

SEFTON COAST WOODLAND OWNERS GROUP

MINUTES OF MEETING

Held on

13 January 2005 at St Lukes Church Meeting Centre, Formby

PRESENT:

Rachel Northover	Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council
Nick Roche	The Mersey Forest
Andrew Brockbank	National Trust
Ian Kippax	Hesketh Golf Club
Chris Whittle	Royal Birkdale Golf Club
Bob Wagstaff	St Lukes Church

ITEM

ACTION

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

Ann Ibbes – Golf Cottage
Mike Mercer – Hillside Golf Club
Alice Kimpton – Site Manager Ainsdale Sand Dunes & Cabin Hill NNRs
Fiona Robertson – Lancashire Wildlife Trust
Alice Kimpton – English Nature, Ainsdale Sand Dunes & Cabin Hill NNRs
Paul Nolan – The Mersey Forest

It is to be noted that some confusion arose because of the typing error on the agenda. The meeting was mistakenly scheduled for Thursday 17th January 2005 (the 17th being a Monday), rather than Thursday 13th January 2005. Jean Ryan of Formby Ladies Golf Club and Chris Barker of Formby Golf Club would have attended had the confusion not arisen.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Accepted.

3 MATTERS ARISING

Database Training

The database training was conducted on 16th November 2004 at the National Trust office. Follow up work with individual owners will continue to support people as necessary.

A point to note is that SMBC found a small glitch with the Management Diary facility and I will have to give people another copy, if they have not yet entered any new data, or will have to spend half an hour adjusting existing copies if new data has been entered.

NR

Website

The database is currently with the technical people charged with creating a web-based version, but no news. Will follow up in the next weeks to establish progress and time frame.

NR

Journal articles

The Sefton Coast Woodlands article has also appeared in The Institute of

Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) journal. The IEMA is a not-for-profit organisation established to promote best practice standards in environmental management, auditing and assessment. Apparently its origins lie

in the merger in 1999 of the Institute of Environmental Management, the Institute of Environmental Assessment, and the Environmental Auditors Registration Association.

Woodland Fair, 2005

It was reported that the Woodland Fair for 2005 is being scheduled for May 2005. This is to coincide with the annual Bodgers' meeting to be held on Lifeboat Road in May. Dates to be confirmed.

RN

The request was made that information to exhibitors be circulated in good time and some better publicity be generated to ensure that the Formby public attends in numbers to justify the exhibitor's attendance.

SMBC

Winter Activity Press Releases

Lark Hill Farm House developers have tried to ensure that the neighbouring properties are well informed about activities and progress of woodland work.

The undertaking to release information on winter work through The Mersey Forest PR system was not followed through. Most of the readily available information was 'old' and had already been released at one time or another. A decision was taken to delay a release until the monitoring information has been collated after this meeting. A press release should be scheduled for February.

NR

4

PROGRESS UPDATE

Freshfield Dune Heath (FDH)

- Countryside Stewardship funding through DEFRA has been secured under a 10 year agreement for heathland restoration over some of the site. Work has begun on reduction in gorse scrub on the eastern side of the site.
- Mersey Waterfront funding through NWDA has been secured. This covers a two year project of heathland restoration, access and interpretation.
- An ICEP application though the Mersey Forest is waiting to be secured for a two year project on woodland management and heathland restoration.
- A felling licence application is about to be submitted so work can begin as soon as possible.
- Sefton Council has begun a project to propagate alder from seed to replant a stand of white poplar on FDH with a mix of wet woodland species.
- A presentation is to be made on the management plans for FDH at Formby Area Committee on the 13 January.

SMBC Coast and Countryside Forest Plan Activities, YR02

The work was undertaken in-house utilising the skills of Coast and Countryside staff and providing 'on the job' training for the Biodiversity and Access (ILM) Project trainees (referred to as 'The BAPS'). 8 people gained employment or went on to further education, either with us or elsewhere, during the 2003/2004 period of the scheme. Machinery and equipment purchased under the ICEP grant in yr01 has helped support this project and enabled timber from the woods to be processed into firewood, woodchip and planks. The latter have been used in our workshop to make bird boxes, feeders and tables. Other timber has been used to make posts, information boards and other countryside furniture. In many

cases, the work has been carried out by vulnerable young people on our Young Persons Scheme and by The BAPS. We are also working with the Council's Tree Development Officer to provide nest boxes for street trees. In future we hope to perhaps market some of this, eg. by selling at our events. A woodland Fayre and several woodland themed walks were undertaken over the year, attracting approximately 450 people.

Thinning

12c (0.5 ha) was scheduled for yr02.

12b (1.19ha) was brought forward from yr06 and 12a (0.56ha) from yr03.

2.25ha were thinned in total.

