

Chairman's Report

This last year was our first without the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund since we became a staffed company in 1999. I am happy to report that financially the transition went extremely well with many of our members rallying to help fill the shortfall, as well as securing the support of new sources of funding such as the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation. To see no loss of capacity with the loss of 70% core funding is quite an achievement and shows that the Forum function is seen not as a luxury item but a necessity that actually leads to more efficient working in the long run.

Working with SEPA and the EA in developing the Solway-Tweed River Basin Management Plan has given us a new focus and one which we are well placed to input. The process of developing our own Catchment Management Plan has proved useful in identifying the priority issues and, more importantly, tackling them. Whilst it might seem that there is duplication in these processes, the CMP will always be more holistic as it takes into account areas such as flooding and tourism that are not part of the WFD and for this reason it is important that we update and service both plans.

In order to take advantages of opportunities outside the catchment and the immediate area of our work, a wholly owned trading arm has been established called Confluence Consulting. This company gives us the flexibility to generate income through the provision of services to other bodies and outwith the immediate interest of the Forum. All revenue generated from this business goes straight to the Forum. Whilst it is important that this new role does not impinge on our core duties, it does give us more options in generating income and this is extremely important in the post-HLF era.

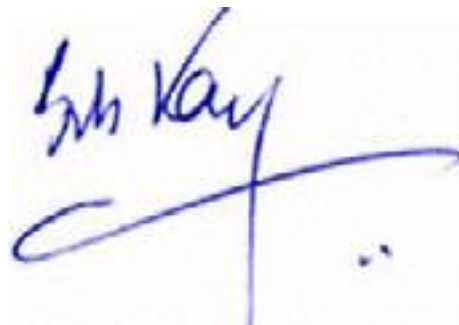
Whilst we were always involved in a huge number of projects through the Tweed Rivers Heritage Project and our members, it is true to say now that we have never run more ourselves. We are now leading or taking an active role in a wide variety of initiatives as can be seen in the following report.



Wetland and riparian work has always been important but it is now taking on new significance. It is clear that these ecosystems have fundamental roles to play beyond biodiversity including flood alleviation, carbon sequestration and benefits to water quality and quantity. For this reason we are involved in a great deal of work on this front, some of it at the cutting edge of its type.

This was a tumultuous year on the staff front. Sarah went on maternity leave in May and Tim left to work with SNH in October. Janet Landells and Heather Forbes joined the Forum in May, the former to take over from Melody Barton and the latter as maternity cover for Sarah. Both have done a superb job at picking up the reins with no handover period. Unfortunately, Heather decided to move on and we recruited Nicola Bissett to take over. Diane Bennett worked out the length of her contract as the Community Wildlife Officer and has had a profound effect on both the Osprey and the Salmon Viewing Centres.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those staff moving on, as they made a very important contribution to the work and reputation of the Forum, as well as welcoming the new recruits to the fold. There are plenty of challenges ahead. The Water Framework Directive, the incoming Floods Directive and the opening of the Scottish Rural Development Strategy are key areas and I am confident that we will play an active role.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ian Kay', with a large horizontal stroke extending to the right.

INTRODUCTION

Tweed Forum was established in 1991 as an informal liaison group comprising statutory and non-statutory bodies connected with the River Tweed and its tributaries. The Forum has developed a long way from those early days and is now:-

- a Company Limited by Guarantee;
- registered as a Charity; and
- registered as an Environmental Body under the Landfill Tax Regulations

with the remit of “*promoting the wise and sustainable use of the Tweed catchment through holistic and integrated management and planning*”.

This report covers the ninth full year of operation of Tweed Forum since it was incorporated as a Company and sets out its achievements over the year, as well as outlining future targets.

CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Area Advisory Group and Water Framework Directive

For the last year we have been working with SEPA and the EA on developing the Solway-Tweed River Basin Management Plan (RBMP). On the Tweed, SEPA and the Environment Agency are using the Tweed Forum to facilitate the Tweed AAG in recognition that we already fit this role well in terms of remit, membership and geographic coverage. This process has involved extensive consultation with stakeholders, principally through the Area Advisory Group, but also with stakeholders further afield. The Area Advisory Group (AAG) has focused on the following areas.

1. Inputting to the Significant Water Management Issues report. This report attempts to summarise the problems and issues facing the Tweed catchment.

