



southern uplands partnership  
living land, living community

## NATURE BASED TOURISM ISSUE

NATURE BASED TOURISM (NBT), heritage tourism, sustainable tourism, green tourism – these are all buzz words at the moment. No-one can deny that Scotland's world-class natural heritage is key to attracting visitors, or that there is a lot of interest in making more of what we have while protecting it for the future.



a chance to meet . . . the NBT Seminar in Symington.

February saw the SUPs own Nature Based Tourism seminar in Symington which drew 57 delegates representing councils, agencies, initiatives and enterprises from across the south of Scotland to hear a range of lively talks and to contribute to workshop sessions. NBT was put in context, clusters discussed, grants reviewed and marketing considered. Case studies were presented

around falconry, archaeology, walking, climbing, cycling, red squirrel and red kite conservation. It was an excellent day – and one where we were pleased to welcome a number of new members. It became clear that for most rural tourism enterprises working with other attractions and service providers is far more effective than trying to compete against them. (Notes on the day and workshop sessions can be found on our website at [www.sup.org.uk](http://www.sup.org.uk), as can the review of NBT sites

in the south of Scotland compiled by Dunira Strategy & The Borders Foundation for Rural Sustainability)

The focus for this News is rural tourism and we are pleased to publish a range of items submitted on or around this theme.

Also in this issue: the Southern Uplands are recognised as a mountain region; Dumfries & Galloway artists Spring Fling; SLF becomes SRPBA; 21st century Community Woodlands; AGM news.

In addition, the Partnership was pleased to be asked to give evidence to the Environment and Rural Development Committee on CAP reform. This was undertaken for the SUP by Project Manager Pip Tabor and Director Mary Ann Smyth, their notes to the Committee are printed on pages 7 – 9.

Finally – the SUP now has a logo! The “hands” logo has been designed for us by Sue Grant of Twenty-Three Crows in Moniaive. Sue has undertaken design work for a number of larger charities, including The British Red Cross, Medecins Sans Frontieres, YCare (YMCA) and The Commonwealth Society for the Deaf. We are delighted with her work for us. The new logo will be phased in across all SUP print and the website over the next few months. We hope you like it.



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## Southern Uplands Partnership AGM



Sarah Boyack, MSP

THIS YEAR'S MEMBERS meeting and AGM will be held in Moffat on Wednesday, 9th June, we hope that as many members will attend as possible. The speakers for our evening session will be Sarah Boyack MSP, Convenor of the Scottish Parliament Environment and Rural Affairs Committee and Barbara Kelly, CBE retiring Convenor of the Southern Uplands Partnership. Sarah was appointed to the first Scottish Cabinet as Minister for

Transport and the Environment, serving in the cabinet from May 1999 to November 2001. In the first session of the Scottish Parliament Sarah was a member of the European Committee and Audit Committee. Barbara is a partner in a farming business and is Convenor of the Millennium Forest for Scotland Trust. She is a former Chairman of the Scottish Consumer Council and has served as a Commissioner of the UK Equal Opportunities Commission and as a member of the Board of SNH.



Barbara Kelly, CBE

This is a members only event. Non-members who would like to join and come to the AGM should complete and return the application form on the back page before 1st June.

## D&G's FIRST WILDLIFE FESTIVAL

Dumfries and Galloway's first wildlife festival was held from 10-18th April 2004. Over 30 events, including guided walks, children's activities, nature reserve open days, exhibitions and illustrated talks were held. Seventeen different organisations including statutory and voluntary conservation groups, private estates, holiday parks and hotels were involved, all co-ordinated through the local Biodiversity Partnership. A Festival programme was prepared and distributed with funding from Dumfries & Galloway Council and Scottish Natural Heritage. Given the relatively short timescale – the proposal was only agreed in November 2003 – this first year was very much a pilot for the future, with the emphasis on encouraging local people to experience local wildlife. In future years the Biodiversity Partnership hope to encourage nature-based tourism by adding new and innovative events, and by widening the marketing of the Festival.



# DIRECTORS COMMENT WILMA FINLAY

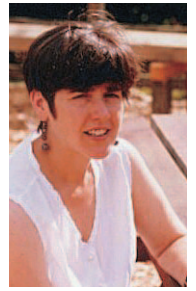
IS NATURE BASED TOURISM just the current flavour of the month or can it actually be a major contributor to the sustainability of the South of Scotland? Certainly it is flavour of the month, if the number of seminars there has been on the topic in Scotland recently is any indication.

One of the most noticeable things from the seminars was the number of young people who were in attendance – not at all representative of the population of the rural Southern Uplands. If Nature Based Tourism can keep young people in the area (and even bring new blood here), then that is the first of the major cornerstones in place for sustainability. People interested in the environment see the Southern Uplands as a desirable place to life and work – the first major advantage we have.

The next question is whether there is a market for our product. All the research shows that Scotland is high on the list of places to visit for scenery, environment and wildlife. However the Highlands win hands down on awareness amongst those wishing to enjoy Scotland's environment. The 'purists' are less likely to visit the Southern Uplands as we don't have the extremes. Instead we attract the dabblers –

those who wish to combine a bit of bird watching and some gentle hill walking with a visit to a castle and lots of good food thrown in. So Nature Based Tourism can work in the South of Scotland if we package our diverse offerings together in a way that is attractive to a very large market of 'dabblers'.

This leads to the question of economic sustainability. Who pays? How much will the public pay to take part in a guided walk? Who will pay the landowners to maintain their land in such a way as to preserve our biodiversity? Will the environment get sufficient emphasis within the educational curriculum to develop an enthusiasm for environmental issues in the young? Hopefully these are questions being addressed by the Scottish Executive, because we need environmental, social and economic sustainability to fulfil our vision for the area.



