



DRN News

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NEW RESOURCES FOR THE DEVON RURAL NETWORK

Devon Rural Network Staff:

The confirmation of support from our funding partners: the Local Authorities, Devon County Councils, the South West Regional Development Agency, the National Parks and English Nature has enabled the Devon Rural Network to secure dedicated staff. Heather Hillman has been confirmed as the Devon Rural Network Manager and on 25th April Heather was joined by a new Devon Rural Network Officer. Lisa Henry has a background in countryside planning and tourism and will take over the day to day support for the Action Groups and will be editing this newsletter in the future. In addition to Lisa, an advertisement has been posted on the Devon County Council website this week for a part-time DRN Assistant to join the team. If you know of anyone who might be interested in working for the DRN please let them know or follow the link: <http://www.devonjobs.gov.uk/devon/jobdetails.asp?jobid=6198>

Lisa is based with Heather at Devon County Council, telephone number 01392 382831 or email lisa.henry@devon.gov.uk

DRN Website:

The exciting new DRN website is under construction and will be live by the end of June. It will be a dynamic site that will be full of information on best practice, where members can share ideas and find out about new projects and opportunities. It will offer members of the DRN, Heather and Lisa the opportunity to post news and events information at any time. Further details on how members will be able to do this will be sent out in a small 'how to' guide. This will add value to the Newsletter, allowing for longer, more in-depth articles and discussion to take place.

DRN Newsletter:

This, the Spring edition of the Newsletter is with you at last, apologies for the delay, but we hope you find the new design and layout worth waiting for. The new website will give us a fantastic opportunity to ensure that members continue to get their quarterly Newsletter, but also post further, more detailed information on the website. With this in mind could I ask you to restrict future articles to four hundred words, but we'd welcome photographs. I would like to thank you for all the articles that we have in this edition of the Newsletter. It really is full of useful information.

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Devon Rural Network
Staff

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01392 383487

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SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIES FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES RURAL RENAISSANCE PROGRAMME

The DRN has submitted an outline proposal to the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) to run a Rural Renaissance programme for Devon. The programme is titled ***Sustainable Economies for Rural Communities***.

The Rural Renaissance Action Group (RRAG) has been instrumental in drawing this proposal together. It is made up of representatives of the protected landscapes in Devon (AONB's and National Park Authorities); District Councils; the Community Council of Devon; Devon Rural Transport Partnership; Devon Renaissance (and RR programme covering the Objective 2 area); Sustainable Farming and Food Action Group; Sustainable Tourism Action Group; Rural Business Support Action Group (covering the non-objective 2 or EHOD area); Devon Towns Forum; Devon County Council; Business Link Devon and Cornwall; Learning and Skills Council; representatives from the private sector and the South West Regional Development Agency.

SWRDA's Rural Renaissance programme is aimed at enabling high-quality strategic rural regeneration initiatives to happen. The DRN - ***Sustainable Economies for Rural Communities*** vision and aims are:

Vision: Build sustainable economies for rural communities by developing key economic sectors to raise incomes, employment levels and identities of rural areas in a sustainable manner

Aims:

1. increase skills required to develop key sectors
2. invest in infrastructure to increase economic viability and levels of productivity
3. utilise and invest in the environment resource to drive economic development and increase use of environmental technologies

Sectors: Sustainable Tourism across Devon, Sustainable Farming and Food across Devon and Rural Business Support in the EHOD area.

It is envisaged that the package of strategic projects and initiatives to be supported over 3 years by this programme, will have been identified from the start of the programme through the delivery plan through a process of consultation and refinement.

This is being led by 3 DRN sector Action Groups which correspond to the sectors above, and they have already begun the process at POP stage. There will therefore be no rolling grants programme for main projects, however 2 smaller grants programmes will help to make up the programme:

- A redundant buildings grant scheme for the non objective 2 area.
- A small grants scheme of between £5k and £10k specifically aimed at research, feasibility and project development work and pilot schemes and projects.

The next stage of the process is to write a detailed delivery plan. The RRAG has met to discuss how the different Action Groups can feed into this process. There is currently a Devon Renaissance programme (see press release extract later in this newsletter) covering business competitiveness and productivity in the Objective 2 areas of Devon, and the DRN has a reciprocal arrangement with that partnership to sit on each others steering and working groups to ensure added value and joint understanding.

