

Chairman's Report

The most significant milestone of last year was undoubtedly the culmination of the Tweed Rivers Heritage Project. This initiative, which began in 1999, transformed Tweed Forum and has had fundamental implications for the way we work together as organisations within the Scottish Borders and North Northumberland. The importance of this project cannot be underestimated. The list of physical outputs is extraordinarily diverse and large enough to make an impact at the landscape scale. However, it is the less tangible outcomes that will continue to benefit the region for many years to come.

This has been admirably demonstrated by the socio-economic impact study that was commissioned towards the end of the project. The impact study highlighted that not only was the project crucial in harnessing funding that would otherwise not have come into the area, but also that the necessary physical infrastructure has been established to bring about substantial economic activity through further partner investment and visitor spend. Indeed, this equates to some 90 full time equivalent jobs per year.



Other nationally important impacts, which by their very nature are more difficult to measure, have also been enhanced by this project. These include the improvement to people's lives through enhanced community involvement, social inclusion and improved working and living environment. The improvement to people's health is enhanced through the massive increase in the opportunity for outdoor activities. Furthermore, the project has increased understanding of the local heritage by the young, locals and visitors alike, which helps strengthen the sense of place and local identity, as well as encouraging a feeling of stewardship of this rich resource.

The other remarkable legacy of this project is the way we all work together. Whilst the Forum was around well before the initiation of the project, it only met a few times a year. We now have a new level of partnership activity, with many organisations working together on a regular basis and this is something we sometimes take for granted.

Whilst the culmination of this project is a substantial achievement, it has brought its challenges, not least the loss of our 70% core funding for the Forum. This has proved a serious obstacle to overcome since it is extremely difficult to secure core funds. However, after some strategic repositioning and refocusing we are managing to negotiate through

become more commercial. Whilst the HLF support gave us the luxury of not having to charge for project management and development, we are now operating full cost recovery where we can. Second, we have aligned ourselves to help meet the challenges faced by our members in meeting their strategic objectives. This has seen the formation of a number of service level agreements with our members, the most important of which include the SNH, SBC and SEPA and the EA.

Finally, we have set up a trading arm of Tweed Forum that allows us to operate outside our immediate charitable purposes and indeed outside the Tweed catchment. All profits from this consultancy work are redirected straight back into Tweed Forum. Together, these changes have left us in a much stronger position for the future.

Another downside to the end of the HLF era has seen the departure of our financial administrator, Melody Barton. Melody has been with the Forum since the beginning and has been invaluable in keeping the delivery of the HLF project on track. Her attention to detail and pin point accuracy in her financial administration is largely why the project was able to come in so seamlessly on budget.

Finally, as ever I would like to extend thanks to those all those who have supported the Forum over the last year and particularly the 60 organisations that were involved in the Tweed Rivers Heritage over the last seven years. It has been a great project to be involved in and I very much look forward to continuing in the same vein.




INTRODUCTION

Tweed Forum was established in 1990 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 eighth 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

The CMP continues to provide Tweed Forum members with the strategic framework against which they can collectively determine priorities and manage decisions within the Tweed. The priority areas, which were identified as part of the review process in 2005, were collated into working agendas for the three working groups.

These continue to be taken forward through regular meetings of the working groups; the details of which are presented below.

WFD and the AAG

In June 2006, a presentation on the Tweed Area Advisory Group (AAG) and the role

and functioning of Tweed Forum within the framework of the AAG was given by SEPA and the Environment Agency at the quarterly Tweed Forum members meeting. In general, Forum members were encouraged by SEPA's and the Environment Agency's approach to using existing structures present within the area.

Since then, the membership has been finalised and there have been three official meetings to discuss the development of the River Basin Management Plan. Initial tasks achieved this year included contributing towards the Draft Plan of Action Report, which is currently out for consultation and agreeing the Significant Water Management Issues Report, on which the future Programme of Measures Report will be based.

Riverworks

The Riverworks Group met a number of times over the course of the year. The first meeting, which took place at the end of March 2006, concentrated on the improvements and changes made to the Tweed riverworks application process. These changes are being trialled on Tweed and are an attempt to come in line with the new SEPA controlled activities regulations (CAR) for the 2006 season. This marks the third season that the application procedure was trialled on Tweed before the CAR came into force and was well received by statutory agencies and applicants alike.

