

Southern Upland NEWS



Fourth Edition: Autumn 2000

ANNUAL REPORT

The SUP has had a Project Manager for a year now and the anniversary of the formation of the Company is in October. Time to have a look at where we have come from and what we have achieved and also perhaps to look ahead and check we are still going in the right direction.

So what have we actually done?

Amongst other things:

- We have commissioned a scoping study into the jobs that are supported by the environment in South Scotland.
- We have held a series of seminars and meetings on bracken management and have had some influence on the shape of the new rural stewardship scheme.
- We have helped raise sufficient funds to employ two Red Squirrel Conservation Officers.
- We have drafted a £0.5million bid for Heritage Lottery Funds to enhance upland habitats.
- We have held a seminar and developed the basis of a project which will seek to add value to hundreds of small woodlands that are currently unproductive and unmanaged.
- We have stimulated activity to promote the Southern Upland Way as a major tourism resource and we are working towards a major arts event along the SUW in 2002/3.
- We have stimulated discussions on the future of rural Post Offices and this may shortly lead to a pilot project in the Borders.
- We have raised funds for a pilot community consultation training event which will take place early next year.
- We have played a key role in establishing an inter-agency communication system called the Border Exnet.



Photo 1 - Uplands at Durisdeer

CONVENORS COMMENT

Partnerships are only as good as the partners within them. Sarah Boyack's speech to the SUP AGM emphasised that successful action depends on the active participation and commitment of all sectors, environmental, social and economic.

With the news of the continuing downturn in agriculture and the problems of the forestry sector, the relevance and importance of the SUP becomes ever more obvious. The SUP Board is immensely encouraged

at the progress the SUP has made in the year since Pip Tabor, our Project Manager, was recruited. You will see in this newsletter the range, scale and diversity of our activities have greatly increased.

We need to do more together if we are to find new and innovative ways of tackling the persistent problems facing South Scotland's rural communities and land managers.

Barbara Kelly, Convenor

**The Southern Uplands Partnership membership leaflet sets out what we are trying to achieve
under 4 headings:**

the 4 "I"s: Integrating, Initiating, Informing and Innovating

INTEGRATING

Minister Endorses Integrated Approach at Southern Uplands Partnership Public Meeting

Sarah Boyack Minister for Transport and the Environment addressed the Southern Uplands Partnership in June at the Moffat Academy. The Minister told the assembly that it is all too easy to romanticise the rural situation and consider the countryside as being far removed from urban problems. The reality was that many of the issues were the same and that there were additional problems in the countryside which required urgent attention. The Minister stressed the need for issues to be looked at with the long-term in mind, examined "in-the-round" and discussed by a broad range of people and interests. The Minister emphasised that a partnership approach offered the best chance of new solutions being found and she endorsed the approach being taken by the Southern Uplands Partnership.

Welcoming John Davidson onto the Board of Directors, Barbara Kelly the SUP Convenor emphasised the need for the SUP to help tackle the most serious problems that were faced by upland communities. By bringing together a wide range of organisations and individuals to discuss issues, it is possible to get to the roots of topics and to look for new ways forward. The Partnership also offers a way of voicing concerns directly to those in positions of influence and authority.

Amongst other issues raised at the meeting were the form of the pending Rural Stewardship Scheme; the future of rural Post Offices; the need for high quality telecommunications to reach out to the most remote parts so that all people could benefit from the opportunities the "e-world" could bring; and the need to establish clear objectives for future land-use.

