

**Peatland & Uplands Biodiversity Delivery Group Meeting**  
**Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2010 - 9.30am**  
**Boardroom**  
**Lough Neagh Discovery Centre**

**Attendees**

Judith Annett	(NIBG chair)
Melanie Flexen	(AFBI)
Julie Corry	(LBAP Officer, Omagh)
Stephen McCartney	(Forest Service)
Seamus Burns	(RSPB)
Demot Hughes	(CNCC)
Roy Tomlinson	Consultant
Richard Weyl	(NIEA – NH - Chair)
Larry Toal	(NIEA – NH)

**1. Apologies**

Laverne Bell	(QPA)
Jim McAdam	(AFBI)
Godfrey McRoberts	(DARD CMB)
Andrew Upton	(UWT)
Billy McCabe	(Planning)
John Hetherington	(Forest & Timber Association)
Richard Schaible	(Forest Service)
Martin Bradley	(NIEA-NH)
Mike Meharg	(NIEA-NH)

**1. Minutes of previous meeting 29<sup>th</sup> June 2010**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed subject to a few edits.

**2. Matters arising**

- a) Workshop – Richard to speak to Ken Bradley **carried forward**
- b) ToR to be updated – including membership **carried forward**
- c) Defra Soils Project - RW gave an update
- d) Irish hare pilot study at Glenwherry – MF said that the project was not at a stage when a report would be appropriate. Nine hares are being tracked and habitat selection recorded
- e) Peat Restoration Guidelines –

**Action 1 – All**, RW invited the group to submit comments on the guidelines over the next month before a final version was produced with the facility to edit as necessary in the future

JA suggested a listing of demonstration sites in the appendix with a short section on who's doing what

RT said that NI was unique because of differences in scale; the guidelines are less appropriate to the smaller sites in NI

RT submitted his own comments to the group

f) A summary of current peat use in DARD, AFBI and the NIEA was provided.

JA asked if the group was just monitoring peat use in Government or working towards zero use and if we had any evidence that peat use by government had decreased.

The group agreed that it would be useful to highlight current peat use by government and such peat use should be monitored.

**Action 2 - JC & LT** to draft a pilot questionnaire to be sent to relevant government bodies.

g) Work programme –

Countryside Survey 2007 – Dr Alan Cooper to be invited to give a presentation to the group – **Carried forward**

h) Rebuilding the Countryside – SB said that the publication pack 'Futurescapes' was ready for distribution

i) Outcome of eligibility in CMS meeting – JA gave details of the redefined SFP

j) Additional NI priority habitats – RW reported that habitat statements would be published for additional NI priority habitats

k) Sign posting – RW reported that the signposting exercise has been delayed

### **3. Single Farm Payment eligibility criteria**

In relation to the redefined SFP RW drew the group's attention to excluded land including tall heather habitat. It was suggested that this redefinition may result in an increase in heather burning.

MF reported an increase in hedge cutting and rush topping and that Jim McAdam was in discussions on this subject exploring ways of enhancing biodiversity.

RW suggested it would create opportunities such as the conversion of bracken dominant habitat to woodland through the Forest Service woodland grant scheme.

RT informed the group that the current scheme provided financial leverage to encourage practices beneficial to the environment and that the new proposals removed this leverage.

RW suggested that the Farmland Biodiversity Delivery Group would submit a paper on this to DARD.

RW invited the PUBDG to comment on the paper to be considered by the Farmland BDG by the 5<sup>th</sup> November 2010.

**Action 3 – All** to provide comments on the Farmland BDG paper by the 5<sup>th</sup> November 2010 if possible

#### **4. Wind farm development on active peat**

RW reminded the group that it was government policy to oppose wind farm development on active peat which may include most of the raised and blanket bog habitats in NI.

JA said that any map showing peatland distribution in NI must be accurate and not adjusted to accommodate development with an emphasis on objectivity and provide a stimulus to debate.

#### **5. Inquiry IUCN commission of Inquiry - draft UK Peatland Programme**

RW gave a presentation on IUCN draft commission. This major review highlighted peat soils as well as areas covered by peatland vegetation and issues such as ecosystems service provision and future policy recommendations.

Managed burning and restoration of species rich peat is not compatible.

**Action 4 - MF/RW** to consult with DARD on policy in relation to improving links between agricultural payments and provision of ecosystem services

**Action 5 – All** to provide comment on the draft UK Peatland Programme to RW by January 2011.

**Action 6 – RW** to identify objectives in the UK Peatland Programme relevant to NI

#### **6. Membership**

JA suggested including representatives of upland farmers

DH emphasised the important of including correspondence members to keep them informed.

#### **7. National Ecosystem Assessment**

RT highlighted problems with this assessment such as the England centred definitions and as a result ecosystem services are difficult to value.

**Action 7 – All** to email Sue Christie with comments relating to National Ecosystem Assessment

## 8. Rebuilding the countryside - update

SB presented the update highlighting

The Antrim Hills programme

- Co-ordinate existing management agreements
- Consulting with land managers to identify issues
- Develop farm plans
- Piloting work on common land
- Identify timing of peatland restoration

Slieve Beagh Programme

- The RSPB and Truagh Development Association
- Restoration opportunities identified
- Partners
- Strategy

Lough Beg Programme at Newferry

- Restoration Proposal from the RSPB to Bulrush Horticultural Ltd/Forest Service as part of the Futurescapes project at Lough Beg.

Outline of national structure of Futurescape

DH said that advice to land owners should target basic approaches to peatland restoration.

## 9. AOB

JA enquired as to the present provision of a peatland education programme

JC outlined the programme at An Creggan.

RW drew attention to the incorporation of the peatlands.ni web site into the DoE web site which will facilitate editing and updating of peatlands.ni.

RW drew attention to the commitment to set up regular workshops as identified in the PUBDG work programme.

**Action 8 – All provide suggestions for a forthcoming workshop**

DH suggested 'Peat Alternatives'

JA suggested a 'Peatland Restoration' workshop to follow on from publication of the guidelines.

## 10. Date of next meeting

It was agreed that it should be held in March 2011 with choice of dates

Summary of Actions:	
<b>Carried Forward</b>	Workshop – <b>RW</b> to speak to Ken Bradley

<b>Carried Forward</b>	ToR to be updated – suggest new members
<b>Carried Forward</b>	<b>RW</b> to invite Dr Alan Cooper to give a presentation on CS 2007 to the group
<b>Action 1:</b>	<b>All</b> , RW invited the group to submit comments on the guidelines over the next month before a final version was produced with the facility to edit as necessary in the future
<b>Action 2:</b>	<b>JC &amp; LT</b> (peat use in government) to draft a pilot questionnaire to be sent to relevant government bodies
<b>Action 3:</b>	<b>All</b> to provide comments on the Famlan BDG paper by the 5 <sup>th</sup> November 2010 if possible
<b>Action 4:</b>	<b>MF/RW</b> to consult with DARD on policy in relation to improving links between agricultural payments and provision of ecosystem services
<b>Action 5:</b>	<b>All</b> to provide comment on the draft UK Peatland Programme to RW by January 2011
<b>Action 6:</b>	<b>RW</b> to identify objectives in the UK Peatland Programme relevant to NI
<b>Action 7:</b>	<b>All</b> to email Sue Christy with comments relating to National Ecosystem Assessment
<b>Action 8:</b>	<b>All</b> provide suggestions for a forthcoming workshop