

The National Tree Safety Group Management Committee

Venue Forestry Commission England, 620 Bristol Business Park,
Coldharbour Lane, Bristol, BS16 1EJ

Present: Judith Webb (Chair); FC, Jon Stokes; Tree Council, Nev Fay; Tree Works Environmental Practice, Mick Boddy; BSI B/213 Committee, Antony Wallis; FC Wales, John Watt; DARM, Mike Seville; CLA, John Lockhart; RICS, Emily Ramsey FCGB Caroline Harrison; CONFOR, Simon Richmond; AA, Mark Daniel; Woodland Trust, Jim Smith FC England.

Apologies: Andy Tipping, LTOA, Paul Johnston, FCE, Shireen Chambers, ICF.

Minutes for: Thursday 2nd February 2011

1. Introductions

2. Notes of last meeting:

Agreed that the notes distributed were representative of the previous NTSG Management Committee meeting held on 3rd February 2011

3. Update on Release of Guidance

Judith gave a brief update on the release of the guidance and the background to the decision not to issue the press release until after the Christmas period. The delay was due to a number of legal cases involving fatalities from falling trees receiving some publicity and the concern that the media may try to exploit the situation and so cause further distress to the bereaved families. The guidance was published on the 5th of December 2011 as a "soft launch" and all members of the Management Committee agreed to delay the press release and broader publicity until the 12th January 2012.

- Richard Benyon's letter concerning the fatality on British Waterways land was raised by Judith
- Judith contacting Coroner and Defra.

- Judith to Draft a letter to Richard Benyon presenting NTSG view and a copy of the guidance.

There was a general discussion on the best way to make the most of the launch and disseminate the document as widely as possible.

- Text of Landowner PDF to be put on website. **ACTION JS**
- Visitor Safety in the Countryside's guidance concurs with the NTSG guidance
- Jeremy Barrell's article in Horticulture Week discussed
- Discussion on how to handle negative perceptions of the guidance as a good number of Committee members being asked to give workshops on the guidance.
- Message needs to be practical and consistent
- Produce Speaking Script/ house style Power Point for all Committee members to use. **ACTION JS**
- Need to be proactive not reactive to spreading message about guidance
- Anticipate FAQ's and draw up "lines to take" list for members at meetings **ACTION JS**
- Set up workshops run by Committee Member organisations to give more detailed steer than in guidance. **ACTION ALL**
- NTSG a hard fought stakeholder consensus-worth preserving!
- Estate owners want to know minimum to comply with their legal responsibilities
- Need to challenge the Risk Entrepreneurs. Actions based solely on each case on its merits
- Information in the guidance is just the beginning. Needs to be implemented but recognise it will take a long time to effect change "tanker turning".
- Guidance will be a tool for customers that gives them confidence to specify what they need from professional service providers.
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4. Agreed to skip Householder Leaflet until after the DARM report.

5. DARMS 3rd Tranche Report

John watt gave a brief synopsis of the status of the 3rd Tranche Report and its position in the context of the other reports provided by DARM and what was expected of DARM within the original brief.

Judith Webb highlighted the need to finish the report to the satisfaction of the Management Committee prior to signing off the final payment.

- Benefits of trees not priced
- Risk to benefit analysis

General discussion about position of DARM's 3rd Tranche report in respect to the guidance. Risk perception of general public from trees is extremely low.

- Agreed to put 1st and 2nd DARM reports back on website, but not the 3rd Tranche report until completed

It was agreed that Jim Smith and John Watt would meet to agree a completion strategy that included some concrete recommendations in the conclusion of the report.

ACTION: Jim Smith, John Watt.

6. Householder Leaflet

An issue was raised by Mick Boddy with the text in the Householder Leaflet concerning the following:

- The wording of the 2nd sentence in 1st paragraph on page 2 in regard to "general pruning" being helpful was queried as being inaccurate.
- 4th Bullet point on last page should have included a reference to professional indemnity insurance as well as public liability insurance

Some members of the Management Committee expressed the view that these queries were so fundamental as to necessitate the withdrawal of the leaflet.

Jim Smith stated that he remained happy with the wording in the 1st paragraph on page 2. He believed it was technically accurate in the context of formative pruning for young trees and did not require changing. This text had been present throughout the drafting stage of the document and had been agreed and passed by Jim Smith and Andy Tipping latterly and originally by Caroline Stott and Nev Fay in the very first draft.

The issue of the reference to professional indemnity insurance was felt more keenly and Simon Richmond stated that at the very least

because the document was targeted at the individual householder and mentions employing a consultant, professional indemnity insurance should have been included.

Jim Smith accepted that the lack of a reference to PI insurance was an omission but not one serious enough to warrant destroying all 10,000 leaflets.

Mike Seville, Emily Ramsey and Caroline Harrison all stated that Public Liability Insurance was considered sufficient for their organisations/members and that the lack of a reference to PI was not deemed a good enough reason to withdraw the leaflet.

There was a general discussion on how best to resolve the situation and Judith Webb proposed that it be agreed that the relevant sections of the leaflet would be reworded, released as an updated pdf download and in the meantime all the existing stock of the leaflet would be allowed to run down. **(Agreed by all)**.

ACTION: The Drafting Group

6. Communications

Nev Fay raised the issue of the inactivity on the NTSG website and the need to be able to download relevant and updated documents from the website.

Jim Smith stated that FC publications had advised that for the pdf's of the NTSG guidance publications a single distribution point was advisable to avoid outdated or earlier versions being released by unauthorised or outdated outlets

- Produce Power Point for member use with Core messages
- Write a scenario for Parish Councils
- DARM reports to be reinstated onto the NTSG website pages

ACTION: Jim Smith

7. Handover event for March 2012

8. Future need, role and structure of NTSG

There was a general discussion on how the NTSG should manage its affairs and existence in the future.

- Demand created that needs to be serviced
- Place NTSG with EWTP?
- FCE support concludes at end of March 2012
- NTSG to continue meeting for the next 3 years
- Uptake of guidance will be slow and NTSG need to retain a profile to deal with feedback, comments etc.

9. Finance and Income

- 5 year revision of document
- Need to explore offers of hosting/caretaker role from groups like the EWTP, Arb Association, The Tree Council etc.

There was a general discussion on raising funds by levying subscriptions on members.

ACTIONS: AA to look at scoping of caretaker role, costs etc.

10. Election of Chair

Jon Stokes highlighted the need for the re-election of an independent Chair for the NTSG for another term. Judith Webb, the current Chair stepped out of the room and there was a brief discussion on suitability and performance.

The Management Committee voted and Judith Webb was re-elected Chair of the NTSG by majority vote.

- Judith agreed to continue as Chair for a further year
- DARM was offered a seat on the NTSG Committee as an observer.
- If DARM was asked to undertake any further work for the Group this work would be incorporated into the NTSG annual budget forecast and not undertaken on a pro bono basis.

10. AOB

A Committee Member had queried amount asked by FC publications for Postage and Packing when ordering Householder Leaflets and Landowner Summary.

Action: Jim Smith