

Nature Exchange 3

Dübener Heide Naturpark, Germany – 27 August to 3 September 2006

Participants: Chris Stark, Angela Hughes, Jake Paul, Mike Strachan

Objectives of the exchange

The Nature Exchange 3 programme was designed to look mainly at NTFPs, green tourism/ interpretation and forest/ environmental education in Germany to provide new ideas and innovative techniques for dissemination in Scotland.

Programme

Monday 28 August

- Reconstructed building
- Water interpretation trail and water purification plant
- Nursery
- Dübener Heide Naturpark office for local press interview
- Charcoal production
- Beaver dams

Tuesday 29 August

- Local artist and sculptor, Wolfgang Koppé
- Honey production & ostrich farming
- Dübener Heide Naturpark office

Wednesday 30 August

- Community building
- Forest education centre
- Wild boar site

Thursday 31 August

- Mobile education unit
- Felt production
- Nationalpark Sächsische Schweiz
- Reconstructed building

Friday 1 September

- Electricity from cattle slurry
- Herbal 'witch'

Our project aims & objectives

Breadalbane Initiative for Farm Forestry (BIFF) – Chris Stark

The project officer work focuses on the integration between farming and forestry including ways to utilise woodland and how this can be built into farm diversification. This may take the form of non-timber forest products (NTFP), green tourism, access, agri-environment schemes, woodfuel, agroforestry and other ways of utilising woodland resources.

As the Breadalbane Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) covers Highland Perthshire it can be linked in with other projects such as Big Tree Country which focuses on access, education and sustainable tourism. It is beneficial for me to learn and understand more about this range of topics so as to provide options to farmers, land managers and woodland owners.

From a personal perspective, I believe that any form of travel provides educational experiences and fresh insights that are transferable between countries and cultures. Learning how activities in other countries are undertaken, whether rightly or wrongly, assists in developing new approaches that can be implemented at home. Cross-cultural exchanges can be beneficial not only for work experience but also for personal development.

Big Tree Country Heritage & Access project (BTC HAAP) – Angela Hughes

The project focus is on improving access both physically and intellectually to Perthshire Big Tree Country for as many people as possible. This includes improved all abilities path networks, tree conservation, a schools programme and high quality interpretation.

In line with the Big Tree Country Forest Education Initiative (FEI) the project developing educational materials promoting forest education (including plants & animals); traditional craft & wood working; and the forest industry. The Woodland Bus (*photo below*) takes woodlands into schools, acting as a catalyst to getting more children, teachers and families – through 'pester power' – out into forests throughout the area. The bus is also used to deliver training to teachers as part of in-service days and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) sessions.



The local tree warden network and other community groups have been involved in providing stories, pictures and folklore to inform the interpretation strategy for the area to be implemented over the next 2 years.

The new BTC website (www.perthshirebigtreecountry.co.uk) was the forerunner for this and ongoing work ensures that this is accessible to as wide a range of people as possible.

Personally, I enjoy the cultural aspect of visiting other countries and how that might be reflected in things such as interpretation and education. Having spent time living and travelling abroad, I relish the experience of seeing and learning about new places.

Forestry Commission Scotland Woodland Officer – Mike Strachan

The remit for the Woodland Officer in Highland Perthshire includes the provision of grant aid, advice and regulation of Forest activities in this area (covering circa 400,000 hectares of land). Other duties include the daily management of the BIFF project officer and ensuring that public money allocated to the Big Tree Country project is utilised in accordance with agreed contracts.

Finally, there is involvement in partnership working with the promotion of Perthshire, and the associated recreation, conservation and bio-diversity value and potential.

From my own point of view, I was interested in looking at alternative approaches to on site interpretation in an established nature reserve and the integration between sites. I was also interested to find out about local Non timber Forest Products and how these are regulated.

Reforestation Scotland Rural Alternatives Project (RAP) – Jake Paul

The project aims to explore options for rural communities in the sustainable use of Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) in woodlands across Scotland. Ostensibly the project aims to rebuild the connection between people and forests – links which were lost with the historic removal of the majority of Scotland's forests.

