

### *The e-bulletin of the Landbased Industries Support Service at Oatridge College*

*Welcome to the December 2006 issue of LISS Online, the e-bulletin from the Landbased Industries Support Service based at Oatridge College. Once again we bring you a comprehensive round-up of the news of interest to everyone working in the landbased sector, but since we are fast approaching the festive season, we have included a few suggestions from experts here at Oatridge, for the sort of last-minute presents which might appeal to green-fingered family and friends. Best wishes for a very Merry Christmas and a happy and productive 2007!*

Chris Wond  
Project Manager  
LISS

### **In this issue of LISS Online...**

- **“Historic” agreement on sector skills**
- **Hear it first at LISS/Lantra seminar**
- **Fund launched for green businesses**
- **SNEC announces programme for 2007**
- **European funding for landbased training**
- **Committee of Enquiry on crofting**
- **Pledge on single farm payments**
- **Making profits without subsidies**
- **All farriers to be registered**
- **Oatridge agricultural engineers are second-to-none**
- **Enforcing environmental law**
- **Food and drink “worth £850m” to Highlands**
- **Tasty in Shetland**
- **Christmas ideas for the green-fingered**
- **They’re aliens Jim, but not a Spock knows them**

#### **“Historic” agreement on sector skills**

The inherent skills and vast experience of thousands of workers in Scotland’s rural industries are to be recognised under a new deal thrashed out over 18 months of consultation with 24,000 employers in 17 industries.

Launching the new Sector Skills Agreement (SSA), Ross Finnie, the Rural Affairs Minister, said that many people in the landbased workforce are highly technically skilled, often with years of vocational experience and family

tradition behind them, but “The problem is, the skills are often unaccredited and their valuable experience not recognised. The Sector Skills Agreement will work to ensure that these skills and experience are acknowledged alongside formal qualifications and professional development.”

Speaking in Perth, the Minister also promised that the SSA would also address misconceptions about working in rural industries: “Historically the landbased sector has suffered from an image of poor pay and low technical skills and is often seen as a non-academic route for students. There is a lack of understanding of the sector and the many exciting career opportunities it offers.”

The tailor-made SSA was brokered and will be run by Lantra in Scotland and fuller details are available on the website: [www.lantra.co.uk/News/](http://www.lantra.co.uk/News/)

### **Hear it first at LISS/Lantra conference**

Delegates to the LISS and Lantra conference on February 6<sup>th</sup> next year are to hear details of a plan by Fife’s award-winning food distribution company, Larder Bytes, to tackle a series of environmental issues, while bringing the ethos of the High Street back to food shopping.

One of the main speakers at “Skills, Sustainability and Rural Development - Challenges and Opportunities for the Landbased Industries” is to be Jim Mullen, who hit on a winning formula when he began his business, supplying local restaurants and hotels with the best of local produce.

Jim will tell the Oatridge College event how he intends to move his business to the next phase by setting up a Scotland-wide home delivery network. He says: “We will be focusing on environmental issues, like reducing carbon emissions, traffic congestion, packaging waste and food waste. We will be supplying the produce that people actually want in the quantities they want, rather than what the large retailers want to sell.”

Focusing on environmental issues, Mullen will explain the benefits and difficulties associated with setting up a regional supply chain network, eventually covering most of Scotland within three years. “We’re not going to be competitors for the supermarkets,” says Jim, “but we will be offering an alternative.

“By doing home delivery we can get away from there being 300 cars in the supermarket car park. We will market the produce online, so there will be no need for all that marketing packaging. People will not need to buy say, a half pound of mince if they don’t need a half pound of mince, so less will go in the bin. We will be delivering to whole communities in one trip, so we’re thinking about the environment again.”

The keynote speaker of February 6<sup>th</sup> will be Stephen Vickers, Head of Rural Property Development at the food-to-bio-energy Buccleuch Group.

For further details and a booking form, contact Chris Wond, Project Manager at LISS, on 01506 864800 or by email: [cwond@oatridge.ac.uk](mailto:cwond@oatridge.ac.uk)

### **Fund launched for green businesses**

A new £1.5 million fund to help develop new technology for the energy industry has been launched by Scotland's Deputy First Minister, Nicol Stephen.