An annual appraisal of Scottish Borders Council's flood management and the roads and bridges annual maintenance programmes has been introduced into the Riverworks Group agenda. This provides a useful opportunity for the all the statutory agencies to input into the Council's schedule of works for the year.

A riverworks day, hosted by the Environ-

ment Agency to raise awareness and promote best practice between the various organisations across the Tweed catchment, was held on the Till on 14th July 2006. The day consisted of a series of talks and presentations in the morning, followed by a fieldtrip to the Breamish Valley in the afternoon. The day proved very successful and stimulated some interesting debates, particularly in the field when trying to assess possible solutions to problems encountered on the Till.

A cross border statutory agencies meeting was held in November 2006 to discuss the legislative position and powers on both sides of the border. This highlighted a number of gaps and disparities across the border. In order to prevent any future problems, a draft memorandum of understanding was drawn up by Tweed Forum in order to involve all the necessary cross border statutory agencies where proposed riverworks are scheduled to take place on the boundary between Scotland and England. Such an approach should not only help to improve cross border communication between the statutory agencies, but will also help to prevent any future cross border legislative disparities from arising. The outlines of the memorandum of understanding will also form the basis of an information leaflet to be circulated to all landowners and proprietors where the Tweed forms the boundary between Scotland and England.

Water Resources

Little progress has been made since the last meeting of this group in March 2006. The priority issue emerging from the meeting was the disparity in abstraction regulation across the border. A SEPA appointed consultant is looking into possible working solutions. Until such time as the report becomes available, Tweed Forum will continue to highlight the need for addressing the cross border disparity, as neither of the agencies see it as a priority at pres-

ent.

The extension of the compensation water on the Whiteadder to the end of October again took place this year. This is the third year that such an agreement has been reached and formed much of the work undertaken by the Reservoir Release Group. It is hoped that this disparity in compensation flow on the Whiteadder will be addressed and corrected as part of SEPA's review of the water order licenses under the new controlled activities regulations.

Wetlands and Riparian Habitats

The Wetlands and Riparian Habitats group has by far been the most project active group over the past year; which is testament to the importance of these habitats and the interest that they generate amongst our members.

A number of initiatives and projects involving wetland and riparian habitats continue to be developed. The **Wetland Filtration Systems Initiative** aims to use specially constructed wetlands to clean 'dirty water' from farm steadings. The project is being taken forward by Borders FWAG on behalf of Tweed Forum and is scheduled to be completed in September 2007. Funding has been secured for the creation of 16 pond systems from Leader+, Landowners, Scottish Natural Heritage and SEPA.

On the back of this project, Tweed Forum has been asked to join the **Constructed Wetlands Research Group**. This is a SEPA led group made up of academics and consultants who have expertise in designing and monitoring constructed wetlands. At present, a design manual is being drafted together with guidance on best management practices.

The Till Floodplain and Wetland Resto-

ration Project is a pioneering project which aims to explore opportunities for reconnecting the river with its floodplain and, where appropriate, recreate or restore wetland habitats. Priority is being given to those areas where multi benefits, such as resource protection, flood management, biodiversity, education, amenity, access and tourism, can be achieved. The project will help to ensure that farmers and landowners within the Till catchment work to create a wetland resource that makes a real contribution to the Regions biodiversity targets.

The project, which is being led and managed by Tweed Forum on behalf of the Environment Agency, has a strong partnership basis and involves many players involved with environmental work on the Till, including Northumberland FWAG, Defra, Natural England, the Environment Agency and Northumberland Wildlife Trust. Funding for the project has been secured from the Northumbria Regional Flood Defence Committee's Local Levy Programme, North Northumberland Leader+ programme and SITA.

Alastair Laverty has been recruited as the project officer. Alastair has worked for the Environment Agency for the past 10 years and is well placed to progress the project as he is familiar with the Till and is well versed in wetland restoration techniques. He is on secondment from the EA for a period of 26 months and is working out of the FWAG office in Wooler.