## WILD SCOTLAND

Wild Scotland, a new Scottish Wildlife and Nature Tourism Operators Association, was officially formed last year. The association aims to encourage everyone to enjoy Scotland's wild array of flora and fauna through the promotion of responsible wildlife-watching in Scotland and encouraging visitors to use recognised operators.

The importance of Scotland's natural heritage is at the heart of the association. All members sign up to a charter which includes a commitment to the conservation of Scotland's natural heritage as well as involvement in establishing best practice guidelines for wildlife watching. Membership is open to all tourism businesses (land and marine) who are actively involved in nature tourism. By working together, Wild Scotland believes that it can bring benefits not only to its members but also to visitors and wildlife too.

"Visitors are increasingly looking for assurances that their holiday has a minimal impact on the environment. There is a tremendous wealth of experience and knowledge amongst our members and through our commitment to conservation, customer service and responsible wildlife-watching, we hope that Wild Scotland can provide that assurance" said Richard Fairbairns of Sea Life Surveys and Chairman of Wild Scotland.

"We believe that Scotland could be one of Europe's top wildlife tourism destinations, but not at the cost of our environment. As Wild Scotland members, we are committed to providing an exciting wildlife tourism experience but we also recognise our responsibility to ensure that our actions and those of our customers do not detrimentally affect the environment. There is an excellent opportunity to boost a responsible approach to nature-based tourism in Scotland and Wild Scotland is ready to meet that challenge".

New members are now being urged to join to help shape the association's future activities, which will include joint marketing and training services as well as development and promotion of best practice schemes.

For more information on Wild Scotland, including how to join, visit their temporary site at [www.greentourism.org.uk/wildscotland.html](http://www.greentourism.org.uk/wildscotland.html) or contact [info@wildscotland.co.uk](mailto:info@wildscotland.co.uk)

## TOURISM & ENVIRONMENT FORUM SETS KEY AIMS

The Tourism & Environment Forum held a seminar in Perth in February with the aim of raising the profile of sustainable tourism and to generate discussion about sustainable tourism aims for Scotland. Sandy Dear of the Forum reported good progress and the setting of 7 key aims which it recommends that tourism planners and businesses pursue. The next step will be to bridge the gap between these broad aims and specific actions that will help move towards greater sustainability – economic, environmental and social – in Scottish tourism.

The 7 key aims for sustainable tourism in Scotland:

1. a more even spread of visitors throughout the year
2. more tourism businesses actively enhancing and protecting the environment, for example by joining the Green Tourism Business Scheme.
3. greater investment in tourism people and skills
4. a better integrated quality tourism product that meets visitors' demands and expectations and encourages them to stay longer and spend more.
5. a clearer understanding of tourism's impacts
6. greater involvement of communities in tourism planning, development and marketing
7. greater use by visitors of Scotland's public transport system.

For more information on the Tourism & Environment Forum visit [www.greentourism.org.uk](http://www.greentourism.org.uk) or see their Positive Impact newsletter which is packed with news, information and advice on good practice.

## ESKDALE PRE-HISTORIC TRAIL

THE 1ST MAY saw the formal launch of the new Eskdale pre-historic trail with an exhibition of local school children's artwork, artefacts from local museums and activities throughout the day based in both Langholm and Eskdalemuir.

The new way-marked trail requires a modest amount of walking and is also accessible to motorists or cyclists. Linking the Eskdale and Meggat Valley all nine sights are well signed and range from 3,500 year-old stone circles to Iron Age hill forts. The sites have been chosen because of their accessibility, because some have been excavated so that their place in prehistory is reasonably established, and in other cases the sites are simply unique. Local artwork enhances interpretative panels and clearly signed finger posts (incorporating the trail logo) link the sites of outstanding archaeological interest.

Visitors are guided around the trail with the help of a colour leaflet and the community website [www.langholm-online.co.uk](http://www.langholm-online.co.uk) provides further information or alternatively the help of an experienced guide is available by prior

arrangement. Other places of interest around the trail are well signed or indicated in the leaflet which also lists accommodation providers within the valley.

Thanks to funding from Making Tracks, Scottish Natural Heritage, Historic Scotland, Dumfries & Galloway Council and local trusts – visitors and locals are able to explore this beautiful quiet valley where man has lived in the landscape of years. For further information please contact The Langholm Initiative on 013873 80914.



An artist's impression of the Boonies near Bentpath



# GLORIOUS GLENKENS

IN RESPONSE to the overwhelming reaction received from walkers trekking the SUW expressing their delight at the beauty and the superb landscape of the Glenkens area for walking, Andrew Case of SUW.com and formally of the Clachan Inn and Bob Peace, a local walking expert, formed a local steering group (The Glenkens Walking Initiative) to address what could be done to realise the potential available.

After consultation with D&G Council and a successful bid to the Community Capitol Fund the GWI has now reached a milestone of documenting 101 walks, the majority of them existing and work has now started to improve the physical condition including the installation of new styles, kissing gates, marker post etc.

SUW.com has, free of charge, provided a web presence [www.glenkens.com](http://www.glenkens.com) which, as well as the walks,

provides information on local accommodation, places of interest etc. Mapping is now being produced and a guidebook is in development and hopefully will be launched later in 2004.

It is hoped that the initiative can be developed further with the long-term objective of providing a 'Walkers Visitors Centre' somewhere within the Glenkens to act as a central source of information for the Glenkens including internet access, café as well as offering the provision to purchase basic walking supplies and equipment.