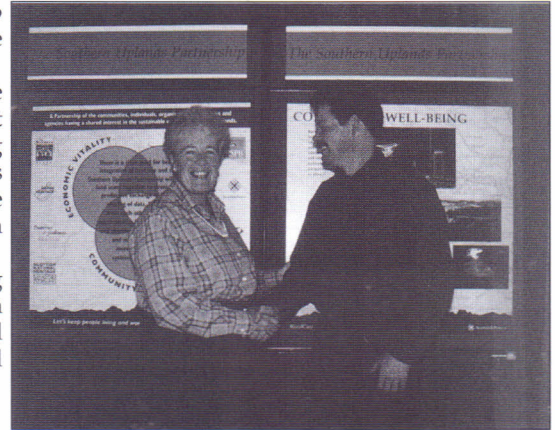


Photo 2 - Barbara Kelly welcomes John Davidson of Crosslee Farm, Selkirk to the Board

... Integrating

We are working to break-down the barriers that separate those who work within the constraints of local administrative boundaries. By bringing together people with shared ideas to examine issues that are not confined to particular Regions such as land management issues, communication and conservation.

We are also keen to see "joined-up" working between agencies when it comes to addressing the major issues that are impacting on the Uplands such as forestry, farming, tourism and access.

We are working to bring together and integrate the social, the economic and the environmental sectors, because these cannot be treated in isolation from each other. This approach is represented by the three overlapping circles shown on our display panels – we are trying to work (and encouraging others to work) at the centre where all three overlap. We are swimming with an increasing flow here, in that Community Planning, Local Agenda 21 and other national initiatives are also seeking to integrate these sectors much more closely, but there is still a long way to go. We hope that by involving a wide range of partners in all that we do, the links and overlaps will become more apparent and we can all benefit from the added value that this can bring.

... Informing

This is the fourth Southern Upland News. In these newsletters we are trying to show the huge range of new approaches to land-use issues that are being considered or tried-out in the Southern Uplands and elsewhere, and we hope that the newsletter will be an increasingly useful medium for the members to exchange views and ideas.

We have established a web-site which again we hope will become a useful source of information as more people make use of the internet and we get trained in managing and updating a web-site.

We have been closely involved with the development of a electronic system – currently called the Borders Exnet – which is designed to encourage the main countryside bodies in the Borders to share ideas and plans at an early stage in development of projects. We hope that this exchange of ideas will result in new and improved partnership projects with the added value this can bring. We anticipate that this system can, in time, be broadened out to provide a facility that will promote wider consultation with communities. As it is, we often find out about developments shortly before they actually happen by which time it is too late to alter them and opportunities are therefore often missed.

... Innovating

The SUP is not intended to replace or replicate any other organisation. We hope that we can provide a link between all those who share an interest in the use and development of the Southern Uplands. We believe that by involving new people in partnerships and by approaching issues in new ways, we will arrive at new solutions – the approach endorsed by Sarah Boyack at the meeting in Moffat.

Objective 2 offers opportunities for new projects that stimulate economic activity and lead to sustainable jobs and also which support community and individual development through training and capacity building. We believe the SUP is uniquely positioned to take advantage of this opportunity and we are working in a number of areas to develop projects which may qualify for such funding.

... Initiating

The SUP is also initiating a number of projects, each of which brings in a number of partners and which we hope will lead to greater confidence in joint-working. Some of these are described on the following pages.

First Direct Jobs

Photo 3 - Sarah Oakley and Robin Fuller at the launch of the Red Squirrels in South Scotland project at Drumlanrig Castle.



Having successfully raised almost £60,000 from a wide range of sources (including Scottish Enterprise D&G, Esmee Fairbairn Trust, Scottish Power Rural Care, The Prince of Wales Charities, and SNH), the Borders Squirrel Management Group and Red Alert South West, in partnership with the SUP have

appointed two Project Officers to implement the Regional Species Action Plan for the Red Squirrel. Red Squirrels are a UK priority species and also a priority for Local BAPs, and this project brings together foresters, the conservation bodies, local communities, the local authority biodiversity officers, colleges, FWAG and

others. Robin Fuller will be based at the Wildlife Hospital, Barony College Dumfries and Sarah Oakley will be based at Borders College in Newtown St Boswells. Further information is available from Sarah on 07733 121838 or Robin on 07733 121837.

