

## **NI Native Woodland Group**

**Meeting Held in the Lecture Room, Belvoir Forest Park on Thursday 19  
October 2006 at 2pm**

### **Present:**

Stuart Morwood (Chairperson)	Forest Service
Richard Schaible	Forest Service
Mark Hamilton	Forest Service
Marion Magill (Secretary)	Forest Service
Christine Butler	DARD CMB
John Gamble	DARD EPB
Patrick Cregg	The Woodland Trust
Sian Thomas	The Woodland Trust
Robert Shearman	Conservation Volunteers
Phil Davidson	National Trust
Richard Wyle	EHS
Brian Sutton	Faber Maxwell (Contracted by EHS)

### **1. Apologies**

Fiona Mulholland – EHS, Mike Meharg – EHS, Brian Poots – The Woodland Trust, Alan Cooper – Ulster University, Alan McHaffie – Belfast City Council, Neville McKee – Ulster Native Trees.

### **2. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

### **3. Matters Arising**

The chairman advised the meeting that matters arising from the minutes would be dealt with individually as agenda items as follows:

- Item 4 - Native Woodland Definitions and Guidance – Publication (Agenda Item 4);
- Item 5 – Progress of the Parkland Study (Agenda Item 5);
- Item 5 – Update on the Survey at Crom (Agenda Item 6);
- Item 8 – The Woodland Trust - Ancient Woodland Inventory (Agenda Item 7);
- Item 8 – The Woodland Trust – Ancient Tree Hunt (Agenda Item 8).

In addition, Richard Schaible reported that:

- Item 7 - publication on the Forest Service website of information relating to Forest Service PAWS had been delayed and would take place in due course;
- Item 8 – The Woodland Trust - a meeting had been held between The Woodland Trust and Forest Service during September.

#### **4. Native Woodland Definitions and Guidance**

Mark Hamilton made a presentation to the group. Richard Schaible thanked Mark and reported that he had made the amendments discussed as a result of the last meeting and that all logos would be represented. A document would be circulated on PDF which would include spaces left for insertion of pictures. The format would be that of a glossy booklet. Richard further advised that the document would be placed on the Forest Service website and represented an excellent shop window for the group. The chairman thanked Mark for the presentation.

#### **5. Progress of the Parkland Study**

Richard Wyle reported that the study, involving research into parkland, had been ongoing for approximately 1 year. It was an intensive study which involved an assessment of biodiversity at six sites:

Castlecaldwell

Caledon

Baronscourt

Glenam

Drenagh

Castleward.

No reports were available just yet but the project, which was due to finish in March 2007, may be extended. Richard advised that he or possibly Fiona would like to come back to the group at that time.

#### **Action**

It was agreed that a presentation on the results would be given to the group.

#### **6. Update on the Survey at Crom**

Phil Davidson advised that the report on the survey at Crom was not yet available.

#### **7. Northern Ireland Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI) Project**

Sian Thomas (Woodland Trust) gave a presentation on the AWI. Sian explained that she worked as a conservation policy officer for the Woodland Trust (WT) managing the Ancient Woodland Inventory Project. The project was driven by the importance of ancient woodland in Northern Ireland. The ancient woodland inventory for Northern Ireland will identify ancient woodland (i.e. land wooded since at least 1600) and long-established woodland (land wooded since at least 1830).

Phase 1 of the project involved comparing several series of Ordnance Survey maps of woodland areas from the 1830s to the present day (long-established woodland) and recording all woodland which was present throughout. This

produced a map of Northern Ireland showing 2,600 polygons of long-established woodland over 0.5 ha in area.

A selection of woods was then researched in more detail to see if their history could be traced back to 1600 or before. Survey data is being analysed to find species which are significantly associated with ancient woodland, rather than long-established woodland. The research team had recommended ways to complete the detailed research and classify the remaining woods.

Phase 2 involved putting the recommendations into practice. Findings are that there has been a loss of approximately 13% of long-established (possibly ancient) woodland in the last 30 to 40 years. A total of around 3,500 veteran trees had been identified and the data shared with the Ancient Tree Hunt. Also, 132,805 records in total had been contributed to the CEDAR database.

