



**ERP Environment Action Group Meeting
3rd September 2010, RCCE Offices, Feering
10:00am**

MINUTES

Present:

John Hall (Chair)	Essex Wildlife Trust
Peter Baggott	EALC
George Courtauld	RCCE
Adrian Gascoyne	ECC
Suzanne Harris (minutes)	RCCE
David Knagg	Environment Agency
Tricia Moxey	CPREssex
Roy Read	Countryside and Coast Officer, Maldon DC
Mike Sandison	Essex Wildlife Trust
Brian Stacey	Woodland Officer, ECC
Brenda Towle	ECVYS
Graham Underwood	University of Essex

Apologies:

Lindsey Allen	Rosemary Padfield	Andrew St Joseph
Ted Benton	Jules Pretty	Karen Thomas
Peter Garrett	Matthew Searle	

1 Apologies

Apologies were read.

2 Note from the Meeting 23 April 2010

A discussion took place regarding whether the record of these meetings should be referred to as notes or minutes. It was agreed that minutes would be issued with numbered references relating to the agenda items.

Points of accuracy

Mike Sandison wished his primary affiliation to be recorded as Essex Wildlife Trust.

3 Matters Arising from these notes

Brenda Towle supported the idea of a Plain English Guide to PROW. Terms of Reference – Core Priorities were still to be added. Some changes were suggested and agreed; John Hall undertook to redraft the TOR.

John Hall

4 Key Targets

The results of the voting showed:

High Priority:	Agri-Environment Schemes and Incentives Initiatives encouraging local activity – local produce, crafts, power, sustainability
Medium Priority:	Green infrastructure and heritage interest Tourism trails and use of redundant buildings

Coastal issues
Low Priority: County Records Centre

Graham Underwood highlighted that there is not much that can be done regarding agri-environment; an important subject but limited opportunity for influence.

John Hall stressed the importance of focusing on areas where the group might make a difference.

David Knagg expressed an interest in agri-environment, but agreed it was hard to deliver on.

Various links were identified, both between priorities and with other Action Groups.

Priorities were agreed as:

**3. Local projects to improve green infrastructure and heritage interest
4&5. Tourism trails, use of redundant farm buildings for selected rural initiatives**

7. Initiatives encouraging local produce, local crafts, local power, sustainability at a local level.

Other issues identified included:

Valuing ecosystems

John Hall summarised people's concerns and interests as:

- Raising awareness of these priorities.
- Woodlands and how they can be used so they are valued and therefore kept.
- Good health and well being of local communities.

5 Essex Woodland Strategy

Brian Stacey reported he had received a few comments but not many.

George Courtauld spoke about the importance of making woodland pay. Main demand comes from charcoal and log burners.

Brian Stacey agreed; for woodland to be financially viable economies of scale are required.

It was noted that Essex is one of the least wooded counties in England.

Co-operative working was highlighted as a good way forward; in particular to break the vicious circle of no market = no supply = no market...

Roy Read cited an example of two people making a living from a 60 acre woodland.

Mike Sandison and John Hall reported that EWT's wood production is only financially viable because of the input from volunteers. Brian Stacey added that it is more usual for people to simply cover costs of management by selling wood from coppicing etc.

Graham Underwood asked what might be needed to encourage farmers and landowners to work co-operatively. George Courtauld suggested a Marketing Board to arrange promotion and storage for charcoal and biomass.

John Hall reminded the meeting that the value of woodland should be recognised. Roy Read advised that Maldon DC promotes some woodland walks, with profits going to landowners.

It was suggested that some of the innovative ideas regarding promotion and viability of woodlands could be pooled and offered as inspiration to landowners.

Roy Read raised concerns about the division of woodlands in the selling of small parts, eg at Chantry Wood, Wickham Bishops. A further discussion followed about how to prevent woodland being divided. Tree Protection Orders can only protect single trees, not the scale of a wooded area. Commercially

selling in smaller plots is much more viable, attracting 3-4 times commercial value if old as one large area. John Hall encouraged ideas as to what could be done – none were forthcoming at this time.

Graham Underwood advised that the Tree Council have collated some good practice ideas.

Brian Stacey mentioned the need for promotion of woodfuel boilers in public buildings. A renewables heating initiative will provide grant support on a 15 year contract, from April 2011.

Tricia Moxey highlighted the important role planners can play.

There is a need to dispel myths of perceptions such as smoke and chimneys.

George Courtauld raised the topic of woodland burials, which are easiest when undertaken alongside creation of a new woodland.

It was agreed that John Hall and Brian Stacey would brainstorm some initial ideas regarding innovative and good practice management of woodland. This could be developed in to a Good Practice Guide

John Hall
Brian
Stacey

6 Living Landscapes and Local Wildlife Sites

6.1 John Hall reminded those present that these projects are part of the three year Local Area Agreement which is over 2 years through.

The target is 41 Living Landscape sites to produce a vision. 29 have been completed to date. The target is unlikely to be reached, due to funding cuts, but it is expected that 36-38 will be achieved.

There are approximately 1500 designated Local Wildlife Sites in Essex. This is a non-statutory designation.

437 are now in active management with both organisations and private businesses involved. John Hall is confident that the target will be met providing all the partners continue their support.

6.2 Biological Records Centre

Essex is one of very few counties which does not have a Biological Records Centre. Various organisations, including EWT, hold databases with their own records, but there is nothing centralised to bring this information together.

There is a pilot project in Tendring which involves Natural England, EWT, ECC, Environment Agency and more. 4 districts are supportive of this approach – it is hoped that work can progress from districts to county level.

6.3 John Hall asked members how they felt they could contribute. Discussion followed, which included:

- An agreement to look at a strategy to implement Living Landscape visions at the next meeting
- Trying to get Parish Councils aware of and involved in Local Wildlife Sites
- Publicising success

John Hall agreed to put this subject back on the agenda at the next meeting.

7 Items Suggested for the Next Meeting of the Environment Action Group

Topics suggested included:

- Access to funding, particularly European funding
- A checklist for woodland owners
- Ideas for initiatives involving green space

- Living Landscapes (how do we take forward)
- Local Wildlife Sites (involving parishes)
- Shoreline Management Plan, Coastal areas, Living Seas referring to the shallow seas off the Essex coast.

8 Date of Next Meeting

Dates to be circulated for availability – late November, early December.

The meeting close at 12.20pm