It should be noted that this project is coordinating closely with the **Catchment Sensitive Farming Initiative** being run by the Environment Agency on the Till. This project is a two year initiative to promote water-friendly farming and to meet the requirements of the WFD. It is being coordinated as a joint venture between Defra, the

Environment Agency and Natural England. A total of 40 catchments have been identified as priority areas for action in England, including the "Tweed Catchment (England) and Lindisfarne". Tweed Forum sits on the steering group to help agree and oversee the delivery of a programme of advice and actions to tackle the issues affecting water quality in the catchment.

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 aims of the **Tweed Water Vole Initiative** are to determine whether there are populations of water voles in a limited number of specific suitable areas, to then use the survey results in 2007 as a training base to help enthuse local people in small mammal ecology, and to inform future habitat work within the catchment that benefits water vole populations. Tweed Forum was successful in its bid for monies from the BAGS – one of only 15 projects selected this year. The first phase of surveying in the East Lammernuirs, Greenlaw/Gordon and Peebles areas found only one sign of water vole, despite plenty of suitable habitat and few signs of mink. Further surveying is scheduled this coming summer in the Newcastleton, Ettrick and Morebattle areas.

Other wetland habitat creation work undertaken in 2006 included the **Borders Great Crested Newt Project**. Recent surveys had indicated that numbers were declining, either as a result of the small ponds they rely on slowly filling in over time, or as a result of fish introductions to larger ponds. Tweed Forum, in partnership with SNH and SEPA, created 12 new pond sites in the central Borders. The objective behind these new pond sites was to create

new breeding ponds for Great Crested Newts which are the most endangered native species of newt in the UK.

The cost of the work for the project was covered completely by the project and represents a very significant step forward in trying to prevent the long-term local extinction of Great Crested Newts from the Central Borders. The Project is relying entirely on the support of the local farmers and landowners to make this happen.

It is now a year since the Forum invited WWF to speak about the relevance of wetland riparian habitat enhancement in the role of flood attenuation. Since then, Tweed Forum has been working with the Council and WWF developing a pilot project on Forestry Commission land that demonstrates some of the Sustainable Flood Management (SFM) techniques on the Borthwick Water. The **Craik Sustainable Flood Management Pilot** is a partnership project involving support from SBC, SEPA, WWF, SNH, FCS and SEERAD and aims to demonstrate the multifaceted nature of wetlands and riparian habitats. Work being proposed as part of the project includes restoration of the main channels through the recreation of meanders and bank protection measures, the restoration of tributaries and burns, and the creation of riparian woodlands. Although the project is still in its development phase, it is attracting a lot of interest both locally and nationally. A presentation on the project to MSP's and policy makers at the Scottish Parliament on 6th February 2007 was well attended and received.

The indicative strategy components of the **Borders Wetland Vision** (Scotland) and **North East Wetland Feasibility Study** (England) are now complete. Some data problems were experienced with the slope data for the NE Wetland Feasibility Study.

However this has been rectified and we await the final report.

The field verification of the Borders Wetland Vision was undertaken during the summer of 2006 on 31 sites across the Borders on a sample of raised bog, fen and meadow sites. The information from the field surveys was used to help ground truth the indicative wetland strategy and is available from the SBC LBAP website.

CONSULTATIONS

- Scottish Executive's consultation on the Rural Development Programme 2007 – 2013,
- Scottish Natural Heritage's consultation: Making a difference for Scotland's Species - a framework for action,
- Scottish Executive's consultation on the draft Scottish Forestry Strategy 2006,
- SEPA and the Environment Agency's joint Area Advisory Groups consultation on the Draft Solway Tweed Plan of Action Report,
- Scottish Executive's consultation on diffuse water pollution from rural land use,
- Scottish Executive's consultation on proposals for more efficient regulation of the water environment - further GBR's, and
- Scottish Executive's consultation on proposals to amend Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in relation to invasive non-native species.

TWEED RIVERS HERITAGE PROJECT

The project finished at the end of 2006. This £9 million project has achieved far more than it set out to do and has come in on budget. The total underspend was £2144 – this represents 0.00023%. A col-

our review of the project has been produced and this has been well received. This review includes some of the headline statements from the socio-economic impact study carried out by Jura Consultants and these are detailed below. Both publications are available from the office.

