

## Chairman's Report

Our partnership of economic regeneration and conservation management organisations has continued to work effectively toward meeting its strategic aspirations over the year. There has been welcome stability on the Management Group and among staff.

There have been some notable achievements this year and the common theme between them is the long-term commitment that is essential if the work we do is to realise its full range of social, economic and biodiversity benefits. It hardly seems 5 years since practical completion was achieved on our two Millennium Forest for Scotland grants. This milestone had major consequences for allocation of staff resources to review and re-write the large number of woodland management plans involved. The exercise has served to bring into sharp focus not only the progress that the individual sites had made toward enhancing the landscape and developing green havens for wildlife and recreation, but also the scale of future investment necessary to manage the resource in the future.



Riparian woodland took centre stage in our project sites this year. These remnants of our natural forest punch above their weight in terms of their contribution to landscape character and species conservation. It is very pleasing to see habitat of this quality getting the attention it deserves and its long-term future being made more secure. Future generations will reap the rewards.

Our training and work experience programme for long-term unemployed played a vital role in the establishment of young trees and maintenance of an ever lengthening countryside access network. This area of East Ayrshire Woodland's activity really does change lives. It must be remembered that success is measured not only in terms of job outcomes and skills qualifications, important as these are. Household incomes are increased and more money circulates within the local economy contributing to improved opportunities and quality of life for whole communities now and in the future.

Looking ahead I believe that the partnership has identified a number of projects that, given appropriate backing and resources, will begin to make the scale of impact that we feel is necessary to contribute meaningfully to sustainable rural development in Ayrshire. New alliances need to be formed and co-operative working arrangements expanded. This can result in frustratingly extended development timescales but the benefits will undoubtedly be greater and longer lasting.



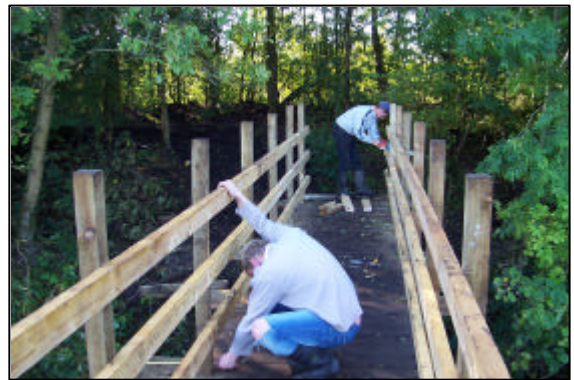
## TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT



A full year of ILM activity was achieved following successful applications under the Objective 2 and 3 ESF programmes in February and September 2005 respectively. This confirmed support through to July 2007 and December 2006 which is effectively the end of the current structural funds programme. A total of 18 full-time equivalent places for the year were available although it should be recognised that the places are only available to individual beneficiaries for a maximum of 44 weeks. Analysis of outcomes for the period April 2005 through to March 2006 is further complicated by the fact that some participants

cross over from 04/05 and recruitment of vacancies is carried out on a rolling basis.

Our client group is drawn from long-term unemployed adults within EA Coalfield SIP communities (now 0-30% most deprived data zones within EA Community Planning partnership). Only beneficiaries eligible for New Deal or Training for Work can be recruited. 90% are males in the 18-24 age bracket with no female applicants referred through Job Centre Plus during the year. Many beneficiaries face multiple barriers to entering the job market such as dependant children, relationship breakdown, substance dependency and/or prison records as well as lack of qualifications and skills. As a consequence a significant proportion fall foul of New Deal terms and conditions in respect of attendance at work in the early weeks and have to be dismissed.



