

SOUTH WEST FOREST – MONTHLY BRIEFING

September 2003

1. Events

- Director, Jim Skelton, attended the launch of the Cornish Woodlands Economic, Environmental and Social Study (CWEESS) at Boconnoc Estate on 10 September. Consultants, Scott Wilson, were keen to interact with the stakeholders present over their draft proposals and South West Forest will be submitting written comments.
- The main proposals cover:-
 - New sawmilling capacity
 - A new Wood Centre which could be combined
 - Improvements to tourist access in the Fowey valley
 - A new Mountain Biking track
 - Local branding
- The latest meeting of the South West Forest Collaboration Group meeting took place on 18 August and heard from Paul Sandys about the new FSC Group Certification scheme for the SWF area. The Forest Certification scheme provoked, lively debate amongst the membership. Individual choice and business strategy will determine who joins up immediately and who sits on their hands. For some it will be a matter of waiting and seeing how the market pans out.
- The Rural Renaissance bid provides a significant opportunity for the Collaboration Group to play its part in securing money for developing the woodland sector in the region. The membership was asked by Sue Blacker, speaking on behalf of the Rural Woodland Renaissance partnership, to contribute its ideas and aspirations for how the money could be spent. Furthermore the group has been asked to put forward a representative to attend future SW Woodland Renaissance team meetings. The steering group will convene in September with a full membership meeting on 6 October to consider and put forward its ideas and elect a representative to this end.
- We have just learned that the Project Outline Proposal (POP) submitted to the Regional Development Agency has been positively appraised and the proposal for £30,000 to develop a detailed plan for the Woodland Renaissance project has been approved.
- Preparations have been underway, throughout August, to help winners from the Woodfair 2003 woodwork competitions to display their work under the SWF banner, at the FTA's SW Woodland show in September. Six prize winners will be at the show promoting their work and demonstrating the value which can be added to timber in the SW.

2. Progress

- Following its launch at the Woodfair, four people have signed up to join the South West Forest's new Forest Certification Scheme.
- The Ruby Country Initiative with whom we work closely have just appointed a new Assistant for Rosie Austin. Wendy Hannaford started work on 8 September and is already contributing to the lively atmosphere at Cookworthy.

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- Walking for Health Initiative (WHI) – Jim White met with Okehampton WHI Co-ordinator Helen Buxton-Smith and Forest Enterprise’s Bridgette Hall to explore further opportunities for how the South West Forest can support the initiative for Okehampton. A member of the SWF Community & Education team will be receiving training in September to become a Walk Leader for the project and the service will also help produce a leaflet promoting WHI, to be called “Walk & Talk”, to potential beneficiaries of the project.
- SWF’s Community Education Ranger, Kate Ainsworth has been on long-term sick leave since June. Freelance environmental educationalist and qualified secondary teacher, Richard Irvine, has been recruited on a contract basis to provide some cover for Kate’s absence. He will help to maintain the level of service to Secondary and Primary schools in Cornwall through the start of the new academic year and develop further, some of the project work in which SWF’s Community & Education service is engaged.
- The August Countryside Clinic attracted 9 visitors. Advice across a range of issues split as follows;
 - South West Forest - New Planting/Green Tourism 3
 - Rural Enterprise Scheme – 2
 - Countryside Stewardship Scheme - 4
 - Ruby Country – 4 enquiries
 - Agri-BIP – 1 enquiry
 - West Country Rivers – 2 enquires
- Although, this clinic was quite busy, some of the recent clinics have been rather quiet. In order to publicise the clinics more widely, Rosie Austin has produced a poster and this has been put up at local Farmers Markets, Livestock Markets etc. However, it needs wider circulation, and partners are encouraged to market the process more widely and should contact Rosie Austin for copies of the poster/flyer if they feel they can advertise the service.
- The South West Forest exhibited at two agricultural shows in August; the North Devon Show and the Okehampton Show. The latter produced particularly strong interest in visits from our advisory service.
- Eleven advisory visits were undertaken in August, three of which were in Cornwall.
- David Rickwood and Jim White responded to NDDC Assistant Planning Officer, Andrew Austen’s request for information and advice on a Community Woodland Implementation Strategy for the council. Comments and recommendations to the strategy have been made and subsequently been passed on to Andrew. A meeting has been proposed between Jim White and Andrew Austen - currently awaiting a response.

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- A monitoring programme has begun and consultants Dave Wood and John Hurle are undertaking the visits. A handful of the advisory service enquires have related to existing planting projects and these have been included in the monitoring programme. To date the monitoring programme covers;
 - 1999 Plantings – 21 of the 35 planted sites
 - 2000 Plantings – 17 of the 32 planted sites
 - 2001 Plantings – 19 of the 31 planted sites
- This will give SWF/FC an overview of the first three years of plantings, highlighting positives and issues, which will help improve the future advisory, and monitoring services. One interesting comment came from a beneficiary who had had some difficulties, over weeding, contractors etc. He would have appreciated the SWF monitoring visit at an earlier stage and found the process very helpful with problem solving.
- Two technical training courses were held during August with a total of 6 beneficiaries attending, 2 of whom were from Cornwall.
 - Horse Logging
 - Basic Chainsaw
- Two best practice events were held in August with a total of 13 beneficiaries, 2 of whom were from Cornwall.
 - Managing Neglected Woodlands
 - Introduction to Culm Grassland

3. Meetings / Networking

- The latest SWF Partnership meeting was held at Exeter Racecourse on 12 September. This allowed Partners the opportunity to visit the South West Woodland Show run by the Forestry and Timber Association.
- Jim Skelton attended a Management Team meeting of the Ruby Country Initiative. This proved useful in view of the close working relationship developed between the two projects.
- David Rickwood undertook a joint site visit, with Sue Williams and Helen Watt (new woodland officer for the SWF area) of the Forestry Commission, to review and bench mark Better Land Assessment outside the Less Favoured Area.
- David also attended a 4 day Grassland Identification Course with the Field Studies Council at Nettlecombe Court on Exmoor. This will help us to feed a better understanding and appreciation of grassland habitats into the advisory service.
- SWF were represented at an Institute of Chartered Foresters meeting at Auswell Wood (SSSI) on Dartmoor. The meeting focussed on the management of native woodland habitats (NVC W11/W17) and heathland sites.

