

Northern Ireland Native Woodland Group

Meeting held at the RAPID offices on Wednesday 10th November

Present:

Richard Schable (Acting Chairman)	Forest Service
Richard Weyl	NI Environment Agency
Mark Edgar	LBAP Forum
Ian McCurley	National Trust
Stephen Warren	CONFOR
Christine Butler	Countryside Management Branch
Jackie Morgan	Woodland Trust
Melina McMullan	NI Environment Agency
Philip O'Kane	RAPID
Gregor Fulton	Woodland Trust
John Griffin	Forest Service

Apologies:

Stuart Morwood	Forest Service (Chairman)
Mansil Miller	Planning Service
Neville McKee	Ulster Native Trees
Alan Cooper	University of Ulster
Declan Little	Woodlands of Ireland
Pat Cregg	Woodland Trust
Ciaran Mullan	Ulster Wildlife Trust
Peter Archdale	CNCC

Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

Matters arising:

J Griffin gave an update on Forest Service grants which are relevant to the NINWG. The Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS), the Farm Woodland Premium Scheme and Restocking Grants are principally aimed at establishing woodland, whereas the Sustainability Forestry Operations Grant and Woodland Environment Grant are aimed at improving the condition of existing woodlands. A Community Woodland Supplement to the WGS is available to encourage the creation of new woodlands near urban areas for informal recreation. Additional

information can be obtained from the links below -

<http://www.forestserviceni.gov.uk/index/publications/forestry-grant-information/forestry-grant-schemes-information-booklet.htm>

Parkland website information

The Chair outlined the reasons for producing information in this format and M McMullan summarised the first draft. The meeting considered that the draft largely met requirements to produce information on parkland relevant to landowners. Possible additions include a reference to leaflets produced by the Ancient Tree Forum and a case study of the parkland at Crom. Good quality parkland photographs and comments on the draft were requested.

Action:

M McMullan and J Morgan to liaise on ways of ensuring that this information reaches the intended target audience

Faughan Valley Heritage Lottery Bid

A presentation by Philip O'Kane provided the background to this project. The application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) was developed by the Rural Area Partnership in Derry Ltd (RAPID), Derry City Council and the Woodland Trust and covers 170km². The aims include enhancing the landscape by creating and restoring semi-natural habitats that will link up existing small fragments of ancient woodland. Individual projects include woodland creation and PAWS restoration. The project will also provide education and activity programmes for local people in the rural area and Derry City. The application will be assessed by the HLF in March 2011. It has received the support of many community and statutory bodies and the value of bid is likely to exceed £2 million.

Work Programme 2009 – 2012

The Work Programme for 2009 – 2012 was discussed in detail. We are now a year and a half into the current work programme. It was emphasised that reporting procedures must be agreed with the NI Biodiversity Group. In response to training needs, the inputting of habitat and species data into BARS will be addressed at the next meeting.

Action

M McMullan –

- **to amend the Work Programme and to circulate to the Group**

- to approach CDP to request a presentation on the remedies programme for the next meeting and to obtain an electronic version of the report for forwarding to Group members. (2.2.1)
- to forward selection criteria for parkland ASSIs to Group members

R Weyl -

- to prepare a presentation on inputting data into BARS for the next meeting (3)
- to provide details of woodland species which are relevant to the NINWG (ie signposting) (3.1.2)

All -

- to notify J Griffin of any omissions in the list of Native Woodland and Parkland references (5.2.1)

Single Farm Payment eligibility and woodland

R Weyl introduced a paper which highlighted concerns relating to the potential inappropriate scrub clearance and hedge management that could be carried out by farmers to fulfil the requirements of Single Farm Payment (SFP). In contrast to light scrub, dense scrub is ineligible for SFP, and may therefore be at risk from widespread clearance. It is intended to present this paper to DARD to highlight the concerns that surround the determination and application of the eligibility criteria relating to SFP and the potential impacts this could have on biodiversity. Prompt feedback on the document was requested by Richard.

National Ecosystem Assessment

M McMullan informed the Group that the 4th draft of the woodland section of the NI chapter is now available for comment. The Northern Ireland chapter will form part of the UK National Ecosystem Assessment, which is planned for publication in early 2011. Comments on the draft were requested by Melina.

Forestry Act

A major part of the Forestry Act (Northern Ireland) 2010 is now law. It was formally introduced on 13 September by the Forestry (2010 Act) (Commencement No. 1) Order (Northern Ireland) 2010. Work continues on those parts of the Act that require subordinate legislation, such as felling licences, statutory right of access and byelaws. This will be preceded by public consultation. When this work is completed another Commencement Order will bring additional parts of the Forestry Act into operation.

Members updates

National Trust

New native woodland has been planted on previously improved grassland sites at Crom and Belfast amounting to approximately 50ha. Currently work is ongoing at the Argory to improve the condition of 13ha of PAWS by removing rhododendron growth.

Woodland Trust

Approximately 100ha of new native woodland has been planted in 2010 through the More Woods Scheme. Another 4.5ha supported by BIFFA in partnership with Carrickfergus Council is still to be planted at Bashfordland.

NEA

A workshop will be set up in spring 2011 in relation to guidance on the biodiversity duty which is a component of the upcoming Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill.

A recent publication titled 'Making Space for Nature' recommends ways of achieving a resilient ecological network of sites throughout England to the benefit of biodiversity. Further information available via the links below.

<http://ww2.defra.gov.uk/news/2010/09/24/nature-news/>

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/biodiversity/documents/201009space-for-nature.pdf>

Forest Service

A summary of new native woodland (NNW) created in 2010 and supported by Forest Service grants was provided. A total of 140ha of NNW was created consisting of 32ha of oakwood, 105ha of mixed ashwoods and 3ha of wet woodland. This formed almost 70% of the total area of woodland established using FS grants in 2010 excluding energy crops such as short rotation coppice. Chemical control of invasive tree species and conifer felling at Brantry, Co Tyrone were the main forestry operations carried out during 2010 on Forest Service PAWS restoration sites. The clearance of conifers on two islands in Lower Lough Erne totalling 22ha (17ha of which is categorised as long-established woodland) and which forms part of Castle Archdale forest was carried out during the summer. Both sites will be allowed to return to native woodland through natural regeneration.

Countryside Management Branch

One of the first Countryside Management schemes began in 2000 and will come to an end during 2011. Due to a shortage of funds, entry into the new NICMS scheme may be very limited which could result in a reduction in the total number of participants within agri-environment schemes as well as a reduction in the

area under agri-environment scheme agreement. Although the NICMS was open for applications from the 10th – 31st March this year, to date no applications have been processed.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting is planned to take place in Peatlands Park next Spring with a possible field meeting on woodland restoration at the Argory hosted by the National Trust

Field Trip

An afternoon visit was made to Burntollet Wood hosted by the Gregor Fulton, Woodland Trust. It was emphasised that the potential value of this new native woodland for biodiversity was enhanced by the proximity of the nearby ASSI at Ness Country Park and the fragments of ancient woodland that remain within the landscape area