

Our ref: NLP 17 - 07/10

## **NEWBOROUGH LIAISON PARTNERSHIP MEETING (17)** **22<sup>nd</sup> JULY 2010**

(Held at the Pritchard Jones Institute, Newborough from 19:00 - 21:30 hours)

**Chair:** Peter Garson, Head of Estate Management, Forestry Commission Wales (FCW)

**Present:** List of Attendees attached

**Apologies:** Trefor Owen, Director Wales (FCW)

## **M I N U T E S**

### **1. Welcome / Introductions**

Peter Garson (PG) introduced himself as Head of Estate Management and welcomed everyone to the meeting. John Browne (JB) as District Forester Planning was also introduced as Jon Levell's replacement.

### **2. Briefing on the context and purpose of the meeting**

PG gave the following explanation about the purpose and context of the meeting:

"The prime reason for calling the meeting is to seek the NLP's views on several key issues within the management plan that FCW is preparing.

However, before doing this I think it would be useful if I put this into the context of what had happened since the meeting in April 2009. That was when we explained that we had been unable to secure approval of the FDP because of concerns that it did not meet the requirements of the Habitats Regulation.

We also explained that we had been asked by WAG to do 2 things:

- To prepare a new plan that would be more explicit about how the forest would be managed in relation to the features for which the area had been designated SAC.
- To undertake some initial felling along the coast frontage in order to promote restoration of the dune habitat.

Since then there has been a lot of discussion, correspondence and challenge which resulted in WAG requesting that a review of the science be undertaken.

While this was taking place we did not think that it was appropriate to undertake the felling.

- However, we haven't been idle, we've done some work on the management plan and Tim and Robert has been able to make some improvements in terms of recreation.
- However, we have not implemented any operations relating to the trees – although we are very keen to resume thinning – particularly given the impact of RBNB.

The science review has taken much longer than we expected and by the end of last year we thought that the most appropriate thing to do would be to complete the management plan omitting the contentious areas the forest. We could have proceeded along these lines and spent this meeting taking you through the detail of these less contentious elements but, we realise that a plan that does not address the main areas of concern for stakeholders will be of little value and leave everybody frustrated and speculating about what might happen next.

We now think that it would better to pull together a plan for the whole forest – albeit that we would not implement any changes along the coastal margins or by the Warren until the science review is concluded and we are sure that the changes are sensible in scientific terms and any necessary monitoring is in place.

This way you'll be able to see the likely implications of the designations and science and how we think we may be able to meet our legal obligations in a way that takes account of other interests and objectives and a degree of uncertainty about what the effect of interventions will be.

I hope you think that this is constructive – it can obviously be argued that no decisions should be made until every element of scientific uncertainty has been resolved but that could be years and we think everybody is getting fed up with this going round in circles so as practical and pragmatic land managers we wish to put forward a plan for the whole forest but within this plan recognise that there are areas of uncertainty where we want to proceed with caution.

So in a spirit of not ducking the main or most difficult issues, we will focus on several key points:

- The extent of felling for dune restoration
- The way in which the plan would deal with the hydrological issues by the Warren.
- The way in which the plan will address red squirrels and other important but mobile species.

We want to share this with you so that we can get some feed-back before we pull together the full plan:

This won't be your only opportunity to view and comment on the plan. Once the draft plan is finalised and put in the public domain there will be an opportunity for further drop in sessions and feedback once people have had chance to see the whole document. It may take several months for the plan to get to the stage where it can be submitted and formally approved. In the meantime we are keen to commence thinning operations in Newborough Forest and we

may therefore submit a thinning licence to enable us to progress with this in case the management plan approval is delayed.

This meeting is also an opportunity to cover a couple of other topical issues, which have been raised by members of the partnership”

### **3. Response to Partnership recommendations on visitor access / facilities**

PowerPoint presentation by Tim Gordon-Roberts (TGR), Local Area Manager. TGR outlined a progressive plan, which could be delivered in stages in line with available funding. The proposal attempts to address some of the access issues raised from the previous NLP meetings. Some of the suggested improvements presented are also driven by the need to improve quality in line with other recreational provision on FCW sites and reduce management costs and liabilities. The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) audit is an important driver and the results of the recent audit need addressing.

The proposals indicated an increase to car park capacity. Some members raised concerns that this might spoil the visitor experience by allowing too many people to gain access at once. PG explained that additional visitors would be catered for at peak time. This provision would hopefully address some of the traffic management difficulties for the Village.

