

WENP Board Meeting

Teleconference // 16 March 2020 // 14:00 – 17:00

Items

SGr welcomed attendees to the meeting, which was held via teleconference due to the Covid-19 outbreak. SGr requested any comments on the draft minutes from the December Board meeting. As no comments were received, the minutes were approved and are now available on the WENP website ([click here](#) to view).

SGa provided an overview of the actions from the previous meeting – a list of open actions can be found at the end of the document.

1. Work Programme update and ToRs

The Board approved the updated versions of the Terms of Reference (ToRs) that were distributed ahead of the meeting, reflecting the expanded membership to include representatives from Bristol Water and the National Farmers Union (NFU).

Post-meeting note: The updated version of the [ToRs](#) have now been published on the WENP website.

2. Agriculture and the Nature Recovery Network

2.1 Presentation from NFU

PC (NFU) presented on ‘The Future for UK Agriculture and potential for Nature Recovery Networks’. The slides from the presentation can be found within the [Board meeting slides](#) (slides 6 – 25). PC explained that the aspiration is for Nature Recovery Networks (NRNs) to influence Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes in targeting and coordinating delivery; the mapping behind NRNs will therefore incentivise certain ELMs options through a scoring approach for payments.

The Board agreed that it would be useful to set up a Working Group to discuss the role of agriculture in the NRN. This group would need to discuss, inter alia:

- How to consider and meet the values and drivers of farmers (which can be split into regulation and contracts, personal and cultural goals, and financial drivers);
- The role of farm clusters in achieving the NRN;
- Farm viability;
- The tools available to enable agriculture to contribute towards the NRN; and
- The role of blended funding in agriculture’s contribution towards the NRN.

AH enquired as to NFUs’ views on farm viability and whether all land currently under production should remain so. PC replied that the NFU recognises that land has to deliver multiple priorities, although the best quality agricultural land should remain in production. Food security and productivity doesn't always mean



producing more food or using more land; it may mean doing things more effectively and delivering multiple benefits at the same time.

RC asked PC if there was any further information on ELM Scheme pilots, as there may be scope within the WoE to put forward new pilots based on, for example, hotspots in the NRN. PC replied that the majority of the schemes were in Devon, but that DEFRA may have more information. IB noted that he was supportive of taking lessons from other areas, as the WoE won't be at the forefront of ELM Schemes trials.

[ActionMar20/01: SGa to coordinate the setting up of an Agriculture and Nature Recovery Network Working Group.](#)

[ActionMar20/02: PC to send SGa list of ELMs trials so that it can be circulated to Board Members.](#)

3. PhD Proposal and Hope Spots

3.1 Occupancy modelling PhD Proposal

SGa provided an overview of the updated proposal for a funded partnership PhD to utilise occupancy modelling to estimate robust distribution trends from opportunistic data, such as the ecological records held by BRERC, which now included justification for a PhD to achieve this work. The justification centred around the cost-effectiveness and added value that a PhD would provide compared to, for example, tendering the work to consultants. The details of this proposal and justification were outlined in a pre-meeting distribution paper sent to Board members.

MM suggested that the work should form part of the conversation on environmental data within the West of England. IB replied that the need to monitor species distribution and abundance had been recognised for years and that this was a cost-effective solution to the problem. LA agreed to input the proposal into WECA's conversations on environmental data, as it could fit within the interpretation and analysis end of environmental data and provide a means of monitoring the success of interventions. The proposal could be reviewed and an answer brought back to Board members rapidly.

[ActionMar20/03: LA to feed PhD Proposal into WECA work on environmental data, and bring back to Board Members \(before the next meeting of the Board\)](#)

[ActionMar20/04: SGa to take PhD Proposal to future LA ecologist meeting](#)

3.2 Hope Spots

SGa presented the Friends of the Earth (FoE) concept of '[Hope Spots](#)' to be Board, which aims to use a local mapping tool to identify spaces where land use could be transformed to create space for nature, engage communities and sequester carbon. It was explained that FoE had met with SGa and Avon Wildlife Trust to discuss Hope Spots, and that FoE would like to test the concept within the West of England given the mapping that has already been done in the region, which would require resources. An information paper on Hope Spots had been distributed to Board Members ahead of the meeting.

The Board agreed that this was not a priority piece of work for supporting financially at this point in time.



