

Southern Upland NEWS



Second Edition: Autumn 1999

GREEN FOR GO!

A YEAR AFTER the idea for a Southern Uplands Initiative was given a mandate by the people of Southern Scotland, the Southern Uplands Partnership is to be launched.

Barbara Kelly, the Convenor of the Partnership, is pleased that so much has been achieved in the past year, "To get from an idea to a legally registered Charitable Company in a year is quick work when you are working in partnership with others. I am delighted that the SUP is now ready to tackle some of the major challenges we all face in the Southern Uplands" she said. "The rapid progress reflects the need to address a range of upland issues that are becoming increasingly urgent. The current problems in farming and rural development require new ideas and new ways of working if upland rural communities are to have a sustainable future".

All a'Board for The Southern Uplands Partnership . . .

THE DIRECTORS WHO will take the Partnership through to the first General Meeting will be Willie McGhee (Borders Forest Trust), Richard Williamson (Buccleuch Estates) and Barbara Kelly for Scottish Natural Heritage. Cllr George Prentice of Dumfries and Galloway Council, and Cllr Alastair Hewat of Scottish Borders Council, will join the Board in time for the public launch in December. Elections will take place at the first AGM in Spring 2000 to choose up to 9 Directors. These unpaid positions are open to anyone with the vision and energy to make projects happen. Once elected, the 9 will have the option of co-opting a further 3 Directors with the aim of getting sound cross-sectoral and regional representation on to the Board.

If you would like to play a part or get involved or just be kept up to date with developments, please get in touch.



Pip Pip hurray!



After a UK wide search, the SUI Steering Group found just what they were looking for right on their doorstep. Pip Tabor has been appointed as the Southern Upland Partnership Project Manager. Pip brings a wide range of experience to the post. He has worked for the last five years as Area Officer in

the Borders for Scottish Natural Heritage. Before that, Pip taught science, studied for a MSc and worked for Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) in the Himalayas for five years, so he knows something about uplands! Pip lives with his family near Lilliesleaf in the Borders.

Nothing to Grouse about here

"BLACK GROUSE ARE THE second fastest declining bird species in the UK, only Capercaillie are declining faster" says Dr David Baines of the Game Conservancy Trust. Dr Baines, who is based in Teesdale, was speaking at a meeting called by the SUP in Moffat in September.



The Black Grouse is a priority species in the Southern Uplands. It features in the D&G Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) and is likely to be a priority species in the Borders LBAP too. There are currently a number of projects aimed at reversing this decline. The SUP brought together all the people with an interest in this species in the Southern Uplands including the RSPB, the Game Conservancy Trust, FWAG, Scottish Natural Heritage, Forest Enterprise and staff from both Local Authorities. A sub-group is now looking to see if the existing project funds can be used to draw further cash into the Southern Uplands, to the benefit of both the Black Grouse population and the Southern Uplands as a whole.

Wildwooders go wild

A Group of local enthusiasts, under the umbrella of the Borders Forest Trust, have successfully raised the funds necessary to buy an entire valley in Moffatdale, at the heart of the Southern Uplands. Carrifran is considered by the Group to be the perfect site for recreating wildwood – the type of woodland which would have covered much of the Southern Uplands 6000 years ago, before man arrived and cleared it away. Obviously buying the land is only the start of the restoration project and the task ahead is considerable, however the Group are confident that their vision will be realised – if only for their grandchildren to appreciate. Trees have been grown from seed collected from local ancient woodland sites and, if the weather allows, the Wildwooders will be planting the first of the trees on January 1st 2000 which will perhaps be amongst the more appropriate ways of marking the start of the new Millennium . . . (see picture on page 6)

And hereby hangs a tale . . .

THE RED SQUIRREL is native to the British Isles but has declined drastically in recent years. Its population is now restricted to Scotland, northern England, northern Ireland and a few isolated pockets elsewhere. Reasons for the decline include loss and fragmentation of habitat and disease. However, the most important factor appears to be competition with the introduced American Grey Squirrel which has become widespread. The grey appears better able to exploit deciduous and mixed woodland, with higher breeding rates and survival. Red squirrels usually disappear from these woodlands within fifteen years of greys appearing. The SUP is co-ordinating efforts to get two full time project officers in post to work with land managers to help the red squirrel, which is now a priority species in local Biodiversity Action Plans. Northern England already has a number of such posts, and if the Red Squirrel is to be saved, it is important that efforts are co-ordinated on both sides of the border. Borders Squirrel Management Group (BSMG) and Red Alert South West (RASW) are working hard to raise the funds to match 50% which it is hoped will come from SNH.



