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Five nation International Conference – Llandudno – 14-16 February

NEW LIFE FOR RURAL EUROPE – WELSH FORESTRY IS SHOWING THE WAY

Wales is leading the way to a brighter rural future through the better use of timber, woodlands and forests as it hosts a major international conference aimed at identifying new ways of increasing jobs and income across Europe.

Drawing up a blueprint for the way forward is key to “*Forestry a new future for rural Europe*” a three-day conference – 14-16 February at Llandudno - run by Robinwood, the Forestry Commission Wales European project which aims to show that trees and woodlands can play an increasingly important role in the lives of millions.

Already each of the project partners, Italy, Germany, Slovakia and Spain, has committed major delegations which will look at how Wales is managing its woodlands for jobs, incomes, health and recreation.

“Forests have a major role to play in the way that rural Europe develops over the next 20 years,” said Kim Burnham of Robinwood, Wales, the European Interreg 111c RFO (Regional Framework Operation) project – funded by the European Union and Welsh Assembly Government.

“Falling incomes, cheap imports and job losses are all adding to the depopulation of our countryside, but Robinwood's aim is to change all that – by

cross border working throughout Europe to identify new ways of making the forests pay, putting new life back into rural areas and boosting the economy.

“And this exciting three day conference is going to give everyone involved in the industry in Wales the chance to play a crucial role in helping to make that process happen.”

As well as top level speakers from the partner regions, and site visits to see more than 15 different ground breaking forest and timber projects across north Wales, every delegate will play a part in putting together a special document detailing how trees can make a difference.

“Most conferences are nothing more than talking shops. This one is different, using all the information we have pulled together, the most innovative new working practices across Europe, we are going to develop a blueprint for change,” said Kim. “Our aim is to create a framework which our politicians, opinion formers and the industry itself can sign up to which allows woodlands to play an even greater role in the regeneration of rural areas.”

The three-day conference is on 14-16 February at Venue Cymru, Llandudno. There is no charge for the three day event, which includes field visits to see timber and forestry enterprises across north Wales on the second day. More details on the “Forestry- a new future for rural Europe” conference are available from Kim Burnham - e-mail kim.burnham@forestry.gsi.gov.uk – tel: 08456 040845 or on the Robinwood web-site: www.robin-wood.it.

17.01.07

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Editor’s note:

Robinwood has given Wales its first opportunity to be a partner in one of the European Interreg 111c RFO (Regional Framework Operation) projects aimed at bringing partner countries together, fostering cross border work between academics, private business and the public sector. The Welsh part of the three and a half year project is worth 1 million Euros to Wales.

Robinwood is a cross-border European project aimed at identifying how forests, trees and timber across Europe can play a vital role in the revitalisation of rural communities through new business opportunities, flood prevention and wood fuel energy. It is hoped that it will also change political perception of the role woodlands can play in the social and economic future of rural communities and build new links between the partner countries involved.

Robinwood will promote the sustainable development of rural areas and overcome obstacles to progress by creating: a woodland chain process - territorial promotion, marketing - new techniques in forestry development - certification, policy changes, silviculture - hydrogeological improvements - models to prevent instability and reduce risks promotion of wood as a fuel source for energy - new management/technologies.

Analyses, sharing of experiences, the creation of new approaches, pilot projects, the preparation of operational and promotional plans and promotions will be used to achieve these. Direct results will be: workshops, meetings, studies, reports, master plans, promotion campaigns, events, maps, networks, partnerships, surveys and directives. Certain activities will be carried out by means of sub-projects assigned by means of open invitations to tender.