

# Federation of Cumbria Commoners

*Affiliated with Lancashire & Northumberland*

## NEWSLETTER SPRING/ SUMMER 2010



Photo Joe Relfh

Fellow Commoners,

Hello and welcome to the Federation's spring newsletter. By way of introduction, for those of you who don't know me, my family and I farm about 500 acres on the side of the Pennines above Dufton on the east fellside. We have fell rights for just over 700 sheep on Dufton and Knock fells. We keep Swaledale and Lleyne sheep as well as a herd of mainly Limousin cross suckler cows. The farm is in ELS, HLS and shortly UELS as well, we are also part of a countryside stewardship/WES agreement on the fell. As well as being on the original committee of the Federation I have been chairman of our local commons association for a number of years, so with that and my farming experience I am pretty familiar with the issues surrounding commons. As I take over the role of chairman from Harry Hutchinson, I'd like to thank Harry for steering the Federation through another challenging year in which a notable success was the negotiation of an extra £5/hectare for UELS agreements on commons to reflect the difficulties which will be encountered when setting up these agreements.

We also bid farewell to Sarah Cattanach our administrator for the past year who has handed over the reins to Viv Lewis. I would like to thank Sarah for doing a great job for the Federation in keeping

everyone up-to-date and informed on all matters and wish her well in her future endeavours. I'd like to welcome Viv who comes to us with a wealth of experience and a keen interest in farming and commons I'm sure she will be a great asset to the Federation.

As the Federation moves forward, with your support, it is pleasing to note that we continue to be seen as an (if not the) authoritative voice in Cumbria and nationally where commons issues are at stake and we will seek to strengthen that position further. The main issue facing the Federation in the coming year is whether it will be in the best interests of Cumbrian commoners for the Federation to form a Commons Council for Cumbria, your committee is exploring all of the aspects of this possibility. As part of this exercise we hope to take a small team on a fact finding trip to visit Dartmoor Commons Council to look at their experience. We are also working closely with Natural England on the monitoring of agri-environment schemes on commons and the provision of training for their staff and others about all aspects of agricultural management on commons.

At a recent gathering of commoners from all over the UK and Ireland which was both interesting and educational, it struck me how much we all take for granted the unique skills and knowledge that we possess as and also the huge cultural, social and economic value that traditional commoning brings. It is up to us to encourage the next generation to see that it is a tradition worth carrying on because without new blood coming in, this traditional form of agriculture could wither away.

*Dave Smith – Chairman*

## **AGM Report**

This year's AGM took place at CREA near Penrith on February 26<sup>th</sup>. Over 30 members and guests attended to hear our guest speakers and outgoing chair, Harry Hutchinson review the achievements of the Federation over the previous 12 months. These included the development of a business plan to guide the direction of the Federation over the next 3 years, meetings with Defra to explain the problems commoners encounter regarding animal movements on and off the commons, hosting a visit at Uldale for Liz Newton, Natural England's Director for the North West so that she could get a first hand account and experience of hill farming and responding to consultations and other requests. The Federation has been successful in winning £5000 per year for three years from the Hadfield Trust for educational activities to promote knowledge and understanding of commons and commoning. Harry thanked Andrew Humphries for his effort in gaining this funding. John Atkinson, our treasurer reported that our income had doubled this year, mainly due to the increase in subscriptions and the Federation is self financing.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting and the meeting continued with interesting and informative presentations by the David Hill, a member of the Board for Natural England on the 'Upland Vision' and Mervyn Edwards on the new UELS and how it should work.

