

SOUTH WEST FOREST – MONTHLY BRIEFING

May 2006

1. Events

- **South West Forest Partnership Meeting** – South West Lakes Trust new Lakeview Centre was the venue for the latest meeting of the Partnership on 12 May. The focus for the meeting was the engagement of partners around South West Forest's new Communications Strategy. This is a dynamic process where early developments surround the challenge of putting the very good evidence in the recent evaluation of the South West Forest in front of a wide range of partners. The Evaluation Summary document funded by the Countryside Agency is an excellent vehicle for the positive messages from the evaluation report.
- **Woodland Initiatives Conference - Cambridge 10-11 May** - Jim White represented the South West Forest at this stimulating event. Delegates included representatives from numerous Woodland Initiatives across England. Forestry Commission's Rod Leslie and Andy Mason were also in attendance. Sandy Shattock from Defra had her first opportunity to put the consultation draft for England's Trees, Woods and Forests in front of a discerning audience. The conference discussed issues around funding for woodland initiatives and efforts to avoid the stop-start and constant reinvention which short-term funding dictates. A number of woodland initiatives expressed frustration at not being able to engage their Regional Development Agency in the economic aspects and potential development of their work.
- Fiona Bryant, who manages the national RDA relationship with Defra and leads on the **Modernising Rural Delivery Programme** was on hand to hear these concerns and will take them forward to her next meeting with the RDA's.

2. Progress

- **Media Exposure** – Jim Skelton took a call from BBC's SW Environment Correspondent, Adrian Campbell after Easter. Adrian was interested in diversification and Jim arranged for him to visit the Cookworthy Forest Centre on 20 April and hear about some of our case studies. He was particularly interested in the wilderness holiday concept at Blagdon Water and Jim arranged for him to go out and meet owner, Dermot O'Neill. It is instructive that it takes two hours of filming to make two minutes of television; the fruits of this labour came to our screens on BBC's Spotlight and other local news slots on 30 April and 1 May.
- **Advisory Visits** - A total of 10 visits were undertaken in April, three regarding woodland creation, and 7 regarding woodland management. The most notable was a visit to the Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research (IGER) site near Okehampton which has nearly 40 hectares of woodland, the majority being existing semi-natural woodland including a 5 ha block of Ancient Semi Natural Woodland. In addition to this are a small area of conifer, a willow energy crop and an area of mainly Ash planted as an agro forestry experiment some 15 years ago. Save for ad hoc interventions the woodland is largely unmanaged and therefore has never really contributed to the work of the organisation. The main interest of IGER is to enhance the biodiversity value of the woodland and to look at the potential to provide fuel wood for a relatively small scale wood heat boiler.
- **Monitoring Visits** - The ongoing monitoring programme resulted in 3 sites being visited during the month of April.

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- **Devon County Show – Woodland Competition**

Of the South West Forest sites entered into the competitions our beneficiaries' sites were placed as follows:

Berridon Community Woodland – Owner Mr P Stubbs.

First Prize in Class 2 - Potential Timber Quality

West Greylake Farm – Owner Mr H Martin

Third Prize in Class 2 – Potential Timber Quality

South Molton Community Woodland – Owner South Molton Town Council

Second Prize Class 7 – Multiple Objectives

Two other sites were also entered but were not placed but their relatively young age was an obvious disadvantage.

- **South West Forest Training** – during April, Kathy Lewington ran 5 courses with a total of 34 beneficiaries:-

➤ Strimmer/Brushcutter	4
➤ Hurdle Making	6
➤ Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites Restoration	11
➤ Alternative Weeding	3
➤ Managing Woodlands for Conservation	10

- **Woodfair South West** – planning for Roadford 2006 continues apace and the visitor flyer has just gone to print (150,000 copies). We are pleased to have agreed a sponsorship deal with Bill Wilson and the flyers acknowledge the support of his two companies – Lindara Lodges and Ruby Holiday Park.

- **Land Between The Moors 2 Project** – Developing Local Land Management Frameworks (LLMF). Following the feedback from the Culm Conference in February, the project is gearing up for a series of stakeholder participation events to draw out the aspirations for land management in the Culm. Three workshops will be taking place as follows:

- **Workshop 1 - 14 June 2006-** Filleigh Hall
Focus: Generating and Agreeing Land Management Aspirations
- **Workshop 2 - 19 July 2006-** Clinton Hall, Merton
Focus: Identifying possible areas and agreeing locations for LMA's
- **Workshop 3 - 27 September 2006-** Parkhouse Centre, Bude
Focus: Prioritising Land Management Aspirations

- Invitations to the first workshop have gone out to over 300 stakeholders. If you do not get a letter of invitation and wish to take part please let Jim White know tel: 01409 221896.

For further information about the LBTM2 project please go to <http://www.southwestforest.org.uk/land-between-the-moors/index.html> .

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- **Linking up with the Hampshire Downs LLMF project** - Hampshire County Council is piloting the LLMF process in their Hampshire Downs Joint Character Area (JCA). This will run in parallel with the Land Between the Moors II process helping to inform the Countryside Agency's future approach and use of LLMF's. Jim White and Jim Skelton of South West Forest hosted a meeting at Cookworthy on Tuesday 25 April with Merrick Denton-Thompson, Mark Braggins and Andrew Davis from Hampshire and Sarah Manning of the Countryside Agency. In addition to gaining a greater understanding of the different issues faced by each of the JCA's, many aspects of the LLMF process were discussed. The sharing of ideas and experience made for a very productive meeting and we plan to continue to liaise to ensure both projects get the best value out of the process for developing the LLMF model.

- **Educational Activity** - Education Ranger, Kate Dixon has begun the delivery of the "Tree for All Seasons" programme funded by the Forest Education Initiative. The first sessions of extension activities with pupils involved in this winter's tree planting programme have taken place at Ashwater, Holsworthy and Kingsacre Primary Schools. Kate will visit six more schools this term and run a further nine return visits to planting sites with additional input from forest craftspeople and artists.

3. Meetings / Networking

- On 18 April, **Devon County Council's Chairman, Des Shadrick** made a visit to Cookworthy Forest Centre to update himself on the work of the South West Forest project. Jim Skelton was pleased to be able to share with him the good range of evidence found by consultant's, PACEC, when evaluating the project and how he was hoping to use this to help potential funders identify with the South West Forest as a proven delivery service for rural regeneration.
- Richard Irvine attended the **South West Forest Products Network Steering Group** meeting in Hatherleigh on 24 April. Following two years under the chairmanship of Sam Whatmore, the group is now led by Brian Williamson with a core steering group of 8 members and a total membership of 30. Plans to expand the membership and fund a group marketing programme were discussed and Tom Hills of Greenspace Designs agreed to take on a voluntary fundraising role.
- Andy Beer of the **Woodland Trust** met with Richard Irvine and Jim Skelton on 8 May to evaluate the success of our **'Tree for All' partnership** and discuss potential for further cooperation in the future. South West Forest will continue to deliver the 'Tree for All' programme for at least one more season and will be working with the Trust on new activities focused around ancient trees.
- On 19 April, Jim Skelton attended a meeting of the **Okehampton Deer Park Steering Group**. A key part of the meeting was to plan a consultation event with local landowners in order to secure their ideas and support for the project activity identified in the concept note.