

Cromarty 2007

Events to celebrate the visit of The Moray Firth Flotilla June 26th to 28th 2007

General Comments

The concept of the Flotilla and the intention to visit ports with a strong historical link to fishing and the sea was excellent. The flotilla organiser made an early approach to Cromarty, an obvious and deserving venue, and was given an enthusiastic response from the newly formed Cromarty 2007 group. Cromarty had already embarked on an ambitious year long programme and to celebrate the Fleet's visit a series of events aimed at raising awareness of our marine environment, both on and beside the sea were planned, whilst ensuring the Highland 2007 concept of community involvement was met.

Original Programme

Tuesday afternoon	arrival of fleet from Helmsdale
Tuesday evening	open music session in Royal Hotel
Wednesday morning	boats available for visitors
Wednesday mid-day	Parade of Sail with on-shore commentary, trips in "EcoVentures" dolphin watch RIB giving close up views of the boats under sail.
Wednesday afternoon	"Highland Games" themed school sports on Cromarty Links followed by children's theatre, beach sculpture, face painting, games etc.
Wednesday afternoon	boats available for visitors, stalls, food, refreshments, etc. in the traffic free harbour area
Wednesday evening	open-air music event with martial arts display, visit of Invergordon Lifeboat. Food and refreshments available during the evening.
Thursday morning	Flotilla leaves for Buckie

Actual Events

Due to adverse weather a decision taken by the flotilla organisers in the interests of safety meant that the fleet's arrival at Cromarty was delayed by 24 hours.

Despite this delay the Tuesday evening music session in the Royal Hotel next to the harbour went ahead, regrettably the flotilla personnel missed an excellent session with a capacity crowd occasionally spilling outside to appreciate a pleasant summer evening.

In addition the Parade of Sail scheduled for Wednesday had to be cancelled as the fleet didn't arrive until later in the day. This cancellation meant there was no onshore commentary and the trips on EcoVentures RIB were limited to the shorter time the arriving fleet took to berth. This was particularly unfortunate as the intention had been to provide the shore-based audience with current and historical information on the boats and their place in our fishing past by means of a live commentary from the Cromarty Boat Club Tower.

All the other events listed above went ahead.

General feedback was very positive and numbers were good.

Promotion

The event was publicised through posters, leaflets, a dedicated website, links in other websites, e.g. CromartyLive, and Cromarty Boat Club, local and national newspapers and local radio.

All printed material, including letters, clearly displayed the logos of the Moray Firth Partnership and other bodies that supported the event. Banners with the logos were prominently displayed at this and other Cromarty 2007 events.

Leaflets were distributed to every household in the Cromarty area; in addition supplies were distributed regularly to Post Offices, tourist information offices, shops, etc. in the Ross shire and Inverness area.

The Press and Journal supplement was available in the local hotel, pubs and shops for two weeks before the event.

Posters were displayed throughout the Black Isle; these were put up on community notice boards, in shops, community centres, etc.

The Press and Journal stand distributed copies of their supplement on the day.

The flotilla event had coverage by Moray Firth Radio. Cromarty 2007 had already obtained agreement from MFR to promote our own event before the flotilla organisers arranged a MFR link to cover all venues.

Acknowledgements of sponsors were made at all events throughout the day.

Visitor Numbers

An estimated 2000 people attended the event over the two main days. The area contained within the road closure measures had sufficient capacity for approx 2500 visitors alone.

The attendance estimate was based on the number of safety leaflets distributed (see safety), head counts and event volunteer's personal conversations with visitors.

The majority of visitors were, not surprisingly, from within an approx. 25 mile radius of Cromarty but a significant number were reported from Inverness, Ross-shire and Moray, others came from the rest of Scotland and England plus several from Europe, Australia, the Far East, Canada, New Zealand and USA.

A significant number of families attended, this was particularly satisfying as we had aimed to provide interest for all ages. It was also rewarding that many were of a more mature age. Arrangements were made to provide access for the disabled from local rest homes.

Safety

A Safety Management Plan and Risk Assessments were prepared prior to the event and discussed with the relevant bodies.

All event details were made available to, and discussed with, the local Community Council, Police, Fire Brigade, Cromarty Primary School, Cromarty Harbour Trust, etc.

A safety leaflet was given out to all visitors at both the road closure and harbour barriers to ensure visitors were aware of the hazards and their personal responsibilities; this was also used to estimate visitor numbers. The location of the barriers meant no one could enter the area without passing one of our stewards. Safety signs were displayed throughout the area, particularly within the harbour area. These clearly underlined the hazards involved and were in addition to the signs displayed in the area by the Highland Council and Cromarty Harbour Trust.

The local First Aid Responders provided First Aid cover. They are fully trained and equipped (including defibrillators) and controlled from a regional centre.

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) were present at the event as was the local RNLI Invergordon Lifeboat.

The policy was that any major incident would be referred to the appropriate emergency services.

