

Lee Moor December 2009 diary



Another successful local nativity play - see photo above! Season's greetings to one and all.

Livestock back at Lee Moor?

A farm is not a farm without livestock and indeed grazed pasture is rarely in its best condition unless it is grazed at opportune times of the year. Thus I was keen to get involved with a scheme called Flexigraze which means that I can draw down rare breeds of cattle and sheep and have them graze at set times of the year. I pay a fee for this service, and in return I get the land grazed and indeed fertilised, while having none of the paperwork hassles - and at the end of the process we can buy the beef and lamb produced from the livestock. So I predict that this flying flock - or, indeed, herd - idea will solve a number of problems and also allow people to see rare breeds in their natural environments. As a shareholder in www.sixbaltic.com I am also very keen to see if we can't get the end product on the plate and get tourists through [Northern Wildlife Experience](http://www.northernwildlifeexperience.co.uk) to walk the supply chain... sort of see it, watch it, eat it! SIX does an excellent vegetarian alternative... the truth is, though, that the landscape of the UK is a grazed one and so let's celebrate that.

Garden enters phase III

What has Alnwick or even Howick gardens got to do with Lee Moor Business Park? The arrival of Christian Perdrier has certainly set tongues and blogs a-wagging. (See <http://tinyurl.com/yffkxhm>, and http://www.gardenvisit.com/garden/alnwick_garden has a range of views.) Christian is a global expert in tourism - unlike most of his critics - but his task is huge, as the job of turning Alnwick - town, castle and garden - into an international destination is a big dream. Now, I love big dreams and am happy to help make this happen, but others I feel are more cynical and fail to articulate their real reasons for doubt.

So does the business park need the gardens of Howick and Alnwick? Well, to have the café and its new gallery succeed, yes; and to have Northumberland Estates have funds to upgrade the business park, yes. There are many reasons to support it, and tourism is real 24/7, 365-days-a-year business. The line I love from Christian is that tourism is 'Show Business'. Don't close early on a slow day, he tells us, the show must go on!

...Northumberland is rather well known for being understated! and that will take a little letting go of... but he is right. If local people don't rise to the challenge, inevitably other people will move in and take the tourism opportunities from under our noses, and what a shame that would be.

What are we doing to lower carbon use at Lee Moor?

Since 1995 we have been monitoring carbon production from our business activities, and for a decade we have been substituting renewable energy for oil. As such Lee Moor has ended up being one of the founding fathers of the biomass boiler business. Indeed we are among the few farmers who grow timber to produce heat to sell – on site and indeed elsewhere in Northumberland. We will continue to use renewables and demonstrate best practice, especially around energy performance and smart metering.

See www.susheat.com to find out more.

Old man time

On the last day of the year, Martin, Sarah, myself and Ellie took the chance for a [nature walk](#). It is easy to be so busy that you don't get to enjoy the fruits of your life. Christmas and New Year is a chance to take stock. The conservation I have done and my children are both examples of this. Martin and Sarah are great at telling me exactly what we do have... One example is lichen on a stark winter's day - these are actually fascinating and quite colourful organisms.



Bong... choose where to be snowed in?

I spent the last day of 2009 with a sniffle, essentially snowed in at Lee Moor... good for security of the site! My wife and kids were near Warkworth at my in-laws', and an ex-tenant, Paul Manson, was in the Tan Inn (the highest pub in England – Everest double glazing advert fame!) with his new fiancée Ruth... Well, I'm sure we all enjoyed being snowed in – but differently.

It just remains for me to wish you all a fantastic 2010. May your dreams be realised and your nightmares prove to be fanciful flights of negativity. It will be a year to be a leader, not a follower – mark my words.

Ian

