

Southern Upland NEWS

Newsletter of the Southern Uplands Partnership

Sixth Edition: Summer 2001

FMD and the way forward

CONVENORS COMMENT

The Foot and Mouth Disaster has emphasised yet again how urgent it is that we rethink land-use policy in South Scotland. The crisis has emphasised how vulnerable rural economies are to events and the need for an integrated approach has been shown to be greater than ever.

Some good things are starting to happen and a number of help schemes and initiatives have already been announced, some of these are described in the following pages.

We have just had our second, and very positive, AGM and it was good to meet many of you there. The Partnership has made excellent progress since the last AGM when Sarah Boyack offered her support to our approach. A wide range of projects have been started and the SUP has established itself as a major player in local land-use policy thinking and planning.

We have now reached a critical stage in the development of the Partnership with the need for an

integrated, strategic approach becoming clear to all the partners. The next few months are going to be exciting with the planned seminar on integrated land management, proposals for a pilot land-management project for the uplands and the possibility of the Partnership expanding its staff resources. The current production of a business plan will, we hope, assist us in obtaining further resources and thus increase our ability to stimulate activity and promote joined-up working across the Uplands.

There is an awful lot going on - and some interesting projects and initiatives are highlighted in the following pages. We hope you find the newsletter stimulating. We are always keen to hear of other ideas and views so please get in touch if you would like to have a say. Or, better still, become a member and join us!

Barbara Kelly CBE

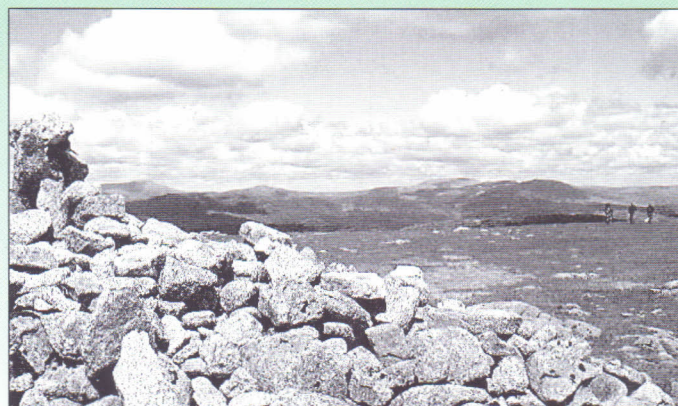
THIS ISSUE LOOKS AT THE AFTER-EFFECTS of FMD and at some of the things that are being done to assist those most affected. Recovery Plans for the Borders and D&G have been drafted, discussed and presented to the Scottish Executive in recent weeks and these are outlined below. A number of other schemes and funding packages are on offer and again some of these are described.

Many people have suffered greatly and many continue to suffer. One farm's experience is movingly described on page 5. The surveys we commissioned (see page 4) highlight the many ways that FMD has also affected a wide range of rural businesses. It really has been a disaster for many. But it has also resulted in new opportunities and the next few months will offer a chance to rethink the way we do things and, for many, the future will be very different from what it would have been without FMD. We have to do all we can to ensure that the future is a better one and we are currently planning a seminar/conference on integrated land management to take place in October which we hope will encourage people to think through the implications of the current situation and to discuss the possibilities for a different approach and a brighter future.

One idea which we are actively promoting is for a pilot Integrated Rural Development Project:

'Partnership working' and 'joined up thinking' are phrases which we hear on a regular basis. In relation to the role of the Southern Uplands Partnership there are a plethora of regional, national and international policy documents which encourage the integration of environmental, economic and social (community) objectives and activities in both rural and urban areas. There are also a number of models which demonstrate the integration of some of these activities in practice; notable examples are the Bowland Initiative and the Countryside Agency's various Land

Management Initiatives in England, and the Land Management Contract system in France. The recently published 'A Forward Strategy for Scottish Agriculture' makes specific reference to Land Management Contracts as an idea which could be tailored to suit the needs of Scottish farmers.



Photograph 1. Cairnsmore of Fleet - The Uplands at their Best.