Bob Peace and Andrew Case of the Glenkens Walking Initiative

## The Galloway Kite Trail



Chris Gomersall/RSPB Images

A NEW OPPORTUNITY to view spectacular red kites is now attracting the attention of birdwatchers in Dumfries & Galloway and from much further afield. The "Galloway Kite Trail" around Loch Ken promotes the population of kites, recently re-established in Kirkcudbrightshire, as a source of nature-based tourism to benefit local communities in the area. In so doing, the trail is helping to strengthen the "ownership" of

the kites by local communities and tourist operators.

Developed by RSPB Scotland, with assistance from Making Tracks, SNH, Forestry Commission Scotland's, Dumfries & Galloway RSG and local businesses, the trail includes various facilities around the loch such as footpaths, viewpoints, information points, CCTV (in summer), release cages and RSPB Scotland's Ken-Dee Marshes Reserve, all of which are good places to see kites and other wildlife. A feeding station with a hide has been established at Bellymack Hill Farm near Laurieston, and over 30 kites have often been seen together over winter months. These have included many of the birds released in 2003, as well as adult birds and two individuals that arrived from other populations. The site also offers good views of raven and



buzzard. Large numbers of kites are best seen in late afternoon in the winter months, but there are generally some kites around all day at any time of the year. The feeding station is only 10 minutes drive from the Ken-Dee Marshes Reserve and around 30 minutes drive from RSPB Scotland's Mersehead Reserve, and so can be easily integrated within a good day's birding at any time of the year

Interpretation has been installed at key points on the trail and these are highlighted in a promotional leaflet and map that forms a fold-out guide to the trail. A special kids' trail has also been developed. Some local businesses such as hotels and B&Bs are also partners in the kite trail project and each displays a unique information board on various aspects of the kites' history and biology. The can also provide up-to-date information on the kites.

The trail has also been promoted with a touring exhibition which features one of the first red kites released in Dumfries & Galloway in 2001. Unfortunately this bird was hit by a car and had to be put down. However, preserved through taxidermy it helps illustrate the species and is the centerpiece of the new display. RSPB Scotland Red Kite Officer Kevin Duffy says "By showing people the size, colour and natural beauty of this amazing bird, it helps in the species overall protection. People become so impressed by what is essentially their own rich natural heritage they want to do more to help it survive."

Information on the trail can be obtained from the RSPB Scotland office on 0141 331 0993 or from Dumfries & Galloway Tourist Board on 01387 253862.



Dave Patterson of the Ken Bridge Hotel with part of the new touring exhibition.

## Let yourself go **WILD!**

'LET YOURSELF GO WILD!' is the catchy title of the East Berwickshire Natural History Festival this year, running from the 18th - 20th June. This festival, first held in 1998, is centred in the village of Coldingham, Berwickshire. Its programme over the weekend caters for all ages and all levels of ability, interest and understanding of Natural History. Advertised locally attendees come from as far away as the south east of England. Apart from promoting this lovely corner of Scotland to visitors, the festival is an opportunity for all to become immersed in this rich countryside adjoining spectacular coastal scenery. The programme this year includes ranger led walks, bird watching from land and sea, coastal geology, conservation, farm visits, art, illustrated talks, sea shore

and ocean studies, a social programme and much more. The Festival boasts visitors who return each year to participate and who recommend the events to others. For further information see [www.coldingham.info](http://www.coldingham.info) 'our countryside page', or call the Festival Hotline on 018907 71979.



Discovering bugs and beasts at last years festival.

# NEW GRANT COULD SUPPORT NBT PROJECTS

A NEW £142,000 grant scheme to celebrate the rich natural heritage and spectacular scenery of Dumfries & Galloway has been launched by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH).

The Special Places fund, jointly funded by LEADER+, Dumfries & Galloway Council and SNH, offers 100% funding for innovative projects that benefit both the local economy and the natural heritage of special places in Dumfries & Galloway. Chris Miles, SNH Area Manager explained:

“Our fine scenery and rare species make this area a special place for those who live and work here and for those who come to visit. To make the most of these assets this grant scheme is targeted at areas in Dumfries & Galloway which are of national or international importance for their wildlife, habitats or landscapes. People might have heard of some of these special places – three National Scenic Areas, covering some of our most lovely landscapes

and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Natura 2000 sites – there are over 100 – which protect our rare wildlife and habitats, like the natterjack toad along part of the Solway and the native woodlands in upper Nithsdale.

“We are inviting individuals, agencies or community groups to come forward with their ideas on how to make the best use of these special places, with of course, the cooperation of those who own and manage them. Examples might involve tourism or wildlife watching opportunities, training in technical skills such as short courses in coppicing for land managers, walking or cycling projects where there are links to interpretation and accommodation providers or the marketing of products and places using natural heritage images by businesses.”

For a leaflet on the Special Places fund call SNH, Dumfries on 01387 247010.

## Viewing opportunities support conservation

CONSERVING AND SUSTAINING red squirrel populations across Dumfries & Galloway and the Borders is the key objective of the Red Squirrels in South Scotland (RSSS) project. One of the ways that this can be achieved is by tapping into the growing interest in nature based tourism and wildlife watching. The RSSS project has developed a number of small scale nature based tourism projects with the local communities where there is an interest and pride in local red squirrel populations and where red squirrel spotting can be a rewarding activity for visitors.

