

**YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER CONSERVANCY  
RAC MEETING**

**8 April 2008**

**Duncombe Park, Helmsley**

**Present:**

Crispin Thorn (CT)	Jeremy Walker (JW) (Chair)
Vince Carter (VC)	Maddy Jago (MJ)
Mick Hoban (MH)	David R Shaw (DRS)
Martin Glynn (MG)	Peter Greenwood (PG)
David J Sharrod (DJS)	Alan Eves (AE)
Nigel Rylance (NR)	David Wilmot-Smith (DWS)
Sally Thirsk (ST)	

**1. Introductions**

Members of the RAC gave brief introductions to the new Chair, Jeremy Walker.

**2. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Mel Burton and Alan Simson.

**3. Minutes of the last meeting on 6 November 2007**

Minutes of the last meeting were agreed to be a true record with one minor change. Peter Greenwood was on the list of attendees but was, in fact, not present at the meeting. Minutes will be corrected to show this.

**4. Actions on Matters Arising**

**Action 1 – Page 3** – completed.

**Action 2 – Page 3** – completed.

**5. RAC Chairman's business**

Paul Hill-Tout is to visit the Region on 16/17<sup>th</sup> April 2008. JW, DRS and CT are to meet with him on the 16th.

The Director England's Background Information Briefing issued to members prior to the meeting was discussed, highlighting the main points of interest for YATH:

Item 3(iv) – Natural England - Licensing of Grey Squirrel release. PG wished to express his deep concerns over the issuing of licences to enable the release of grey squirrels. The release of grey squirrels was counter to the work by woodland owners in protecting woodlands and sent the wrong message out. This concern was widely supported by the Committee Members. DRS's understanding of the release programme was that if an injured animal was taken to a rescue shelter etc, once it was fully recovered the shelter was releasing it back to the wild, and the

numbers were very small in the context of the whole grey squirrel population. However the point about sending out the wrong message remained and the concerns raised by the Committee will be put forward to FC / Natural England.

**ACTION 1: CT to feedback the concerns / issue with National Office. / DRS to obtain further details of the licensing / release programme.**

Item 5(viii) Regional Forestry Strategy Delivery Plan – This was successfully launched on 16<sup>th</sup> November in York.

Item 7(v) – Dalby Visitor Centre – Committee Members formally wished to congratulate everyone concerned with the Dalby Visitor Project on its huge success.

Item 8(vii) – Great Yorkshire Show – the theme for the 2008 GYS is to be utilisation/green wood-working. The Forestry Commission has a long-standing partnership with the Yorkshire Agricultural Society and have a significant input into what happens in and around the pavilion.

### **RAC Meeting Schedule and Priorities – Paper 01/08**

This is a follow on from the November meeting looking at the RAC member priorities, looking at the balance between national and regional issues. The paper outlines the priorities for each meeting. MJ questioned the frequency of the meetings and wondered whether it would be more effective in terms of continuity if another meeting were to be held each year. After discussion it was decided to remain at 3 meetings per year but to consider the timing of the meetings for the next year, so as to avoid very long gaps between meetings. CT suggested that it might be appropriate in the future to consider holding extra meetings on specific topics, if required. JW suggested that as the UK climate change impact programme had significant impacts/opportunities for forestry, that this may be a topic for a future meeting.

## **6. Regional Update**

EWGS demand within the Region remains strong; YATH remain one of the lead regions for committing budgets, and in recent years has secured extra support to meet this demand (WCG and WRG). In terms of 2008 prospectus the FC is hoping to publish this by the end of May following the conclusion of the Comprehensive Spending Review Process and the RDPE re-profiling work.. The overall level of commitment for the programme is expected to be in line with previous years. Partnership work – final confirmation of the budget was received this week. For this year there is a slight reduction in the overall partnership budget, however we are not withdrawing from any existing core funding operations, but there is a slight reduction in the contributions

CT had attended the launch of the RDPE. MG has been accepted onto the Skills and Industry Advisory Board, will support Lantra and Yorkshire Forward in the delivery of the skills / training element of RDPE. Members congratulated MG on this appointment.