However, these projects focus principally on linking agriculture and the environment; broader questions of rural development, especially relating to social issues, tourism and the wider rural community are generally not fully addressed. Indeed, there would appear to be very few examples of how to achieve true integrated development in the rural sector. Scottish Natural Heritage is committed to this integrated approach and has produced a paper proposing that the SUP may be an appropriate forum by which to take forward the development of an integrated rural development scheme, in association with the key organisations, communities and individuals who have a role to play in ensuring a sustainable future for the Southern Uplands. It is further suggested that the establishment of a pilot area for trialing such an approach might be the most appropriate means of developing the concept for future application across a much larger area.

The principal aims of a pilot scheme would be:

- To link together the planning of initiatives across sectors (environmental, social and economic) and identify appropriate, co-ordinated financial assistance for these.
- To identify key features and implement environmental management plans to increase the biodiversity and quality of the Southern Uplands and to aid sustainable development.
- To provide assistance to rural businesses to develop, diversify and add value in ways which complement or enhance the environment of the area.
- To enable the rural community to develop, promote and market products using the environment as a selling point.
- To provide appropriate and relevant training which enables rural businesses to better meet market requirements and, in particular, exploit the opportunities for sustainable adding of value.

- To provide for better well being of the rural community, especially helping farmers, agricultural workers and their families come to terms with change and overcome barriers to achieving optimal economic performance.

A classic example of the type of project that the scheme might support would be someone planning a tourism business development (such as accommodation) in tandem with the provision of countryside activities, and linking this to access provision, habitat enhancement (through agri-environment funding) and marketing this as a single package. Others might include linking village services (such as retail/community open space/public transport) with tourism services or linking agri-environment works with local quality marketing schemes.

The proposal has been circulated to a number of key organisations and initial reaction has been positive. It is crucial, however, that the views of individuals and communities are sought in the development of a pilot project, so that it is not seen as a 'top down', agency-led initiative, but that it properly addresses the aspirations of people living and working in the pilot area. Placing the development of the project with the Southern Uplands Partnership, and having wider discussion through a SUP conference this autumn, should ensure that this component is fully considered.

These ideas were being formulated before the Foot and Mouth epidemic and this crisis has emphasised in the starkest way the urgency of the need to develop joined up, partnership working. This pilot scheme could be one way forward.

Let us have your views on this idea.

The Regional Recovery Plans

The Scottish Borders: The New Ways Response to Recovering the Borders Economy

(the recovery plan is available from Scottish Enterprise Borders)

The Plan points out that the Scottish Borders has a fragile and extremely vulnerable rural economy which is very exposed to global economic change. Continuing problems with Foot & Mouth Disease and the global downturn in electronics have seriously impacted on agriculture, tourism and electronics, the key Borders business sectors.

The Borders is very dependent on agriculture and was struggling with agricultural restructuring issues even before Foot and Mouth Disease. Now a decrease in Tourism of around 30% (equivalent to £30 million a year) is forecast and the overall impact is currently estimated at a loss of £70 million (7%) of annual GDP.

The Borders has identified practical and deliverable solutions in the Recovery Plan. As a first step, projects requiring additional funding of £12 million have been identified. It is argued that local agencies also require the appropriate level of annual funding to deal with diversifying the Borders economy. The Borders has asked the Scottish Executive for assistance in: funding over short to long term; readjustment of national spending; acknowledgement of issues; going forward.

The D&G Plan (available from Scottish Enterprise Dumfries & Galloway) identifies four main priority areas for action:

- Agriculture and Rural Development – To encourage the revival and restructuring of the industry and new approaches to integrated and sustainable rural development
- Businesses – To provide an effective range of support services for businesses affected by the current situation
- Tourism – To rebuild the region's tourism image and bringing back the visitors
- People and Communities – To support a local approach to economic and community regeneration.

The Recovery Plan aims to provide a co-ordinated approach to re-building the economy of Dumfries and Galloway post FMD.

The Plan covers a wide range of programmes and initiatives, and it is closely integrated with existing national and local strategies.

The top priorities for action include:

- designation of Priority Area Status
- farm audit scheme
- employment retention scheme for farm and land-based businesses
- business funding to aid recovery
- establishment of community fund
- targeted tourism marketing
- tourist product marketing and development.

Successful delivery of the Recovery Plan will depend on a joint commitment from the Scottish Executive and local and national agencies.

The cost of the three year plan is given as £39,905,000

Potential funding sources could include:

- Scottish Executive
- South of Scotland EU Objective 2 Programme
- Re-direction of the existing spending plans of local agencies
- Lottery funding

The Plan will be supported by a more detailed Action Programme, which will include further information on economic impact, project costs and performance targets.