FROM OUR FARMING CORRESPONDENTS

With fronds like this . . .

. . . who needs enemies?

Many land managers had difficulty getting approval for bracken spraying last year, causing frustration and potentially expensive delays. Knowledge of bracken management is improving rapidly, and new ways of treating bracken are now available. With the aim of improving the planning process and the effectiveness of bracken management, the SUP is arranging a seminar for interested parties. The seminar will take place on February 16th 2000 in the Yarrow Valley. Contact the Project Manager for details.



Minimalism in the Borders

The *Scottish Environment Protection Agency* and *Scottish Borders LEADER II* project are currently funding a study to promote waste minimisation, and to help farmers to address the issues associated with present and future legislation. Increasing environmental legislation coupled with the escalating costs of waste disposal have resulted in waste minimisation becoming an important part of any business.

The project will identify waste minimisation opportunities by targeting the elimination, reduction, recycling or re-use of wastes (including energy) and offers support for participating farmers in the form of visits from a specialist consultant. Watch out for updates in the next issue.

WHERE THERE'S MUCK THERE'S BRASS

Based at Rigghead, Shawhead, Solway Recycling have recently collected the millionth bale of silage bale wrap from local farms. The baled plastic wrap is processed by Dumfries Plastics into pellets to be used as the base material for a range of other plastic products. The scheme is popular with farmers who would otherwise have to dispose of the used wrap in land-fill sites which is expensive, burying it – which is wasteful, or burning it – which is illegal. Farmers are not charged for collection. Two jobs have been created so far and with less waste plastic around, the countryside benefits too. The scheme is supported by a number of agencies including Solway Heritage who have secured land-fill tax funds to support a three year pilot study, and the Rural Diversification Programme (EU funds).

Woolly thinking

The Scottish Borders Environment Partnership in association with the Borders LA21 Project is about to commission a feasibility study to look into the possibility of adding value to upland wool through using it to manufacture high quality insulation material. A similar product is already being imported from New Zealand and a number of UK bodies are keen to see if such a scheme could be established in the UK.



Jim Knows how to get IT

THE RECENT ALARMING trends in agriculture are without doubt leaving Scottish farmers in a non competitive position in the increasingly globalised market place. We have the position of decreasing meat values, due to the strong pound, and the increasing buying power of the end retailers, who are dictating prices to improve their own margins. Who can blame them, that's business. But what could we do about it. The faults are that we are generally marketing our products as commodities and that we are also acting as price takers with no control of the supply chain. We therefore need differentiation of the products and control to come back to the producers. Project AgrIT proposes to tackle this problem with three instruments:

- *Quality Assurance – involving the creation of a 5 star QA system for the business buyer that is consistent with the supplier standard. It will differentiate the product at many levels and build on current brand promotion such as 'Scottish'. e.g. The wine industry doesn't just brand French Red and White wine, there is a stratified range to suit all customers, £2 bottles to £2000.*
- *IT facilitation – provide the means for the producer to deal direct with his customers through an online trading platform. Leverage synergies with other industries such as tourism systems and access to hoteliers and restaurateurs. Our whole industry can be linked via IT (information technology), e-commerce transactions all the way down our supply chain. With the margins being evenly spread throughout our industry, rather than being forced to the outlet end.*
- *Niche marketing – specialist marketing to promote product quality, branding based on breed and QA classification with premium pricing promotion.*

This may seem adventurous folly to some, but has already happened in the Scottish Tourist industry with the project Ossian. A system has been set up where foreign tourists are buying their holiday package on line e.g. Ossian allows the customer/tourist to check the availability of a small B&B anywhere in Scotland and book immediately. Project AgrIT is being managed by the same company as Ossian. Therefore the initial targeting of the 8000 catering outlets already on the sister project's database seems a prudent beginning. Already the English tourist industry is considering joining Ossian, further opening doors for our products to be sold through in the future. The key to such a project's success is that it is industry led, the key to its continuing success is that it remains that way. At this moment Scottish abattoirs, meat producers, processors, hoteliers and the manager of Ossian have formed a steering group involved in setting this system up to give Scottish Agriculture the global lead in the next millennium. Find out more, contact Jim Hume at Sundhope or visit www.agrit.net

