



tweed matters

the newsletter of tweed forum



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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

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 this bottleneck. This has been won on a number of fronts. First, we have had to 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.

Catchment Management Planning

It is now over two years since the Tweed Catchment Management Plan was published. Due to the fact that a significant range and number of people were involved in the public consultation stage of the planning process, it was felt that it was time to feedback what had been achieved since its publication in 2003.

Thus an easily digestible review was published which charts the progress on actions and targets identified within the Tweed CMP. The simple use of language and limited jargon, as well as the beautiful pictures of the Tweed has been well received by the general public. The review document sets out future priorities under each of the strategic aims and provides a benchmark from which future work, undertaken as part of the Tweed CMP, can be assessed. Copies of the Tweed Catchment Management Plan Review can be obtained from Tweed Forum.



The restructuring and review of the Tweed CMP in 2005 has proved to be an invaluable exercise for Tweed Forum. All the priority targets and actions highlighted are being addressed by three working groups and recent progress is detailed here.

Water Resources Group

This group brings together a plethora of issues but the overriding priority, highlighted at the inaugural meeting in March, was how to manage and resolve the disparities in the way water abstractions are regulated on either side of the border.

Whilst regulating abstractions has been de rigueur in England for some time now, this is a totally new regime for Scotland, and it is clear that the differences in the two systems have the potential to cause problems. The main issue is how to deal with those farm units that straddle the border and which require two licenses, with

two quite different charging schemes. It is essential that the two agencies work together; not just in dovetailing the regulatory regimes, but also in sharing information regarding water resources as integrated catchment management is impossible without knowing the complete picture. The differing legal frameworks make this far from easy but the Forum is continuing to press for a working solution.

Riverworks Group

The streamlined riverworks application procedure devised by the Riverworks Group was again trialled on Tweed for the 2005 season and proved to be useful for both the applicants and the statutory agencies.

The CAR for engineering works which came into force in Scotland on 1st April 2006 is in a transitional period until 31st December 2006. The procedure that was trialled on Tweed for the past three years has gone a long way in preparing both applicants and the statutory agencies for the new regulatory regime. A list of qualified and experienced river geomorphologists has been compiled so that applicants could seek appropriate professional advice in order to inform the design brief and promote best practice.

The riverworks fieldtrip for SRPBA members in September 2005 was very well received and went a long way towards raising awareness of the complex issues of riverworks on Tweed. The day involved a morning of talks given by representatives from SEPA, River Tweed Commissioners and Tweed Forum. Three sites were visited in the afternoon to illustrate some of the issues and concerns and highlight best practice. The Forum hosted a similar event with the EA on the Till in July 2006 to highlight the process and some of the issues in England.

The Riverworks Group continues to be a useful arena to debate individual proposals on the river as well as adapting to the changing policy environment. This was enhanced recently with the Scottish Borders Council bringing their flood alleviation proposals and roads and bridges programme of works to the table for debate. Such an approach provides the opportunity for the statutory agencies to input and influence these plans and proposals before a formal application is submitted. This means conflicts or breaches of environmental legislation can be resolved before implementation and represents a far more open and progressive way of working than a few years ago.

Wetlands and Riparian Habitats Group

This was an area highlighted as a major priority by many of the Forum members and much work has been done in the past year to demonstrate the benefits of wetlands: biodiversity, flood attenuation, buffering against droughts, diffuse pollution control and carbon sequestration are all encompassed in this field.

At the policy level the Forum has been lobbying for wetlands to be acknowledged as a major opportunity and priority to achieve on a multitude of strategic fronts. In particular, the Forum has made representations to the Executive for wetlands to be supported and encouraged under the agri-environment and land management contract schemes.



On the project level, a number of initiatives are being taken forward. These include the **Borders Wetland Vision**: led by Scottish Borders Council and the Scottish Borders LBAP Wetland Habitat Working Group, the project aims to develop a wetland vision for the Scottish Borders to guide future conservation of multi-benefit wetlands at the landscape scale. The Environment Agency is carrying out a similar exercise in the Till as part of the **North East Wetland Feasibility Study**. Together, these two studies provide a genuine catchment wide 'vision' for the Tweed. The outcomes from these two projects will provide an essential strategic document to inform wetland restoration work in the future.