FCW propose to move the residents car park more inland (capacity remains at 20 spaces) in line with a naturally changing coastline; whilst maintaining access for boats for as long as is physically possible.

NLP suggested that visitors should be informed of a full car park when they are in the village before they get to the Hydrakerb. Rob Williams (RB), Woodland Manager, explained that a communication system between FCW staff at the Hydrakerb and in the village is no good as the visitors ignore the advice of FCW staff, this has been tried with FCW staff stopping visitors at the graveyard where they can turn but this advice is often ignored. The County Council has now put double yellow lines along the access road to the Hydrakerb in an attempt to alleviate the problem. Menter Môn had previously suggested a park and ride system.

FCW stated they need to better manage peak demand. FCW's vision is to maximise the whole of the forest area so visitors will have a full range of options to choose from which may alleviate the honey-pot feel on the coastal strip. NLP suggested that it would be too difficult to manage where people go and most want to go to the beach where it can get overcrowded. NLP members also suggested that any increase in car parking would be irrelevant if FCW fell trees on site as the car park may be put under threat. This matter was dealt with in the Forest Plan presentation.

NLP asked whether FCW want to increase car parking and subsequently visitor numbers in order to support the need for a Visitor Centre (VC). FCW explained that there are no funds available in grant aid and FCW do not have the funds available for developing a VC. It is considered that a VC will not be up for discussion for many years from now due to funding issues. The improvements are suggested as a "plan B" to a VC so that FCW can try and meet the needs of the visitors and the recommendations of the partnership. FCW confirmed they are looking into the possibility of getting European Union (EU) funding from the CCW run Communities and Nature Scheme for the Plan b access project.

NLP suggested that Newborough is the largest leisure centre on the island which is open 365 days a year and the County Council should do more to support the site and the recommendations of the partnership.

NLP asked whether the income generated by the Hydrakerb could be allocated towards a long-term project such as the VC and what exactly does this income go towards? FCW confirmed that the income already goes towards the managing and maintenance of Newborough i.e. resurfacing the car parks, toilet block cleaning etc. NLP suggested the fees are increased to assist with the improvement works and FCW agreed that it could look into this to support new projects and staffing but that this would not be enough to fund a VC development which could amount to £2m. PG indicated that like all public bodies, FCW was facing the prospect of significant funding cuts and therefore FCW could not guarantee that any increase in parking charges would be available for additional investment as this income may be needed to sustain existing facilities.

Under the improvement proposals FCW propose an opportunity for a Business lease this would generate additional income and provide an additional service at the site. NLP asked it we could ensure that this opportunity went to local businesses. TGR explained that in line with government procurement guidelines this would be put out to tender. Unfortunately this can not guarantee that local person would be successful. It is possible to set certain requirements e.g. sustainability of produce and mileage travelled to site can be criteria used to address concerns regarding local businesses. The location of the catering business was pointed out on the relevant slide. A new waste collection area will also be created which will be a secured area to ensure no problems are encountered with littering. FCW suggested the staffing levels for the site would include the current seasonal warden but would also generate employment for at least 2 catering staff.

Concern was raised over the proposal for a focal piece of artwork at the trail head. FCW explained that the intention of the artwork was to create a main focal point to get the attention of visitors in addition to providing interpretation. In 2009 Anglesey was the second area in Wales to become a European Geopark and is known as "GeoMôn". FCW confirmed that it proposes creating waymarked routes to provide relevant interpretation for this and confirmed this status is a very important part of Newborough. It might be possible to link the

artwork to this status and something more natural could be commissioned. The group would be consulted again over this issue

#### **4. Presentation on the key aspects of the Newborough Forest Management Plan**

PowerPoint presentation by JB to run through the key aspects of the draft Management Plan outlined in the introduction. FCW confirmed that they would not implement any clearfelling operations along the seaward edge until the results of the Science Review have been received. The draft plan and the presentation would be shared on the intranet and further opportunity to comment would be arranged.

JB presented the long-term vision for the site and outlined management zones along the coastal edge, which aimed to fulfil legislative requirements of the site as well as maximising the potential of the forest to bring public benefits in the long term. FCW explained the potential zone of experimental clearfell for hydrological purposes is subject to the Science Review. Members of the NLP present at the Science Review raised concerns that this has not been agreed and felt that another meeting on the Review group was required to iron out misunderstandings. FCW will amend this part of the plan as required by the Science Review and agreed that any research should be accompanied by a designed methodology before any action was agreed.

**AP17.1 - CCW to arrange a further meeting of the Review group to agree the final report.**

NLP informed the meeting there are lizards and dune helleborines are found within some of the zones on the plan that FCW propose clearfelling. This would require consideration in any operational method statement.