Following the Haskins review of Rural Delivery a MRD (modernising rural delivery) programme is being implemented and SWRDA have indicated that a significant proportion of their additional resources as a result of MRD will be channelled through RR partnerships such as DRN, which would mean a key role for the network in future.

For questions relating to the SERC proposal please contact Heather Hillman:

Tel.: 01392 383487

Email: heather.hillman@devon.gov.uk

DEVON RURAL NETWORK ACTION GROUPS

ENVIRONMENT DEVON

Environment Devon is a group that was already in existence before the launch of the DRN.

The DRN has agreed a reciprocal arrangement with Environment Devon to ensure that information flows both ways, and the DRN benefits from this partnership agreement.

If you want more information, please contact the Environment Devon Co-ordinator, Phil Collins:

Tel.: 01392 889 770

Email: philip.collins@english-nature.org.uk,

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM ACTION GROUP

At the Summer event last year members of the DRN requested that the DRN set up a Sustainable Tourism Action Group to bring together rural tourism stakeholders in Devon. A small number of representatives have already met, but it is important that all members interested in sustainable tourism has the opportunity to get involved.

To enable wider participation we are holding a meeting in early June. Invitations will be sent out this week to all those who have previously expressed an interest in sustainable tourism through their membership forms. We would then form a smaller core Action Group that will meet regularly with input from the wider group at less frequent intervals.

A key task for the STAG will be to inform the delivery plan for initiatives relating to sustainable tourism within the DRN SERC Rural Renaissance.

Local Authority Tourism Officers in Devon who meet regularly see the formation of a STAG as a welcome development and have elected a member of their group to play an active role in STAG, along with protected landscapes, the private sector, and many other member groups.

SUSTAINABLE FARMING AND FOOD ACTION GROUP

Following presentation of the SFF action plan to the DRN steering group on 25th January 2005 a new action group has been formed to take the plan forward to delivery. The Chair of the group is Dominic Acland from the Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust along with 10 other members from both the public and private sector. Over the last couple of months the group has been busy feeding into the DRN bid to Rural Renaissance and hope that this will allow us to deliver some of the priority projects from the plan whilst other sources of funding are being investigated.

The action plan is to remain a working document, however if you would like a copy please contact Kate Harris through kate.harris@devon.gov.uk or on 01392 383 205

CONSULTATION RESPONSE ACTION GROUP (TO INCLUDE RURAL PROOFING)

One of the key reasons to become a member of the DRN is to ensure your voice is strengthened by joining with other stakeholders in rural Devon. The Consultation Response Action Group is going to be a vital mouthpiece of the DRN.

Through this action group we will respond to consultations and represent your collective views, and proactively be involved in rural proofing and lobbying on new policies and strategies that will affect rural Devon.

What is rural proofing? Rural proofing describes a collection of tools that can be used to inform consultation responses. It can be a simple and effective way to determine if policies or actions will have an impact on rural areas. This includes the people who live there, economic activities that rely on the natural resources and people who work in rural areas.

By rural proofing a document, strategy or action plan it is possible to determine if the impact on rural areas will be positive, negative or the same as the impact would be on non-rural areas.

The DRN should be involved in rural proofing strategic, county wide, rural Devon specific, Regional and National strategies and action plans. In this way we can determine the relative impacts for rural Devon and feedback the views of the DRN members as one voice representing the majority of sectors and communities.

The suggested first targets of attention for this group are: the Regional Spatial Strategy, DEFRA consultations on Social Inclusion, and the Devon Local Area Agreement pilot..

The Consultation Response Action Group (CRAG) will first need to agree the criteria that will be used to rural proof documents and consider mechanisms for finding out about proposed policies and consultations in enough time to provide effective input.

We need your help - if you would like to be involved in this important process through CRAG or receive regular information about new policy proposals and consultations where the DRN should respond, please contact Lisa Henry on lisa.henry@devon.org.uk 01392 382 831.

