

Halt the Invasion!

Avon Invasive Weed Forum - AIWF

4th Forum Core Group Meeting 12 August 2008 - Minutes

Present:

Guy Pluckwell - Environment Agency
Paula Spiers - The Avon and Frome Partnership
Caroline Hollies - Parks, Bristol City Council
Victoria Freke - Environment Agency
Kathy Derrick - Bristol City Council

Apologies

Ed Hall - Bristol Ferries Company
Melissa Clarkson - Environment Agency
Arthur Barker - Shirehampton Greens
Tim Corner/Helen Davies - BRERC
Sue Douglas - Network Rail
Matt Hamilton - Avon Wildlife Trust

1. Welcome and Introductions

GP explained that this would be his last meeting with the forum as he was leaving to take up a new job with the Environment Agency in Shrewsbury. Victoria Freke introduced herself as the replacement for GP and will be working 1 day a week based at Bristol City Councils Offices, from now onwards and will have the same role and responsibilities as GP.

2. Minutes from last meeting

Minutes were agreed

Outstanding Actions:

ACTION: VF add information about legislation to the AIWF website

ACTION: VF contact North Somerset District Council to ask them to put forward a representative to attend core group meetings -

3. Website update

The Avon Invasive Weed Forum internet site is now up and running and the address is www.aiwf.org.uk. The web site looks good but there are a few minor corrections to be made and the report a weed section needs improvement.

PS raised the question of how we would update the web site with news and events etc. It would be important that the news is kept up to date and that we have easy access to make changes. Administrative access?

ACTION: VF to contact BRERC or arrange meeting to discuss initial changes to be made to the web site and to discuss maintenance of web site and how we would get access to the web site to make minor text changes such as adding in news and events.

CH asked whether the Bristol City Council and Parks Department had or should have links to the AWWF web site. It was agreed that this would be a good idea.

ACTION: CH to arrange links to go from the BCC Parks Department pages to the web site.

4. Report on launch / weed event and media attention

GP reported that the launch event and weed pulling volunteer work held on 29 July at Manor Woods Bishopsworth and Three Brooks in Bradley Stoke was very successful. Good attendance from volunteers despite the drizzle. Large areas of Himalayan Balsam were cleared at both sites. Three Brooks conservation group and South Gloucestershire Council sent their thanks for all the hard work of the volunteers in clearing a large patch of Himalayan Balsam at the reserve.

GP reported that there was good coverage of the event and the forum in local newspapers, radio and on the BBC.

VF has submitted article to go in the Bristol Living Rivers Newsletter.

VF mentioned that she was hoping to arrange another day of weed pulling at the Three Brooks Nature Reserve using Environment Agency volunteers on their Environmental Leave.

ACTION - VF to email core members with links to the press articles for the launch day.

5. Additional unspent money - What to do with it?

KD reported that there is now £4,500 left in the pot of funding.

GP suggested using some of the money to clear/treat patches of Giant Hogweed identified in Bristol near to the River Frome (Riverside (near Cabot Circus), Ridgeway and Stapleton).

VF suggested that need to identify patches in other local authority areas and calculate whether funding may also pay to have these areas treated. Would need to involve other local authorities and determine whether they can contribute costs or member of staff to help with this.

ACTION: VF to give contact details and locations of Giant Hogweed to CH. VF to contact other local authorities to discuss.

ACTION: CH to arrange contractors (via BCC contacts) to treat the Giant Hogweed patches in Bristol area.

GP and KD suggested that some of the unspent money should be left to allow members of the forum to attend events and to buy exhibition equipment such as display boards.

At an event in Leister they had fish tanks with aquatic invasive weeds and invasive animals (signal crayfish) - this would be very interactive and good for children. Could the

forum do something similar? Forum needs to think about what equipment we have already got and what would be good to have in future and write a wish list and expected costs of this. Need to have this stored in such a way that if an event comes up we are ready to go and organised.

KD/GP suggested that a good information leaflet for public also needs to be developed.

ACTION: VF to make a list of what equipment we have already got and make a list of what equipment would be good to have in future and expected costs of these. VF or subgroup?

ACTION: Develop an information leaflet on invasive weeds and the forum. VF or subgroup?

6. Events

VF suggested that as a member of the forum, she and a volunteer could attend one of the Environment Agency learn to fish events with a exhibition stand and give info to public attending. Perhaps the Wessex Water/ Bristol Water event days also?

ACTION: VF to contact EA, Wessex and Bristol Water and look into these events.

7. Gaining commitment from others

Pledge - GP has written a generic pledge for corporate and public organisations. Generally agreed that is ok but agreed some minor changes to the wording.

ACTION: VF to make minor changes to the pledge and send to all core members to review.

Opportunity to get others involved in core group - Discussed that need to get all local authorities involved, including North Somerset District Council and perhaps West Wilts and Wiltshire Council? And potentially British Waterways?.

ACTION: All need to think about whether other organisations should or can be involved.

8. Chairman/Chairperson

GP showed the group the draft that he had written for the chairperson specification. The specification was mostly agreed by the group except a few minor changes.

It was agreed that ideally the chairperson should act as the 'face of the forum' and can act as a spokesperson for the forum where appropriate. Also should add to the specification that the chairperson will have the support of the forum and VF (as designated staff member) and that expenses will be paid for any subsistence, travel expenses while carrying out the role.

KD suggested any interested parties to call VF for an informal chat.

ACTION: VF to make corrections to the chairperson specification and

distribute it to core members and ask for nominations/volunteers to take up the role.

9. Subgroups / volunteers - What is the next step to getting subgroups up and running

Subgroups - KD suggested that subgroups should meet at meetings separate to the core meetings and lead on specific pieces of work (eg. Developing exhibition stands and organising events etc.) and then report back to the core group meetings with news.

Volunteers - Discussed the need to spread the word about the forum's web site and arrange encouraging volunteers.

ACTION - VF if possible to arrange putting report on the web site about the weed event on 29th July, and add paragraph about contact details for willing volunteers.

10. Funding

KD/VF suggested that we could approach Public Health Authority for funding/support of the forum as some of the invasive plants, namely Giant Hogweed are a public health risk. Perhaps a contribution to a safety leaflet about Giant Hogweed?

GP suggested that we contact the Urban Splash - as they are creating several developments, including that at the Wills Building at Henbury, which are encompassing watercourses and rivers that are effected by invasive weeds. VF suggested that she could also try approaching her contacts at the Bristol Alliance at Cabot Circus development.

Some discussion about partners (eg. Local Authorities) possibility of commital to a certain amount of funding/resource/staff time for the project each year? But need to establish what resources and costs they are already putting into invasive weeds?

ACTION: KD/CH to get idea of what resource BCC is already putting towards invasive weeds. VF/PS try to get idea of other local authorities approaches.

Discussed that we would need to have clear and specific proposals of the budget (how the money would be spent) before we could ask companies/partners for funding. Need to have wish list together for events equipment etc. and costings.

ACTION: VF find out from the Cornish Invasive Weed forum how they manage their funding and donations etc.

11. What next? - What should we aim to achieve before the next meeting?

- Identify and attend events
- Giant Hogweed work
- Funding
- Volunteers - advertise for through email and the website
- Find potential Chairperson

13. Date of next Meeting

Week of 27 October 2008 - details TBC