KINDLING A NEW BARBIE BUSINESS

BUCCLEUCH ESTATES ARE currently feeding the thinnings from Dalkeith woodlands into a new enterprise producing logs, charcoal and kindling. Lothian Fuels employ up to nine full time workers and supply the local community, garage forecourts, B&Q and other outlets with their products. The Dalkeith woodlands have Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC) recognition and the company have recently been registered as part of the BioRegional network, reflecting the high quality and environmental benefits of the products.

Amazingly there is demand for high quality logs, charcoal and kindling from all over southern Scotland and even further afield. Lothian Fuels is considering expanding into the Borders and would like to hear from anyone seriously interested in working with them to produce high quality products locally.

Much of the charcoal sold in the UK as "British" is actually produced in S Africa, often from badly managed forests, and only bagged in this country. It is good to know that you can now buy a locally produced, high quality charcoal made from well managed native woodlands.

Would you like to get involved? Lothian Fuels can be contacted on 0131 454 0536.

Beefy Boost to Borders Business

What started as a hobby is now a new business for Michael and Hazel Clarke. Keeping both Dexter and Highland cattle at Ashieburn provided the impetus for them to venture into the world of retail butchering. They have just opened a new shop in Ancrum village near Jedburgh, to sell meat from these two breeds of cattle, and from other rare and traditional breeds of cattle, sheep

and pigs. These native breeds are often used to conserve our wide range of natural habitats. The animals are all sourced locally, from welfare friendly farmers, slaughtered locally and then carefully matured to produce an exceptional product at a competitive price. If you would like to know more please contact Hazel on 01835 830358.

Need to get out more?

VIALE, VIBRANT RURAL communities are under threat from a lack of public transport options. Approximately 30% of Borders households do not have access to a car. Access to cars can be limited for a number of reasons: young people who are too young to drive; adults with disability or illness; situations where the household car is shared by several drivers. For many others the costs are prohibitive and the situation is likely to be made even harder if fuel costs continue to rise. In isolated upland situations, the private car will continue to be the predominant form of transport, but there are alternatives being tried across upland Britain.

Community transport services run in areas where conventional services do not, usually because they are not commercially viable. Community services can be operated by community groups, local authorities and/or commercial operators. They are run *to meet the communities needs*. Such schemes are usually non-profit making and the vehicles are often chosen to be accessible to those with mobility difficulties. Examples of successful rural community transport services include:

Community Buses – like a conventional bus service, but operated by volunteers. To supplement the income of the bus, it can be hired out to community groups.

Voluntary Car Schemes – door-to-door transport using volunteers who drive their own cars, servicing people who find particular journeys difficult or impossible to make.

Subsidised Taxi Operations – flexible, subsidised transport service provided by a local taxi contract.

Taxibus – service running timetabled or on-demand journeys.

Dial-a-ride – service running on a semi-fixed route but responsive to needs and requests.

Car Share Clubs – group of car users share a pool of cars.

Assistance in establishing schemes such as these is available from a specialist in Rural Community Transport, Elliot Lorimer. Elliot is employed by the Scottish Borders Rural Partnership and can be contacted at the

RURAL RESOURCE CENTRE

Tweed Horizons, Newtown St Boswells TD6 0SG

Tel: 01835 824125 or Fax: 01835 824126



DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY LAND USE CONSULTATION EXTENDED

FOLLOWING AN INITIAL round of public workshops in January, a second round of public workshops was held in the mid-Galloway, and Lockerbie/Langholm areas in September. Over one hundred and twenty people came along to discuss draft consultation papers on the future scope for forestry and woodland development and management in the two study areas, drawn up on the basis of the earlier workshops and other research.

"The September workshops were a key stage in the public consultation. All the comments and subsequent letters will be taken into account in refining the documents for the two study areas. There will then be a further opportunity for people to comment on the next draft, before the 'Local Forestry Frameworks' are finalised" explained Tony Turner, chairman of Dumfries and Galloway Council's Environment and Infrastructure Committee.

