

Forestry and Woodlands Advisory Committees

Annual Report, 2017 - 2018

June 2018

A report co-authored by the nine Forestry and Woodlands Advisory Committee Chairs

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I have always felt the living presence
of trees
the forest that calls to me as deeply
as I breathe,
as though the woods were marrow of my bone
as though
I myself were tree, a breathing, reaching
arc of the larger canopy
beside a brook bubbling to foam
like the one
deep in these woods,
that calls
that whispers home

Michael S. Glaser

About this report

This report summarises the work of the nine Forestry and Woodlands Advisory Committees (FWACs or Committees) from April 2017 to March 2018. The Committees are required to provide a joint report annually which describes the business highlights against the founding FWAC principles set out in 2013 as follows:

- Champion forestry interests and partnership working at local level for woodland resilience and sector development, providing independent insight into local needs and priorities.
- Provide advice on the application of national policies into local programmes, and help feed local priorities into national programmes.
- Support the Government’s interests by developing strong local connections and networks to enhance synergies across the diverse forest and woodland sector, including the public forest estate.
- Conciliate in disputed applications for grant aid, felling licences, or approval of forest plans where there is a sustained objection by a statutory body.

Committee members made significant contributions to this report, through agreeing contributing reports and preparing copy.

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Thank you to all those who have provided photographs relating to the various activities, and to Mr. Bob Richards from Hawling who provided the rest and excellent they are too.

Introduction

This report is the collective effort of the nine Committees and the Urban FWAC Network over the course of the year from April 2017 to March 2018. Building on the previous FWAC Annual Reports, this report addresses items using the same key themes as well highlighting the work, achievements and actions of the Committees.

The Committee members contribute to a large number of wider networks advocating the interests of the forestry sector and bring together professional knowledge and experience to bear in the regular meetings.

In 2017/18 the Chairs and members met with leaders and officers of the Forestry Commission and Defra and (via the Forestry Forum and other routes) the Forestry Minister.

The Chairs have just one change from last year. In the South West, Mike Moser has stepped down after many years of great service, as a member and then as Chair of SW FWAC. This committee is fortunate to now have John Wilding as its chair.

Membership on each committee principally represent three perspectives of the forestry community:

- Social, Access and Environment (4)
- Local community, Economy and Government (4)
- Forestry industry and Land Ownership (1)

The FWAC Urban Network is chaired by Jane Carlsen and includes representatives from across the 9 Committees.



Trees in urban spaces provide multiple benefits to communities



Forestry contributing to our health, the environment& economy

Executive Summary

This is the fourth published annual report from the nine Forestry and Woodlands Advisory Committee Chairs and builds on the themes and key areas of the 2017 report. Without doubt the last 12 months has provided real challenge but also opportunity. The publication of the much awaited 25 Year Environment Plan accompanied by other measures has brought real recognition of the importance of trees, woodlands and forests in delivering national plans and providing a safe, healthy and sustainable environment.

The FWACs have welcomed the opportunity to be a key part in the various discussions leading up to the plan and afterwards. The need for a local voice has never been greater and FWACs provide an excellent and crucial vehicle for this.

This report reflects the business of the individual FWACs, their priorities and individual plans. It looks at how each is addressing the key priorities of Protect, Improve and Expand along with some excellent examples of research, development, delivery and strategy to inspire and excite in the years ahead.

From Last Year

Last year's report highlighted administrative issues with Countryside Stewardship and the associated programmes acting as a barrier to the opportunities they offered. In that regard we welcome recent statements from Defra to seek to reform the programme of support and make it far simpler and easier to administer and more fit for purpose. The FWACs will continue to provide support to make these programmes work to best advantage.

The 2016 report also referred to the precarious situation facing the community forests as local authorities withdraw their core support. A Health Check led by the FWACs identified this in some detail and confirmed the view. The FWACs agreed with Defra and the Community Forest sector to undertake a business plan into new and innovative approaches to funding the sector long term. Building upon this, work has continued under the leadership of the chairman of the NW FWAC to develop an innovative approach to providing core funding so as to ensure at least the existing network of community forests can not only survive but provide the vehicle for delivery required in going forward.

In January 2017 Woodland Trust and the four Northern Community Forests started a collaboration to develop a prospectus and business plan for a new Northern Forest - a long term visionary plan to support the Northern Powerhouse and deliver 50m trees over the next 25 years. This work continues and offers a truly exciting opportunity.

The FWACs sought to work closely with Defra and FC to help determine the future of FWACs and their role in forestry policy and management. This has taken place and FWACs have certainly had influence in the final outcomes.

Core issues from current year

Reading through the activity reports from all the FWACs what comes clear is the essential nature of their work. They provide a local voice and viewpoint bringing forward thoughts and ideas as well as being a critical friend to both the Forestry Commission and DEFRA.

Tree health is a common issue discussed and monitored by all the FWACs. They provide a very good mechanism of communication to forest and woodland managers as well as the general public.

The reports also highlight the real benefits to all of close working with Forest Enterprise. A number of FWACs have undertaken joint working with them this year which has proved highly productive and beneficial.

Many FWAC discussions have focused on these benefits in terms of health, environment, community, economically and so much more. That this is acknowledged in the recently published 25 Year Plan is very much welcomed

It is impressive to read how many FWAC members are bringing their experience and expertise to sub

committees and external groups acting as ambassadors for trees, woodland and forestry and helping shape policy in a local context within national agendas.

