

PARTNERS WILL FOSTER RESEARCH, AND DEVELOP POLICY AND TECHNIQUES, FOR SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Background:

The Moray Firth has been an important fishing area for many years, producing reliable catches from both the demersal and pelagic sectors. The importance of fisheries, particularly in the inner Moray Firth, has declined in recent years although the area is still regarded as an important nursery ground for herring. Many of the fishing vessels have switched their attentions to shellfish, primarily Norway lobster and scallop, which now account for the majority of landings from the Firth's inshore waters. The south coast of the Firth is particularly dependent upon fishing and related activities but the fish landed are primarily caught from outwith the Moray Firth area.

Key ways in which The Moray Firth Partnership can help include:

- encouraging a long term strategic overview of fisheries;
- raising awareness of the economic importance of fisheries and supporting environmental quality;
- promoting integrated management of migratory marine and freshwater fish.

Key Issues and Opportunities include:

- maintaining the area's relatively high water quality, essential for healthy fish-stocks and the fish processing industry;
- highlighting the area's high environmental quality when marketing Moray Firth fisheries products;
- increasing population of seals and their impact upon fish populations;
- exploring more sustainable local fisheries management to ensure the industry's future viability;
- promoting the culture of harvesting;
- potential conflict between fisheries and natural heritage interests but also common ground, such as a for high water quality;
- continued dialogue between oil and fishery interests;
- the loss of fishery grounds and impacts upon spawning and nursery areas from activities such as sand and gravel extraction for which there is a need for early consultation on any applications;
- providing a forum to bring together interested parties to identify suitable artificial reef sites in the Firth and their potential role in sustainable fisheries;
- the cost to the processing industry of implementing effluent regulations, especially if legislative costs are not even throughout the country;
- highlighting the economic importance of fisheries to the area and the high quality of the environment that supports those fisheries;
- evaluating the impact of current aquaculture and potential further development.

Complementary initiatives include:

National: Scottish Environment Protection Agency, The Crown Estate (research programmes), Seafish Industry Authority, Fisheries Research Service (information on species catches, fishing effort, fish predators), Association of Salmon Fishery Boards.

Regional: The Highland Council, (work on regulating orders and Coastal Zone Management), The Moray Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Local Authorities have regulatory authority for fish farms.

Local: Ross & Cromarty Enterprise (food and drink initiative), Beaully Angling Club (River Management Improvement Plan), Spey Research Trust (baseline habitat surveys), Conon District Fishery Board (baseline surveys), District Salmon Fishery Boards (monitoring of stocks), Moray Firth Dolphin Trust (research - River Spey).

NO	ACTION	1999/ 2000	2000/ 2001	2001/ 2002	2002/ 2003	LEAD BODY	CONTRIBUTORS	ROLE OF THE MFP SECRETARIAT
10.1	Ask the fishing industry what role the MFP can usefully play in supporting fishing communities dependent upon the Firth		✓			MFP	HC, WS, SNH	MFP to write to fishing organisations
10.2	Establish the current knowledge on sustainable fisheries and how this might be applied to the Moray Firth, including regulating and several orders. Promote benefits to user groups		✓			<i>to be determined</i>	AC (PD), HC (PD), SNH, WS, FRS	
10.3	Establish current knowledge on enhancement and restoration, including artificial reefs. Promote benefits to relevant user groups			✓		<i>to be determined</i>	FRS, HC (PD)	
10.4	Investigate traditional fishery knowledge and practice for sustainable resource management with a view to re-establishing fishery as a long term goal (pilot area to be determined)		✓			HC (PD)		Assist with seeking funding
10.5	Contribute to the review of the Common Fisheries Policy 2002			✓		<i>to be determined</i>	HC (PD), SNH, FRS	Help with initiating discussion to form a response
10.6	Draw attention to what can be sourced and processed locally to the wider market, eg through a leaflet			✓		SFIA		Assist with seeking funding
10.7	Identify where marketing of Moray Firth fishery products would benefit from links with the Firth's high environmental quality, including labelling and work with producers to achieve this			✓		<i>to be determined</i>	FRS, AC (PD), RACE, SNH, HC (PD)	Help with publicity
10.8	Identify how best the processing industry may meet the costs of implementing effluent regulations, especially if legislative costs are not even throughout the country		✓			MC (EDP), HC	FRS, HC (PD), RACE	Help with organising any meetings
10.9	Undertake programme of baseline river corridor and landuse surveys for rivers entering the MF which are important for salmon and sea trout, identifying priority factors that adversely affect salmon and sea trout population (pilot area to be identified)			✓		<i>to be determined</i>	ASFB, BAC, FRS, CDSFB, MFD, SRT, SNH, WS,	
10.10	Develop and implement an Integrated Catchment Plan for the River Spey		✓			SNH	SEPA, HC, MC, SDSFB and all Relevant Authorities	
10.11	(a) Identify priority rivers entering the Firth for which there is a need for the development of Integrated Catchment Management Plans and (b) Develop and implement plans through wide consultation, learning from the experience of the Spey (pilot area to be identified)				✓	(a) SWT (b) <i>to be determined</i>	ASFB, CDSFB, SEPA, FRS, HC (PD), SNH	
10.12	Evaluate impact of current aquaculture and potential further development		✓			FRS	SEPA, SNH	
10.13	Explore the role of the MFP in addressing the perceived predator issue			✓		MFP	ASTB, BAC, FRS, CDSFB, SNH, WS, MFWC, MFD, SRT	

