

RWFF Implementation Plan event, 12th March 2009, Exeter

Notes from [Climate Change](#) theme groups

Simon Bates, NE, Facilitator

Graeme McVittie, Forestry Commission, Scribe

Attendees: Steve Minton, FE; Sally Glass, WT; Becca Eastman, SWCCIP; Tom Langdon-Davies, Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust; John Wilding, Clinton Devon Estates; Kirsty Tooker, Devon Assoc for Renewable Energy; Richard Nicholson, Poole BC; David Blake, Cranbone Chase AONB; Andy Player, Crown Estate; Jim White, SWForest; John Rainger, Norbord; Alistair Gordon, EA; John Weir, Westonbirt FC

1. Review of issues and priorities sent in beforehand:

The 9 topics submitted through questionnaires which were on display as background information were voted on by the group participants, as follows:

- i) To promote the links between woodland and water, eg flood amelioration, CSF, River Basin Management plans etc - 7 votes
- ii) The role of woods and woodland creation in relation to climate change – 3
- iii) What guidelines should we follow to ensure that the trees we plant maximise contribution to climate adaptation agenda (and the trees cope with predicted climate changes)? - 3
- iv) Identify sites where afforestation will contribute to achieving WFD environmental targets – 1
- v) Role of trees and woodlands in flood risk management – opportunities through Catchment Flood Management Plans – 3
- vi) Ensure that adaptation to climate change is integrated throughout the IP, with specific actions led by those organisations best placed to deliver them – 1
- vii) Explore further project opportunities in future use of trees and woods in cc adaptation (species and planting), and mitigation (woodfuel) - 12

2. Priorities for Action over the next 3 years

Much of the discussions from both groups centered on the **likely increase in extreme weather events and the contribution which trees and forestry has to make** in terms of **adaptation** and dampening the effects. Priorities included;

- Understanding the ameliorating effects of trees and forestry in flood management (conifer plantations not ideal).
- Understanding the preventative effects of increased tree cover in the headwaters of catchments
- River corridor planting – how much do we want? How do we target? Should the agencies collaborate on an opportunities map?
- Understanding and communicating the effects of agricultural practices in terms of flood management – (scrubbing-up of some farmland).
- Restoring wet-flushes and wet woodland

- Strong plea for climate-proof woodlands
- Need to address urban issues, in terms of species choice and predicted problems – is there good evidence to back-up aspirations to increase tree cover?
- Need to make the links between increased urban tree cover and reduced costs to businesses (and make this a political issue!)
- RFF should have statistical and specific evidence of the benefits of trees (cf London RFF as a good eg)
- Engage insurance companies regarding flood-proofing
- **WE HAVE SOME EVIDENCE – WE NEED MORE**
- **URGENCY OF ADAPTATION**

The other main topic was the role of **woodfuel and increasing role of construction timber** in terms of *mitigation*. Priorities include:

- understanding the role of peatlands in carbon capture (CC)
- identify and quantify the commercial role for carbon sequestration and sinks
- include forestry as part of our carbon accounting – good argument for long-term forestry, new planting is a step towards sequestration but not the answer
- substitution of high carbon fuels and materials
- understanding the role of forest soils and use of “bio-char” as a carbon-capture technique
- production of a single short paper to summarise the mitigation issues headlining the role of forestry in carbon balancing
- High capital cost is the major barrier to expanding the woodfuel industry – need to support more uk manufacturers – is there an economic tipping point with the woodfuel market expanding exponentially?

3. Top 5 priority actions

i) Understanding, promoting and facilitating the expansion of headwater, floodplain and riparian woodlands and scrubby, well tree'd agricultural landscapes

ii) Climate proofing woodlands

iii) Need to make the links between increased urban tree cover and reduced costs to businesses (and make this a political issue!)

iv) Reduce the capital costs of woodfuel boilers

v) RFF should have statistical and specific evidence of the benefits of trees

NB Not possible to tackle other workshop questions in time available.