In terms of woodland creation, it is good to see that all the FWACs are contributing to this agenda looking at opportunity mapping and helping identify potential areas for woodland creation. These are times of change, challenge and opportunity and important times to have a strong local view and voice. FWACs through their activities very much fulfil that role.

Looking Ahead

2019 marks the centenary of the Forestry Act which brought the Commission into being but also set the framework for modern forestry. The centenary is important and offers real opportunity to celebrate success and emphasise the importance and multiple benefits to be derived from trees whether singular, in woodlands or forests.

The FWACs look forward to supporting the implementation of a 25 Year Framework and Plan for the Environment and will strongly make the case for a productive woodland and forestry sector providing multi benefits

Reports from across the FWACs

The last 12 months have been extremely busy for everyone involved in forestry and woodlands. It has been a time of change and challenge but also opportunity and the FWACs continue to provide an invaluable role providing a local context to policy and operational matters and seeking to directly assist Forestry Commission and Government in all its forestry work. This section provides a report from each FWAC Chair on highlights from their activity within their committees during the year.



FROM THE EAST OF ENGLAND

Protect, Improve, Expand

Ash dieback was first discovered “in the wild” in the East of England in 2012, and its impacts in both young and mature ash trees is now common place. The debate has moved on from how to reduce the spread of the fungus to how to manage woodland with disease; it has become a mainstream silvicultural decision.

In autumn 2017 the East England Committee met in the internationally renowned Bradfield Woods in Suffolk to learn how the landowners - the Suffolk Wildlife Trust - were managing their woods, and to hear from Professor Rob Fuller, recently retired Director of Science of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and a RAC (FWAC) member from 2004 - 2014.

Professor Fuller has used Bradfield woods for his scientific research since 1987. His last published report for the BTO, “Management Responses to Ash Dieback in woodland: implications for woodland structure and resources for biodiversity” looked particularly on the impact of coppicing. Over 80% of coppiced ash stools in Bradfield have died within 3 or 4 years. This has profound implications for the use of coppicing as a silvicultural technique. In Bradfield the Trust has continued because the temporary open space is more important for biodiversity than the trees per se, but a number of potential seed trees and relic veterans are being retained uncoppiced in hope they can continue to provide a genetic resource for the future.

The East continues to be an “outdoor laboratory” for the study of ash dieback (many of the funded research projects on ash provenance choice and genetic tolerance to the disease take place here) and the FWAC are keen to engage with Committees further west if they are interested to see the impact of this disease.

Reflecting the importance Government and the Forestry Commission place on the expansion of England’s woodland, the East England FWAC met at the Forest of Marston Vale Community Forest in the spring of 2018 to look at woodland creation exemplars and discuss novel approaches to encouraging landowners to plant more trees.

Members were guided around a site near Cranfield, south of Bedford, by Forestry Director and FWAC member James Russell accompanied by FC Woodland Officer Richard Pearce.

Discussions *en route* produced a number of ideas for encouraging and increasing woodland creation.

These included:

- The importance of skilled and knowledgeable people on the ground able to provide hands on advice and encouragement to landowners
- The need for collective action/vision across the different agencies.
- The importance of continuity, consistency and certainty; both of policy and funding.
- The need to remain opportunist: having too much targeting or focus leads to missed opportunities
- Trees are a key part of the answer to improving water quality, mitigating flood risk, increasing biodiversity and diversifying a revenue stream. They should be credited with this importance in policy and funding.
- Focus on housing growth - Section 106 agreements and Community Infrastructure Levies can influence planners and developers. The challenge is the small developer will only do it if pushed.
- Developer models costed early, in order to influence early in the planning process.
- Focus on a global approach with benefits to all stakeholders



Visit to Marston Vale

FROM THE EAST OF ENGLAND

Advocate and champion – (including FWAC expertise and challenge)

The East England FWAC has taken an active role in helping shape the local relationship of the “Defra Group” and, jointly with the East Midlands FWAC, engaged senior managers of Natural England and Environment Agency to help plot a roadmap of engagement.

The Defra Group have been working innovatively locally for over 10 years, working in partnership with Local Authorities, businesses and communities. There are now challenges and opportunities such as the Clean Growth Strategy and the 25 Year Environment Strategy, and the FWAC is well placed to help advocate and champion new approaches.

Members thought that phenomenal work could be achieved to greater public benefit with investment in the right areas, and the “Area Integrated Plans” are a useful approach to targeting this activity. Dialogue now needs to take place with other organisations to widen collaboration to help meet the priorities. There is a specific opportunity to engage with the Local Enterprise Partnerships in the writing of their new economic strategies.

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Some omissions were identified of concern to the FWACs, including more widespread deer management (there have been very positive results of partnership work with the Deer Initiative), and the lack of mention of the historic environment; Historic England is not part of the Defra family. There were concerns about the level of investment supporting the ambition and Members had concerns for the white spaces on the maps and any opportunities which might be missed in those areas.

The FWACs were particularly keen to encourage secondments and job shadowing opportunities within the Defra Group. This is particularly important for the FC who are spread so thinly on the ground.

The internal overlay of the 3 organisations (NE, FC, EA) works well, but the Committee’s suggestion is to bring in all the other partners which represent the thinking behind the 25 Year Environment Plan. A blank sheet and pooled resources could encourage radically different way of working.

