

Following another busy year at Moray Estates now comes the opportunity to reflect upon the passage of 2007 and look forward to what 2008 holds!

We would also like to welcome another member of staff into the team. The recent appointment of Nicole Le Vaillant as Tornagrain Development Manager took place in November. Nicole left Hamptons International to join Moray Estates and has stepped in to meet the challenge of overseeing the Tornagrain development.  
*Larry Irwin*



## **Tornagrain**

Following decisions taken by The Highland Council in March and September 2007, which approved the A96 Corridor Strategy: ([www.highland.gov.uk/businessinformation/economicdevelopment/regeneration/a96-corridor-masterplan.htm](http://www.highland.gov.uk/businessinformation/economicdevelopment/regeneration/a96-corridor-masterplan.htm)) the Estate announced its intention to submit a planning application in June/July 2008 for Tornagrain.

You might think that such a large scheme would involve an immensely detailed application. You would be right! As well as the application for the proposal, this will have to be accompanied by an Environmental Statement, which details, through an Environmental Impact Assessment, the potential impact the proposal may have on a wide range of areas. These include site and local ecology, soils, hydrology, archaeology, landscape, transport, air quality, noise & socio-economic factors. As well as

examining the impact, the statement will also detail what mitigation measures have been taken and if the proposal has been amended to reduce the expected impact.

Consistent with our approach to this proposal so far of wishing local communities to be informed and engaged with what we are doing, we have created a 3 steps engagement process for the application preparation. The first of three exhibitions took place in early November in Petty Church Hall to make available the first stage project impact analysis prepared by our consultants. The consultants all attended so local residents could speak to them directly about the potential impact of the proposal. A brochure of the exhibition material was produced and can be downloaded from: [www.tornagrain-newtown.co.uk](http://www.tornagrain-newtown.co.uk) or, obtained from the address on the back of this newsletter.

*Andrew Howard*

## Tornagrain Development Manager

I was delighted to be appointed as the Development Manager for Tornagrain. The opportunity to work on the project is incredibly exciting. For 8 years I worked for Estate Agent's Hamptons International, both in residential sales & latterly managing their own office portfolio of 70 units across England and southern Scotland.

I have been living in the Forres area for a year, so I was aware of the project, but now I'm catching up on 4 years of preparation work. The work covers many areas. I have worked through Land Capability Classification for Agriculture, design codes, Community Engagement Guidance and many other documents. Sometimes important, sometimes surprising facts stand out. For instance, our socio-economic analysis has revealed that by 2031 there will be a 7% fall in 20-39 year olds

in Scotland; whilst this will not alter population growth, because of the growth of older age groups, this poses all sorts of challenges and emphasises the need to take steps to maintain the young in The Highlands – hence the importance of UHI and initiatives such as Inverness Airport Business Park. Quite differently, and perhaps surprisingly, our noise consultants report that, although we have to be mindful of Tornagrain's location vis a vis Inverness Airport it is in fact the A96 that presents the noise challenges on the site not aircraft.

As is reported elsewhere in this newsletter, further public consultation will take place soon. I am very much looking forward to this as a first opportunity to hear local residents' views on the project and meeting members of the local community.

*Nicole Le Vaillant*



Change of scenery at Alves

## Forestry

Tempus fugit. Unbelievably it is planting season again, and once again the weather seems determined to thwart all efforts to be that little bit ahead. Rain followed by snow and ice has held up ground preparations for this year's planting and re-stocking activities. As commented on in the last newsletter, uncertainty over the new forestry grants under the Scottish Rural Development Plan means we continue to press ahead with a full felling programme at present in advance of changes in grant structure. One consequence of this is a change of scenery at Alves with significant felling on both sides of the A96.

We continue to carry out work to assist the beleaguered capercaillie with a programme of management activities in Darnaway forest (an SPA for capercaillie), in order to improve habitat.