## **A portrait of Crossfell Commoners Association**

*We hope that this is going to be a regular feature in our newsletter and Marianne Teasdale has kindly agreed to write the first article about the Crossfell Commoners' Association*

Crossfell Commoners' Association was informally constituted in 1985 and is comprised of the Pennines 'east fellside' commons of Melmerby, Ousby, Skirwith, Kirkland and Blencarn, an area of some 4,300 hectares. The current Countryside Stewardship Scheme commenced in October 2001, the basic principle being to compensate the active graziers on a pro rata income foregone basis for a reduction in grazing numbers. In the qualifying years 9,000 grazing rights were being utilised by the active graziers, from which Defra sought a reduction to 1 sheep per hectare, making an allocation of 4,300 across the five commons. The only apparent solution at the time to accommodate those graziers who were unable to accept hefty reductions was for several graziers to remove all of their sheep, with the result that only ten graziers continued to maintain flocks on the fell.

Gathering takes place annually on three dates: the first Mondays in July and September, and the last Monday in October. Fewer flocks on the fell means fewer people doing the gathering, so to assist with this, money from the Stewardship Scheme is used to hire in help for the gathering days, with some of this help coming from other Stewardship Scheme members. In addition, as an aid to rehefting and to support Defra in achieving its regeneration target on Crossfell summit and the montane heath, sheep are cleared off these areas every other day between May and September. Participation in the rota is open to all farms in the Stewardship Scheme and currently eleven do so. Funding through the Stewardship Scheme has also enabled repair of the shedders, with £3,000 being allocated to each common to organise for themselves the work required

The Stewardship Scheme will conclude in 2011: a decision will need to be taken as to whether another agreement is desirable – should it be an HLS or simply a UELS? Re-establishment of flocks is being discussed amongst graziers and rehefting guidelines is something which the Association may need to give consideration to, as will the taxing problem of loss of grazing areas through encroachment of 'scrub'. Then there is the thorny issue of Natural England's aim to have cattle grazing the open fell - much against the wishes of the majority of graziers with their concerns as to how this reconciles with open access.

In his book 'Harvest of the Hills', Angus Winchester indicates that a route for sheep down into the fields from Ousby common was spelt out in 1683. The area of common grazing came under pressure in the mid nineteenth century with the enclosure of allotments, pushing the open common further away from the farmsteads and increasing the journey for both grazier and sheep. As with other areas, the average age of the Crossfell graziers is high, however there are some younger members, and a new generation needs to be encouraged if this ancient commoning practice is to continue as a viable activity.

*Marianne Teasdale*

## **Reaching high places with our DVD: *Common Understanding***

One of the Federation's original aims was to improve the public understanding of commons. We have tried to meet this aim in a variety of ways including producing the DVD '*Common Interests*' which we launched early in January 2007. The DVD clarifies the historical background to common land and presents the perspectives of commoners in Cumbria. It was produced with funding from the Hadfield Trust and Lake District National Park Authority. We have only a handful left and are in the process of a second production run with an updated leaflet to continue the message. The first

copies were issued free of charge to decision makers to improve their understanding of a unique, diverse and fragile element in the uplands. More recently copies have been sold to support the work of the Foundation.

Has it been successful? We can say yes with confidence. The DVD has and is used for training in several organisations. It has been seen and used by commoners across Britain. Commoners in the South were inspired to make a DVD on Southern Lowland Commons which has attracted interest and spread the effect of our initiative. Only last week in received very favourable comments from the Radnorshire Wildlife Trust who obtained a copy.

*'We thought it was really informative to the general public, [the introduction sticks in my mind when people were interviewed and asked what they thought common land is...it...put the right messages across. I was also impressed that the commoners had formed a commons committee [ Federation] and were very eloquent in the interviews.'*

*[Sue Buckingham Project Officer]*

A few months ago we had a request for a copy from Italy which sought permission to add an Italian translation. A very distinguished expert on commons in India has shown the DVD to government ministers and has promoted our way of working as relevant to dealing with some of the common land problems in the Himalayan foothills.

When new supplies are available we hope to market copies to further promote public understanding. If you feel that there are people in local groups or visitors to B&B's who would be interested to view a copy whilst on holiday or to take home we encourage you to consider having a small number to hand. The DVD is deliberately limited to 22 minutes and has an accompanying leaflet that provides additional information.