"However, the high level of continuing interest, particularly from the farming community, has led the project partnership of the Forestry Commission, the Council and Scottish Natural Heritage to extend the current deadline for comment to the end of November.

"Farming and forestry are very important parts of the landscape, economy, employment and people's everyday lives in these areas, so it is very important that the Local Forestry Frameworks take account of the range of local people's aspirations. In the meantime we want to emphasise that the Frameworks will be reviewed from time to time, so that they can be flexible enough to adjust to changing circumstances over the years."

The consultation exercise is being carried out by consultants Environmental Resources .

Management on behalf of the Council, the Forestry Commission and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). If you have not already made your view known, you may still have time to comment – contact Sue Bennett on 01387 260167. We will report on progress in the next newsletter.



They are out to help you . . .

There are a number of organisations out there to help you if you have a community project which you want to carry out. Two organisations have trained and experienced field staff who can offer advice on how to develop your idea, identify funding sources and successfully apply to them. Attracting funding is increasingly competitive and it helps to know what works. In Dumfries & Galloway, South West Environmental Action Project (SWEAP) have field staff in post across the region and can be contacted on 01557 331993.

The Scottish Borders Rural Partnership runs the Rural Resource Centre based at Tweed Horizons in Newtown St Boswells, and they also have field staff. Contact them on 01835 824125.

FUNDING NEWS

New Opportunities Fund

This Initiative is likely to be launched later in the year and is a new Lottery Distributor. It will offer funds to projects which:

- improve the quality of life of people throughout the UK
- address the needs of those who are most disadvantaged in society
- encourage community participation
- compliment relevant local and national strategies and programmes.

More news next time.

Forward Scotland

One of the current funders of Southern Upland Partnership, was launched in 1996 as an independent company with charitable status. The organisation uses its resources to promote Sustainable Development (improving the quality of life in the communities of Scotland by integrating social, economic and environmental issues).

Forward Scotland is guided by four main principles:

- Seeking Partnership;
- Working to Empower;
- Enhancing Integration and
- Equity

By applying these determining principles together with a project sustainability checklist, Forward Scotland seeks to obtain quality and value for money from project proposals. They are working in partnership with a number of other organisations in the region including the South West Environmental Action Project based in Dumfries and Galloway and the Borders Local Agenda 21 project.

Should you require further information on Forward Scotland, their Development Officer is Francis Kiernan based in Glasgow who can be contacted on 0141 222 5611.

It takes 2 to tango . . . Objective 2 latest

All of Dumfries and Galloway and all the Borders excepting Tweeddale has been put forward for Objective 2 funding from Europe. This is disappointing for Tweeddale, but transition funding will be available for the next few years as Objective 5 funds are phased out. The funding is still dependant on acceptance by Europe and a planning team with representation from both Borders and D&G is working to produce the necessary documentation and strategy that will convince Europe of the case for South Scotland. Confirmation is due early next year.

Who Cares? We Care.

Rural Care is a multi-million pound initiative by ScottishPower with the objective of improving the reliability of electricity supply for customers most vulnerable to the damage to power lines caused by falling trees.

To reduce the likelihood of damage, wayleaves through woodland and forests may have to be widened. ScottishPower are keen to work with local groups, conservation bodies and others to find ways of ensuring that the outcome of any work is positive in terms of wildlife and landscape. Where trees have to be felled, new trees will be planted at sites to be determined by local people perhaps in schools or community woodlands. ScottishPower may be approaching your community to find out your views. There is an opportunity here for your community to benefit. For further information contact ScottishPower on 0845 2721717.

Tweed Forum

The last six months have been exceptionally busy for the Forum with the award in June of nearly £2 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Tweed Rivers Heritage Project. This is a £4 million multi-disciplinary and multi-partnership scheme which aims 'to conserve, enhance and raise awareness of the rivers and valleys of the Tweed catchment and develop the recreational opportunities and the quality of life in the region.'

Many of the 22 constituent projects are located in the uplands of the catchment and a great deal of work has already been achieved by the likes of East of Scotland Water, Borders Forest Trust, the Tweed Foundation and Forest Enterprise in terms of habitat improvements, community involvement and increasing public access.

