



Big Tree Plant Assessment Panel

Venue: Kew Gardens

Date and time: 19th September 2012 - 10.00am – 5.00pm

1. Attendees:

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

1. PW introduced the meeting and a brief round of introductions was held. Tim Hughes was welcomed to the panel as the new Defra representative for The Big Tree Plant.

2. a. Progress

MD provided a summary of the Scheme's recent achievements, highlighting BTP geographical coverage and planting achieved in Season One (2012). A further BTP analysis report covering all project activity to date as well as funding commitments will be produced by Groundwork in the autumn.

b. Social Research into Groups' engagement with BTP

MD briefed the Panel on Defra's social research for which tenders are currently being invited. The key focus on this research will include a review of how community groups have engaged with the application process, the reasons for non-submissions as well as obtaining an overview of the key characteristics of groups funded through The BTP. MD emphasised that this particular piece of research would not be providing analysis of the environmental benefits of the Scheme.

c. Conditional applications from R III

HC provided an update on all conditional approvals from the last round. The panel were informed that all projects funded in Round III, have or are in the process of finalising contracts with Groundwork. Where a reduction in costs and increase in planting numbers has been a condition of approval, groups have been able to meet this requirement in all but one case, where unfortunately, the group has had to withdraw from the scheme.

d. Monitoring and interim feedback

HC confirmed that 10% of projects for year one planting were selected for monitoring visits and that of those with planting on multiple sites, a number

of locations was selected to obtain a reasonable sample of sites and tree numbers for inspection. Five of the six projects have already been visited, with a further visit is planned by the end of September.

Once all monitoring visits have taken place, a report will be circulated to the panel for comment, and further advice will be issued to all funded groups. At the time of writing, the main points highlighted through these visits were: the majority of sites visited showed an establishment success rate of at least 80%, There were however, a few reported issues with weeding and marks to trees from the use of strimmers in some cases as well as insufficient protection to trees. These and other findings will be highlighted through a 'Do's and Don'ts' guidance document to be sent out to all groups later in the autumn.

e. 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 together with the agreed criteria for quality including targeting communities in deprived areas as well as community engagement, and aftercare.

It was noted that the next meeting in March 2013 is likely to be the final grants round of the Scheme.

3. Applications

Please see accompanying spreadsheet for the outcome of all grant panel recommendations.

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. MD led an in-depth discussion on the Independent Forestry Panel Report which covered the implications for future schemes, particularly focussing on urban tree planting and future potential funding opportunities.

5. Date of next meeting:

During week commencing 29th May 2013 (grants deadline on 15th March 2013)