

Environmental Working Group Meeting

MINUTES

Date: Thursday 5th May 2005
Location: English Nature, Exeter
Time: 10.00 am

Co-ordinator: Angela Proctor
Tel: 01392 440722
Chair: Gerry Hamersley

Present

Gerry Hamersley - Chair (English Nature), Phil Tolerton (RDS), Tim Brooks (FWAG), Charles Routh (GOSW), Mark Robins (RSPB), David Dixon (SW Protected Landscapes Forum), Alex Raeder (National Trust), Richard Partington (Countryside Agency), David Crabb (Defra).

Apologies

Simon Brenman (SW Wildlife Trusts), Ian Morrison (English Heritage), Jenni Bashford (Environment Agency), Christine Goodall (Countryside Agency), Steve Colderick (Forestry Commission), Julia Proctor (National Trust), Diana Mompoloki (RDA).

In Attendance

Angela Proctor (SW CoRE - secretariat)

1. Actions from last meeting

Action 2 - The EWG has been joined by Tim Brooks, who has replaced John Sheaves as SW Regional Manager of FWAG.

John Sheaves is to be approached and asked to remain on the EWG. **Action: GH**

Action 3 – No progress has been made with filling in the Actions Framework document with related partner activity.

Action 4 – GH still to draft covering letter and send out Environmental Priorities via SW CoRE.

Action 12 – EWG secretariat now provided by SW CoRE.

2. Project updates

Farming & Birds

A joint RSPB and RDS Farming & Birds event was held in March, attended by more than 150 advisors to farmers. Due to the success of the event publicity has started for a second event to be held in December 2005.

Put together actions and ideas that have been drawn from the Farming & Birds event, in order to keep the good working going. **Action: MR**

Improved Grasslands

This project is live and will run over the next year in response to the SFF Delivery Plan. The project is run by Exeter University and is steered by a small group.

A proposal to trial and test pastoral systems will be put forward at the Summit event in February 2006.

Environmental Economy

Two bids have been submitted but neither have been accepted, due to a lack of deliverables. The Environmental Economy components need to be broken down and made more specific and spread across the SFF Delivery Plan, to try and take the topic forward and win the bid. A meeting with Diana Mompoloki of RDA is essential, in order to help steer the topic and ensure it is capable of winning a bid. **Action: GH and RP**

An Environmental Economy Development Group, made up of organisations such as GOSW and RDS, could be set up to encourage activity. Approach Tim Render of Rural Development Framework regarding development of such a group. **Action: GH**

It may be more appropriate for Gerry Hamersley or Julian Hosking to become Topic Lead for the Environmental Economy topic, rather than Mark Robins, due to his involvement in other topics. The Countryside Agency may be able to provide funding for the topic this year, if it can be proven to be beneficial.

3. Project proposals & discussion

The RDS has been commissioned to write up the papers that will be submitted for the Livestock Grazing bid (£60k) and there will be a Grazing Enhancement Group (GREG) meeting in early June. It is fundamental to sustain grazing in the south west region but the single payment scheme is likely to change grazing practices. Julian Hosking welcomes input from the EWG regarding the bid and it would be beneficial if it was supported by an organisation such as the NFU.

The proposal needs to be refined soon, in order to meet the pending bid deadline. A clear set of objectives are needed and the bid must be realistic. Funding for some aspects of the project may have to be sought elsewhere. EWG endorsed the project subject to the above clarification and recommended Phil Tolerton and Julian Hosking put in a formal submission to RDA to follow up the expression of interest already registered.

Hill Farm Allowance (HFA) money could potentially be used to fund aspects of the project, this should be investigated further. **Action: PT with Julian Hosking**

4. Demonstration Farms (David Crabb, Defra)

Farm demonstration activities funded last year:

1. Single Payment Scheme (SPS) seminars
2. Diffuse pollution
3. Farmer collaboration
4. Farm buildings: options for owners
5. Compilation of database for demonstration farms by ADAS, including gap analysis

A further £150-200k is available for farm demonstrations in the region this year. These are likely to include further pollution events and the introduction of climate change events, for example, production of alternative crops. There is currently five times more activity in the south west than in other regions and David Crabb is trying to secure increased funding for the region.

