



southern uplands partnership
living land, living community

Southern Upland Way Forestry and Woodlands Issue

Newsletter of the
Southern Uplands Partnership

No.20 Winter 2005

Wood, woodland and forestry link into many of the areas of interest of the Southern Uplands Partnership and its members – employment, conservation, renewable energy access and nature based tourism to name just five. It has, therefore, been difficult to select news items to represent all that is currently happening.

It is four years since the report on the small woodlands resource in the south of Scotland was produced by John Clegg & Co*. This identified 31,191 woods of less than 10ha covering a total of 48,989ha in southern Scotland. Most of this was in private ownership and very few of these woods had formal management plans and most were largely unmanaged.

At the time the report stated that “There has been increasing recognition that small woods provide a range of benefits that include shelter, conservation, game cover, fox coverts, landscape enhancement and timber production, although timber production is seldom of primary importance. ...Round timber markets do exist in south Scotland, but the prices offered to owners do not tend to meet their expectations because of the higher operating and

transporting costs associated with smaller woods.” Perhaps as fuel costs rise and the kit required to efficiently produce and burn woodchip becomes more available, on-farm chipping and machinery rings will become a more attractive option?



Many thanks are due to Forestry Commission Scotland for their support which has made it possible to produce this issue of the Southern Uplands Partnership newsletter.

FUNDING FOR BORDERS NATIVE WOODLAND

The Scottish Borders is to receive a £1 million grant to boost its native woodlands and help take forward a new woodland strategy for the area.

The region has one of the lowest levels in Scotland of native woodland cover (0.26% compared to a Scottish average of about 2%), around the same level as Shetland, Orkney and the Hebrides. Efforts to address this will focus on surviving fragments of native woodland, the River Tweed, and smaller rivers and burns across the entire Borders.

The push for more native woodland cover is part of a new strategy developed by Scottish Borders Council, in partnership with Forestry Commission Scotland and other key groups. The strategy has identified many areas where trees and woodlands can be used to enhance the lives of people.

At the launch of the strategy in November Scottish Forestry Minister Rhona Brankin said: "An important issue identified in the strategy is the very low level of existing native woodland cover within the Borders. The level of cover is only about a quarter of one per cent of the total land area. This low level is of concern, especially as this type of woodland is of the highest environmental value and often associated with that icon of the Borders, the river Tweed."

The £1 million grant will be paid over two years to help boost native and riparian woodland cover, particularly where it will reduce the isolation of existing native woodlands or improve riparian habitat. This new grant is

known as a Locational Premium as it is only available in parts of Scotland where the Scottish Executive considers woodland planting, regeneration, improvement or management as priorities for action. Landowners in the Borders already receive standard woodland grants, currently totalling about £1million a year.

Early priorities include developing wood based renewable energy initiatives in the Borders; using the new grant to protect, enhance and link ancient woodlands; the creation of greater opportunities for more communities like Galashiels, Hawick and Kelso to get involved in woodland management, as has already happened in places like Wooplaw, Gordon and Peebles

Dr Andy Tharme, Ecology Officer at Scottish Borders Council comments, “The Woodland strategy will provide a robust framework to initiate actions for biodiversity. The Locational Premium from Forestry Commission Scotland will create an additional 500ha of native and riparian woodland over the next two years, which will take great strides towards meeting LBAP targets for native woodland.”

A Woodland Partnership is to be set up by Scottish Borders Council, Forestry Commission Scotland with other key partners to ensure the co-ordinated implementation of the strategy. It is likely that a project officer will be employed to co-ordinate action and there will be a key focus on promotion and development of added value products from local timber, local wood-based renewable energy initiatives and enhancing the region's natural and designed landscapes.



Rhona Brankin and John Elliot plant a rowan to mark the launch.

This issue has been generously supported by
Forestry Commission Scotland



Protecting and expanding Scotland's forests and woodlands, and increasing their value to society and the environment. www.forestry.gov.uk/scotland

DIRECTORS COMMENT

SOUTH OF SCOTLAND REGIONAL FORESTRY FORUM

Just over a year ago, the Scottish Executive established five new regional Forestry Forums to provide advice on the review and implementation of the Scottish Forestry Strategy. The South of Scotland Forum has a broadly based membership with interests in private forestry, the timber industry, community woodlands, farming and general rural development, under the chairmanship of Professor Paul Ignatieff.