RURAL BUSINESS SUPPORT ACTION GROUP

The Rural Business Support Action Group (RBSAG) is co-ordinated by Graham Walker of Teignbridge District Council. It covers the non-Objective 2 areas of: Teignbridge, East Devon, Mid-Devon, Exeter and parts of Torbay. For more information on the Rural Business Support Action Group please contact Graham at: gwalker@teignbridge.gov.uk or telephone 01626 215102.

DEVON FORUM - STRENGTHENING THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR

Our voluntary and community sector (VCS) is hugely important to Devon’s quality of life, it has the ability to tackle social issues, it strengthens civic society, and it is a significant element of the local economy. Devon’s voluntary and community sector has a relatively large number of effective umbrella organisations, but until Devon Forum it had no collective voice or network, and therefore little impact on other sectors or on policy development locally. Devon Forum was launched in June 2004 and adopted a constitutional document. It has 24 founder members, and held its first AGM in February.

It is intended that all work undertaken by Devon Forum is channelled through existing voluntary and community bodies such as the Devon Rural Network, thus strengthening the sector and increasing the chances of sustainable progress. The Home Office ChangeUp strategy has provided opportunities for Devon Forum to develop its work in the year ahead. It intends to set up a number of interest groups including: rural issues, young people, older people, community groups, diversity, disability, health and environment. The rural issues group intends to oversee projects and rural proof investment in the voluntary and community sector in Devon.

Devon Forum, c/o CCD, School Huts, County Hall,
Topsham Road, Exeter EX2 4QB
t. 01392 383443 e. info@devonrcc.org.uk

Strategic News

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

The long-awaited details of the Environmental Stewardship, new agri-environmental schemes, which provide funding to farmers and other land managers in England, who deliver effective environmental management and protection of their land, was launched on 3rd March 2005 by DEFRA. These schemes are in addition to ‘cross compliance’ obligations under the Single Farm Scheme (SFS).

The schemes are intended to build on the acknowledged success of the Environmental Sensitive Areas scheme (ESAs) and the Countryside Stewardship (CA) scheme. The primary aims of the new schemes are to:

- Conserve wildlife (biodiversity)
- Maintain and enhance landscape quality and character
- Protect the historic environment and natural resources
- Promote public access & understanding of the countryside

Environmental Stewardship has three schemes or tiers:

• Entry Level Scheme (ELS)

This is a whole farm scheme that is open to all farmers and land managers who farm their land conventionally. Acceptance for the scheme is guaranteed provided you can meet the scheme’s requirements. ELS will enable farmers to earn up to £30.00 a hectare for providing straightforward, but effective work, such as maintaining hedgerows, leaving conservation strips around fields and creating beetle banks.

• Organic Entry Level Stewardship

is also a whole farm scheme, very similar to the ELS. It is open to farmers who manage all or part of their land organically and who are not receiving funds under the Organic Aid Scheme (OAS) or the Organic Farming Scheme (OFS). The OELS will provide payments of up to £60.00 per hectare annually for land entered in the scheme.

• Higher Level Stewardship

This scheme aims to deliver significant environmental benefits, targeted to local environmental priorities and will build on ELS and the OELS. It offers a wide range of land management options linked to specific environmental outputs.

Please Remember!

- The ELS and OELS go beyond the obligations of cross compliance under the Single Farm Scheme (SFS)

- Participation in any of these Environmental Stewardship schemes or agreements **does not remove** any ‘cross compliance’ obligations.

For the Southwest, you can get application information through: RDS, P.O. Box 277, Bristol BS10 6WW; Tel 08456 024098 or from the website: www.DEFRA.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/es/default.htm

LOCAL AREA AGREEMENTS

The new Local Area Agreements represent a radical new approach to improve co-ordination between central government and local authorities and their partners, working through Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP).

Local Area Agreements will focus on a range of agreed outcomes that are shared by all the delivery partners locally and which they all agree to work towards achieving. They will simplify the number of additional funding streams from central government going into an area, help to join up public services more effectively and allow greater flexibility and freedoms for local solutions for particular local circumstances.

Local Area Agreements will help devolve decision making, moving away from a ‘Whitehall knows best’ philosophy and reducing bureaucracy. This should allow efficiency gains and a greater proportion of public servants to be directly involved in front line delivery in every region of the country.