LANTRA and NPTC qualifications lie at the core of our programme. Research and experience suggest that demonstrating competence in particular skills such as herbicide application, chainsaw and brush cutter operation, and strained wire fence erection significantly enhances employment prospects. Even more critical in some respects to increasing self-esteem and aspiration to find work is the independence that securing a driving licence can bring. This option is only offered toward the end of the programme and consequently job outcomes are often delayed. Employers offering positions directly related to our training included K. Imrie, QTS and Land Engineering

	Target	Coalfield ILM	Irvine Valley ILM	Total
No. of ILM places	18	12	6	18
No. of Completers	18	10	4	14
No. of 1 <sup>st</sup> Aid Certificates	-	6	4	10
No. of LANTRA VQ's	45	43	20	63
No. of NPTC VQ's	15	13	10	23
Personal Development	9	6	4	10
No. of People into Work	12	5	4	9

## NATIVE AND AMENITY WOODLAND

It is worth noting that at the beginning of the year East Ayrshire Woodlands had responsibility for managing nearly 450ha over 64 sites. 224ha of this is young woodland under the age of 10 years, most of which involve an extended establishment period due to pressure from public use and abuse, particularly spring fires. This 'woodland estate' incorporates nearly 30km of public access footpaths and tracks, most of which are compacted stone construction but there are also mown green routes. This 'estate' and management responsibilities and obligations that are associated with it have major implications for Project resources.



2005/06 was the year in which the full implications of the Millennium Forest for Scotland projects undertaken between 1996 and 2001 came into sharp focus. A total of 33 management plans covering 47 sites reached the end of their 5 year programme. Under MFST contract conditions all required to be reviewed and a new 5 year programme written. This was a huge undertaking for the Project and no additional resources were made available to assist. Almost 200 working days had to be dedicated to the task. A full audit was completed by MFST in January 2006 and final completion certificates for 1/28 and 2/48 have now been issued. This exercise will require to be repeated in 2010.

No new land reclamation projects progressed during the year. Our ERDF programme of environmental improvements reached a successful conclusion in April 2005. A new bid to Strathclyde European Partnership was formulated on the basis of developing a wood fuel community enterprise centred on Piperhill OCCS. This extensive area of low quality and under used land (+200ha) having previously been approved by Forestry Commission Scotland for woodland establishment under the Woodland Grant Scheme. Our innovative bid for ERDF funding in partnership with Scottish Coal was submitted in August 2005 and successfully passed through the assessment process resulting in an offer of grant in March 2006.

Native riparian woodland projects along the River Lugar, Cessnock Water and River Irvine were implemented during the year. Broombraes is a 20.5ha ancient woodland remnant that links directly with those in Woodroad Park. A new public path has been created from Lugar bridge through to Woodroad Park providing the communities of Logan and Lugar with high quality off road access to Cumnock. The boundary of the woodland was expanded by 2ha through group planting of local provenance stock. A number of small planting schemes on West Overland and Whitehill farms east of the A76 secured the boundaries of remnant ancient and long-established woodland associated with the Cessnock Water and will in time compliment the landscape character of the area. The Burnbank site near Loudoun Kirk includes the



popular Ladyton Loch wetland and a significant section of riverbank. A new short circuit path links with the Irvine Valley Trails network and native tree planting extends the narrow semi-natural area associated with former mineral railway onto previously mined and landfilled pasture.



An exciting project to restore positive management practice to the native and policy woodland complex associated with Glenlogan House in Sorn progressed to SFGS application stage. Survey work undertaken on behalf of the owner and EAC's Outdoor Access Unit covered 26.3ha and highlighted the imminent risk of uncontrolled grazing by livestock on adjacent land.

A woodland condition survey covering the woodland complex on Goldenberry Hill, Hunterston, was also completed during the year. We have now been asked to assess additional areas on Campbelton Hill and the policy woodland at Hunterston House. All woodlands have suffered a prolonged period of neglect and under investment. Goldenberry and Campbelton are subject to uncontrolled grazing although natural regeneration can be found outwith the original boundaries. These woodlands are important in the coastal landscape and are now subject to regular windthrow incidents.



Further woodland survey and design work has been undertaken at South Lodge, Barrhill, Whitehill Farm, Skares and South Auchemmade, Auchentibber amongst others..

Progress with the Pinclanty Forest Learning Trail is highlighted later in the report but it is clearly worth recognising that substantial infrastructure work has been completed during the year. 2,200m of forest tracks have been constructed to establish access to, and a circuit within the 170ha upland forest. It is suitable for equestrian and cycling use as well as by walkers. Wetland habitat has been enhanced through the formation of two significant lochans and small areas of native trees and shrubs have been planted to add diversity to the woodland structure and contribute to the forests overall biodiversity value.





