

COLLEGE VALLEY ESTATES

MANAGING FOR THE LONG TERM

Welcome to the first College Valley Newsletter and our opportunity to report back on an initiative started towards the end of last year. The Directors with invaluable support from Northumberland National Park Authority set out to produce a long-term sustainable development plan for the College Valley and appointed local consultants Natural Capital Management based at Fleetham to assist them. The first task was to canvass the views of friends, residents and neighbours on the issues you felt were important. The following tells the story of what took place.....



Those with a stake in the College Valley have their say.....

January 10th this year seems like another world - not only of course a dark Winter's night when there was an unusually large gathering in the Cuddystone Hall, but before the huge impact of Foot and Mouth which has been a watershed in the confidence of the rural economy. The hardship caused to those who have caught the disease, and perhaps to a greater economic extent, those who are left with their livestock farming and rural businesses "intact", has made our desire to review the long term strategy for College Valley, all the more important. The Directors are determined that the College Valley Estate and all those who have a stake in it, will survive and thrive into the future.

At the public meeting in January, the Estate canvassed your views on the 'likes' and 'dislikes' and your 'top 5 priority actions' for change. Perhaps one of the most encouraging results of the meeting was the overwhelming

desire for constructive action from such a diverse gathering of interests.

You liked "tranquillity/natural beauty/rich biodiversity/existing level of access/opportunity for outdoor recreation".

You disliked "commercial forestry/poor communication/infrastructure maintenance/bracken management/level of access".

Priorities for action.....

- change the nature of the woodland
- positive management of access
- improved communication
- enhancement of the natural environment
- improved economic viability

The Estate has listened carefully to comments and contributions from the huge range of people and organisations interested in what happens within the Valley; it has been a rewarding and positive exercise. As a result, it has put together its long term strategy for future management.

A vision for the future.....

As a general aim, the Directors seek:-

"To manage the Estate in a way that will enhance and maintain its value as a cultural, environmental, economic and scenic place of excellence".



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In applying this vision, the following eight key principles will be adopted:-

- the value of the landscape is to be maintained and enhanced
- the needs and aspirations of those living and working in the Valley are to be respected



- biodiversity is to be enhanced
- the Valley must be accessible on an educational and appropriate recreational basis
- agriculture and forestry will continue as principal land uses within the Estate but may be joined by other enterprises in the future
- the cultural heritage is to be protected and valued
- any future developments within the Estate will meet the highest achievable environmental standards
- all maintenance and developments must be paid for in full from its own available resources

And so to action.....

The challenge, of course, is to convert fine words into actions on the ground that will actually make a practical difference at the end of the day. To that end, the Directors have identified a number of key topic areas each of

which has defined targets and actions; if you would like more details on these, please contact or consult at the address below.

Some of the priorities identified are already being put into action and as shown here at Goldsleugh we are already starting to remove unnatural geometric blocks of conifers to be replaced in the future by natural broad leaved



woodland that should encourage a richer biodiversity.

Communication – a high priority

One of the strongest calls for action related to communication - this publication is the start of a rather more effective means of ensuring that there is a positive two way flow of information. The Estate is establishing an "Advisory Group" to contribute towards management policy who will meet at least once a year or as necessary. There will also be an annual public "open afternoon" enabling anybody who is interested to both see and hear about achievements, failures! and plans for the future.

The Directors are indebted to the Northumberland National Park Authority for both time inputs and financial support. We should also like to thank English Nature, the Tweed Foundation and the Environment Agency for their time during consultation on this initiative.

We are also extremely grateful for everyone else's support and input to-date - the future is approached with enthusiasm and determination but your continued help and input will be needed.

Charles Baker-Cresswell