4. West of England Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy update

LA updated Board members on the West of England Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy (JGIS): the presentation can be found on slides 33-39 of the [Board meeting slides](#).

It was explained that a final draft of the JGIS had been completed and that the sign off process was underway – the document will be sent to all WENP Board members after sign-off at the West of England Directors meeting on the 26th March, for endorsement by WENP. Discussions are ongoing to ensure that resources are in place for implementation of Strategy, including further discussion on joint working regarding the natural environment (e.g. partnerships, resource and shared environment data).

Additionally, a number of pilot studies and commissions related to the JGIS are ongoing, including the WoE Biodiversity Net Gain project; the WoE Natural Capital Account (led by the Environment Agency); and delivery of the Natural England National Framework GI Standards Pilot in the WoE.

LA noted that comments on the GI Action Plan would be most useful at this stage; a meeting of the Chairs of WENP, BACP and LEP is planned to discuss details of the Action Plan.

[ActionMar20/05: LA to share Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy with WENP Board after approval at Board of Directors](#)

5. Tree & Woodland Strategy

5.1 Principles and proposed approach to Strategy

SGa updated Board Members on the work of the West of England Tree and Woodland (T&W) Strategy Working Group. At the second meeting of the WG in February:

- It was agreed that the draft Tree & Woodland principles would be commented on and finalised; and
- There was support for a Community Forest approach, as suggested by the Forest of Avon (FoA) Trust, to coordinate a Tree and Woodland Strategy.

The Working Group decided to request the FoA Trust to produce a brief of work for creating a Tree and Woodland Strategy for the West of England, in the form of an updated Forest of Avon Plan. SGa explained that the FoA Trust had since produced such a brief, which would be shared with Board Members post-meeting.

RK stated that the Woodland Trust were supportive of this approach, and that there was a possibility of involving the Woodland Trust and the Forestry Commission in funding the proposed approach. RK also noted the importance of ensuring the Strategy links in with the Nature Recovery Network and the GI Strategy (in which it is referenced).

It was agreed that, once comments had been received from the T&W Strategy Working Group, SGa would send around the updated draft WoE Principles for Trees and Woodland to Board Members for comment.

[ActionMar20/06: SGa to send updated draft WoE Principles for Trees and Woodland to Board Members for comment](#)



ActionMar20/07: SGa to send Forest of Avon Trust Community Forest proposal to WENP Board members

ActionMar20/08: SGa to follow up potential funding for proposed Forest of Avon Trust work with Woodland Trust and Forestry Commission

5.2 Delivery Mechanism

SGa outlined the proposed approach to a delivery mechanism, as outlined in the pre-meeting paper distributed to members – slide 44 of the [Board meeting slides](#) sets out the proposed approach in a diagrammatic format. SGa added that EnTrade, a platform for matching demand and supply via reverse auctions, had reached out to meet WECA regarding the use of the platform for tree and woodland delivery in the West of England. Board Members were requested to share their views on the proposed approach and the potential use of EnTrade.

PC explained that farmers had used EnTrade in nutrient trading, with farmers as the ‘suppliers’, and might be interested in using the platform for such an approach. PC added that there was a role for an area-based cooperative to bring demand for trees and woodland together, but that there was a need to combine this with an entrepreneurial approach from landowners.

RB noted that it would still be necessary to have groups of buyers and sellers, and to build relationships: EnTrade is a mechanism for enabling the matching of demand and supply, rather than being mutually exclusive with the idea of setting up a Community Interest Company (CIC) to act as a demand aggregator.

MM observed that FWAG SW might be a useful organisation to engage with as they have used reverse auctions through NatureBid. PC added that FWAG would be a good forum to present such a mechanism to landowners.

SGr concluded that there was enthusiasm among Board Members for exploring this work further, and that a next step should be to talk to FWAG about the use of reverse auctioning.

ActionMar20/09: SGa to explore use of reverse auctioning with the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) South West

6. Nature and Health

SGa updated members on WENP’s work on nature and health, led by the Nature and Health Strategy Group:

- The four Directors of Public Health (DsPH) in the West of England, plus the Director of Public Health in Wiltshire, have contributed £1,000 each (totalling £5,000) towards WENP’s work on nature and health, and there is a carryover of around £2,600 from last year’s funding from the Academic Health and Science Network (AHSN) for the work on Hyvr.
- Michéal Connors (Natural Academy) is coordinating a nature and health consortium bid on behalf of the WENP Nature and Health Strategy Group – an information paper on this was sent to the Board ahead of the meeting.
- It was originally planned to hold a Nature and Health conference in June, but this has been postponed indefinitely due to the impact of Covid-19.