The breadth of interests of the members and the geographical spread across rural South Scotland have ensured that this is a proactive and lively group committed, not only to commenting on the national forestry strategy, but also to developing a regional dimension to forestry policy which recognises the importance of woodlands and forests to the economic and social life of Dumfries & Galloway, Scottish Borders, and South Ayrshire.

Sustainable forestry has a major contribution to make to the economy, environment and social wellbeing of the region but this must be seen as part of a wider approach to integrated rural development which takes cognisance of changes in agriculture, demographic and economic trends, and the challenge which the rural south of Scotland faces to gain political recognition of its distinctive issues.



Joan Mitchell, Director

The South Scotland Forum has advised that the vision of the national strategy should be:

- 1. To maximise the value of the wood resource to the Scottish economy by the creation of a diverse forest resource for the future.*
- 2. To make a positive contribution to the natural environment and cultural heritage*
- 3. To create opportunities for communities to benefit from woods and forests and for more people to enjoy trees, woods and forests.*

While a balance must be struck between these roles, we have stressed that for the South of Scotland it is vital that the economic importance of the timber product remains a high priority. We have 40% of Scotland processing capacity, the forest industry in general is a significant employer and there are real opportunities in product development, both for construction timber and biomass energy generation. The problems associated with timber transport, which are being tackled in a co-operative way, tend to give a negative perspective to commercial forestry, particularly in Dumfries & Galloway. One role for the forum is raise public appreciation of the importance of our timber as a valuable raw material with considerable value-added potential and our forests as a recreational and tourism resource.

The encouragement of native woodlands for their contribution to biodiversity and to the landscape, as well as a source of raw materials, albeit on a small scale, must not be lost sight of either. The woodland strategies produced by the Ayrshire Councils and Scottish Borders Council are important tools in planning the woodland resource. Traditionally in Scotland farming and forestry have operated as two separate industries. CAP reform and the changing role of agriculture demand a more integrated approach. Multifunctional farming and multifunctional forestry are both on the agenda – we need to see how this can work positively for South of Scotland

The immediate task for the forum is to undertake public consultation in the spring on the draft Scottish Forestry Strategy. In addition to public meetings, the forum plans to hold stakeholders meetings to discuss how we can adapt the implementation of this strategy to suit the needs of the south of Scotland, which the forum sees as the challenging and interesting task at hand.

Cllr Joan Mitchell
Member South of Scotland Regional Forestry Forum

Memberships

SUP memberships run January – January, please continue to support the Partnership as a member. If you have not joined before, we would urge you to consider membership.

As last year, a Full Individual Membership is £10. An application form is printed on the back cover of this newsletter, by signing the Gift Aid box you can increase the value of your subscription or donation to us by 28p in the pound.

Wood Pastures in Dumfries and Galloway

There are many publications that describe the history of woods and hedges, and their importance for farming, wildlife, cultural heritage and the landscape is accepted. But trees and shrubs in the middle of pastures have received relatively little attention, especially in Scotland. The publication of a new booklet from the Dumfries & Galloway Biodiversity Partnership called 'Trees in Fields and the Landscape of Dumfries and Galloway', goes some way to address this gap. It provides a guide to the history, biodiversity and management of wood and scrub pastures, much of it is based on information collected over the last two years in the Fleet Valley National Scenic Area.



Veteran oak in wood pasture, Fleet Valley.

Trees in pastures provide valuable shelter for livestock, and recent research suggests there may also be benefits to stock from feeding off tree foliage. Many of these trees have been present for hundreds of years, providing a link with the ancient wildwood and evidence of historical land-use practices. Such 'veteran' trees are particularly valuable for fungi,

lichens, hole-nesting birds and bats, and a wide range of specialised insects. They have also inspired artists, photographers and writers and make a valuable contribution to many landscapes, including designed parklands around historic buildings.

It is hoped that the work completed so far will provide the basis for the practical management of wood and scrub pastures across Dumfries & Galloway. Whilst there are options through Entry Level and Higher Level Stewardship Schemes to protect, maintain, restore and create habitats of this type in England, support here in southwest Scotland is currently limited to particular types of ancient wood pastures under the Rural Stewardship Scheme. However, an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund as part of the wider Sulwath Connections Landscape Project is at an advanced stage, and may be able to offer support to landowners and managers who wish to manage an existing wood pasture, or perhaps even create a new one. If you own wood and scrub pastures in Dumfries & Galloway and might be interested in getting involved contact Clair Spray, Ecologist at Solway Heritage on 01387 247543 cspray@solwayheritage.co.uk.