FWAC business agendas forward look

- Continue to support FE on strategic issues, including active engagement on local planning issues
- Actively engage in delivery of the 25 Year Environment Plan
- Work with regional and local partners in celebrating the Forestry Act Centenary and support the FC national programme
- Forestry and woodland support programmes post Brexit



In Bradfield Woods

FROM THE EAST MIDLANDS

Protect, Improve, Expand

EM FWAC took stock of the current situation on tree health given the growing number of threats to trees and the vulnerable location of the East Midlands as ash dieback moves westward across the country, acknowledging the increased capacity and expertise within the FC in response to the growth of concern over tree diseases and their impact on forest resilience.

EM FWAC members also debated the orthodoxy of current approaches to planting and management of ash based on their varied experiences.

We revisited the exemplar of the National Forest, 30 years since the idea was first mooted and more than 25 years since the location was selected, to explore lessons on how to stimulate flagging woodland creation rates.

The FWAC noted that sustained investment, simple and attractive schemes of support with rolling windows for applications, finding ways of making the planting of small woods practicable, testing of new schemes like the HS2 Fund, keeping agents acting on behalf of owners in the loop, good leadership and flexibility of options of support to meet different landowner motivations were transferable lessons beyond the Forest itself.

More broadly, it was noted that demonstration of the relevance of woodland creation to other government policy areas via proposals such as Health and Harmony - the future for food, farming and the environment in a green Brexit, was necessary to support wider interest in and action on woodland creation.

Advocate and champion – (including FWAC expertise and challenge)

The EM FWAC has advocated for some time the importance of the FWAC network in supporting not just Forestry Commission Forest Services but also Forest Enterprise England.

In response to this and in order to clarify how this will work in practice given the varying experiences of FWACS across the country, the Chief Executive of FEE agreed to develop a more explicit national protocol for the relationship between FEE and FWACs which was presented to the FWAC Chairs in May 2017 with a further update in November 2017.

The *modus operandi* will include supporting FEE in scoping more strategic planning matters rather than site-focused advice, regular FEE updates to FWAC meetings and annual opportunities for site visits to discuss such matters.

EM FWAC members have been actively promoting the significance of the Charter for Trees, launched at Lincoln Castle and Cathedral in November 2017 and encouraging FC to build on the public support and momentum of this initiative particular in the run up to the Forestry Commission’s centenary in 2019.

The East England FWAC has taken an active role in helping shape the local relationship of the “Defra Group” and, jointly with the East Midlands FWAC, engaged senior managers of Natural England and the Environment Agency to help plot a roadmap of engagement [see East of England report]



Visit & discussion at the National Forest

FROM THE EAST MIDLANDS

Cross Cutting Issues

With impeccable timing, the EM FWAC autumn 2017 meeting took place the day after the Ministerial statement on the future of the Forestry Commission. This confirmed the continued existence of a separate Forestry Commission. The meeting was attended by the Director of Forest Services Richard Greenhous, to whom EM FWAC were able to offer some immediate feedback.

As well as the feeling of relief and reduction of uncertainty, FWAC members fed back advice that branding will need to be carefully considered as will the planning of resourcing on cross border issues for key areas such as tree health.

FWAC business agendas forward look

- Conservation of ancient trees
- Management of woods for water quality/flood alleviation and integrated working with EA and NE
- Support for FEE on strategic planning issues
- Growing incidences of illegal felling
- Future design of woodland management and creation
- Funding schemes and forest business support post Brexit



Richard Greenhous meets the EM FWAC members

FROM LONDON

Protect, Improve, Expand

FWAC members contribute broadly to the agenda

Tree health has again been an important issue and the OPM strategic advisory group benefits from the lead of Colin Buttery as chair and other FWAC member input The Royal Parks with FWAC member Simon Richards gives support for OPM and other tree health issues - event hosting and collecting intelligence. LTOA liaison through David Houghton including biosecurity working group and surveillance on Plane wilt.

Woodland enterprises are taking an increased profile in London and FWAC members have been involved in supporting and developing the London Wood Enterprise Network. FWAC members have also engaged the support of the Greater London Authority (GLA) for London Wood Enterprise directory and factsheets

There has been close working with GLA team through Andrew Jones especially on woodland creation and tree planting - in terms of identifying opportunities, prospect liaison and support package offer

Woodland creation workshops have been held this year involving FWAC members and their organisations e.g. Woodland Trust, Trees for Cities, Greater London Authority

Advocate and champion – (including FWAC expertise and challenge)

FWAC members promoted and supported the London Tree & Woodland Awards 2017

A strong advocate of the urban forest amongst the architect / construction sector, Jo Gibbons, has instituted a series of talks and initiatives with wider Development industry

The FWAC has begun discussions about London involvement in FC centenary celebrations



Local growth agenda and Urban

Over the past year there has been much FWAC discussion and engagement in the development of response to the Mayor of London's London Environment Strategy (LES) and London Plan consultation documents.

