



# Northumberland Fire Group

**Northumberland Fire Group – Steering Group Meeting:  
22<sup>nd</sup> September 2008, Highlander Inn, Belsay, Northumberland 1400-1600**

**Attendees:**

Angus Collingwood-Cameron, CLA (Chair)  
Ethan Bigelow, Northwoods  
Pete Berry, Forestry Commission  
Steve Gibson, NFRS  
Ian Fletcher, National Trust  
Martin Dodd, Landmarc  
Alan Rutherford, Landmarc  
Jon Williams, Durham Cathedral

**Apologies:**

Malcolm Fieldsend, NGO  
Duncan Hutt, Wildlife Trust  
James Scott-Harden, Moorland Assoc.  
Chris Livsey, MOD  
Alan Edwards, NGO/East Allenheads Estate  
Helen Courtney, EA  
Andrew Miller, NNPA  
Duncan Hutt, NWT

**Note:** *Can all members highlighted in the Action sections please ensure that they act on the information contained. There are some very important actions within that need to be followed up to ensure the continued success of the group.*

**ACC** opened meeting and **EB** introduced himself and gave a brief description of his background.

**Funding Update**

Discussion	Action
<p><b>EB</b> gave the funding update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Current Funding</b> – Current funding for the third year of the project is being provided by Draeger through the NFRS at £12,000. Pending agreement on activities with the Climate Proofing the Cheviots Project, funding shall be awarded for the completion of those activities.</li><li>• <b>Future Funding</b> – <b>EB</b> to attend a meeting with the County Council's external resources officer to source new funding options for the group's activities. <b>SG</b> stated that the NFRS would continue to provide their share of funding for the group to be maintained in the future. Two potential funding streams to which the Fire Group could apply:  -Interreg4c – EU fund that the NFRS will be making an application to in the near future which may incorporate the Fire Group as a part of the bid.  -Forest Education Initiative – Small fund that seeks to bring forest/environmental education into primary/secondary schools</li></ul>	<p><b>EB</b> to attend a potential funding meeting with County Council's External Resources Officer.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ACC</b> suggested that there may be a potential funding opportunity through the Leader programme in Northumberland for training.</li> <li>• <b>EB</b> gave an update of the funding streams being examined in for the Cumbria Wildfire Group.</li> <li>• <b>JW</b> proposed the possibility of the Northern Way being a funding source for the group. <b>ACC</b> commented that this possibility was uncertain at present.</li> <li>• <b>Discussion on cross-regional Wildfire Group – SG</b> proposed the possibility of a Wildfire Group that incorporated both Cumbria and Northumberland and potentially Durham. The existence of such a group might be able to pull down larger pots of funding. The cross-regional group could potentially act as a vehicle to discuss problems found in the different county fire groups, share new ideas, work together, etc.</li> </ul>	<p><b>EB</b> to source potential benefit/possibility for holding meetings involving Fire Groups from different regions/counties.</p>
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### NFG to be granted £25,000 by Landmarc for purchase of an Argo Cat

Discussion	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>MD</b> stated that Landmarc would be providing the NFG with a cheque for £25,000 for the purchase of an Argo Cat to be used by group members in the event of a wildfire. The Argo Cat will hopefully be available by spring of 2009.</li> <li>• <b>EB</b> stated that the contribution in cash would be beneficial as it could be used as “match-funding” for future funding sources.</li> <li>• <b>SG</b> proposed the idea of holding an event to mark the acquisition of the Argo Cat and also to distribute the SOP Handbook.</li> </ul>	<p><b>MD</b> to forward cheque for the purchase of the Argo Cat to Northwoods.</p> <p><b>EB</b> to look into the possibility of holding an event to mark the acquisition of the Argo Cat and to release the SOP Handbook.</p>

### Fire Plans

Discussion	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>EB</b> stated that Fire Plans had been put on hold to make sure that the correct GIS software was used by Northwoods to be in line with the software to be used by the NFRS’s new “mobile data” system</li> <li>• <b>SG</b> referred EB to the IT officer at the NFRS to follow up on this.</li> <li>• <b>ACC</b> commented that the Upland Entry level scheme might be a vehicle to publicise the use of fire plans.</li> <li>• <b>ACC</b> suggested that EB get in contact with Duncan Hutt to make sure the Wildlife Trust had a Fire Plan</li> <li>• <b>EB</b> stated that he had received feedback from ACC as to which estates/areas of Northumberland should be targeted over the next year.</li> <li>• <b>JM</b> suggested that EB get in contact with Lorrie Norris at the NFU to obtain a contact list of rural community</li> <li>• The group discussed the need to make an annual review of all fire plans to ensure information is up to date.</li> </ul>	<p><b>EB</b> to update overall Fire Plan map with currently covered areas.</p> <p><b>EB</b> to liaise with NFRS IT officer to ensure that software is compatible before scheduling more fire plan visits.</p> <p><b>EB</b> to make an annual review of all Fire Plans every year from the date of their creation.</p> <p><b>AC</b> to pass along contact details for Lorrie Norris.</p>

