
Darwin Project Ref: 14-045: Sustainable Support for Biodiversity & Forestry in Tomsk Taiga, Siberia

Minutes of Tree Council & WTA meeting April 25th 2006

Produced by Janet Sackman, 3rd May 2006

Time: 10:0 to 13:30

Venue: Tree Council, 71 Newcomen Street, London SE1 1YP

Attendees: Tree Council: Pauline Buchanan-Black, Andrew Lane

WTA Education Services: Janet Sackman, Wayne Talbot

Purpose: To review progress on the project in year 1 and plan for years 2 and 3

1. Review of project plan for Year 1.

The project plan was presented by JS along with the Darwin Stage 2 application form from which it was generated to give a one-page summary of activity and targets for each of the project's three years. The project plan shows that work has been completed for many of the objectives: the ecological monitoring and eco-tourism, but that we are behind on FSC certification and developing trade in birch bark products and pine nuts.

The impact of this delay on the plans for years 2 and 3 is to be assessed after WT's visit to Russia from 28th April to 3rd May.

Action 1: Review plans for years 2 and 3 after WT's visit. Due date: 10/05/06 by: JS/WT

2. Budget review for Year 1.

AL described the way in which he would like to reflect the budget versus actual in the final report to fit with the Defra report structure and ensure that we fit the WTA Budget v Actual into their requirements. The figures were agreed in principle and JS submitted the detailed amounts by email the next day.

3. Review of payment procedures for IIES.

The issue of how IIES are paid was discussed. Initial attempts by AL to use Barclays, with whom the Tree Council banked when the first payments were made, had failed and resulted in us having to rely on Price Batch UK top carry out the transfers to Russia for us. Price Batch bank with HSBC and have a US Dollar account, which seems to have been significant in their subsequent successes.

As making a transfer to Russia requires official documents to be drawn up detailing the payment and forming a contract between the organisation making the payment and the one receiving it, JS & WT



feel that it's important to maintain good relations with Price Batch that we seek alternative ways of doing this.

The option of using the Tree Council's new bank was discounted; JS offered to investigate what Lloyds TSB had to offer so that putting the transfers through WTA's bank could be considered, and report back to AL on options.

Action 2: JS to investigate using TSB for bank transfers to IIES and report back to AL for a decision. Due date: 04/05/06 by JS

4. Areas of concern for Year 1:

a. Completion of Year 1 report

Work on the production of the Year 1 report for Defra had not begun. With WT's imminent visit to Russia, where copies of reports and publications from Russian partners for inclusion in the report could be obtained, an extension to the deadline had been requested from Darwin by PBB until 12th May. This would allow for WT's visit from 28th April to 3rd May and a meeting with Nick Langley, JS and WT on 4th May to work on the report.

PBB received confirmation by email after the meeting that the request for the extension had been approved by Defra. The deadline of 12th May would be circulated to NL by JS.

NL has been made aware by JS of the circumstances surrounding the change of project leadership and since that conversation, NL has emailed to say that he wants to have dates on the calendar for update meetings and will make more effort to keep involved in progress on the project.

Action 3: Meeting to work on report. Due: 04/05/06 by NL, JS, WT

Action 4: Submit completed report to Defra by new deadline. Due: 12/05/06 by: NL

Action 5: Set up meetings between NL, JS, WT. Due: 05/05/06 by: NL

b. Price Batch/IIES relationship

Concerns were raised about the working relationship between Price Batch (Altai) and IIES in Russia. All agreed that it was vital that IIES find ways of working with them as they are so well connected in the system of FSC Certification in Russia. WT would investigate this on his trip and report back.

Action 6: WT to discuss the PB (Altai) and IIES situation during his trip to Russia. Due: 03/05/06 by: WT

c. FSC Certification

The certification of one of the forests in the Taiga had been planned to begin in Year 1 but this has stalled. The potential reasons for this were discussed. It was agreed that clarification of the feasibility of moving forward with this was needed during WT's visit to Russia before the impact could be assessed.

Action 7: WT to review progress on FSC certification, identify problems and potential solutions. Due: 03/05/06 by: WT

d. Project web site

The current situation whereby one of the students for the 2005 expedition owned the web site was agreed to be not an ideal situation. The cost implications of transferring it to WTA or the TC were discussed and it was agreed that as there was no budget for the web site to be rewritten then it would have to stay where it is and be amended to be less of a student web site and be the project web site it was intended to be.

Action 8: JS to collate details of what is required on the web site. Due: 15/05/06 by JS

Action 9: JS to produce specification for revised web site. Due: 31/05/06 by JS

Action 10: JS to arrange meeting with Cambridge University Expedition Society to go through required changes. Due: 15/06/06

e. Student expedition: lack of UK partner supervision

Concern was expressed by WT and JS that the student group was going out this year without any adult supervision from the UK partners. This had always been part of the plan as envisaged by the previous project leader, without there being any clear reason from the project's perspective for doing so. This leaves us with a situation whereby the group are entirely in the hands of the Russian partners. WT is to raise this with IIES whilst he's in Russia and make sure that the plans for the expedition are appropriate for the personal safety of the group, and to arrange a meeting with CUEX's group leader to go through the detail.

Action 11: WT to discuss arrangements for the expedition with IIES during the visit. Due: 03/05/06 by WT

Action 12: WT to have meeting with CUEX student leader to ensure he is appropriately briefed. Due: 31/05/06 by WT

f. Student expedition: funding

JS explained concerns about the way in which the fund was administered and how it dovetailed, or not, into the Darwin funds. This could potentially cause a problem for IIES in their preparations for the expedition, as there was no-one going out from the UK as part of the expedition to take any cash with them – the previous project leader had done this.

Action 13: WT to discuss the funding of the expedition with IIES during the meeting. Due: 03/05/06 by WT

5. Plans for years 2 & 3.

It was noted that the plans for years 2 and 3 would need to be adjusted to take into account the unfinished items for year 1.



Action 14: Plans for years 2 and 3 to be adjusted after WT's trip to Russia. Due: 10/05/06 by JS

6. Budget plan for years 2 & 3

The problem of VAT having to be recovered from within the existing budget was discussed. It was seen that the estimated spend for the rest of the project would allow for VAT to be funded from within it. This would be monitored by JS when processing invoices for payment and keep AL informed. Savings could be identified from the budget although it was agreed that the extra workload from WTA to include the work required to get the project back on track and carry out project leader functions would increase the number of days spent on the project by WTA. JS to reflect this in the next invoice and produce an estimate of the number of days effort required.

Action 15: JS to continue to monitor the budget and send updated spreadsheets to AL.

7. Any other business

PBB would write to Defra regarding the change of project leadership. It was agreed that the grant from Defra would still go to the Tree Council and be administered there, but that the two names on the agreement would be PBB and WT. A curriculum vitae for WT would be required for PBB to send to Defra.

Action 16: JS to send WT's cv to PBB

Action 17: PBB to write to Defra to add WT as project leader

8. Date of next meeting

To be decided.