FWAC members shared key messages to ensure they were consistently given and added weight, including:

- Support for Mayoral ambition of tree canopy cover increase
- London's urban forest identified as a golden thread through the LES, offering multiple benefits across multiple agendas (health, transport, air quality etc.)
- Need to consider protect & improve, not just expand
- Advocating the need for an urban forest plan to underpin the LES ambitions. The urban forest plan has now been embedded in the LES implementation plan as a specific activity.
- Identifying opportunities to enhance the green belt - including woodland creation - not just preventing development on it

FROM LONDON

Cross Cutting Issues

A joint meeting of the SE and London FWACs provided an opportunity for a broad discussion on 25 year Environment Plan and its ambitions

LFWAC summer visits and discussion engaged with developers on the use of trees benefiting developments, schemes to reuse timber and bringing social benefits around Elephant and Castle and Southwark. Visits to wood enterprises in south London led to further discussions about the development of the Woodland Enterprise network.

Both the Mayor’s London Plan and LES are cross cutting - see earlier comments on FWAC engagement

As an urban based group the FWAC has been closely engaged in discussion about urban forest data and evidence, including Kieron Doick’s work on tree canopy. Kieron is a Forestry Research staff member.

The FWAC has also contributed to discussions on ways to achieve the national 1 Million Urban Trees and FWAC members have had input to the urban forest manual.



FWAC business agendas forward look

- Woodland creation - challenges and opportunities
- Finalised London Plan & Environment Strategies - FWAC will be involved in wide ranging discussions on how they are taken forward & implemented

FROM THE NORTH EAST

Protect, Improve, Expand

Tree health once again has been high up the Forestry Commission’s workload in the region and several meetings of woodland owners were held. These were supported by the FWAC and proved very worthwhile for those woodland owners who attended, it was also an opportunity to underline the need for biosecurity using the ‘Keep it Clean’ initiative to keep the 1,000 potential pests and diseases at bay

The joint FWAC meeting with Yorkshire and Humber allowed us to visit Robson Spring Wood which is managed by the Woodland Trust. We were grateful to be given an excellent tour by Mark Feather and Gordon Pfetscher from the Woodland Trust.

The wood is demonstration woodland for PAWS restoration and active woodland management. The members discussed the different approaches to supporting PAWs restoration recognising the importance of managing light levels to ensure the ground flora can survive and flourish.

Members thought that phenomenal work could be achieved to greater public benefit with investment in the right areas, and the “Area Integrated Plans” are a useful approach to targeting this activity. Dialogue now needs to take place with other organisations to widen collaboration to help meet the priorities. There is a specific opportunity to engage with the Local Enterprise Partnerships in the writing of their new industrial strategies.

The discussion across the two FWAC’s concluded the following key points;

- Start conversations early and engage fully with stakeholders;
- Biodiversity, archaeology and cultural heritage can all be constraints to afforestation and need to be considered during the early planning phase;
- Welcomed the overall strategy which recognises the importance of priority habitats as key areas for biodiversity in England. There is however a need to consider their effective management;

There has been a lot of progress in the area of woodland creation, after a couple of years of lower interest in tree planting. There has been significant interest in the new planting at Doddington North Moor which will result in 600,000 trees being planted. The media picked up strongly on the Defra press release which highlighted “The Forestry Commission has approved planting at Doddington North Moor in Northumberland, England's

largest woodland planting scheme for 30 years” there has been a lot more projects coming forward, many of them of good scale responding to the increased types of funding. The scheme was also the first site to utilise Woodland Creation Planning Grant support and was also the first successful Woodland Carbon Fund application.

Being so close to Scotland our FWAC is aware of the higher planting rates and are pleased the North East is catching up. The FWAC was pleased to have helped spread the knowledge of the new schemes as well as helping feed their thoughts into the Environment 25 year plan. There is an ongoing appetite to engage with FC and Defra to help address the challenges and opportunities which will arise through Brexit.



A Tree Health Event

Advocate and champion – (including FWAC expertise and challenge)

There are several areas where the FWAC committee have been asked to act as advocate for the Forestry Commission including providing expert advice and challenge; last Summer a sub group was set up to review the Cheviot Forest Plan. This formed part of the formal approval process as a result of initial objections received from both Natural England and the Northumberland National Park Authority.

The sub group was able to review the process to make sure that all relevant facts had been appropriately considered and to provide advice and feedback on the approval process. The issues of restocking on peat and species mix, as well as wider landscape issues, were all considered during the review. There have been a number of interesting and challenging cases during 2017/18 and the Area Team has been working with National FC colleagues to help develop clearer guidance on issues such as afforestation on priority habitats. The NE FWAC provided feedback and advice on the proposals.

FROM THE NORTH EAST

Sir Harry Studholme visited the North East to see the new woodland creation site at Doddington before heading to Wallington Hall to be shown the excellent red squirrel conservation work being led by the National Trust with support from Red Squirrels Northern England. He also had the opportunity to visit Northumberland National Parks new Landscape Discovery Centre, The Sill.

Richard Greenhous also went through the changes that are happening across FC GB as devolution continues and the organisation adapts to the times we find ourselves. The committee appreciated the opportunity to give their opinions on these important issues.

The 800th anniversary of the tree charter was another opportunity for stakeholders to celebrate the many roles of trees in 2018

The MEP Paul Brannen led an excellent discussion in our latest FWAC about forestry in a European context but also in terms of how he is encouraging substantial planting close to urban areas as well as some ideas around stimulating new markets for timber through engineered wood and their potential use in construction including high rise. He was also keen to share some research on agroforestry which is timely given the changes of funding that Defra is consulting on.