Restocking Felling

4 felling coupes (1.79ha) were scheduled for yr02 .

102a (0.2ha), 102c (0.4ha) and 18i (0.8ha) have been cleared.

95a (0.39ha) is still to be felled.

102b (0.41ha) was scheduled for yr01. This area is in fact new planting. The figure of 2.2ha given in the yr02 targets includes this. If removed, the actual area to be felled is 1.79ha, 1.4ha of which has been achieved.

A further coupe in 18l (1x0.2ha) was brought forward from yr03 making the total 1.6ha.

Natural Regeneration

2.2ha were scheduled for yr02. On investigation, this should be 0ha as the compartment in question, 18f, is scheduled for new planting.

Planting

102b (0.41ha) was scheduled for yr02. This was not achieved.

Cleaning

92d and 92e were scheduled for cleaning but not undertaken.

National Trust, Formby Point

Much of the year was spent trying to secure grant funding from the Forestry Commission and ICEP for the woodland work. This has held back progress on the main tasks, however, tariffing was undertaken in the proposed thinning areas to give an indication of the timber that will result. Tenders have been invited to carry out the thinning and felling work in year 3 as it will be too much to do 'in-house'.

Hesketh Golf Club

Some of the priorities within the Club plan are being re-visited. Additional planting and the extent to which some of the untended areas of woodland scrub should be addressed are the issues to be considered. Small areas of boundary willow have been coppiced in the past year.

St Luke's Church, Formby

The main woodland restoration work was undertaken in the previous year and this year saw continued improvements by preparing the restocking coupe for replanting, continued thinning of the sycamore regeneration and underplanting of the woods with woodland wildflowers.

Formby Golf Club

Formby Golf Club has not progressed as much as it was hoped in 2004 mainly due to the lack of resources, both manpower and financial in what was otherwise a very busy golfing year. Fires were experienced in early summer with damage to several hundred square metres of forest. The winter storms also caused severe damage to over 130 trees. The club remains committed to the Plan albeit at a slower pace than initially envisaged.

Lark Hill Farm House

We are pleased to be able to confirm that we have virtually completed our felling operations and that we intend to commence the first phase of replanting during February.

The unsightly overhead powerlines and posts have finally been removed, which has opened up the remaining felling works adjacent to Wicks Lane Track.

In addition, we are in discussions with the Planners with regard to our "Domestic" planting, adjacent to our new house, and the erection of the new boundary fences, the completion of which will allow us to re-open the Track to the public.

During the strong winds, one mature pine was blown down, fortunately without causing any damage. It was amazing to witness the extent to which the pines will bend in the wind, without any apparent undue effect.

5 2005 TARGET SETTING

The process for determining the targets for 2005 are that we take the targets for 2003, 2004 and 2005 and add them together. We then subtract the achievements for 2003 and 2004 and the balance should be the target for 2005. A table of the draft targets is presented below and all owners will need to check the figures to ensure that they will not be committing to more than they have resources for.

NR

ADJUSTED TARGET, 2005

	Thinning	Coupes	Nat regen	Planting
English Nature	18.67	(0.6)	1.9	0.16
Formby Golf Club	3.98	0.2	0	0.2
Formby Ladies Golf Club	0.11	0	0	0
Hesketh Golf Club	0.41	0.23	0	0.1
Lancashire Wildlife Trust	2.89	0	0	0
Hillside Golf Club	1.16	0.59	0	0.59
National Trust	17.41	0.9	0	0.5
Private, Freshfield Dune Heath	0.28	0	0	0
Private, Lark Hill Farm	1.36	0.37	0	0.37
Private, Lark Hill Farm House	0.63	(0.2)	0	0
Private, Pilkington Estate	2.54	0	0.3	0
Private, Shorrocks Hill	0	0	0	0
RFCA	(2.69)	0	0	0.97
Royal Birkdale Golf Club	0	0	0	0
SMBC	2.7	1.09	0	4.01
S&A Golf Club	0.46	0.16	0	0.11
St Josephs Nursing Home	0	0	0	0.25
St Lukes Church	0	0	0	0.25
TOTAL	49.91	2.74	2.2	7.51

ABr reminded the Task Group that there will be a need to re-visit the Forest Plan tolerance tables to ensure that all obligations are being met. Once targets slip (for example for more than two years for thinning work), there is a requirement to put the changes into writing, with maps and amended schedules.

It will be important to address this issue at the next meeting.

NR

6 PREPARATION FOR THE SEFTON COAST FORUM 2005 **ACTION**

The Sefton Coast Forum is an opportunity to share the progress of the Forest Plan with the general public. It is important that the Task Group do not hide their light under a bushel! NR has booked display space during the Forum and is requesting that the Task Group takes the opportunity to provide a Woodland Task Group presentation (as opposed to any single partner going it alone).

