

SOUTH WEST FOREST – MONTHLY BRIEFING

December 2006

1. Events

- **Woodfair South West – Tavistock 2006** - In the business plan for Woodfair South West, we planned to deliver a Christmas Woodfair at Tavistock, but constraints identified when dealing with the Town Council resulted in us downsizing to a Foresters Market which took place on 2 December in Bedford Square. This is a popular location and the 14 exhibitors who took part had plenty of interest in their products and services.
- **Woodfair South West – Haldon Forest 2006** - On 3 December, a hastily arranged Christmas Woodfair took place at Haldon Forest. This event was focussed on providing a retail opportunity to beneficiaries who had products suitable for Christmas gifts. 25 exhibitors were involved and there was a good turn out of visitors with over 1200 being counted entering the event which was free of charge. If the storm on Saturday night had come through 12 hours later we would not have had an event and as it was some hasty reparations were required to deal with a lake in the first marquee.
- South West Forest attended the **Devon Rural Network's Winter Event** at Roadford Lake on 8 December. This was an interesting day albeit with fewer participants than for previous events. The afternoon workshops included one focussed on forestry issues for which Jim Skelton provided a ten minute overview. With forestry emerging as a key theme, we look forward to seeing ways in which this might help us to garner ongoing support for our services.
- On 28 November, South West Forest attended the '**Making a Difference in the Biosphere**' event in Barnstaple. Visions and aims of the North Devon Biosphere Reserve were discussed and practical actions to achieve them identified.

2. Progress

- **Advisory Visits** - A total of 15 visits were undertaken in November, 9 regarding woodland creation, and 6 regarding woodland management. The most notable was a report written regarding the potential for woodland creation on Lundy!
- **Monitoring Visits** - During November, 12 monitoring visits were undertaken. Poplar remains an ongoing issue on the older sites but there has been some success. Ironically where Poplar is establishing well damage from Grey Squirrels is a serious threat and many crops have lost 30 or 40% of leading shoots.
- **Forestry Commission Grants** - The Forestry Commission has recently requested that all grant applications for grant will need to be in before the end of this month for the payment period 2007/8. i.e one year and four months before the grant is payable. The result of this is that there will be no grant available to any new applicants until April 2008, but applicants would be wise to apply up to a year in advance. In addition, because of the current freeze to the ERDP budget those who do apply before December 2006 should not expect to receive a contract until the freeze is lifted. Unfortunately, these financial constraints are outwith the control of the Forestry Commission. Another consequence of the freeze is that all FWPS payments have been stopped until further notice.

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- **West Devon BC – EWGS Application** - David Rickwood assisted Rob Sekula of West Devon Borough Council in completing a EWGS application for Old Town Park. It is hoped that funding can be obtained for enrichment planting, the production of a promotional leaflet, creating an access gap, control of non natives, coppicing, tree surgery and annual maintenance. Although, the sums are not great it is hoped that it will be possible to secure a little over £500 per annum over the next 5 years.
- **South West Forest Training** – during November, we ran 5 courses with a total of 35 beneficiaries:-
 - Apple Tree Pruning
 - Practical Hedgelaying
 - Deer Larder
 - Mobile Chipper
 - Basic Chainsaw
- **Final Report and LLMF for the Culm JCA** - The final LLMF will be available sometime after 31st January 2007, the extended deadline of Natural England (NE) for submission of the final report and LLMF for the Culm. Both will be made available to stakeholders and interested parties once NE are satisfied with the content and presentation of the LLMF and final report.
- 20 November – The first '**Tree for All**' event of the season took place at Trelaske Barton near Lewannick and involved all 88 pupils in Lewannick Primary School. Richard Paton of the Forestry Commission provided expert help all day.
- 7 December – The third and final training event for teachers in the North Devon AONB took place in Bideford on the topic of '**Managing the Woodland Classroom**'. Gale force winds forced a change of plan and provided a graphic illustration of the potential hazards and control measures needed when working in the woods.

3. Meetings / Networking

- On 22 November, South West Forest met with Andrew Counsell and colleagues from **Duchy College to discuss ways of collaborating** on training delivery in the future. A number of interesting possibilities were discussed and it is hoped that at least two of these might be brought to fruition.
- On 27 November, Richard Irvine attended a **Big Lottery Fund** regional briefing in Plymouth. Updates on all BIG funding programmes were presented and technical queries from persistent applicants answered.
- On Friday 3 November, Jim White attended a meeting of the Environment Agency's **North Devon Catchment Flood Risk Management Steering Group** which looked at the draft approach to Flood Risk Management in the North Devon area for the next century. Amongst issues such as catchment prioritisation and identifying priority flood risk areas, interests in rewetting of Culm habitat and upper catchment wet woodland re-establishment were discussed. Such activities have been identified in connection with alleviating flood risk the work of South West Forest can contribute to this.