The term NTFP implies greater use and productivity of forests than for timber alone. A simple definition used by Reforestation Scotland is: "... a (*tangible?*) product or the use of a product from a wooded area, other than timber or fuelwood"

RAP focuses on four rural community woodland groups in Scotland and aims to increase the awareness, understanding and appreciation of:

- Traditional NTFP knowledge – relating to the identification, harvesting and uses of a wide range of woodland flora, fauna and fungi.
- New NTFP knowledge – relating to sustainable NTFP harvesting and management, developed by those who currently use the products
- Habitats for NTFPs – best habitats and how to maximise management for NTFPs
- Income generation potential of NTFPs – identifying opportunities for revenue generating activities for local communities using available resources and skills and developing new skills through access to targeted training.

Relevance of project sites visited during the exchange

BIFF

Although we visited many interesting sites on our Nature Exchange trip, there seemed to be a gap between learning how the activity was undertaken and learning about the management of such activities. Mushroom collection (an NTFP) can be readily found throughout the Naturpark and is a major attraction for visitors but the management and monitoring for the sustainable collection of mushrooms was unclear for much of the trip. This lack of monitoring is not uncommon, as is the case here in Scotland, which proves that Scotland is in a similar situation to other countries in the EU. It was hoped to find out how the collection and marketing of NTFPs was conducted within the Naturpark but this also seemed to lack a definite strategic plan.

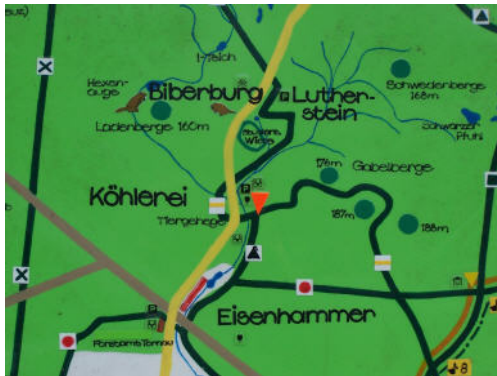
It should be pointed out that staff within the Naturpark are extremely dedicated individuals who are very passionate about their work, but unfortunately lack resources and support. The BIFF project is in the fortunate position of being supported by several Government agencies not only financially but also in the promotion of new ideas. For example, the Naturpark has adopted a logo to appear on products that originate within the park, much the same as the BIFF project and logo. The Naturpark is struggling to get producers to buy in to the idea, whereas the BIFF project is supporting new business through a grant scheme and will stipulate that the logo be attached to the products.

BTC HAAP

Of the sites visited during the trip, some had specific relevance to BTC HAAP such as the mobile education unit in Dresden. This provided a wealth of ideas and experience that could be readily and economically adapted to fulfil and expand the objectives of the Woodland Bus programme.

Several of the sites seemed of little relevance in themselves yet the knowledge and enthusiasm of the people involved provided links that were not necessarily obvious. A talk with Tomas about the Naturpark revealed interesting information about the use of their brand and threw up ideas, problems and possible solutions that were in line with the development of the BTC brand. A separate discussion about the 'Friends of Dubener Heide' also offered useful

insights in to how this might work in BTC. However, there seemed to be little in the way of strategic management of the group and its set up and it was unclear how they really interacted with the Naturpark. The park also works with school and youth groups which reflect similar work taking place in BTC.



On interpretation we saw several examples – much of which was of the ‘home made’ variety (see left) and suited to the cottage industry idea.

In the Naturpark itself there were some good examples of interactive elements that could be extracted and worked in to the forthcoming BTC interpretation strategy.

FCS Woodland Officer – Highland Perthshire

The Dübener Heide Naturpark (DH) covers an area of approximately 100,000 hectares, of which about 75% is forest. The landform is relatively level with no key hills allowing any overall view of the park. The forest is composed primarily of pine (about 70% conifers) with key broadleaf species being beech and hornbeam. Woodland ownership is split between state and a variety of private landowners. The state owned woodlands are generally well managed – regular thinning takes place with small coupes felled as agreed through their forest planning process.