The Fleet Valley NSA Wood and Scrub Pasture Project was funded by Scottish Natural Heritage through the Special Places Leader+ Programme and Dumfries and Galloway Council. The project was co-ordinated by Solway Heritage and the Catchment Planning Officer of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, with the support of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan Wood Pasture Working Group. Fieldwork and desk-based studies were carried out by DH Ecological Consultancy and the Archaeology Service of Dumfries and Galloway Council. Assistance with maps and data presentation was provided by the Dumfries and Galloway Environmental Resources Centre.

For a free copy of the booklet, or further information, contact Peter Norman, Biodiversity Officer at Dumfries and Galloway Council Tel 01387 260172 peter.norman@dumgal.gov.uk.

Rural Alternatives: Rebuilding our non-timber forest culture

by Kristin Olsen, Development Officer, Reforesting Scotland

Much of the richness of the world's forest and woodland resources lie in their non-timber forest products (NTFPs) – also in Scotland. NTFPs in Scotland encompass a range of goods that we use and harvest including wild foods, medicines and herbal medicines, crafts, dyes and floral greens, cosmetics and pharmaceuticals sourced from plant products. Whilst people in Scotland have used these forest goods for thousands of years, for pleasure and to substitute for things that they would otherwise need to buy, a more formal interest in the NTFPs of Scotland has been growing in recent years. For example organisations such as Scottish Enterprise who are eager to develop new products to help forestry recover from current low timber prices are supporting research into the role NTFPs might have. Although a recent national survey showed that 24% of Scotland's population have harvested some form of NTFP in the last five years (a percentage which rises in rural areas) NTFPs are under-used and have enormous potential to provide more cultural, environmental and economic benefits – provided they are harvested sustainably.

Reforesting Scotland's work towards restoring Scotland's forest heritage has included investigating these forest products that people gather for their own use and for commercial harvest – and trying to demonstrate how rural communities can benefit more from them. However despite the rise in community involvement in woodland use and management, there are few practical examples of communities that are actively benefiting from non-timber forest goods. The Rural Alternatives project arose to try to identify and develop practical examples of NTFP use, processing and local enterprise, that can be used as examples and inspiration for other community groups and the forestry sector as a whole, of the value of our non-timber forest heritage.

The project will focus on working with four community woodland groups: Tinne Beag (near Newton Stewart), Culag Community Woodland Group (Lochinver), Sunart Oakwoods (Acharacle) and one other group (to be determined), although it is hoped that other communities in these areas will also become involved and be able to benefit. In broad terms the project will enable each community to find out more about the ecology of local woodland sites, and the existing or future potential for NTFPs through carrying out ecological surveys. It will also explore local heritage/culture of harvesting and using forest goods, and provide training and information required to develop and market small-scale, enterprises based upon sustainable harvest of local forest resources. Each of the sites are quite different from each other, both ecologically and culturally – and the project will try to address the range of interests and needs of each group.

The Tinne Beag Workers' Co-operative own 175 acres of woodland at the Doon of May, south-west Scotland. The woodland comprises mainly poor quality Sitka spruce and Scots pine plantation, planted on blanket bog. Since 1999 members of the Co-operative have been working to manage the woodland to encourage greater biodiversity, restore Celtic tradition and develop income-generating opportunities including use of

mushrooms, honey and forest music. Co-operative members are interested in developing a wide range of NTFPs at the Doon of May, including paper-making, sphagnum moss, honey (and other products from bees), medicines, mushrooms, ink (from ink-cap mushrooms), wool and lamb (from Shetland sheep), fruit and nuts, green waste, and beverages. The group has carried out a considerable amount of research already and it is hoped that the project will help to provide technical support to develop these through using traditional methods, and to improve forest management to develop appropriate habitats and cultivation methods to grow a range of species of interest.

The project will also work with two communities in the North of Scotland: Acharacle Community in the Sunart Oakwoods Initiative area on the south side of the Ardnamurchan peninsula, and the Culag Community Woodland Trust of Lochinver. The Acharacle Community hope to raise awareness and develop abundant, healthy local food sources, stimulate some local employment, improve woodland management to enhance abundance of NTFPs and link the woodland into the strong local culture. The Culag Community Woodland Trust already know something of the NTFPs they could derive from their woods, but have little sense of the scale required for an economically viable project, and no knowledge at all of the marketing requirements. The project hopes to address this.