Devon County Council is a pilot for the new LAAs and the Agreement works through 3 blocks of activity – Children and Young people; Safer and Stronger Communities; Healthier Communities and Older People.

The identified cross-cutting issues are:

- Regeneration of the 25% most deprived wards in Devon;
- Housing (affordable general needs housing and supported housing for vulnerable groups);
- Creating happier lifestyles.

The LAA has been signed in March 2005, and work is now focussed on these blocks of activity, as well as developing the Local Public Service Agreement over the next few months. The LAA will run for three years from April 2005.

OBJECTIVE 2 FUNDING – ACHIEVEMENTS AND THE END OF FUNDING.

We are now well into the second half of the South West England Objective 2 programme and there is a good range of successful projects which are benefiting from funding - Broadband4Devon, Dartmouth's Flavel Centre and the Minehead to Torbay cycle route, to name but a few.



The 'Path to Prosperity' is being made possible by a £1.7m Objective 2 grant and involves creating one of the longest sections of the National Cycle Network in the UK, from Minehead to Torbay.

However, the distribution of bids has been uneven so far and there is still capacity for more projects in the rural areas. To help address the imbalance, a Rural Task Force has been set up by Government Office South West (GOSW) to encourage more applications which fit well with the Objective 2 programme framework and which will be able to spend up by the time the programme comes to an end in June 2008.

Government Office is therefore looking for projects which can demonstrate:

- wider economic impact/ additional wealth created / long-term benefit
- quality of employment and skills
- sustainability
- strong contribution to the programme outputs
- a sound funding package
- planning permission in place

If you have a project which ticks these boxes and will help to regenerate the rural areas of Devon, Government Office will be able to advise on its suitability for funding and can provide further details on how to apply. Remember that the usual eligibility criteria still stand:

Where? Rural projects can be anywhere within North Devon, Torridge, West Devon or South Hams. Transitional funding is available in parts of Mid Devon.

Who? Local authorities, not-for-profit organisations, partnerships, etc are eligible to apply. It is advisable to contact GOSW at an early stage to check that you are eligible (see contact details below)



The Flavel is a multi-purpose arts & entertainment venue in the heart of Dartmouth housing a cinema, theatre, live music venue and meeting rooms. Objective 2 contributed £250,000 to the total costs.

What? The following types of activity are eligible:

- projects that provide employment opportunities including initiatives to support business development and improve competitiveness, the provision of employment and business space, tourism initiatives and the conversion and reclamation of local buildings and infrastructure to meet these needs
- the development and enhancement of FE/HE and local integrated facilities and initiatives which support training, entrepreneurship, innovation and enterprise including the provision of childcare in the rural economy
- actions which develop economic or tourism enterprises
- comprehensive visitor and countryside management initiatives
- town and village enhancement schemes which demonstrate a capacity to increase tourism in the area
- activities which help support communities develop and deliver their economic potential including support for feasibility studies linked to the development of sustainable economic growth

When? There are no formal deadlines but, with the end of the programme looming, projects should be submitted as soon as possible.

How much? Grant rates vary depending on the project but you will need to provide match funding to make up the total

For more information, contact the GOSW Objective 2 programme secretariat on 01752 635000 or see the website at <http://www.gosw.gov.uk/>

VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR HELPS TO SHAPE THE FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local:Vision is the Government's debate on a ten year strategy for the future for local government, considering issues such as the community leadership role of local government and at how involvement and participation in neighbourhoods can be increased.

The call for contributions to the Local:Vision debate reflects the discussion already underway in the voluntary and community sector (VCS) facilitated by the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service (NACVS) and other national and local organisations, all of which seek to achieve better outcomes, tailored to the specific needs of local communities.

The initiatives to help the VCS reach their full potential as a force for good in society are:

- ‘Compact Plus’ – a proposed new opt-in scheme which will shorten and simplify the commitments between Government and voluntary and community organisations to work together;
- Capacity Builders – a new sector-led agency to manage the ChangeUp fund, the Government's investment programme for VCS infrastructure. This will further drive its benefits to frontline organisations, backed by a further £70 million over the years 2006/2007 and 2007/2008;
- a further £90 million investment over the years 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 for the Futurebuilders fund which will enable further development in the capacity of voluntary and community organisations to deliver public services; and
- an investment of £4 million in the Capital Programme to provide ‘incubator’ space for embryonic community-based organisations and enterprises.

