

Halt the Invasion!

Avon Invasive Weed Forum - AIWF

Forum Core Group Meeting 6 November 2008

Minutes

1. Present:

Victoria Freke - Environment Management, Environment Agency
Paula Spiers - The Avon and Frome Partnership (BANES and South Glos)
Ed Hall - Bristol Ferries Company
Sue Douglas - Network Rail
Kathy Derrick - Bristol Living Rivers / Bristol City Council
Tim Corner - BRERC
Melissa Clarkson - Fisheries, Recreation & Biodiversity, Environment Agency

Apologies:

Caroline Hollies - Parks, Bristol City Council
Helen Davies - BRERC
Charles Halliday
Matt Hamilton - Avon Wildlife Trust
Arthur Barker - Shirehampton Greens

2. Minutes from last meeting

Minutes were agreed and the following actions discussed:

Forum Members - VF had an action in last meeting to contact North Somerset Council about them putting forward a representative to attend core group meetings. VF explained that she had contacted North Somerset's Susan Stangroom and she proposed that a representative from their parks department may be best and she would pass on the contacts.

ACTION 1: VF to contact them to invite to next meeting - By next meeting.

EH suggested that British Waterways should be contacted and invited into the forum. All agreed. VF suggested that Bristol Water and Wessex Water as major land owners of high risk land should be involved in forum. KD Questioned as to whether need to be involved as core members? Needs further discussion.

ACTION 2: VF to contact British Waterways and invite to next meeting - By next meeting.

Giant Hogweed Spraying - VF explained that CH had arranged for the identified patches of GH along the River Frome and Ridgway to be sprayed. Cost was £347.50.

Events with EA, Water Companies - VF explained that EA, Bristol and Wessex Water Events were all over for this year but that plenty were going ahead next year that we can and should be involved in.

Finding a Chairman for the forum - VF explained that after sending out chairman specification and asking for volunteers. One nomination had come through so far.

It was decided that whoever is appointed, it would be ideal for them to commit to 6 months initially and then see how they and the forum feel it is going after the 6 months. Also discussed that availability for meetings would be crucial and timings of meetings during the working week would need to be considered if appointment was with someone who's employer was not in support of the forum.

ACTION 3: VF to arrange last steps of appointment of chairperson. As soon as possible

3. Update on other work done since last meeting

VF explained that she had been doing a lot of work answering many queries from householders and small firms regarding Japanese Knotweed. These enquiries mainly coming in from the EA incident reporting system (covering the whole of Wessex Area) and enquiries from BCC and the AIWF website. Also VF has been doing research on the classification of soils containing Japanese Knotweed and the waste disposal issues linked with this.

Article on the AIWF and the event on 29th July has gone into the latest edition of the Bristol Living Rivers Newsletter published Sept 2008.

VF attended workshop/training event on Invasive Weeds run by the Wiltshire/Hampshire Wildlife Trusts and Living Rivers Project in Dorset. Also attended on 4th Nov the CIRIA Annual Contaminated Land Conference to listen to talks on invasive weeds and the re-use of compost on development sites (amongst other things). Thanks to the EA for funding this trip.

VF researched how our work links into the NNSS (Non Native Species Secretariat) work plan and Defra's Strategy for Great Britain.

4. AIWF Website

VF explained that the site is now up and running fully and the corrections identified at the last meeting have been rectified. CH has arranged for links to AIWF website to be added to the BCC Parks Pages.

ACTION 4: PS to enquire about getting link added to the BANES and South Glos website pages and to the River Avon and River Frome pages.

ACTION 5: VF to enquire about getting a link added to the EA pages.

ACTION 6: VF to arrange a meeting with Daniel Marshall of BRERC to discuss the process of updating website with current news and events.

TC suggested that the contribution that BRERC made to the development of the website could be recognised. VF suggested that if there is not already, a paragraph could be added to the website to state that BRERC developed the website and handles data from the report a weed system.

Report a Weed System

VF explained that KD had suggested the possibility of using an interactive map system for reporting weeds on the website instead of the current system of completing a form and emailing that is currently on the website. VF sent links to an example of an interactive map of this kind (Bristol Streets Website) to a selection of members of local community groups, and to some of the core forum members to test out and compare and give feedback on. VF explained that about 50% liked the interactive map and the other 50% preferred the old system as thought easier to understand. Those that liked it thought it may encourage members of the public that like to see things spatially represented to take the time to report a weed rather than the old system. Some had trouble using the map and for some it took a while to upload.

KD advised there would be costs (£1,500) to set up the layer on the website and then maintenance costs each year after that.

VF stated that other fora web sites in Devon and Cornwall 'report a weed' using the same system as ours and suggested that it may be good to be consistent with them.