JOBS STUDY

On behalf of a number of our partners, the SUP has commissioned a scoping study into "The Interactions between the Environment and the Regional Economy of South Scotland". Carried out by consultants ERM, and funded by the Scottish Executive, SNH, Scottish Borders Council, Forestry Commission and RSPB, this study examined all the existing data on the jobs that are supported by or dependant on the environment in any way. Comparisons have been made with other parts of the UK and recommendations for further work have been suggested. The main finding was that in the order of 4.5% of jobs in South Scotland (around 4500) depend on the high quality environment we have. The study also identified areas where there were real opportunities for significant future growth. The study has already been used in the bid for Objective 2 funding.

The Partners are now considering commissioning further work into two areas: wildlife tourism initiatives and the scope for further developments in the Southern Uplands and secondly the economic value of biodiversity.

BRACKEN MANAGEMENT

We have brought together all those with an interest in bracken management including land owners, managers, the statutory bodies (SEPA, SERAD, SNH and Water Authorities), land-based and aerial contractors and academics. The results of this have been very positive, with the SUP now working towards a bracken management strategy, producing information leaflets and possibly updating the Bracken Management Handbook.



Photo 4 - The effects of poor bracken management - stripes of bracken left untreated will quickly recolonise.

THE TREES & THE WOODS

Woodland on the Brink

SUP member James Pringle hosted a meeting held at Torwoodlee in April which was attended by a range of foresters, conservationists, contractors and the statutory agencies. We discussed the development of a project which could add value to small-scale woodland products. There is a large resource of under-managed woods in the South of Scotland often on difficult slopes. In other parts of the UK, efforts have been made to utilise these in a co-operative way so that economic benefits as well as environmental improvements are gained. Charcoal is an obvious product that could be produced but there are others which would allow the woods to be brought into appropriate and sustainable management. The group agreed to meet again to look for ways of taking the idea forward and we hope to find a way of commissioning the preparation of a development plan possibly in partnership with the Forestry Action Groups of Borders and D&G.

Last winter we put together a bid which we hoped would attract European funds to allow us to develop a **native woodland strategy** for part of the uplands in partnership with SNH and FC, local communities and the private sector. This bid has not been successful, but it is hoped that a smaller scale project will go ahead anyway. The idea is to promote best practice in woodland and forestry design, support the Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) and we hope stimulate new woodland plantings in appropriate locations.

Biodiversity on the Edge

We have brought together all the bodies with an interest in conservation of **black grouse** and the habitats they depend on. We have now submitted a bid for Heritage Lottery Funding towards a £500,000 project to take this forward. This work has been supported by the Biodiversity Officers of SBC and D&GC, the RSPB, Game Conservancy Trust, Forest Enterprise and SNH. If successful this project will create two full time posts and generate significant groundwork contracts.



Photo 5 – The edges are often of vital importance to species as well as the landscape.

A South Scotland Environmental Resource Centre

We believe that people and communities as well as businesses need access to data if they are to make informed decisions about sustainable development. On behalf of a wide range of others we have commissioned the production of a development plan for a dynamic Environmental Resource Centre in South Scotland. This work is largely being funded by SNH, and the Local Authorities in Dumfries & Galloway and the

Scottish Borders. Once established, the Centre would store, process and collate relevant data and make it available in a wide range of forms to a wide range of users. We hope that such a project will attract Objective 2 funding from Europe and/or HLF funds and we anticipate this could create up to 5 full-time posts as well as supporting a wide range of other initiatives.

ACCESS AND RECREATION



Photo 6 – St Mary's Loch – a popular walking area and key part of the Southern Upland Way.

Marking the Way

In partnership with others we are now looking at a project which will seek to promote the **Southern Upland Way**. The route is a wonderful resource and yet we believe it is under-used and could bring greater benefits to those who live and work along its length. We hope to raise the profile of the SUW through a series of arts events. We plan to work with communities along the Way to maximise the economic benefits that can come from walkers. There are exciting plans for the next two summers.

The SUW is one of only 4 Long Distance Routes in Scotland and it is regarded as the toughest. It attracts a large number of walkers to South Scotland each year, but it does not receive the same attention as paths such as the West Highland Way.