MH spoke at the launch of the regional Vision for Biomass on March 17<sup>th</sup>.

There was a press release issued recently on the Bleeding Canker of Horse Chestnut. Overall in England 40% of Horse chestnuts are suffering from this canker. There is a Q&A sheet available, attached to minutes as Appendix 2.

**Action 2 - CT to send out Q&A to Members.**

**7. Forest Estate Update**

The strength of the timber market is still very high providing good returns for the Forestry Commission Estate. This is the first year that the FC have supplied timber to SembCorp and this is proving to be very successful. Forest Design Plans are being renewed currently at a rate of 3/year. The project works are Dalby will be signed off this week. The Strategic Forest Plan for the Estate will be regionalised over the next year. Members wished to congratulate North York Moors on it's success.

PG pointed out that a proposed new wood pelleting plant at Wombleton has had it's planning consent deferred due to the number of complaints by local residents. The plant is due to take 60,000 tonnes/year of low grade timber which was to be sourced from local estates.

PG – gave the outline details of a plan to open a wood pelleting plant at Wombleton, planning deferred due to residents complaints. The total potential volume being sought is in the region 60,000 tonnes/year. PG trying to source timber from local estates. Drax is seen as a potential market for pellets.

**8. ETWF Delivery Plan – Paper 02/08**

NE and FC are working on the ETWF delivery plan. RAC members were asked to note the timings of the Delivery Plan process; comment on the analysis of the current and future state; comment on the pivotal national activities; suggest any omissions in the thinking for the national delivery plan; highlight any improvements that can ensure a more effective interface between the regional and national level and advise on how the aspirations for regional partners involvement can be ensured. A very useful discussion took place with the outcomes attached as Appendix 1.

**9. Introductions to the changes to Habitats Regulations – Paper 03/08**

The aim of the paper was to provide RAC Members with an overview to changes in legislation in relation to the EPS. CT gave a brief presentation outlining the changes and the implications for woodland owners and managers.

**10. Habitats Regulations Case Study – Delivering Best Practice Paper 04/08**

Following on from CT's presentation, NR presented a case study to Members showing the effects the EPS regulations have on a forestry operations. The case study showed that although there was EPS present in the area, that by following a

system of good practice it is possible to carry out forestry operations within an EPS area successfully.

PG asked that if he was doing work on ivy covered trees, that had potential bat roosts, would that be a contravention of EPS regulations. The FC will consider EPS in woods and forestry; individual trees are considered by NE. The owner will therefore have to consider the impact of the operation on any EPS, and if in doubt consult with FC / NE as appropriate. When the FC are dealing with felling licences/EWGS applications, and we think there is a potential EPS situation, we will raise this with the applicant. The key message to take away is that the legislation has been brought into effect to protect key species, and to provide a mechanism for their protection. FC and NE have worked together to develop a system of good practice to support owners in carrying out forestry operations. Thanks to NR for joining the meetings and for presenting the case to Members.

#### **11. Regional Forestry Strategy Capital Programme Update – Paper 04/08**

VC gave a brief update on the development of the Yorkshire Forward Capital Programme. Members were invited to send any comments on Paper 04/08 to VC.

**Action 3 – Members to feedback comments on RFS Capital Programme Update to VC.**

#### **12. AOB**

None. - The Business part of the meeting was closed at 13:00hrs

#### **13. Overview of the Cando Project by Mark Antcliffe**

Mark Antcliffe joined the group for the afternoon session. Mark is the Native Woodland Development Officer, employed by the North York Moors National Park through a partnership project between the FC and the Park. Mark gave an overview of the Cando Project (Cultural and Natural Development Opportunity) which seeks to link the cultural and natural environment assessments of a defined area within the NYMNP and the Howardian Hills AONB. This is part of a wider landscape scale co-ordinated programme that is seeking HLF support.

