

Southern Upland NEWS

Newsletter of the Southern Uplands Partnership

Ninth Edition: Summer 2002

WE DID IT!!

TWEED TRAILS has now been formally approved by the Heritage Lottery Fund and South of Scotland Countryside Trails has been approved for ERDF support by the South Scotland European Partnership. In total the project aims to develop 250km of paths, nearly all of which will be multi-use. Proposed installation of self-closing bridlegates will make access easier for walkers and riders, and allay farmers' fears of livestock straying if gates are inadvertently left open. Clear signposting, remedial drainage and construction of new bridges across burns and rivers will also help both the public and landowners by enabling people to use clearly identified routes. The £0.5M project has now contracted a project manager – Vyv Wood Gee to work with the various project partners to ensure the ideas and plans become reality. This is a major success for the SUP and the partnership approach we have promoted. We gratefully acknowledge the support the project has received from the British Horse Society Scotland, SNH, the Paths for All Partnership, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the South of Scotland European Partnership, Scottish Borders Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Solway Heritage, Tweed Forum and Forest Enterprise as well as the various members of the Tweeddale Community Access and Heritage Group.



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PARTNERSHIP NEWS

At the third Partnership AGM Dr Elaine Murray MSP, Deputy Minister for Tourism spoke of the need for a dynamic, high quality tourism industry in S Scotland based on the rich natural and cultural heritage that we have. Efforts were being made to assist with this, with national schemes to promote walking in Scotland and advertising campaigns to sell Scotland as a wildlife watching destination. Much still needed to be done to enhance the image of the industry so that it attracted high-quality personnel.

Alex Fergusson MSP spoke of the review being carried out by his committee into Integrated Rural Development. While the report was not yet finalised, some messages were becoming clear – and these included the need for secure core funding for agencies working in rural development – an issue close to our hearts! The committee had also accepted that infrastructure – of transport and

communications were critical to the rural economy and that affordable housing was also a major issue.

Other issues that were raised during the evening included the siting of windfarms, community planning and joined-up working (or lack of it), planning control and its consistency, winter road maintenance, support for rural arts and financial support generally (and the mystery of aggregate tax specifically). Much was said of the complexity involved in the range of grant-giving mechanisms that now exist.

It was generally agreed that we all had to make better use of the funds that were available and that while this was difficult, partnerships were a good way of maximising benefits.

Since the AGM, we are delighted that South Lanarkshire Council have formally joined the Partnership and Cllr Eileen Logan has joined the Board as a co-opted member.

CONVENORS COMMENT

THE RECENT PUBLICATION of all three reports on the Foot and Mouth Epidemic has given us much food for thought in South Scotland. The clear and unanimous message is that the scale and magnitude of the outbreak must not be allowed to happen ever again. The accompanying recommendations give clear guidance on how that might be achieved.

The recognition that in formulating policy to deal with a livestock epidemic it is inadequate to treat it as purely an agricultural problem is an important conclusion. The cost to agriculture was serious but the measures taken to control the outbreak had no less serious consequences for the whole rural economy particularly tourism.

It is now of vital importance that those of us who were in the thick of it ensure that Govt. listens and acts on the recommendations. These reports must not end up on a dusty shelf till the next time. **SOUTH SCOTLAND HAS GONE THROUGH TOO MUCH.**
Barbara Kelly, Convenor

Among the recommendations made by the recently published Royal Society of Edinburgh's report into the impacts of foot and mouth disease are:

In considering the options for controlling FMD, the Scottish Executive must take account of the effects on the wider interests of the rural economy and involve appropriate stakeholders.

A complete ban on movement of susceptible animals throughout the country must be imposed immediately an FMD case is confirmed. This may be speedily relaxed in consultation with the relevant stakeholders, including rural businesses, once the source of the disease is traced.

An appropriate GIS system should be established detailing landuse, livestock numbers and other information relevant to disease control. Furthermore uniform standards of database design and data handling protocols should be established.

In the event of an outbreak, unless its origins and spread are immediately apparent, the countryside should be closed for a limited period of three weeks at the same time as the animal movement ban is announced: but as soon as the extent of the disease is determined, the closure should be lifted.