### ‘BREAKFAST WITH RED SQUIRRELS’

Last year, 10 B&Bs, hotels and caravan parks in Dumfries & Galloway with red squirrels regularly visiting their grounds became “Hot Spots”, taking a donation box and a batch of ‘Red Squirrel Hot Spots’ leaflets. At these locations visitors can see red squirrels, learn what is being done to conserve them and discover where some of the other best Hot Spots are in south Scotland. Any profits go towards RSSS conservation work. The scheme will expand this year and a new ‘Hot Spots’ leaflet with new trails and viewing opportunities is in the pipeline.

### ESKRIGG NATURE TRAIL, LOCKERBIE

RSSS has helped to secure funds from the Community Environmental Renewal Scheme for a nature trail near

Lockerbie in the Eskrigg Nature Reserve. This is a fantastic spot for watching red squirrels, managed by Lockerbie Wildlife Trust. The new trail will complement the recently opened Dryfesdale Visitor Centre and the many scenic walks advertised in the area and will raise the quality of a visitors experience in Lockerbie, encouraging them to spend longer in the town and its surrounding area.



### BALLOCH WOOD BURNSIDE NATURE TRAIL, CREETOWN

RSSS designed an information post for this new trail as part of a red squirrel viewing station which will eventually be linked to the towns Visitor Centre by CCTV. Come along on Sunday 19th September, 3pm, for a guided walk in search of the Balloch red squirrels.

For more information on RSSS projects or guided walks, contact Zoe Smolka, Red Squirrel Conservation Officer on 01387 860 442 or zoe@red-squirrels.org.uk

## SRPBA shows colours

The Scottish Landowners Federation has officially changed its structure and name to become the Scottish Rural Property and Business Association (SRPBA).

The change was marked with the unveiling of the new name, logo and Association strapline – the voice of rural property owners and land based businesses in Scotland. Following an extraordinary general meeting of its members in January, the organisation voted to adopt a new legal entity, a new structure of governance, more inclusive membership, and a new structure for developing policy – in addition to its new name.

Speaking at the unveiling SRPBA Chairman John Don said: “This marks considerable progress for the representative organisation of Scotland’s rural property owners and land based businesses. It will set the Association on a firmer, stronger and more modern footing, broadening our membership constituency which in turn will strengthen our voice, particularly in terms of reaching and influencing

opinion formers and decision makers at all levels.

Once our new board has had the opportunity to settle we will be rolling out a series of policy announcements in the course of the next few months.”



Pictured at the SRPBA launch (l to r):

Miranda Lindsay, Director; Maurice Hankey, Director General; Garth Morrison, Director; Andrew Howard, Director; Keith Arbuthnot, Deputy Chairman; John Don, Chairman.



# ECOTOURISM . . .

## . . . Naturally Bulgaria

Екотуризм  
естествено България

Says It all really, doesn't it?

Ecotourism  
naturally Bulgaria

BULGARIA RARELY comes into our minds at all and, then, usually in the context of poisoned umbrellas or elderly Wombles. To say that it has the national objective of Becoming the premier nature/eco-tourism destination in Europe over the next decade and as such will knock Scotland for six might seem a little ambitious if not downright delusional. But is it?

Bulgaria was the first country in Europe to introduce conservation legislation beginning in the mid 19th century with laws protecting raptors. Even during the communist era after WW2, the Bulgarians' strong sense of national identity helped them maintain most of their natural and cultural heritage intact. As a result, it now supports some of the richest biodiversity in Europe with over 400 species of birds and 90 of mammals including brown bear, wolf, jackal, wild boar and chamois. The diversity of flora within its natural forests is equally impressive.

If we add to this an agricultural sector that is primarily based on organic small farms and a well developed mix of mineral spa, ski and seaside resorts, they certainly have all the right components. Did I mention the weather?

So what did we do with them? Firstly, we defined ecotourism as having two characteristics:

- it benefits the environment
- it benefits the communities living in and around it.

The important point here is that we did not define what ecotourism is but rather what it does. This enabled us to avoid wasting time on differentiating between nature, outdoor activity, wildlife and ecotourism and keep the academics off our backs. We then divided the country into 12 eco-regions and asked all the relevant parties in each to jointly tell us what they considered their nature product to be. They duly did and all said much the same thing. We then asked them tell us what made them different from each other. The end result was a national audit of the product in regional packages which each region presented to the rest for comment and critique at a two day national conference. The benefits of this approach were:

- Generation of national brand based on reality on the ground
- Clearly differentiated regional product range
- Local ownership of regional product and hence of national brand

This gives you a fine, warm feeling but doesn't bring in any tourists. We had already included "wish-list sessions" as part of the process, asking the regional groups to identify barriers to development and how to overcome them. We subjected these to a ruthless analysis out of which came an Action Plan designed to be difficult but feasible to implement over five years. This included about fifty specific actions. Critically, we specified, for each of these, who was responsible, the timescale and where the resources should come from. In parallel, I had already put together an EC fund to support product development on the ground.

So what? There were some elements of the process which could benefit other areas and have, in my view, been serious weaknesses in Scotland.

- Combined bottom-up and top-down approaches to enable regions to control the development of the process but under expert guidance – recognised that communities are not necessarily very good at strategic marketing and development
- Built up national product and strategy from regional components – recognised the need for local ownership
- Differentiated regional products to generate a range of holiday choices within a common brand – recognised that the primary product is the nation but that this is made up of diverse regions
- Redefined the strategy as a series of specific, detailed actions identifying resources, responsibilities and timescale – recognised that waffly statements of strategic objectives accomplish nothing

Above all, I was impressed by the Bulgarians' clear understanding that to develop an economically sustainable ecotourism industry, you have to adopt a genuinely ethical approach both to the rural environment and its human inhabitants. Whether they succeed or not, they certainly deserve to.