#### **14. Ancient Woodland Site visit to Hawnby Estate**

The site visit comprised 3 stops – Cliffe Wood, Peak Scar Wood and Gower Dale/Peak Scar Wood. The site visit provided an opportunity to discuss the impact of EWGS in supporting PAWS restoration. Members visited a two PAWS sites, one being reverted to site native species and the other area containing a proposal to remain in productive conifer woodland. The final site visit provided the opportunity to consider the wider landscape impacts on the proposals.

CT provided outline details of an EWGS woodland creation scheme that the local parish council had raised concerns relating to scale and landscape implications. The scheme had been considered by the FC and the National Park and following some initial amendments had been deemed to be acceptable.

JW thanked the Members for their input into the meeting.

## Appendix 1

Region	Yorkshire and The Humber	
Forum	RAC	
Date of discussion	7 April 2008	
Attendees:	<b>(Name)</b> Jeremy Walker (Chair) Martin Glynn Peter Greenwood David Sharrod David Wilmot- Smith Maddy Jago David Shaw Alan Eves Mick Hoban Vince Carter Nigel Rylance Sally Thirsk Mel Burton	<b>(Organisation / Nominating Body)</b> Private Consultant Rural Development Initiative FTA / Consultant / Forest Industry YDMT / Yorkshire Wildlife Trust NFU / Forest Industry / Landowner English Heritage Natural England FC FC FC FC FC - Written comments provided to meeting.
Recorder:	Sally Thirsk	

### *Points arising from discussion*

#### **Comments on the analysis of the current and future states**

Aim 2 – The issue of flooding / flood risk should be included in Aim 2 relating to Climate Change.

Aim 3 – The where we are analysis statement ‘ woodlands are critical in our landscape’ would benefit from further explanation to cover, why they are critical and what for.

Aim 4 – Where we want to be – we need a wide understanding / appreciation of the central role that trees woods and forests play in delivering Quality of Life issues. In particular the Creating a Setting for Investment Interegg project seeks to demonstrate the economic benefits (e.g. inward investment) of enhanced places. The importance of the soft location factors are being increasing understood, as a result of the developing evidence base, leading to a greater understanding on the impact on increasing regional competitiveness.

Aim 5 – The issue of skills and the labour market was discussed. It was felt that the rather limited statement of ‘more employees in, staying in, the industry’ should be reconsidered. In particular, one of the key problems relates to the declining number of skilled contractors, with issues associated with this including the need to work long hours, relatively poor wages, and high risk factors. A more positive statement could relate to ensuring that the industry is recognised as a good place to work where employees are valued and have the ability to earn a decent standard of living.

### **Comments on the pivotal national activities**

The group noted the reference to LAA's under the pivotal actions under Aim 4. Questions were asked as to whether the FC was doing enough and whether we had engaged in the development of the indicators with a view to focussing which elements forestry can deliver against. The view was that this should be led with nationally and the integration with the Delivery Plan could be a way of securing wider ownership / buy in from the LA sector.

The group discussed the importance of landscape scale adaptation in relation to climate change and also the issue of landscape scale working in relation to developing habitats / delivering biodiversity gains.

### **Suggested omissions in the thinking for the national delivery plan**

Members discussed the subject of priority setting as a way of providing a focus on key actions and assisting in future resource allocations.

The paper / draft plan recognises the importance of the RDA's in supporting delivery. It was felt that the developments under the Sub National Review should be included in terms of both recognition of the issues and acknowledgement of the implications (e.g. the proposal to move towards a Single Integrated Framework).

The group discussed the important role of the RDA's in supporting delivery, questions were raised as to whether they have the relevant expertise to deliver what is required to support the plan and if not, how to address this issue (e.g. through secondments, partnership posts etc).

The group discussed the importance of using a wider range of support tools beyond the current grant mechanisms. In particular, greater use of the various planning tools (e.g. Section 106 Agreements) to support urban forestry issues (aim 4). This is more efficiently taken forward at a national level through discussions with key stakeholders (e.g. CLG).