<b>Output</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Achievement</b>
No. of Woodland Surveys	4	4
No. of Woodland Proposals	8	8
Ha. of Land Reclaimed	45.0*	-
Ha. of native woodland Planted	25.0	20.2
Ha. of woodland into management	15.0	30.9
No. of MFST Man. Plans	7	30
Ha of Land Managed	390.4	446.6
Ha. of wetland habitat	4.0	3.1
M. of public access	3500	3610
M. of disability access	1000	1300
No. 'Sense of Place' projects	1	2

\* Piperhill Wood Energy Project did not progress to site works during 2005/06



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT and SUPPORT

Consultation with neighbours in relation to proposals for woodland creation projects is now initiated through a simple questionnaire issued in co-operation with the landowner. This helps identify those with greatest interest and to highlight issues of concern that need to be addressed early in the design stages. Potential new projects are brought to the attention of partners through the Management Group as a mechanism for assessing suitability as an East Ayrshire Woodlands project and enabling any conflicts of interest to be aired. More intensive engagement may be required to ensure that we meet our strategic objectives and a range of complementary approaches are regularly employed.

### Community Facilitation



An unsuccessful bid through the Rural Challenge Fund to expand the scale and operational area of the approach piloted with Reforesting Scotland in 04/05, and reduced support from the Community Regeneration Fund, forced us to reduce the number of part-time facilitators from 2 to 1. Project staff continue to play an active role in this area.

Discussions with interested people in Drongan and West Kilbride have begun the process of establishing new Community Woodland Groups.

Stewarton Woodland Action Trust (SWAT) has now constituted itself as a company limited by guarantee and is seeking charitable status. A study into countryside access around the town was commissioned by SWAT and was completed by Vyv Wood-Gee on behalf of Scottish Woodlands during the year. A networking event between SWAT and Dunlop MWNP was arranged. New information panels for Dunlop were installed. Muirkirk Enterprise worked with us to create 3 totem poles for the village and

at the start of the River Ayr Way at Glenbuck Loch. The substantial poles were donated by Dumfries House Estate and carved by an Ayrshire artist to community inspired designs. Sorn CC initiated a project between two local artists and the primary school to engender stronger links with Sornbank Plantation Community Woodland. Monumental rocks donated by the local quarry were installed at two path entrances and a 15' foxglove sculpture in fibreglass created. Interpretation panels at the car park were designed by the community. In Bellsbank a metal handrail was installed on footsteps within the amenity woodland to assist the elderly and less able to access the popular short walk. Drongan Health Project became an active partner in the development of Hannahston Community Wood. A trim trail and timber play equipment donated by Hope Homes and supported by EAC Outdoor Access has been installed around the site to encourage recreational use.

The EASY Project also engaged with Hannahston during the year. A full day of tree planting and installation of two



'perch' style seats with project staff was arranged and numerous 'Nature Watch' panels were installed through the Outdoor Access team.

### CSV Give & Take Project



Learning disability groups from Hurlford and Riverside Centres again have been active in native tree propagation at Sorn Community Nursery. A major project during the year was the development of a sensory garden designed as part of an Action Earth Award at the rear of the Hurlford Day Centre. Funding and materials were raised by the group and many volunteer hours put in over the months. Wild flower seed was collected and woven willow hoops produced for Treefest 2005.



### Volunteering

Community Woodland Groups held an average of 3 meetings each and the more active hosted action days in the woods or to raise funds. Most groups have 6-10 active members and serve a much wider community of interest.

5 pupils from Doon Academy, Cumnock Academy and Auchinleck Academy were supported for week long work experience placements during the year. Activities included work shadow, hazel and willow coppice management, bird box and feeder building, beat up survey and tree shelter maintenance.

A Dynamic Marketing student worked with the Project for a two week period with the primary task of developing an information pack for use by school careers guidance staff in accurately promoting the nature of work placement opportunities.