Further information is available from the following sources:

- Local: Vision: www.odpm.gov.uk/localvision
- NCVO's local government policy work: www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/localgovt
- Plans to enhance the role of voluntary and community organisations as partners in delivering world class public services: www.homeoffice.gov.uk/n_story.asp?item_id=1276

NEW ROLE FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICES AND THE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES IN THE REGIONS OF ENGLAND

After the redistribution of Countryside Agency responsibilities, the GOSW's new responsibilities and arrangements are confirmed as follows:

GOSW taking on the funding of the social & community sectors from the Countryside Agency
GOSW will be responsible for sponsorship of the Rural Community Councils (RCCs), with increased funding available for the voluntary/community sector programmes, such as support for parish councils
GOSW taking on a wider delivery role with responsibility for Local Area Agreements (LAAs)
GOSW will ensure that all services must provide local solutions for local issues

April 2006 will see the launch of the new DEFRA Rural Social & Community Programme for which £13 million will be available nationally and that the South West should get a sizeable portion

The RDA's new responsibilities and arrangements are confirmed as follows:

RDA takes over responsibility from the Countryside Agency for accessibility of services in rural areas. Additional funds, a total of £18 million (£6 million over the next three years), are being made available to the RDA for Rural Productivity, which will deal with the provision of employment skills and training and sustainable food and farming

The RDA is committed to providing the following services and initiatives during 2005/2006:~

- Provision of Broadband in 19 areas
- Increased investment in workspaces in Objective 1 areas (Cornwall, West Devon, North Devon, Torridge and the Forest of Dean)
- It will provide matched funding for National Parks Sustainable Development Funds over the next two years
- Honour legal commitments transferred from the Countryside Agency
- Extend support for Rural Transport Partnerships until 2007
- Support Dorset Pathfinder

The RDA has stressed that it will **not** be creating new structures and, very importantly, it will provide **local delivery to meet local needs**. A representative from GOSW is attending the next steering group meeting to brief the DRN.

GOSW: www.gosw.gov.uk

South West RDA: www.swrda.org.uk

STOP PRESS!

Chairman of the Devon Rural Network, Prof. Michael Winter, is now a member of the Board of the Countryside Agency.

CHANGES TO THE COUNTRYSIDE AGENCY

DEFRA's Rural Strategy 2004 sets out aims for improved delivery arrangements through providing services in a more streamlined, customer-focused way and through a smaller number of organisations. As part of achieving this aim, it is anticipated (subject to the will of parliament), that an integrated agency will be established in 2007 which brings together in a single organisation the landscape, access and recreation team of the Countryside Agency, English Nature and the environmental land management remit of the Rural Development Service (RDS).

The integrated agency's general purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

The three organisations are committed to working together over the next two years and have produced a joint statement, a summary of which is available at: <http://www.countryside.gov.uk/regions/southWest/index.asp>

As part of these changes, from April 2005 our socio-economic work will be transferring to the South West RDA and GOSW. In practice this means that the RDA will be dealing with queries about existing Community Service and Transport grants, along with Market Towns work previously undertaken by the Countryside Agency. With the new funding that comes with this new role they will be looking at ways to improve rural regeneration through initiatives such as Rural Renaissance. GOSW will be responsible for rural proofing in the region, support for Rural Community Councils, Parish Planning and Rural Housing Enablers.

The commission for rural communities (launched on 9th March as a separate division of the Countryside Agency) will focus nationally on rural disadvantage, operating as Rural Advocate, expert advisors and independent champion for rural communities. It will become a separate organisation in 2007 following legislation. For further information see <http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk>

STATE OF THE COUNTRYSIDE IN THE SOUTH WEST 2004

The latest State of the Countryside in the South West 2004 report has now been published. Copies of the full report and a summary leaflet are available from our Exeter office (01392 477150) or on the web at: <http://www.countryside.gov.uk/regions/southWest/index.asp>

Members' News

DEVON RENAISSANCE LAUNCH

Devon Renaissance is an innovative partnership consisting of private and public sector organisations who have worked closely together to develop a programme of action to improve the performance of rural businesses based in the North Devon, Torridge, South Hams and West Devon areas. It has devised a three year programme to fund business development projects in this area, with an anticipated total cost of £8 million. With the conclusion of an agreement for £2.4 million funding from the SWRDA the partnership is now open for business.