I am not so sure about us, though.

### John Todd

John is Senior Partner in Todd Associates International which specialises in rural and tourism development consultancy. He was Team Leader of the EC-funded Bulgarian Ecotourism Grant Programme and Senior Advisor to the USAID funded Bulgarian National Ecotourism Action Plan, both in 2003.



# Project News

## SOUTHERN UPLAND WAY USER SURVEY

Thanks to funding from D&GC, SBC, SNH, D&G Leader +, SB Leader + and SED&G the research work into use of the Southern Upland Way is now in hand. The Crichton Tourism Research Centre carried out an initial survey over Easter and walkers will be surveyed throughout the summer months.

## COMMUNITIES ON THE EDGE

Buccleuch, Douglas & Angus and Roxburgh Estates along with Enterprise Companies for Borders, D&G and Lanarkshire, the Rural Challenge Fund and Leader+ are supporting this exciting project which seeks to match underused resources to community enterprise. Final funding decisions are pending decisions at the moment, all being well we aim to have a project officer in post in June/July 2004.

## EQUESTRIAN TOURISM

Funded by BHSS, SBTB, D&GTB, VisitScotland; SLC, SED&G and SBC, market research is now underway into the potential for trail riding in the south of Scotland, the report will be published on the SUP website at the end of May. (This project has been managed by SBTB).

## THE SOUTH OF SCOTLAND BOOKLET AND WEBSITE

Work is now underway to put the booklet together and this will form the basis for the accompanying website. Support has been secured from SNH and regional councils. The booklet and website will emphasise the cultural, economic and environmental strengths of the Southern Uplands and will signpost sources of further information.

## COMMUNITY FUELWOOD PROJECT – SEMINAR 8th JUNE

Forestry Commission Scotland, Borders Forest Trust, Reforesting Scotland, East Ayrshire Woodlands and The Energy Agency are looking at a partnership approach to stimulating greater use of wood as a heating fuel in the South of Scotland. A seminar in the Glenkens is planned for June, organised by Ayr-based Energy Agency, Reforesting Scotland, Forestry Commission Scotland and SUP. Call Anne McCulloch at The Energy Agency on 01292 280109 for information, or see the SUP website.

## Southern Uplands now "officially" a MOUNTAIN REGION

THE SOUTHERN UPLANDS are now officially a European mountain region. The European Commission has just published a report on the "Mountain Areas in Europe" which defines the mountainous regions of the EC. The Southern Uplands are recognised as a mountain massif along with the likes of Highlands, Cumbria, the Pyrenees and the Alps.

The report outlines how "In general, mountain agriculture cannot compete with lowland agriculture. However the maintenance of mountain agriculture is important to preserve landscapes, recreational opportunities and cultural identity." The report concludes that "As the CAP continues to evolve, a primary goal should be to encourage systems that give added value to the specificities of mountain agriculture and consider the whole process from production to marketing. Countries should particularly consider mountain regions when developing the second pillar of the CAP, addressing agriculture in the broader context of multifunctional regional economies."



The Southern Uplands is obviously smaller than the Highlands massif and the EC report notes that the smaller or less obvious mountain areas are often the losers in terms of policy.

The SUP is working to raise the profile of the Southern Uplands as a unique land mass and to stimulate sustainable rural development. "After 2006, funding from Europe is likely to be targeted at mountainous areas so this is a very important announcement" said Pip Tabor, Project Manager with the SUP. "European support through CAP and through structural funding offer us the chance to revitalize upland rural communities, we need to ensure we make wise use of these funds."



# Evidence to Rural Affairs Committee Inquiry on CAP Reform Implementation

## FROM THE SOUTHERN UPLANDS PARTNERSHIP

### BACKGROUND

The Southern Uplands Partnership is committed to sustainable rural development in the south of Scotland. We are a regional charity established in 1999 which developed as a result of a need: the rural south of Scotland has many different local authority and enterprise areas, and it was never central to any one organisation's remit to look at the needs of the rural uplands as a whole. Local people initiated this Partnership in order to plug those gaps. Within a year individuals, voluntary groups, agencies and groups from Forestry Commission Scotland to NFUS, Community Councils to Local Authorities had become members. The Southern Uplands Partnership now contributes to the delivery of joined-up thinking in the south of Scotland.

This strong partnership has a challenge when it comes to presenting an opinion on SEERAD's proposals for CAP reform, because we have a broad spectrum of opinion, even among our directors, and certainly among our membership. We include farmers and landowners, archaeologists and environmentalists, as well as government bodies and councils. Some of our members favour providing as much aid as possible to farmers with fewest strings attached; others favour making cross compliance as tight as possible in order to gain maximum environmental benefits. We are therefore pleased to report that, on balance, SUP favours the proposals put forward by SEERAD.

Farming is an important component of rural economies, and is perhaps more important socio-economically to the South of Scotland than to other parts of Scotland. The agricultural statistics indicate that the South has a very mixed agricultural economy, producing much more beef and dairy products than average for Scotland, and also has very productive arable and sheep farms. The Arkleton report (commissioned by the South of Scotland Alliance in 2000) showed that unlike other public funds (proportionally most of which in Scotland goes north to support the most remote and disadvantaged communities) proportionally most CAP money goes to the South of Scotland, because this is where agricultural production is highest. One view which is consistent within the membership is the desire for the South of Scotland not to lose out significantly through a change in delivery mechanisms.

