

SOUTH WEST FOREST – MONTHLY BRIEFING

February 2006

1. Events

- On 31 January, SWF Director, Jim Skelton, attended an **IEEP workshop** in London on implications of the EAFRD to the woodland and forestry industry. The **European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)** will be the main European delivery mechanism for rural development from 2007. It is divided into three axes that equate to economic (axis1), environmental (axis2) and social (axis 3) sustainability. Three important overarching themes need to be borne in mind:
 1. Forestry now sits in parity with agriculture and must be considered on an equal basis
 2. A "LEADER" approach is seen as the key local delivery tool for the funding
 3. The European funds will come ready matched by the UK Treasury
 - Axis 2 will take up 80% of all available funds, will be administered by Natural England and is already accounted for. The remainder will go into Axis 1&3 and will be administered by the RDA. At this time the total funds are unknown as negotiations are continuing in Brussels.
 - The meeting discussed recommendations from the forestry sector on how the funds should be used. The majority of these concerned primary grants (EWGS) for new planting and management and environmental measures. Of interest is that the recommendations will feature agroforestry, woodfuel, technical transfer and tourism as key areas to be addressed by the funding. The recommendations will also support the LEADER approach. One area of concern is that the Fund will only fund micro enterprises in economic development.
- On 28 January, a public planting day at **Bratton Fleming Community Woodland** benefited from the best of January weather, with over 70 parishioners planting the whole south facing side of the site with over 600 native trees.

2. Progress

- A review of the **South West Forest Supplement** with the Forestry Commission has led to some agreed changes in the structure of the supplement. Points will be awarded under four main headings:-
 - Robustness
 - Access
 - Biodiversity
 - Timber Quality
- For each theme 5 points will be available on a sliding scale. A number of points are mutually exclusive and therefore it is not anticipated a scheme will score 20 points which would be equivalent to a supplement rate of £2000 per hectare. A launch event highlighting the details of the new supplement is proposed for April.

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- **The external evaluation of the South West Forest** by consultants PACEC has been completed and their final report has just arrived. There are detailed reports on both South West Forest and a similar project in Cumbria called Forest Futures. There is also a briefer joint report which takes the executive summaries from the two detailed reports and provides a comparison of outcomes from the two projects. In addition it comments on the use of the evaluation template created for this work and the potential to use the same approach to benchmark other rural development projects.
- The evaluation, which focused on the three years from 2002-2005, was funded by the Forestry Commission and the Countryside Agency who are pleased with the outcomes identified for both projects. For the South West Forest the headlines are:-
 - 131 local jobs supported (197 jobs throughout UK)
 - Net cost of job supported = £3,080 per job
 - Gross cost of job supported = £9,344 per job (incl FC grants)
 - Advice to 346 rural businesses
 - 995 training beneficiaries
 - 135 beneficiaries involved in collaboration and networking
 - 11 Community projects supported
- Jim Skelton and Chairman, Ian Mercer, had a meeting with **Forestry Commission and Countryside Agency** representatives on 1 February to discuss how the report can be used to raise awareness of relevant agencies and organizations to the benefits provided by the project. The Forestry Commission had previously linked ongoing support for the South West Forest Partnership to the outcome of the PACEC evaluation and was able to confirm that the very positive outcome would enable them to continue that support.
- **Culm Conference - 25 February** – arrangements for this event are fairly advanced. Jim Skelton visited the **Forest of Bowland** in Lancashire on 27 January and met AONB Principal Officer, Don McKay and David Wrigley of Lancashire Rural Futures. There are many similarities between this area and the Culm and Jim has arranged for a guest speaker to address the conference on some of their more interesting projects and approaches.
- **Advisory Visits** - A total of 12 visits were undertaken in January, three relating to woodland creation, and nine regarding woodland management, some of which were part of the North Devon AONB survey work.
- **AONB – County Wildlife Monitoring** - The advisory service is contracted to complete 20 visits by the end of March. To date, 10 are complete and a further 3 need reports to be written with 4 visits scheduled for February.
- **Monitoring Visits** - The ongoing monitoring programme resulted in 10 sites being visited during the month. Visits to older sites are highlighting the need for the formative pruning of broadleaves and squirrel control

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- **Devon Rural Network Sustainable Farming and Food Action Group - Farmers Forum Meeting** – Cookworthy Forest Centre was the venue for this workshop which arose from a challenge laid down at last year’s Culm Conference for more joined up advice to farmers and landowners. The aim of this event was to look at the issues concerning the plethora of advisors working in the agricultural sector. Matt Lobley of Exeter University is to prepare a report reviewing the advice provision and how it might be improved on behalf of the Sustainable Farming and Food Action Group. The meeting highlighted the fact that there was a lot of advice available, not always well co-ordinated and advisors tend to be over represented in the public sector and sometimes less trusted. The meeting identified the need for more interaction and knowledge sharing between advisors, and the avoidance of potential confusion from yet another “innovative” advice solution available as a result of short term funding.