The Partnership chaired by Peter Tansey, a Regional Manager of BT, has benefited from good links with the business community through its Board members and strong support from the local authorities in the four districts. The programme will be run from an Okehampton base by a team of four led by Robin Makeig-Jones who has experience of running previous business funding schemes in Devon.

Devon Renaissance has identified and developed four main priorities:

- Priority 1: Improving business skills and business development
- Priority 2: Improving physical capital and business infrastructure
- Priority 3: Promoting innovation, productivity, technology and environmental efficiency
- Priority 4: Stimulating enterprise in rural households

Some of the issues that Devon Renaissance will address include:

- Helping rural businesses gain access to the latest new technologies through, for example, transfer of knowledge from Universities and the Ministry of Defence
- Improving the skills of business managers and their workforce.
- Supporting access to work schemes to overcome rural disadvantage.
- Developing local renewable energy schemes
- Developing locally distinctive products and selling them to new markets
- Supporting co-operative enterprises and local purchasing initiatives
- Helping companies make the best use of broadband
- Developing rural workspace

Located in the Partnership's offices in the heart of the Devon Renaissance area in Okehampton, Robin is now seeking outline proposals for projects that will really make a difference. Enquiries via the web site www.ruraldevon.org or on **01837 658643**.

MCTI AND DEVON TOWNS FORUM NEWS

The newly formed Regional MCTi Association has agreed to fund most of the proposed year 1 programme for the Devon Towns Forum. Membership has been opened up to all Market and Coastal Towns in Devon, of which there are thirty.

The Association has as a first priority the recruitment of five full time facilitators across the Region of which more than one will handle the Devon Towns which currently comprise nearly a third of the total in the MCTi process, twenty out of sixty five. The five new Devon Towns in the process will initially get much of the facilitators' attention.

There is an ongoing discussion about the post first brokering phase, and what support the facilitators will provide, and what success in implementation looks like.

It is now almost four years since the first announcement of the awarding of the MCTi to the foot and mouth Towns in May 2001. Others will judge the rate of progress over an entire inter-election period!

On that note, the MCTi process has won a Royal Town Planning Institute award for work with sustainable communities. Read more about this award in the following article.

As is often the case, others see us in a better light than we see ourselves! The South West is undoubtedly in the lead with this approach to community development.

Tom Langdon-Davies

Chair, Devon Towns Forum.

Community Representative, MCTi Association regional board.

tom@quickes.demon.co.uk, ph. 01392 214 747

REGENERATION PROJECT WINS PRESTIGIOUS AWARD

A South West initiative to regenerate market towns has won a national award from the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI).

The Market and Coastal Towns initiative (MCTi), set up in 2000 to encourage the economic, social and environmental regeneration of market towns, was given the award in the “Planning for Sustainable Communities” category. The announcement was made at the National Planning Awards ceremony held at the Royal Lancaster Hotel in London on 3 February.

Led by the South West of England Regional Development Agency (RDA) MCTi ensures that people from local communities can plan their own future by deciding what is important for their area. With support from the RDA, each town forms a partnership to produce a community action plan, which is then presented to a variety of organisations for funding to help turn its ideas into reality.

Many developments can emerge from community action plans, including new work space, town centre improvements, better transport and modern training courses. Many other smaller innovative ideas are put forward, such as turning old buses into mobile youth centres.

The judging panel highlighted MCTi as “a model of good practice that deserves widespread acknowledgement of how to achieve community planning at the local level. Vibrant and healthy communities will only come about if they believe in themselves and have ownership of their future. This initiative makes this happen.”

There are 65 towns across South West England currently involved in MCTi. The initiative is now run by the Market and Coastal Towns Association, which provides specialist services, advice, funding and information to the towns involved.