Announcing the Renewable Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Support Scheme, Mr Stephan said: "Earlier this year I launched a £20 million strategy to develop cheap, green energy in Scotland. Included within that package was significant investment to strengthen the role that hydrogen fuel cells could play in the future of renewable energy in this country."

Scottish companies are now able to apply for a share of the fund. The Minister said: "I want to see home-grown companies seize the opportunity created by this new fund to deliver a cleaner, more sustainable future for Scotland."

Fuel cells work in a similar way to batteries, but are designed for the continuous replenishment of the reactants consumed, in other words it produces electricity from an external supply of fuel - such as hydrogen - and oxygen, instead of having the limited internal energy storage capacity of a battery.

[www.scotland.gov.uk/News](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News)

### **SNEC announces programme for 2007**

Carson Jones, the Director of the Scottish National Equestrian Centre at Oatridge has one big Christmas wish...that the recent foul weather improves quickly enough to allow contractors to finish the £3.5 million first phase of the project.

Both giant arenas are virtually complete, but torrential rain and storms during December have meant that work on the exterior, such as car parking, access roads and landscaping, has had to be put on hold.

Even so, Jones is hoping that an open schooling day planned for January 20 - when individuals, groups and clubs will be able to try out the new world-class facilities for free - will go ahead as planned. He says: "It's been very frustrating, but very understandable. The weather has been atrocious, as we've seen from the flooding all over the country.

"We're solidly booked for the 20<sup>th</sup> of January and we had hoped that everything would be perfect by then, but it's now a race against time. I'm sure everyone will understand if we've still got bits and pieces to finish off, but I'm absolutely certain they'll be knocked out by the new arenas. They are fabulous."

Jones has now issued a provisional list of bookings from February to the end of the year, kicking off with a series of clinics by internationally-known experts, quickly followed by a programme of shows and competitions, some of which have never been held in Scotland before.

Details can be had from Carson Jones or Richard Negus, the Events and Facilities Manager, on 01506 864800.

### **European funding for landbased training**

The quantity of European Social Fund (ESF) funding available to Scottish colleges is rapidly diminishing with the expansion of the European Union. Competition within Scotland has been fierce but Oatridge has secured ESF

funds for 2007, although the focus of future European structural funding remains unclear at present. Firstly, Oatridge has been successful in securing funding through the Scottish ESF Objective 3 programme for our “Raising Rural Skills Levels” training project. This means we are in a position to continue to offer discounted training to employees of eligible SME’s in the landbased sectors. Check out your eligibility with Moira Montgomery when booking courses.

Secondly, the new “Rural Skills Academy” project has been developed to provide young people with the opportunity to enter a 26 week landbased training programme and work towards Level 1 qualifications in either Horse Care or Landbased Operations. They will also have the opportunity to progress to a relevant work placement. There are three start dates throughout 2007. Contact either your local Careers Scotland office or the college for further information.

### **Committee of Inquiry on crofting**

The Committee of Inquiry set up to look at how crofting can best contribute to improving the economy, social structure and environment of rural Scotland is to be chaired by Professor Mark Shucksmith.

Shucksmith is currently Professor of Planning at Newcastle University, but was until recently Professor of Land Economy and Co-Director of the Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research at the University of Aberdeen. He Co-Directed the Scottish Centre for Research on Social Justice and has been an adviser to the Environment and Rural Development Committee of the Scottish Parliament and is a member of SEERAD’s Strategic Science Advisory Panel.

### **Equestrian industry to salute high achievers**

*The British Equestrian Trade Association is currently taking nominations for a host of awards to be presented to the highest achievers in the industry. The 2007 BETA Business Awards are widely regarded as the equestrian industry’s “Oscars”. The winners will be announced at a gala dinner on February 18. The deadline is close for all of the categories, so there’s no time to delay. Log on to [www.beta-uk.org](http://www.beta-uk.org) for details.*

### **Pledge on single farm payments**

The Scottish Executive is expecting to pay 70 percent of eligible claims for Single Farm Payment, within the first month of the 2006-07 payment window. It means that approximately £290 million will go out to 14,000 producers during December.