Local growth agenda and Urban

Ross Weddle has represented the NE FWAC on the national urban FWAC network and the North East has seen some worrying trends with community backed trees and woodland with sanctions being taken against one local authority and another passing control of its parks to a Trust to run. The FWAC recognises the importance of the urban woodland resource and the need to work effectively with local authorities to share best practice through the urban forest vision and publications such as the one on urban canopies. The Government target of 1 million trees in our cities and the 11 million manifesto pledge target have been discussed and ways to help deliver these ambitions in the North East. The work done by the stakeholders in the North East to help develop the concept of opportunity mapping for woodland creation is seen as an important step forward in helping identify potential areas for woodland creation. However as Doddington North Moor has proved that it's critical that individual decisions on woodland creation are based on the evidence and information from the site and a clear understanding of the features of interest. Effective joint working across the Defra group is key in helping landowners and applicants understand the potential for change. Forest Enterprise Estate reviews have been very positive; the North East has a significant share of the

national forest and creates a significant cash surplus which has been boosted by the current robust timber prices. Kielder also remains a key focus with the observatory expanding on the estate on the back of Dark Skies designation, sports activities and ospreys and the Gruffalo all in the mix. Recreation on many of the sites is increasing and plans to expand further through opportunities which arise through the Borderlands and the Northern Powerhouse initiatives.

Cross Cutting Issues

Borderlands pilot scheme continues with various areas of working within the Defra to make outcomes on the ground easier. To deliver landscape scale impacts needs careful coordination and effective cross sector engagement with land owners and managers. Area Integrated plans have also been discussed by the joint FWAC of the North East and Yorkshire with advice being given on the forestry and woodland priorities.

FWAC business agendas forward look

- The Borderlands Initiative
- Looking for opportunities to learn from the Northern forest.
- Best practice with local authorities
- FC Centenary in 2019



Sir Harry Studholme's Visit to the North East

FROM THE NORTH WEST

Protect, Improve, Expand

The focus of the work in the Northwest has been on how best to understand the evidence base for forestry and best translate this into action on the ground. The group received a presentation on tree cover outside woodlands and developed a better understanding of the scope of the assets in the region.

Two main delivery themes considered and supported by the FWAC were Northern Forest and the NE Cumbria (Forgotten Lands) Forestry Investment Zone. Whilst separate these two projects are linked in their assessment of what tools might be available to accelerate woodland delivery by the private sector and landowners. The group discussed enabling large scale woodland creation & considered new EIA regulations with low sensitivity mapping. The RAG rating of land is hoped to set the appropriate expectations of delivery and has the potential to accelerate readily deliverable sites that may have been put off by the EIA cost and process.

FWAC members also considered and supported the CONFOR towards a Common Countryside Policy Document.

Northern Forest: FWAC chair is chairing the Steering Group with representatives from the Community Forests and Woodland Trust and in future will bring issues impacting on delivery to the group for consideration.

Advocate and champion – (including FWAC expertise and challenge)

In 2018, the group had the opportunity to consider and reflect on (with regard to the North West), national environmental policy and the local delivery plans. There is broad consensus that the 25 year plan for the environment sets a very favourable context for the delivery of more trees and woodland, and effort by the sector is now required to ensure that as we develop new land management arrangements these best reflect the needs and opportunities in both the North West and across the Northern Forest.

Specific attention was given to delivery and woodland management in the Lake District given the recent World Heritage Site Designation.

Chair attended a visit by the Forestry Commissioners, Non-Executives and Executives to Manchester, talking in particular about the opportunities for development of trees and woodlands in urban areas



FROM THE NORTH WEST

Cross Cutting Issues

The North West is focused on ensuring that the whole sector is resilient and able to provide valuable natural capital and ecosystem services to support the economy and communities for the North West. In support of this the committee has received several updates on the work of the Community Forests and Defra on the future business case for a resilient community forest sector.

Since the completion of the strategic business case, a project to help secure core funding for community forest sector called “A Bond with Nature” has been established and is working to gain broad backing for its implementation.

The FWAC produced a response to DEFRA Health and Harmony consultation and responded to regular updates and briefings from the Public Forest Estate.

FWAC business agendas forward look

- Future Visioning of how the NW FWAC adds value will focus on key aspects of work around:
- Forestry Investment Zones
- Delivery in urban and peri-urban areas through the community forests
- Implementation of the Northern Forest Project
- Feeding into the process of designing a new land management system post EU CAP.



FROM THE SOUTH EAST

Protect, Improve, Expand

At all meetings, appropriate VIPs, decision makers and policy makers from a local, regional and national perspective are invited guests. The integration, learning and knowledge transfer is very valuable to all involved.

For example, seeing the ash dieback destruction first hand around Folkestone, with the associated impact on highway budgets, recreation and landscape management was a real eye opener. This was especially true for those delegates with equally complex sites to manage with lots of Ash which has yet to be infected.

The FWAC advice has been invaluable to the Area team in their work to cope across the region with such a major change in the treescape.

South East FWAC are represented on the Oak Processionary Moth steering group in order to help manage and control the pest as it attempts to spread out from London

The Green Halo project in Hampshire led by a South East FWAC member is having an impact on local supply chains for timber and advancing the messages around woodland management and natural capital as part of a sub-regional landscape approach.

The Area Team completed a successful management plan processing pilot which has now led to changes and streamlining and roll out of a new set of delivery targets nationally. The FWAC were closely involved in discussions concerning this.