- The Practitioner Network has secured funding for the remainder of the year (through funding from the DsPH and the AHSN carryover, as set out above). The meeting in March will be held via teleconference, and a draft website for Practitioners has been developed.

7. Away Day and Conference

The WENP Away Day was originally planned to be held on 29th April at Yeo Valley Farm, but this has now been cancelled due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

The WENP conference was planned for September, but that will also need to be postponed due to the uncertainty in the evolution of the situation regarding Covid-19. It was agreed to monitor the situation and potentially look to hold the conference later on in the year if feasible.

8. Partner updates

RB proposed an update on the Somer Valley social prescribing project at the next meeting of the Board.

MM informed the meeting that Shelly Dewhurst had started as the manager of the [Water Space project](#) and suggested an update on this project at the next meeting.

9. Any Other Business

SGa explained that he was working to coordinate a joint letter from the relevant LNPs and Wildlife Trusts to the Chair of the [Western Gateway](#) initiative, raising the importance of the natural environment in the area and inviting engagement; a draft version letter will be sent to WENP Board Members before being finalised.

SGa also informed members of the [BIFFA Award's Partnership Grants Scheme](#), which is looking for online Expressions of Interest for funding between £250,000 and £750,000 for large-scale projects of regional or national significance in the themes Natural Environment or Built Environment. The Natural Environment theme aims to restore or improve the environment and the natural systems or habitats that support it; projects must be working to Biodiversity 2020, its successor, or a Local BAP target. RE opined that this was an opportunity worth looking at, although local government organisations were not able to access the funding.

The next meeting of the Board will be held on 24th June 2020 (likely via teleconference due to Covid-19).

Attendance

Attendees

Selena Gray (Chair) – SGr	West of England Nature Partnership
Ian Barrett – IB	Avon Wildlife Trust
Richard Cresswell – RC	Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership
Richard Ennion – RE	Bristol City Council
Mark Minkley – MM	Bath & North East Somerset Council
Andy Hicklin – AH	Environment Agency
Simon Stonehouse – SS	Natural England
Savita Wilmott - SV	Natural History Consortium
Paul Cottingham – PC	National Farmers Union
David Villis – DV	South Gloucestershire Council
Ruth Barden – RB	Wessex Water
Laura Ambler – LA	West of England Combined Authority / LEP
Ross Kennerley – RK	Woodland Trust
Stuart Gardner – SGa	West of England Nature Partnership
Sarah Jackson – SJ	West of England Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy Project Manager

Apologies

Sally Hogg	Bristol City Council (representing Directors of Public Health)
Marion Steiner	Bristol, North Somerset & South Gloucestershire CCG
Natasha Clarke	Bristol Water
Russell Ashfield	National Trust
Tom Boden	National Trust
Claire Newill	Natural England
John Flannigan	North Somerset Council
Brian Glasson	South Gloucestershire Council (representing Heads of Planning)

Actions

Action	Description	Lead(s)	Status
ActionDec19/01	SGa to contact Highways England regarding WENP membership	SGa	Open
ActionDec19/08	BG and LA to take proposal for a Woodland Delivery Mechanism to Board of Directors	BG/LA	Open
ActionMar20/01	SGa to set up an Agriculture and NRN Working Group	SGa	Open
ActionMar20/02	PC to send SGa list of ELMs trials so that it can be circulated to Board Members	PC	Open
ActionMar20/03	LA to feed PhD Proposal into WECA work on environmental data, and bring back to Board Members (before the next meeting of the Board)	LA	Open
ActionMar20/04	SGa to take PhD Proposal to future LA ecologist meeting	SGa	Open
ActionMar20/05	LA to share Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy with WENP Board after approval at Board of Directors	LA	Open
ActionMar20/06	SGa to send updated draft WoE Principles for Trees and Woodland to Board Members for comment	SGa	Open
ActionMar20/07	SGa to send Forest of Avon Trust Community Forest proposal to WENP Board members	SGa	Open
ActionMar20/08	SGa to follow up potential funding for proposed Forest of Avon Trust work with Woodland Trust and Forestry Commission	SGa	Open
ActionMar20/09	SGa to explore use of reverse auctioning with the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) South West	SGa	Open