Geoff Forrest and Steve Robertson continued the hazel coppice work that they started in 04/05 at Dalhanna Wood in Glen Afton. 'Fedges' were built and strengthened to protect cut stools from browsing by deer. Good growth of young shoots has been achieved.

Arrangements were made with 3 local people to undertake pest control on sites where browsing damage was significant, access is good and residential areas distant. This had only limited impact over the year and this has largely been put down to dense cover available as a consequence of vigorous ground vegetation. No deer were shot at Piperhill due to the difficulty stalkers found in accessing the site without detection. Access tracks are on the west side and the forest to the south provides excellent cover.

<b>Output</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Achievement</b>
No. Community Wood Groups	2	2 (+ 8)
No. Community meetings	30	30
No. community events	16	14
No. Volunteer Days	157	240
No. of CWGp Training Days	16	18

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION and AWARENESS RAISING

### Environmental Education

#### Schools & Youth Groups :



The Project undertook guided walks and illustrated talks for Yipworld.com, Muirkirk, Newmilns and Stewarton Primary Schools. In addition we worked closely with Ayrshire & Arran Woodland Partnership on its Treasured Trees initiative putting together resource boxes for the 4 Ayrshire Schools that won the creative writing competition.

In partnership with the Ayrshire Forest Cluster Group for FEI we put together a successful bid for funds to develop a 'Learning Trail' in Pinclanty Forest. Waymarker posts, hardwood benches and information

panels have been installed on site, a field studies resource bag created and a substantial section of dyke rebuilt. Working with teaching professionals we are now refining worksheet and activity options that fit with the 5-14 curriculum. Part of this exercise will involve risk and welfare assessments. Staff from Dolphin House are keen to develop opportunities for woodsman skills activities such as shelter building, camp fire construction, green wood working, etc. A field study resource pack has been created for use on site.



#### Students and Other Groups :

The project was asked to deliver a guest lecture on reclamation of vacant and derelict land to forestry and conservation end use to Auchincruive students. A visit was hosted for a small group at Sornbank Plantation to look at countryside access issues and working with communities.

A delegation from European Union countries, mainly new members looking at management of structural funds, was hosted during the summer. They were particularly interested in projects like ours that link Social and Development Funds and have strong environmental regeneration objectives.

4 walking festivals in North and East Ayrshire provided opportunities to engage with adults and families. Tree identification and silviculture were explored as well as more general conservation topics on these distance forced marches.

A simple common tree identification booklet was prepared inhouse for use by ILM trainees when on site and has proved useful with in the FEI framework.

### Awareness Raising

The project attended the Ayr County Show, Drumlanrigg ‘Take a Walk on the Wild Side’, Dunlop Country Fair and Tree in the Park 2005.

A new East Ayrshire Woodlands web site was created during the year helping to establish a much stronger and more independent project identity. Individual site information is being added as time and resources allow and we can now manage the site directly in order to update content and advertise events etc.



Information/interpretation boards for a number of key demonstration sites were progressed during the year. Delays have been experienced in getting feedback from communities on content and from manufacturers in reproducing our artwork accurately. Whitehill Colliery Woodland outlines the reclamation strategy involved and a potted history of mining and brick production on the site. Hannahston concentrates less on the industrial side and more on recreation and wildlife. Auchlin and Burnbank/Ladyton whilst largely developed for wildlife habitat have mining histories that are important to local communities.

<b>Output</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Achievement</b>
No. Demonstration Sites	4	4
No. FEI events	3	5
No. Env Ed Events	9	9
No. Illustrated talks	9	10
No. Interpretative Signs	4	15
No. Education Packs	2	3 (+4)*
No. Local Festivals attended	7	4**

\* Bracketed figure illustrates additional Tree Trunk resource boxes for ‘Treasured Trees’.

\*\* Excludes walking festivals counted under environmental education events.

## FOREST BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



East Ayrshire Woodlands continues to operate a policy of supporting local contractors where we need to sub-contract work. Our objective is to sustain and expand employment in the countryside. We seek to maximise our limited but significant contribution within the local economy and ultimately enhance opportunities for ILM beneficiaries to secure sustainable employment in the future.