Other recommendations refer to the need to use protective ring or barrier vaccination as a adjunct to slaughter or clinical cases and dangerous contacts and the need to develop means of distinguishing between vaccinated and infected animals.

The Royal Soc. of Edinburgh website is <http://www.royalsoced.org.uk>.

The report can be downloaded from it or if you write to the Royal Society of Edinburgh, 22-26 George Street, Edinburgh, EH2 2PQ.

The State of South Scotland

The South of Scotland Alliance recently commissioned a study to look at the factors affecting development in South Scotland. The report concluded:

"There are other clear opportunities for both further co-operation at a South of Scotland level as well as influencing policy development and institutions. The study makes various recommendations, many of which have been adopted by the South of Scotland Alliance in drafting its Manifesto for action".

The recommendations as to the way forward for the South of Scotland are as follows:

- The South of Scotland needs to lobby more effectively to ensure that its needs are fully recognised in the development of economic, regional and rural development policies. It should take a leadership role in pressing the case for rural Scotland in all its diversity. This can be done against the background of a recent focus of attention at a Scottish, UK and EU level on rural development and the problems facing agriculturally dominated rural areas.
- The South of Scotland should continue to develop co-operative action and build on the significant strengths arising from co-terminosity of its main institutional structures ie both Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway areas share common boundaries for their councils, Local Enterprise Companies, Tourist Boards and Health Boards. Both areas have also established Economic Forums to take forward their already published joint economic development strategies.
- The South of Scotland Objective 2 European Programme is the only Rural Strand Objective 2 Programme in the UK and offers considerable opportunities for joint working and co-operation across the Plan area. There are already signs of a strong partnership developing in this regard and the programme will in fact be delivered by a single management structure. The programme also provides the opportunity to raise the political profile of the South of Scotland both at the national and European levels.
- The economic and social development capacity of local communities provides growth opportunities. This will be partly encouraged by the new Objective 2 Programme which will finance local economic development. There are many good practices across the region and sharing of experiences with other Scottish, UK and EU areas would be extremely valuable in implementing best practice.
- Growth in the higher education sector across the South of Scotland is to be encouraged and is structurally very significant. Research and development activities must be expanded which support and fill gaps in the economic, social and environmental structures of the area.
- There is a need to develop a strong joint lobby on infrastructure issues such as roads (including forestry, roads and transportation, telecommunications and industrial properties and sites).
- There is an opportunity to develop a more positive South of Scotland identity with benefits for tourism, agriculture, rural development and the environment. The exceptional beauty and environmental richness of the Region are clearly a major product of the area. Various "hooks" for the development of such an identity would include the high quality natural landscape and wildlife, the potential for outdoor activities, the Region's unique culture and heritage as a border area, its small towns, literature and art, forestry activities and selling quality regional products. The development of initiatives such as the Southern Uplands Partnership are to be encouraged.
- Whilst diversification of the regional economy is vital, scope still remains to improve the contribution of the very vital traditional industries eg agriculture, forestry and fisheries. The contribution of agriculture and fisheries for example can be improved through diversification and locally added value strategies to increase the market power of primary producers. Better co-operative working across and between such sectors would also add commercial value.
- The spread of ICT has seen problems of "location" removed for new ICT based small companies. The Region could usefully look to targeting such foot-loose entrepreneurs.

The full report is available from the South of Scotland Alliance.

Nature-based Tourism

The efforts put into stimulating discussion on this subject are starting to bear-fruit. VisitScotland are now promoting Scotland as a “wildlife tourism destination” and in S Scotland a special fund has been established to promote projects which involve farmers in wildlife-tourism. A meeting at the Crichton Campus last month asked how to make more of the natural heritage of South Scotland. Called by the Southern Uplands Partnership, and attended by representatives of SNH, the National Trust for Scotland, Forest Enterprise, RSPB, the Game Conservancy, Red Squirrels in South Scotland, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and local Tourist Boards and Local Authorities, the meeting heard about experience from Wales. The red kite is prospering in Wales and thousands of visitors now witness the regular feeding time for the spectacular birds. One feeding location is on a small family run farm – which has seen annual visitor numbers grow to over 20,000. The visitors can enjoy the spectacle and enjoy a coffee and browse in the craft shop, bringing money into the local economy.

