

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Trees and Woodland Scientific Advisory Group (TAW-SAG)

Meeting 19 Minutes: 12 March 2024 10am to 12pm

Attendees

- **Rob MacKenzie** (RMK) - [Chair], School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences University of Birmingham; Birmingham Institute of Forest Research.
- **Ian Bateman** (IB) - Director of the Land, Environment, Economics and Policy Institute. University of Exeter.
- **Richard Buggs** (RB) - [Observer], Kew Gardens, Plant Health Group.
- **Paul Burgess** (PB) - Ecology and Management, Cranfield Soil and Agri-food Institute Cranfield University.
- **Keith Kirby** (KK) - Department of Biology, University of Oxford.
- **Mike Morecroft** (MM) - [Observer], Principal specialist on climate change, Natural England and Visiting Professor, University of Reading.
- **Ruth Mitchell** (RM) - Biodiversity and Ecosystems Group, Ecological Sciences Department, James Hutton Institute.
- **Stephen Cavers** (SC) - Ecology Evolution and Environmental Change - Centre for Ecology and Hydrology.
- **Chris Quine** (CQ) - [Observer], Chief Scientist, Forest Research.
- **Maggie Roe** (MR) - Landscape Planning Research & Policy Engagement, University of Newcastle
- **Martin Lukac** (ML) – Professor of Ecosystem Science, University of Reading
- **John Healey** (JH) – Professor of Forest Science, Bangor University
- **Bella Murfin** (BM) - Director Nature for Climate Tree Programme, Defra
- **Iain Dummett** (ID) - Evidence and Analysis Team Leader for Trees/ Forestry, Defra.
- **Rhiannon Leyden-Preece** (RLP) - Evidence and Analysis Team for Trees/Forestry, Defra.
- **Chris McGurk** (CM) - Evidence and Analysis Team for Trees/Forestry, Defra.
- **Richard Bridge** (RBr) – Head of Monitoring and Evaluation, Trees, woodland and forestry, Defra
- **Clare Williams** (CW) – Evidence and Analysis Team for Trees/Forestry, Defra.
- **Sandra Angers-Blondin** (SAB) – Liverpool John Moores University
- **Luke Bentley** (LB) - Liverpool John Moores University

Apologies

- **Julie Urquhart** (JU) - Environmental Social Science, University of Gloucestershire.
- **Daisy Ellis** (DE) - Head of Strategy, Engagement and Analysis, Defra.
- **Clive Potter** (CP) – Centre for Environmental Policy, Imperial College London.
- **Rebecca McIlhiney** (RMI)- Evidence and Analysis Team Leader for Trees/ Forestry, Defra.
- **Patricia Thornley** (PT) - School of Engineering and Applied Science, Aston University.

Item 1: Welcome and introductions

1. RMK welcomed everyone to the 19th meeting of the TAW-SAG.

Item 2: Review minutes from previous meeting

2. The minutes from the last meeting were agreed and the actions were reviewed:

From	Number	Action	Owner	Status
11/09/2023 – Sub-group	2	RBr to share the findings of the Defra/FR Agroforestry research project with TaW-SAG.	RBr	Complete
30/01/2024	1	Defra to contact the Woodland Creation and Ecological Networks (WrEN) project to see if it is useful for the M&E programme.	RBr	Complete
30/01/2024	2	TaW-SAG are asked for suggestions for site visits which may be useful for Ministerial engagement.	All	Complete.
30/01/2024	3	Defra to circulate final version of the Forestry Environment Impact Assessment paper.	CW	Complete
30/01/2024	4	Defra to circulate an updated Emerging Forestry paper	CW	Complete
30/01/2024	5	TaW-SAG will review the Biomass strategy and Energy forestry documents Defra have provided and send comments by email by 29th Feb.	All	Complete
30/01/2024	6	TaW-SAG to provide comments on the Tree and woodland resilience paper to ER by email.	All	Complete
30/01/2024	7	TaW-SAG to let RMK/ Defra know any suggestions for face-to-face meeting, by email.	All	Complete.

Item 3: Programme Board update

3. BM provided an update on the last NCF Programme Board.

4. The key points are:

- a) Slightly below planting compared to original business case
- b) A positive planting season despite delays due to weather.
- c) Forecasting is more accurate and being refined
- d) Looking at next spending review.
- e) Lot of work on Grant payment rates
- f) New Forest for the Nation competition launched

5. Naomi Mattheissen, Director Nature for Climate Tree Programme (Job share with BM) is leaving Defra. TaW-SAG thanked Naomi and praised her agile and inspiring co-leadership of the Programme.

Action 1: CW to share the Analysis of uptake of different grants with TaW-SAG when possible

Item 4: Update on the NCF programme

6. BM provided an update on the NCF programme and its breadth of activity. The programme has done more than tree planting:
 - a) providing funds for planting stock and workforce skills and capacity and gathered learnings.
 - b) Communications with farming and forestry sector, national campaigns, officers on the ground to promote the grants.
 - c) Research and development, monitoring and evaluation work
 - d) Maintenance payments have increased from 10 to 15 years
 - e) Lots of models have been used for tree planting including direct grants and via partnerships.
 - f) Speeding up time it takes to plant trees on low sensitivity land
 - g) There has been an increase in planting in last 2 years.
 - h) There will be a woodland management focus in future

Action 2: CW to send TAW-SAG Impermanent Forest Knowledge Review to JL and ML

Action 3: TaW-SAG to provide an opinion on woodland management and natural capital (IB and MR to start the draft)

Item 5: Inquiry into public financial support for tree planting and forestry (2024). Royal Society of Edinburgh.

7. RM introduced the RSE public inquiry and report which has promoted discussion in the sector, which TaW-SAG noted and discussed.

Item 6: NCF Evaluation Indicators

8. SAB presented the NCF Evaluation Indicators work, developing metrics around 5 themes using a spatial approach to supplement the Monitoring and Evaluation of the NCF programme.
9. Summary of key points raised in feedback discussion:
 - a) Future predictions are beyond the scope of the project
 - b) Relative capacity of ecosystems is scored 0-100
 - c) Metrics for climate and habitat are simple but will confirm suitability and more work is planned in the future.
 - d) Values e.g. carbon sequestration by habitats will be an estimate associated with the habitat in general.
 - e) Re-running model on what has been already planted with different species mix is not covered by this project but could be future work.
 - f) Species and genetic diversity indicators are not included. Modelling is at landscape scale, but this would be interesting to investigate.
 - g) Forest of Marston Vale in Bedfordshire is using this sort of approach. Defra work is looking at natural capital rather than cultural capital. Social metrics are being investigated in a separate project.
 - h) Data such as planting mixes are not always available
 - i) Ground truthing for baseline mapping is being undertaken.
 - j) Uncertainties, limitations and confidence will be articulated

Item 7: AOB

10. There is an additional TaW-SAG meeting on 21 March.
11. CW will circulate an Agroforestry and carbon paper for TaW-SAG comment via email.
12. Any comments on Forestry Environmental Impact Assessment paper can come back to Defra and TaW-SAG.

Trees and Forestry, Strategy Engagement and Analysis Team April 2024

Date of the next three meetings – 21 March, 15 May 2024 and 10 July 2024.