In the short term, the Forum has developed, and successfully obtained funding for, two wetland initiative projects: one in the Scottish Borders and the other in the Till catchment. On the Scottish side, the project builds on FWAG's extremely successful 'Ponds for Biodiversity' project which ran from 2003-2006 (as part of the Tweed Rivers heritage Project). The overall aim of the **Tweed Wetland Initiative** is to illustrate the multi-functional role that wetlands play specifically in reducing diffuse pollution. The wetlands are therefore being targeted in the lower catchment where arable farming dominates and where nutrient inputs are highest. The interest from farmers so far has been very encouraging.



In England, the Forum applied to Leader + for monies to support a similar scheme. However, at the same time it was also apparent that the EA were developing a major floodplain restoration project and for this reason the two projects were merged to form the **Till Wetland Restoration Project**. The project is based around the premise that the future maintenance of flood banks by the EA is not assured and that the HLS Stewardship rates in the River Till are such that there is a real incentive to reconnect the river with the flood plain and create a mosaic of wetland habitats. The project is led by the Forum in partnership with the EA, FWAG, Natural England and Northumberland Wildlife Trust. The Forum is in the process of recruiting a dedicated project officer to take the project forward over the next two years.



The Till Floodplain

Tweed Rivers Heritage Project

Seven years since it began, this major initiative is now in the home strait with less than 6 months to go. The majority of projects are complete but a selection of highlights since the last newsletter follows.

The Natural Heritage

This past year has seen the end of the initial three year phase of the **Tweed Invasives Project** and the achievement of a funding package for a further three year phase.

This project is rapidly becoming recognised as the blue print for invasives control in the UK. At the end of May the Tweed Invasives Project was invited down to the London Wetland Centre to give a talk at the annual Invasives Group Conference. The presentation was very well received and was regarded as one of the few invasive control success stories in Europe. The Invasives Project has also been working with the Scottish Executive to produce a best practice guide for invasives control, using the Tweed example as a framework for the increasing number of catchments around the UK who are contemplating implementing long term control programmes.

Along side this, the Project has continued on at the coalface of invasives control and is now well into its fourth season. The general consensus from ghillies and landowners is that the river is looking pretty clear of flowering Giant Hogweed plants, which can only be good news for future years control efforts. Even after four years we are still finding new areas of infestation of Giant Hogweed and especially Japanese Knotweed, most commonly some distance away from the riparian zone and nearly without exception, these infestations have been caused by using river gravel contaminated with seeds or root sections.



Not always on the river – Hogweed on a road verge

This year has also seen the continuation of the pilot study into Himalayan Balsam control on the Till system. The work continues to be extremely hard, laborious and expensive. However it is starting to show dividends as the areas that were virtually nothing but Balsam are showing strong signs of regeneration to native flora.

The Tweed Foundation has completed their programme of **Riparian Habitat Improvements**. This project began in Phase 1 and has been one of the biggest in terms of scale and geographic coverage. There is barely a tributary of the Tweed that hasn't been touched in some way by the work of the Foundation. Whilst their primary motive is enhancement of salmonids, the habitat work has fundamental benefits for a wide range of important species.



New willow revetments at Halltree Farm

The principle prescription is the fencing off of the burn area. This allows for the burns, damaged by decades of overgrazing, to recover naturally. Very unstable channels require a little more help as shown in the photograph below. Here the fence required protection from an actively eroding bank and this has been addressed through willow spiling which offers a softer alternative to rock revetments.

The **Borders Wood Pasture** project has featured in the newsletter before, but the last year has seen a massive expansion in the number sites and tree boxes in the upland landscape. Those who travel up the Yarrow valley in particular can see the bespoke tree shelters, particularly around St Mary's Loch. In a few decades time the hill should look a little more like this area of existing remnant of wood pasture in the upper Tweed valley (see below).



Wood pasture in upper Tweed.

Forestry Commission formally opened their **Hyndlee Burn Improvements Project**. This important site is adjacent to SSSI/SAC woodland and much has been done to enhance this catchment. After an initial survey and community consultation, work was carried out and a biodiversity, access and interpretation plan was drawn up. Over the last few years this has seen the expansion of native woodland; the creation of wetlands; in streams works to improve the morphology of the burn to help recovery from the effects of conifer shading and the creation and enhancement of the footpath network.



The opening of Hyndlee Burn Enhancement Project

Access and Recreation

The Forestry Commission upgraded the access infrastructure at **Wooler Common**. This important site, within close proximity of the town of Wooler, offers peaceful and scenic walking facilities, particularly for the less able.

