechanism for monitoring and reporting greenhouse gas emissions and for a linked regulation that paves the way for the Land use, Land Use Change and Forestry Sector to be included in the EU's greenhouse gas emissions reduction commitments. The next stage is a vote in the European Parliament early in the New Year.

Currently, forestry is not included in the EU's greenhouse gas emissions reduction commitments and, consequently, is not included in the EU Emissions Trading System or other instruments or markets designed to drive lower carbon emissions. The importance of these two EU regulations is that when the EU increases its emissions reduction commitments, forestry (strictly speaking, the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry sector) will become part of the EU's climate change framework and 'instruments/ markets' to help deliver the sector's contribution to emissions reduction targets are likely to be introduced.

Woodland creation and water management

Water companies are becoming increasingly important as a possible source of funding to address diffuse pollution problems. They are now able to invest in measures to address pollution on both their own land and privately-owned land where that investment can help reduce the costs of water treatment further down the system. Woodland creation clearly has a role to play – as evidenced in Forest Research's '*Woodland for Water*' Report (http://www.forestry.gov.uk/fr/woodlandforwater) and the Woodland Trust's report on '*Woodland actions for biodiversity and their role in water management*' (http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/en/campaigning/our-views-and-policy/Documents/woodland-biodiversity-actions-water.pdf).

The next price review process for the water companies (PR14) is starting to gather pace. Defra have published the Statement of Obligations (SOO) and is now consulting on a combined Strategic Policy Statement and Social and Environmental Guidance.(SPS/SEG). For the first time the SOO includes a direct reference to both the UK Forestry Standard and the '*Woodland for Water*' report. Both should influence the water companies as they develop their programmes for the next price review period and, hopefully, provide additional funding for woodland creation.

Contact **14th of January 2013**
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