Defra contracts and projects include:

1. Environment sensitive farming
2. Conservation advice
3. Cross compliance
4. Farm Business Advice
5. Encouraging farmers to add value to produce, by entering the food chain

Demonstration farm data is accessible through the live database, which is in the process of being integrated with the Rural Enterprise Gateway (REG). To ensure the demonstration activities are effective and worthwhile David Crabb is assessing on a

regional and national level. It would be beneficial if the EWG could help to drive the agenda forward, rather than it relying solely on Defra. The EWG can become involved by determining how the farm demonstration program fits in with EWG objectives and assessing where gaps in the work program exist. **Action: All**

5. Input to REG training

It would be very useful for the EWG to approach the REG regarding a program of environment based training for Gateway staff. An ongoing program of training would be more beneficial than a single day slot. **Action: DD**

6. Revision of SFF Delivery Plan, opportunities & EWG task

The planned revision of the SFF Delivery Plan will give the EWG the opportunity to introduce the environment theme into the rest of the topics. The existing environment topics could also be better structured, excluding the Environmental Management topic which has been very successful. A task group should be created to formulate suggested revisions on environmental matters in time for the autumn. **Action: GH**

7. Environmental theme/topic reporting & action framework

Insufficient EWG work is being documented in the SW CoRE regional reports, although the principal of the report is good, flagging up areas of concern or progress. It may be useful to have a slot in each EWG meeting agenda in which areas are flagged up that have/haven't seen progress, regarding the Delivery Plan topics. It is important for all work to be included in the report, within reason.

The EWG Action Framework requires completing and updating, in order to ensure all projects are documented. **Action 3: All**

8. EWG web page

An EWG page is to be set up on the SW CoRE website. All relevant information and documents will be posted, for example, meeting minutes and papers. The web page will be a good tool for the EWG to keep track of activities. **Action: AP with DD**

9. EWG & SWBIP agriculture group merger proposal

The EWG and SWBIP group (Biodiversity Implementation Plan) have approximately 50% of the same members. Therefore, it would be beneficial to merge these groups, in order to reduce duplication of work and outcomes and reduce time and money required. A new and more meaningful name for this group would be required, *South West Environment, Farming & Food Group* has been suggested and agreed.

Gerry Hamersley will discuss SWBIP group membership transfer to EWG with Heather Sohl. The NFU and CLA should also be approached and asked to be involved in this group. **Action: GH**

10. Any other business

Produce a table which outlines forward looking aims and ideas for projects. These aims/projects should be realistic and not too aspirational. **Action: GH**

AONB's are likely to receive a development fund of £80k each over the next three years, however, this money is not being matched.

Meeting dates

Friday 8th July, English Nature, Exeter, 10am – 1pm.

Thursday 29th September, English Nature, Exeter (time to be confirmed).

South West Environment, Farming & Food Group

ACTIONS

No.	Detail	Issue Date	By Whom	Due Date
3	Fill in action framework table with related partner activities	7Feb05	All	20June05
4	Send out Environmental Priorities via SW CoRE	7Feb05	GH	27May05
8	Schedule a Research Priorities Workshop for EWG	7Feb05	GH	Sep05
13	Approach John Sheaves with regards to remaining on EWG	5May05	GH	3Jun05
14	Collate actions and ideas drawn from Farming & Birds event	5May05	MR	July05
15	Meeting with Diana Mompoloki regarding Environmental Economy topic	5May05	GH & RP	24June05
16	Approach Tim Render (RDF) regarding Environmental Economy Development Group	5May05	GH	24June05
17	Investigate potential sources of funding	5May05	PT & DD	July05
18	Assess gaps in farm demonstration program	5May05	All	May05
19	Approach REG regarding environment training for Gateway staff	5May05	DD	24June05
20	Determine how environment theme should be structured for Delivery Plan revision	5May05	GH	July05
21	Develop EWG web page	5May05	AP with DD	June05
22	Approach NFU/CLA regarding involvement with SWEFF group	5May05	GH	24June05
23	Produce table of aims/projects	5May05	GH	24June05