Photograph 2. After the Storm – A rainbow over the Borders?

Launched on July 5th, **THE ENVIRONMENT & TOURISM RECOVERY GRANT SCHEME** is a short term grant for farmers affected by foot & mouth disease in Dumfries & Galloway and parts of the Borders, which aims to:

- * Provide funding for practical projects that benefit the natural and cultural heritage of an area
- * Raise awareness amongst farmers of the importance of their land as a natural and cultural heritage resource, which can be valuable to local tourism
- * Provide opportunities to carry out practical works that aid farm diversification

For further information and an application form, please contact:
Scottish Natural Heritage, Carmont House, The Crichton, Bankend Road, Dumfries DG1 4ZF. Tel. 01387 247010
or download from www.snh.org.uk

You may also have heard that the Scottish Executive has now opened a new Farm Business Development Scheme (FBDS). Funding is available to farmers (and their immediate family members) to assist farm diversification enterprises or the expansion of existing diversification enterprises. Contact your local Enterprise Company for further information or call SEERAD on 0131 244 6372.

SUP Surveys - FMD: The Effects Go Deep Into The Uplands

Foot and Mouth Disease has had serious effects on a wide range of businesses and much has been done by bodies such as the Tourist Board, Local Authorities and Enterprise Companies to measure this impact and use the findings to argue for assistance from the Scottish Executive. However, the Southern Uplands Partnership became aware that a number of rural businesses, especially the smallest ones, have not featured and yet they are often vital to the well-being of the small and remote communities of the Southern Uplands. To address this, the SUP recently commissioned survey work to ascertain the impact of FMD on these small but vital "micro" businesses. The findings are interesting.

In D&G, 32 out of 35 such businesses had suffered losses as a result of FMD. Only 5 of the businesses we surveyed had been contacted by another agency - mostly by the Tourist Board. The losses these 5 had incurred (amounting to around £22,000) have been excluded since these figures will have already been recorded; the remainder amounted to a loss of £104,000 by the middle of May and at least 7 posts were unfilled as a result. Expected losses through to August were obviously difficult to predict but amounted to a total figure of £183,000.

Almost all of these losses are permanent - they cannot be made-up later in the year if things improve. Many have been hit by the loss of agricultural shows as venues for marketing their goods. Bee keepers have lost their stock as they have been unable to move them around the country. Several respondents reported that investments planned for this year had been shelved, and some mentioned that they were having to run-down stock which could affect their competitiveness later in the year.

In response to a question on what sort of assistance businesses would like to see, financial aid was mentioned by many - as was deferment of rates and taxes. Marketing of the region was called for by several, as was assistance with getting products into new markets in the UK or abroad. All wanted to see the countryside reopened as soon as is reasonably possible and visitors actively encouraged back to the region. The need for a radical look at the future of the region was also suggested by some as they saw the danger of a steady decline in population and increasing environmental degradation.

Several also wanted a review of agricultural policy and a move away from intensive production with a few arguing for a vaccination policy. Food was mentioned by several as an area of high growth potential.

Of 35 responses in the Borders, only ten businesses reported that FMD did not significantly affect their activities.

The financial loss amongst the other 25 businesses to date totalled £283,400 and a total of 8 full time staff and 15 part time staff had been laid off because of the FMD crisis. Expected losses through to August were again obviously difficult to predict but amounted to a total figure of £351,000. In most cases, this loss was irrecoverable.

The consensus was that to ensure the security of full time staff, seasonal staff positions would remain unfilled this year despite the fact that many business owners will therefore have excessive personal workloads.

Many respondents felt there was little that anyone could do to alleviate their problems apart from the re-opening up of the countryside. However, some felt the current re-opening of the countryside to the public was perhaps premature, with further sporadic outbreaks of the disease threatening to jeopardise their businesses further. Although many of the respondents were sympathetic to the farmer's plight, they expressed dismay that the interests of the agricultural industry was put before and above those of existing profitable and financially unaided sectors of the rural economy.