A number of businesses are trying to develop the SUW and an ambitious web-site is currently being developed which will highlight services available along the whole

length. Links will be included to other recreation facilities such as golf-courses, fishing sites and riding centres. Visit the site on www.southern-upland-way.com.

Efforts are being made to develop a project to promote horse-riding across South Scotland and especially in the Uplands in the hope that this will bring valuable tourist-trade to the remoter areas of the Region. Work has already been done by Solway Heritage looking at routes around the Forest of Ae and Drumlanrig, and the British Horse Society is keen to see further networks established and links developed between these networks.

The Tweeddale Local Paths Network Group has been developing the Paths for All principle and is looking for Heritage Lottery Funding to realise their ambitious and far-sighted plans.



Photo 7 – Horse riders could bring economic benefits to hard-pressed upland farms and communities.

Student Placement

The Shell Technology Enterprise Initiative is a scheme which encourages undergraduates to take on 8 week environmental projects during the summer so as to gain experience with a company or non-profit organisation. The SUP agreed to support Carmen Mayo, a Spanish student studying at the Scottish Agricultural College in Edinburgh, doing a project suggested by the Borders Forestry Action Group. She has been recording which woodlands around the main Border towns have footpaths and researching attitudes to access. This work has produced a useful database which will be of value to a range of partners including the Forestry Action Group, Tourist Board and the Forestry Commission. Carmen was runner-up in the Borders heat of the STEP competition.

Education for the Countryside

In partnership with Buccleuch Estates, the first Countryside Education Lecture was given by John Markland, Chairman of Scottish Natural Heritage, at Bowhill in May. The text of this fascinating talk has been sent to all SUP members and further copies are available from the SUP.

Community Consultation

We are working closely with other Partnerships (such as the Scottish Borders Rural Partnership and SWEAP) on a Community Consultation training initiative which has already attracted Rural Challenge funding. The aim is to develop a methodology which can be used to allow communities to establish their own local "land-use visions". We hope that these will form the basis of a land-use vision for the whole of the Uplands which all concerned can sign-up to.



Photo 8 – Community consultation at Whitsome earlier this year.

The Specific Aims of the Partnership are to:

- help Southern Uplands communities shape our own sustainable future
- provide a cross-regional forum for Southern Uplands land use issues
- inform an integrated rural land use strategy for the Southern Uplands
- act as a catalyst for land use projects and initiatives within the Southern Uplands
- protect and enhance the countryside
- promote integrated farming, forestry, tourism and other sustainable rural businesses in the Southern Uplands
- encourage people to live and work in the Southern Uplands

CORE FUNDING SITUATION

<i>Funder</i>	<i>1999-2000</i>	<i>2000-2001</i>
SNH	£ 20,000	£ 15,000
Scottish Borders Council	£ 5,000	£ 5,000
Dumfries & Galloway Council	£ 5,000	£ 5,000
Solway Heritage	£ 5,000	£ 5,000
Forward Scotland	£ 5,000	–
RSPB	£ 2,000	–
Membership	£ 500	£ 1,000
Rural Strategic Support Fund	–	£ 13,000
Total	£ 42,500	£ 44,000

Future Events

We are in discussions with the NFUS, the Food Trust for Scotland and others, concerning a possible series of seminars to look at **locally produced foods**, the niche marketing of these products and links to local tourism initiatives. In England there is currently an initiative called “eating the view” supported by the Environment Agency and it would be good to see something similar happening here.

We are also investigating the idea of a **carbon bank** which would allow small landowners to benefit from the big carbon producers who wish to compensate for their production by planting trees. Some large forestry companies are already benefiting from these funds and we would like to see the smaller land-owner helped to benefit as well.

Wool Insulation: This project has grown out of the Scottish Borders Rural Partnership’s Sustainability Group. It is looking at the feasibility of developing **wool** as a more “sustainable” insulating material. This is at relatively early stage but may offer an interesting future.