During the year Lantra and NPTC training courses were again sourced through Bill McKechnie and cultivation contracts were placed with Craig Cochrane and Jim Shankland. Boundary fencing was contracted through individual farmers and land managers. Establishment work involved Stuart Douglas, George Helon, Neil Dyson and SWT work teams. Access creation contracts were awarded to Ronald Campbell, Jim Shankland and Craig Cochrane. Approximately 96 contractor weeks were undertaken during the year.

We have attempted to stimulate demand for local hardwoods by specifying this in orders for site furniture such as benches, way markers and threshold signs which we are now able to source through Ayrshire Hardwoods. We are looking to expand this to include stakes for tree shelters and simple structures in the future. Efforts to become active in promoting short rotation biomass coppice and wood fuel moved forward with the successful application for ERDF grant toward the Piperhill Wood Fuel Project. Uncertainty over the timetable and commitment of our private sector partner, Scottish Coal, remains an issue. We hope also to seek opportunities to work with Ayrshire & Arran Woodland Partnership and the SW Scotland Energy Agency to develop the supply chain for domestic wood fired heating systems. Resource constraints are a limiting factor in taking this area of our activity forward.



Output	Target	Achievement
No of Contractor days	342	482
No of Market Development Initiatives	1	0

## STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

Project staff attempt to engage as far as possible with local and national initiatives that work toward similar objectives. During the year we engaged with the Southern Upland Partnership and South Scotland Forest Cluster to explore the potential for increasing active management of small farm woods. An outline proposal for a 3 year project to stimulate interest and establish a number of farm based wood heating systems and supply chains has been developed but appropriate funding has yet to be identified. We contributed to the Ayrshire & Arran Woodland Partnership study on the potential contribution of woodlands and forest industries to local rural economic development and Forestry Commission Scotland’s habitat network for south west Scotland. The Project became a networking member of Greenspace Scotland during the year. Staff were also elected into key posts on the Ayrshire Forest Education Cluster Group.



We have actively participated in Outdoor Access Forums for East and North Ayrshire and are part of the wider contact group for South Ayrshire. We continue our involvement on the habitat leaders group of the Ayrshire LBAP, and on the steering groups of the Coalfield Environment Initiative and Ayrshire and Arran Woodland Partnership. In relation to Community Planning Partnerships our main engagement is on the Environment Group for East Ayrshire although we did make a presentation to North Ayrshire’s thematic group.

Towards the end of the year we were drawn in to the working group investigating the potential for developing a biosphere reserve in southern Ayrshire and Galloway.

East Ayrshire Woodlands continues to support the work of the Ayrshire Red Squirrel Group.

Output	Target	Achievement
No. of Networking Groups	10	13
% 'age of Project Manager	20	20
% 'age of Asst. Project Manager	6	5
% 'age of Community Officer	10	12
% 'age of Forester	5	3



## INCOME & EXPENDITURE

	<b>Budget</b>	<b>05/06</b>	<b>04/05</b>
Staff Costs	211,997	203,546	171,002
Trainee Costs	103,210	108,517	37,422
Training Costs	24,658	22,575	7,668
Transport Costs	48,472	44,861	40,709
Site Costs	215,079	210,175	351,407
Running Costs	20,357	15,217	27,787
General Costs	2,857	2,389	1,650
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>626,630</b>	<b>607,280</b>	<b>637,645</b>

	<b>Budget</b>	<b>05/06</b>	<b>04/05</b>
ESF/ERDF Grants	139,000	130,365	160,201
EACPP – CRF Grant	87,000	87,000	79,200
Forestry Commission	99,632	99,632	66,591
East Ayrshire Council	87,950	85,150	65,150
Scottish Natural Heritage	65,000	65,000	65,000
Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire	18,000	18,000	21,025
Scottish Coal	-	-	60,000
Millennium Forest for Scotland	5,000	8,261	8,963
Other Grants and Income	125,490	117,137	111,453
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>627,072</b>	<b>610,545</b>	<b>637,583</b>