Identifying edible fungus in Acharacle Community Woodland.

Throughout the two-year project Reforesting Scotland will be developing a series of case studies that demonstrate best practice sustainable use of NTFPs. These will be distributed to community groups and will be made widely available. It is hoped that the project, which started in October, will increase awareness, understanding and appreciation of identification, harvesting and using a wide range of woodland flora, fauna and fungi. In turn it is hoped that the diversity, history and sustainable management of woodland habitats that make up a very significant part of Scotland's natural heritage will be enhanced and that opportunities for revenue generating activities for local communities will be identified.

For more information about the project please contact Reforesting Scotland or look at our Forest Harvest website (www.forestharvest.org.uk). Contact details: Reforesting Scotland, 62-66 Newhaven Road, Edinburgh EH6 5QB. Tel: 0131 5544321/ Fax: 0131 5540088/ www.reforestingscotland.org/Email: info@reforestingscotland.org

TREES; THE REAL POWER PLANTS

Forestry Commission Scotland has announced the launch of the Woodfuel Development Programme for the west of Scotland to promote the use of wood as a sustainable clean source of heat and power. To lead on this innovative project, operating throughout Ayrshire, Glasgow and the Clyde Valley, a new Woodfuel Information Officer, Trevor Blackburn, has been appointed. Trevor will be based in the Forestry Commission's Central Scotland Conservancy office in Hamilton. The three-year programme is funded by FCS, Scottish Enterprise, the Scottish Executive and the West of Scotland European Programme.

As Trevor explained, "Modern technology is very widely used in neighbouring European countries to create heat from wood for use in houses, community buildings and schools etc. On a larger scale wood can also be used to replace fossil fuels, such as coal, in the production of electricity to feed into the national grid. The idea now is to match this modern technology to Scotland's increasing output of wood and to generate clean heat and power here at home in Scotland.

"The foresight of foresters and governments who set about re-establishing Scotland's lost forests over the past 80 years means that Scotland is now in an excellent position to use wood as a renewable fuel. This will not only combat climate change, but will also provide new jobs and business opportunities throughout Ayrshire, Glasgow and the wider Clyde valley.

"Modern technology has developed sophisticated, automated, wood-burning boilers that are a clean and easy way to provide heat and hot water to buildings. This combination of modern technology and a plentiful sustainable wood supply gives us a wonderful opportunity to develop a whole, new, environmentally friendly industry."

Modern, wood-fired boilers can be used for both space and water heating, and they can be fed with chips from automated hoppers that only need refilling at very wide intervals. They are suited to buildings with a constant demand for heat, such as hotels, offices, schools, hospitals, care homes and factories. In combination with energy efficiency measures, wood fuel can also provide an affordable clean means to heat homes and domestic buildings, especially in areas without access to the gas grid.

"Wood fuel is really beginning to take off with new systems being installed and new supply chains being established all the

time. My job is to promote the benefits of wood fuel and to help bring together 'clusters' of suppliers and customers, throughout west and central Scotland. Given the current extremely high oil prices and our need to address climate change I feel it is the right time to take a serious look at a resource that is clean, useful, affordable, and home grown," said Trevor.

"If we can get woodland and sawmill owners to commit to supplying wood fuel, this will give potential customers the confidence to install boilers in the knowledge that they will have a reliable fuel supply. Conversely, if we can get potential customers to commit to installing boilers and buying wood fuel, this helps to give potential suppliers the confidence to invest in the equipment they need to supply it.

"The trick is to achieve these two in the same areas at the same time, and therefore one of my most important roles will be in helping to kick-start that process. In doing this I will be able to help suppliers and customers tap into grants that are available for helping to develop the use of this renewable, carbon-neutral fuel."

Trevor has worked in the forestry sector for the last 12 years, first as a contractor, and later as a forester with a forest management company based in Perthshire. For the past 18 months he has worked for the Forestry Commission as a Woodland Officer. He has a BSc first class honours degree in forestry and is a qualified arboriculturist.

Trevor's "patch" includes East, North and South Ayrshire, East and West Dunbartonshire, Glasgow City, Inverclyde, North and South Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire. Anyone in those areas who is interested in installing wood-fuelled boilers or in supplying wood fuel can contact Trevor for information and advice at the Forestry Commission Scotland office in Hamilton, telephone 01698 368530; e-mail: trevor.blackburn@forestry.gsi.gov.uk



Modern boilers only need refilling at wide intervals.

