

Halt the Invasion!

Avon Invasive Weed Forum - AIWF

1st Forum Core Group Meeting 19 February 2008

Minutes

Present:

Guy Pluckwell - Environment Agency
Kathy Derrick - Bristol Living Rivers / Bristol City Council
Paula Speirs - The Avon and Frome Partnership
Matt Hamilton - Avon Wildlife Trust
Caroline Hollies - Parks, Bristol City Council
Helen Davies - BRERC

Apologies

Arthur Barker - Sea Mills and Combe Dingle Community Project

The agenda ran through the suggestions made during the weed stakeholder event that took place in September 2007

1. Background

The establishment of the forum was discussed detailing how it came about via The Non-Native Invasive Weed Strategy for Bristol's Watercourses, the stakeholders event to the forum itself.

2. Survey data

Money has been found from the Environment Agency for BRERC to digitise the data collected from the Non-Native Invasive Weed survey of Bristol's watercourses. BRERC have started that work.

3. Website

Money has been found from Bristol City Council for BRERC to design and establish a website for the forum. Money will cover the design, implementation as well as the maintenance of the site for 1 year.

ACTION: GP to put together a brief and text for the website and liaise with BRERC.

4. Scope of the forum

It was decided that:

- i) The forum should initially concentrate on the three main invasive weeds, Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and Giant Hogweed. This should be reviewed as the forum develops.
- ii) The forum should initially focus on weed corridors such as watercourses, roads and railways. This should be reviewed as the forum develops.
- iii) The forum should include surrounding areas within the Avon catchment and not just Bristol City. Paula Spiers could possibly represent BANES and S.Glos.

ACTION: GP to contact N. Somerset DC and invite them to join the forum.
ACTION: PS to make sure that BANES and S. Glos are aware of the forum and Paula's role within it.

5. What should the forum be called

Following much discussion it was decided that the forum should be called: Avon Invasive Weed Forum - AIWF

6. What should the forum try and achieve

It was discussed that the forum will not have adequate funding/resource to physically control weeds and therefore should focus on raising awareness, advising and coordination.

The forum should have a vision suggested *example: Reduce the negative effect of non-native invasive weeds in Avon*

ACTION: GP to work on a vision and send suggestions out to the group for comment.

The forum should have Aims and Objectives. It was suggested that these should be based on what we have identified as the tasks to be carried out by subgroups. They should be kept as brief and simple as possible.

ACTION: GP to put together some aims and objectives and send them to the core group for comment.

7. Gaining commitment from other organisations

It was discussed that this is important but may be difficult. Network Rail for instance need permission from Head Office before anything is signed up to even at local level. Questions were asked about what would they get and what would they gain from signing up.

It was suggested that organisations make a pledge rather than just sign up and receive a certificate of that pledge.

To be discussed further at next meeting.

8. Who else should be involved / Who should drive forum forward / Need a Chairman

N. Somerset - possibly Sue Stangingham, Biodiversity Officer.

Maybe another representative from the EA.

ACTION: GP to consider who?

Representation from the public / community groups. Hopefully Arthur Barker will be able to make the next meeting. Edd from the ferries is also interested in getting involved.

ACTION: KD to contact Edd and see if he would like to come along to the next meeting.

Potentially ask active councillors if they would like to be involved.

It was discussed that for the forum to be a success there should be at least 2 individuals who would drive the forum forward as in the Cornwall Knotweed Forum. It was suggested that there is already one person in Guy, who has 1 day a week to spend on forum work. Hope to identify someone else soon, potentially someone like Arthur or Edd???

GP will act as temporary Chairman until someone else shows an interest in taking over.

Discuss Chairman role further at next meeting.

9. How do we attract volunteers and sub-group members

A list of potential volunteers should be made, both individuals and groups /

organisations. We must consider privacy / data sharing issues when making this list. Contact people / orgs identified and ask if they are interested in getting involved and volunteering time and resource. Think about what we can offer them. Involve the public and community groups as much as possible.

Discuss further at next meeting

10. How do we encourage research into NNIWs

Try to identify a contact for each of the universities and colleges in Avon. Contact them and make them aware of our presence and what we are trying to achieve. Try and get a partnership going with them and discuss potential research subjects.

Discuss further at next meeting

11. Provide information / publicise the Forum

Potential for the forum to hold a launch event in partnership with the EA. The EA may commit to a three year treatment of a patch of weed in a prominent place with a control demo which could also be used as a launch event for the forum. If this does happen the forum should attempt to get media interest.

ACTION: GP to follow this up.

Information will generally be available on the website but it is important to also try and target groups and individuals to actively disseminate information to. This should be done through risk assessment with such an assessment to be devised by the forum.

The forum should aim to advertise its existence and disseminate information via other organisation newsletters e.g Bristol Parks, BRERC, EA's Our Place.

ACTION: Everybody to try to get the forum publicised.

The forum should look to attend as many events as possible with help from volunteers. There was a concern that to attend such events costs money which the forum currently does not have. Suggested events include:

NERC event

Climate Change Festival

Festival of Nature

Flower shows

Country shows

It may be possible to join onto another organisations display to reduce the need to find money for own stand.

The forum should also consider having displays in prominent places such as:

Libraries

Garden Centres

Schools

The forum may also consider giving presentations and training courses to numerous identified audiences e.g. High risk industry, schools and at related events.

Should attempt to gain media interest in what we are doing.

To be discussed further at next meeting.

12. Funding

Do we need funding and if so is there identified funding that we can apply for?

To be discussed further at next meeting.

13. How should we coordinate the control of weeds

The forum should find out who is currently doing what with regards weed control in Avon? Investigate whether all organisations with control programmes are fulfilling those programmes and aiming their resources at the right areas? A risk assessment

should be devised so that the high risk areas can be identified.
Are there standard conditions that could be used in the planning process and if so are they being used?

14. Surveys

The forum should identify if there have been other surveys completed in other places within Avon. There are a lot of gaps in the survey data so priorities for further surveys should be identified and surveys set up using volunteer resource. Any survey data should be linked to BRERC and any national database.

15. AOB

The Water framework Directive has/will move NNIW's up the list of priorities and it has been discussed that there may be national and catchment task groups set up to liaise with local forum. It appears that they will encourage local forum and should provide support and advice to help them prioritise work.