NLP stated that under-planting (as shown in zone 5 on the plan) is a very good idea and should be done before the actual felling takes place. It is not FCW's intention to pre-empt the results of the Science Review and the felling is dependent on the outcome of the said Review although the under-planting is not. The Management Plan will be 10 -year plan reviewed in 5 years. All proposals are subject to agreement and a 5-10 year period is required for under-planting to be established. It was noted that the natural regeneration closer to the shoreline is not growing as well as expected. Red Band Needle Blight (RBNB) is affecting the crop at Newborough and FCW's restocking plans would be geared to diversifying the current crop. FCW also need to look at diversifying the crop due to other potential impacts of climate change. The cotoneaster has been recognised as an invasive species and as such this feature will require future management by FCW. NLP stated there is an agreement with the RSPB in regard to not eradicating the cotoneaster completely as it provides berries for the birds. FCW reiterated the intention is management and not complete eradication. There was some support within the group for controlling the cotoneaster and FCW's proposals are to create

reserves by the parking bays and along the road but not in the forest area itself. Bramble is also a species that requires management on site and will be controlled within specified limits.

**AP17.2** - TGR will check the extent of the agreement between FCW and RSPB as details of this will be recorded in the Conservation Management Plan prepared by FCW's Conservation Manager, Martin Gould.

Grey squirrel control is also necessary management work required in order to maintain the existing red squirrel population. FCW's thinning proposals will maintain canopy connectivity. A non-intervention area within the forest had been suggested by the Partnership and the question was raised as to whether this will be going ahead. FCW confirmed that the RBNB would require us to work in the area originally identified as non-intervention. Minimal areas of non-intervention within the woodland will be possible. The UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) requires 1% of the woodland across the FCW managed estate and FCW confirmed that Newborough is probably not an area that would be considered suitable for this purpose. The forest requires active management at this time.

For the period of the Management Plan, zone 3 is an area of limited intervention which means FCW will not carry out any active forestry operations within this zone for the next 5 years. This zone will be monitored and reviewed to assess the impact of any coastal felling on dune restoration. This wait and see approach would use the time to reassess delivery of the required outcomes of the SAC but also recognises that additional dune restoration may be required within this zone to deliver natural dune zones behind the shoreline.

NLP questioned why zone 1 was being clearfelled and FCW confirmed the rationale is to promote dune mobility but reiterates this proposal is subject to the Science Review as is zone 2. Zone 5, however, is flexible and not contentious.

There was general agreement that intervention was required to manage the forest and put in place action that would be robust enough to protect it in light of future possible landscape changes, so long as the coastal felling was subject to the Science Review. FCW also pointed out that it is an UKWAS requirement to have a Management Plan in place for our woodland to maintain certified status in Wales. FCW confirmed that are not trying to rush through any proposals but stated that any delay in the plan would not stop an application to thin the woodland under licence so critical is the issue of RBNB.

Some members of the NLP support the under-planting and see it as an important proposal that needs to occur immediately.

NLP raised the question as to how confident FCW are in the actual whereabouts of the various species and the importance of recording this information. FCW would be happy to receive any additional information and Martin Gould is working closely with JB on the plan. CCW stated

that further detail is required regarding the geological aspects with some fine tuning needing to be done. Especially in the planting zone to avoid impact on species and features.

### **5. Feedback on the Science Review**

John Ratcliffe (JR) of CCW gave an overview of the current situation in regard to the Science Review. There have been 4 meetings to date between November 2009 and March 2010. There is a legal obligation to the EU as to interpretation of data under the Habitats Directive in regard to SACs. Agreement has not yet been reached as to whether the dunes are in a favourable condition or not. The conifer woodland status does come under Habitats Regulations. The dune zone is a very particular part of the assessment of the dunes and CCW have highlighted this issue. Scope for further research in regard to the hydrology of the site has been agreed along with the experimental felling zone although disagreement raised at the meeting needs clarifying at a further meeting.

There has been a failure to agree much of remaining science due to differences in the interpretation of the legal requirements. The Review is based on indicators and not specifics. The methodological approach is well established within all organisations. CCW staff uses their own internal experts to carry out monitoring according to this nationally approved method.

### **6. Discussion on Management Plan / Science Review**

NLP suggested that a document needs to be prepared which would clearly show all parties agreement etc. and felt that the Review had broken down after the Summary document had been produced. There are significant disagreements and it was suggested an arbitrating panel be brought in so that a conclusion can be reached.

