

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Trees and Woodland Scientific Advisory Group (TAW-SAG)

Meeting 12 Minutes: 09 January 2023

Attendees:

- **Rob MacKenzie** (RMK) - [Chair], School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences University of Birmingham; Birmingham Institute of Forest Research
- **Paul Burgess** (PB) - Ecology and Management, Cranfield Soil and Agri-food Institute Cranfield University
- **Keith Kirby** (KK) - Department of Biology, University of Oxford
- **Richard Buggs** (RB) - [Observer], Kew Gardens, Plant Health Group
- **Ruth Mitchell** (RM) - Biodiversity and Ecosystems Group, Ecological Sciences Department, James Hutton Institute
- **Chris Quine** (CQ) - [Observer], Chief Scientist, Forest Research
- **Mike Morecroft** (MM) - [Observer], Principal specialist on climate change, Natural England (NE) and senior visiting research associate, Oxford University
- **Maggie Roe** (MR) - Landscape Planning Research & Policy Engagement, University of Newcastle
- **Patricia Thornley** (PT) - School of Engineering and Applied Science, Aston University
- **Ian Bateman** (IB) - Director of the Land, Environment, Economics and Policy Institute. University of Exeter
- **Stephen Cavers** (SC) - Ecology Evolution and Environmental Change - Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
- **Naomi Matthiessen** (NM) – Tree Programme Director, Defra
- **Daisy Ellis** (DE) - Head of Strategy, Engagement and Analysis, Defra
- **Clare Williams** (CW) – Evidence and Analysis Team for Trees/Forestry, Defra
- **Charlotte Williams** (ChW) (secretary) – Research & Development (R&D) Project Delivery Advisor, Defra
- **Rhiannon Leyden-Preece** (RLP) – [Guest - agenda item 6] Scientific Policy Advisor, Tree Health, Defra
- **Dan Doherty** (DD) - [Guest] Head of Trees, Woodlands and Forestry Policy, Defra
- **Mark Broadmeadow** (MB) – [Guest – agenda item 3] Forestry Policy Team, targets and net zero, Defra
- **Jessica White** (JW) – [Guest - agenda item 6] Performance & Insight Lead, Defra
- **Richard Mills** (RiM) - [Guest - agenda item 6] Data Analyst - Performance & Insight Analysis, Defra

Apologies:

- **Julie Urquhart** (JU) - Environmental Social Science at University of Gloucestershire
- **Yadvinder Malhi** (YM) - Ecosystems Research, Environmental Change Institute, Oxford University
- **Rebecca McIlhiney** (RMI)- Evidence and Analysis Team Leader for Trees/Forestry, Defra
- **Bella Murfin** (BM) – Tree Programme Director, Defra

Item 1: Welcome and Updates

1. RMK welcomed everyone to the twelfth meeting of the TaW-SAG.

Item 2: Review and agree minutes from previous meeting

2. The minutes from the last meeting were reviewed and agreed with no further amendments.

3. The actions were reviewed:

- Action 1 – Review with Julie when she returns.
- Action 2 – Review with Julie when she returns.
- Action 3 – Ongoing. Nothing to raise to Defra Chief Scientific Officer (CSAO) yet.
- Action 4 – complete.
- Action 5 – complete.
- Action 6 – complete.

Item 3: Programme Board Update and feedback on recent TaW-SAG advice

4. All members were thanked for providing quick responses to the recent request for advice. This was collated and informed submissions to Ministers. There will be more emphasis on future requests for advice, to allow adequate time for review.
5. The key points of the Programme Board were:
 - a. The R&D team will ensure there will be regular progress updates to TaW-SAG on the projects.
 - b. TaW-SAG input would be welcome on identifying research gaps on productive forestry.