Photograph 3. Carrifran Valley - Now Without Sheep

THE FUTURE

Most of the respondents acknowledged that this year was a financial write-off, but were optimistic that their business interests would survive, in some form, the effects of the crisis. However, recovery would be slow and was dependent on the quick eradication of FMD. Until the future become certain, plans for capital purchases, expansion of business premises and employment of staff are suspended, with the knock-on effects this will have on the local economy. With regard to the longer term, the FMD crisis has undermined the competitiveness of small businesses in the Borders through reduced stock levels, overworked staff and unanswered phones and messages because the relevant person is providing cover elsewhere. Most expressed hope that the crisis had led to the government recognizing the importance of the financially unsupported non-agricultural sectors of the rural economy.

At The Heart of The Crisis - A Personal View

MAGGIE GORDON AND BOB LEE farm at Barfil, near Crocketford, between Dumfries and Castle Douglas. It's an organic farm (biodynamic) with a wind turbine, new planted native woodlands and rare breeds. Except that now only the cows, calves and chickens are left; the rare breed pigs and sheep have gone.

"It is difficult to grasp that it has been so long since we let folks know what has befallen us since our last missive. It literally feels like a lifetime ago. As we now know, it starts with a call from your neighbour, apologising over and over. After that, uncertainty. Pure, hellish uncertainty. Followed two days later by a letter from the Scottish Office. It takes six readings to establish that the intention is to cull every animal on the farm. Calm people, that you will never meet, phone up: logistics. Saying they understand as you break down when being asked how many sheep you have? cattle? pigs? What are the handling facilities like? Can we get an articulated lorry up the loaning?

The abyss looms in front. Sleep, for 5 weeks so rare, slips in gracefully as resignation anaesthetises the mind.

So our lives progressed from the night of Thursday 29th to Monday 2nd. Then a call to suggest we enquire after the reasoning behind the culling of our cattle since we are not actually adjacent to premises that have been infected. In a period spanning two hours, we lost, kept and lost our cattle again. The 'phone call to say that they were to stay came half an hour before the valuer came on Tuesday morning.

Through all of this we have to say that we had resigned ourselves to accepting that the cattle would have to go as a contribution to the desperately needed firebreak. There is a strong sense of community that we are considered part of. Could we be responsible for bringing neighbouring farms down if we had fought to retain our cattle and subsequently became infected? In the end the epidemiologists appear to have considered ourselves and 3 other farms to pose less risk. Had they confirmed otherwise, we would have accepted their decision without query.

The valuer visits with a 'clean' vet who first establishes that the disease is not apparent on the farm. A representative from the Scottish Office accompanies the valuer and all the animals are counted physically. The valuer is gracious and sympathetic, pointing out that he already considers us 'at the top of the organic tree' and intends to reflect this in the valuation of the stock. The pedigreed rare breed sheep and pigs have been valued by specialist valuers and it is an appalling shock to realise that in the 10 years we have been quietly conserving these animals we have become outposts of rare lines. We are stunned and chastened that we did not consider our sheep good enough to sell. We will not make the same mistake again. Quietly, the form filling progresses and is passed to me to sign on our behalf. It is at this point that I crumple up. The ££s so obviously, callously even, attempting to measure up the sum of our work here.

We receive a call from Northern Ireland in the afternoon. Last year we were asked if we would be prepared to export Gloucester Old Spots pigs to NI since their bloodlines had diminished rapidly to a dangerously low level. After months and months of tagging, tattooing, bloodtesting and waiting, 11 young pigs representing 4 distinct parent lines made their way to find new homes in the province. Two of the gilts we had sent had had their first litters the week before. The Barfil lines are still out there and will be gladly returned when it becomes possible so to do.

Wednesday is at least a bright, blustery Spring day. Everything seems to sparkle in brilliant colour like the two male yellowhammers arguing shrilly beneath the sheep troughs. We carefully gather in the ewes noticing with deep sadness the wonderful new tup lamb that chirpily follows his proud mother in from the field. The imminent loss begins to feel very tangible.

Two 'clean' vets accompany the slaughterman. We provide tea prior to a further confirmation that the stock are still healthy. At this point we send David off the farm. He has already said his own goodbyes to the stock he has so carefully looked after. It becomes apparent that the team have volunteered their services to Dumfries and Galloway in order to help prevent the rest of Scotland becoming contaminated with this hideous virus. However, the practicalities still require our attention. Boards, ready for use as lambing pens, are tied against hurdles to provide escape-free and stress free races for the ewes. We are in practical mode, scuttling round providing string and tying gates under the supervision of the slaughterman. The army team arrive, they seem so young. One soldier places his arm gently on Bob's shoulder and tells him how very sorry he is that this is all happening to us, Bob folds up. I am in the shed with the vet as he looks once more at the cattle, telling me how important he believes it is to try to save them. On emerging, Bob and I are gently told that we should make our way to the house.