*Andrew Humphries.*

## **Establishing a Commons Council**

As our Chairman Dave Smith mentioned on page 1 the Federation Committee will be exploring whether we should establish a Commons Council in Cumbria. If we decide to go ahead the advisory leaflet: *Establishing a Commons Council* recommends nine steps to establishing a Commons Council. These are:

Step 1: Clarifying the Benefits

Step 2: Clarifying the land to be covered by a Commons Council

Step 3: Establishing who has interest in the common

Step 4: Assessing the level of support for the proposed commons council

Step 5: Review the response and identifying the main issues of concern

Step 6: How will the Commons Council operate?

Step 7: Further consultation

Step 8: Compiling a case for an establishment order

Step 9: Consideration by the Secretary State

Clearly we are going to have a lot to do to confirm the substantial support needed to establish a Commons Council and investigate matters thoroughly including how the process will be funded and facilitated. Watch this space!

## **Bethecar Moor Commoners Association: Battling for winter berries**

### **A helping hand for England's threatened juniper**

Bushes laden with berries are a familiar sight in the English countryside in winter. But for the juniper, 50 years of rapid decline have turned this once familiar plant into a rarity with a very uncertain future. Now help is at hand as a budding task force, led by Natural England, is returning the threatened juniper plant to its former haunts across England.

Junipers have a life span of around 200 years but many old junipers are not being naturally replaced owing to shading from other plants, grazing pressures from rabbits and livestock and increased cultivation. The answer is a widespread planting programme run by Natural England and designed to re-establish populations of young juniper in the chalk and limestone landscapes they favour.

Poul Christensen, Chair of Natural England, said: "Juniper is a symbol of many of our upland landscapes, but changes in land management have greatly reduced the populations of this important berry bearing plant. Conservation help is now needed to enable the next generation of juniper to become established and with the help of land managers and volunteers the plant is now being restored to many of its former strongholds.

"The timing and colour of winter berries is all part of nature's design - berries appear when the countryside is at its most subdued and provide an essential and conspicuous food source much sought after by animals such as field mice, squirrels, badgers and especially birds."

To complete its juniper planting for 2009 Natural England joined forces with members of the Bethacar Moor Commoners' Association and volunteers from the Lake District National Park Authority to complete the planting of more than 500 junipers in selected areas upon the moors above Coniston Water.

Supported by Natural England's Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) scheme, the work will help to conserve and enhance this area of diverse moorland habitat ensuring the continuity of the scarce juniper habitats.

Liz Newton, Natural England's North West Regional Director, said: "The Bethacar Moor Commoners Association supported by their ESA agreement are committed to a long term programme of conserving the heather moorland and regenerating juniper by planting these young plants grown from seed and sourced locally from within the Lake District. The restoration work also includes careful management of the grazing levels on the fell and control of bracken encroachment.

“It is thanks to their hard work together with the support of the Lake District National Rangers that these important habitats can be enhanced for future generations to enjoy.”



Mr Bobbie Dobson, Chairman of Bethacar Moor Commoners Association said: “The Commoners Association is very pleased to be able to carry out this conservation work and we are particularly grateful to Natural England for their help and support. We are also very grateful to the Lake District National Park for their co-operation in the management of public access, enabling visitors to enjoy this very special place.”

Tony Hill, Lake District National Park Ranger, said: “We work closely with Natural England and the Bethacar Moor Commoners Association, as well as the local community on a variety of initiatives. It’s another excellent example of everyone working together to protect our landscape”.



## **News from the Foundation for Common Land - Linking the Federation of Cumbria Commoners with others.**

At the AGM of the Federation of Cumbria Commoners in February two things really stood out for me. Firstly after seven years the Federation has a track record of which it can be justly proud and which is reflected in tangible benefits to commoners. Secondly, the number of issues causing difficulties for commoners arising out of policy show little sign of disappearing.