The privately owned woodlands tend to be under-managed with little or no thinning taking place in the early years. This is starting to cause some problems in tree stability. Trees are etiolated and crowns are weak resulting in crown deformation.

Public access through the forests is promoted along designated routes that are ideal for walkers and cyclists but, although well mapped, these are not well sign-posted for visitors to the area. The quality of interpretation varied throughout the park from extensive to minimalistic and from high to low quality. There seemed to be a lack of an holistic and cohesive approach to how the park should be promoted and interpreted. There was also a perceived lack of a partnership approach in developing this.

Reforestation Scotland Rural Alternatives Project (RAP)

It was in the context of learning lessons from a country which has neither lost its forest cover nor its forest culture that attracted Reforestation Scotland to take part in the Nature Exchange programme. It was hoped that this would generate knowledge, ideas, and comparable examples which could influence the activities of RAP and facilitate its progress towards achieving its aims.

It was during some of the travelling around the area that several examples of NTFPs of relevance to RAP came to light. There is a strong tradition of growing and planting fruit trees around the villages in Dübener Heide (plums, apples, nectarines etc). Plenty of fruit trees were in abundance during the visit bordering fields and buildings. Some more recent plantings had placed trees along paths and roads to be within easy access of cyclists and walkers. This had mixed responses as some had complained about wasps becoming a problem when the fruits drop, whilst others benefited.



One of the main seasons for visitors to the Naturpark is autumn when people come to pick mushrooms (see above) and harvest berries. These visitors, described as ‘non-paying guests’, do not seem to raise any sustainability issues for the park. Peter Kaiser’s response to this was that they have plenty of forest, with a low population density to impact on it and they “will never find them all”. This was surprising as there had been an expectation that there would be some sort of strategy for dealing with these activities.

During his presentation Thomas answered questions on all aspects of the park and confirmed there is little control of wild harvesting of NTFPs. Legally people are allowed to collect bulbs and fungi for their own use without any restrictions. If they are not doing it for their own use they need to ask for the permission of the land owner. Theoretically the park is policed by the foresters but they are 1 per 4000 ha and no collection licences are issued.

In terms of sustainability he said it was hard to determine the pressure placed on the park as they do not have an accurate estimate of users. The tourist office has estimated 2 million visitors per annum but restaurant use indicates it may be a lot less. It was interesting to learn from Thomas that the park has a Regional Product Marketing Project which has 13 producers so far branded as producing a major part of their products from the region. These producers include producers of beer, honey, blueberries and meat – so the focus is not on forest products alone. They promote the brand not the products, with a very small budget with of €3000 for the whole of the park. Consequently progress after the initial stage of setting up the brand seems slow despite what is a sound idea in theory.

Examples of sites visited

A variety of sites were visited during the time in Germany. All of the sites had some merit in their overall contribution to the area, but some were of more particular interest to the group than others. Therefore each participant has summarised those that of particular interest to their project/ line of work.

Reconstructed Houses

A variety of reconstructed houses were visited (see photo). These were built using what was perceived to be the methods and materials applicable to the period. This is something that has been done in Perthshire such as the Crannog Centre at Loch Tay and the Crux framed house at Lochearn and as a partner for the promotion of BTC, FCS was interested in this element.

In Perthshire, these have been interpreted and are well visited sites. They form a part of the promoted visitor attractions and as such offer something new and different to both attract and hold people in the area.

In DH this level of promotion was lacking and it was therefore difficult to understand the relevance of the project within the context of the park which is a shame as cultural heritage can be a big attraction for visitors.



Water interpretation trail

The trail was formed to tie in with the water purification plant with the Naturpark and had some interesting games/ activities including pond dipping; question & answer wheels; areas for children to touch/ climb on. The main boards were also designed in an interesting book type layout so people can leaf through the information. Several of these will be passed on to the interpretation consultants handling the BTC strategy as ideas for consideration when developing the project.

