

# Report on 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Forum of the East Devon AONB

*2<sup>nd</sup> July 2009*

Terry Sweeney attended this event on behalf of the Parish Council, and this is his report:

## **“Background.**

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) are, together with national parks, the nation’s finest landscapes, covering just under 20% of England and Wales. Whilst AONBs are of equivalent status to national parks, their primary purpose is “to conserve and enhance their natural beauty” but not, like national parks, to “provide for quiet recreation”.

East Devon is one of 41 AONBs in England and Wales, was designated in 1963, and covers 268 sq km between Exmouth and Lyme Regis. Only in 2000 did it become a requirement to have a management strategy and a partnership of organisations to coordinate positive action to protect the landscape, and promote social and economic development that contributes to the conservation and enhancement of the environment.

Every year since 2003, an Annual Forum is held to report on progress of the management strategy, now in its second version covering 2005-2014.

## **The forum**

This year more than 80 people attended the Forum at Bicton College, to hear an address by the new Principal, David Henley, about how the College could develop the managers and the skills to best meet AONB aims.

He had to admit to being a Yorkshireman who enjoys riding motorbikes cross-country, but he was clear that teaching new skills and lively enterprise that recognized future needs for food security and energy production in a world confronting climate change, would be Bicton’s way forward.

In answer to queries, he stressed there was a strong role for local food production and use. A sustainability theme would run through all College courses, whether agriculture, arboriculture, machinery or countryside management.

Chris Woodroff, leader of the small AONB team, then presented his review for 2008-2009. A major success was securing, with the Blackdown Hills, AONB to the north, £2.4 million of EU funding over the next 4 years to help local communities improve employment, performance and make the best of local resources. Training, marketing and even village hall improvements were all mentioned.

Other projects completed included promotion of woodland management, improving biodiversity, promotion renewable energy use, and better appreciation of landscape history, such as the recent “Farming in the Lim Valley” exhibition held in Uplyme Village Hall.

## **The AONB strategy and further info**

I acquired for the Parish Council a CD containing the new AONB strategy for 2009-2014, and printed copies of the Annual Review. These are also available on the AONB web site under the management section, and a link from the bottom of the home page [www.eastdevonaonb.org.uk](http://www.eastdevonaonb.org.uk)

### **Summary**

As a large and particularly beautiful parish in East Devon, lying in the AONB, these documents provide valuable insight into the future pressures for change, and ways we can all help protect and improve landscape, wildlife, local services and the local economy.

Terry Sweeney, 8<sup>th</sup> July 2009"

PS from Clerk: some copies of the review are being placed in the Post Office for anyone interested.