

## Fife and Dumfries & Galloway Local Plan Action Needed Now

Dumfries and Galloway Local Council are preparing a new Local Development Plan which is scheduled to come into force in 2012. The process has already begun and the Council is currently advertising an **Initial Opportunity to Submit Sites and Comments**. This provides landowners with an opportunity to put forward potential sites to be considered as part of the new plan. Submissions can be made up until June 2010. If you have any queries please contact Huw Connick or John Neil.

Fife Council is due to publish the **Draft Dunfermline & West Fife Local Plan** in February 2010. There will be an eight week opportunity for representations to be made for new sites and re-development in the West Fife Area. For further information please contact Charles Reid Thomas.

### Staff

#### Chris Edmunds

Chris joined us in June on his sandwich year from Harper Adams. He hails from Cumbria and will be gaining experience in property management and general private client work before returning to college next autumn.



#### Clare Maxwell

Clare joined us in July having graduated with an Honours Degree in Animal Science with the SAC and a Masters Degree in Land Economy and Rural Surveying from Aberdeen University. She is already involved in estate management and telecom masts amongst other things and her professional training programme will last for the next two years.



#### Ed & Isla Dunbar

Caroline and Ed Dunbar were delighted to announce the arrival of their daughter Isla May on 10<sup>th</sup> July weighing 6lb 1oz. Isla is their first and has kept Ed on his toes during his APC studies!



Congratulations also to Ed who passed his final RICS assessment in November. Two hard years of training and study have paid off. Ed is now a qualified Chartered Surveyor and has also continued the Davidson & Robertson Rural tradition of a 100% first-time pass rate since the APC began nearly 20 years ago.



# Davidson & Robertson

## RURAL

### Newsletter No 7 December 2009

*Welcome to our December Newsletter.*

*We are delighted to announce that Davidson & Robertson Rural will be merging with John A Neil FIA (Scot) and establishing new premises in Castle Douglas from 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2010. The two firms are already well known to each other and we look forward to working more closely with John over the coming years as we continue to provide high quality, independent advice to new and existing clients across the southwest of Scotland.*



**John Neil and Martin Hall**

*Other articles in this newsletter cover woodland creation under the SRDP, a brief look at the emerging Fife and Dumfries and Galloway Local Plans and the current turmoil in the telecom mast industry.*

*Finally, may we take this opportunity to wish you a very happy New Year and a prosperous 2010.*

*Best Wishes*

**S Martin Hall – Director**

## Woodland Creation under SRDP

The Scottish Government strongly supports planting new woodlands as a key part of its climate change strategy. The Scottish Government has set ambitious new planting targets of 10,000 hectares per annum with a view to reaching 25% forest cover by 2050 (currently 17%). In addition the medium term outlook for timber is good due to rising population, changing trends in the construction industry, an ever increasing interest in wood fibre to replace fossil fuels and a possible future role for woodland in carbon credit systems.



The delivery mechanism for new planting is the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) and recent improvements to the payment rates are likely to see applications gather pace. Under the new rates a productive conifer scheme on LFA land will attract an initial payment of £1,379 per hectare and five years of maintenance at £161 per hectare per annum. In addition to this Farmland Premium payments will compensate for agricultural income foregone over a 10 year period. Under SRDP smaller blocks benefit from a fast track scheme if total funding is less than £250,000. In a bigger block, economies of scale should allow conversion to be a cost neutral exercise over the grant period. Creation of woodland and hedging can also help fund the costs of new fencing as part of the capital works programme allowing a spin off benefit.

Forestry can also provide benefits beyond the traditional aim of timber production including shelter, enhanced amenity, habitat diversification and improved sporting potential. Take for instance that rough bracken bank that never seems to stop spreading. SRDP rules mean that solid stands of bracken are now ineligible to activate SRDP entitlements. In forestry terms, however, bracken usually means good, free draining soils with excellent potential for planting. There is therefore a real opportunity to add value by converting unproductive ground to productive woodland which is an attractive long term asset.



The main thrust of SRDP is an integrated land use strategy to encourage farmers to take a long term view of their overall objectives and to enable the creation of a more sustainable farming sector. There is a sound business case for diversifying long-term risk away from food production by using some land for timber production **without** prejudicing core agricultural operations.

This article has been produced in conjunction with Scottish Woodlands Ltd, the woodland management experts, and if you are interested in creating a new woodland and making an SRDP application please contact Charles Reid Thomas or Niall Milner for further info.

## Telecom Turmoil

The current turmoil in the telecom industry, caused by the merger of Orange and T-Mobile and the proposed amalgamation of the mast networks of other companies, will have an effect on every mast landlord and usually in one of the following ways:-

1. Lease Renewal – leases usually last 10 or 15 years and many of the original agreements are nearing an end. The company will inevitably try to re-negotiate terms at lease renewal but only rarely will this be to your advantage. We normally recommend that a lease be continued on the same terms by tacit relocation.
2. Rent Review – Usually every 3 or 5 years on the higher of OMV or RPI. The companies are actively trying to reduce mast rents dramatically and in some cases this is being done under threat of termination.
3. Lease Termination – Sadly, the upshot of the turmoil will be the need for fewer masts overall. However, termination and removal may be avoidable as it is a very expensive option for the company. In the event, proper reinstatement should be the owner's priority.

Forewarned is forearmed so we would urge you to look out your lease in the New Year particularly if you are facing any of these three situations. Please contact Charles Reid Thomas or Andrew Miller for a review and further advice.

## CASTLE DOUGLAS OFFICE

Davidson & Robertson Rural are delighted to announce that we are going to merge with the Firm of John A Neil FIA (Scot) with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2010. John has provided general property and compensation advice to the farming community in the Southwest for many years. He is a well kent figure at any gathering in the area and he will be permanently based at the new office from 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2010. The contact details of the new office are below.

We are also very fortunate to have recruited **Huw Connick** to partner John in the Castle Douglas Office. Huw already has extensive experience of property and estate management, planning and development, wind farm projects and conservation schemes across the south-west. Huw lives in Newton Stewart with his wife Anne and their new baby, Emily. Huw enjoys fishing and mountain biking when work and childcare permit.



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