From the house we could hear nothing and could only just see the telehandler as it carefully manoeuvred close to the huge lorry time after time after time. We found it impossible to sit in the front of the house looking at empty fields and were finally drawn to the kitchen, drinking tea, eating nothing and cleaning everything in sight.

It took six hours to finish. We knew when it was all over when the vets and the slaughtermen walked slowly up the yard towards the house. We went outside to thank them for completing this thankless duty as carefully and gently as they could. There were tears in their eyes too. As we stood outside in the warm sun, the high sided lorry slowly made its way from the handling yard and on past us down the road. We felt the need to be there, to personally bid farewell to 10 years of hard work and all the heartache and joy that this last journey represented.

The army supervised the clean up team making sure that we could feed the cattle, horses and attend to the chickens. The officer was from a Stirling regiment and was stringent in his demands that everything should be left in as decent a condition as possible.

As Bob said: "the end of chapter one, now we have to begin chapter two . . ."

Our thanks to Bob and Maggie for permission to use this piece.

Partnership News



Photograph 4. Under Managed Woods – A Resource Going To Waste?

DOT COMS COME TO THE UPLANDS

In May, Andrew Case (landlord of the Clachan Inn at St John's Town of Dalry) and Paul Collins (of The Way Forward - a service-provision business for walkers on the Southern Upland Way) made a presentation to a wide range of our partners on their plans for stimulating business along the Way. They have already established an excellent web site (Southern-upland-way.com) and they now hope to expand this to allow inclusion of an even wider range of businesses along the route. For maximum benefits, it is vital that such plans fit with the local Access Strategies and Tourism and other Development Plans and this was an excellent way of ensuring open discussions early in the development process. Their proposals have since been praised by the Tourism Minister as a positive response to the post-FMD situation and we now look forward to further developments.

YEARS AND YEARS . . .

Another reason to promote this subject now is that 2002 is to be the United Nations Environment Programme International Year of Eco-tourism. This will aim to promote best practice in eco-tourism and to encourage sustainable developments in this growing and economically important sector. 2002 is also to be the UN International Year of the Mountain and "Treefest" is a "year-long party" to celebrate the tress and woods of Scotland. We hope to be involved in all of these in some way and will keep you informed of developments.

Small Woods - bigger future?

A Steering Group has been established to continue to develop a project which will seek to increase the number of small woodlands that are managed across South Scotland. There are over 30,000 small woodlands - many of which are not managed because they have no significant economic value to the owners. However, these woods are of high importance in the landscape, for recreation and for conservation and as such they have high public value. Many of them could also produce timber of value if they were better managed. The project will seek to improve the provision of advice to owners as to how such woods can be managed and what grant aid might be available to help.

Nature-based Tourism - making the most of our natural heritage?

Caroline Warburton of the Tourism and Environment Forum, based within Highlands & Islands Enterprise, and Bill Taylor of SNH attended a meeting arranged by the SUP in May at the Gordon Arms. A wide-ranging discussion took place on the potential for nature-based tourism projects in the Scottish Borders. Since then the Scottish Borders Environment Partnership has established a working group to continue exploring the subject. Developments in this area are now written into the FMD Recovery Plan for D&G, and we hope to be able to continue to play a role in this subject across the Uplands.

Still nuts about squirrels . . .

Red Squirrels in South Scotland, the ground-breaking red squirrel conservation project has secured funding for a second (and probably third) year thanks to Scottish Natural Heritage, the Esme Fairbairn Foundation, the Wyfold Foundation, ScottishPower RuralCare and a number of other funders. Our thanks go to all of them, and we are delighted that Robin Fuller and Sarah Oakley can now continue their work for the conservation of the red squirrel in South Scotland. The project produces a newsletter called "Red Bush Telegraph" - let us know if you would like to be put on their mailing list.