The subject of the available labour market was discussed at length. It was felt that the current plan covers clearly the actions relating to the physical resource (trees and woodlands) but limited in relation to capturing the key issues relating to human resource (availability, trends, impacts etc). Skills and training formed another element to this discussion and whilst the support under Axis 1 is welcomed a more strategic / national focus should be provided by the Delivery Plan. The group discussed the details of a local Apprenticeship Scheme run by the National Park with the view that key national organisations such as the FC should be considering how to support recruitment into the industry. This was felt as being particularly important given the desire to extend the area of woodlands under management and the improvements in the timber market generating an increase in demand.

**Improvements highlighted for a more effective interface between the regional and national level, whilst respecting the national lead as set out in para 5 of the discussion paper.**

The group discussed the issue of the interface between the national and regional strategies / delivery plans. The group agreed that the national strategy and delivery plan should be clearly linked to national level actions and issues. It should provide an umbrella to support appropriate work within the regional forestry strategies.

**Advice on ensuring the aspirations for regional partners, as noted in the national strategy - specifically the RDAs - are captured.**

The group discussed the strategic importance of the Sub National Review as a mechanism for engaging with the RDA's.

**Suggestions for further engagement in this process (including any events in the autumn at which it can be given some profile):**

The group discussed the developing capital programme with Yorkshire Forward (RDA). It was thought that if the timings of the launch of the ETWF Delivery Plan and the capital programme fit together a regional event could be delivered to promote both the national delivery plan and the developing regional support elements.

## Appendix 2

### BLEEDING CANKER OF HORSE CHESTNUT

#### QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

APRIL 2008

#### 1. What is the history and significance of horse chestnut?

Horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) is a native of the Balkans region of south-eastern Europe. It is believed to have been introduced to Great Britain in the 1500s. Exactly how many there are in Great Britain is unknown - we know there are approximately half a million in woodland situations, plus an unknown number in other situations such as streets, parks, gardens and farmland. They are much-loved features of many parts of the British landscape, and their large seeds are the "conkers" used for the game of the same name. Although conkers are not edible by humans, they are used by cottage industries, more especially in other countries, as ingredients in products such as soaps and cosmetics. The timber of horse chestnuts has no economic value.

#### 2. What is a bleeding canker?

A bleeding canker is like a "running sore" consisting of an area of dying bark on a tree's trunk or branches that oozes, or "bleeds", liquid. There are many different pathogens, or disease-causing organisms, that can cause bleeding cankers, and cankers can occur on many species of tree.

#### 3. What causes bleeding canker of horse chestnut?

*Phytophthora citricola* and *Phytophthora cactorum*, which are well-known fungus-like organisms from the large *Phytophthora* genus, have been causing bleeding cankers on horse chestnuts (and other tree species, such as lime) in Great Britain for several decades. Infection rates from these pathogens remained at a low level and therefore did not cause concern. However, over the past few years there has been a significant increase in reports of bleeding canker of horse chestnut, and in the vast majority of samples analysed since this increase began, *Phytophthora* pathogens have not been found. Instead, a bacterium recently identified as *Pseudomonas syringae* pathovar *aesculi* has been found to be the cause, and is causing us the most concern.

#### 4. Where did *Pseudomonas syringae* pathovar *aesculi* originate?

It has only previously been known to infect the leaves of Indian horse chestnut (*Aesculis indica*), a native of the north-west Himalayan region of the Indian sub-continent.

#### 5. Where else is *Pseudomonas syringae* pathovar *aesculi* found?

At least two other European countries (The Netherlands and Germany) have confirmed *Pseudomonas syringae* pv *aesculi* as the cause of bleeding canker of horse chestnut

there. Trees showing similar symptoms have also been reported in other western European countries, including France and Belgium, but not yet confirmed as *Pseudomonas syringae* pv *aesculi*.