There were lessons to be learnt in that the people producing and implementing the project were not the same as those involved in the initial stages. As a result, there were several examples of what was on the ground not realising the anticipated aims and ideas of those involved in the beginning of the project. This was something we are seeking to avoid in BTC by ensuring the project from inception to final production and implementation is handled by the same group.



Finally, it seemed a pity that there had been a lot of time and effort put in to the on the ground interpretation without thought to how the trail as a whole be promoted. Much of the interpretation was not immediately obvious, the trail is not promoted in the Naturpark and there is no orientation between each interpretation 'station' – a real oversight and apparently related to a combination of miscommunication and allocation of funding.

Water purification plant

A very detailed tour was made of a water purification plant. Water for most of the Dubener Heide NaturPark is sourced from springs which run through forested areas. This broadened thoughts as to what could be considered as an NTFP delivering broader benefits from the forest for people.

Nursery and fruit tree orchard

This tree nursery owner was diversifying his business from forest tree seedlings (oak, sycamore, Douglas fir, from select seed sources) to fruit tree seedlings as the tree seedling market had reduced to 80%. He was preparing to plant a large area of mixed fruit orchard to showcase the quality of the trees he was hoping to produce. Presumably he was targeting local markets, as the planting of fruit trees in the area could conceivably generate a demand for these but this was not a question that was asked at the time.

He had planted several fields with blueberries. These are an agricultural crop and are very water intensive - they grow them economically as they have their own water source.

They were an interesting example because wild Blae berries are a popular NTFP to harvest in Scotland. Knowing the economics of producing a commercially viable crop was of interest to Reforesting Scotland to objectively inform such an idea in Scotland.

He harvests 1.5 tonnes per season – a maximum 150 kg per day harvested by local villagers (40kg per day maximum by hand) – this is not enough to supply large

They sell all of their produce to small local shops and get a good price of €4/kg (labour costs are €1.5/kg). Some people preserve the fruits in rum and claim they have medicinal properties.



Köhlerei – charcoal production

The charcoal producer we visited near Eisenhammer in the Naturpark not only produces charcoal and its co-products for sales but has also diversified to maintain a steady income. Surrounding the charcoal production area there is a small 'zoo' and a barbecue area where visitors can buy meat to barbecue and drinks to enjoy outside with their families.

Several aspects of the charcoal production business were of interest as people within the BIFF area have expressed an interest in this type of diversification.



The yard contained large stacks of good quality hornbeam, beech and oak that are purchased from within the Naturpark (*pictured*).

These logs would easily be mill-able in Scotland. The size and subsequent labour intensive requirements of such logs prior to charcoal production would more than likely make this business a non-starter in the Breadalbane area.

The majority of recommendations for charcoal production in the UK have specified small diameter hazel and alder.

The charcoal is produced in four large brick kilns on a rotational basis over a four to five day cycle. The charcoal producer related his figures for production, costs and profits which led to the calculations that he enjoys a profit of at least €3,000.00 (excluding labour) per kiln which seems somewhat unrealistic considering he needed to diversify to maintain his livelihood.

The charcoal producer stated that he loaded each kiln with 25m³ of fresh timber bought in at €30/m³, and removed 2.5 tonnes or 2500 kilograms from the kilns. His charcoal sales were based on 3kg, 5kg and 10kg bags ranging between €5.50 and €15.00 per bag. This would equate to a profit of €3,000.00 to €3,800.00, not including the cost of labour.

Labour costs would be quite high as all of the logs would need to be split, the kilns must be constantly monitored and the final product is sorted by hand. The profits received for the various co-products (ie carbon for metal processing, rope coating, medicine, and fertiliser for nurseries) were not provided. Such calculations for the BIFF area are still to be obtained.

From a RF point of view, the charcoal producer was interesting as he has successfully developed a market niche producing top quality charcoal from hardwood timbers (beech and hornbeam) which is considered of poor quality in Germany for milling. The high quality of the charcoal ensured people sought out his product and would travel to get it.