GUIDELINE II

PARTNERS WILL PROMOTE A HEALTHY MARINE ENVIRONMENT BY TAKING ACCOUNT OF, AND SEEKING TO INFLUENCE, LAND BASED ACTIVITIES WHICH AFFECT THE SURROUNDING SEA

Background:

The coastal fringe and hinterland of the Moray Firth supports a diverse range of land uses. The coastline has a population of more than 150,000, living in hamlets, villages and towns along the coastal edges and across the major firths. Along much of the coastline agricultural land runs down to the coastal edge with crofting fairly sparsely distributed. Large-scale forestry is present in some coastal locations such as the Culbin Sands. The Ministry of Defence also has a significant presence in the Moray Firth with Royal Air Force bases at Kinloss, Lossiemouth and Tain. Many of the issues and opportunities identified relate to the down-stream or 'down firth' effects of the use of this land.

Key ways in which The Moray Firth Partnership can help include:

- exploring further integration of existing codes of practice;
- raising awareness of issues of concern.

Key Issues and Opportunities include:

- determining local areas of concern and conflict with regard to land use impacts;
- improving the accessibility of land use information
- increasing the awareness and recognising the importance and benefits of agriculture and forestry and its interpretation;
- enhancing farmers' awareness of environmental enhancements, particularly in relation to water courses;
- exploring further integration of codes of practice for land use;
- developing river catchment planning in the Moray Firth area;
- recognising the impact of some land use that reduces the water quality of rivers and run-off into the Firth including agriculture, distilleries, forestry and urban areas;
- loss of semi-natural coastal habitats and sites of cultural importance through expansion of the built environment or improvement for agricultural purposes;
- the impact of some land use on coastal physical processes and a need to recognise the role of forestry in coastal protection;
- the impact of mineral extraction upon coastal processes and habitats;
- coastal access and car parking;
- fly-tipping that reduces the quality of the local environment;
- future changes in goose populations and geese management.

Complementary initiatives include:

National: Forest Enterprise (application of pollution control guidelines, monitoring and assessment), Forestry Commission, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (application of Best Management Practices to appropriate developments, catchment management planning), Scottish Natural Heritage (as it relates to the natural heritage through consultative process).

Regional: Highlands & Islands Enterprise Network (Community Land Unit), The Highland Council, The Moray Council, Aberdeenshire Council.

Local: Spey Research Trust, The Highland Council (Protective Services), Moray Firth Wildlife Centre (raising awareness of land use issues through pollution).



NO	ACTION	1999/ 2000	2000/ 2001	2001/ 2002	2002/ 2003	LEAD BODY	CONTRIBUTORS	ROLE OF THE MFP SECRETARIAT
11.1	Improve accessibility of landuse information to inform landuse decisions, including catchment maps			✓		<i>to be determined</i>	ASFB, CDSFB, HIE, HC (PD), SNH, FC	Links to Partnership Project I
11.2	Identify how the integration of codes of practice might reduce impacts on the marine environment of the Firth			✓		SNH	HIE	Help with initial organisation of discussion group

PARTNERS WILL SUPPORT THE SENSITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION BACKED UP BY EFFECTIVE CONTINGENCY PLANNING

Background:

Currently, the only exploited oil field in the Moray Firth is the Beatrice Field, operated by Talisman Energy (UK) Limited and the Captain Field, operated by Texaco, situated just outside the Firth. Exploration continues in the Firth. All stages of oil exploration and exploitation can have an impact on the lives of local communities and the environment.

Key ways in which The Moray Firth Partnership can help include:

- bringing together the different interests with a stake in, or concerned about, oil and gas exploration and production;
- helping to disseminate information from production/exploration companies as requested.

Key Issues and Opportunities include:

- developing the oil and gas industry alongside the development of the most effective pollution contingency measures, including those that will be required for decommissioning work.

Complementary initiatives include:

National: Scottish Natural Heritage (advice on new developments), Fisheries Research Service, Maritime & Coastguard Agency.

