

NI Native Woodland Group
Belvoir Park Forest 17th February 2005

1. **Present:** Pat Hunter Blair (Chairperson), John Hetherington, John Cross, Richard Schaible, Jill Sefton, Phil Davidson, Christine Butler, Bob Davidson, Dedan Little, Brian Poots, Fiona Mulholland, Rachel Bain, Robert Sheaman, William Webb (Secretary).
2. **Welcome and Introduction:** Pat Hunter Blair welcomed the group to Belvoir Park Forest.
3. **Apologies:** Mike Meharg, Neville McKee, Patrick Cregg, and Alan Cooper.
4. **Minutes to last meeting (1/10/04):** All present content

5. Matters Arising:

- The group was informed that the NI Biodiversity Group is still working on Woodland HAP's, with Mike Meharg (EHS) involved in this process.
- Richard Schaible enquired as to the current situation with Planning Policy Statement 2. Bob Davidson informed the group that Planning Service has shelved the review of PPS2 for at least 6 months. Richard was concerned that SLNCI Woodlands would not be protected until PPS2 was advanced.

6. Presentation 1: Forest Policy Review

- Pat Hunter Blair gave a presentation on the current Forest Service public consultation, entitled 'Options for Forestry'.
- Pat received and answered comments and questions as regards to the core consultation issues from the group, however Pat was keen to stress that all present were welcome to provide a response to the public consultation document 'Option for Forestry' either through written correspondence or by attendance at one of the public consultation meetings. This would ensure that all comments could be recorded within the consultation process, and responded to where appropriate.

7. Woodlands Definitions:

- Rachel Bain was interested to know what the 'Woodlands Definitions' document is to be used for, and who is going to own it. Fiona Mulholland explained that this was to allow monitoring and reporting of targets within NI Biodiversity HAP's and of more general use to DoE and DARD. Others may also find them useful. Richard Schaible added that at present the NINWG provides the definitions but that there was a level of latitude in that some of the definitions were 'should' and not 'must'. It was also made clear that commercial considerations impinge upon the definitions, and that HAP's encourage industry to provide native trees.
- Rachel was concerned that only a truly 'native woodland' should be defined as such, however Richard countered that the genetics of the actual trees was

not as key as introducing and developing desirable forest environments for the future.

- Pat Hunter Blair felt that it was important that people must have an incentive to achieve better woodlands through realistic goal setting. Pat explained further that the document by its very nature provides flexibility and compromise in order that the process could move forward, and concluded that designated sites are treated with greater scientific rigour within the definitions paper.

- It was agreed that the term 'for example', as suggested by Declan Little, would be used in the Definitions Paper when describing the preferred use of local provenance, as opposed to the use of 'should' or 'could'.

- For reporting purposes, it was also agreed that the date that Government signed up to the Biodiversity Strategy (2002) would be used as a starting date for the inclusion of associated data.

- It was agreed that the Definitions Paper will be reviewed annually at the spring meeting of the NINWG.

- The group discussed the definition of 'local provenance' as provided by Rachel Bain. **Action:** Richard Schaible to reword the definition as to the points raised by the group.

- **Action:** Removal of Creeping Willow from Box 4 (Page 2)

- John Cross suggested a change to the definition of 'Provenance' on page 4, specifically to substitute the words 'seed lot' for 'propagated material'. **Action:** Agreed.

- In relation to non-invasive species Declan Little suggested that the term 'nurse species' be used as opposed to the inclusion of specific trees. **Action:** Agreed

- Rachel Bain requested that the changes to the paper be included and a copy sent to the UWT for consideration. **Action:** Richard Schaible to send an electronic copy of the draft labelled 'as agreed 17th February' to Rachel, with the premise that a nil response will be considered as an agreement.

- Pat Hunter Blair took this opportunity to thank John Cross and Declan Little for their input.

- Richard Schaible highlighted that there will be a further paper to show how this is implemented by Forest Service and EHS in their respective areas of responsibility.

8. Review of Native Woodland Group

- Pat Hunter Blair opened this item by explaining that as per the agenda this was an agreed date for review of the group

- It was agreed by the group that the Native Woodland Group should continue.

- The group discussed the Terms of Reference and agreed a number of points, as noted by Pat Hunter Blair. **Action:** Updated T.O.R's to be circulated by William Webb with the minute to the meeting. If not heard by end of March 05 will assume that all are content.

- **Action:** Pat Hunter Blair to write to Bob Brown (Chairman NI Biodiversity Group) in reference to the agreed position.

- It was agreed that Forest Service retains the Chair of the NINWG due to it being a statutory organisation.

- **Action:** The list of non-members who attend meetings as 'additional individuals' will be given invitation to become members of the group, but will not be added to the official list. John Cross and Declan Little to remain as 'observers', with papers also to be sent to Kevin Collins (Forest Service, Dublin)

9. Presentation 2: Woodlands of Ireland

- Declan Little gave a presentation on WOI to the group.
- Further information on the WOI can be accessed at www.woodlandsofireland.com

10. Update by Members

Bob Davidson: EHS has put forward 2 new woodlands to CNCC as ASSI's in the last few months, however these have not been formally designated as yet.

- EHS has agreed a sale of a farm at Ness and Ervey in order that two woods be linked together through planting.
- Bob also reported that the Woodland Trust, as part of the Trafalgar celebrations, would be establishing a new wood at Redbum (Holywood) and one at Crawfordsbum.

John Cross (National Parks and Wildlife Service): Inventory work continuing, this year at Leinster/Leitrim/Roscommon

- Reported also that Trinity and Bangor Colleges are conducting a study into Rhododendron control, and that a 5yr EU life fund has been secured for a project in the Burren.

Robert Shearman: Reported a CVNI 'NI Tree Campaign' and the organisation of various public events where native trees are grown for the community to enjoy.

Christine Butler: Reported that there are now 7,500 farmers in agri-environment schemes, expected to rise to 10,000 when agreements from last year have been processed. Aim is for 20,000 to be involved by 2006. Under the Countryside Management scheme over 500ha of woodland are protected. Christine conveyed concern that Single Farm payments will affect tree-planting uptake.

Richard Schaible: Restoration/plantation of 12 sites of Native Woodlands within the last year- hope to achieve the same this year.

-PAWS- restoration programme in place for another 100 hectares. Forest Service has identified 450ha for restoration. Survey reports of PAWS sites to be on Forest Service website in near future. Richard would also like to provide relevant information and to link to an all island context- will inform Declan Little.

John Hetherington: Reported a reduction in afforestation applications due to SFP concerns, and is unsure how it will affect business. There has been a

swing towards native type afforestation, particularly in the farm-owning community.

- Also reported an uplift in the value of soft wood, and that this would encourage private managers to improve standards of management.

Rachel Bain: Reported the work of the Wildlife Guardianship Groups; 30 groups in total, 2 of which are in partnership with Forest Service.

11. Any other Business

-Christine Butler raised the question as to should the NI Native Woodlands Definitions Paper require that 'native woodland' have at least 5 different species of tree, as this would mirror the requirement of 5 species within hedgerow guidance. Richard Schaible commented that this would perhaps be better within a guidance document, and possibly aimed towards specific HAPS, but not as an overall principle. Other members within the group agreed with this.

12. Date and venue of next meeting

Glenam (County Antrim) 21/22 September 2005.