Many rural people depend upon farming, and upon associated work such as transport, fencing, contracting, engineering, animal feed suppliers... few of whom are counted as belonging to the "agriculture sector" in the economic statistics, but all of whom live in our area and are trying to make a living here. If farming decreases suddenly without appropriate diversification support mechanisms in place, these jobs

will be lost. Economic statistics indicate that Dumfries and Galloway and the Borders have the lowest average wages in Scotland. Our rural economy is fragile.

The Countryside Survey indicated that land use change has been more widespread in South West Scotland than anywhere else in Scotland during the last 50 years. This change, due to the economics of farming in marginal areas, has resulted in one third of Galloway becoming afforested (Dumfries and Galloway has twice the national average of commercial forestry). Upland farms have been replaced with sitka forestry. We fear for the spread of blanket forestry across southern Scotland, and want to maintain the diversity we have left – the farms, moors, woodlands, jobs, villages and communities.

The Southern Uplands core area is a mountain massif as defined in the 2004 EC report on Mountain Areas in Europe. That report outlines how "In general, mountain agriculture cannot compete with lowland agriculture. However the maintenance of mountain agriculture is important to preserve landscapes, recreational opportunities and cultural identity." That report concludes that "As the CAP continues to evolve, a primary goal should be to encourage systems that give added value to the specificities of mountain agriculture and consider the whole process from production to marketing. Countries should particularly consider mountain regions when developing the second pillar of the CAP, addressing agriculture in the broader context of multi-functional regional economies."

The Southern Uplands is the smaller of the two mountain massifs in Scotland; just 4318 km<sup>2</sup>. However, the EC report notes that often it is the smaller or less obvious mountains that are the losers in terms of policy – they are frequently overlooked.

**REFERENCE:** European Commission contract no. 2002.CE.19.0.AT.136 "Mountain Areas in Europe: Analysis of mountain areas in EU member states, acceding and other European countries". January 2004

### CAP REFORM

The SUP helped run three lively regional meetings in November 2003 to discuss the effects and potentials for CAP reform. The following points are the conclusions reached during those meetings.

- There were hopes that farming could become more prosperous and diverse, more entrepreneurial, more integrated with woodlands and nature conservation, and better connected with the public.
- There were fears about more farm amalgamation and specialisation, loss of farm viability, loss of

upstream and downstream jobs, loss of family farms, loss of hill cattle, and degradation of the landscape through intensification, abandonment and blanket afforestation.

- The meetings were in favour of full decoupling by a large majority. Reasons included simplification of bureaucracy and increased diversification and entrepreneurship.
- The meetings did not favour recoupling (by a huge majority), in order to avoid complication, although there was concern to find a way to support upland beef production. There were mixed views about the national envelope for beef, but no support for an envelope for dairy or sheep.
- There was strong support for a hybrid system of payments, phased in over a number of years to shift from a historic to a flat rate system so long as a fair and painless way could be found of achieving this.
- There was a majority in favour of increased national modulation, but many disagreed. Many felt that modulated funds should be regionally ring fenced, and even directly returned to farms.

Mid-term review decisions – how do these impact on the more rapid development of more environmentally sustainable farming and quality products?

- The most economically and ecologically fragile parts of the Southern Uplands are the marginal areas between fertile lowlands and most extensively farmed hill. These tend to be smaller farms, where conservation interest is high (pastures, bogs, woodlands, burns and springs). They are often family farms, suggesting a long-term commitment to the business and to the land, and where a current reliance on subsidies (50-60% of income) means that an alternative option will be needed post CAP. There is a risk that with the current shakedown these marginal farms may change by default, either by amalgamation with more intensive farms, or afforestation. New support schemes could allow them to survive, rewarding farms with specific species and habitats.
- When asked ‘what agricultural environment we want in the western Southern Uplands, a meeting answered that ‘we want it as it is (i.e. mostly permanent pasture) but with more ecological diversity, better ecological management and stronger socio-economic prospects’. More especially, we wanted better managed pastures, better managed moors, more native trees and woodlands, more paths especially around towns and villages, and some people wanted more organic and low-input farming, even conservation farming. CAP reform will help bring about these improvements.

- In the Southern Uplands, ideal environmental outputs had already been defined and agreed in local initiatives such as the LBAPs, SNH’s Natural Heritage Futures programme, the local NSA and river catchment management plans and to a lesser degree through the relevant Indicative Forest Strategies. It was suggested that some sort of Indicative Rural Strategy (including these, and culture/archaeology) might be useful in guiding future land-use. The Southern Uplands Partnership has appraised the plans and strategies of those with an interest in land-use and there is general agreement; however, there are few, if any, specific targets. A Regional Indicative Rural Strategy might clarify “sensitive”, “preferred” and “potential” areas for various activities. Farmers adopting agri-environmental measures in areas preferred by the strategy should receive additional funding.
- There was concern over the details of Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC), and particular concern about the ruling to preserve all permanent pasture, partly because many of the all-grassland farms in the Southern Uplands would benefit ecologically from diversity: occasional ploughing and the introduction of a few arable fields (e.g. to benefit black grouse).
- There was concern over the lack of integration of farming with forestry. For example, it was feared that GAEC may inadvertently proscribe against wooded pastures by not considering them as agricultural, and that the new schemes may prohibit the planting of small woodlands on farms.
- Quality products such as award winning cheeses, Scotch Beef, heather-fed lamb, organic food, and green labelled produce are part of the way forward for many farms in the Southern Uplands.

Mid-term review decisions – how do these impact on the provision of jobs and opportunities in the rural economy and a more secure future for rural industries?