He also attracted visitors by developing a small menagerie with deer, wild boar and other animals alongside the charcoal production kilns. He provided a BBQ site where people could light BBQs to cook food, and buy drinks from a bar. This honey-pot approach and the high quality of his product made his business resilient in the face of competition from much cheaper Polish charcoal.

Only three local people are employed to run the business which he claims produces 100 tonnes per year (and one lady who runs the bar/ stall is self employed). He charges about €15/10kg bag but price differs depending to whom it is sold. It was interesting to note that all of the wood he is using is apparently either PEFC or FSC certified, as, according to Peter Kaiser, all of the forest in the park is certified in this way. However, he does not bother to advertise this or use it to his benefit as he already has the market captured.

Non-Timber Forest products (NTFP) – Woodland Officer observations

The NTFP opportunities within DH park varied enormously from a very successful charcoal production business with associated visitor attractions, through wildlife watching, mushroom collection, honey 'farming' to water extraction. Of these, it was only those at opposite ends of the spectrum that appeared to be controlled in any way.

The charcoal production was controlled through the need to purchase timber which cannot be felled without permission. Water extraction is also tightly controlled with regards to pollutants.

Mushroom and wild berry harvesting appeared to only be controlled on Natura sites and elsewhere there was a very ad hoc approach to administering licences and other regulatory devices – so much so was so that nobody could provide a straight answer as to how it was being delivered. This was an area of particular interest to members of the group, as it was hoped that we would get the answers required to many of our questions regarding legislation – answers that could then be used to help deliver this area of NTFP in Scotland.

With regards to charcoal production, the key point of note was the physical size and quality of timber being 'burnt'. Some of the beech and hornbeam logs would have produced good planking material in Scotland, but they were considered to be of too low a quality in Germany.

The process was very labour intensive, despite the opportunities for mechanisation. A small front end loader had charcoal hand graded into the bucket before bagging but the machine could have been used to empty the kilns and to load a stone screen to mechanically grade the charcoal. This would speed up the process and allow for a quicker turn around, resulting in a higher throughput of product during the year.

The process using open fronted kilns was very interesting as it allowed for about 25m³ of timber to be easily processed in one batch and was obviously an easier option to the bell shaped retort kilns that were also on site.

On wildlife watching, the nature park is home to beavers, wild boar, deer and an extensive variety of birds. Although only a one year old hind was seen, there is the opportunity to promote the area as a place to see wildlife in a natural habitat. It appeared that wildlife watching although appropriate for the park was not something that was actively promoted, with the exception of the Osprey watch – with night vision technology no less. It was felt opportunities were being missed regarding this and that it could form a part of an overall package to attract visitors to the area.

Wolfgang Koppé & wood sculpture festival

The majority of Wolfgang's work had little to do with the work of BIFF however he is an amazing individual and his vision and energy were inspiring. With relation to utilising wood, Wolfgang hosted a sculpture event and sculptors from around the world congregated to share and enjoy their art. This is an excellent way of utilising wood and promoting the arts within woodlands.



Although much of what we were shown was of no real relevance to the work of BTC HAAP either, there were insights into how he used wood for art and the whole art in the forest that was of real interest. Unfortunately we ran out of time before he could really explain how the wood sculpture festival worked but we were able to look at the examples on display. The standard of work was amazing and a festival such as this would work really well in BTC.

It seemed unclear as to what happened with the sculptures once finished and we were unable to establish whether they were distributed throughout the Naturpark or remained in the field outside Wolfgang's house. This would have been of particular interest as there are wood sculptures in some BTC sites – particularly Weem Wood and Craigvinean Forest with the latter being tied to a project with the nearby Royal School of Dunkeld where matching wooden totems were made, one for the forest and one for the school grounds. It is an idea that is being expanded for phase II of the BTC project.

An annual sculpture event in Perthshire would seem to provide many opportunities as the resultant sculptures should provide for an alternative approach to interpretation, either as prominent features on a trail or as hidden objects waiting to be discovered.