Woodland Management for Red Squirrels.

One of the tasks of the Red Squirrel Conservation Officers from the Red Squirrels in South Scotland (RSSS) project over the last 5 years has been the identification of 23 commercial upland conifer forests which are considered most likely to offer long-term refuges for red squirrels in south Scotland, as greys become more widespread. Guidance Documents have been produced to maximise their medium to long term suitability for red squirrels and to ensure that measures are put in place to prevent the incursion of grey squirrels.

Grey squirrel control in the surrounding areas at key locations or within the wood itself will be vital to the long term survival of red squirrels and protect trees from the damage caused by bark stripping. It has been shown that by controlling numbers of grey squirrels in and around a wood, resident reds can survive for much longer. Control programmes must be run on a long-term basis and in a co-ordinated manner and grants may be available to managers and landowners in areas surrounding Priority Woodlands through the Scottish Forestry Grants Schemes (SFGS).

Under this scheme, the RSSS project has successfully set up SFGS projects for grey squirrel control for red squirrel conservation. The schemes currently on the go have so far removed over 150 grey squirrels in four vulnerable valleys, and there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that red squirrels are starting to appear in areas where they have not been seen for years.

Trappers are issued with squirrelpox virus testing kits to enable the RSSS project to monitor the incidence of this virus in south Scotland. Blood samples are taken from captured grey squirrels and sent to the Moredun Research Institute for analysis. The results are then fed into the National Squirrelpox Virus Monitoring database. This work is especially important after the discovery earlier this summer of grey squirrels carrying antibodies to the disease moving northwards from infected populations in Cumbria.

Successful conservation action for red squirrels will depend on two things: habitat management which favours red squirrels and discourages greys and grey squirrel control programmes. The success of these programmes will depend on the continued support from owners and managers of Priority Woodlands and the maintenance and expansion of the grey control network through SFGS and other schemes in the buffer zones of Priority Woodlands and within national and regional 'pinch' points.

The challenge ahead will be sourcing reliable funding for local squirrel management groups to take this action forward, a task which is proving to be increasingly arduous. The Red Squirrels in South Scotland project has been fortunate to secure funding for Phase III which will run from October 2005 to September 2007.

Elly Hamilton, Red Squirrel Conservation Officer (Scottish Borders) Red Squirrels in South Scotland www.red-squirrels.org.uk



Forests provide a major tourist draw for the south of Scotland



Mountain biking in the south of Scotland is set to move up another gear with a cash boost of £1.7 million for the 7stanes project. The new funding package will last for three years and aims to consolidate Scotland as being a world leader in mountain biking.

The 7stanes project completed its first three year phase by building seven biking centres in Forestry Commission Scotland forests in the south of Scotland. Estimates show that the project could be bringing over £3million to the local economy. Biking centres have been built at Glentress, Traquair, Newcastleton, Dalbeattie, Kirroughtree, Mabie, Ae and Glentroll. The new

trails cater mainly for intermediate and experienced mountain bikers, but the funding for a second phase will go towards encouraging new people to take up the sport.

Rob Soutar, Forest District Manager of Forestry Commission Scotland in Galloway has welcomed the funding. "The 7stanes project has helped Scotland become one of the top five destinations in the world for mountain biking. The tourism spin offs are obvious."

At Glentress Forest near Peebles new facilities are planned for visitors after Forestry Commission Scotland acquired a 5 hectare site near the existing facilities. The proposed new visitor centre will become a gateway for the whole Tweed Valley Forest Park, which encompasses seven forests and receives about 364,000 visitors a year.

Christina Tracey, the Commission's Scottish Borders District Manager, explains, "Glentress Forest has been a fantastic success as a visitor attraction, drawing 250,000 visitors a year, but it is becoming more difficult to provide a quality service to the growing numbers of visitors with the tight space we are operating from at present. We have been very fortunate to acquire 12 acres nearby with panoramic views of the Tweed Valley, where we are planning to provide more and better facilities and overcome the space restrictions that our present site imposes."



Establishing your own Community Woodland

There is a tremendous amount of support and there are several funding opportunities available for groups wishing to establish their own community woodland. The approaches taken by three groups within the southern uplands illustrate different routes that can be used to access land for this purpose.

