

RWFF IMPLEMENTATION PLAN EVENT – ASHTON COURT

Climate Change groups

Facilitator – Alex Webb, SWCCIP

Scribe – James Fry, Forestry Commission

For both sessions, Alex introduced the topic and explained the process. First part of the session involved discussion of the issue and any key themes / priorities identified by members of the group. Discussions, comments and possible actions grouped under headings (in blue/red for am/pm. Following this, Alex summarised the key priorities and the group then voted on which they felt were a priority (each member had three votes each). Top 5 priorities recorded.

In terms of identifying who would /could take the lead on topics, we ran out of time and only managed to briefly talk about this in Session 1.

Morning Session:

David Pengelly, agent

Howard Vater (for John Davis), Woodland Improvement and Conservation

Steve Russell, Wiltshire County Council

Phil Harding, GOSW

Mike Moser, FC Regional Advisory Committee

John Waltham, Greenspirit Fuels

Mike Edwards, NE

1. Species choice/provenance/silvicultural system for climate change adaptation

Clarification needed of silvicultural system (ie, how woodland is planted, managed and harvested to produce a particular result); species choice and provenance; and woodland structure most likely to be able to cope with the impacts of climate change. **Research into this and a clarifying statement / guidance note from the FC on this is very important.** Promotion of continuous cover forestry.

Local provenance always pushed. Is this still relevant if we are trying to adapt to climate change? FC should possibly revise/review current practice / advice.

Support for above points. Felt this issue was linked to Communication cross-cutting theme. **Need for the FC to improve its communication.** There has been considerable research done, but this is not shared in a user-friendly way with practitioners and the wider public.

Species considered unsuitable / vulnerable in terms of climate change should not be funded through the eWGS. **Grants should only support climate change suitable species.**

The link between provenance / species choice and the market is key. **Any new guidelines on species choice for climate change should also be based on the market – i.e.** ensuring that the species planted have a market and have economic potential.

Important to promote the concept of mixed stands. May be appropriate to mix natives with exotics – this could be on PAWS sites or non-PAWS. Also need to consider the potential impact of storms.

2. Woodfuel / renewables

We may be focussing too much on supplying the large power stations and bigger power projects, when the majority of activity is in the small – scale firewood market. Have we got the scale right? A push to support smaller-scale, local initiatives may be a better option. This would also have carbon savings, as transport would be reduced.

There may be a danger that people buying wood burners will switch back to an alternative fuel (gas) relatively easily. Important to get individual households involved in woodfuel for replacement of fossil fuel heating, not just log burners. This is also a communication issue. Balance between logs/pellets/chip as fuel source?

3. Street Trees

Key message is the value of urban and street trees. Importance of Tree Wardens, Community Forests etc to promoting this. Have to get the public involved. Again, a communication issue. Also key that Councillors / Elected Members are aware of this.

Wood school and forest schools a great way to get this message across to teachers, young people and parents. Wood School / Forest School programme should be supported / promoted.

4. Carbon offset

Need to find good examples of carbon offset projects working at the local level. Eg. Helping to offset costs of people's holidays (in SW & elsewhere), via optional charge on hotel bills for example, towards new community woodlands?

This should not be seen as a licence to pollute.

Could a scheme be promoted that isn't linked to planting? Could bringing unmanaged woodland into management also be promoted because of the carbon sequestration potential of managed woodland?

REVIEW OF KEY ISSUES AND VOTING

	ISSUE	VOTES
1	Statement / guidance on species, silvicultural system, provenance	5
2	Species choice should take account of potential timber markets	4
3	Promotion of community-scale / local projects - woodfuel heating systems, local carbon offsetting, street trees, Tree Wardens, Forest Schools	4
4	Species suitable for climate change should be linked with eWGS and funding	3
5	Communication / awareness raising and presenting evidence in a user-friendly format	3

Do we also need to look at water and flooding?

Group felt that wording of second bullet point (on the list of existing RWFF climate change priorities) under '2. Mitigate the wider impacts of climate change' in RWFF should be changed from 'reduce' to 'manage' as in dry areas, water flow may need to be increased.

Access: a side issue, but potentially important in terms of climate change: FC will only pay supplements for access based on local population. But this does not take into account the travelling tourist population. Can this be changed as it helps woodland owners access additional funds and contribute to the local economy?