- Rural jobs and industries will develop as new ways are found of adding value to the resources – although this will require support structures. For example, nature-based tourism initiatives are starting to make an impact in the Southern Uplands but depended on support from well-resourced organisations such as the Forestry Commission Scotland or RSPB to get them off the ground. There is potential for many more such initiatives – but they will not come about without some ‘hand-holding’.
- More paths would be an economic asset to the region and would catalyse new rural enterprise



- We must sustain rural communities, maintain and strengthen rural jobs, both in land management and in green tourism, which means building buoyant rural businesses. Ways to develop new jobs and to hold young people in the countryside are vital. If the agricultural industry is not profitable the environmental benefits and landscapes which the industry provide, and the public enjoy, will cease. CAP reform must allow farm businesses to develop while at the same time protecting those farms which are creating environmental benefits. Business Gateways are important.
- There are too many grant schemes on offer, each with its own criteria, application procedure, reporting procedure and time-schedule. The complexity acts as a barrier to many potential projects. A simpler and more flexible approach to supporting local projects is desperately needed.
- We look with some envy at the role and remit of Highlands and Islands Enterprise where social, economic and environmental concerns are being addressed together and in all sorts of innovative ways. We would like to see a similar remit given to all the enterprise companies or at least those in largely rural areas. This would in our view encourage a more appropriate approach to rural development and might also facilitate closer working between the key agencies.

Mid-term review decisions – how do these impact on the introduction of Land Management Contracts?

- At our meetings, the majority were in favour of Land Management Contracts (LMCs) because public support should be prioritised to farms that produce public benefit. LMCs have the potential to target resources to where they can deliver maximum public benefit. Beyond 2006 the links between what the public want and what farmers provide must be visible. At present most support goes to the most intensive farms – under reform, there is the opportunity to use funds where the public benefits are greatest.
- The challenge is to find a mechanism to inform the LMCs. Local priorities need to be identified in each region by local stakeholder groups. Every area and every farm is different. Previous schemes have offered standard options with very minor local flavour. Real benefits will come about when local priorities can be specified. A regional Indicative Rural Strategy might be helpful in this respect.
- Many benefits will only be realised if scattered information is brought together so that farmers and communities can see for themselves what is important about their landscape -archaeology, paths, biodiversity, historic landscapes or key habitats – and how these relate to the bigger

picture. Local Environmental Resource Centres will hold the key to this, and require funding.

- Farmers should be asked to produce outcomes (environmental and social outcomes) rather than follow prescriptions and training may be required to facilitate this.
- Land will require careful monitoring and policing to ensure that the targets benefits are being produced over the long term.
- The more modulated funds there are the faster changes might be made. It is likely that 10% modulation would result in LMCs being available to all who want them – i.e. non-competitive. Rather than distribute modulation funds to a few big projects, we would prefer an accessible, appropriate scheme across the whole country of a size that can deliver the desired outcomes.

## IN SUMMARY

The task is to create a rural support package which helps create jobs in rural Scotland at the same time as enhancing the environment. For this reason, we support SEERAD's proposals for the reform of CAP in Scotland. We support the shift to full de-coupling based on historic payments, and support SEERAD's suggestion that this should be reviewed in due course to consider whether a gradual move towards area based payments would be appropriate.

If area based payments do occur, we urge the Parliament to ensure that payments are ring-fenced towards the various agricultural regions of Scotland. No doubt every region would like to receive more subsidy than it had before but this would result in other regions receiving less; which would be unfair.

New support mechanisms must be flexible, locally focused, and must encourage diversity

Farmers need to be able to choose support from a wide menu of options

The options need to recognise that a few farms are intensive and specialise in food production, and many are extensive, with opportunities to specialise in providing public benefits such as nature conservation and access.

Regional strategies need to be available so that additional incentives can be offered to farmers who agree to provide certain public benefits in preferred geographic or ecological zones.

CAP reform should benefit communities, nature, landscape and access to the countryside.

The SUP considers that the mid-term review decisions will impact positively on more rapid development of more environmentally sustainable farming and quality products, the provision of jobs and opportunities in the rural economy and a more secure future for rural industries.

We support the introduction of robust Land Management Contracts, but consider that the aims and priorities of such contracts should be agreed regionally and locally, rather than at a national level.

# 21st Century Community Woodlands

The Southern Uplands Partnership is part of a group of Scottish rural development organisations set to mount a bid to help local communities in the South West and Ayrshire benefit from the phenomenon known as *Community Woodlands*, which is currently sweeping across other parts of Scotland.

A meeting, hosted by Reforesting Scotland and East Ayrshire Woodlands was held in Cumnock to establish a Community Facilitation partnership to capture more of this exciting phenomenon. It is hoped that such a project could allow the south-west corner of the country to expand and capitalise on the few, but exciting, initiatives that already exist there. This meeting was attended by MSP Chris Ballance and representatives from other key organisations, including the *Cairnhead Community Woodland*, near Moniaive. The project idea is also broadly supported by representatives from *South West Community Woodlands*, the *Association of Scottish Community Councils* and *Borders Forest Trust*.

The big idea behind the Community Facilitation project is to encourage local people and existing groups to engage with the huge potential presented by community led and run woodland groups in areas such as jobs, health and education. A brief pilot project is currently running in Ayrshire developed by Reforesting Scotland and East Ayrshire Woodlands to test out this big idea.

