

Wales Community Woodland Association (WCWA)

Working Group Meeting

4th September 2008

Present: Philip Swain (PS), Steve Wigfall (SW), Jenny Wong (JW), Roger Davies (RD), Fay Sharpley (FS), Jon Hollingdale (JH), Katy Harris (KH), Zena Wilmot (ZW)

1. Scottish perspective on establishing a Community Woodland Association – Presentation by Jon Hollingdale

Key points from the establishment of CWA

- Policy to not to have policies ó it is up to the communities what they want to do (avoid over definition).
- Directors must be nominated by the a group
- Anyone can be a member but only 1 per community group can vote (community group has to be open to anyone over 18, usually defined geographically, majority of directors elected from the membership, must be involved in woodland management)
- It is up to the community groups themselves to define how they fit that.
- Annual conference is very important
- Need to be independent
- Encouraging groups to widen support in the community - wider coalition of interest.

2. WCWA Relationship with CLL

The issue of CLL effectively being managed by two steering groups was raised. WCWA does not want to feel as if it is being blocked by this arrangement. Letter from the CLL steering group was given out effectively handing over responsibility for this project and the CLL staff work plans to the WCWA working group. This was seen as a suitable arrangement.

Need to be looking forward and deciding how the group can develop ó outcome of this 2-year project should be a business-plan and timeline for establishment of WCWA as independent organisation. Formal membership should be prioritised in order to harness the energy from community groups at the networking event at C.A.T. These groups need to feel like something is happening and that they are a part of it.

Community asset transfer is an important upcoming issue in Welsh politics at the moment and it is important to engage with it. Consultation is needed to get it right. Leases can work just as effectively without having to own land for the community.

Could link the issue of community asset transfer to the planned trip to Scotland. Offer of Jon Hollingdale to advise Welsh agencies with an interest on matters in Scotland ó from a community perspective.

3. Follow up on previous day's policy discussion

CLL to put together a draft of strategy answers and put a PDF version on the website as soon as possible. This will also be sent out to WCWA working group for comments. The WCWA joint response must be submitted by the 14th October. Strategy should be out Jan-Feb 08.

There are Documents on Scottish CWA website: Scottish forestry strategy consultation, implementation plan and analysis of responses. Could be useful to look at these.

In addition to this it was felt that a letter / email should be sent to Mike Pitcher outlining /highlighting additional/key issues not covered in the consultation document:

- Process of consultation should be transparent and an interim report be made available, at this point we would like to re-engage with the process including commenting on outcomes and action plan at a draft stage. Comments and changes should be tracked transparently with comments. Issues brought up outside the questions asked in consultation document should not be overlooked.
- We can potentially offer access to large community membership on the ground of assistance with baseline data and community engagement for monitoring outcomes.
- Key point missing in strategy is need for community input to forest management, not just community benefits.

4. Response to FCW plan - how to build internal capacity for dealing with communities

See notes from previous meeting of plus additional points below.

If there are new members of staff then we would like to work alongside them.

There is obviously a need for someone to follow up on Cyd Coed of follow up on what each group now needs to proceed by visiting each group in person, individual support. If an FCW member of staff is working on this could they work alongside WCWA? Coed Lleol could fill this role but unlikely to have capacity for this level of engagement. Would be a good opportunity to work together and build WCWA capacity to take this support role in future, rather than a top down approach.

Is there a conflict of interest between these new staff and what WCWA want to do? If there is this team internally to FCW conflict for funding, etc. We do not want an internal FCW team competing with our role. This has happened with Forest School of need to avoid. Roles need to be defined early on. Has already been acknowledged that networking and support role is better done externally to FCW of need to clearly

distinguish between support provided by Coed Lleol / WCWA and by FCW so as not to duplicate.

Support for groups not working on FC land?

What each Cydcoed individual group need and how can they be helped ó we need to know that.

We don't necessarily think the FCW should have a remit to support non FC groups other than giving grants, and any follow-up from Cydcoed needed to tie up loose ends. Long-term this support role sits better with WCWA than FCW.

Specifically nurturing ex Cydcoed projects – what are likely needs?

Help and advice starting up woodland based business or industries, ability to engage better with the community, technical assistance (FC or independent woodland advisors), certification. Most of these issues could be better dealt with by WCWA (partly through signposting).

Is FCW best placed to deliver on this?

FCW should concentrate on dealing with the significant issues re working on FC land ó tenure, operations, legislative barriers. The new FC group should focus internally on building capacity and culture for community engagement, doing properly the things they should ó consulting on design plans, allowing groups to work on their land.

Long-term many of these issues are best dealt with by WCWA.

5 - Community Asset transfer WAG plans – our next steps.

Get hold of Peter Williams, Development Trust (KH action point) (who are putting together a report for the minister).

PW may be interested in case studies of woodland projects dealing with these issues ó KH to set up a meeting to get more information on what his role is. Express an interest to Development Trust and to FCW on this topic.

Scottish National Forest Land Scheme has a National Forest Advisory Panel specifically to review applications.

If communities approved ó offer land at nominal market value but with independent valuer (cuts out speculation). Communities have 18 months to raise this money. Every bit of National Forest is within this scheme and could be bought by communities ó if it's a high value area there would be a higher expectation of increased public benefit.

Leases are possible on FCW land but not for forestry / woodland management. This is a GB wide issue in need of attention.

If our minister wants to talk about community assets Jon Hollingdale would be willing to speak about Scottish situation from community perspective. Bob Frost, Malcolm Wield from FCS also good contacts.

6. Logo and name

Three logos were considered as presented by Jen Drage

Jen is to develop two of these ideas in line with ideas during the meeting:

- try leaves other than the sycamore leaf
- people to look less like women in dresses
- smaller name to be tried Coedlannau Cymunedol

Shorter name in Welsh to be investigated ó all to think about it and get back to us with ideas, CLL to take advice on meaning of different Welsh woodland words. To be decided at next meeting.

6. Constitution ó as revised in document. To be circulated by email and revised some more ó decision at next meeting.

7. Activities and CLL work programme ó see attached document.

8. Relationship with CLL ó group happy with letter (amendment re planned establishment of WCWA instead of actual). Judy welcome at next meeting or at launch meeting ó would like to meet her. Steve Wigfall to represent WCWA on CLL steering group.

9. Date of next meeting Monday 3rd November in Machynlleth.