Environmental Resource Centres

quality environmental data for all in South Scotland

All of the projects that SUP has been involved with to date have highlighted the need for accurate environmental information. Sustainable development of the Southern Uplands requires access to up-to-date information covering environmental, economic and social factors. As the SUP starts to develop an Integrated Land Use Strategy for the Southern Uplands, the need for comprehensive environmental data becomes even more apparent. This awareness is shared by many partner organisations and other partnerships such as the Local Biodiversity Partnerships and the Community Planning fora.

Over the past year the SUP has assisted a wide range of partners from across the region in the development of the framework of a "South of Scotland Environmental Record Centre (SoSERC)". A feasibility study commissioned by SUP on behalf of the partners proposes the establishment of two centres, one in Dumfries & Galloway and the other in the Scottish Borders. The centres would be linked by a shared IT network and administrative structures within SoSERC. This would enable the project to benefit from economies of scale, develop joint working practices and hold data for the whole of the Southern Uplands at the same time as having local centres responsive to the separate data needs of D&G and the Borders. The project is now working to finalise costings before broadening the partnership and preparing funding bids.



Photograph 5. The Borders LBAP Partnership at the launch of the Framework Document

BETTING ON THE HORSES?

We are also pleased to announce that the first part of the Tweed Trails project has received provisional support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and work will be starting soon to prepare for the second phase which will deliver almost half a million pounds of multi-use route development works in the Scottish Borders. We are also working hard on a joint bid for European Objective 2 funds with Solway Heritage which will see further, connected horse riding routes developed in D&G.

personal view – on the soap box

"It seems to me that even in the unlikely event of the SUP achieving its avowed goal of "keeping people living and working in the Southern Uplands" it would still not be enough to alter the degenerating state we now endure. It seems that no-one, including the SUP, is addressing with any seriousness the terrible fact that the countryside population in terms of numbers, demographic spread and geographical distribution has already dropped below the critical mass required for a healthy community. The process of decline is now self-feeding.

We could tell ourselves that this an inevitable historical process and sadly watch the disappearance of people, families, schools, shops, post offices, and garages while simultaneously and not un-coincidentally, farms get bigger, shed their workers and farmers themselves grow older.

We could as a society, be a bit more intelligent and encourage the introduction of new enterprises and new people in place of much of the territory now occupied by an agricultural industry which over many years has appropriated most of the land and fallen into fewer hands and whose over-capacity, far from being an asset, has been a serious problem to the exchequer and the rest of the nation.

Or we could continue the way we are going, the way favoured by Dumfries & Galloway Council and executed by its planning officials. I point the finger at the guilty party (one of our core-funders) because time and again I hear reports of plans for dwellings and businesses being denied on the grounds that "there shall be no sporadic development in the countryside unless it be for the purpose of agriculture and forestry".

This tired old formula has now solidified into an insane edict which links the cultural and economic well-being of the countryside to two declining, beleaguered and possibly doomed industries. It is an incredibly foolish and short-sighted approach.

"Sporadic development in the Countryside" is a meaningless tautology. Surely sporadic is the best and only way to develop the countryside. If this prohibition had been in force 200 years ago there would be virtually no-one living in the countryside today at all. Do we all have to live in streets with each other? Do businesses have to operate in industrial estates and nowhere else? Whoever thought up the absurd idea that the countryside is for the sole use of farmers and foresters?

Galloway could probably attract hundreds of potential rural dwellers with capital and innovative ideas to create new ways of living and working in the countryside. It doesn't mean we have to go mad with vulgar retirement villas all over the place like they have done in Ireland.

New people and new ways of living are what is required. Planning officials and Councillors do not need to concern themselves too much with the ways of living bit - they appear to lack the required creative imagination. What they should do is loosen up the regulations, stop treating the countryside like a closed shop for farmers and let other people in to have a go.

We can still entrust our planners with the job of imposing standards of utility, safety and aesthetics. But by adhering to their outdated policy, the Council is doing this region a grave disservice; it is condemning us to economic and social stagnation, population decline and an unhealthy shift in land-ownership as farms collapse, are sold and instead of being allowed to evolve into something else (using for example some of the excellent ideas in the Southern Upland News) they are more often than not swallowed up by a neighbour to become part of someone's super-farm estate."

Clive Donovan
Corsock

AN ALTERNATIVE TO SOME SUBSIDISED UPLAND FARMING?

