

## North Northamptonshire Carbon Sink Forestry Project

Feedback from Workshop held at Top Lodge, Fineshade Woods near Corby – 13<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

A Workshop to introduce the concept of a Carbon Sink Forestry Project was held at Top Lodge, Fineshade Woods on the 13<sup>th</sup> January, 2010.

31 attendees attended, representing the following organisations:

Local authorities:

East Northamptonshire Council  
Corby Borough Council  
Kettering Borough Council  
Northamptonshire County Council  
North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit

Government bodies:

Forestry Commission  
Natural England  
Environment Agency  
Government Office – East Midlands

Private sector:

Boughton Estate  
King West  
Lockhart Garratt

Charity / Community Sector:

The National Trust  
The Woodland Trust  
River Nene Regional Park

A representative from each of North Northamptonshire Development Company, and the Wildlife Trust were unable to attend on the day due to the snow and ice.

### **Main Speakers**

The workshop was chaired by Andy Hall, the Forestry Commission's Regional Director; and supported by the following speakers:

John Vaughan from the Forestry Commission's Policy & Programmes Group spoke about 'Combating Climate Change – A Role for UK Forests'

Karen Horner, Principle Planner at the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit spoke about the 'Joint Core Strategy Review'

Michel Kerrou, Chief Executive of the River Nene Regional Park CiC spoke about the 'Environmental Character and Green Infrastructure Suite'

Kevin Stannard, the Forestry Commission's Forest Management Director in Northants Forest District spoke about the 'Carbon Sink Forestry Project – A Concept for North Northamptonshire.'

### **Afternoon Work Groups**

The workshop divided into four work groups in the afternoon, with each group tasked to look at four questions:

Work groups:

- Funding Options;
- Land owners / Land managers;
- Organisational structure;
- Public relations / social responsibility.

Questions:

- What is good about this initiative?
- What are the problems?
- What is needed for me / my organisation / my sector to engage?
- What is the next step?

### **Summary feedback from the workshop session.**

#### **Funding the Carbon Sink Forestry Programme.**

##### What is Good About this Initiative?

- Links to other sustainability initiatives currently running
- Meets strategic targets – nationally and locally
- Emphasises multiple benefits of woodland to society

##### What are the problems?

- Current funding streams are drying up rapidly – both in reality and perceived
- Valuing community in-kind contributions
- Carbon accounting / off-setting – understanding the terminology

##### What is needed for me / my organisation / my sector to engage:

- Innovation – innovative long-term management to reduce costs / turn profitable – utilise existing land managers, ie the farmers
- Flexible approach to planning (does the planting of trees today preclude the future development of that land – if so urban fringe will be unavailable)
- Direct financial incentive to plant – grants (eWGS) / commercial benefits (from carbon accounting)
- Private funding on private land – may not want public access but want to be socially responsible
- Transparent financial accounting and decision making

- Funding over a longer term
- Public recognition of contribution.

#### What is the Next Step:

- Identify funding / bid for funding – from for example:
  - S106 / Community Infrastructure Levy;
  - eWGS / RDPE / Environmental Stewardship
  - LEADER funding (EU RDPE)
  - Carbon accounting
  - Landfill / Aggregates levy
  - Corporate sponsorship – with or without carbon accounting;
  - HLF / other lottery funds.
  - Other planning gain – ie. tree planting linked to windfarm permissions / housing permissions / distribution warehousing.
- Policy Cover – link to core spatial strategy / essential requirements for developments and developers to plan in as part of carbon economy.
- Identify Seed Funding for feasibility study / early exemplars / PR and promotional literature.
- Public promotions / corporate promotion to raise profile and get ground swell of popular support to influence funding
- Promotion / talk to land owners
- Brand the concept early in order to gain credibility
- Identify what land would be readily available to use in early funding bids (establish a land bank)

#### **Land Owners / Land Managers**

##### What is good about this initiative?

- Increasing public awareness of woodland; the value of that woodland to society
- Increasing benefits of woodland ownership to land owners
- Improve the profile of the wider countryside as being relevant in a modern society
- Recognition of the value of timber as a sustainable commodity.

##### What are the problems?

- Lack of funding for woodland creation
- Low financial yields from forestry
- Land under woodland is locked up for a very long-time
- Land is locked into other programmes – farming, golf courses, and often tenanted which limits options for releasing for tree planting
- Some land owners will not agree to public access, others only if financial incentive great enough
- Deer – major threat to existing woodlands, let alone new planting schemes
- Perceptions of future food shortages versus need to take carbon out of atmosphere

- Uncertainty over the carbon accounting – ability of a corporate land owner to take a carbon credit on the balance sheet from the scheme

#### What is needed to engage?

- Confidence in the organisational structure and robustness of the delivery structure
- Financial clarity – short and long-term
- Promotion / identity of the project / branding
- Degree of long term Forestry Commission support? Will this be part of the long-term compact between land-owners / managers and the FC, or spun off as something separate?
- Degree of community support – most land owners are embedded in their community, if strong community support at a very local / village level then may be more willing to support.
- Flexible tree planting schemes.