With £2.5 million from the South West RDA, the Association is a partnership including representatives from the communities involved, the South West RDA, GOSW, English Heritage, the South West Regional Assembly, the Countryside Agency, South West Acre Network, Development Trust Association, Local Government Association, South West Chamber of Commerce, four representatives from the community, and the South West Lottery Distributors

Contact: Rachel Price, South West RDA press office on Tel: 01392 229548

A VISION FOR DARTMOOR

Farmers have been demanding a single vision for Dartmoor’s landscapes and *Moor Futures* is an attempt to define that vision for the year 2030. Experts from English Nature, English Heritage, Dartmoor National Park, DEFRA’s Rural Development Service and the Environment Agency have been working together on this joint vision.

Dartmoor National Park is one of the most important archaeological landscapes in England. The partners have identified a number of Prime Archaeological Landscapes (PALS) where archaeology is of international importance and preservation requires a landscape approach.

Much of Dartmoor has been affected by overgrazing. Ecologists have been working to improve the quality of moorland by increasing the amount of gorse, heather and other ‘dwarf’ shrubs, and by allowing some natural expansion of woodland on the fringes. This had the potential for conflict as it was feared that increased vegetation in the wrong place could damage or obscure historic structures preventing visitors from seeing and enjoying them.

At Dartmeet, there is one of the most extensive prehistoric landscapes in north-west Europe. The different periods of human occupation are very well preserved, ranging from a Neolithic linear cairn, to a medieval field system and excavations for tin dating back to the 12th century. However, the area is also internationally important for blanket bog, heathland and oak woodland, and nationally important for more than 13 species, notably the High Brown Fritillary butterfly!

We have agreed that the vision for this area will be to retain short grassland and fragmented heath around the bronze-age reave and medieval field system, preventing the expansion of gorse. Bracken will be confined to steep slopes where it is important for the High Brown Fritillary, whilst heathland can remain around the tin excavations.

It is expected that the agencies will endorse the broad vision map for 2030, and agree more detailed visions for each PAL, before exploring with land managers how this could be achieved. Very positive discussions have begun with farmers about the livestock types and numbers needed to deliver the vision.

Everyone has brought different knowledge and experience to the table, providing a unique opportunity to learn more about the archaeological and ecological value of Dartmoor. As a consequence, we have shifted our views to resolve the often-competing demands on each area of land.”

Contact details: Phil Collins, English Nature, philip.collins@english-nature.org.uk, 01392 889 770

BIG BOOST FOR BOGS, HEATHS AND FARMERS!

In 2004, English Nature secured £3 million from the Sheep National Envelope. The money has helped farmers to put in place sheep grazing regimes that will deliver 'favourable condition' on Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). On Dartmoor, our aim was to reduce sheep stocking rates on 4,300 ha to levels that would allow heathland to recover. We actually achieved 5,600 ha and put nearly £500,000 into the pockets of those farmers taking part in the scheme!

We have worked very closely with colleagues from the Rural Development Service. The Dartmoor Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) scheme has provided the bedrock of financial support to farmers, and has generally halted the decline in the quality of moorland vegetation. However, there were still several commons where the ESA grazing levels were not low enough to achieve the quality boost that is needed, if we are to meet the Government's target for SSSI. As a result of this work, we can look forward to the spectacular site of purple and gold heathland alive with bumble bees and birds.

At the same time, we have had a lot of interest in our Traditional Breeds Incentive, particularly for cattle. This is very heartening, because mixed grazing and the skills and experience of livestock farmers is vital to maintain the rich diversity of habitats that we have on Dartmoor. A great example of how this incentive can help is provided by the Coaker family, who graze their pedigree Belted Galloways on the blanket bog of Whinney's Down. This lighter breed of cattle eats off the purple moor-grass in the summer, allowing plants like the insect-eating sundews to flourish. The Coakers sell their premium beef through the Rare Breeds Meat Marketing Scheme.

We would like to thank all the farmers for their interest in these schemes, ensuring a colourful future for Dartmoor's wildlife.

Phil Collins, English Nature, philip.collins@english-nature.org.uk, 01392 889 770



CELEBRATE BEST OF THE SOUTH WEST AT THE WOODFAIR 2005

The Woodfair is a celebration of the South-west's woodland as well as the region's crafts, skills and food and will be held on Saturday 9th July 2005 at Roadford Lake, between Okehampton and Launceston.