Item 3: Update on statutory woodland target

6. MB provided an update on the Statutory woodland target, with the following key points raised:
 - a. The group was thanked for their input to support the development of the targets.
 - b. The suite of 13 Environment Act Statutory targets were announced on the 16 December 2022, with the Statutory Instruments (SI) laid on 20th December 2022.
 - c. The tree canopy cover and woodland statutory target is to increase from the current assumed baseline of 14.5% in England, to 16.5% by 2050.
 - d. A non-legally binding target will shortly be announced in the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP). This will be a similar scope and metric to the statutory target to provide transparency.

5. Summary of Key Points raised in discussion:

- a. Blackthorn above 5 meters could meet the definition however bramble is unlikely, but this does pose a challenge for the remote sensing team at FR.
- 1) The SI are for England's commitments only. Defra works closely with the Devolved Authorities (DA) who are responsible for delivering their share of the overall 30,000 hectare target.
 - c. The 16.5% target will be supported by interim targets every 5 years.
 - d. Should the baseline figure show a significant change then the EIP 2028 review will be the time to revise that target.
 - e. Grant scheme design will be important when assessing the split between broadleaves and conifers. This should be monitored.
 - f. Neatly managed hedgerow will not currently be included in this target, however large outgrown hedgerow that meets the definitions will.

Action 1: CW to note a remote sensing agenda item for future TAW-SAG meetings.

Item 4: Discussion of TaW-SAG knowledge review

6. RMK thanked the group for their contributions on the knowledge review so far and acknowledged that there will be additional work to get it completed.
7. RMK suggested that the group work on creating something that can be published as there has been a lot of useful advice that has gone into the paper. This may take work further past the January Defra deadline.
8. CW and DD also thanked TaW-SAG for their contribution so far which has been comprehensive and thorough.

Action 2: PT to add some information and send to RMK.

Action 3: All to provide comments to have a final version to Defra by 31/01/23.

Item 5: TAW-SAG Terms of Reference Review

9. CW gave a brief overview of the Terms of Reference (TOR) review which has the following recommendations:

- a. Review membership to consider whether an International Member would be appropriate.
- b. Discuss succession planning of current membership.
- c. Consider the diversity of the current group.
- d. Consider whether it's appropriate to add representatives from the Forestry Commission and/or Commercial Forestry (to include forestry supply chain).
- e. Reviewing attendance and notice of termination of appointment.
- f. Reviewing the meeting format looking into more clarity on how officials interact with the group.
- g. Defra to produce a short biography of all the members.
- h. Defra to update the TOR to reference the England Trees Action Plan.
- i. Defra to review the role of observers.
- j. Defra will also consider TaW-SAG beyond the NCF programme.

10. Summary of Key Points raised in discussion:

- a. The risk with an international member could be that forestry in England is very specific which may be frustrating for an international member.
- b. Having an international member from a country where forestry is a more important part of the economy, like Sweden. This could bring different perspectives and lessons learned. Ireland could also be a suitable candidate.
- c. Rather than an international member it may be more beneficial to boost the DA representation.
- d. Regular attendance from international members may not be appropriate but a group of members to call upon when the topic arises may be better.
- e. For succession planning, the role of observers needs to be defined more as it's not clear how they differ.
- f. Conflict of interest (COI) needs to be considered for bringing in more FR or FC representatives (noting that all members have, by definition, interests very closely aligned to the work of the Group).
- g. The balance of professional representation from the Arms-Length Bodies needs to be reviewed. An FC representative would be useful but there are COI issues due to their closeness with NCF. They could be invited to certain discussions more regularly where it is appropriate for their expertise.
- h. We have less expertise on carbon value chains and timber production forestry. Only a few UK HEIs have reputation for research directly on wood products, though several others have track record for broader aspects of the wood products value chains.
- i. Commercial forestry expert could potentially be an international member.

Item 6: AOB – Discussion on forestry statistics

11. RIM and RLP provided a summary of a research question that has come up, for which TAW-SAG advice is being sought.

Action 4: RiM and RLP to follow up the research question with PB.

Trees and Forestry, Strategy Engagement and Analysis Team January 2023