Steve Robertson, a Director of Reforesting Scotland and Community Liaison Officer with East Ayrshire Woodlands, explained that, "the Community Facilitation pilot project offers support, training and advice through three regional facilitators to any community wishing to develop new or existing woodland projects". "Work done by Reforesting



Front Row (l to r): Cllr Elaine Dinwoodie, Chair EAW; Nick Marshall, Projects Co-ordinator Reforesting Scotland; Chris Ballance, MSP; Bruce Davidson, Project Manager EAW; Cllr Neil McGhee, Board Member EAW. Mid Row (l to r): Rachel Blow, Director RS; Ros Lauchland, Community Facilitation contractor; Pauline Jewett, Forester EAW; Karen Pickles, Community Facilitation contractor; Christime Clark, Community Facilitation contractor; Paul Ignatieff, Cairnhead Community Woodland. Back Row (l to r): Brian Broadley, Ayrshire and South Regional Party convenor, Breen Party; Steve Robertson, Community Liaison Officer, EAW and Director RS; Pip Tabor, Project Manager SUP; Flora McDowall, Project Officer, SUP.

Scotland elsewhere in the country", Mr Robertson continued, "has shown how crucial support can be at this early stage of forming a new group." "Such support," he added, "is also important in encouraging these early successes to result in meaningful and sustainable benefits in the longer term."

For more news on this project see the next SUP News which will have a woods and woodland theme – contributions on a wood or woodlands theme are welcomed – please send to [floramcdowall@sup.org.uk](mailto:floramcdowall@sup.org.uk) by 12th July.

## SPRING FLING 2004

**Spring Fling is a unique event in Scotland, providing a once-a-year opportunity on 29-31 May for anybody of any age from anywhere to go and see what professional artists and craftsmakers in Dumfries & Galloway do – and perhaps even make a purchase of two. This year the "Fling" is even bigger, a day longer and with late night opening until 7.00pm on Saturday 29th. Enquiries have been received from as far afield as Finland, Barcelona and**

**Düsseldorf. For your colour brochure call Gracefield Arts Centre on 01387 262084 or visit [www.spring-fling.co.uk](http://www.spring-fling.co.uk)**



Serena Rowe painting for Spring Fling outside her studio near Sandyhills.



# PLANTING WITH TREES

IN 1983/84 I WAS fortunate to be given several areas of bracken to plant trees in south of the border in Cumbria. The farmers were keen to give areas of bracken as they felt they were not losing grazing. The maximum area of any of these plantings was 1 hectare at maximum height of 250 - 280 metres. Most of them needed fencing and this was often done by using stone walls as one or two sides of the area to save cost, and even making a triangle using only one side a fence and the rest walls. As you probably know, most bracken areas are remnant woodland areas anyway, so the flora under the bracken often contained bluebells, wood anemone, creeping corydalis, wood stitchwort and wood sorrel. The tree species to be planted were mainly broadleaved trees especially birch and oak.

One of the plantings had its first thinning last year [2003] with birch thinned moving towards oak as the final crop. There are now large areas of sweet vernal grass, scattered bracken and bluebells under these trees. No tubes were used in the original planting as bracken dominates the tubes and the bracken was line weeded to help the trees grow above the 5 ft bracken. No chemicals were needed to control the bracken. The only areas not to grow trees well were where bilberry

dominated and this had the knock on effect of encouraging Black Grouse to move into these non grazed areas.

The thinned areas could now have stock returned to them with plenty of grazing to enjoy but due to the rich wildlife using the woodland the farmers have decided to keep stock out for the present time. Instead most of the areas here have been left for pheasant cover for a rough shoot. The big bonus has been the number of long eared owls using this new woodland which are quite rare in the rest of Britain. Other species using the plantings include tawny owl, tree pipit, willow warbler, chaffinch, blackcap and garden warbler. Both short eared owl and hen harrier hunted over the areas in the early years. Roe deer have moved in and rabbits have increased but numbers were very low during the planting stage.

Overall you could say that these bracken areas have encouraged more wildlife by being managed than left or sprayed and the shelter created for stock is amazing.

John Miles, Castle Carrock, Cumbria

## D&G Council windfarm framework

**DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY COUNCIL** is to draw up a framework to help local communities benefit from windfarm developments. Planning and Environment Committee Chair, Dr Joan Mitchell explained: "What we need is a code of practice for both developers and local communities to follow. This will help the developer, in terms of which communities they should be negotiating with, and the local communities to

understand what they might reasonably expect to receive from the windfarm developer". A toolkit has been developed in the Highlands region to deal with this issue and it is expected that as part of the process to develop an approach suitable for Dumfries and Galloway, that officers from Highland region will be invited to share their experience and offer guidance on best practice.

### e-mail lists

Just a reminder to those of you who would like more regular updates on particular topics that we now offer members an electronic update service. Those opting in to this service will receive news on events, meetings and other topical items – all you need to do is register by sending an email to the address below saying that you would like to be included.

[piptabor@sup.org.uk](mailto:piptabor@sup.org.uk)

#### MEMBERSHIP

*It costs you a little. It means a lot to us.*

If you support the work of The Southern Uplands Partnership and our aim to help keep people living and working in southern Scotland, please help us by subscribing, or renewing your subscription, now.

**AN INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP FOR 2004 COSTS BETWEEN £5 – £10.**

Subscriptions play a significant part in our core funding and a growing membership illustrates support, which helps us to lobby or secure project funding. As a member you can have an input into determining priorities, free entry to our AGM and members meetings as well as regular updates on progress through the newsletter. An application form is on the back of this newsletter.

# 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](http://www.sup.org.uk) and complete the form on-line.

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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**.

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**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.

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## 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

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