

Rangers Rag



DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL

Spring 2004

Countryside Stewardship

The Countryside Stewardship Scheme is set up by Defra, to encourage farmers and land managers to improve the diversity and natural beauty of the countryside. Defra make payments to the participant for various forms of management. The current scheme involves a commitment of ten years to complete all the proposed works.



The Grand Western Canal has put in a successful application to receive payments for improving public access, improving field boundaries for wildlife, creating otter holts and to help preserve historic features. The canal is a very popular and valued local amenity, so visitors will be able to see the benefits to wildlife and the landscape provided by the Countryside Stewardship work programme.

The work will be done by a range of different people; the ranger team, volunteers and local contractors. Work that has already taken place includes a 200m section of hedgelaying near Manley Bridge. This was carried out as

a joint project between the ranger team and a BTCV conservation holiday group.

Hedgelaying benefits wildlife in a number of ways. The trees that have been laid will sprout new shoots, which will grow into a strong dense hedge. This will be an essential provider of food, shelter and nesting sites for local birds. It will also enhance the beauty of the surrounding landscape with its colourful blossom, striking berries and constant buzzing of insect life.



EU Support for the Canal

Devon County Council is a partner in a successful European funding bid, led by British Waterways. The Interreg IIIb Crosscut project will enable the Grand Western Canal to benefit from funding towards dredging works over the next three years. In addition, efforts will be made to reduce the amount of silt building up in the canal in future.

One of the key aims of any Interreg project is the sharing of knowledge and experience between European partners. As part of this, in November 2003, canal managers and professionals from England, Wales, Holland and Belgium came to Devon to learn about our sustainable dredging methods and to look at our plans for the future. In turn, we shall also gain from their experience in managing canals to support tourism, recreation, heritage and wildlife in a sustainable manner.



External Funding For New Ranger

The Crosscut project has provided funding for a new ranger to be employed on the canal. Mark Blake joined the Ranger Team on 2nd February 2004. He has been employed on a three year contract, and will spend most of his time on practical work relating to the Crosscut sustainable dredging project. Mark previously worked as a tree surgeon for one and a half years, covering much of Somerset including Wellington and Taunton.