

NTSG Management Committee Meeting

1st July 2010

Forestry Commission, 620 Bristol Business Park, Bristol

Attendees:

Judith Webb

Caroline Harrison

Andy Tipping

Sarah Dalzell

Mark Daniels

Mike Seville

Catherine Stott

Neville Fay

Simon Richmond

John Lockhart

Mick Boddy

Rebecca Wilson

Anthony Wallis

Welcome

JW opened the meeting and welcomed everyone attending.

Staff Changes

Gareth Price has left the FC and Bill Heslegrave, who will now be leading the Quality of Life team on a part time basis, will take over Gareth's role on NTSG. Rebecca Wilson is now responsible for secretariat duties.

Since the meeting a further staffing change has occurred at FC and Bill Heslegrave will no longer be taking on the NTSG role, this will now be Jim Smith, Project Development Manager with FCE in London.

Presentation of on-line consultation responses

Sarah Dalzell from E3, the consultants handling the online consultation did a powerpoint presentation outlining the findings. 107 responses were received in total with the majority of responses favourable, 91.5% agreed with the fundamental concept of the NTSG and the draft Guidelines. Full details are provided in the attached report "Analysis of On-line consultation for NTSG" with a summary on page 117 and 118.

Discussion of the on-line and other responses

SD was asked whether consultation responses could be sorted to allow comments to be observed alongside each other with the demographic and whether Local Authorities could be identified. SD agreed that this could be done.

Action 1: SD to sort online-consultation responses to ensure complete picture of individual responses can be gained by NTSG in time for Drafting Group meeting.

Several written responses to the NTSG consultation were received from organisations including The Consultants Arborists Society, the HSE, Landscape Planning Ltd and various individual consultants.

Jane Karthaus from ConFor provided a useful summary of the written responses to the consultation which was circulated around the group and which will help inform the re-drafting of certain areas of the document.

It was agreed by the group that some responses did contain constructive criticism (that needed to be taken into account by the drafting group), but that the comments from the HSE were of the most concern and fundamental to the whole line of approach that the NTSG has taken.

MB asked whether the written responses needed to be weighted differently considering the expertise of the authors. It was agreed that this was not appropriate but that all the points made would be looked at and assessed to see if any redrafting of these particular elements of the guidance was warranted or appropriate.

JW pointed out that care was needed not to change things on the basis of one or two responses since there was such strong support for what was produced so far and significant rewriting to satisfy one or two individuals could run the risk of reducing that overall level of support. JL pointed out that huge efforts had been made by the NTSG to ensure that the process was legitimate, unbiased and that the NTSG was made up of representatives from all areas of tree management and safety.

JW asked the group whether they generally accepted the principle of the document in light of the very positive online consultation response and mindful of the fact that the other written comments would be taken into account during the next draft.

Action 2: Organisations to email JW to let her know whether they broadly support the principles of the document or have any other issues in light of consultation process. Comments by August 15th

All present thanked Sarah Dalzell for her useful presentation and the follow up discussion and for the clear and constructive way that the consultation and its responses had been handled.

Next steps on drafting of Guidance document a) content b) publishing

Content:

It was verbally agreed by all round the table that they did accept the broad principles of the document but that significant work needed to be carried out with re-drafting key areas, namely:

- a) Whether the "benefits" of trees to society should be included.
- b) Clarification of specific legal points and technical issues raised during the consultation process

It was also agreed that:

Action 3: Urban Local Authorities need to be contacted to ensure they are on board

Action 4: Separate meetings to be held between SR/MD and key individuals (Alan Plomb) within HSE to bottom out whether "benefits" should be included in the document as well as issues over SFAIRP ("So far as is reasonably practicable").

It was agreed that the NTSG must ensure that the "benefits of trees" is included in the document and that the overall tone and nature of the document should not change due to the negative comments that had been received by a small number of organisations. Drafting Group to consider this further.

JW agreed that the document should be turned back to the drafting group and that each comment should be dealt with individually. There is a need for a thorough process to ensure all pertinent points are captured but there was general agreement that a complete rewrite was not needed. JW agreed to get more involved in the drafting group if necessary. The HSE are not expected to agree with every word of the document but their broad endorsement was felt to be very important.

Action 5: Re-drafting group to meet to discuss re-drafting specific areas in light of consultation before Management Committee next meet

Publishing:

There is no NTSG registered address and JW is currently acting as post-box. This will need to be dealt with before the final document is published so there is a home for future correspondence regarding document review etc.

Communication via briefing notes will be key to keeping people in the picture regarding progress of the final document. The simple summary (landowner focussed) document will be drafted after the main document has been finalised.

Next meetings & other actions

Action 6: Rebecca Wilson to arrange next NTSG Management Committee meeting using online meeting organiser "Doodle". Timescale to be dependent on Drafting Group progress, but we will try and keep as close to original publication aspirational timeline as possible.

Action 7: Drafting Group to meet as required.

Action 8: JL to produce bullets on his take on where we are / what NTSG has achieved so far for circulation. Others can use this as basis for updates to their own organisations.

Action 9: JW to pursue issues with HSE and seek to progress their endorsement of the Guidance.

Action 10: JW to look at the publication spec and timescale and keep group informed on this.