2. Helping produce a Programme of Measures. This identifies projects and mechanisms that will help address these issues.
3. Commenting on the classification of water bodies and helping set objectives for those water bodies.
4. Commenting on the draft RBMP and inputting to the Tweed geographical chapter.

Tweed Forum is also an integral member of the RBMP editorial team. The editorial team are a subgroup of agency and stakeholders working together to draft an RBMP that best serves and represents the Solway-Tweed area and the people who live, work and recreate here.

Tweed Catchment Management Plan (TCMP)

The working groups continue to oversee delivery of priority activities under the TCMP. The following is a summary of progress made in the past year.

Riverworks

The Riverworks Group met a number of times over the course of the year. SEPA's powers have now come into effect and the Controlled Activities Regulations should deliver a new level of more robust and streamlined regulation. One of the main focuses of the group has been to ensure that the regulatory regimes mesh effectively where the river forms the border. Some engineering operations are genuinely cross border in nature e.g. works to a cauld or weir where one half is England, the other in Scotland. This has caused problems in the past and we have spent sometime drawing up an MOU that outlines what should be done when this happens. This will ensure activities do not slip through the net and provide some clarity as to who should be doing what in this scenario.

The group again had the opportunity to

discuss the Council's flood alleviation works programme plus that of the roads and bridges team. This continues to be a useful way of discussing works before they are carried out, so that the impact on other sectors is minimised.

Water Resources

There has been little progress on this front although it is encouraging to see that there has been positive dialogue between SEPA and the EA over one of the most important issues – the management of abstraction licensing along the Border. The regulatory systems are quite different and it is not clear as to who should be doing what on farms that straddle the border and abstract from a number of different points. It is hoped that a protocol can be developed that will give some transparency in the very near future.

Wetlands and Riparian Habitats

It was again a very active year for project work in this area. The **Wetland Filtration Systems Initiative** aimed to use specially constructed wetlands to clean 'dirty water' from farm steadings. The project comprised a partnership between Borders FWAG and Tweed Forum and created 17 wetland systems, mainly on sub catchments affected by diffuse pollution. A number of them were visited as part of a fieldtrip associated with SEPA's international conference on constructed farm wetlands. We were also fortunate to have two students from Edinburgh University investigating the water quality and ecology of these systems, to help ascertain their efficiency and value.



Queenscairn constructed wetland just after completion

FWAG and the Forum have forged a good working relationship in terms of delivering wetland restoration through this project and its previous incarnation, Ponds for Biodiversity. The Forum applied to SNH and the Council's Landfill Tax Credit Scheme for further monies and these have been successful. This is a one year project (due to SNH financial restrictions) with a total spend of £57k that aims to create 18 further wetland systems with an emphasis on Great Crested Newt priority areas.

The **Till Floodplain and Wetland Restoration Project** is a pioneering project which aims to explore opportunities for reconnecting the river to its floodplain and, where appropriate, recreate or restore wetland habitats. The project was successful in attracting the maximum available grant from the SITA Trust of £175,000 which brings the total budget up to £500,000.

A low key, successful, opening was held in February at Fenton when the first 'sod' of the flood bank was cut, before the diggers moved into to remove the flood bank completely. This was done by representatives of the SITA Trust who have given £175k towards the project. The new regional manager of the EA and the regional manager of Natural England were in attendance and publicity in the local press was excellent. The initial work at Fenton is complete and Alastair Laverty has been developing new projects on neighbouring farms.

In April 2006, Tweed Forum was asked to develop a project proposal to the Scottish Executive's Biodiversity Application Grants Scheme (BAGS), on behalf of the LBAP Partnership, for a two year, £12,000 project on water voles in the Tweed catchment. The main aim of the **Tweed Water Vole Initiative** was to determine whether there are populations of water voles in a limited

number of specific suitable areas. Unfortunately the commissioned surveys found virtually no signs of voles though the habitat was in many places ideal. Following the depressing results of the field surveys, a poster has been designed and printed to request that any sightings of voles, by those living and working on the river, be submitted to the Borders Biological Records Centre. This will be distributed to relevant stakeholders and put up in key places – bird hides, fishing huts etc.



The Craik Natural Flood Management Demonstration Project is a partnership project involving support from SBC, SEPA, WWF, SNH, FCS and the Scottish Government and aims to demonstrate the potential for habitat restoration measures to slow down flows and increase storage.