### ***Things to be proud of .....***

The Federation was established in 2003 as a grassroots organisation to work on behalf of Cumbrian commoners and now it has affiliated members from Northumberland and Lancashire. Your reputation nationally is high and reflects the leadership that commoners are giving nationally. Our Cumbrian example has led to the establishment of the Welsh Commons Forum and the Federation of Yorkshire Commoners and Moorland Graziers. Together with groups in Dartmoor, Bodmin, Forest of Dean, New Forest and Crofting communities there are now many ‘umbrella’ groups across Britain.

### ***Challenges to address.....***

Nevertheless our opinions in Cumbria and elsewhere are generally about regional issues, while but policy is national and EU in origin. We have been successful in responding to change but are not well placed to influence policy formation. You will be aware that in 2012-3 a further round of CAP reforms will produce changes of which agri-environmental schemes will be an important element, especially as support moves further from pillar 1 to pillar 2. The other stakeholder groups with interests in common land which include flora, fauna, access, recreation and landscape are well organised to influence policy reform at a national level, and we, as a regional group cannot easily contribute.

### ***The Foundation for Common Land***

Over the last three years discussions have been held to consider how to improve the effectiveness of Federations across the country. The people attending the inaugural meeting of the Foundation for Common Land held in Malvern on December 8<sup>th</sup> 2008 voted unanimously to establish a network to provide a comprehensive means for commoners to engage with each other and with other stakeholders so that local Federations can be effective in policy matters as well as practice.

Bringing the Foundation into being has been challenging since common grazings are found from Bodmin to Shetland and from the North York Moors to Connemara. Securing financial support has been difficult since funding is mainly regional and the funders are reluctant to support projects that span regional boundaries. Nevertheless the commitment to establish the Foundation is strong and we have been working for the last year with a 'shadow board' that will need to formalise the legal status of the Foundation during this next year. Although funding is difficult we decided that we should be as active as possible and this has resulted in progress on two fronts, though we would like to do much more and more quickly.

### ***The first actions of the Foundation – undertaking research***

Firstly we realised that we had the skills and experience to bid for project funds. The Foundation embryo group (Pastoral Commoning Partnership) bid for and won an in-depth research project into 'Trends in Pastoral Commoning in England' funded by Natural England. Generally such work is carried out by universities and leading consultants. The report is now on the NE website and is the main reference point on the subject. Key parts of the work were undertaken by Cumbria Federation members and shows that given a chance we can deliver work of national significance.

Currently we are putting together a Common Land Toolkit to guide professionals working with commoners and a Guide to Commons Councils. Both have been commissioned by Natural England. We have won a bid to provide research to inform those dealing with policy about ways to improve the sustainability of commoning. Recently we have collected and collated evidence of the difficulties that commoners are experiencing with the RPA. All of these projects are essentially country wide and reflect the needs of common graziers nationally and are the result of a network that the Foundation needs to develop on a more organised basis.

### ***The Melmerby Gathering February 2010.***

We held a day workshop for commoners and their representatives from across the British Isles to ensure that the Foundation has a clear idea of what commoners need. The first arrival was Brendan O'Malley from Connemara closely followed by Norman Leaske from Shetland with others from across the country close behind. Dave Smith our Cumbria Federation Chairman welcomed the participants who worked really hard in an atmosphere that showed the commitment and sense of purpose that commoners feel about their unique place in agriculture. Four introductory presentations set the scene and demonstrated just how diverse commons are. The New Forest, Cumbria, Dartmoor and Scottish Crofting Commons provided brief insights into a world that few understand and for which we carry joint responsibility. The attendees were asked in the workshops to identify their view of the priorities for the foundation.



**Messages from the gathering were that the Foundation should:**

- keep things simple
- start practical work as soon as possible
- do not duplicate or conflict with the working of existing groups.