- **South West Forest Training** – during January, Kathy Lewington ran 6 courses with a total of 50 beneficiaries:-

➤ Basic Chainsaw	3
➤ Squirrel Management	18
➤ Apple Tree Pruning	5
➤ Hedgelaying	5
➤ Tree Planting	11
➤ Growing and using Willow	8

- Land Between the Moors Project Officer, Jim White is getting immersed into his new role and has developed a detailed work programme for the **Land Between the Moors 2** (LBTM2) project being funded by the Countryside Agency. This project will be exploring ways of developing better access to land management information in the Culm Joint Character area. In addition Jim will be to engage directly with a number of communities to test the Local land Management Framework approach. The first monthly progress bulletin specific to the LBTM2 project is now available via e-mail or by clicking on the ‘Land Between the Moors’ link on the South West Forest website home page. Click on the link provided under the heading “Bulletin” to view a pdf copy of the document. Subsequent monthly reports will also be posted up on this site.

- **Trees for all Seasons** progress. On 31 January Richard Irvine met with Marilyn Tucker of Wren Music to update on the Greenwood Show commissioned by South West Forest with funding from PRSF. Highlights from the show will be premiered at ‘**Woodland Crafts in Action**’ day on 24 and 25 February. This event is being hosted by the Yarner Trust at Welcome and financial support from the event comes from the North Devon AONB Sustainable Development Fund.

- **Moorhaye Farm** hosted a tree for all event on 13 February where in addition to the usual program, an exiting walk around some ancient woodland was a real hit with the children. The next day saw year 10 pupils from **Budehaven Community School** spend a day tree planting, brash pruning and green woodworking using off-cuts from Oak felled on the farm which was planked on the day by Julian Moles with his Lucas Mill mobile sawmill.

- **Tree for All Events** – these were held over 4 days at Holders Nursery, Braunton and Smayes, Winkleigh attracting 230 and 60 pupils respectively.

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- On 26 January, Community Education Ranger, Kate Dixon led over 40 pre-school and reception children on shelter building activities in the school grounds of Appledore Primary School.

- ***In the News*** – Articles were printed in The North Devon Journal and The Gazette and Advertiser for the event at Holders Nursery giving some good coverage but highlighting confusion over the various agencies involved in the project. The press launch of ***Yeo Valley Community Woodland*** which we are helping to facilitate, was also the subject of a prominent article in the North Devon Journal. It is hoped that this will stimulate interest in the creation of a community based steering group to participate in the consultation, planting and future management of the wood.

3. Meetings / Networking

- ***Land Between the Moors 2 Project*** - On 6 February and 10 February, meetings were held with local authority planners from North Devon, North Cornwall, Torridge, Mid-Devon District Councils, Cornwall and Devon County Councils, proved a very valuable exercise in finding out the state of progress and possible synergies between the Local Development Framework (LDF) process and the Local Land Management Framework (LLMF). LBTM2 Projects Officer Jim White set out the aims of the LLMF and sought feedback from planning officers as how best to feed this work into the LDF process. It became clear that LLMF's might serve a useful role for planners as a background document to aid decision making and possibly for providing evidence and information from stakeholder participation and consultation.
 - However, the need for care was also expressed with respect to the engagement of stakeholders in the LLMF process. We must be careful not to raise unrealistic hopes as to how much stakeholder participation will influence local planning policies and outcomes, as had been the experience for some communities involved in the process of Parish Plans / Appraisals.
 - A further meeting is scheduled later in February with West Devon Borough Council Planning and Local Strategic Partnership Officers, Chris Dunford and John Dixon respectively, bringing to completion initial contact with all district planning authorities of the Culm.
- On 20 January, acting Woodland Projects Officer, Richard Irvine attended the ***North Devon Coast and Countryside Service Interpretation Strategy Event*** at Broomhill Sculpture Gardens. A variety of workshops reviewed the draft interpretation strategy for the area and asked searching questions about 'what is interpretation?'. A useful outcome from this process will be an interpretation toolkit for use by all agencies and individuals in the area.