TC advised caution that the data produced from the map system may not be compatible or easy to use at BRERC and so may cause difficulties with their data sets. If interactive map did go ahead would need to do some work on this and see if feasible. He said that Daniwl Marshall is currently working on an interactive map using Google Earth maps. VF will discuss this feasibility at meeting with Daniel Marshall at BRERC.

5. Education and Awareness

Development of AIWF Leaflet

VF explained that she had done research on EA website and their publications catalogue. EA information is strongly biased towards developers, hauliers and waste companies. Research on websites of BANES, South Glos, Bristol City and North Somerset Councils found that the information on invasive weeds is very lacking for householders especially. They are often advised to look at leaflets by Devon and Cornwall forum, which is ok but would not give them any local contact details or info on report a weed via the AIWF. VF and Melissa Clarkson of the EA researched the info available for target groups such as farmers, angling clubs etc. and MC suggested that there is a EA leaflet which may be appropriate called 'Guidance for the control of non-native invasive weeds in or near water'.

Agreed amongst forum that the correct approach would be to initially target an information leaflet at householders and then perhaps a second leaflet, if time and resource allows, targeted towards small businesses (landowners/landlords, small businesses, small building and construction firms etc).

EH suggested that our leaflet needs to have good detail on how and where householders should dispose of any JK or GH.

ACTION 7: VF to draft the word content of leaflet and send to forum members for review - By next meeting.

Other ways of Communicating

KD suggested that we could ask Bristol City Council to add some information about disposal of JK and GH to their leaflets that they send out regularly to householders about waste kerbside collections etc.

ACTION 8: VF to contact waste departments of each council and see if this is possible.

VF/EH suggested that leaflets could also be given out at Civic Amenity sites (Council Tips).

VF suggested posters would be good to go up near the green waste bays at CA sites (Council Tips) advising members of the public on correct disposal of GH and JK and that they shouldn't put it into the green waste bin as seeds and rhizomes may not be treated by the composting process.

ACTION 9: VF/subgroup to develop posters.

ACTION 10: VF to contact waste companies and councils to establish whether joint funding of posters is possible.

Targeted Training Events/workshops

VF explained that she attended training event/workshop organised and hosted by the River Avon (Wiltshire/Hampshire) Living River Project and the Wiltshire/Hampshire Wildlife Trust that was aimed at raising awareness of invasive weed ID, treatment and control with organisations and key stakeholders such as Council Parks Departments, EA Operations Delivery, Local landowners and others involved in work on waterways. It was felt that on the ground staff doing work on river banks or wildlife corridors etc. are not always aware of how to identify the weeds and the issues that they bring. VF suggested that if the forum should be targeting higher risk activities and landowners of high risk sites for education and awareness, then an event like this (or couple of events) could be arranged.

The forum generally agreed this was a good idea.

SD - said that Network Rail staff are well trained in this area and they have a procedure. Although she appreciated that not all company's do and this could benefit their work.

TC suggested that company's such as Bristol Ferry Company (for example) or a local landowner could host the event rather than the EA or Local Authority (as the regulators) so that the message we are trying to get across may be welcomed more readily. Most of the Forum members agreed this could help. VF said this has worked with farm pollution issue events when EA has asked farmers to host rather than the EA themselves (with EA bearing all costs and the lions share of the preparation). VF suggested network rail may like to be involved in a similar event.

ACTION 11: VF to begin looking into how an event of this kind could be organised and work out what needs to be done.

6. Gaining support from others.

Discussed the pledge. Thought that a different style of pledge should be designed for corporate and public organisations. TC suggested that company's may sign up but not do

anything about it. It was discussed that the corporate pledge should have attached to it a way that the company has to sign up to certain actions as part of the pledge in order to go on a list of supporters of the AIWF and gain publicity and recognition towards ISO schemes etc. Discussed that more thought required on this. KD suggested that we speak with the organisers of the Green Capital Bid about how they arranged things.

ACTION 12 : VF to look into this aspect. On-going.

7. Events

VF mentioned an event that Charles Halliday is hoping to organise in Keynsham on the River Chew. He is hoping to combine a youth fishing event, some invertebrate sampling with local school and a bit of Himalayan Balsam weed pulling and raising awareness of weeds. Forum members generally agreed would be something we can support but will need to look into the details further. EA, AIWF and BTCV likely involvement.

Not time to discuss any further events.

8. Subgroups and Volunteers

Not time to discuss

9. Funding

Not time to discuss

10. AOB

EH mentioned that he had enquired about getting a stand at Sunday market at Tobacco Factory but that he has been told he will need very expensive public Liability Insurance. The forum will have to look into this when arranging events in the summer.

PS is putting article on the weed pulling event on 29 July into the Frome Partnership Newsletter.

ACTION 13: VF to send some good photographs of the event in July to PS by end of the day.

NEXT MEETING:

**Thursday 5 February 2009
10:00 TO 13:00
LOCATION TBA**