FROM THE SOUTH EAST

Advocate and champion – (including FWAC expertise and challenge)

With FWAC backing, one of the members has led on the creation of a new woodland advisors group that will collaborate in order to improve woodland management and supply chain operations across the region. This is innovative and helps develop partnership working.

FWAC members from Grown in Britain (GiB), the Country Landowners Association and Forest Services delivered a major forestry regional conference during GiB week 2017. Talks on markets, including inspirational case studies, were well received by a packed venue. A bigger, more central event is being planned for 11th Oct 2018, again in GiB week.

Members are fully engaging with the important Cambridge Oxford Arc development and supporting the Area team on methods of collaboration and early messaging.

Members met the new owners of Verdo renewable ARENSIS to discuss maintaining homegrown supplies for their pellet making. These are early stages but progress slow currently.

FWAC business agendas forward look

- In July 18, the SE FWAC will hold a joint meeting with the Forest Services Senior Management team/board to discuss a range of topics.
- The key focus will include new developments for adding value to home grown timber through innovation.
- The Committee will continue its focus on tree health and contributing to discussions and decisions on future policy and its implementation.



The committee at work

FROM THE SOUTH WEST

Protect, Improve, Expand

Throughout the year the FWAC was focused on supporting the ongoing control of *Phytophthora ramorum* and was kept abreast of the developing spread of Chalara and 2017 outbreak of Sweet Chestnut Blight. FWAC members supported the Forest Services Tree Health event at Roadford Lake in March.

The FWAC was updated on the grey squirrel Bait-Station Feeding Control Trial, first seen at our FWAC meeting in summer 2016. The FWAC was also kept abreast of the progress on the development of the Good Nature Grey Squirrel trap and the immune contraception development.

Improve (includes woods into management): The FWAC were kept updated on the Areas Incentives and Regulation activity and performance.

Expand (woodland creation): The FWAC were kept updated on the Areas Incentives and Regulation activity and performance.

Advocate and champion – (including FWAC expertise and challenge)

The June 2017 meeting included a presentation to FWAC members on the revised Forest Enterprise England’s Strategic Framework by Kevin Stannard.

A key point for members to act on was that the FE are looking to use the expertise of the FWAC to provide advice, particularly in this instance the operational use of natural flood management features and the potential of beaver introductions. This directly influenced subsequent FWAC meetings later in the year which visited the River Otter Free Living Beaver Trial and at the October meeting the proposed beaver reintroduction site at the Forest of Dean.

At the March 2018 meeting FE Strategic Framework ambitions specific to the Forest of Dean were presented, including the Foresters Forest funded by National Lottery. Recreation networks are being revamped and linked to a new network. The afternoon site visits reflected some of the Foresters Forest ambitions and included watercourse realignment, the beaver introduction site and an area of potential mire restoration and issues of reverting streams to a more natural alignment.

Local growth agenda and Urban

The June 2017 meeting looked at the North Devon Pioneer and Natural Capital with talks from the Pioneer Natural England lead and the Director of the N Devon Biosphere. A key focus of the Pioneer is to drive local growth in the small woodland sector through collaboration and valuing the ecosystem services derived from woodlands and forestry.

The urban agenda was not a specific focus for our meetings this year.



Slowing the flow on the Forest of Dean

FROM THE SOUTH WEST

Cross-cutting issues

The October 2017 and March 2018 meetings focused on issues of water management. At the October meeting we looked at a case study from the Upstream Thinking Project in the River Otter catchment where the landscape scale project seeks to protect Ottery St Mary from flood risk with strategic tree planting to slow flows and amend woodland management practice to retain water in the forest and slow it flow. The aim being to influence future woodland design and best practice.

The March meeting covered a discussion around the forestry ambitions of the 25Year Environment Plan and the Health and Harmony Consultation. A consultation response was submitted on behalf of the FWAC.

The FWAC were able to review the Area Teams plans for events and campaigns, feeding in ideas and identifying opportunities to support.

FWAC business agendas forward look

The FWAC will be looking to engage with the potential new Environmental Land Management Scheme pilots in the SW during the three meetings.

The June meeting will explore in detail the development of the Exmoor Ambition and the N Devon Pioneer proposals, as well as the FC's own approach. Future meetings will look at other examples such as the Marlborough Downs Farmer led NIA. Look to continue to support FE on strategic themes that they bring forward.



FROM THE WEST MIDLANDS

Protect, Improve, Expand

Throughout the year the FWAC has continued its oversight of the ongoing tree disease issues and support initiatives and communications regarding control measures.

The FWAC also retains a strong focus this year on the impact of climate and environmental change on woodlands and received an excellent presentation on this at one of its meetings. A visit was subsequently arranged to Birmingham Institute of Forest Research's (BIFOR) site in Staffordshire where extensive and world leading trials are taking place measuring the impact of climate and environmental change in a forestry situation.

The committee received a presentation on Natural Capital accounting as applied in Forest Enterprise and engaged in discussions about its applicability in a wider context.

Following an excellent presentation on woodland creation and links to productive management, a lively and very helpful discussion ensued

Other discussions focused upon new EIA regulations and low sensitivity to woodland creation mapping and the committee welcomed the design workshop held in the area.

There were also linkages to an exercise undertaken by the FWAC on an FE site and presentations on future policy (see elsewhere). One of our members attended a low carbon energy working group in Birmingham and reported back as well receiving comment from the committee

Countryside Stewardship has been debated long and hard. The need to simplify matters to maximise benefit is clear. This is no criticism of FS staff who have worked hard and diligently but there has been much frustration about the systems and delays.