#### What is the next step?

- Form a working group to develop robust framework
- Keep to a timescale – don't drift
- Scheme / plan ready for planting this coming planting season (autumn 2010)
- Flagship project – champion early wins, secure national funding as such
- Present to CLA at earliest opportunity

### **Organisational Structure**

This group did not respond to the questions – and went straight to drafting out a structure to take the project forward:

- ◆ Project Development Group to be established – to include
  - Public agencies
  - Local authorities
  - Utilities
  - Community and national forest representatives
  - Role for the River Nene Regional Park
  - Role of the East Midlands Green Infrastructure Network (EMGIN)
  - Role of the Northamptonshire Environmental Network (NEN)
- ◆ Scope / Scale of the Project:
  - Local – North Northamptonshire – a response to the core spatial strategy review and CABE place making workshops; or
  - County – Northamptonshire – county wide response supporting local area agreement; or
  - Regional – East Midlands programme

What is the focus for the Carbon Sink Forestry programme – is it spatially targeted? Is it a North Northamptonshire pilot for the whole of the region?

How different is it to the tried and tested Community Forests / National Forest programme?

◆ Structure of Delivery Group:

- Core should be people, agencies that shape the strategies, policies, programmes that make it happen and that are then implemented by 'the rest'
- The core should be surrounded by a broad partnership of individuals, organisations and companies that support and will work to implement the concept, and will work to make it happen but do not need to be in the driving seat
- Wider stakeholder group – those affected by the concept; who will benefit directly or indirectly but may not be directly involved – supporters and influencers but not necessarily doers.
- Role of champions and carbon evangelists in spreading the word and making it happen
- Communications
- Critical Players – who are they – stoppers as well as promoters
- Key supporters – positions of real influence in organisations

◆ Developing the idea further:

- Larger landowners – estates, farmers, developers (option holders), public land asset managers
- Forestry Commission – relationship with 'normal business'
- Role of Natural England and Environment Agency – clarify and make clear;
- Who else wants to deliver on the ground – Woodland Trust / Wildlife Trust / National Trust
- Who is best placed to shape, steer and influence? Forestry Commission / RNRP
- Communications with local authority officers and members?
- Local Strategic Partnerships – access to?
- Parish Councils for grass root support?
- Recreation / leisure / tourist interests – what is the leisure hook?
- Business / commercial interests – what is needed to get engagement?

### **Public Relations / Social Responsibility**

#### What is good about this initiative?

- Local response to climate change – local action
- Visible tangible landscape change (although will be slow)
- PR / programme will attract funding to area
- Education resource for the area – climate change mitigation in action – woodland resource. Agenda is strongest with children so children will influence adults
- Trees are positive, more accessible and more fun to hug than waste and recycling
- Recreation and access resource being created for people and nature

- Tangible, practical, strengthens bio-diversity, people and landscape through integrated network
- Be a good carbon citizen – plant a tree, use wood

#### What are the problems?

- Too many messages – need to keep simple, and focused – careful use of well crafted messages
- Problems with the science and public perception / cynicism towards climate change
- Problems with terminology permitted – issues of carbon accounting versus offsetting – making carbon visible and counting it robustly
- Long term proposal – early progress likely to be slow – peak benefit will be many years off
- Funding carbon sink forestry can't be at the expense of personal action to reduce carbon pollution at source
- All UK efforts will be peanuts compared to the actions of the big players – China / India / US – so why bother?
- Tree planting versus food production – what is best?
- Complication of woodfuel / short rotation coppice – can be seen as contradictory to carbon sink forestry

#### What is needed to engage?

- Money – financial incentives
- Enabling legislation and clarity for carbon accounting and terminology
- Consistent policy across Government – with joined up thinking
- Consistent education programme to get the wider community on board with climate change, the need to act, the need to act now
- Be aware, be prepared for negative media spins on positive PR
- Plant 1 tree per person in Northants (is that enough?)
- Enthusiasm
- Trusted leadership.

#### Next Steps:

- Identify core stakeholders
- Engage with core stakeholders at the right level – what is needed to get lasting buy in – will be different for each player
- Planning – get the strategies lined up, get synergies with the planning system – new developer targets for carbon and sustainability – what can carbon sink forestry do for developers and vice versa.
- Be clear on the 'what's in it for me' for each player – but ensure the core message is consistent.
- This is urban as well as rural agenda – but the type of woodlands created may be different.
- Forest schools and education – consistency and ownership by the next generation

- Education, education, education.
- Understand and promote consistent activities – such as green burials, woodland paintball, etc.

### **Brief Resume of consistent themes:**

#### The Good:

- ❑ A very worthwhile initiative, long over due;
- ❑ Very topical, ripe for engaging wider community and specific organisations;
- ❑ Very positive messages;
- ❑ Very laudable scheme.

#### The Problems:

- ❑ Consistency of language of carbon accounting / off-setting / sequestration – linked to a complex and emerging area of science; linked to:
- ❑ Perception of climate change by wider community – can't do anything about it / actually I'd quite like it to be a bit warmer;
- ❑ Money – perception (and reality?) that available funding will dwindle to nothing as all public funding is cut, and business struggles to survive in coming years
- ❑ The big land-owners need to be incentivised to engage.

#### Engagement:

- ❑ Clear, transparent, trusted structure;
- ❑ Robust, transparent finances and clear trusted decision making;
- ❑ Flexibility to be all things to all people, but maintain integrity and consistency.
- ❑ Enthusiasm, trusted expert leadership.
- ❑ Don't bog down in paperwork and committees.

#### Next Steps:

- ❑ Identify stakeholders – talk to them, engage, enthuse;
- ❑ Don't drift – get on with it;
- ❑ Find seed funding to do feasibility study / exemplar plantings / promotional literature in first year;
- ❑ Clarify language, branding and core messages – quickly.