Also in the Borders, efforts are being made to establish a **Credit Union**. This would establish a fund which could be used to make low-cost loans to those who cannot afford to borrow from the commercial sector. The project is being encouraged by SBC, the Rural partnership and Heriot Watt University but it needs a lot of keen volunteers to make it work. If you would like to get involved, please contact the office for further information.

FUNDING NEWS

Leader + is a European fund which will be available in 2001 for community-based projects. Quite how this fund will be administered is as yet unclear, but Local Action Groups will be established and those groups will then be looking for projects to develop along the themes of:-

- The use of new technologies to make the products and services of rural areas more competitive
- Improving the quality of life in rural areas
- Adding value to local products, in particular by facilitating access to markets for small production units via collective actions
- Making the best use of natural and cultural resources, including enhancing the value of sites of community interest selected under NATURA 2000.

The **New Opportunities Fund** is a new lottery fund aimed at a number of issues including cancer prevention, detection and treatment, Information Technology training, and "Healthy Living Centres". There are two other categories which may be of interest to us. The first is the "Green Spaces and sustainable communities" is intended to support communities who wish to understand, improve and care for their local environment. The Scottish Land Fund is available to assist communities to purchase particular areas of land. The second is the Community access to life-long learning intended to support the provision of education direct to the community.

Further information can be obtained from the Scottish Office, 2nd Floor, Highlander House, 58 Waterloo St, Glasgow G2 7DA.

The Scottish Executive is also keen to hear from groups with projects which:

Stimulate rural economic development and increase education, training and job opportunities

Facilitate social inclusion by tackling poverty and isolation, and providing access to services

Enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the local area.

The **Rural Challenge Fund** can provide up to 50% to a maximum of £50,000. Bids are however required by 24th November 2000 and must come from projects that can demonstrate broad community support.

Contact this office or call Julie Currie on 0131 244 4069 for further information.

The Way Forward for the SUP?

The priorities for the next few months are starting to become clear. The Directors have approved a process which will lead to the production of a "land-use vision" for the Southern Uplands. We want to ensure that as many people as possible contribute to this process and to ensure that widespread consultation takes place, we believe it will take 18 months to two years to produce. The first stage is to produce an audit of the Uplands resource – what makes the Uplands what they are in terms of the communities, the culture, the economics and the natural heritage. We plan to produce a booklet describing the resource for release early next year. We hope this will stimulate discussion and start the process of agreeing the main issues that need to be addressed. From these issues we will develop a vision of what needs to be done, and who needs to do it. This approach has been tried by other groups and in a number of different situations and it seems to work. There is a cost to this approach and we hope that we will be able to attract European funds to help with these. If you have comments, positive or negative, on this approach please let us have them.

Last words

I hope you have got something out of this edition of the Southern Upland News. The last year has gone in a flash and yet I think we have taken some important steps forward. I would like to think that the newsletter is of some value in both publicising what we are trying to do and in encouraging others to get involved. There is a lot going on – in fact it never ceases to astonish me how much is happening and how little we know of some of the exciting and innovative initiatives that are out there.

If you have an idea or know of a project or group, either in the Southern Uplands or beyond, that is likely to be of interest to those of us who are trying to keep people living and working here, do let us know. The newsletter is intended for sharing and spreading ideas.

We hope to produce the next edition early in the new year so send articles, pictures, photos etc to this office now and I will try to include them. We are also keen to develop a list of useful websites, so again if you have found a really useful site – let us know about it.

I would also like to include a "soapbox slot" in the next edition, so if you feel the need to get on a soapbox and broadcast your personal opinion on a relevant topic, jot it down and send it in.

Likewise, if you would like to express an opinion on what this edition covers or what future editions should cover please let me know.

Pip Tabor, Project Manager

The Southern Uplands Partnership – a partnership of all those who want to see people living and working sustainably in the Southern Uplands.

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SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE



Photo Credits:
1-6 P. Tabor

7 Courtesy of Scottish Borders Tourist Board
8 Courtesy of Rural Resource Centre