Meanwhile, the Executive has launched a consultation paper proposing changes to the way farm income statistics are collected. Interested parties have until February 22, 2007, to comment on replacing Net Farm Income with a measure called Farm Business Profit.

[www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/)

### **Making profits without subsidies**

The Scottish Enterprise Rural Group is running a series of workshops over the next three months to show farm businesses how there can be life after EU subsidies. The “Profits without Subsidy” events are being run in partnership with the Scottish Agricultural College and the Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society. They will focus on seven key principles for maintaining a competitive and sustainable farm business:

Reducing capital, increasing labour productivity, improving production efficiency, reducing the costs of inputs, adding value to production, supply chain participation and joint ventures and co-operation. Contact SAC or SOAS for details.

### **All farriers to be registered**

Farriers working in the Scottish Highlands and Islands are to lose an exemption, which allows them to work without registering with the Farriers Registration Council. From March 30, 2007 anyone flouting the requirement could face a fine of up to £1,000.

Until now farriers working in Highland Region, the Western Isles, Orkney, Shetland and all other Scottish islands did not have to register because, when the Farriers Registration Act was introduced in 1975, it was feared there would not be enough farriers eligible to register in the remoter parts of Scotland. Following a consultation exercise, Ross Finnie, wearing his Animal Welfare Minister’s hat, said: “Horses and their owners in the Highlands and Islands will have the same degree of protection as that currently enjoyed by those elsewhere in Scotland.”

### **Oatridge agricultural engineers are second-to-none**

Two Engineering SVQ students training at Oatridge College, Calum McLeod (Sellars, Newbridge) and Steven Sloan (Wm Kerr, Ayr), participated in the Weir Shield competition at the Forestry Commission Workshops, Dunkeld on Saturday 25th November. There were six competitors in total, two each from Oatridge, Barony and Elmwood College. The competition has run since 1972, and was devised by Jim Weir, an agricultural engineer working for the electricity board, who wanted to promote the spirit of competition amongst apprentices in Scotland. Apprentices are chosen by their colleges to compete in the event which is judged by independent assessors put forward by the Institution of Agricultural Engineers. In an extremely close contest Steven Sloan, representing Oatridge College, came 2nd overall with Elmwood College winning the Shield.

### ***Jim aims to boost the Bonnie Banks***

*Jim McAloon, the incoming operations director of Scottish Enterprise Dunbartonshire, says his priority will be developing Loch Lomond as a world class visitor destination. As he steps up from his role as the organisation’s senior director for skills and growing business, he says that the Loch is a truly internationally recognised symbol of Scotland, but so far only a tiny fraction*

*of its economic potential has been exploited. He now hopes to build on the success of the resurrected Lomond Shores development with the delivery of an £8 million second phase, including hotel and residential accommodation.*

[www.scottish-enterprise.com/](http://www.scottish-enterprise.com/)

### **Enforcing environmental law**

Spot fines and specialist courts to improve the enforcement of environmental law in Scotland are among suggestions for discussion, following the publication of a new consultation paper by the Scottish Executive.

The paper looks at pollution, waste, wildlife crime, contaminated land, drinking water and the historic environment.

The Executive has also issued a consultation paper with new proposals to change the current laws on the use of snares for catching animals, a practice which is causing concern because of the possibility of inflicting unnecessary suffering. Ministers will look at the possibility of an outright ban. The closing date for views is February 28, 2007.

[www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/)

### **Food and drink “worth £850m” to Highlands and Islands**

A conference at Nairn has been told that food and drink is worth £850 million to the economy of the Highlands and Islands and supports 32,000 jobs.

The figures were given at the “Produce to be proud of” conference, organised by the Moray Firth Partnership for businesses involved in fishing, farming, processing, distribution, retailing and the hospitality and tourism sectors.

### **Tasty in Shetland**

A new “food trail” to promote the delights of traditional Shetland produce to an international audience is to be set up in the new year by a group of local volunteers.

The Shetland Crofting, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group will play host to visitor groups from countries ranging from Norway to Germany and Malta to Ireland during the year of Highland culture. The scheme is part funded by Highland 2007, through Shetland Enterprise and Shetland Island Council.