Advocate and champion – (including FWAC expertise and challenge)

The committee has received a presentation to FWAC members on the revised Forest Enterprise England's Strategic Framework

The WM FWAC has always enjoyed strong links with FE and believes its continuation to be vital for all involved. During the year, the committee undertook a practical Natural Capital forest design planning exercise at the FE site, Hay and Park Wood, in Shropshire. This proved productive in many ways despite the heavy rain throughout.

It gave positive engagement with FE staff and produced valuable ideas and thoughts. The plan is to return to the site to see progress in about 18 months' time. The committee split into three groups focusing upon natural capital value, ecosystem services and commercial and financial opportunity.

Members champion the FWAC and FC at a range of events and at each meeting the chairman updates the committee on his external meetings and discussions and seeks their input.

Local growth agenda and Urban

The committee received a presentation on a new Midlands Innovation initiative. To date this has had an agricultural focus but the members were able to help steer towards a more integrated land management approach. The committee receives regular updates on the work of the urban network and makes an active contribution to discussions and actions through one of its members serving on the group.

The FWAC is supportive of community forests and has welcomed the re-birth of Mercia Community Forest following its loss of core funding from local authority sources. It was pleasing to attend the opening of the new Hilton Community site. Lack of core funding though remains a critical issue and needs to be addressed



Members visit the Norbury BIFOR site in Staffordshire

FROM THE WEST MIDLANDS

Cross-cutting issues

Natural flood and water management has long been an issue discussed in the committee. Tree planting and management have a clear role here and two members who sit on the Severn & Wye Flood and Coastal Committee have helped it take a lead role in this area. The area Director and Chairman of the WM FWAC visited Stroud to see work in action along with non-executive members from the EA and NE.

The committee has had positive and productive discussions around the impact of BREXIT, the 25 year Environment Plan and discussions on future land management making a full response to the recent Health & Harmony consultation. The FWAC strongly advocate a fully integrated approach to land management to produce and maximise multi benefits.

The FWAC welcomed a presentation on the future of the FC and the opportunity to provide comment and help shape final decisions.

Education & skills has long been a focus of WM FWAC and promotion of skills is seen as vital.

FWAC business agendas forward look

The FWAC is set to have a further detailed look at education, training and skills seeking to stimulate activity across the area. The WM FWAC undertook a survey of training provision in the WM some years ago and seeks to update this especially given new initiatives with apprenticeships.

There are also plans to return to the topics of woodland creation and tree disease and also actively engage in all the consultations and discussions surrounding implementation of the 25 Year Plan. The committee will continue to advocate for a fully integrated approach to land management and recognition of the multi benefits of trees, woods and forests.

The Committee continues to look to support FE on strategic themes that are brought forward.



A sub group of the committee hard at work looking at the commercial opportunities of the FE managed site at Hayes Wood

FROM YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER

Protect, Improve, Expand

Tree health continues to be an important issue. The FWAC has discussed the managing the impact of *Phytophthora ramorum* on the public forest estate and the wider challenges associated with Chalara, particularly in areas such as the Yorkshire Dales where small upland ash woodlands form a key part of the landscape. We discussed the woodland opportunities in the North York Moors arising from the Section 106 Agreement.

The Chair of the FWAC introduced the work of the Red Squirrel Survival Trust (RSST) to the Linbury Trust which subsequently made a grant towards its research on controlling grey squirrel fertility being undertaken at Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), near York and agreed by the UK Squirrel Accord. The FWAC looks forward to the results of this work.

The joint FWAC meeting with the North East allowed us to visit Robson Spring Wood which is managed by the Woodland Trust. We were grateful to be given an excellent tour by Mark Feather and Gordon Pfetscher from the Woodland Trust.

The wood is demonstration woodland for PAWS restoration and active woodland management. The members discussed the different approaches to supporting PAWs restoration recognising the importance of managing light levels to ensure the ground flora can survive and flourish.

The discussion across the two FWACs concluded the following key points;

Start conversations early and engage fully with stakeholders;

Biodiversity, archaeology and cultural heritage can all be constraints to afforestation and need to be considered during the early planning phase;

Welcomed the overall strategy which recognises the importance of priority habitats as key areas for biodiversity in England. There is however a need to consider their effective management;



Joint North East and Yorkshire FWAC visit to Robson Spring

Advocate and champion – (including FWAC expertise and challenge)

The FWAC discussed and provided feedback on the future Food, Farming and Environment consultation. It was recognised that this a once-in-generation opportunity to reform land management policy and better integrate forestry and woodland with agricultural policy. The FWAC welcomed the proposed shift in land management financial support to provide public money more explicitly for public goods, and the ambition for trees and woodlands in the draft bill. However, we want to see these desirable objectives translated into **clear goals and targets with specific policies and financial support.**

Through the year, we have sought to promote the opportunities for woodland creation and woodland improvement. Key points include the discussion on PAWs restoration as part of the Field Visit for the Joint June Meeting. The discussion centred on how we can help promote the opportunities available through Countryside Stewardship and the use of different approaches to deliver restoration. In the November meeting we visited Castle Hill's Hospital to look at the connection between woodland creation / green infrastructure and health and wellbeing.

