

## what's up elsewhere

### Acting the part

Marika Saranne, project manager at Peräpohjolan kehitys ry LAG, describes how a community is at the heart of an interpretation project in Finnish Lapland.

The Peatland Meadow Culture Path is in Finnish Lapland, in the Arctic Circle Hiking Area. Over 100 years ago people used live here, making hay for their cattle from the rich meadows on the edge of the peatland.

The project was made possible through the co-operation of a number of different groups, a combination of professionals and local volunteers. These included the Vikajärvi community, experts from organisations like Metsähallitus ([www.metsa.fi](http://www.metsa.fi)), the Geological Survey of Finland ([www.gtk.fi](http://www.gtk.fi)), Lapland Regional Environment Centre ([www.ymparisto.fi](http://www.ymparisto.fi)) and local action group Peräpohhitys ([www.lapland.ws/ppk/](http://www.lapland.ws/ppk/))

The aim of the site is to show visitors, especially the younger generation, how hard people worked in the past, and how they used the peatlands to support themselves. Old buildings have been restored, including a meadow cabin and barn, and haystacks, scythes and rakes add to the scene. Explanatory interpretation helps people understand the exhibits. Volunteer guides are dressed in old peasant style and re-enact peasant life on the site. Visitors have the chance to try mowing for themselves, and hear stories of peasant life on the meadow peatland.

Initial plans for the site were drawn up by expert conservation organisations, working in partnership. This fruitful co-operation led to a project where a broad range of disciplines is covered in the site's interpretation. Once these plans were drafted the next step was to talk to the community. They gave their opinion of the draft plan, and were committed to the regular meetings which were held during the planning process. The community took an active part in this planning. They collected the folklore of the peasant culture and the site's history. They also looked for old tools and buildings, and were involved in voluntary construction work on the site. The stories and folklore they collected are included in the site interpretation.

The project has been a success because people were open to others' ideas, there were opportunities for discussion, a willingness to redraw plans if necessary, local people were given responsibility and tasks in the planning process and last, but not least, people could see the benefits to the community and individual which came out of the project.

*Marika Saranne*

*project manager, Peräpohjolan kehitys ry LAG*

## Creative Corner - The Participant

Scottish Natural Heritage's Sharing Good Practice (SGP) programme (see [www.snh.org.uk / working with you](http://www.snh.org.uk/working_with_you)) is a series of one day events that invites people to get together to share experience, ideas and inspiration on a wide variety of topics. An SGP event is not a conference, seminar or training course, but a gathering of people who may have very different levels of experience, but who all have something to contribute and something to learn.

Over the last three years we have run three events on working with communities, in partnership with colleagues from SEPA and Forestry Commission Scotland. The first looked at how we can move from consultation to meaningful participation; the second turned things around to look at working with organisations from the perspective of the participant; and the third, in September 2006, focussed on evaluation of community projects and experience.

Thinking about our very broad audience at these events, with representatives from a variety of organisations and community groups, we decided that instead of giving participants a sheaf of conventional handouts, we would produce a newspaper, The Participant. This features articles written by the presenters and workshop facilitators, photos and cartoons, relevant news items and adverts for useful resources and websites. The Participant has the look, feel and style of a local paper, but each issue has a shelf life of around twelve months, and plenty of extra copies have been produced and distributed because it is aimed at a much wider audience than those who come to these events.

Copies of The Participant can be collected from SNH's Battleby Conference Centre near Perth, or posted on request (contact [sgp@snh.gov.uk](mailto:sgp@snh.gov.uk) ). It is also available as a pdf on the SNH website.

'The strongest bond of human sympathy outside the family relation should be one uniting working people of all nations and tongues and kindreds.'

*Abraham Lincoln*