Biggar and District Community Heritage Limited have a management agreement with the landowner of Little Mitchellwood, a small, mixed woodland on the outskirts of Biggar. The group aim to develop the woodland to increase its nature conservation value and improve public access. With the help of a Scottish Land Fund grant they have incorporated as a community company, consulted with the Biggar community on their plans and engaged professionals to advise on the work required in Little Mitchellwood. The group are now keen to extend to other environmental projects or community woodlands around Biggar.

The Kipp consists of 20 hectares of land on the edge of the village of Kippford, Kirkcudbrightshire. The future of the land has been uncertain for several years since the company owning it went into receivership. Seeing the land's great potential as a community and environmental resource, a local group came together to register a community interest in the land under the Community Right to Buy. The land is predominantly rough grazing interspersed with mature parkland trees and areas of natural regeneration but includes five hectares of mixed woodland.



Having been successful in registering the community interest in the land, the group are now in the advantageous position that the landowner will not be able to sell The Kipp without first offering it to the community. If, in the future, community ownership is secured, the group plans to expand the area of woodland, improve the management of the area for environmental benefit, provide a resource for environmental education, improve the public access and create a focus for local community activities including the practice of traditional countryside skills.

The Friends of Leadburn Community Woodland has been awarded a Scottish Land Fund grant and is in the final stages of negotiating with Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) to purchase Leadburn wood at Leadburn in the Scottish Borders. The 44 hectare parcel of land has been clear-felled and was on the FCS disposal list. The community used the FCS Preferred Purchaser Scheme to gain preferential status as a purchaser before the land went on the open market.

The Friends of Leadburn Community Woodland plans to replant much of the site with native tree species that will be interspersed with wetland areas. There will be a strong focus on access, taking advantage of the existing disused Leadburn railway line and providing for users of all abilities.

The FCS Preferred Purchaser Scheme has now been extended to a broader range of options under the National Forest Land Scheme. These include the opportunity for communities to apply to buy land from FCS at any time.

Further information on the Scottish Land Fund, the Community Right to Buy and the National Forest Land Scheme and general support for establishing community woodlands can be found at:

The Community Land Unit: www.hie.co.uk/CommunityLand.htm 01463 244 253

Scottish Land Fund: www.hie.co.uk/scottishlandfund 01520 722 988

Scottish Executive Community Right to Buy: www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Rural/Land/17063/8276

The Register of Community Interest in Land (RCIL): <http://rcil.ros.gov.uk/RCIL/default.asp?category=rcil&service=home>

Forestry Commission Scotland <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-66re5j>

Community Woodlands Association: www.community-woods.org.uk

Borders Forest Trust: www.bordersforesttrust.org

Project News

TWO SUP PROJECTS MAKE GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

Two SUP projects, Red Squirrels in South Scotland and Communities on the Edge, were shortlisted for the recent Dumfries & Galloway Leader+ Awards. Both projects received very positive comment from judges Norman MacAskill and Isabel Glasgow, who had the unenviable task of picking the winners in the Vibrant Communities and Caring for the Environment award sections respectively. Our congratulations go to the winners, Spring Fling/Gracefield Arts Centre (Champions of Culture), Taking the Past into the Future/Kirkconnel Parish Heritage Society (Vibrant Communities), One Stop Shop Tourism Services/Isle Futures (Reinvigorating the Local Economy) and Glencaple Village Appraisal/National Scenic Areas Officer (Interpretation, Access and Enjoyment of Rural Areas).

Ros McNay, LEADER+ Programme Manager for Dumfries & Galloway said, "The fact that two projects created and managed by Southern Uplands Partnership have been included in the twenty shortlisted Best Practice examples of the region is a significant achievement. All of the judges commented on the quality of the projects in all 5 categories and both the Red Squirrels in the South of Scotland and Communities on the Edge initiative received positive feedback from the independent judges."

RENEWABLE ENERGY FAIRS – PAST AND PRESENT!

The South of Scotland Renewable Energy Conference and Fair held at Browne House, Dumfries in November attracted over 600 people. The events were organised by the Energy Agency, Solway Heritage, Crichton Campus



and the Southern Uplands Partnership – who were delighted with the support the events attracted from sponsors, trade, communities and the public. The Fair, which focussed on small scale developments, was such a success that a second event is being arranged for the Borders towards the end of January. Check the SUP website for details – www.sup.org.uk

NEWSLETTER SPONSORS

Sponsors for forthcoming SUP newsletters are sought – if you are able to help SUP by funding a newsletter we would really like to hear from you!