The Welsh Festival of the Countryside project has gone on to develop links between a number of local initiatives – whether food production, crafts, walks or arts events. “It is forging the links between existing initiatives that brings added value to the benefit of everyone”. They have also linked such developments to community development through training, so that the benefits are shared.

Quality has to be high. People will go away from a visit feeling positive if they have had a high quality experience. These people will be valuable promoters of the region and will be more likely to return.

The Southern Uplands Partnership group agreed that there was an urgent need to make more of what we had in South Scotland and that there were opportunities to work better together. Consideration will be given to creating a post to develop links between existing initiatives and in the short-term, efforts will be made to establish a database of the existing wildlife-watching sites and appropriate guides. Efforts are already underway to develop sites for watching red squirrels and birds of prey but it was agreed there is scope for much more.



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MOORLAND REGENERATION

Another recent meeting called by the Partnership discussed the opportunity for a large-scale moorland regeneration project in the S Uplands. It was agreed that there was a need for a project and a working group has been established to take this forward. Contact us if you would like to be involved.

Renewable Energy

The Partnership has been asked to host a meeting in Clovenfords to look at the potential for an integrated project based around the proposed new primary school there. We would like to see the school powered by a combined heat and power unit running on locally grown wood-chip. The unit could also supply heat to neighbouring housing and the woodchip production could result in improved local habitat management. The unit would be CO2 neutral and benefit the local economy.

The technology exists – all that is needed is the will to make it happen. Contact the office if you would like to know more. The meeting is scheduled for September 5th.

Rural Partnership Support

There have now been two gatherings of local Rural Partnership Coordinators from across southern Scotland and northern England. Hosted by the SUP, the meetings have aimed to identify possible joint projects and to share best practice.

The SSERC application for European support was not successful because the benefits to business were not clear enough. While this is disappointing, we are confident the project will find alternative support. It is too good an idea to give-up on. LEADER+ funding will now be considered.

Snippets

Red Squirrels in South Scotland

Robin Fuller, RSSS Conservation Officer in D&G, is moving on to work for Forest Enterprise. Robin has worked hard for the last two years and has transformed the project – from nothing to become the leading red squirrel conservation project in Scotland – if not the UK. We wish Robin all the best in his new job. Meanwhile we are working hard to find a replacement – not an easy task!

The UK aims to produce 10% of electricity from renewables by 2010 – a £10 billion market.

£66 million has been allocated by central Government to encourage energy from crops, forestry wastes and other surplus materials. Are we making the most of the potential in Southern Scotland?

SWEAP – the SW Environmental Action Project has been revived and is now being managed by Solway Heritage – the project staff are available to assist community recycling and renewable energy projects and they will continue to run the eco-schools project. Contact them on 01387 247543 or email sweap.david@solwayheritage.co.uk



Kevin Carter hopes to beat the bracken this year, having just taken delivery of a brand new piece of machinery for controlling this invasive plant in the Cairnsmore valley. The lightweight roller is widely used in England and is becoming the accepted technique for controlling bracken. The roller bruises the stems and thus weakens the plant. Scottish Natural Heritage are keen to reduce the need for spraying bracken and hope that this new approach will get the problem at Cairnsmore under control. Contact the office if you want to know more.

The SUP guide to Bracken Management is now available on the SEPA website at <http://www.sepa.org.uk/publications/leaflets/bracken/index.htm>

PEREGRINE

The fastest animal on earth has successfully bred in Galashiels. A pair of spectacular Peregrine Falcons made the unusual choice of nesting on a church steeple in Galashiels. Peregrines are famous for swooping down from a great height to catch other birds, their main prey. They can reach speeds of over 100mph, faster than any other animal. Because they usually live in remote areas and nest on high cliffs, it can be difficult to see peregrines at first hand . . . but this has changed for people in the Borders.

FUNDING NEWS

The Local Heritage Initiative Scotland (LHIS) is a new grant scheme that will help community groups to investigate, explain, care for and celebrate their local heritage, including traditions and culture, landmarks and landscapes.