The Natural Heritage

Physical outputs include:

- 130 km of river enhanced through fencing and planting
- 1400 hectares of woodland, wetland and moorland brought into management
- 140,000 trees planted
- 80 ponds created
- 36 km of hedgerow created or restored
- Eradication of alien plant species taking place on 300 km of river

Access and Recreation

- Over 1000km of footpath upgraded and 520km created
- 175 km of multi-use path upgraded and 207 km created
- 170km of cycleway created
- 11 different trails created
- 9 bridges built and 9 replaced/restored
- 8 community woodlands established

Built and Cultural Heritage

- 20 different listed structures and scheduled ancient monuments restored, including 3 listed bridges, 2 castles, a viaduct, a folly, an ornamental spring, a sawmill and waterwheel, an old colliery chimney, a number of significant tombstones and a summerhouse incorporating Roman masonry.
- 15 archaeological sites excavated
- 650 hectares of archaeologically sensitive landscape brought under management

Education and Interpretation

Education

- 57 schools involved
- 43 publications produced
- 674 education/ resource packs distributed
- 187 school visits/field trips
- 370 talks and presentations given
- 14,000 people attending talks

Interpretation

- Over 90 interpretation boards installed
- 12 exhibitions and visitors centres enhanced and upgraded
- 20 key heritage sites and viewpoints enhanced
- Over 520,000 leaflets distributed

Economic impact

Funding and leverage

Funding for the project came from over 50 different sources. Some of this money was already committed to be spent in the area. However, well over £5 million was attracted to the area specifically due to this project.

Employment

The business activity generated by such an investment is profound and it is estimated that the equivalent of 40 full time jobs were created as a result of the project.

Even more important is the legacy left by this investment after the lifetime of the project. It is estimated that continued project expenditure and visitor spend will amount to £3.6 million-equivalent to 90 full time jobs.

Tweed Invasives Project

The Tweed Invasives Project has continued to make impressive progress in the control of Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed throughout the Tweed catchment, thanks to the help and support of farmers, landowners and fishing interests throughout the catchment who have spent long, hard hours spraying invasives. The co-ordinated, catchment scale approach to

controlling invasive species pioneered by the Tweed Invasives Project is now widely viewed as the blueprint for invasives species control and is attracting attention from DEFRA, the Scottish Executive and the Countryside Council for Wales as a means of helping to inform future policy direction on invasive species and their control. The need to control invasive species is climbing ever higher on the agricultural and environment agenda, as witnessed by the inclusion of invasives control within the Cross Compliance Measures for claiming agricultural grant and the recent government review on non-native species policy.

Last year's late spring meant a late start to the control season for Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed. However, once it started it was all hands to the knapsack sprayer pumps, as the Hogweed and Knotweed started to grow with a vengeance! The late spring had the effect of shortening the amount of time available for controlling Giant Hogweed before it started to flower and, although there were significantly fewer large Giant Hogweed plants around this year (as a result of previous years work), it seemed that some people still had problems getting round to carrying out their control work. As a result, flowering plants grew that then had to be cut down and sprayed to prevent seeds being produced. This said, the vast majority of people still managed to carry out the necessary control work or contributed to getting contractors in to do the work.

This hard won success has been noticed, not only by the people who live and work on Tweed, but also at a national level, with the Project being used as a best practice example by the Scottish Executive, Countryside Council for Wales and DEFRA. We are also providing advice and support to numerous projects around the UK, including the Spey, Tay and Sol-

way, Lothians, Tyneside, as well as the Usk and Snowdonia National Park down in Wales.

Tweed Community Wildlife Officer

Diane Bennett continues to service the Osprey Viewing Centres at both Kailzie Gardens and Glentress, near Peebles. She recruited and trained up a large number of volunteers to help run the two centres and continues to facilitate visits to the centre by those groups who otherwise would find it difficult. Diane has also helped recruit volunteers for the Salmon Viewing Centre at Philiphaugh.

Both these attractions have been popular and have attracted the attention of the media. Two TV crews visited to film footage of both Salmon and Ospreys for national nature documentaries.