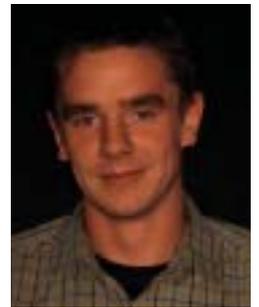
Please contact **Pip Tabor** on **01644 420808** or **Flora McDowall** on **01644 420808**.

TOM JOINS THE TEAM

The newest member of the SUP team is the Black Grouse Conservation Officer, Thomas Adamson. Tom took up post at the start of October, and will be working with land managers in the Yarrow, Ettrick and Tweed Valleys to try to stop the decline of this impressive gamebird. Latest research suggests that there has been a 70% decline in the last 10 years.

Tom recently graduated from the University of Central Lancashire having carried out a degree in Conservation & Land Management, and previously attended Craven College undertaking at National Diploma in Countryside Management. He has experience in a wide range of practical countryside management, with strong interests in heather moorland management and predator control systems.

The Black Grouse project has been developed by a broad based partnership which includes the RSPB, Scottish Borders Council, Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Game Conservancy Trust. The aim of the project in the short term is to halt the rapid decline of black grouse and to raise awareness of issues relating to habitat management and predator control. The long-term aim is to achieve an increase in the black grouse population across the Southern Uplands.



Tom Adamson

Some work has been done in recent months to develop a clearer idea of the current local status of the species. The main tasks are to work with interested land owners and managers to identify appropriate management measures, to assist in securing resources so that these actions can be implemented and to develop a monitoring programme. Predator control is to be undertaken at key sites within the project area to try to increase the success rate of the black grouse, which fall prey to a wide range of predators.

Tom explained "The key to establishing a healthy black grouse population is to have active predator control and increased habitat creation, as well as promoting good habitat management. Especially important is the woodland/moorland edge which is essentially the key habitat type for the black grouse. This will allow the birds to disperse and take up new territories, reducing the risk of fragmented populations and increase the productivity of the species. I am delighted to be involved with this exciting project."

If you would like to contact Tom please call: 01750 725157 or e-mail: tom@sup.org.uk

NUMBERS UP ON SOUTHERN UPLAND WAY

The SUW21 project assisted by Leader+ Dumfries & Galloway and Scottish Borders is now drawing to a close. Established to mark the 21st anniversary of the long distance walking route while the project partners sought funding for a route development manager, a lot of work has been done to promote the Way. It has, therefore, been rewarding to hear that numbers walking the Way in 2005 are up. Rangers Richard Mearns and Mike Baker monitor walker numbers with electronic counters during the year. A 5.5% increase in walkers has been recorded on the more difficult western half, and a whopping 23% increase in the eastern half. Enquiries to www.southernuplandway.com, which organises long distance walking itineraries, also show a very marked increase for 2006.

Langholm Initiative - The Moorland Project

The Langholm Initiative, in partnership with The Buccleuch Estates, has recently established The Moorland Project to promote the Langholm and Newcastleton Hills Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Protected Area (SPA).

The Langholm Area boasts spectacular landscapes, diverse wildlife, rich history and culture and a strong community spirit. This rich natural and cultural heritage makes Langholm a special place that is enjoyed by those that live and work in Langholm and by visitors alike. The importance of the natural heritage is formally recognised in the designation of the Langholm and Newcastleton Hills as a SSSI and a SPA.

The Moorland Project aims to promote and enhance this special place for the benefit of the Langholm Community, through the provision of moorland trails, leaflets and information boards. The Project will also set up a database of the plants and animals that have been seen in and around the Langholm and Newcastleton Hills. The database will be held locally to provide a focal point for local records and to encourage the local community and visitors to get involved in recording the wildlife that they see. The database will be linked to both the Dumfries and Galloway Environmental Resources Centre and the Scottish Borders Biological Records Centre so that local records contribute to the regional centres.

The Project is funded by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) Special Places Fund that is jointly supported by Leader+ and Dumfries and Galloway Council.