The walk is focused around a series of ponds and now the paths have been upgraded to allow easy access for all. Interpretation has also been installed highlighting the local flora and fauna and the site is now proving very popular with local people. The new car park also offers an excellent launch point to explore the Cheviot section

of St Cuthbert's Way and the many hillforts in the area.



The pond at Wooler Common

Scottish Borders Paths have completed the final leg of the **Borders Abbey Way**. This project involved the creation of a dedicated path from Dryburgh Abbey to Kelso. The entire route takes in the four great ruined Abbeys in Kelso, Jedburgh, Melrose and Dryburgh and is 65 miles in length. Naturally, this last section is crucial, as it makes the whole route circular and takes in most of the major towns of the Borders. A number of other sites restored under the Tweed Rivers Heritage Project can be viewed along this section of the route such as Rhymer's Stone, Temple of the Muses and Crystal Well.



Dryburgh Abbey

Built and Cultural Heritage

One of the most recent milestones has been the completion of the consolidation works at Cessford Castle.

This £300,000 project achieved far more than was envisaged and the sympathetic conservation works are seen as a model of best practice. Roxburghe Estates, who led the project, held an event that appropriately marked the opening of this near impregnable fortress with a bang. The Duke of Roxburghe introduced the mortar and gave the signal for a cannon to be fired



The opening of Cessford Castle

Education & Interpretation

The **Tweed Rivers Interpretation Project** has achieved a flurry of milestones recently.

This £400,000 scheme aims to highlight and tell the story of the rich natural, built and cultural heritage associated with the Tweed and its tributaries. The latest sites to be unveiled included the sculptural installation inspired by Hutton's Unconformity. James Hutton was a Scottish geologist whose revolutionary ideas shaped the way we understand the Earth. On a river cliff at Jedburgh he noticed that vertical and horizontal sedimentary layers lay on top of each other and surmised that huge forces and long periods of time were involved to achieve this. His book *The Theory of the Earth*, published in 1795, was as radical as Darwin as it challenged the Old Testament story of creation. Max Nowell has brought to life the rock formation that gave Hutton the clues he needed for his theories. A striking landmark, it marks the key role Jedburgh played in Hutton's work. The sculpture was unveiled by Aubrey Manning, Emeritus Professor of Natural History at Edinburgh University.



Max Nowell's artistic interpretation of Hutton's unconformity

A number of interpretative works have been carried out at St Mary's Loch. These include Henderland Graveyard, Oxcleuch and the sculptural installation at Bourhope. This artwork was designed in consultation

with the local community by Matt Baker. It takes the form of a series of floating bronze discs that project out from a promontory into St Mary's Loch and is inspired by many different threads of local natural, cultural and social history. The site is accessible on the Southern Upland Way from Tibbie Shiels.



Matt Baker's sculptural inspiration at St Mary's Loch



Other recent works have included the completion of the landscaping, interpretation and access works at Wallace Monument; the landscaping of the viewpoint at Stow Bridge and finally the installation of information boards and a spiral staircase at Dryhope. This latter addition to the major consolidation project carried out last year, has greatly increased the visitor experience. The top tower gives panoramic views over St Mary's Loch and the Yarrow valley.



The view of the Yarrow valley from Dryhope Tower

The Philiphaugh Fish Viewing Project opened last September and despite problems with the severe October floods damaging some of the underwater cameras, has proved a popular attraction. However, it wasn't only water that was moving the cameras. The night camera was repeatedly being knocked over, even in low water conditions. Recorded footage eventually captured evidence that it was an otter taking a swipe at the camera that was the problem! An artificial otter holt has been built with an infra red camera inside and it is hoped that a better view of this secretive animal will be soon possible.



Watching live images of fish in the Ettrick at Philiphaugh

Community Wildlife Officer

The New Year saw the start of the Tweed Forum's newest member of staff, Diane Bennett, who has come to us from the Wirral, where she worked as a countryside ranger.

Diane's role will be to work in close partnership with our local Forestry Commission Scotland team, RSPB, local communities and other organisations and groups to support the development of key nature based tourism projects and develop and encourage local public access and use of the new and existing facilities. Key foci within this remit will be the Tweed Valley Osprey Centres at Kailzie gardens and Glentress during the summer months, and the Philiphaugh Salmon Viewing Centre just outside Selkirk in the autumn.

