

Tree seed and stand meeting. Westonbirt 26th of April 2012.

Purpose of meeting

The main purpose of the meeting was to discuss, and if possible, agree actions to tackle our current overdependence on a few major forest species, in the light of recently introduced diseases, and the need to adapt to climate change.

The meeting opened with John Weir giving a presentation that illustrated the driving forces behind the need to increase the diversity of species and the genetics within species in our woodlands.

The group agreed that there is a need to act now. There is a current conundrum, as to how and when customers order trees, the nursery taking the risks to grow the new tree species, and how would the timber trade regard these new tree species.

Seed stands of existing species

The meeting had originally been called by the Future Trees Trust to promote the use of seed from registered seed stands. This should give increases in yields of around 2 and 5% in volume compared with trees grown from seed of the local provenance. The discussion concluded that there is a need to examine the current condition of our registered seed stands and their ability to meet current and future seed demands. This should be not only for broadleaves but also conifers, and among broadleaves the focus should be particularly on oak and sweet chestnut. The Forestry Commission, Wales and England, would make their resource available as part of this project as well as recent work on emerging species stands.

It was agreed that tree species not officially listed under the FRM regulations would be treated as though they were, using the voluntary scheme. Currently there is no funding for their inspection and would still appear as 'source identified' on the register. "Selected" seed should be the lowest category considered though "Qualified" and "Tested" would be far more desirable. At present, about 90% of broadleaved tree seed can only be described as "Source identified", the least desirable category. Information has been published about the species that should be considered in future to ensure our woodlands stay resilient to climate change. Confor is conducting a survey to quantify the likely amounts of the species that will be required (James Hepburne Scott).

The group concluded that a project needs to be drawn up to bring this all together and this will be drafted by Tim Rowland, on behalf of the group. If successful, it would probably be run jointly between FTT and Confor. The project would have a broadleaf and conifer element.

The broadleaf element should examine the condition and potential productivity of the current stands classed as at least 'selected' to meet current and future demands. It should focus on oak and sweet chestnut selected seed stands: how to get potentially productive ones properly managed into production, and how to get the seed they produce used by nurseries. The possibility of creating an oak seed orchard from selected "Plus" trees should be part of the project.

The conifer element should examine the condition and potential productive capacity of the conifer seed stands and orchards to meet the demands of the species diversification challenges as indicated by the Confor survey. This project should review existing stands, not on the register and probably on private land, of the

‘emerging’ species to see what resource the UK may already have to meet this challenge, and/or availability and ease of access to seed abroad.

In addition the likely influence of Woodland Improvement Grants being targeted at seed stand management should be considered. It is probable that this work would be fundable by the RDP. In the project, the need for thinning in seed stands should be emphasised continually.

Drafts will be circulated around the group, with a final draft being ready for a meeting towards the end of the summer. The fact that money may be available from the RDP needs to be checked. **Action Tim Rowland and all for input**

[Emerging species](#) (**[FR link](#)**) **[England advice](#)** (**[link](#)**) **[Wales advice](#)** (**[link](#)**)

A discussion around the need for iterative learning on how the emerging species could be grown developed during the day. Issues around frost hardiness, shade tolerance, use of nurses, nursery techniques, etc, were explored. Forest Enterprise England told the group that they had set up an adaptation and silviculture group to ensure iterative learning takes place. It is probable that the private sector woodlands contain emerging species as well. The group agreed that something similar was needed to work across private and public sectors. This is clearly a UK issue.

It was decided that this would be discussed further at the next meeting. **Action All to put thought into how this may happen.**

Richard Jinks to follow up on novel establishment ideas in south-west private woodlands.

It was acknowledged that more needs to be done to make the forest industry more aware of the urgency to adapt, and to make the most of our productive plantings by using improved stock whenever possible. Whilst all three countries and Forest research have produced guidance on species selection it appears that much of this is not reaching the forestry practitioners. It was felt that a programme of communications and training was required. All agreed that they had a responsibility to use opportunities within the professional press and societies to promote awareness.

Action John Weir to make contact in England with the Royal Forestry Society and others to offer seminars, also to discuss with the EWTP.

Those present felt that possibly the Forestry Commission does not fully recognise how important the grants mechanisms are in directing what trees get planted. There was a strong belief that implicit guidance is needed to get forestry practitioners to adopt new attitudes. **Actions Forestry Commission staff to take note of this view and share it with their grant regulation colleagues.**