## **6. How did it get to Great Britain?**

We cannot be sure, but the most likely route is that it came in on trees intended for planting in Britain.

## **7. Is there anything that can be done for a sick tree?**

There is no chemical treatment currently available to cure or arrest the development of bleeding canker. Moreover, some trees with trunk infections retain healthy-looking crowns and might not deteriorate further. In some trees the disease progression can be very slow, or even cease, with trees showing signs of recovery as vigorous callus development occurs at the edge of wounds created when bark has been killed by the disease.

## **8. What's the future for horse chestnut trees in Britain? Does this mean the beginning of the end for them here?**

It is too early to say. We know that some trees survive bleeding canker, some die, and some have to be felled for public safety reasons when the condition weakens the trunk or a branch to a point where it is in danger of falling. There is also anecdotal evidence of uninfected trees being found very close to trees that have been heavily infected for some time, suggesting that some horse chestnut trees might have a genetically inherited ability to resist the pathogens that cause bleeding canker. We hope to be able to conduct research into apparently resistant varieties to scientifically assess this hypothesis. If it is true, it would hold out hope that seeds from these trees might form the basis of future planting stock from which future generations of the species might be grown so that we can continue to enjoy horse chestnut trees in the British landscape.

## **9. What does this mean for conker production?**

There are still hundreds of thousands of healthy horse chestnut trees in Britain, so there should be plenty of conkers to satisfy demand for the foreseeable future.

## **10. Is this another Dutch elm disease?**

No, we believe it is very different. The landscape impact of bleeding canker of horse chestnut is likely to be much less severe than the impact of Dutch elm disease, because there are probably fewer than 2 million horse chestnut trees in Britain, whereas there were tens of millions of elm trees. In addition, the Dutch elm disease fungus is spread very rapidly by elm bark beetles as they fly from infected trees to healthy trees to feed and, in so doing, transfer the disease. Compounding this, elm trees often have shared root systems, especially in hedgerows, and the root systems of adjacent elm trees can

graft themselves to each other. So if one tree becomes infected, the disease can spread via the roots to neighbouring trees as well. As a result we estimate that Britain lost more than 30 million elms over three decades.

#### **11. Should we stop planting horse chestnut trees?**

This is a decision for individual land managers to make based on their own objectives and priorities. In coming to a decision, we would advise them to weigh the risks that their trees might not survive against the possibility that among the trees they plant might be some which, thanks perhaps to genetic variation, will prove resistant to this pathogen. The seeds from such trees could help to form the basis of resistant planting stock for the future. We would also emphasise the importance of appropriate site selection and good tree care.

#### **12. Could the organisms that cause bleeding canker of horse chestnut infect other species?**

We know that *Phytophthora cactorum* and *Phytophthora citricola* do infect other species, such as lime and sycamore. Tree and plant species that might be potential hosts of *Pseudomonas syringae* pv *aesculi* still need to be tested to determine whether it can infect them.

#### **13. Is climate change involved?**

We do not yet know enough about *Pseudomonas syringae* pathovar *aesculi* in Britain to know whether climate change is a factor.

#### **14. Are there any other pests or diseases that affect horse chestnut trees in Britain?**

Yes, there is a moth and a fungal disease that occur on horse chestnuts.

The moth is horse chestnut leaf miner (*Cameraria ohridella*), a tiny moth that lays its eggs in the leaves. The larvae that emerge from the eggs then tunnel through the leaves, which causes the leaves to turn brown in July and August and fall off, as though autumn had come early. However, leaf miner does no serious harm to the trees' health, and they do flush again the following year, so we encourage owners to seek expert advice before rushing to fell their trees in the belief that they are dead. Gathering up and burning the leaves, or composting them under four inches of soil or six inches of other plant material in autumn, can destroy the over-wintering eggs and help to reduce the number of larvae that emerge the following year. Leaf miner was first found in Britain in 2002, in the London area, and is so far confined mostly to southern and central England, but it is spreading north and west. It was first recorded in Macedonia in 1985 and has spread across much of Europe since then.