The scheme will be tested out in Scotland during the next 18 months by supporting 2 projects in each of the following 6 areas (i.e. 12 projects in total):

Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire; Clackmannanshire; Lochaber; Shetland; North and South Ayrshire; The Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway.

They hope to be able to launch a full scheme across Scotland during 2004.

The next round of the Rural Challenge Fund is due to be open for applications sometime after August 12th. Deadlines for applications are usually tight so if you have a project which you want to submit – watch out for announcements and be ready to apply!

Dumfries and Galloway Community Regeneration Fund

The Dumfries and Galloway Community Regeneration Fund was launched in June 2001 and is available to community groups across the region that are seeking funding to support projects that will have demonstrable economic benefits on their local and regional economy.

A number of community groups in Moffat have been successful in receiving funding to implement a number of projects that complement each other. Moffat & District Community Initiative secured funding to carry out two Feasibility Studies into developing Moffat into a Healthy & Well-Being Town and for their Town Centre Enhancement Project, Moffat Business Group received funding to create some Town Centre Interpretative Maps.

The Community Regeneration Fund can make up to £50,000 available for the duration of a project, with up to 100% funding. Information packs with full details are available from the Community Regeneration Fund Co-ordinator, c/o Dumfries and Galloway Council Community Resources Department (phone 01387 260070). It is anticipated that the final round for applications will be in October.

Upper Nithsdale Community Learning Centre

A new Community Learning Centre has opened in Upper Nithsdale, bringing new opportunities for local people and businesses and creating two part-time posts in the area. Based at the Upper Nithsdale Partnership Office in Sanquhar, the Learning Centre offers a range of courses to suit all levels of ability. Learning facilitators are on hand to help people taking up the courses, with the training packages.

As well as serving the general public, the centre will be open to people who are in business or thinking about starting a business. They can visit the centre to discuss any training requirements with the staff and also to discuss the video-conferencing facilities that will be available. Facilities will be accessible for people with a disability, with ground-floor workspace available.

The Community Learning Centre is open from 9.30 am to 5 pm each weekday, and members of the public can drop in at any time then. The organisers expect that hours may become more flexible, in response to demand.

Shelter Housing Action with Rural Communities (S.H.A.R.C)

Shelter Scotland's latest project is aimed at helping communities secure the homes they need and maintain the sustainability of their rural villages. Shelter Housing Action with Rural Communities is funded by the Community Fund and aims to tackle issues of inadequate housing supply and poor housing conditions in the villages of Dumfries and Galloway.

Many rural communities who have concerns about the lack of affordable housing available in their area have contacted the project to date.

Karen Lewis, Rural Housing Enabler with the project, assists small communities in finding out what sort of housing is needed, where it might be built or where properties can be brought back into use, and can help negotiate with housing providers and landowners in making their plans a reality.

Karen is also interested in developing volunteer opportunities for local people with the work of the project. "The whole aim of SHARC is to support communities to make things happen for themselves."

If you would like further information about how the project could help your rural community or if you would like more details about volunteering please contact Karen at:

S.H.A.R.C, P.O Box 7467, Castle Douglas, DG7 3TS

Tel: 01644 430571

Email: karenl@shelter.org.uk



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Who's Who in Organic Farming?

Mary-Ann Smyth writes "In a Southern Uplands-wide initiative, Dumfries and Galloway Organic Network and Borders Organic Network are about to jointly publish their first ever directory. The directory lists 90 organic farms and food producers in the South of Scotland who want to work and trade together, and advertise their products.

In Dumfries and Galloway and the Borders there are more than 3000 farms, of which about 200 are organic. The number of organic farms is growing fast - but the organic farms are well scattered, and many of us did not know who else was organic. In late 2001 we began contacting each other, and decided to create a "Who's Who" directory of organic farmers and producers in the area.

The Dumfries and Galloway Organic Network and the Borders Organic Network operate independently, running farm open days, discussion evenings and training events. Local organic farmers use these events to meet others and to collaborate in buying, selling and sharing information. Within these networks, several smaller trading and marketing groups are emerging. We are also connected to organic networks in northern England and highland Scotland.

Our main aim this year is to ensure that lambs born and bred on organic farms in the Uplands can be finished and sold as organic meat, rather than just being absorbed into the conventional market. This means that upland

organic farms (the breeders) need to link up better with lowland organic farms (the finishers). We also need more lowland farms to become organic - anyone interested?