The purpose of the Foundation would be to facilitate lobbying/advocacy (and the necessary evidence gathering) and to provide a networking and information exchange for commoners. It would achieve this through a simple partnership between existing federated commons organisations. Staffing and financing would, as far as possible, be done through the existing organisations e.g. funding bids could be done via a Federation on behalf of the Foundation. This would mean that the Foundation would:

- be a 'light touch' organisation, set up as simply as possible to deliver a facilitative programme of work;

- stay closer to the grass roots and to actual work on the ground;
- be an extension of existing groups, working bottom-up, rather than top-down;
- reflect the different starting-points of the English, Scottish and Welsh groups.

The Foundation shadow board will consider the recommendations from the Melmerby Workshop and make appropriate decisions.

The need to fill a real gap in policy influencing is clear; we hope to make it happen, but it will only succeed if it fulfils a clear need and is supported by commoners.

*Andrew Humphries*

## **Renewable energy in the uplands**

At one of our Federation meetings I landed the unenviable task of reading a new book entitled *Drivers of Environmental Change in Uplands...* I was told it would be the basis of Natural England's future policy thinking for the uplands. It was 500 hundred pages of essential reading, really? It covers 25 subjects and is written by no less than 41 authors, and after every article there's around 3 pages of post script references, oh joy!

Subjects to excite and motivate the reader include, 'The Carbon Budget For Upland Peat Soils, Condition Of Upland Terrestrial Habitats, Moorland Management With Livestock, The Effect Of Policy Change On Upland Grazing, Vegetation And Farm Economics, and Moors From The Past', etc. Though every article is well written by highly qualified and learned people who know their subject, nearly all request further extensive research work which would of course be financed out of our farming budget.

Is this what our country needs today when we have a major financial problem, energy crisis and world food shortage? Surely our scarce financial capital resource should be directed into projects that will give a maximum return on our available capital. We need to rekindle a Dunkirk or Battle of Britain spirit and focus on these three essentials as part of our farming enterprise. The new Feed in Tariffs will allow every hill farmer to generate returns probably better than any other farm enterprise. His choice between the following will depend on his farm or circumstances.

- Wind
- Hydro
- Photo voltaic
- Anaerobic digestion
- Heat pumps
- Green reusable biomass energy

The Generation Tariff Payments vary according to the technology used and the scale of generation, but some examples are shown in the table at the end of this article.

### ***WIND***

Wind power is probably the most proven technology, for example in Denmark about 20% of their total electricity needs are produced by wind turbines. Vestas of Denmark is probably the worlds

leading producer of wind turbines. A very high number of Danish farmers have their own wind turbine plant and export a major portion of their electricity production to the Nation's grid. Britain, with the highest average wind speeds in Europe is guilty of failing to exploit this natural resource. (Denmark has used turbines for the last 20-30 years in my experience). Britain is doubling the cost of electricity production by building and servicing off shore instead of onshore, thus increasing the nation's production costs at a stroke with the bulk of its wind generation.

It was reported in the news recently that Siemens would be starting to produce wind turbines in the UK. Other smaller manufactures are Westwind, (NI), Segen (supplier), Proven and recently a Japanese vertical axis machine has become available up to 50kw per hour capacity. Farming press adverts also offer a partnership route if your land is suitable to wind generation. Large scale turbines (3 MEG per turbine) can offer a rental income of £20k per turbine per year on your land.

### **HYDRO**

Hydro power is less obtrusive and having read the Farmers Guardian on 4th December 2009, I visited Alan Williams and spent a very useful day studying the system he installed at his farm. Alan spent £20k and claims he will get a 2½ year pay back for this expenditure. (£8k per annum or 40% return on capital). He could easily have doubled or trebled the size of his installation. Alan has a 700 metre run of 6" pipe (gas mains plastic pipe), with a total fall of 74 metres. A small Dam, filter and tank maintains a constant head and an electric motor (running reverse), attached to an enclosed turbine generating 10kw at the bottom of the hill near his farm. The very small amount of diverted water to the 6" pipe is not detectable to the eye, but water authority approval is required.