[www.hie.co.uk/](http://www.hie.co.uk/)

### ***Eat, drink...and forget the guilt!***

*The National Farmers Union in Scotland is hitting back at the media for bombarding us with “seasonal guilt-inducing articles about the amount of calories we are likely to consume” over the Christmas and New Year period. Instead the NFU is congratulating Scotland’s farmers for the excellent quality of the food they produce for festive consumption and reminding everyone that buying Scottish produce will make sure of having the best food on the table, help cut carbon emissions, support local business and allow farmers to continue maintain our beautiful countryside. We’ll eat and drink to that!*

[www.nfus.org.uk/](http://www.nfus.org.uk/)

### **Christmas ideas for the green-fingered**

Nothing is more certain to inspire that Bah! Humbug! mood than spending fruitless hours trailing around packed shops, desperately searching for the right present for a loved one or friend...and it was with this in mind that LISS Online decided to seek out expert advice.

We were especially interested in suggestions for the many people who are into gardening and so decided to consult two of the leading horticulturalists at Oatridge College. John Smith and George Gilchrist have come up with a long list of great ideas, so we thought we would share some with our readers.

John, who's in charge of the College's Suntrap Garden at Gogarburn, suggests books - especially the Royal Horticultural Society series - secateurs by Felco, stainless steel tools from Spear and Jackson, or that good old standby, gift tokens, for starters.

His own wish-list would include an environmentally friendly clockwork radio for listening while working around the garden, a leaf blower/sucker, a Victorinox gardening knife, a pair of loppers (Handy at this time of year) and a pair of thick-skinned gardening gloves.

For the ladies, John recommends floral wellies and/or gardening gloves or a set of small tools. Then there are ornamental pots, membership of societies, a soil testing kit, or some of the gifts from [www.perennial.org.uk](http://www.perennial.org.uk), the website of Perennial, which used to be called the Gardeners Royal Benevolent Society.

Both John and George Gilchrist suggest a visit to [www.wigglywiggles.co.uk](http://www.wigglywiggles.co.uk) for presents for anyone who is environmentally aware, where you can find a range of things like hedgehog boxes, bird boxes and feeders and you can even buy Ladybirds for the garden or a wormery, which comes with a bag of worms to start it!

George has a few quirkier tips, like a Wollemi Pine, a very small tree which was thought to be extinct, but is now on sale at [www.wollemipine.co.uk](http://www.wollemipine.co.uk) or the wonderfully scented Hamamelis, or Chinese Witch Hazel, which is in flower now.

Finally he suggests a visit to [www.gardenorganic.org.uk](http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk) which is the website of the former Henry Doubleday Research Association, where it's possible to "Adopt a veg" and help retain some of the traditional varieties of vegetables.

### **They're aliens Jim, but not a Spock knows them**

Plans are being drawn up to halt an invasion of Scotland by aliens, not, we should hasten to add, little green men, but a range of plants and animals which it is feared could damage native flora and fauna.

Deputy Environment Minister Rhona Brankin has launched a consultation of proposals to make it an offence to sell or release into the wild some species, which are reckoned to be among the most dangerous. They include wild boar, the domestic European ferret, the Chinese Mitten Crab and certain types of parakeets and crayfish.

Plants that are on the alien list include Parrot's Feather, Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed.

[www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/)

### **Event calendar: Jan - Feb 2006**

For details of events and workshops coming up in early 2007 click on [www.liss-scotland.org.uk/news-events/index.htm](http://www.liss-scotland.org.uk/news-events/index.htm)

### **Your guide to short training courses: Jan - April 2007**

A comprehensive listing of short training courses in 2007 organised by Oatridge College can be viewed at [www.liss-scotland.org.uk/info-lib/training-employment.htm](http://www.liss-scotland.org.uk/info-lib/training-employment.htm)

#### **Contributions to LISS Online - January 2007 edition**

We aim to make the e-bulletin accessible to all those who work within the landbased sectors, as well as the wide range of organisations and industry bodies active in supporting and assisting these industries. LISS Online is therefore another means through which you can raise the profile of your local/national activities and highlight your organisation to a broad landbased audience across Scotland.

**We invite you to contribute an item for inclusion in our e-bulletin.**  
Please e-mail your material to me **as soon as possible and no later than Fri 12 Jan.**