

Woodland Focus Group Minutes

16th September 2004

2-4.30pm

Folly Farm, Bishop Sutton



Chair: Rob Spence

Minutes: Jenny Hayward

Action

Introductions

Rob Spence, Forestry Commission, Avon, Swindon, Forest of Dean.

Lorne Campbell, Forest Enterprise, Area Forester for community forest. South Bristol, North Wilts, Oxfordshire.

Stuart Hales, acting Head of Reserves, Avon Wildlife Trust.

Matthew Bufton, BAP responsibility for HMP Leyhill. Leyhill, Bristol, Shepton Mallot.

Robin Marshall-Ball, Conservation Officer, BASC. Somerset Levels.

Craig Stenson, Biodiversity Projects Officer, Avon Wildlife Trust.

Alistair Rankin, Tree Officer, South Gloucestershire Council.

Mark Minkley, Tree/woodland officer, B&NES Council.

Jim Fry, Forest of Avon. Changes in the forest mean that Jim will increasingly be able to work across the whole of Avon.

Richard Ennion, Bristol City Council. Manager of Natural Environment Team, Parks department. Forestry/wildlife/arboriculture.

Status of the Avon BAP (re. other BAPs, other strategies, action plans, political processes)

Please see sections 1.1-1.3 of Avon BAP for full explanation (www.avon-biodiversity.org.uk).

ALL

The role and function of the group

All agreed to use JH's model as a starting point (role of groups model). To evolve with the group. Habitats to be covered: woodland, wood pasture and parkland. Species plan: dormouse.

Background How the plans came about: Brainstorming sessions with local experts on the particular habitat/species followed by at least two rounds of consultation with all the partners, where organisations were asked to sign up to relevant actions as well as comment on the plans. JH pulled together all results to come up with plans as they are now.

Issues that can't be solved through existing work – where the BAP can really make a difference and projects to deal with these issues

1/ Group could set standard for favourable conservation status/ favourable management for the Avon area. Currently no workable consistent definition, making monitoring more difficult (e.g. see target 3 objective 1). Agenda item for next meeting. ALL to consider before then. RS/JH particularly to consider resources to be brought to meeting to facilitate discussion.

RS/JH
ALL
next
meeting

2/ Deer and Squirrels.

- Deer a problem across the area and all attempting to control in different ways, in ad-hoc manner. May need a more co-ordinated approach. There is a deer group

already, run by Roger Davis, which deals mainly with injured deer. Should ensure that they are contacted + involved in any new initiatives. More data needed on where worst problems are in the area incl. species, intensity and impact. ALL to collect information on this before the next meeting in order to discuss the way forward.

ALL

- Deer control recognised as necessary but sensitive issue. Organisations such as AWT with membership need to approach in a particularly careful manner. Education needed to inform people of the damage that deer do to our native woodland and biodiversity. Many may currently perceive deer to be a problem only to commercial forestry. Issue to be discussed at communications group. Could go alongside awareness raising of the problems of alien species.

JH

Summary: Education on issues needed. Proceed with more co-ordinated approach to deer control if necessary, dependent on outcome of next Woodland Group meeting.

Other groups: British Deer Society, Deer Initiative.

Squirrels more difficult to control and less consistently recognised as a threat. Even more sensitive issue than deer control, although managed well at Ashton Court with good effect.

3/ Data collection. How good is our baseline data? Mapped datasets currently available NBN/EN priority habitat map, FC WGS map, EN ancient woodland data. FC has management agreement on 1/3 – 2/5 of woodland in Avon, theoretically these should have good management. Map of AWT reserves and SSSIs should show other areas where woodland managed well (at least in theory). JF will pull together this data into one map before next meeting. This should highlight areas which we know least about. A project may then be developed to target those areas with unknown management/that haven't been surveyed. To be discussed at next meeting. RS/JH to co-ordinate any further resources needed to facilitate this discussion. Other datasets that may be useful are Woods for People (accessible woodlands) from Woodland Trust and BCC mapping of natural green space. RE will update group on latter when it's available.

JF

Next meeting (RS/JH)

RE

Monitoring and reporting back on action

Frequency of reporting: 6-monthly to start with

Data to be reported: As quantitative as possible.

Method: Initially in word documents, reporting against each action in action tables. The action tables to have 3 extra columns: 1/ what have you done +timescale, 2/ currently doing +timescale 3/ plan to do +timescale. First extra column most important as way of keeping track of work actually done on the ground. Others useful for group discussions, as way of identifying common projects etc. Should be bit which says 'What you would like to do but don't have resources for' – this will also help with group discussions.

- JH to provide all with relevant action tables in word format
- All to determine how monitoring and reporting back will work best for their particular organisation

JH

ALL

RS to refer to national guidelines on monitoring – FC's position statement on dealing with action plans. RS to feed back information from this to group, either in form of whole document or as a summary.

RS

Issues for other groups? (Monitoring/Funding/Communication + other habitat groups)

Monitoring – feedback on discussions about data collection (point 3 above)

Communications – deer problems (point 1 above)

Any relevant issues from other groups to be fed back e.g. conflicts with other habitat types.

RS will attend steering group meetings where all chairs can communicate relevant issues from their group to chairs of other groups. JH will also be a consistent factor at all

RS

meetings to facilitate communication. ALL to be aware of structure of partnership and existence of other groups to be made use of when necessary. **ALL**

Feeding back to your organisation

All to ensure relevant people in their organisations kept informed of Avon BAP group activities **ALL**

Are the right people attending the groups?

Woodland Trust – have been invited but do not have resources to attend
EN will keep watching brief and attend when there are particular relevant issues
CLA, representing landowners. R M-B to contact CLA and invite them to attend **R M-B**
R M-B represents many landowners through BASC membership.

FWAG invited to attend all meetings

Vincent Wildlife Trust – if anyone has a contact with them please use it and invite them along. JH tried but with no success. **ALL**

Others to be pulled in for particular topics: contractors e.g. Forestry Contractors Association, Timber and Forest Contractors organisation, Small Woodlands group etc. ALL **ALL**
to propose relevant people to be invited to meetings.

List of email addresses to be circulated **JH**

How often should group meet?

6 monthly unless special circumstances require more frequent meetings

Next meeting date: March 10th 2-4.30pm, Folly Farm