Regional: The Highland Council, The Moray Council and Aberdeenshire Council (Emergency Planning), Talisman Energy (UK) Limited/Scottish Natural Heritage (study to improve guidelines for dealing with cetaceans in the event of a spill, existing oil spill contingency plans and shoreline protection plans, oil spill response exercises).

Local: Talisman Energy (UK) Limited (exploration and production), Texaco (production).



NO	ACTION	1999/ 2000	2000/ 2001	2001/ 2002	2002/ 2003	LEAD BODY	CONTRIBUTORS	ROLE OF THE MFP SECRETARIAT
12.1	Undertake a study of the purchasing requirements of the oil and gas industry and possible local constraints including environmental issues. Create and implement an action plan to improve the marketing of local industry to the oil and gas industry			✓		<i>to be determined</i>	MC, Tal, CFLG, SNH, HIE	Help disseminate information
12.2	Establish an oil spill liaison group for the Moray Firth to examine current legislation and regulations, lessons learnt from recent oil spill incidents and exercises and identify actions to be taken forward (including experience from elsewhere)		✓			Tal	FRS, AC (PD), HC, MCA, CFLG, SNH, Tex, BARMAC	Initial help with organising meeting
12.3	Identify and implement mechanisms for developing dialogue between the oil industry and local communities, industry groups, fisheries and environmental groups in order to enhance wider understanding of respective needs, goals and issues			✓		Tex	BDC, FRS, AC (PD), Tal, SNH, MFWC, BARMAC	Initial help with organising discussion group, circulating information, identifying key contacts
12.4	Carry out a risk assessment and review of decommissioning practices elsewhere to determine the range of environmental hazards, how they might be overcome, using existing information and highlight issues surrounding decommissioning through education			✓		BARMAC	FRS, Tal, SNH, INCC, MFWC, Tex	Help with disseminating information. Possible student project

PARTNERS WILL PROMOTE THE MANAGEMENT OF RECREATIONAL USE AND ACCESS TO THE COAST

Background:

The coastline and inshore waters of the Moray Firth are used for a wide range of sport and recreational activities. Much of this activity is informal, such as walking and dingy sailing, together with a range of organised water and land-based clubs and organisations used by families, informal groups and individuals for a variety of activities. For many, the Firth is a place for relaxation and inspiration. It is the balance of these different types of activities which often require different aspects of the Firth's resources that has, or has the potential, to result in conflict. Conflict can be between different recreational activities, recreation and other users of the Firth and with the natural heritage. There is also the opportunity for positive management to ensure that all legitimate users are able to fully enjoy the Firth's resources.

Key ways in which The Moray Firth Partnership can help include:

- bringing together the different interests in recreational use;
- providing a forum for recreational users and service providers/managers to debate needs and issues.

Key Issues and Opportunities include:

- establishing the existing level of use for sport, recreation and access;
- establishing the location, or lack, of existing recreational facilities around the Firth;
- establishing and publicising ownership and management responsibility;
- public water safety information at appropriate locations;
- assessing existing and potential conflicts between incompatible recreational uses and users and minimise these with appropriate management measures, such as zoning;
- pro-actively promoting appropriate use of the Firth;
- encouraging networking amongst existing recreation clubs and bodies to cater for new minority sports and to promote good practice including codes of conduct;
- expanding local coastal path and cycling networks;
- concern over the loss of green space that might otherwise be available for recreation;
- ensuring the maintenance of harbour infrastructure for recreational use, including disposal facilities, and an opportunity to explore the role of the Firth in attracting recreational yachts.

Complementary initiatives include:

National: Forest Enterprise (promotes and manages its own sites and database), North of Scotland Yachting Association (website on local sailing clubs), Scottish Natural Heritage (with respect to natural heritage, including the Dolphin Awareness Initiative), Maritime & Coastguard Agency, Paths for All, The Crown Estate (Geographical Information System with information specific to its own management purposes), The Tourism and Environment Forum (sustainable tourism guidelines).

Regional: The Highland Council (database of existing sports clubs, Access Strategy), Aberdeenshire Council (Countryside Access Strategy), Footpath Trust (1997 Survey of Access, planning new routes and promotion and proposed Path Network Participation Survey 1999-2001), Inverness Museum (data from Moray Firth Oceanwatch, 1995), Local Enterprise Companies (ongoing tourism projects), Ranger Services, The Moray Council, Highland Cycle Campaign ('Round Beaully Firth' route), Highlands & Islands Enterprise Network (Land Ownership Database), Moray Access Network Initiative.

Local: Local Sports Councils, Nairn Tourism Management Plan (informal recreation audit), Royal Findhorn Yacht Club, Inverness and Nairn Canoe Club, Findhorn Bay Local Nature Reserve, Cycle Nairnshire (paths around Nairn), Speyside Way extension, Nairn Seafront Renewal Project, slipway extension at Dunbeath.

