



December 2006 newsletter - plus Oxford Farming Conference Special

Rural excellence in Northumberland



Early December saw the standing conference for Northumberland Strategic Partnership (NSP). Funded mainly but not exclusively by ONEnortheast, this organisation is there to help the economy move forward - but not forgetting communities and environmental issues. The body is also split into a rural team and board, as well as working with SENTTRI which looks after the Blyth and Wansbeck end of the county, deemed to be in the main travel-to-work area of North Tyneside. The reason for mentioning this is that the government is keen to get communities working for themselves and we will probably see District and County Councils removed and a unitary system put in place. Change is of course inevitable and rural areas will have to argue consistently to be at the 'table'. A website which will allow us all to find out what is happening is www.ruralvoices.org.uk.

Environment - Forum for the Future

Ian Brown has been lucky enough with his ONEnortheast role to be asked to attend a 'masterclass' on sustainable development with Jonathon Porritt in London. As Ian pointed out: "Lee Moor has put the environment at the very centre of its activity for some 20 years and in many ways was ahead of the curve, pioneering activity which has now become mainstream. I feel very lucky that I have had the circumstances to experiment, and look forward to pushing these areas forward both in my policy sphere of influence but also in my businesses. There now is a business case for green business activity as people weigh up the alternative... irreversible climate change!"

See note on climate change by Stern; the tipping point has arrived:

www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent_reviews/stern_review_economics_climate_change/sternreview_index.cfm

See also www.forumforthefuture.org.uk/

New tenants

The New Year sees Geoff Jobson taking on Unit 11 for storage; Tilhill expand into unit 6A from 8; 3-16 Productions move into 8 - and New Life Fitness move into 3B.

Having a gym on site and shower facility is great news for all, especially at this time of year. Lee Moor will be fighting fit for the New Year!

Toasty Heating Ltd

Keith Hudson is now on site three days a week as the new Managing Director of Toasty Heating Ltd, working with Econergy to sell wood-fuelled boilers. Despite oil prices coming back a bit it is clear that carbon neutral heating is going to be at the centre of many building heating schemes in the near future. Lee Moor Business Park has the most modern boiler system in the UK and in January 2007 willow planted nearly 5 years ago will be coppiced - the stumps regrow and are cut every 3 years - air dried outside and then chipped for fuel. Roy Iliffe is the other new director of Toasty Heating who will be active commissioning systems. Kirkley Hall - part of Northumberland College - is the first of these; this will double as a working system to help students to understand wood-fired boilers.

Oxford Farming Conference

It has been some 15 years since Lee Moor was represented at the Oxford Farming Conference. Ian Brown was a young farmer who was farming and I dare say young way back then...

Things have moved on and an update of the conference can be found on <http://www.ofc.org.uk/>.

Here are six bullet points for your interest from the event:

- Farming is becoming a free market economy but with a contract for producing other things, such as landscape, wildlife, jobs and society.
- We can grow more than food. Heat, base chemicals and carbon mitigation: the list is long and growing. We are in a global market for all the above!
- Business is aware of green issues and the public are swinging away from 'cheap' food in the most cynical definition of those words.
- Politicians of all hues have become aware that land managers - farmers and foresters - have a valuable role in creating the countryside.
- 'One planet living' is as important out in the sticks as amongst the chimney pots and the two worlds are linked by one landmass/atmosphere and water system.
- Innovation is the key in rural areas and we need rural entrepreneurs to add value to basic commodities and re-engage the public.

Lastly

2007 is the year of food and farming. Lee Moor will be opening its doors in the New Year through the launch of Charlotte's Web the movie - opening at all good cinemas from 9th February 2007. At Lee Moor we have Charlotte, her web and a quiz sheet and certificate; do call in with the family.

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