Car Parking

In addition to the normal parking available access to a signed and roped off area on the Links provided adequate additional facilities on the day, these were controlled by stewards. Had it been required significant overspill parking space was available at the local park, this had been agreed with the Police and local council.

Site access

Appendix 1 shows the location of the harbour and Links area that were the main locations.

The school sports and beach activities on the Links area were cordoned off. Road closure orders around the Harbour were obtained, this was well signed and points of access and egress were controlled. Access for emergency vehicles was provided. Additional barriers and access points to the harbour area controlled by stewards allowed additional control of numbers visiting the boats and harbour area.

Crowd Control

Surveillance was achieved from the CBC Tower that acted as the Control Point for the event organisers. The Tower is located near the Cromarty/Nigg ferry slipway and has unobstructed views both over the harbour and Links area.

No significant pinch points had been identified; the event was free which reduced the need for control of movement in and out. The site had ample room with wide exit roads.

Evacuation would have been effected by a combination of public address announcements over the PA system and control by the stewards. As mentioned the number and size of the exits presented no threat to a quick and effective operation. In addition to the full PA system, a personal loud hailer was used to advise smaller groups if necessary.

Arrangements were in place to deal with lost children and personal belongings. Fortunately there were no lost children, but several personal articles were handed in and returned to their owners.

Communication

Where necessary communication with visitors was done using the PA system at the harbour, a megaphone for smaller groups or by word of mouth by stewards.

The controller at the Tower had a mobile phone whose number was known to the volunteers. A list of volunteer's personal mobile phone numbers was also held at the Tower. In addition 2 VHF handheld sets were available if required.

Public Health

Volunteers checked, cleaned and replenished the local public toilets throughout the day. It was considered that the cover normally in force did not meet our requirements; hence the additional attention was provided.

Extra litterbins were provided and regularly emptied. At the end of the day the site was cleared of the debris left by the late revellers and made secure.

Arrangements were made to have all bagged debris collected by the local council within 24 hours of the flotilla's departure.

Stalls

Several stalls and promotional stands were accommodated in prominent locations: The Puppet Theatre, Beach art and sculpture, Scottish Cooperative, Press and Journal, RNLi Guild, Maritime and Coastguard Agency and Face painter. A space for the expected Moray Firth Partnership marquee was allocated next to P&J but was not taken up.

A large stage to accommodate the musicians with a full PA system was located near the harbour.

Electrical power was provided where required.

Benefits to the community

Impact on local business

After the event reaction was canvassed from local businesses, the local shops, restaurants, coffee shops, pubs and hotel reported their busiest day for years.

It was reported that guest accommodation in the area was fully booked over the period. Several visitors questioned had arrived prior to the event.

The food and merchandise stall manned by the RNLi Guild raised approx £1000, other fund raising benefiting the RNLi were sales of raffle tickets on the visiting lifeboat, collections made by "EcoVentures" during boat trips and a half share of a public collection taken on Wednesday night. The other beneficiary of this collection was Cromarty 2007.

Intangible benefits

Educational. All sectors of the community were given the opportunity to see at first hand the types of boats that had fished from ports such as Cromarty. The opportunity to visit and speak to those crewing the differing boats was unique.

The children explored not only the boats but also the beach as well whilst engaged in artistic use of natural materials.

The "Puppetlab" presentation consisted of a series of inspirational stories on environmental themes. The performances provided great fun for all and covered themes such as conservation, litter, outdoor activities and information about the animals, nature and our interaction.

Unsolicited comments suggested that it had been an enjoyable and informative event.

The major part that the flotilla visit has played in Cromarty's yearlong community celebrations is difficult to measure, but there is no doubt that it remains one of the high points of our year.

Boats

All aspects of the berthing of the boats, etc. were the joint responsibility of the Cromarty Harbour Master and the Flotilla organisers.

Cromarty 2007, with full support from The Cromarty Boat Club, provided food and refreshments for boat crews on arrival, toilets, showers, camping area and facilities to recharge phones etc.

It was a pleasure to welcome the fleet and the crews entered into the spirit of the event despite the cool and damp weather.

Miscellaneous Event Details

The RNLI Guild had a very successful day with a brisk trade in food and RNLI merchandise despite the weather.

Many camera enthusiasts were seen, especially as the Fleet entered the Cromarty Firth during Wednesday afternoon and during the departure on Thursday.

It was particularly appreciated that the "Isabella Fortuna" deliberately tacked across under full sail and passed close to Cromarty harbour affording a close-up. We are pleased to report that an opportunity arose at a later date to personally express our thanks to the skipper and crew for this gesture.

The School sports and beach activities were very well attended. An early sharp downpour, complete with large hailstones, did not deter the activities or the enjoyment of watchers and participants.

The colder weather experienced later on Wednesday evening didn't stop the music or the dancing in the streets of Cromarty, a lively Strip the Willow in Bank Street being a particular highlight of this event.