Tweed Forum now employs four staff and has recently moved into its newly converted offices at Drygrange near Melrose.



Why the Southern Upland Partnership

THE SMALL PRINT

COMMENT

MANAGEMENT SPEAK ALWAYS throws up a selection of words and phrases that you just know are going to annoy you. Words like downsizing, amateur, visioning. "Joined up thinking" is the current buzz phrase in Parliamentary circles and destined to join an "A" list. What on earth does it mean? Who doesn't think in a joined up way?

I guess we all do to some extent. Certainly those of us who work in land management have been as guilty as anyone in the past of not thinking out of our boxes (sorry! another A candidate there). We think along narrow professional lines, its what we have always done, its easy, its what we know. Its probably why when you want to make a land management decision you end up referring to structure plans, local plans, subject plans, biodiversity action plans, species action plans, access strategies, indicative forest strategies, local forest frameworks. Not forgetting to think about SSSIs, NHZs, NSAs, ESAs, 5bs, Objective 2s, SRO3s.

If ever there was a time to begin joining up our thinking about landuse it was now. But thinking is easy and solitary, joined up action is harder to do. This means working together, with other people. It means sharing objectives, strategies, information. We will need to communicate with other people, not just fellow professionals who understand our secret coded acronyms but with real people in the real world.

Signing up to the Southern Uplands Partnership provides a special opportunity to go further than joined up thinking and go for joined up action. The SUP has broken down some of the barriers to this. SUP is now working across local government boundaries, across agency boundaries and across professional boundaries. SUP is about real joined up projects.

Come and SUP with us. You know it makes sense.

This issues comment is by Richard Williamson of Buccleuch Estates and a SUP Director.

Have you got a comment to share?

WHY WILLIE WANTS TO BE A DIRECTOR . . .

WILLIE MCGHEE IS the one of the dynamic team behind the Borders Forest Trust, a charity that grew out of the wide interest there is to recreate the link between people and woodland. He prefers action to talk and he is now a Director of the Southern Uplands Partnership. He says:

"My environmental career started on a land use survey of the Isle of Skye. I rapidly became aware of the lack of dialogue between major land users such as farmers, foresters, crofters and conservationists. I also saw the amount of national and European funding that was targeted at rural interests in the Scottish Highlands. Coming to the South of Scotland it was clear there was much less funding available.

"Our projects involve working in partnership with farmers, foresters, community councils, schools, local authorities, government agencies and voluntary groups. This partnership working has reinforced my belief that the best results and greatest gains to be made in countryside management stem from co-operation and negotiation between different and often conflicting land uses and interests.

"Many of the issues thrown up during project working in the Southern Uplands are neither obvious nor widely discussed, such as the siting of mobile phone receivers and private water supplies. The Southern Uplands Partnership will be able to raise these issues and seek sensible solutions".

101 THINGS ABOUT THE SOUTHERN UPLANDS PARTNERSHIP

THE SOUTHERN UPLANDS PARTNERSHIP is a partnership of the communities, individuals, organisations, authorities and agencies having a shared interest in the sustainable use of the Southern Uplands.

The Southern Uplands Partnership aims to achieve the integration of environmental, social and economic land use policies in the Southern Uplands.

We want to hear from you. Let us have your thoughts on what the issues are. What could be done to help you make your living in the Southern Uplands? What would you like to see the Partnership doing? What are your concerns for the future?

Ask folk what they think of when they hear the word "Scottish Highlands" and they'll have an answer. Ask them about the Southern Uplands and they'll mostly look blank. The issues and problems are similar for both and yet the one gets most of the help.

What do the Southern Uplands mean to you? What can we do to foster an image that will bring people here and send them away knowing and caring about the Southern Uplands? Is there a particular image that captures the Southern Uplands? We want to hear from you.

Contact:

The Southern Uplands Partnership

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Photographs 1, 5 and 8 are courtesy of Derek Robeson, Borders FWAG
Photographs 2 and 3 are courtesy of B Turner, Buccleuch Estates

Photograph 4 courtesy of Scottish Borders Tourist Board
Photograph 7 courtesy of Philip Ashmole