The fungal infection is leaf blotch (*Guignardia aesculi*), a fungal pathogen that attacks the leaves and causes reddish or dull brown blotches with bright yellow borders around the

perimeter. The blotches are usually at the tips or edges of leaves. From a distance the symptoms look similar to the leaf miner's, but examined closely they are easily distinguishable from leaf miner marks by the bright yellow borders. Again, leaf blotch does the tree no significant harm, so we advise owners not to jump to the conclusion that their trees are dying without first getting expert advice.

We are monitoring the progress of these pests and diseases and working with other researchers here and abroad to understand them better in order to be able to provide management advice for tree owners.

#### **15. Is anyone else doing research on these problems?**

The lead research into *Pseudomonas syringae* pv *aesculi* is being conducted in The Netherlands. For further information, visit [www.kastanjeziekte.wur.nl](http://www.kastanjeziekte.wur.nl)

#### **16. Should we be worried?**

It is always a cause for concern when significant numbers of a particular tree species appear to be under threat. The greatest importance of horse chestnut trees in Britain is cultural - they are a much-loved feature of the landscape in many parts of Britain, and of course they are the source of conkers. For these reasons they would be missed by many people if we were to lose significant numbers of them.

However, we also need to remember that trees and woodland live in cycles of natural phenomena such as climate, weather, and pests and diseases. These cycles can be measured in years and even decades, and there is a limit to what human intervention can do to influence their outcomes. The most important thing we can do is to research and understand the causes so that we can provide appropriate management advice for tree owners and woodland managers. It is also important that we remain vigilant against accidentally importing new and damaging pests and diseases from outside Great Britain.

#### **17. What is the Forestry Commission going to do next?**

We will carefully consider the results of the survey and investigate further some of the symptomatic trees before deciding what further steps we can take.

However, there is a limit to what can be done to combat diseases of trees, apart from encouraging tree owners and woodland managers to practise good woodland management and tree care to ensure maximum tree health. The healthier a tree is, the better it is able to withstand attack by pests and pathogens. Therefore the main thrust of our work is likely to be to gain as much understanding of the condition as possible so that we can provide appropriate advice to owners on how to manage affected trees and how to prevent the spread of the organisms that cause the problem.

The main features of good tree care and woodland management are:

- matching trees to the planting site, i.e. plant species that are best suited to the characteristics of the site, such as the soil type, weather, sunshine hours, wind

strength, drainage etc. This ensures that the tree is subjected to a minimum of stress from environmental factors;

- planting trees of local provenance and origin. Research and experience have shown that using seeds that are descended from trees that have inhabited a particular locality for centuries are best adapted to local conditions and prove the most resistant to harmful insects and diseases. (However, since horse chestnut trees arrived in Britain only about 500 years ago, there is a limit to how well adapted they can be to local conditions here); and
- following best practice in woodland management and tree care, such as thinning, weed control and minimising damage by mammals such as grey squirrels, cattle, sheep and deer.

#### **18. What should people do if they see symptoms of bleeding canker?**

We are not asking the public to report symptomatic trees to us at present. Tree owners and woodland managers who are concerned might wish to consult the Forest Research website for more information at [www.forestryresearch.gov.uk/bleedingcanker](http://www.forestryresearch.gov.uk/bleedingcanker). Anyone concerned that an infected tree might present a threat to public safety should notify the local Council.

#### **19. Where can I get more information?**

- The full report of the survey of bleeding canker of horse chestnut is available in the Plant Health area of the Forestry Commission website;
- A [press release](#) about bleeding canker of horse chestnut is available from the News area of the Forestry Commission's website;
- more scientific information about bleeding canker is available from the [Forest Research website](#);
- Further information about leaf blotch is available from the [Forest Research website](#).
- A press release about horse chestnut leaf miner is available from the [News area](#) of the Forestry Commission website; and further scientific information is available on the [Forest Research website](#).

**Forestry Commission**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> April 2008**