

**Peatlands & Upland Biodiversity Delivery Group Meeting
Glenwherry Hill Farm
Wednesday 11th October 10am**

Attendees

Michael Meharg	(EHS – Chair)
Richard Weyl	(EHS)
Martin Bradley	(EHS)
Godfrey McRoberts	(DARD – deputising for Keith Johnston)
John Gamble	(DARD)
Matthew McCrisken	(Minerals Unit – deputising for Kevin Armstrong)
Paul Lyness	(RSPB – deputising for James Robinson NIBG)
Roy Anderson	(AFBI)
Jim McAdam	(AFBI)
Ronnie Tosh	(Environmental Policy Group)
Stuart Morewood	(Forest Service)
Laverne Bell	(QPA)
Helen Paul	(EHS-Minute Taker)

1. Introduction

Michael thanked everyone for attending.

2. Apologies

John Hetherington (Forestry & Timber Association), Demott Hughes (CNCC), James Robinson (NIBG), Gillian Stewart (Invest NI), Sean Convery (FWAG), Jim Ryan (NPWS)

3. Minutes of Previous meeting

Agreed

4. Matters Arising from meeting held 20/03/06

Terms of Reference and Membership (agenda item 4)

Representation

Demot to provide a further name from Peat Consortium

Action: Dermot

Richard reported that he had been in touch with Karen Gamble from NILGA who informed him that Rosemary Mulholland was to

attend the meeting. Richard to follow up with Rosemary to see if she will be present at future meetings.

Action: Richard to contact Rosemary Mulholland

Gillian Stewart was unable to attend the meeting but she reported via email that she had contacted Brian Grey from the NI Independent Retail Trade Association to see if he would represent Peat Retailers. Brian advised her that he felt he wasn't the most suitable person as their association mainly represented Grocery Retailers for NI.

Action: Richard to consider who should be contacted.

Priorities for next meeting (agenda item 7)

A discussion took place on Peat Alternatives and it was agreed that this item should be added to the agenda for the next meeting at which time the DEFRA report should be available. It was agreed that some of the Loughgall CAFRI staff attend the next meeting.

Action: Jim to arrange with Staff from Loughgall

AOB (agenda item 8)

Information on documentation on best practice and an inventory of publications on Peatlands still to be sourced.

Action: Richard

Matters Arising from meeting held 15/06/06

Terms of Reference and Membership (agenda item 5)

Richard to endeavor to meet with the Ulster Farmers Union before the next meeting.

Action: Richard

Update on 'Boglands' project (agenda item 6)

Richard and Jim reported on the 1st Seminar of the Irish National Committee of the International Peat Society which took place on 10th October 2006 in Dublin. Jim had a couple of copies of the proceedings of the meeting entitled 'Peatland Utilisation & Research in Ireland 2006'. Richard informed the group that more copies could be acquired and if anyone would like one to let him know.

The Irish National Committee are organising an International Peat congress which will take place in Tullamore in June 2008.

The general consensus was that it should be ensured that there will be good NI representation at this event.

It was also suggested there should be a close working relationship between the Irish National Committee of the International Peat Society and the NI Peatlands & Upland Biodiversity Delivery Group (PUBDG) and that this would be best achieved through cross representation.

Richard reported that Bob Davidson had been in contact with Florence Renou, the 'Boglands' project Manager, who was keen to meet with this group and give a presentation on the individual projects and the progress to date.

Action: Richard to arrange a joint workshop with Florence.

Work Programme (agenda item 7)

Ronnie reported on the Peatlands Conservation Policy. It should go out to consultation and be circulated to the PUBDG early in 2007.

Action: Ronnie

Site Designation

Richard to circulate SLNCI selection guidelines and an update on site designation.

Action: Richard

Site Management

Richard to circulate an update on site management.

Action: Richard

AOB (agenda item 8)

A draft list of the relevant published SAPs to be circulated to the group for information.

Action: Richard

5. Work Programme

Martin informed the group that he had made a few presentational changes to the work programme. He pointed out that most of the Key Actions previously started with the phrase 'Government will...' or similar. This was because they were based largely on the draft Northern Ireland Peatland Conservation policy. He advised that he had removed the reference to 'Government will...' from the key actions which hopefully will make the Key Actions and as a consequence, the Key Tasks, much more generic and more inclusive for the members of the group.

The cross reference column had been added but he pointed out that there were still some gaps that would need to be looked at.

Site Designation

(Ref. to key tasks 1.2.1 & 1.2.2) Michael gave a brief overview of the process for SLNCs and he explained that Planning were in the process of reviewing PPS2 and it was hoped that Biodiversity issues such as SLNCs, species etc would be addressed in the revised statement. He pointed out that in the mean time we are in a state of limbo as there is the possibility that by carrying on surveying them we are drawing attention to them and possibly leaving them vulnerable.

Site Management

Information on site designation and management will be circulated to the group.

Action: Richard

It was agreed that Richard will arrange for an update on Habitats Directive reporting to be presented at the next meeting

Action: Richard

Management of Peatlands and Uplands in the wider countryside

(Key Task 3.5.1) The production of habitat conditions in the wider countryside to be added to the agenda and discussed at the next meeting.

Action: Richard

Godfrey tabled a paper entitled 'DARD Agri-Environment Schemes – summary of stats. He informed the group that the Countryside Management Scheme did not open in 2006. DARD Agri- Environment Schemes are to be resubmitted to EU for approval under the new NI Rural Development Plan 2007-13.

At this stage it was not known how much funding would be available. Godfrey also summarised the changes to the Common Agricultural Policy and introduction of the Single Farm Payment in 2005.

Michael suggested that it would be worthwhile linking agricultural support and regulation information on biodiversity gain.

Michael pointed out that there wasn't any related HAP actions in 3.2.1. Martin agreed to check this again.

Action: Martin

Michael pointed out that 3.4.1 did not have a lead partner assigned to it. It was agreed that DARD should be the lead.

Action: Martin

Under Key Action 3.4.1 Paul suggested that the group should look at funding available outside the government.

Action: Paul to investigate

It was agreed that a new key task 3.4.2 should be included:

'Implement and Refine the funding for the management of peatland & upland habitats through agri-environment schemes.'

Action: Martin

Jim McAdam advised that AFBI should be included in 3.3.1 & 3.5.1.

Action: Martin

Ref. to key action 3.10 & 3.11 Stuart gave a brief update on what Forestry Service are doing at the minute with regard to restoration and redesign plans. He informed the group that Forest Service published a Forestry Strategy in March 2006.

Michael pointed out that Forestry Service are probably already achieving some of the targets and these should be recorded. He suggested there may be opportunities for future habitat restoration in forest in peatland and upland areas.

Key Action 3.17.1. It was agreed that the wording should be looked at and possibly change the word 'oppose' to 'consider'.

Action: Martin

Roy raised the subject of Climate Change. Michael agreed that this was something that should have been taken into account in relation to the HAPs. It was agreed that there is a need to set up a session in the future to look at this.

Action: Richard

Due to shortage of time it was agreed to continue on from keytask 4 at the next meeting.

6. UK Targets Review

Richard presented the paper on UK Targets Review which had been circulated to the group.

In the table for UK Blanket Bog HAP it was agreed that although a figure had not been provided for T4 the group would still need to be involved in promoting restoration activities in blanket bog.

Action: Richard

Martin advised the group that he had information on how the figures were obtained and if anyone wished to see this info to contact him.

7. Glenwherry Hill Farm

Jim and Godfrey gave a brief update on the history and management of the Hill farm.

8. AOB

None.

9. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is on Tuesday 24th April 2006 and will be held at Peatlands Park.