It was of interest to RAP that Wolfgang prepares home-made therapies from pine flowers. He harvests the flowers in the first two weeks of May and places them in a jar of pure alcohol to infuse for a few weeks. Presumably it's the essential oils from the flowers produce that a menthol-smelling infusion which is rubbed across the temples and brow to cure head-aches.

Wolfgang was taught his traditional medicinal knowledge skills by his grandmother and widened this knowledge through his time with Canadian first nation peoples. He also mentioned another medicinal rub which involves pickling red ants in alcohol and rubbing them on sore joints.

Another plant called "scholkrout" is used to cure warts – it produces a caustic orange sap which is put on the offending area. Wolfgang indicated that although he was not the only person making and using these cures, there are only a few older people still doing this.

Honey and Apiculture Centre

This was a large building specialising in keeping bees, training others in apiculture and selling them equipment. They have 40 hives which they transport to different places in the Naturpark. It seems that most of the people they sell to are hobbyists or earn only part of their living from bee products.



Markets for the honey, wax and other products are mainly local as they get a better price. They provide tours for visitors to the park, including bus loads of tourists who are given a talk about bees and then shown the shop which has a range of bee products for sale. It was apparent that the products alone were only part of the income generating element – the educational/ tourism aspects were just as important in generating funds through training workshops and talks to groups of interested tourists.

Basket makers

There were two basketry shops in Bad Duben which were not visited but were discussed with Peter Kaiser in the car. One shop used to employ 12 people but now only employs one. Competition from cheaper imports, principally from Poland, has led to him importing the more standard basket designs and producing the more complicated items himself. This is similar to the situation with basket making in Scotland and is an interesting word of warning for groups, such as those involved in RAP, that are looking to develop basketry for income generation.

Naturpark Forest Education & Interpretation Centre

Although BIFF is not currently involved in forest education, there will be future involvement in the input/ development of modules for the Breadalbane Academy's land-based studies and therefore found the education tools in Germany of interest.

The Saxon Forest Service has a dedicated visitor centre and is actively creating a Forest trail, which seems in some ways to be commensurate with work being undertaken by the Forest Education Initiative of which FSC is a partner.

The Visitor centre provided some useful ideas that could be used at various shows and attractions including the 3 levels of a tree and the associated wildlife (roots, trunk and crown); a comparison of the varying weights of different timbers; and a very simple way of demonstrating how the vessels in a tree work.



There was no NTFP message at all despite a wide range of topics that were discussed which was interesting and considering the foresters are aware that the forests are used by many people harvesting fungi.

The forest trail was still under construction and although what was being completed was innovative, the longevity of the structures and approach to interpretation caused some concerns. This was in marked contrast to the quality of the interpretation in the small arboretum at the visitor centre. The centre relies on schools and groups travelling to the site and paying for the privilege.

Mobile Education Unit – Dresden

In contrast to the above centre, this is an education department initiative. It was the visit that resonated most with the educational work taking place in BTC through FEI and the HAAP and was well worth the two hour drive. There are two units and the project has been on the go for 13 years. It also has established connections on a European scale with other such ventures.

Run by an ex-teacher, there were clearly demonstrable links with the curriculum over a range of subjects & age ranges and delivered using seven themes including meadows, forests, water and bugs. The unit is different from the Woodland Bus in that it basically acts as a base for equipment etc whereas in BTC the bus is actually a converted mobile library that houses sessions on board.



The project coordinator had a host of ideas for activities that would be easily transferable to BTC and the unit contained lots of simple, inexpensive equipment to allow children to conduct all sorts of experiments and information gathering. She also said that although the unit was used as a free resource for schools, there was a charging scale in operation for other groups – charities, youth groups and commercial ventures.

As the Woodland Bus is at present offered as a free resource to everyone, this was a useful suggestion for the future.

One of the themes was exploring the forest from a scientific perspective. When asked about using the forest for things such as food, Angelica Starh, who runs the project, said that teachers were concerned about connecting food with the forest because of the belief that mice urinate on fruits and plants in the forest and transmit a species of tapeworm in this way.

