

**Minutes of a Meeting**  
**Sefton Coast Woodland Owners Group**  
**17<sup>th</sup> May 2007 – HQ, Altcar Rifle Ranges**

**1. Present:**

Nick Roche (Mersey Forest Team), David Duncan (WRS Composting Company), Richard Topley (Forestry Commission), Major Bill Hunter (Reserve Forces and Cadets Association), Rachel Northover (Sefton Coast & Countryside Service), Fiona Whitfield (Lancashire Wildlife Trust), Alice Kimpton (Natural England), Andrew Brockbank (The National Trust).

**Apologies:**

Ian Kippax (Hesketh Golf Club), Chris Barker (Formby Golf Club), Cllr Anne Ibbs (Golf Cottage).

**2. Minutes of last meeting:**

The minutes of the last meeting were passed as an accurate record and will be posted on the Sefton Coast Partnership web site.

**3. Matters arising:**

Annual Targets – table made available highlighting the agreed targets for 2007.

**4. WRS Composting:**

Mr Duncan of WRS Composting gave the members of the Task Group some background to the company: It composts all green materials from soft (grass) to hard (trees), taking 22,000 tonnes of waste per annum, producing 18,000 tonnes of compost.

Processes licensed by the Environment Agency. Materials are processed 300 tonnes at a time – temperatures up to 60 °C to kill off pathogens. The material is turned regularly over a 6 month period before it is ready, producing a loamy material suitable for agriculture, forestry and gardening use. Any left-over woody material is chipped.

WRS will buy soft waste at £22/ tonne delivered to the composting plant – it has the contract with Sefton Council. Woodchips are accepted free of charge when delivered to the plant. The company has the machinery to dispose of timber using very large shredders to reduce roundwood to woodchip/biomass fuel – the product is sent to the Shotton mill.

It was proposed that the Task Group organise a visit to the plant.

**NR to co-ordinate date/time.**

**5. Clarifying Forest Plan Terminology:**

NR emphasised the need to adhere to terms of the licence and Woodland Owners need to understand terms like 'cleaning'. Discussion followed with respect to what growth can be removed legitimately. Anything over 7 cms in diameter (dbh) requires a felling licence. NR has prepared the following amended definition of cleaning:

“The maintenance of the ‘mosaic’ of habitats within the woodland area through the removal of unwanted or weed species, including woody material up to 8cm in diameter at chest height and less than 5m<sup>3</sup> by volume in any calendar quarter.

Anything potentially exceeding this specification must be additionally licensed by the Forestry Commission.”

Some clarification was required of the 5m<sup>3</sup> – the volume excludes brash, lop and top. Coppicing has been specified in the plan and would require a license when not specified, where diameters are greater than 10m<sup>3</sup> and volume greater than 5m<sup>3</sup>. It was suggested that reference be made to the Forestry Commission 'Tree Felling, getting permission' booklet.

**NR to redraft in the light of comments from the Task Group.**

## **6. Forestry Commission Updates:**

Appropriate Assessment (AA) for the Sefton Coast Woodland Forest Plan – original AA was for a period of one year only. Tim Oliver took this to Forest Research when Gordon Adam moved on, but there has been no further progress. Technically, the SCW Forest Plan, SSSI and SAC Consent from Natural England (formerly EN) has expired. Need to progress this with Conservation Officers of Natural England, FC, Richard Topley and someone from Forest Research. AA as an interim measure precluded re-planting/planting within 100m of a dune slack.

**RT to follow up this action.**

Felling Licence demands the maintenance of the recording system in order to keep on top of monitoring/sign off on a year by year basis. Richard Topley proposed that he develop an annual visit schedule to owners to inspect work and to support them to progress with their respective parts of the woodland programme. This was welcomed by members of the Task Group.

**RT to arrange visits.**

Woodland Grant (EWGS) from 1<sup>st</sup> June – New round of applications invited for WIG, Management Grant, Wood creation, Regeneration - Grant valid for 2 year period.

Red Band Needle Blight – RT highlighted the characteristics of this pathogen and drew attention to the earlier advice that no re-stocking with Corsican pine is advised on affected sites. This has now been relaxed – as it is less likely to be a problem in coastal areas (with better air flows within compartments).

NR informed the group that opportunities for ICEP funding have been extended and new grant applications may still be possible

## **7. Forest Plan Review:**

a) Deadline for articles for Forum Newsletter by 25<sup>th</sup> May to NR please;

**Action all group members.**

b) Blog – going to be based on the summary of results of Yrs 1 to 4 of Forest Plan (circulated). It will be important to make it clear that, at this stage, the evaluation of the SCWFP is in the context of the agreed short term objectives and how the actual activities have contributed to achieving the objectives. There a few items that have come to light, such as fire risk reduction strategy and education, which have been added into the review that were not in the original Forest Plan document.

c) Schools Blog – potential to be an excellent educational resource – but will only be taken forward if it generates feedback into the review. To be discussed with Fiona Sunners, Sally Orritt and Sally-Ann Tatlock of Lifelong Learning Task Group.

**NR to raise as an agenda item with Chair, Rachel Northover.**

d) 13<sup>th</sup> June Open Meeting drop-in at St Lukes –

**Owners to contribute displays on their achievements and to be present on the day.**

e) SCP Forum – similar approach to 13<sup>th</sup> June consultation event at St Lukes Church – there are 2 sessions in the afternoon, which will mean that owners will have to display and answer questions in both sessions.

f) The other, complementary, activities are listed in the attached schedule.

g) Presentations to Area Committees/Parish Councils and Civic Societies have been offered by NR – awaiting dates and confirmation from the various organisations.

Discussion followed regarding involvement of the various Golf Courses in the review events. It was suggested that a joint display with golf and nature as the theme.

**NR to look into coordinating a display.**

### **8. Owner Updates:**

National Trust – updated the Group on re-scheduling – copies of letter submitted by AB circulated and attached.

Natural England – some reduction in funding is inevitable, AK set out the consequences.

Sefton Coast and Countryside – no planting took place in the spring at Sands Lake due to the dry spell, so the area will be planted in the autumn.

RFCA – thinning completed in compartments 23b, 24c, 24a and b and 24u. Scottish Power has cleared under cables in 24n. RFCA is 100 years old this year, so is proposing to plant a small area of new woodland (500 trees) in November using the compensation from Scottish Power to fund the work.

### **9. Any Other Business:**

Fire Plan – it was noted that this was not completed due to capacity issues during the industrial action affecting Merseyside Fires and Rescue Service last Autumn. There is a need to re-establish contact with MF&RS

NR passed on the news that following the visit by HLF, the Landscape Partnership bid looks likely to proceed.

Nature Conservation Strategy – due, very shortly, to go to the next stage of the consultation process. It is likely that the Task group will be expected to respond, but now are not meeting until September and do need an opportunity to meet to consider implications before taking a position. It was agreed that the Task Group cannot consider the draft before the SCP Forum meeting in July and that this should be conveyed to the Sefton Coast Partnership Board Meeting.

**NR to report to the Board**

Task Group extended thanks to RFCA for their hospitality. Suggested that the next meeting could be held at new offices at Ainsdale Sand Dunes NNR, Natural England

### **Date of next meeting**

**Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2pm at the new offices, Ainsdale Sand Dunes NNR**