We have raised concerns about two matter that currently affect the Yorkshire and Humber region but may well affect other regions in the future. The first is the matter of maintenance costs of natural flood management measures. It is not yet defined which agency carries the responsibility for the on-going maintenance costs of natural flood defence measures. This situation has come to light at the Slowing the Flow project in Pickering. While Forest Enterprise has to date maintained this site it is not within its remit. We hope that in raising this matter it will be integrated into the design of other natural flood defence schemes.

The second is the urgency of reviewing the guidance to commercial forestry in the UK Forestry Standard on replacement species for larch on ancient woodland sites.

FROM YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER

Local Growth Agenda and Urban

We have discussed the opportunities available through the Northern Forest and the desire to help utilise the connections to the community forests / local LNP network. This includes White Rose Forest, Heywoods and the South Yorkshire LNP.

The discussions on the Area Integrated Plans have helped shaped the key forestry and woodlands priorities which include the NFM through the Woodlands for Water Programme, woodland creation opportunities and the importance of protection / resilience.



Yorkshire FWAC visit to Castle Hills Hospital

Cross-cutting issues

Area Integrated plans have also been discussed by the joint FWAC of the North East and Yorkshire with advice being given on the forestry and woodland priorities.

The work on the Defra 25 YEP and Area Integrated Plans help demonstrates the cross cutting nature of our work. Feedback on the priorities on the AIP has been very helpful including how to ensure the forestry and woodland elements are effectively covered. We have also discussed some of the delivery aspects of Countryside Stewardship looking to ensure it provide an opportunity across Yorkshire.

FWAC business agendas forward look

Considering the opportunities presented by the Northern Forest.

Continuing to support the development of Natural Flood Management as a response to the challenges of climate change. Specific areas of interest include Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme and the Derwent.

Looking for opportunities to work with the Tree Champion on urban woodlands

The FWAC welcomes the investigation by the Forestry Commission into the urban tree felling programme in Sheffield. The members look forward to the opportunity to explore the lessons learned and how processes can be improved.

URBAN FWAC NETWORK

Protect, Improve, Expand

The Urban Network has published a leaflet on tree canopy cover and has continued to develop positive relationships with a number of stakeholder groups on issues around the urban forest.

It has advocated innovative approaches to funding for Community Forests and contributed proposals for supporting the government's commitment to plant 1 million trees in urban areas.

Advocate and champion – (including FWAC expertise and challenge)

The Network published "England's Urban Forest" - Using tree canopy cover data to secure the benefits of the urban forest. It was launched at England's Community Forest annual conference in March 2018 with support from a range of stakeholders. It builds on the work by Forest Research's Urban Forest Research Group team assessing urban tree canopy in England's towns and cities, published April 2017. The document gives advice on how planners, developers and community members can use tree canopy cover data to gain support for the urban forest, including developing locally agreed tree canopy cover minimum standards. The Network was pleased to receive support for this approach from the Forestry Minister Therese Coffey.

Network members have continued to input to the project on the Community Forest Business case.

It visited Thames Chase Community Forest in December 2017. It considered innovative financing and had in depth discussion with members of the Thames Chase Trust in issues facing that CF. It welcomed the chance to see the outstanding projects in the Thames Chase Community Forest.



Local growth agenda

The Urban FWAC network has provided support to Defra and the Forestry Commission on options for achieving the 1million urban trees target. In September 2017 the Network brought together stakeholders to gather ideas on scheme design and to record what is already happening in our urban areas. In March 2018 a further workshop advised on the development of a manual to support work on achieving the right tree in the right place in urban areas.

The Network visited the BIFOR FACE project site in July 2017 to see the cutting edge forest research. The project enables the exposure of patches of temperate forest to elevated amounts of CO2 to see how the ecosystem responds. It has links to projects in Australia and the Amazon and is led by Prof Rob Mackenzie, a Network member. It will run until 2026.

The Network has also discussed with Prof Rob Mackenzie his work on using green infrastructure to improve urban air quality. This work has led to a new publication by Trees and Design Action Group.

Network members have also contributed to consultation meetings by Defra following the publication of the 25 Year Plan.

URBAN FWAC NETWORK

The Network has been extremely saddened at the death of one of its members, Peter Wilkinson, former Director of the Thames Chase Community Forest and Head of Parks for Bristol City Council. In recent years he was instrumental in setting up the Wandle Valley Trust in SW London. He worked on the restoration of Wanstead Park and the Thames Estuary Path in Essex. In most recent years he managed the restoration of Leyton Jubilee Park in Waltham Forest. Peter was a great colleague to work with and we were extremely grateful for the time, expertise and good humour he brought to the Urban FWAC Network and the South west FWAC in supporting the Forestry Commission.

*<https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/tree-canopy-cover-leaflet>

FWAC business agendas forward look

- In summer 2018 the Network is planning a visit to Leeds to look at the development of the Northern Forest and approaches to using GI in the urban area, through the planning system, adopted by the City Council.
- The Network will continue to support Defra/FC in work to set in place mechanisms to achieve the target of 1million urban trees by 2022.

URBAN NETWORK MEMBERS

Chair: Jane Carlsen
London: David Houghton,
South East: Bruce Collinson,
South West: the late Peter Wilkinson,
West Midlands: Prof Rob Mackenzie,
East Midlands: Patrick Candler,
East England: John Meehan,
Yorkshire and the North East: Liz Ballard,
North West: Iain Taylor,
North East: Ross Weddle,



FWAC Network in England