Last summer was a buoyant time for prices with optimistic predictions of at last a permanent rise. However much of the timber was bought for stock to hedge against further price rises and with the down turn in housing starts due to the effects of the turmoil in the mortgage market, many sawmills are overstocked and having to work short time with the consequent downward pressure on prices. The actual or perceived impact of fuel wood is keeping the prices of small round wood buoyant but it is the saw logs, which give the real returns at the end of the day, justifying the policy of growing quality timber. Recently it was confirmed that Callanders (our major purchaser at Doune) had secured a site for a new mill and in the north both James Jones and Gordon's continue to upgrade their mills, all confirming their faith in the industry.

*Gareth Whymant*

## Farming

Over the past 12 months we have reintroduced beef cattle to Darnaway by buying 13 pedigree Beef Shorthorn heifers and a bull. The plan is to establish a small herd that will help us to manage the landscape in the castle park.



The Shorthorn breed of cattle, which we know today has evolved over the last two centuries, from Teeswater and Durham cattle from the North East of England. In the late 18th century two brothers, Charles and Robert Colling started to improve these cattle using line breeding techniques established so successfully by Robert Bakewell on Longhorn cattle.

In 1822 Mr. George Coates published the first Herd Book containing 710 bulls and 850 cows, and Coates's Herd Book became the first pedigree herd book for cattle in the world. After publication of the first four volumes, Mr. Henry Stafford took over ownership and retained the name "Coates's Herd Book". After the formation of the Shorthorn Society of Great Britain and Ireland in 1874, the society purchased the copyright of the book and have continued to compile and publish Coates's Herd Book ever since.

The Shorthorn was used in the early part of the 20th century, primarily as a dual purpose breed, but specialisation for beef or milk led to beef producers starting their own section of the herd book in 1958 and now the Beef Shorthorn is recognised as a separate breed. The importance of the Shorthorn breed in the development of other cattle breeds is enormous, and Shorthorn genetics have been used worldwide in the development of over 40 different breeds. The breed is renowned for its quiet temperament, ease of calving and good mothering ability. They are very hardy and thrive on traditional grass based farming systems. Their beef quality is excellent, attracting a premium price in the marketplace. Our first four calves were born last summer, three heifers and one steer, so already the herd is expanding and we will be able to supply readers with some quality beef in the near future.

*Martin Bridges*

## Estates

Some of you may be aware of significant changes in the Estates Department, with Larry Irwin, formerly Estates Assistant, moving to take up the position of Doune Estate Manager just before the Christmas break. We hope that this will provide for much better and locally sensitive management of our Doune and Callendar Estates. It is some time since Doune last had a Factor. The north and south estates were amalgamated

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New Estate Office, Doune





for management purposes in 1958, although James Stirling remained until 1962 as the last factor at Doune. There have, of course, been many changes in estate management since then. In the late 1950's Doune had a staff of 3 in the office with over 20 estate employees. There were even enough men to form an estate cricket team. Increasing mechanisation and the use of contractors has reduced the number of staff considerably, although many of the contractors are based locally. However, we reached the view that, despite modern communication, there was no substitute for management on the ground.

Larry has worked for the company for 2 years in Forres so is conversant with all our estates and we wish him well at Doune.

Last Autumn saw a major milestone reached at Doune with the opening of the Braes of Doune Wind Farm by Scottish Government Environment Minister, Mike Russell. This 36 turbine project, (30 on Moray Estates), has a total capacity of 72 megawatts and feeds into the National



Mike Russell opens the Braes of Doune Windfarm

Grid at Braco. The Wind Farm will generate enough electricity to power 45,000 homes and save the release of approximately 173,000 tonnes of CO2 annually. This is the equivalent of taking 41,000 cars off the road.

The formal opening took place up on the Braes of Doune following a reception at Dunblane. You might have almost thought it had been organised, but as the Wind Farm came into view from the buses transporting guests, they slowly started to move and by the time the opening ceremony was underway, all were in production.

*Duncan McConnell*

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