A considerable amount of time has been spent on this project, largely dealing with queries from community members. Discrepancies between the Forests and Water Guidelines and WWF's vision for the project have been highlighted as being of great concern. The differences are in fact minor but Tweed Forum agreed to host a meeting between the agencies on the subject to provide some clarity. A public meeting at Roberton was then held in February, with key people from the Council, Forestry Commission, WWF and Mountain Environments clarifying the issues.

Tweed Forum has been carrying out the necessary work to achieve consent from SEPA for the meander restoration. The Forum has also put the planting work out to tender and this will be carried out in the coming weeks. This carefully designed

planting strategy will create the 'leaky barriers' that should slow down flow during flood events. Due to channel changes in the January floods, only one meander will be restored (3 were originally planned). This will free up monies to do work further upstream where the community feel the work is really required.



New riparian planting at Craik

Other projects

Cheviot Climate Proofing project

This project is being led by the Environment Agency, who commissioned Royal Haskoning to look at likely climate scenarios in the Cheviot area and suggest land use changes that might increase resilience to such changes. Tweed Forum has been involved in the steering group and is well placed to lead on some of the practical measures, especially as there is such strong synergy with the Till Wetland and Floodplain Restoration Project. The practical measures being considered include moorland fire management techniques, increasing water storage through wetland creation, peatland rehabilitation, wind erosion management, winter storage wetlands, riparian and floodplain planting.

Tweed Aerial Survey

Autumn brought ideal flying conditions and the contractor captured 83% before the plane broke down and remained grounded for the rest of the season. This data is in the process of being rectified and 'mosaiced'. SBC are committed to finishing the survey and the Phase 1 habitat survey this coming season. The data will be available to participating members shortly.

Consultations

Over the last year, the consultation response service offered by the Forum has been somewhat restricted due to staff changes. We did, however, respond to the following:

- The Future of Flood Risk Management in Scotland
- Significant Water Management Issues Report for Solway-Tweed RBMP
- The Till Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy
- Diffuse Water Pollution from Rural Land Use. General Binding Rules and related provisions consultation

Tweed Invasives Project

Once again the project effectively stopped all flowering Hogweed in the Tweed catchment. Tim Barratt was away for most of the control season on sick leave but Kevin Stewart did an effective job at keeping delivery on track and tackling all flowering Hogweed. Work on controlling Himalayan Balsam on the Till again proved challenging due to the time taken to hand pull it. However, a significant step forward was achieved by gaining consent to spray the larger stands away from the waters edge. If done in dilute concentrations, it was found that the Balsam died whilst the native vegetation underneath survived.

The launch of the Invasives best practice publication by Michael Russell, Minister for Environment, was held at Paxton at the beginning of November. This attracted a good amount of publicity in both the press

and on TV. Since then we have had a stream of enquires from all over the UK on how to control non native plants.

Tweed Community Wildlife Officer

Diane Bennett continued to service the Osprey Viewing Centres at both Kailzie Gardens and Glentress and the Salmon Viewing Centre up until the end of her contract in January. She recruited and trained up a large number of volunteers to help run the centres and helped facilitate visits to the centre by those groups who would otherwise find it difficult. Both these attractions have been very popular and have attracted the attention of the media with both appearing on Nature's Calendar. A DVD showing highlights of the Osprey footage and the Salmon footage has been produced.

Wider Networking

Tweed Forum continues to be involved in a wide range of groups including

- the Leader + Decision Making Groups
- LBAP partnerships in the Scottish Borders and Northumberland,
- New Ways Working Countryside Theme Team
- Catchment Sensitive Farming Steering Group.

Staff attended, contributed to or gave presentations at the following courses and events:

- The Border Union Show
- Scottish Government Flooding Summit
- Upper Teviotdale and Borthwick Valley Community Council
- Presentation to the RSFS Annual meeting regarding the WFD.
- GB Non Natives Stakeholder Forum
- Tweed Angling Fair
- Ellemford Fishing Club
- Philiphaugh Salmon Safari
- Ministerial launch of the Tweed Invasives manual
- Great Crested Newt training day

- Led a site visit to Haltree Farm to discuss the use of the soft engineering technique, willow spiling, with Borders College students.
- SEPA/IEMA/Constructed Wetlands Association/Edinburgh University conference on constructed farm wetlands
- Berwickshire European Marine Site Forum.
- Launch of the Fenton Floodplain Project

Confluence Consulting

Tweed Forum has established a trading arm to allow it do work outside the catchment and its immediate sphere of interest. At the moment this has involved fundraising and project development for the Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland. Also, Janet Landells works one day a week for Southern Upland Partnership carrying out financial administrative work, both of which have added useful income to offset the loss of HLF monies.