In just a few short months Diane has made a tremendous start and has become a favourite with the fifty or so local volunteers at the two Osprey Centres who provide information and interpretation for record numbers of visitors to the two Centres; the success of the Osprey Centres goes to show that what is good for the local environment can also be good for the local economy. Work is now underway to join Wild Scotland with a view to developing joint marketing initiatives with other local nature based tourism attractions in the area to establish a robust network of quality wildlife viewing opportunities across the Borders.



Tweed Water Vole Initiative

Identified as a priority UK species in both the Tweed Catchment Management Plan and the Scottish Borders Rivers and Burns Habitat Action Plan, the status of water voles in the Tweed catchment is not well known with only 13 sightings over the past 20 years!

The LBAP Partnership has successfully obtained funding from the Biodiversity Action Grants Scheme (BAGS) for a two year project to find out whether there are populations of water voles in specific suitable areas of the Tweed catchment. The results from the survey will then be used to enthuse and educate local wildlife community groups and wildlife rangers in small mammal ecology. In a wider context, it is hoped to be able to use the survey results to inform future habitat work within the Tweed catchment to benefit water vole populations.

The project is being managed by Tweed Forum in partnership with SBC LBAP Partnership, SNH, FCS, SBBRC, SEPA and FWAG.

Tweed Aerial Survey

The work over the past year by Tweed Forum staff to make the Tweed Aerial Survey a reality has finally paid off.

An initial scoping and feasibility assessment of the need for an aerial survey on Tweed was strongly supported by members. This commitment, together with a substantial contribution of £75,000 from SBC, provided the basis for a successful, cross border grant application to SBC and North Northumberland Leader+ Programmes.

This £159,500 project aims to commission the co-operative procurement of comprehensive aerial survey coverage and habitat type mapping of the Tweed catchment and to make this information available to all organisations, agencies, communities and schools

within the catchment on both sides of the border. Local community groups, schools and libraries will be able to access the information via a web-based system which will be user and password protected.

The project is being managed by Scottish Borders Council, working in partnership with a steering group of Tweed Forum members. Further information can be obtained from Tweed Forum.

Borders Union Show 2006

The Forum once again had a stand in the Countryside tent at the Borders Union Show in Kelso along with many of our members.

The Countryside tent continues to grow in popularity amongst those visiting the show with many innovative and exciting activities for children and adults alike. This year, Tweed Forum and Bridging the Borders embarked on making fish hats which the children could colour in and wear on their heads. This proved to be very popular and provided a good opportunity to learn all about the fish in the Tweed and the differences between salmon and trout.



For adults, the 'Tweed Eye in the Sky' competition offered the opportunity to identify various stretches of the Tweed from photographs taken from the air and win a magnum of champagne. The winner was Mr H Wallace from Bonnybridge who was delighted with his prize.

Consultations

The Forum continues to notify members of relevant consultations and their deadlines, as well as providing an initial draft response for consideration by members.

This remains a popular service to the members. Tweed Forum submitted responses to the following consultations:-

- Forestry Commission Scotland's consultation Review of the Scottish Forestry Strategy
- Scottish Executive's consultation on Diffuse Water Pollution from Rural land Use
- SEPA's consultation on Water Environment (Controlled Activities) Fees and Charges (Scotland) Scheme 2006
- Scottish Borders Council's consultation on the Draft Supplementary Planning Guidance for Biodiversity
- Scottish Natural Heritage's consultation Making a difference for Scotland's Species - a framework for action
- Scottish Executives consultation on the Rural Development Programme 2007 – 2013
- Scottish Executives consultation on the draft Scottish Forestry Strategy 2006
- Northumberland County Council's consultation on Options for Site Specific Allocations

The Water Framework Directive (WFD)

As already indicated Tweed Forum will be playing a fundamental role in the delivery of the Water Framework Directive at two levels.

Firstly, by performing the Area Advisory Group role as part of the river basin planning process - i.e. engaging stakeholders in discussing and drawing up the agenda and targets for action in the cross border district; and secondly, in the facilitation of projects that help restore degraded stretches in order to achieve 'good ecological status'; the ultimate goal and measure of success.

Fortunately, the Forum will have to change little in order to accommodate these demands as this exactly what we have been doing for well over a decade now. We are well placed to hit the ground running.