### **PHOTO VOLTAIC**

More research is now required to see if this approach is financially viable. The new Feed In Generation Tariffs (1st April 2010 see table below) will pay 36p kw in the 4-10kw technology size range for a 25 year guaranteed period. As the government has offered such good terms for PV it now may become worth while as it is probably the easiest for planning permission.

### **ANAEROBIC DIGESTION**

I think the Germans have the most experience in this sector. They have traditionally sited their farm houses and buildings close together to form a village and travelled out to their fields as opposed to our farms sitting in the middle of our fields. This close grouping has allowed large AD plants to be situated in the middle of the village, and the village to use the generated energy. New companies have set up in the UK offering well systems. Mainly suitable for large farms or neighbouring farms willing to share, the gas being used for heat or for the generation of electricity.

### **HEAT PUMPS**

A neighbour has installed this system as his main house heating and the underfloor warm water heats the whole house. His opinion is that this form of heating is even better value than his 5kw rated small wind turbine (in my opinion no turbine 5kw or below is worth considering). As well as vertical and horizontal pipes buried underground coils can be placed in ponds or lakes. Huge heating costs can be saved, but I'm not certain about Generation tariffs.

## **BIOMASS, FURNACE & STOVES GAS**

Canada, USA, Scandinavia and Germany seem to be ahead of us in electrically controlled wood burning stoves. One local farmer plans to import a stove from overseas which would be a 40kw electrically controlled burner. He has already planted a number of Ash cuttings and believes that in ten to fifteen years he will become self supporting for his heating needs. (The wood may qualify for environmental scheme grants?) Ash is one of the few types of wood that can be burnt green as the sap is so oily and once his coppice has become established with three to four inch stems after the first cut there is no need to split the logs. He advises that from April 20th 2011 this green energy will qualify for the Generation tariff.

## **BEWARE OF THE SHARKS AND MIDDLE MEN**

1. Marketing companies that cream off the margins and absorb the money in their overheads and profit.
2. Small life sentence systems that will never pay for their costs.
3. Always obtain two to three quotes.
4. Less than four years pay-back should be your min target and 25% return on total expenditure. Better than most other farming prospects or investments.
5. Capital grants may also be obtained.

Farming is still one of the largest production industries in Britain today, and perhaps we can help put the nation right on all three fronts.

## **Extract from table Generation Tariffs.**

<b>Technology</b>	<b>Scale</b>	<b>Tariff level (new)</b>	<b>Tariff Lifetime (g'teed)</b>
Anaerobic Digestion	500kw	11.5	20 years
Hydro	15-100kw	17.8	20 years
PV	4-10 kw	36.1	25 years
Wind	15-100kw	24.1	20 years

For the full table, e-mail: [microgeneration@npower.com](mailto:microgeneration@npower.com) or phone 01905 340 646.

*Edward Thomas*

## **Early entrants into HLS miss out as capital payments rise**

Farmers will no doubt be delighted to find payments for some capital works carried out under the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) agri-environmental scheme such as hedge and stone wall restoration

are to be increased. But the news is not all good, as only new entrants will be eligible to claim at the revised higher rates.

Comments Charles Raine of North East based Youngs Chartered Surveyors, "It is great news for new HLS applicants that Natural England has agreed to raise payment rates for some capital items. What is somewhat extremely disappointing however is that these higher rates are not retrospective and as a result only apply to new entrants coming into the scheme after July 1st this year. This puts existing HLS agreement holders at something of a disadvantage as they will continue to be paid at the old rate until reaching the five year break point in their existing agreement."

Capital items set to attract the higher rates include hedgerow restoration plus coppicing and gapping up which will see rates rise from £5 per metre to £7 per metre. Also stone wall repairs up from £16 per metre to £30 per metre, stone faced hedge banking, earth bank restoration, sheep and post and wire fencing and some drainage schemes.