Future Plans

The following will be priority areas for the Forum over the coming year:

- The continued development and delivery of the Catchment Management Plan, to be driven principally in the short term through the identified working groups of Riverworks, Water Resources and Wetlands & Riparian Habitats.
- To update the Tweed catchment Plan in the light of recent achievements and legislative changes.
- To help complete the Solway-Tweed Rivers Basin Management Plan in conjunction with the AAG, SEPA and the EA.
- To continue to offer the service of highlighting and responding to relevant legislation. In addition to this, the Forum will attempt to

influence the legislation more proactively than through consultation alone, by actively briefing key people and agencies.

- To continue to develop and work up projects where our members see gaps and opportunities.
- To continue to play a crucial role in wetland related issues, including managing the Till Wetland Restoration Project and the Craik Natural Flood Management Demonstration Project.
- To play a role in the incoming Floods Directive and help ensure this integrates with the WFD as smoothly as possible.
- To deliver the sixth season of control on the Invasives project, including suppressing all Hogweed seed production and making real advances in the reduction of Himalayan Balsam on the Till.
- To take advantage of income generating work through the consultancy arm as and when appropriate.

Company Management

Board of Directors and Executive Committee

Directors:

- Bob Kay (Chairman)
- Jonathan Mullard (Secretary) - Northumberland National Park
- Willie McGhee – Borders Forest Trust
- Chris Badenoch

Executive Committee:

- John Hogger – Environment Agency
- Ian Lindley – Scottish Borders Council
- Andrew Panter – SNH
- Nick Yonge – RTC/Tweed Foundation
- Angela Foss - SEPA
- Simon Henderson – West Fenton Farm and Fenton Centre
- Ian Davidson – Scottish Government

Members

The Company membership is now 28 due to the amalgamation of the Countryside Agency and English Nature.

Tweed Forum Staff

The staff of Tweed Forum for 2006/07 were:

Luke Comins - Manager

Janet Landells - Finance Officer/Office Manager (from May 07)

Sarah Currie – CMP Officer (until May 07)

Heather Forbes - CMP Officer (from May 07)

Tim Barratt - Tweed Invasives Officer (until Oct 07)

Diane Bennett - Tweed Community Wildlife Officer (until Jan 08)

Alastair Laverty – Till Restoration Project Officer

Finance

The general reserve has increased. This is in line with the objective of having at least one years turnover (i.e. circa £150,000) in reserve in order to act as safety net.

We continue to rely on our members for match funding and this is all the more important now that the HLF support, as part of the Tweed Rivers Heritage Project, has ceased. These contributions are vital and our thanks go to those who have supported us over the last year. The following have contributed directly to the Forum, in some form or another, over the past year:

Esmee Fairbairn Foundation

Heritage Lottery Fund

Scottish Natural Heritage

Northumbrian Water

Scottish Environmental Protection Agency

Scottish Borders Council

Environment Agency

Natural England

Northumberland National Park Authority

Berwick upon Tweed Borough Council

Forestry Commission Scotland

River Tweed Commission

Tubney Trust

Tweed Foundation

Leader + (Scottish Borders and North Northumberland)

***TWEED FORUM* is:**

Borders Anglers Federation

Borders Forest Trust

Berwick-upon-Tweed Borough Council

Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Environment Agency

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group

Forestry Commission

Natural England

Northumberland County Council

Northumberland National Park Authority

Northumbrian Water

Northumbrian Wildlife Trust

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

River Tweed Commission

Scottish Agricultural Colleges

Scottish Borders Council

Scottish Borders Rural Partnership

Scottish Enterprise Borders

Scottish Environment Protection Agency

Scottish Government

Scottish Rural Property & Business Association

Scottish National Farmers Union

Scottish Natural Heritage

Southern Uplands Partnership

Scottish Water

Tweed Foundation

Visit Scotland