



Cumbria Wildfire Group

STEERING GROUP

27th Feb 2008, CREA Building, Redhills, Penrith

Attendance

Charles Ecroyd – CLA and Cumbria LAF (Chair)
Duncan Taylor – Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service
Stuart Palmer – National Trust
Marc Barendrecht – Rural Development Initiatives
Geoff Fewkes– CCC
John Bruce – Forestry Commission
Mark Eccles – LDNPA
Vicky Pearson – United Utilities
Alasdair Brock- Natural England
Andrew Clark- Landmarc

Summary of the Meeting

1. Charles Ecroyd welcomed all members to the meeting. Apologies were given from Robert Benson and Jake Morley who were unable to attend the meeting.
2. The last meetings minutes were discussed and agreed any outstanding actions completed.
3. CE moved the discussion onto item 3 on the agenda which was a detailed discussion on the aims, objectives and outputs of the group. MB took the lead on the discussion

Aims:

Overall group happy with general content of the aims. Members agreed some slight rewording would be appropriate. The aims should be split into two distinct areas following the general themes of:

- Reduce/minimise the risk of wildfire
- Benefits of a collaborative approach

Discussion amongst group members also agreed that climate change should be mentioned in the over-arching aims as well.

Objectives:

Discussion moved on to the proposed objectives of the group. MB asked whether objectives 2 and 6 could be combined into one objective. Overall discussion was that these two objectives, while appearing similar, needed to stay separate as they achieve slightly different outcomes.

DT asked that the objective on standard operating procedures (4) also include wording on health and safety. Group also agreed that objective 3 should also contain wording on public safety as well.

VP commented that United Utilities would like to see an objective covering water pollution and catchment issues incorporated into the document. This comment was echoed by SP and ME as being important. SP directed MB towards the water framework directive for Cumbria for more information on the subject.

JB added that in relation to objective 6 was it possible to find out an inventory of all the valuable sites in Cumbria at risk to wildfire (SSSI's etc). This could be included as an appendix in the document to help illustrate the areas at risk.

Activities:

ME indicated he would like to see the objectives noticeably tied into the activities. Overall the group happy with the activities proposed, it is just a matter of creating clear links with each activity and the objectives it meets.

Outputs:

Discussion moved onto specific outputs that the group would like to achieve in relation to the activities. There were still some outputs needing to be decided upon but the following represent the general decision by group members.

A. Attend shows

Produce promotional material

Display stands

Widen member base amongst appropriate people

DT indicated that CFRS could help with design of materials. Group thought that Cumbria Woodlands database could be used to disseminate information. AB indicated that the NE SSSI database may be able to be used as well.

B. See individual section on fire plans

C. Standard Operating Procedures pocket guide and manual

These would need to be written by the CFRS who intend to adapt work that is being done by Northumberland FRS.

D. Public Awareness campaign designed and delivered

Standardised signage and press release

Links to news and weather (TV and radio)

Generic press release branded by CWG for high risk days.

These outputs will need to be finalised further amongst group members on the specifics of a public awareness campaign.

E. Output agreed to hold one or more live fire exercises in Cumbria.

F. All members agreed that training courses for organisational staff and members of the rural community would be a good idea. Output to be along the lines of 'x amount of people trained in wildfire fighting'

G. Group questioned whether it would be possible to set-up a phone line specific for the fire group with a Cumbria number based in the RDI office. This is to avoid promoting the group with a Northumberland phone number.

ME added at end of discussion he would like to see a section added into the body text on the benefits the project would bring. This would be before the outputs section.

4. MB gave the group a run-down on the funding research made by RDI so far. ME advised to start making an application to the LDNPA SDF fund now.

With regards to the RDPE in the NW it was recommended that MB contact Ian Hill at CCC who may know more about the Leader process.

VP said that UU has a carbon fund that may be a possible source of funding for the group.

MB advised all members that no matter the amount of funding that was won we would still need private match funding of at least 25%. MB estimated that the project would need roughly £30-40k to achieve its goals so approx £7-10k of private funding needed. RDI is looking into options for this.

ME suggested MB email him to ask about climate change action plan delivery and possible funding.

5. General discussion around the table was that the fire plan process had stalled at the present time. This was due to the fact that the CCC rangers were unable to spare much time to visit people face to face. GF indicated that not many plans were being returned voluntarily.

MB indicated that RDI would take over the process of getting these plans completed and sent back. This would involve face to face visits with relevant organisations and landowners to get these done. MB said he would be in touch with individuals shortly to organise these visits. DT and GF offered up some staff time when these visits are booked in to assist in the visit.

SP asked whether MB could conduct a NT specific visit to show relevant NT staff what is needed. MB said this would be fine and he would contact to organise.

AB asked MB to email him the word template of the fire plan. MB will do.

6. Group members decided that it was too late to organise standard signage for this fire season. Instead MB is to email members the signage designed by CCC to be used this season so that everyone is using the same sign. It was decided that standardised signage be produced for next season.
7. AB informed group that at the present moment NE is having an internal debate over whether staff would fight wildfires on NE land.

AC stated that Landmarc is also in the same situation.

VP stated that UU had already had the debate and decided that their staff would fight wildfires on UU land.

ME asked those organisations that have had or are having this debate to please email him the details as the LDNPA may be going down this path.

It was indicated that Mountain Rescue staff are not allowed to fight wildfires but can be used for other parts of wildfire control such as communications.

DT gave the group an update on CFRS activities in relation to wildfire. New equipment to arrive from April 08 and internal training course on the-29th-30th March. He indicated that there may be 2-6 places for steering group member's staff to attend. Contact DT if interested.

MB to email all steering group copy of the Met Office email about the Fire Danger Rating System for comment.

MB to inform steering group members of details of live fire exercise in Northumberland in first two weeks of April and organise any interested attendees.

8. Next meeting date to be set for mid to end of May 2008