

Trees and Woodland Scientific Advisory Group (TAW-SAG)

Meeting 13 Minutes: 14 March 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
- **Stephen Cavers** (SC) - Ecology Evolution and Environmental Change - Centre for Ecology and Hydrology
- **Julie Urquhart** (JU) - Environmental Social Science at University of Gloucestershire
- **Bella Murfin** (BM) – Directors Nature for Climate Tree Programme, Defra
- **Daisy Ellis** (DE) - Head of Strategy, Engagement and Analysis, Defra
- **Rebecca McIlhiney** (RMI)- Evidence and Analysis Team Leader for Trees/ Forestry, 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) –Scientific Policy Advisor, Tree Health, Defra
- **Louise Hill** (LH) - Lead Advisor on Adaptation, Tree Health, Defra
- **Dan Doherty** (DD) - Head of Trees, Woodlands and Forestry Policy, Defra
- **Jessica White** (JW) - Trees, Woodlands and Forestry Performance & Insight Lead, Defra
- **Richard Mills** (RiM) – Project Management Office (PMO), Defra
- **Hugh Loxton** (HL) - Head of Forestry Environment Policy, Defra
- **Jemma Snoxell** (JS) - Policy Adviser – Woodland Management and Biodiversity, Defra

Apologies

- **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
- **Yadvinder Malhi** (YM) - Ecosystems Research, Environmental Change Institute, Oxford University

Item 1: Welcome and Updates

1. RMK welcomed everyone to the thirteenth meeting of the TAW-SAG and the first hybrid meeting. Everyone introduced themselves in person.

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. For item 3a RMI confirmed that the R&D team will provide TAW-SAG with regular progress updates on research projects. It was confirmed that for item 3c members will provide thoughts or feedback on productive forestry, or any other topic, through email to RMK and copied to the group.
4. The actions were reviewed:
 - Action 1 – complete.
 - Action 2 – complete.
 - Action 3 – complete.
 - Action 4 – complete.

Action 1: RMI to schedule 6 monthly R&D updates for future TAW-SAG agendas.

Item 3. Programme Board Update including Annual Review

5. BM provided an update from the Programme Board.
6. The key points of the Programme Board were:
 - a. The programme is at its mid-point.
 - b. The priorities for the programme were discussed, these include–
 - i. achieving the best value for money (VFM) with the budget remaining and preparing for the next Spending Review.
 - ii. Ensuring the transformational work setting the foundations for trees post NCF are well established. This includes the monitoring and evaluation work and the R&D package, the importance of timber and boosting timber production in England.
 - c. There were discussions around woodland for water, stacking, and communications to help farmers and landowners understand how to make money from woodlands.
 - d. JW provided an update on the Annual Review which has been underway to review programme progress and evaluate VFM and direct resource to where it's required where gaps are found.
 - e. CQ mentioned the Defra led external stakeholder event acknowledged a lot of effort that the team had made to make the NCF quite responsive. Positive feedback from the day that good progress is being made.

Action 2: CW note the value of timber for a future TAW-SAG agenda item this year.

Action 3: ChW share the list of top 30 external stakeholders to TAW-SAG.

Item 4. TAW-SAG knowledge review – final document

7. RMK thanked all members for their contribution and continued effort for the review. Feedback on the process was welcomed.
 - a. It was agreed the knowledge review should be published as an academic paper.
8. **Summary of Key Points raised in the feedback discussion:**
 - a. It would have been helpful to get the level of detail required for the paper, at the beginning of the process.
 - b. A short summary at the start was helpful.
 - c. There is an opportunity to share with the Devolved Administrations once it's published as they have been having these conversations as well.
 - d. During the process the paper evolved at different rates and at times it was unbalanced. A workshop to discuss the paper may have been useful before going away to work on it.

- e. Are TAW-SAG there to provide an objective knowledge review or is there an element for interpretation? A clear distinction in the brief would have been very helpful. DD confirmed that policy would welcome interpretation. Follow up questions to policy are welcome throughout the process and it's good to show differing views.
- f. Need to allow just as much time as collating, to distil the evidence.
- g. If more time was available, this would have allowed the group to show gaps and strengths of evidence.

Action 4: TAW-SAG provide RMK with suggestions for publication of the review.

Action 5: RMK to consider academic publication of the review.

Action 6: RMI to consider the opportunity to share with Devolved Administrations.

Item 5. PMO statistics issue for discussion

- 9. RLP provided an overview of the issue for discussion.

Item 6. Expert advice on temperate rainforests

- 10. CW thanked KK for providing input into the paper and gave an overview of the paper on Temperate Rainforests.
- 11. TAW-SAG discussed the paper and will provide advice in May 2023

Action 7: All to provide comments to have a final version to Defra by 19/05/23.

Item 7. AOB

- 12. None.

Trees and Forestry, Strategy Engagement and Analysis Team March 2023

For information: Dates of next two meetings are 9th May and 18th July 2023