The Woodfair is the premier event of its kind offering over 130 organisations a unique opportunity to promote woodland products in the stunning location of Roadford Lake. Visitors can meet the horse logger and his heavy horses, Anstey and Tom; find out how hard a charcoal burner works; learn about hurdle making, thatching, basketry, furniture and long-bow making; watch falcons soar across the sky; come face-to-face with bats and owls; make their own bird box and enjoy the intensity of the 'Log to Leg Race' as some of the UK's top green wood experts battle it out to be champion turner. For the first time at the Woodfair, the public can also try out the new sport of laser paintball, a thrilling experience for those seeking adventure.

Along with music, fine food, competitions, storytelling, a mountain bike display and children's entertainments, the Woodfair is a fun day for all the family. All activities are free with the exception of a small charge for laser paintball and bird-box making.

For further information, please contact Suzie Holt at South West Forest, Cookworthy Moor, Beaworthy, Devon, EX21 5UX. Admission charges: Adults: £5.00, Senior Citizens: £4.00, Under 16's: free, free car parking, gates open 10.00-17.00.

Tel: 01409 221269.

Email: suzie.holt@devon.gov.uk.

Web: www.southwestforest.org.uk.

Listings and events

MAY

County Shows

In the next few months, County Shows will be taking place all over the country. The notable ones in the Southwest include the Devon County Show (19th-21st May at Westpoint, Exeter) and the Royal Cornwall Show (6th-8th June at Wadebridge, Cornwall).

Smalls Farms Association Farm Walk

Place and time:

Summerhill Farm, Hittisleigh, Exeter EX6 6LP
Saturday, 28th May 2005. Start: 12.00 noon (including Lunch)

Rob Brighton, Director of Land Heritage, has kindly agreed to host a farm walk for the SFA members and will personally guide us around this interesting farm.

Summerhill Farm, Hittisleigh near Exeter, is the headquarters of Land Heritage, the charitable Trust for the protection of Britain's Land Heritage. It is a 100-acre; panoramic farm located 545 ft above sea level that plunges 250 ft to the River Yeo.

The farm has a 50 Red Ruby suckler herd, a flock of rare Zwartble sheep for fat lamb production, winter wheat Maris Widgeon producing bread-making wheat, Dunkeld winter oats for livestock feeding and a new set of timber livestock barns. The farm has approximately 50% permanent pasture and the remainder is rotatable cropping, with the emphasis is on high clover content. Winter feed is haylage based, and a mineral source is based on seaweed.

Summerhill, the Trust's new headquarters and home of the new Land Heritage Centre, is a mixed farm of 100 acres in an area of outstanding natural beauty in mid Devon. The farm is 545 ft. above sea level and plunges 250 ft. towards the River Yeo. It is run by the Trust's Director, Robert Brighton and was acquired in 2002.

Dunkeld winter oats for livestock feeding and winter wheat (Maris Widgeon) are grown on the farm. The livestock includes a flock of rare Zwartble sheep for fat lamb production and a herd of 50 Red Ruby sucklers.

A new set of timber livestock barns were erected in spring 2005 and are now ready for over-wintering livestock.

Dunkeld winter oats for livestock feeding and winter wheat (Maris Widgeon) are grown on the farm. The livestock includes a flock of rare Zwartble sheep for fat lamb production and a herd of 50 Red Ruby sucklers.

A new set of timber livestock barns were erected in spring 2005 and are now ready for over-wintering livestock.

Fifty percent of the farm comprises permanent pasture and the remainder is rotatable cropping, with an emphasis on high clover content. Winter feed is principally haylage and a mineral source is based on seaweed. The farm is rich in biodiversity and is surrounded by ancient woodland.

Summerhill is being developed as the model farm for the Land Heritage Centre allowing for practical demonstrations of organic husbandry. Through the management of Rob and his team, the farm embraces the best of the old and the new in organic farming practices.

Phone: 01548 830302

Email: mary@small-farms-association.co.uk

Website: www.small-farms-association.co.uk

JUNE

United Nations World Environment Day is 5th June

JULY

South West Forest Woodfair is on 9th July this year.

This newsletter is produced by the DEVON RURAL NETWORK

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All articles represent the views of the authors and are not necessarily those held by the Devon Rural Network.