If the teacher agrees then Angelica teaches them about the association between the forests and food such as carrying out wild herb collections with a teacher and a class. She says this is in many ways is safer as once a child has tasted a plant they remember it. It was encouraging to see that NTFPs were on someone's education agenda in Germany. This is an approach used by the Forest School in England and Reforesting Scotland intend to talk to Simon Shakespeare who is the Training Leader for Forest School. There is also scope to develop and NTFP agenda for the Woodland Bus and other future related projects.

On the whole it provided much food for thought on how the Woodland Bus project could be expanded over the coming years to keep the project fresh and interesting.

Axel Mitzka

The opportunity to meet up with the NaturPark Director Axel Mitzka seemed a bit rushed and occurred late at the end of a long day. However, it provided some detailed answers to questions from Reforesting Scotland about process and sustainability for wild harvesting of NTFPs in Dübener Heide. Axel harvests several plant species from the park and sells them to a company called *Bombastus* based near Dresden, which specialises in herbal teas and medicines. He harvests European Mistletoe (*Viscum alba*) which is believed to act as anti-cancer, anti-diabetes and as a stimulant of the immune system. He harvests 200-400 kg per year which produces 8-9 litres of extract which is diluted with water and marketed by Bombastus on a small production run of about 1000 125ml bottles. He claims he gets maybe €1-2 per kilo of fresh mistletoe.

Axel also collects mare's tail (*Equisetum arvense*) which is generally used to stop bleeding (it has astringent, anti-hemorrhagic and anti-inflammatory properties) also for Bombastus. He described other wild harvesting practices in the park including: wild blueberries, Christmas tree harvesting under electricity pylons and traditional birch broom manufacture.

Other than specific cases of NTFP harvesting, the most interesting discussion centred around the legal procedure that Axel went through when harvesting officially. Initially he would ask the permission of the land-owner. Secondly he would determine any government constraints on harvesting from the land. Areas reserved for 'nature protection' usually exclude wild harvesting of products, but these are the best areas to collect mistletoe and other plants due to lack of pollution. County officers have responsibility for these areas (strangely they fall outside of the NaturParks management remit). A site visit is carried out with the appropriate county officer and an agreement made on appropriate harvest levels (20% in the case of an agreement Axel made to harvest mistletoe).

Apparently the county officer has access to experts to determine sensible harvest levels but it was unclear exactly how these were decided. A lot depends on personalities and usually the more questions asked the more complicated things become.

Electricity from cow manure

Although bio-energy production is an emerging market in Europe, the UK is only starting to consider the options available. The visit to a Farm generating electricity from the methane gas produced as a by product from the 'cooking up' of cow slurry and maize was of great interest and is something that FCS is now actively pursuing as a follow on from the visit.

The process is relatively simple and is a true reflection of the saying – where there's muck, there's brass. The plant relied on waste from 350 stored dairy cattle, supplemented with maize. The supplement could have also been waste food from Hotels – had there been any – and this approach could be used in the UK where maize is not a common crop. The plant generated about 7.5MW of electricity per day, which was worth about £250,000 per year to the farmers group.

A co-operative group of farmers in the Dübener Heide Naturpark is involved in the creation of the electricity. The duplication of such a project would be beneficial in Scotland but not obviously feasible due to the ways in which we farm. Cattle must be stored inside to collect the amount of manure that is required. The main interest for BIFF was in the organisation of the co-operative group but we were unable to find out more about the farmers' situation.

Herb restaurant



A visit was made to a vegetarian restaurant within the park specialising in foods made from herbs. The herbs used were mainly grown in a garden behind the restaurant with a few harvested from the wild.

Nearly every dish utilised an herb of some description and it was an interesting example of how far the food from the wild idea can be taken.