Wider Networking

Tweed Forum continues to be involved in a wide range of groups, including the Leader + Decision Making Groups. We continue to have representation on the Flood Liaison Advisory Group, LBAP partnerships in the Scottish Borders and Northumberland, the New Ways Working Countryside Theme Team and the Catchment Sensitive Farming Steering Group.

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

- GB Non Natives Programme Board
- New Ways Awards
- CIWEM Conference on Integrated Catchment Management
- Opening of Cessford Castle
- The Border Union Show
- Opening of Dryhope Tower
- Seminar on Sustainable Flood Management at the Scottish Parliament
- SE's Flooding Issues Advisory Committee
- Upper Teviotdale and Borthwick Val-

ley Community Council

- Lead a site visit and discussion of the Habitat Enhancement work at Hyndlee Burn for members of the Royal Scottish Forestry Society. The day involved discussions centred on using soft engineering techniques to improve in-stream habitat.
- Presentation to the RSFS Annual meeting regarding the WFD.
- BRISC Conference and AGM
- GB Non Natives Stakeholder Forum
- Tweed Angling Fair
- Philiphaugh Salmon Safari
- Invasives Conference, Eden Centre-Greta Crested Newt training day

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 continue to service the Tweed Area Advisory group in conjunction with SEPA and EA as part of their commitment to River Basin Planning.
- 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 deliver the fifth 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.

- The Forum, as one of the most active bodies in the nature based tourism field to date, will continue to play an important role in promoting and developing this growing area.

Company Management

Board of Directors and Executive Committee

The Directors were:

- Bob Kay (Chairman)
- Jonathan Mullard (Secretary) - Northumberland National Park (from Jan 07)
- Willie McGhee - Borders Forest Trust
- Chris Walton - National Farmers Union
- Chris Badenoch
- Ian Currie

In addition to the Board, the following made up the membership of the Executive Committee:

- John Hogger - Environment Agency
- Ian Lindley - Scottish Borders Council
- Andrew Panter - SNH
- Nick Yonge - RTC/Tweed Foundation
- Allan Virtue - SEPA
- John Elliot - Scottish Borders Council
- Jeremy Thompson (Secretary) – Forestry Commission Scotland (until Jan 07)
- Simon Henderson (from Jan 07)
- Gregor Caldwell (from Jan 07)

Both Ian Currie and Chris Walton indicated that they would like to retire. Jeremy Thompson has moved jobs within the Forestry commission and has had to relinquish his secretarial role. Jonathan Mullard has kindly agreed to take over this duty in the short term. Jeremy's commitment to the Forum over the years has been significant as he was one of the champions

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
Melody Barton - Finance Officer
Sarah Currie - CMP Officer
Tim Barratt - Tweed Invasives Officer
Diane Bennett - Tweed Community Wildlife Officer
Alastair Laverty – Till Restoration Project Officer

Finance

The accounts for 2006/07 are set out in the Appendix. Naturally, the cessation of the Tweed Rivers Heritage Project at the end of December means that total turnover is less compared to last year. However, the Forum itself is now carrying much more project work itself and this is reflected in the amount of restricted funds, dedicated to specific projects that are being held. The general fund has also increased in line with goal of having a years turnover in reserve as matter of good fiscal practice and management of risk.

We continue to rely on our members for the 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:

Heritage Lottery Fund
Scottish Natural Heritage
Northumbrian Water
Scottish Environmental Protection Agency
Scottish Borders Council

Environment Agency
Natural England
Northumberland Wildlife Trust
Northumberland National Park Authority
Berwick upon Tweed Borough Council
Forestry Commission Scotland
River Tweed Commissioners
Tweed Foundation
Leader + (Scottish Borders and North Northumberland)
Sir James Knott Trust

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
Forest Enterprise
Natural England
Northumberland County Council
Northumberland National Park Authority
Northumbrian Water
Northumbrian Wildlife Trust
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
River Tweed Commissioners
Scottish Agricultural Colleges
Scottish Borders Council
Scottish Borders Rural Partnership
Scottish Enterprise Borders
Scottish Borders Tourist Board
Scottish Environment Protection Agency
Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Division
Scottish Rural Property & Business Association
Scottish National Farmers Union
Scottish Natural Heritage
Southern Uplands Partnership
Scottish Water
Tweed Foundation