A request was made that everyone interested in contributing send in material – photographs and short descriptive text to Nick Roche – to enable him to coordinate a display. NR

NR to send out a letter or e-mail to owners inviting contributions and owners will need to respond promptly in order that it can be coordinated. The suggestion was that the display be under the banner “MORE THAN THE FOREST”. All

A suggestion was made that there be a permanent display created to highlight the background to and activities of the Forest Plan and Task Group. The display could then be moved around the area and set up in appropriate places – the Golf Clubs (to inform members), libraries, schools and at public meetings. To be discussed at the next meeting in more detail. All

7 THE SEFTON COAST FORUM 2006

It was proposed that the 2006 Forum be used as an opportunity to engage with the public on the Forest Plan. How have people reacted to activities, how have they changed in their perceptions, what are the issues that have arisen since last going out to public consultation.

It would be necessary to book a slot in one of the workshops for the woodland task group to present progress and invite comment and discussion. The outcome would then be published as a report and publicised in the local press.

Action needs to be taken to ensure a workshop slot. ABr, PN

8 FOREST PLAN REVIEW PROCESS

Although this is only the start of year 3 for the Forest Plan, the Task Group needs to prepare for the first review of the Plan. The Coastal Forum in 2006 will be an opportunity to gain some feedback from the public and to formally announce the beginning of the review. The review should take about a year to complete and incorporate changes into the second 5 year cycle in time to ensure that there is no break in implementation.

All agreed that the timing was right and that there should be some more discussion on the process and its implications at the next meeting.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Coordinated Monitoring Across the Coastal Partnership

The issue of coordinating monitoring has been raised in several meetings. It is important and acknowledged as such, but the overriding issue is one of resources. It will be hard to find a way of funding a post. The other side of the coin is that if nothing comes of it, there is a danger that the Partnership falls into the trap of being a ‘talking shop’ if there is no point at which partners can buy into action and commitment to making it work.

Squirrel Monitoring Report

Background

Visual survey along 16, 1000m transects are carried out bi-annually throughout

the Sefton Coast Woodlands to help monitor the success of the implementation of the Sefton Coast Woodlands Forest Plan.

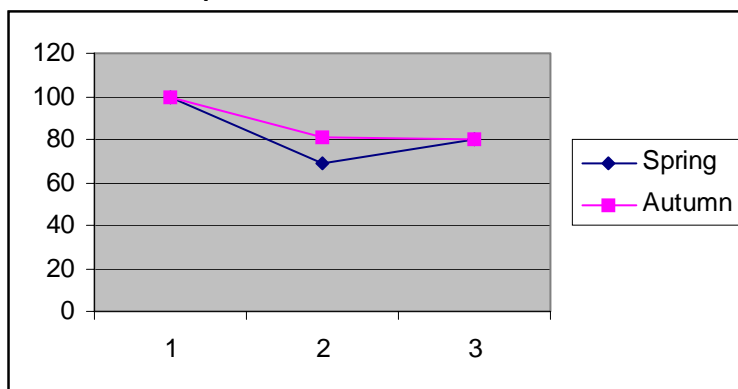
This technique was chosen for its effectiveness in assessing the presence of squirrels and being able to monitor changes over time, to give scientific back up to proposed policies and to monitor grey squirrel incursion.

2004 is the third successive year the monitoring has been carried out on the Sefton Coast.

Results

The graph below shows an index of the average maximum count each year, year 1 = 2002, year 2 = 2003, year 3 = 2004

Indices for Red Squirrels on the Sefton Coast, 2002-2004



The graph shows that numbers of squirrels declined slightly in 2002 but have partially recovered by 2004. In statistical terms these changes are so small, they are insignificant, we therefore conclude that the Sefton Coast population has remained stable.

In terms of the Sefton Coast Woodlands Forest Plan the conclusion is that since work began no adverse impact on squirrel numbers can be detected.

The average maximum number of animals seen per 1km transect during 2002-3 was 6.3 in spring and 8.2 in autumn compared to 6.3 and 7.8 in 2004. This not only shows stability in numbers and highlights the fact that red squirrels are relatively easy to see in the Sefton Coast Woodlands (if you are setting out to see them) but also that the monitoring technique we have chosen is working to gain the data we require.

Using the data we have so far collected we calculated a minimum spring population of 650 individuals within the Sefton Coast woodlands.

As with all monitoring the more data collected the more conclusions can be generated and the more certain you can be of the accuracy of the data. It is hoped that the monitoring of these transects will continue across Sefton and will be a useful tool for the future monitoring of the Sefton Coast Woodlands Forest Plan.

Feedback from the Coastal Footpath Task Group

See attached document from Task Group in relation to the Forest Plan areas.