Herb garden

A Leader+ funded project which helped a local woman to design and plant a herb garden. The garden sorts different herbs based upon the part of the body or the illnesses they address. The self-styled "herb witch" runs courses and gives guided tours but she cannot use the herbs for medicine because she does not have a degree in Herbalism. She sometimes takes groups on forest tours to find wild herbs. This was an example again of where NTFP knowledge was being traded as opposed to the products themselves – an important lesson for the Scottish situation perhaps.

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Conversation with a visiting Bulgarian forester



A chance conversation with a visiting Bulgarian forester which took place whilst sitting around the fire at the end of the study tour. He was adamant that NTFPs had little value after his country’s historic attempt to develop them.

Ultimately it was agreed that whilst NTFPs might only provide a complete income for a few people under the right circumstances, they certainly had value to local people for other reasons and he quoted the usual uses of the forest for fungi foraging.

It might be very useful to look to some Bulgarian examples in developing approaches to NTFPs in Scotland – although it was interesting to note that he felt that Germany was a lot more Rural Development orientated in their management of the Naturpark than his country would ever be with protected forest areas.

Dissemination of information & lessons learned

The exchange provided a useful platform to compare and reflect on the approaches to visitor management within Perthshire, and also the opportunities for encouraging NTFPs. The initial programme of visits that had been agreed to was not always followed, and we felt that this was in part due to our host being over committed in other areas of work and interests.

To some degree, lessons learnt from the Nature Exchange trip have already been disseminated widely as some specific experiences were referred to by Jake as part of a presentation and during breakout discussion groups at the Enhancing Local Activity and Values from Forestry (ELAV) Conference in Orkney on the 6-9 September.

This report to the Leonardo Da Vinci Programme will be also be disseminated by Jake around the 10 Directors and 6 staff members of Reforesting Scotland and placed on the Reforesting Scotland website for access by 719 members of the charity.

BIFF is involved in promoting a variety of land management and rural development activities throughout the Highland Perthshire area. Information required for the project, and gained from the Nature Exchange, will be disseminated by Chris through newsletters, the internet, demonstration days and training courses. Chris will also be involved in developing training for a range of topics within the wider forest management context and also for diversification for farm business.

Angela manages the BTC website which has links with the Forest Education Initiative (FEI)/ Forest School and Forestry Commission Scotland as well as VisitScotland, Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust (PKCT) and Perth & Kinross Council. The trip will be featured on the site with relevant links to other websites.

Through the BTC HAAP, PKCT, FEI and the council newsletters and in-house publications will be targeted for a feature/ article and relevant photographs. In addition, Angela will give verbal reports and presentations at the PKCT Executive, the BTC Steering Group and the FEI Steering Group. These groups feature representatives from a variety of bodies including SNH, FCS, LANTRA, local councillors, community councils, journalists, local visitor attractions and VisitScotland.

A press release will be circulated to local/ regional press with the possibility of a tie-in with national publications relevant to parts of the exchange eg TES Scotland. Ongoing work with the Woodland Bus and community groups will be adapted to reflect some of the ideas and information gathered during the exchange.

FCS, led by Mike, is hoping to hold an open day for NTFP in the future, and will be actively considering how some of the better aspects of interpretation and related attractions can be incorporated into some of our own projects. Other possibilities could be investigated ... perhaps we can hold a competition between our tourism clusters to see which town can create the biggest picnic table, one to rival that in Durchwehna maybe?



Recommendations/ feedback on organisation

The range of sites visited was extensive and impressive and the energy of our host, Peter Kaiser unsurpassable. However, there was at times, a distinct feeling that the specific interests of the group were missed through the handling of some of site visits. In hind-sight this was probably largely because the agreed schedule was not adhered to. Some degree of divergence from the agreed programme was inevitable with so many individual visits involved, but there was the distinct feeling that the planning had slipped. This became an issue as it disrupted mental preparation for what to expect and therefore questions to ask.

In some cases it only apparent why we were at a site right at the end of the visit and this left little energy in either party to focus questions. This said, Peter certainly put his whole-self into showing the group as much of Dubener Heide as possible and for this the group was very grateful.

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