LEAD ORGANISATIONS / INDIVIDUALS

Important for local authorities to take the lead.

MM: N Devon Biosphere project could be used as a pilot project

DP: Happy to be consulted on species selection / woodland structure/ silvicultural system for climate change

ANY OTHER ISSUES / POINTS...

Important to think about trees and water and the link with the Water Framework Directive. Having a link to issues raised with respect to this in the RWFF is important.

Afternoon session

Kevin Lindegaard, Consultant
D-J Gent, Environment Agency
Mark Connelly, Cotswolds AONB
Jonathan Burgess, Woodland Trust
Jonathan Wilshaw, Great Western Community Forest
Phil Tidey, Small Woods Association
John Flannigan, North Somerset Council
Nick Fackrell, Somerset County Council
Deborah Elton, Forestry Commission (part only)

1. Carbon sinks & storage – trees vs other land use, ‘managed & unmanaged’ woodland

Recent ‘Carbon Sink, Carbon Sinner’ report. **Important to know exactly whether/where tree planting is positive in terms of climate change** or whether best to keep land arable / pasture etc. Media reporting focussed on the worst case scenario.

More guidance on this issue may be needed to clarify. Regional and local variability – depends on soils, local climate etc etc.

Given the importance of climate change in years to come, important to think about expanding forest / woodfuel resource. We may not have enough home grown woodfuel to meet demand / government targets. Need to plan ahead and do it now.

Important to know the facts and get the message right before it is communicated to people.

What exactly is ‘managed’ woodland? There is much talk of bringing un-managed woodland back into management. Some woodland, however, is left without intervention, but is still ‘managed’. The fact that timber etc not extracted does not mean that it is un-managed. Also, need clarification on whether ‘unmanaged’ woodland is better for sequestration and storage than managed woodland eg what is the impact on soil carbon of intensively managed woodland?

2. Carbon sequestration & trees

How do we achieve point 1 in the list of the current climate change priorities in the RWFF? Is it possible? Could / should it be ‘*Make woodland and forests more resilient*’? Also, can it be changed to ‘*Trees, woodland and forests...*’

Should we even be including carbon sequestration in the plan? Planting to sequester carbon would have to be done on such a large scale that it would be impossible given the size of the UK. Encouraging the planting of urban trees and a tree outside each house / in garden would have more of an impact on climate change (shading and reduction of summer temperatures – reducing the demand for air conditioning).

3. Species choice

Can the plan focus on species choice? Research has been done and is available, but does not filter down to woodland owners. This is a key priority, along with integrating climate change issues with forestry grants and licences.

Problem with issuing National guidance is regional / local variability. SW is a diverse region. How can a broad approach be relevant to the whole of the SW? For this reason, we are looking at climate change with specific reference to the Cotswolds.

Given the range of climate predictions, impossible to specify particular species. Best option may be to plant / promote the widest possible mixture / range of species.

Appraisal of the SW land bank to identify areas where climate change may have the biggest impact may help. This could identify where planting would be most appropriate.

4. Impact on water

EA Would like to see projects on shading of watercourses. High temperatures have been recorded downstream and this has a significant impact on fish breeding. Would welcome a study to look at the impact of tree planting on stream banks – different planting patterns, densities, blocks and open ground etc. The Water Directive sets a framework for this.

5. Contribution of trees / woodland to climate change

Research needed on the role of trees / forests with regard to climate change. This is important re: green infrastructure, development and putting a value on trees / woodlands (monetary value) for negotiations with developers.

One way this could be done is by conducting a detailed cost-benefit analysis.

REVIEW OF KEY ISSUES AND VOTING

	ISSUE	VOTES
1	Investigation into / clarification of the climate change benefits of bringing 'unmanaged' woods into management	5
2	Raising the profile and importance of street and urban trees (and including in the strategy/plan)	4
3	Research to clarify and identify the monetary benefits of planting trees (with ref to climate change as well as new development)	4
4	Clarification of species choice / mix to cope with climate change and clarification of where we should be targeting planting (which sites will be suitable). Land bank assessment for SW	3
5	Investigation into the role of trees and water flow management (with specific ref to shading and reducing water temperatures)	2