A second round of funding has been used to engage the public. Seven events have been run over the past year on an ancient/long-established woodland theme.

The final inventory will be launched at Belfast Castle on 25 January 2007 and the website will be live from that date. Professional users will be able to gain access to survey information on the website.

Work for the future involves:

- Protection of ancient and long-established woods;
- Further work on parkland;
- Further work on landscape history.

The chairman thanked Sian for the presentation.

## **8. Identification of Ancient Trees Programme**

Patrick Cregg suggested that definitions of ancient trees and veteran trees would be useful. Patrick wanted to engage with people to create widespread awareness and hopefully to provide greater protection. He pointed out that ancient and veteran trees were usually older than many buildings which are protected.

The programme was UK wide and had received £1m in funding. It involved people identifying and recording trees in their area and submitting the information to WT through their website [www.ancienttreehunt.org.uk](http://www.ancienttreehunt.org.uk). WT had verifiers who would scan the information. Targets for Northern Ireland included the development of 4 x partnerships and the holding of 6 events over the life of the project. Also, a conference had been planned to promote awareness.

Patrick suggested that a report would be issued to the group after the identification programme had been running for 1 year. The chairman agreed that it was an excellent project with a novel approach and would hopefully involve significant numbers of the public over Northern Ireland.

## **9. Update from Members**

### **Forest Service**

#### **Forest Service Biodiversity Survey**

Richard Schaible advised the group that work was continuing on inputting data to the GIS system and he considered that the work was nearing completion. The survey will identify the main areas of priority woodland habitat.

#### **PAWS**

The survey at Castle Caldwell PAWS has been carried out and this has completed the Forest Service PAWS surveys.

### **The National Trust**

Phil Davidson reported that the National Trust were looking at training needs as there had been an accident involving tree felling.

### **The Woodland Trust**

Patrick Cregg reported that Brian Poots had been working with the Countryside Access and Activities Network and he would forward details to the group.

He also provided leaflets/publications for the information of the group as follows:

Background to the Ancient Woodland Inventory

Ancient Tree Hunt

The Woodland Trust Autumn 2006 Magazine.

## **10. Recommendations for Policy Changes – NI Ancient Trees and Native Woodlands**

FaberMaunsell recently completed a contract on above for EHS. An over-view was given by Brian Sutton of FaberMaunsell.

They were required to consider the impact of past policies, strategies and legislation on NI ancient trees, native woodlands and parklands and to assess the current and future threats to these habitats. From consideration of threat mitigation measures 13 recommendations for policy change were made. The importance of overall planning policy was highlighted and how the related interpretation documents provided a spatial template for habitat conservation. The recommendations were as follows:

- The current review of Planning Policy Statement 2 should include a presumption for protection of veteran trees, native woodlands and parklands. It was also suggested that permitted development rights should be withdrawn where the development would have a detrimental effect on a site's conservation value, especially if identified on Ancient Woodland Inventory. Further protection of Ancient Woodland sites might be possible through temporary TPOs and/or through the concept of a Woodland Preservation Order.
- The Forestry Strategy should take much greater account of NI Biodiversity Strategy, and enable the re-introduction of a Felling Licence scheme for both woodland and individual trees.
- Both Forestry and Agri-environment Scheme grants should be reviewed, so that they were consistent and would enable targeting of resources to maximise benefits for conservation of important woodlands and trees. A holistic approach to the planting of new native woodlands should be taken and especially encouraging them adjacent or near to identified Ancient Woodland sites.
- Local councils should appoint Tree Officers to enable the councils to properly undertake their responsibilities regarding the protection of trees and woodlands.

The chairman thanked Brian Sutton for the summary of recommendations.

### **Action**

Richard Schaible advised that he would respond on behalf of Forest Service after studying the detail of the document.

## **11. AOB**

### **Work Programme**

The chairman asked for a work programme to be agreed with the group including discussion of desired outcomes etc.

### **Action**

It was agreed that a draft work programme be circulated within the group and comments provided.

### **The Woodland Trust**

### **PAWS**

Patrick Cregg suggested that the Trusts's lead officer on PAWS, Tim Hodges, could make a presentation in the new year if the group were agreeable.

The next meeting was arranged for a full day on Friday 27 April 2007.