Says Charles Raine, "The aim in selecting these particular items is apparently to bring payments into line with those offered under the new Uplands Entry Level Scheme (UELS). Hence payments for capital works not offered under UELS, and those made under other schemes such as Countryside Stewardship (CSS) and Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA), remain unchanged. With Defra ministers having agreed last year to delay any payment review for Agri Environment schemes for the foreseeable future, it seems unlikely farmers in these schemes will see any increase for some time."

"For those with existing ELS and HLS agreements thinking of adding HLS, the defining criteria as to which payment rate you receive is the start date of the current agreement. Hence those with start dates prior to Jan 1st, 2007 will be eligible for the new rates as they will be restarting a new 10 year agreement. But for those with agreements dated post 1st Feb 2007, they are considered to be applying for an extension to their existing agreement, and will therefore only become eligible for the higher capital payment rates after their next five year break point."

"Any increase in payment has to be good news, but only if you happen to be the right side of the line. This is certainly not the case for the majority of farmers carrying out this type of work, essential for the continued upkeep of the countryside."

For further information, please contact: Charles Raine, Partner Youngs Chartered Surveyors.

Phone: 01434 609000, [Charles.raine@youngscs.com](mailto:Charles.raine@youngscs.com)

## **Consultation on the simplification of livestock movement rules and holding identifiers in England**

Defra is seeking views from farmers and other interested parties on a package of proposals for the simplification of livestock movement rules and holding identifiers in England. It also seeks views on sheep and goat recording and reporting arrangements to replace the transitional arrangements introduced on 1 January 2010.

Over time the livestock movements and tracing regime in England has grown steadily more complex as it has been adapted to take account of Community law and amended in response to a number of disease outbreaks. The Review of Livestock Movements Controls carried out in 2006 highlighted the need for simplification of procedures and for improvements to the County Parish Holding (CPH) number system by which farms are identified. These proposals seek to address these issues whilst maintaining robust systems for livestock traceability and disease control.

The consultation was launched on 31 March 2010 and closes on 30 June 2010.

If you would like to know more go to <http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/simplify-livestock-move-id/index.htm>

## Dates for your diary

**Fell Gather** will take place on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2010 at Mitchells Lakeland Livestock Centre, Cockermouth. It has become the flagship event of Cumbria Farmer Network and is designed to explain to the public about how the food chain works and to give people involved in agriculture to interface with the public. The Fell Gather attempts to entertain, educate and enlighten all ages, in essence, a fun day for the family organised by local farmers. For more information see [http://www.thefarmernetwork.co.uk/fell\\_gather/index.html](http://www.thefarmernetwork.co.uk/fell_gather/index.html)

**8<sup>th</sup> National Seminar on Common Land and Town and Village Greens** to be held on July 1<sup>st</sup> 2010 at the University of Gloucestershire, Cheltenham. The programme offers a real opportunity to get to grips with the implementation of the Commons Act 2006. Commoners and others who are currently putting the Act into practice will share their experiences in the morning sessions while officials from England and Wales will provide an update on the implementation of the Act. The Foundation for Common Land has been asked to take a significant part in the 8<sup>th</sup> National Seminar. In addition the sponsorship from Defra and Natural England has enabled commoners and those known to the Foundation to receive a 50% discount on the delegate fee. **To claim your discount** please contact Jill Harper via [ccri@glos.ac.uk](mailto:ccri@glos.ac.uk) (or call her on 01242 714122) and request the FCL booking form. You can also register to receive the full programme and registration form by email or post later this Spring. The website can be found at <http://www.ccri.ac.uk/Events/8thseminarcommonland.htm>.

**Bracken Open Day** on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2010 in the Brecon area. For more information contact [Garethjmorganuk@aol.com](mailto:Garethjmorganuk@aol.com)

**The Northern Farming Conference** will take place on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> October at Newcastle Racecourse. For more information contact Harry Crisp on 0191 279 9118 / [harry.chrisp@dickinson-dees.com](mailto:harry.chrisp@dickinson-dees.com)

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If you wish to publish anything in this newsletter, please let me know