It was claimed that as FCW had presented a plan they had pre-empted the Review unnecessarily as no conclusions have yet been written. FCW confirmed that it felt the production of a Management Plan would help progress the matter (with caveat enclosed that no coastal clearfelling be undertaken prior to conclusions being received).

The Review was initiated by WAG and it was suggested that after the next meeting with CCW a meeting should be arranged with WAG. A report has been provided to WAG that includes comments from both Ian Miller and Martin Hollingham but this needed to be concluded and represented.

It was agreed that this meeting was not the time or place to hold a detailed discussion about the Review.

### **7. FCW position of signage at Newborough**

NLP members raised the issue that permission had been given by FCW for leaflets and posters to be displayed at Newborough and yet these have been systematically removed by FCW. NLP had complained to TGR and he had confirmed that all leaflets were to be removed due to concerns over the nature of the information being provided. Some member of the NLP felt they were being accused of scare mongering and frightening the visitors and objected to their freedom of speech being removed. FCW confirmed that the nature of the information contained in the publications had raised concerns and that it could approved factual information. A number of posters had been found nailed to trees, which is unacceptable. NLP have sent a revised leaflet to TGR for approval but have had no response as yet. The Forest District Manager admitted that she had been holding up the approval of the leaflets but this should be addressed very soon and hopefully before TGR went on leave.

### **AP17.3 - Forest District Manager to progress this matter.**

The notice boards are to provide information regarding activities and forthcoming events being held and FCW still have that need. NLP suggested that local businesses should be allowed to use the notice board for advertising their business. FCW cannot endorse specific businesses even if it is a local business and any concerns about lack of opportunity to advertise local businesses should be addressed to the local council or community council.

## **8. Drought issues**

NLP member raised the point that the drought issue had not helped the situation with RBNB disease and close monitoring was needed. The under-planting proposals of the Management Plan were important proposals that needed implementing sooner rather than later.

## **9. Horse riding access issues**

NLP member complained that the horse riders are not adhering to the designated routes. Immediate short term action is required, as there is not enough control and there are H&S risks to walkers RW explained that FCW have been working closely with the Traeth Rhosyr Riding Association and these problems have been highlighted. FCW has made it clear that the use of unauthorised routes must stop. The Riding Association has stated that their members would not use the unauthorised routes and will ask their member to "warden" the situation when they are out themselves. RW informed the NLP that horse and carriages have been given permission to access the wood. RW also confirmed that the authorised horses will have tags and new routes will be in place for the riders. It was agreed by all that there are one or two riders who are not adhering to the rules or routes, which spoils the experience for everyone. FCW are hoping that the combination of new routes, maps and signage should improve the situation but agreed to look into other suggested options such as strategically placed gates.

**AP17.4** - NLP suggested a kissing gate by the cob and RW will investigate this request.

### **10. Any other business**

It was agreed that there was no other business to discuss.

Draft Forest Design Plan (Management Plan) will be issued all and FCW will arrange drop-in sessions for NLP and community members. A further facilitated NLP meeting was offered if members felt that this would support them in articulating their comments more collectively.

**AP17.5** - NLP to let FC know if they require this meeting to help with this.

Minutes of the meeting will be issued to all and PG thanked everyone for a very constructive meeting.

FCW's PowerPoint presentations will also be made available in the public domain for those who wish to view them again. These are too large to post onto the website but can be emailed on request by getting in touch with John Browne ([john.browne@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:john.browne@forestry.gsi.gov.uk))

Ruth Jenkins  
Forest District Manager

### List of Attendees

Peter Garson, Head of Estate Management (FCW)  
Ruth Jenkins, Forest District Manager (FCW)  
John Browne, District Forester Planning (FCW)  
Tim Gordon-Roberts, Local Area Manager (FCW)  
Robert Williams, Woodland Manager (FCW)  
Lynne Morris, Assistant to Area Land Agent (FCW)  
Tim Jones, North Regional Director (CCW)  
John Ratcliffe, Nature Reserves Sites Team Leader (CCW)  
Hilary Miller, Senior Land Use Officer (CCW)  
Arne Pommerening  
Ian Miller  
Steve Kneale  
Ann Hesson  
Kate Evans  
Liz Webb  
Michael Webb  
Charles B Cochrane  
Philip Snow  
Chris Wynne  
Hughes Knott (Menter Môn)  
Geoff Radford  
Martin Hollingham (Hydrologist)  
John Tripp  
Maureen Parry-Williams  
Enid Mummery