NO	ACTION	1999/ 2000	2000/ 2001	2001/ 2002	2002/ 2003	LEAD BODY	CONTRIBUTORS	ROLE OF THE MFP SECRETARIAT
13.1	Develop a database of existing access to the Firth and identify gaps		✓			HC (CL/PD), MC (TL/EDP), AC (ER/PD)	FE, KHA, INCC, RFYC, PP, FT, HIE, MCA, CFLG, SNH, BHUA, HCC, MFWC, PFA, RACE	Links to Partnership Project I. Help secure funding
13.2	Identify 3 priority areas of current/potential conflict between recreational users & with the environment on the coastline & identify & pursue mechanisms for working together to resolve these (including zoning, codes of conduct, open/closed season, safety practices)		✓	✓		HC (CL/PD), MC (TL/EDP), AC (ER/PD)	RFYC, HCC, FE, MFWC, MCA, FoE, SNH, CFLG	
13.3	Identify existing Best Practice Guidelines for recreation on the coast and disseminate through the network of existing clubs and bodies, eg for wildfowling, canoeing, sea angling			✓		HC (CL/PD), MC (TL/EDP), AC (ER/PD)	INCC, RFYC, FT, FE, MCA, SNH, CFLG	Help with disseminating information Assist with seeking funding
13.4	Identify priority areas where new codes of conduct or development of Best Practice would be appropriate		✓			HC (CL/PD), MC (TL/EDP)	RFYC, FT, MCA, SNH, PFA, TTEF	
13.5	Identify and implement programmes to expand for all abilities local path networks for cyclists, walkers, horse riders in priority areas (pilot area to be determined)		✓	✓		HC (CL/PD), MC (TL/EDP), AC (ER/PD)	HCC, KHA, INCC, FT, MFWC, FoE, RACE, SNH, PFA, HIE	Help with dissemination of information/publicity
13.6	Assess current and potential demand for filling gaps in existing facility provision (including slipways, toilets, litter removal and disposal)				✓	HC (CL/PD), MC (TL/EDP), AC (ER/PD)	KHA, INCC, DHIC, RFYC, HCC, FT, HIE, MFWC, RACE, SNH	Help with dissemination of information/publicity
13.7	Publicise existing paths open to the public (pilot area to be determined)			✓		HC (CL/PD), MC (TL/EDP), AC (ER/PD)	KHA, INCC, FT, EM, RACE, FoE, SNH, PFA	Help with publicity
13.8	Design a programme of maintenance of harbour infrastructure for recreational use for priority harbours (including dredging disposal facilities and attraction of recreational yachts)			✓		<i>to be determined</i>	INCC, RFYC, HIE, RACE, SNH	Gather information and advice for local communities in self help and raising funds

PARTNERS WILL PROMOTE GOOD SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF ACTIVITIES WHICH AFFECT THE SEABED

Background:

The bulk of the dredged material deposited in the Moray Firth is silt and sand, although sand and shingle can occur in maintenance dredging. In 1996, 443,584 tonnes of dredged material were deposited in licensed sea disposal sites in the Moray Firth. The Marine Laboratory will continue to monitor the quality of dredged spoil being deposited in licensed sea disposal sites in the Moray Firth and ensure that OSPARCOM guidelines are met.

Key ways in which The Moray Firth Partnership can help include:

- bringing interests together;
- raising awareness of issues important to particular sectors of interest;
- encouraging wide and early consultation on dredging, dumping and mineral extraction.

Key Issues and Opportunities include:

- elevated suspended solids concentration;
- changes to natural seabed sediments regimes;
- destruction of benthic fauna and flora and damage to fisheries and fish breeding areas;
- release of pollutants, including heavy metals, to the marine environment;
- full consideration of all relevant interests before dredging and sea disposal activities are undertaken and during consultation period;
- consideration of alternative disposal options and constructive uses of dredged material.

Complementary initiatives include:

National: Fisheries Research Service (current research on effects of dumping in sensitive areas, eg Sutors, consideration of alternative options), North of Scotland Yachting Association (through Department of Transport referrals), Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Natural Heritage (advises on natural heritage implications), The Crown Estate (research on effects of marine aggregate dredging).

Regional: Aberdeenshire Council, The Moray Council, The Highland Council.

Local: Moray Firth Wildlife Centre (awareness raising, dredging of local harbours eg Brora - dredged material used for sea defences).



NO	ACTION	1999/ 2000	2000/ 2001	2001/ 2002	2002/ 2003	LEAD BODY	CONTRIBUTORS	ROLE OF THE MFP SECRETARIAT
14.1	Research on dumping between the Sutors		✓			FRS		Help distribute information on new surveys