

**LAND BETWEEN THE MOORS II PROJECT
MONTHLY BRIEFING – 3**

***Developing a Local Land Management Framework (LLMF)
for the Culm Countryside Character Area***

March 2006

March has seen follow up work from the initial stakeholder engagement at the Culm Conference and processing information for the next stakeholder participation stage (at parish level) of the project (scheduled for late April / early May). By the end of the one year project, we aim to have achieved, tested and reported upon a Local Land Management Framework (LLMF) approach for land use in the Culm.

Consultation

The Culm Conference 2006 (25 Feb 2006) afternoon workshops were successful in developing continuity between the original LBTM and LBTM2 (LLMF) processes, offering an overall vision and indicating priorities for land use from the existing objectives of the LBTM Strategy. Key concerns cross-cutting all the LBTM strategy themes included such developments as: Threshold & Gateway signage; a 'Culm' Website; Expanding the Ruby Icon identity to cover the Culm; Promoting and selling what's being done already (ie. best practice) and getting the identity from this; Developing and promoting a 'Culm Icon'; Mapping of all recreational activities to provide a GIS resource for prospective and actual visitors to the Culm through a website portal to these facilities. All of these concerns are clearly geared towards creating greater opportunity for income generation in the Culm through better marketing of land-use, its natural assets and associated products. A full breakdown of the issues generated from the PM workshops is available from Jim on request.

However these general concerns need to be translated into something more specific for the LLMF process, at a more local / parish level on the Culm. A first step has been to find out which Parishes of the Culm have a parish plan or appraisal in place in order to help inform this work and Jim has made contact with Karen James of North Devon and Exmoor Regeneration Company who is engaged in work to do just that for the North Devon and Torridge Districts. This work is still ongoing but the information gathered so far will help to inform the work of the LBTM2 project in addition to advising Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP's) and other groups with wider community / parish concerns.

Furthermore we now have a up-to-date database of contacts for all Parish councils in the Culm. Give or take one or two which have yet to be added to the list the number stands at 162 parishes. A short-listing process can now begin, to get a representative sample of Culm parishes which will be invited to engage in the LLMF process. Ideally all parishes of the Culm would be invited to participate and in due course it is to be hoped that this would be the case but for now, for the short life of this project, a sample of 8 parishes is all that's required.

Pending the outcome from the assessment and short-listing process, representative Parishes will be invited to attend a stakeholder participation event to map their land use aspirations towards the close of April, beginning of May.

South West Forest

GIS

A helpful and instructive meeting with Alistair Gordon and Bob Marshall of the Environment Agency looking at their GIS capacity, gave some key points to take forward for the project:

- "Look at the big elephants in the room first" deal with the most obvious needs first in developing the GIS package.
- EA and SW Observatory may be able to help with datasets as required.
- "iGather" - using iPod technology to find relevant info / data sets to feed into a LLMF GIS framework may be a possibility. Alistair is on the SW committee for 'iGather' and will feed info as appropriate.
- Websites: www.Southwestid.org.uk; www.rotherham.gov.uk/statsmaps; and www.askgiraffe.org.uk/metadata/default offer useful information or exemplars towards the LLMF model.

Communication

Attendance at a Devon Towns Forum event (21/03/06) "Involving Communities in Planning" saw a very good turnout of councillors, planners and community activists eager to find out about ways in which local people can get more involved and have more representation in the planning process. Some key issues emerged from the day: 1) legal expectations on the planning system dictated an unwieldy 'top-down' approach which often worked against local interests. 2) Whilst there have been moves afoot to get more of the local community involved in local planning issues, the windows of opportunity for this in the planners' timetable still remain very tight and demands a level of organisation and knowledge of the planning system which few communities have at their disposal. 3) LSPs and Community Strategies have strong potential (with improved links and communication between planners and the parishes) to inform the Local Planning (LDF) process re community vision and aspirations for development in their area. A meeting has been arranged in mid-April with members of DCC's Northern Devon Community Strategy Team in order to gauge the experiences of LSP's in getting community strategies onto the 'planning map'. This will advise the work of the project for the generation of community 'Land Management Aspirations' for the LLMF, helping to give weight to rural community interests in the planning process.

Cross-Checking

A scoping meeting in Exeter for the Environment Agency's North Devon Catchment Flood Management Plan allowed opportunities associated with LBTM2, South West Forest and the Culm Core group's work in the catchment to be identified. There was particular interest in the potential to offer 'soft engineering' alternatives for flood risk management. Establishing woodland in upper catchment areas and the decrease in stocking numbers associated with extensive grazing of 'herb rich' Culm grassland were two such examples, seen as potentially beneficial to reducing agricultural surface water run-off and associated soil loss. Chris Paul, Strategic & Development Planning Flood Risk Project Manager for the Agency reported back: "We found the meeting extremely beneficial... we will be using this information to develop draft objectives and scenarios... A full report should be ready for formal consultation the week commencing Monday 17th April." It is anticipated that the Local Land Management Framework will make good reference to this work in its own strategy and policy cross-checking process.