The directory is organised roughly west-east across the area, beginning with the farms and growers in Wigtownshire, followed by Kirkcudbrightshire, Dumfriesshire, and the Borders. Look out for it in health food shops and other organic food outlets this summer, available free thanks to funding from Scottish Enterprise (via the Scottish Food and Drink strategy) and to voluntary work by a member of the Southern Uplands Partnership.

Also look out for our website - a wealth of information, including data on the amount of organic food being produced in the South of Scotland - a first for Scotland!" www.scottishorganicnetwork.net



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Did You Know? . . . The Borders and D&G have a smaller proportion of jobs in the service sector than the Highlands - matched by a higher dependency in S Scotland on the (declining) primary sector.

COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE

The Soil Association has secured funding from the Lottery Community Fund, to run a 3 year project to promote and create Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) schemes.

The basis of CSA is developing a relationship between a farmer and the community that consumes their produce, founded on an understanding of mutual support. CSA can be defined as:

A partnership between farmers and consumers where the responsibilities and rewards of farming are shared.

There are many exciting examples of this relationship including whole farms supplying produce to their local community to renting a row of vines or having shares in an orchard or woodland.

CSA gives farmers and growers the fairest return on their products. They receive a guaranteed market for their produce – and can invest their time on growing the food rather than looking for customers. As with all types of local food initiatives – box schemes, farmers' markets, food co-ops etc - the local economy is stimulated by consumers supporting local business. The farmer is part of a community and is no longer isolated.

Consumers benefit by receiving fresh, locally produced food on a regular basis.

As CSA farms are directly accountable to their consumer members, they strive to provide fresh, high-quality food, typically using sustainable production methods such as organic farming. CSA can give farmers the security they need to enter into organic conversion.

The project will work across the UK (England, Wales, Scotland & Northern Ireland) and although information and advice on CSA is available to all, particular emphasis will be given to:

- **Low-income farmers disadvantaged as a result of foot and mouth disease, BSE, swine fever, flooding and/or agricultural recession**
- **Disadvantaged communities**

A number of CSA awareness workshops and training events are going to be held around the country.

Farmers considering the CSA approach can be linked with existing schemes, and a number of demonstration CSA farms are being developed. Eligible farmers and community groups will receive support with no charge.

For further information:

Greg Pilley, Soil Association, Bristol House, 40-56 Victoria Street, Bristol, BS1 6BY

Tel: 0117 9142425

Email: csa@soilassociation.org, www.soilassociation.org



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SOAP BOX

from Roy Carlaw

The latest newsletter is even more depressing than normal, with almost every article depending on the customary farming industry “begging bowl syndrome”.

Jamie Carruthers, of whom I would have expected better, lists about ten different headings, each of which is a demand for public cash, presumably in addition to all the grants already paid put to the farming fraternity.

I always thought that farming types were rugged individualists, of independent mind, determined to stand on their own two feet. Alas, the reverse seems true; if there is no grant available farming becomes supine, and the idea of following the successful lead of New Zealand and abandoning the begging mentality, would be unthinkable. Earn our own living? “Not bloody likely!”

Why not read and implement the SUP statement “ A partnership of all those who want to see people living and working sustainably in the Southern Uplands”

I take it we mean sustained by their own efforts and not parasitic on others?

Anyone care to respond?

MANIFESTO

The Southern Uplands Partnership is about to publish a manifesto for Rural South Scotland. This sets out the issues we believe need to be addressed in rural South Scotland and the opportunities that we see for progress. Members will receive a copy with this newsletter. If you are not a member and would like an application form or if you would like a copy of the manifesto, please contact us.

~ Help Needed ~

The partnership is looking for someone with fund-raising experience to work on a voluntary basis as a fundraiser for projects. If you have experience of this and some spare time, we would like to hear from you.

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

Studio 2, Lindean Mill, Galashiels TD1 3PE Tel: 01750 725154 e-mail: piptabor@sup.org.uk



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE



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Did You Know? . . . Life membership of the Southern Uplands Partnership is still only £100 – real value for money and likely to increase next year.