For further information contact The Moorland Project Officer: Emma Ahart Email: emma@langholminitiative.co.uk

AGE CONCERN SCOTLAND LOGS PROJECT

The Age Concern Scotland Logs Project is a partnership between Age Concern, the Criminal Justice Social Work Section of Dumfries & Galloway Council and local businesses. Through this Winter Warmth initiative, logs and kindlers are delivered free of charge to older people (over 60) throughout Dumfries and Galloway region, subject to certain conditions being met.

Donated wood is cut, bagged and delivered by supervised teams of people subject to community service orders. Deliveries made during the winter months depend on the availability of wood and demand for the service and are therefore intended as a supplement to normal supplies.

For further information or inclusion on the delivery list contact Age Concern Scotland, Crichton Hall, The Crichton, Bankend Road, Dumfries, DG1 4TG.

TREE IN THE PARK



Scenes from Tree in the Park

South Lanarkshire's woodland and forests were celebrated at Tree in the Park in October. The aim was to show how trees and woodland contribute to the quality of life - economically, socially, recreationally and culturally. The two day event included everything from forest machinery, axe throwing and chainsaw carving to more conventional furniture makers and craftspeople.



Squirrel Alert . . .



The Red Squirrels In South Scotland project, managed by SUP and funded by Scottish Natural Heritage and Leader+ is working to protect red squirrel populations across the South of Scotland. The good news is that this has been an excellent year for red squirrels due to the high levels of natural food available; the downside is of course that it has also been good for grey squirrels.

The American grey squirrel competes with red squirrels for resources and carries squirrelpox, a virus potentially lethal to the red squirrel. Until now, Scotland, a red squirrel stronghold, has remained free from squirrelpox but last month several grey squirrels moving north from the Cumbria area into southern Scotland tested positive for the virus.

WE ARE VERY KEEN TO HEAR FROM ANYONE WHO SEES A GREY SQUIRREL ACROSS SOUTHERN SCOTLAND.

Please visit the website (www.red-squirrels.org.uk) or contact your local Red Squirrel Conservation Officer:

Dumfries and Galloway:
Sue Hearn 01750 725157/ 07733121837
(sue@red-squirrels.org.uk)

Scottish Borders:
Elly Hamilton 01750 23446/ 07733121838
(ellyhamilton@redsquirrels.org.uk)

Membership

The Southern Uplands Partnership is a membership organisation and depends on subscriptions for a significant part of its core funding. Members elect the Directors, receive regular newsletters and play a major role in determining priorities. If you are not a member, please consider becoming one. If you sign and return the Gift Aid declaration it allows us to get extra support from the Inland Revenue.

To apply for membership either use the form below or visit www.sup.org.uk and complete the form on-line.

Membership Category please tick box: Individual member Group member

Subscription Category Rate please tick box:

Individual waged per year £10 Individual unwaged per year £5 Individual life £200

Group(voluntary group/community council) per year £40 Group (National/corporate body) per year £100

If you would like to pay by standing order please contact the office for the necessary form.

Please make cheques payable to the SOUTHERN UPLANDS PARTNERSHIP.

Name

Address

Postcode

Telephone email

GIFT AID You can increase the value of your subscription or donation (by 28p in every pound) if you pay income or capital gains tax in the UK. By signing and dating below, you will enable the Southern Uplands Partnership to claim back the tax on your subscription or donation under the Gift Aid Scheme.

Return to: The Southern Uplands Partnership, Freepost SC05012, Studio 2, Lindean Mill, Galashiels TD1 0BR

Signature Date

My interests are (please tick up to 3 of the following):

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> conservation/environment | <input type="checkbox"/> archaeology | <input type="checkbox"/> forestry/woodlands | <input type="checkbox"/> equestrian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> buildings | <input type="checkbox"/> sustainability | <input type="checkbox"/> communities | <input type="checkbox"/> local foods |
| <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture/land use | <input type="checkbox"/> water/fish | <input type="checkbox"/> economics | <input type="checkbox"/> housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> land reform | <input type="checkbox"/> renewable power | <input type="checkbox"/> access | <input type="checkbox"/> tourism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> employment | <input type="checkbox"/> local arts and crafts | <input type="checkbox"/> ornithology | <input type="checkbox"/> rural transport |

The Southern Uplands Partnership

The Southern Uplands Partnership was established as a company limited by guarantee with charitable status in 1999, with the aim of promoting sustainable land-use in the Southern Uplands of Scotland and thereby keeping people living and working here.

Company No 200827 Charity SC029475

The Southern Uplands Partnership
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e-mail: piptabor@sup.org.uk