### Climate Proofing the Cheviots Project

Discussion	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>EB</b> (in place of Andrew Miller, NNPA) gave a short presentation on the planned activities of the NFG through the CPCP. Proposed activities include conducting controlled burning experiments/exercises to test new burning techniques, provide practical experience to group members, evaluate the effect of wildfire in certain areas of deep peat blanket bog, to provide an</li> </ul>	<p><b>EB</b> to attend a meeting with Helen Courtney, Andrew Miller and Steve Gibson to work out the details of the activities to be carried out through the CPCP.</p>

<p>environment for expert research, and to provide an opportunity for multiple organisations to work together on a project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The group was in general agreement to the carrying out of this type of activity through the CPCP</li> </ul>	
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### Standard Operating Procedures Handbook

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>EB</b> stated that the first draft of the SOP handbook was completed and that comment was needed from all group members to create the next version.</li> <li>• <b>SG/PB</b> proposed the idea of holding individual meetings (one with PB/SG &amp; one with a group of gamekeepers/land managers) to get quality comment on the legitimacy of the SOP handbook.</li> <li>• <b>EB</b> thought that the printing/writing costs would be covered by the NNPA SDF fund although the claim would have to be pushed back.</li> <li>• The group discussed the need to hold an event highlighting the release of the SOP handbook in order to publicise the document and get the rural community to take the handbook on board.</li> </ul>	<p><b>EB</b> to hold meetings with focus groups to revise the first version of the SOP handbook.</p> <p><b>EB</b> to circulate revised draft before sending the handbook to the printers.</p>
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### English Wildfire Forum

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SG</b> informed the group that the EWF would not be providing a great deal of leadership in the near future, but that it was still in the process of good development.</li> </ul>	
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### NFG Project Evaluation

Discussion	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>EB</b> presented the group with his ideas for the project evaluation (See attached evaluation proposal).</li> <li>• The group thought that it would be a good idea to hold individual focus group meetings with different group representatives to gain quality feedback on the success/weaknesses of the NFG.</li> <li>• <b>EB</b> suggested that the results of the evaluation might provide an idea of where the group needed to focus its activities in the future. The group was in general agreement on this point.</li> <li>• <b>JW</b> proposed the idea of making the evaluation a part of the “upland keepers meeting.”</li> <li>• <b>ACC</b> suggested that the original Goals/Objectives of the Fire Group be included in the evaluation.</li> </ul>	<p><b>EB</b> to hold Evaluation meetings with different group members to create the project evaluation. Results to be circulated to the group upon completion.</p>

### Future Group Activities

Discussion	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>EB</b> stated that the group needed to have a good idea of what its aims were in the coming years. A short action plan detailing the group’s goals/objectives for the next year could be created with steering group input and the results of the NFG project evaluation.</li> <li>• <b>SG</b> stated that the Fire Group needed to consolidate its position at present and continue with activities that would keep the public/interest groups in communication with the Fire Group. He stressed the need for the group to be able to keep its internal network of organisations strong through periods of “low wildfire activity.”</li> <li>• The group agreed upon the idea of releasing a newsletter as soon as possible to raise awareness of the group’s activities and</li> </ul>	<p><b>EB</b> to formulate a focused action plan from the results of the evaluation and steering group meeting.</p> <p><b>EB</b> to create a Fire Group Newsletter ASAP and circulate to the Fire Group</p> <p><b>EB</b> to circulate a steering group email to scope potential training needs by group members</p>

<p>to keep in good contact with the parties that have a vested interest in wildfire.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>IF</b> thought that training should be an ongoing output of the fire group to ensure that the group's organisations had the ability to train new staff or refresh old staff in wildfire.</li> <li>• <b>EB</b> stated that maintenance funding in the coming years to fund activities that are ongoing would have to be provided by new funding sources or by group member contributions.</li> <li>• <b>SG</b> proposed the idea of creating a new "controlled burning/fire use" course to be delivered to group members.</li> <li>• <b>ACC</b> thought that there was a chance of getting Leader funding for any new training course.</li>   <li>• <b>Proposed Future Group Activities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bi-annual Fire Group Newsletter</li> <li>○ Fire plans</li> <li>○ Live Wildfire Exercises</li> <li>○ Climate Proofing the Cheviots Project</li> <li>○ Wildfire Training</li> <li>○ Updated Webpage</li> <li>○ Advice/Group Support</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
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### Public Awareness Campaign

Discussion	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public Awareness DVD Completed</b> – <b>EB</b> has completed copies of the DVD at the Northwoods office. A looped version is also available upon request.</li> </ul>	<b>Group</b> members to contact <b>EB</b> if a copy of the DVD is desired.

### Other Wildfire Group Update

Discussion	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>EB</b> updated the group on the progression of the Cumbria Wildfire Group and other groups across the UK. CWG is progressing well in the first year of the project and other wildfire groups are coming about slowly around the UK.</li> </ul>	

### BBC Radio 4 "Open Country" Programme

Discussion	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>EB</b> noted that the programme on the Fire Group had been greeted with praise and could be noted as a good success for the Fire Group.</li> <li>• <b>Copies of the Programme</b> – Contact <b>EB</b> if you would like a copy of the NFG show.</li> </ul>	

### Date of Next Meeting

Discussion	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2009</li> </ul>	<b>EB</b> to inform members of date