A personal view from Stuart Barber

No one wants to be dependent on subsidies for their livelihood and no taxpayer wants to continually subsidise uneconomic enterprises. Much upland farming is heavily subsidised and, if such farming is to continue, will need to be subsidised for the foreseeable future. Particularly in the aftermath of Foot and Mouth Disease, there is a need to reappraise such land-use. I suggest that instead of subsidising upland farmers, we should identify an area, perhaps upwards of 10% of the Southern Uplands, where farmers and farm workers should be offered a lump sum and/or a pension to stop farming (with appropriate compensation for landowners). No further subsidies should be given to these farms although some boundaries would need to be maintained. Limited in-bye (max 10 acres?) and farm buildings could perhaps become unsubsidised small holdings. All farmers in the identified area should be encouraged to give up farming - accepting that this may take some time.

The disused farms, possibly amalgamated, could be managed without public subsidy for fieldsports, conservation, recreation or left as wilderness. There would be no need to publicly subsidise activities on this land and it could be allowed to revert, perhaps over hundreds of years, to whatever it will, heather, moor, peatbog, bracken, grassland or scrub. Buildings could be used by keepers, rangers, commuters or as guest houses or holiday homes.

Of course, if there was a sea-change in farming requirements or a need for, say, subsidised wind-powered electricity generation or tree-planting, the situation could be reviewed. Comments please.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

At the second AGM of the Southern Uplands Partnership, which took place at the beginning of July in Moffat, members called for an urgent review of policy concerning land management in the Uplands. It was agreed that the Foot and Mouth disaster had given further emphasis to the need for a new look at the way we use the land, and the current lack of an integrated approach to land management. Sustaining rural communities depends on innovative development and making better use of existing resources. Breaking down traditional sectoral, regional and political barriers was vital if new enterprises and jobs were to develop and succeed.

Reporting on progress over the year, Project Manager Pip Tabor spelt out a number of areas in which the SUP had argued for a more "joined-up" approach. The SUP had successfully brought together a range of organisations and individuals with shared concerns. Topics such as local food production, woodland management, nature-based tourism, access, land management and conservation had been addressed and a number of projects had resulted, drawing significant new funds to the region.

Barbara Kelly, the SUP Convenor, told the members that the next step was to bring all the concerned parties together and to develop a shared vision for the future of the Southern Uplands, based on sustainable principles, which everyone could then work towards. Following the publication of the Scottish Executive's 'A Forward Strategy for Scottish Agriculture' and its commitment to exploring new approaches to land management tailored to local priorities, the SUP is calling on the Executive to consider such pilots in the Southern Uplands.

NEW OFFICES

The SUP has, at last, moved into Lindean Mill – just off the A7 between Galashiels and Selkirk. Our thanks go to Scottish Natural Heritage who allowed us to use office space in Galashiels since we started in 1999, I will miss their support, humour and coffee.

We are gradually getting the new space organised with luxuries such as furniture and filing cabinets and we now have a rather grand meeting table. If you are passing please feel free to call in. The full address is Studio 2, Lindean Mill, Galashiels TD1 3PE and the phone number is 01750 725154. email address is as before: piptabor@sup.org.uk

TWEED FORUM PASSES HLF FIRST STAGE FOR THE SECOND TIME...

The Tweed Rivers Heritage Project phase 2 has been approved in outline by the Heritage Lottery Fund. This means that, subject to the detail being put in place, the Borders stands to receive a further £2.2million from lottery funds for a range of projects across the region starting in July 2002. Tweed Trails, led by the SUP, is one of these projects and we are delighted to be part of this exciting initiative. Proving the detail is going to be hard work, but we are confident that the necessary information will be ready for the stage 2 submission later this year.

FUNDING NEWS

Yet another source of funds has been launched - this one is part of the New Opportunities Fund: Green Spaces Initiative. **The Fresh Futures Programme** invites bids from communities for projects which "develop access to local green spaces" and for projects which "contribute to sustainable development".

These are fairly broad themes and grants (average level of support is 30%) can be from £3,000 to £50,000.

You can get details from Forward Scotland, Portcullis House, 21 India St, Glasgow G2 4PZ. Tel. 0141 222 5630 or visit the website at www.fresh-futures.org.uk



Photograph 6. The well-worn road between Selkirk and Moffat

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

Company Number: 200827. Registered Charity Number: SC029475

The Southern Uplands Partnership

Andersons Chambers, Market St, Galashiels TD1 3AF

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SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE



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