

MORAY FIRTH PARTNERSHIP COMMUNITY GRANTS SCHEME 2008 END
OF PROJECT SURVEY FROM THE FINDHORN DUNES TRUST NOV 08

The aim of the project was to produce an expert survey of the lichens of the Findhorn East Dunes, a neglected part of the famous Culbin Dune System, organised into a comprehensive, illustrated study and available to lichenologists, biology teachers and environmentalists as a paper reference or disc copy.

We used the services of Dr B Coppins, the foremost UK expert on lichens, and A M Coppins to make the survey and to write up the report. We achieved more than we expected in the sense that the report is such an impressive piece of work in every respect.

School teachers have been given copies of the survey and the find it particularly useful to demonstrate to senior environmental students how a report of this kind is put together. The report includes a suggested project for pupils and we have plans to illustrate a simple lichen trail (as exists at Edinburgh Botanic Gardens). Senior pupils (17-18) have already constructed a barrier to prevent vehicle access to the most valuable lichen area of the dunes and they and volunteer adult groups have been busy reducing the number of alien Lodgepole Pines in the area.

With all projects it is important to be clear about exactly what you want and why.

A local press cutting is attached from the Forres Gazette. The survey has also been publicised in the house magazine of the Findhorn Foundation which is next door to the site, and an article will appear in the British Lichen Society twice-yearly journal as well as the Society holding the list for the Findhorn East Dunes – previously recorded as 22 lichen species but actually 145, more than Cuthill SSSI at 111!

The cost of the producing the survey was as agreed – a contribution of £1000 from the Moray Firth Partnership as part of the total cost of £2515.20 (receipt enclosed).

There has been considerable local interest in the Survey which supports the efforts of the Findhorn Dunes Trust to safeguard the site and encourages our volunteer helpers. The protection of the site from future development is guaranteed because it was a condition of the Trust's ownership that the site was never to be developed. The site will be managed by the Trust as recommended in the survey including the continuing reduction of Lodgepole Pines, the erection of another information board to encourage use of paths (one has already been installed at the main car parking area) and to discourage firelighting, vehicles or other damage. The use of the Moray Coast Trail will be monitored to ensure that the use is consistent with the thriving of the lichens which it will be if the footpaths are used as it would be expected that they will be - there are very clear tracks and pathways across these dunes as well as posts to mark the Moray Coast Trail.

Report highlights dunes' importance

A REPORT has been published which details the rare beauty and natural importance of the Findhorn dunes.

The detailed 110-page illustrated survey of the East Findhorn Dunes and its precious covering of lichen was commissioned by the Findhorn Dunes Trust following a visit from an expert about four years ago.

The trust was established in 2000 after a gift of around 80 hectares of land was donated by Duneland Ltd, who bought a much larger area next to the Findhorn Foundation, including the old Wilkie Wood, but decided to donate part of it to the local community to be kept and managed in trust for them.

The two groups often work together to try and protect the wider area and a separate group calling itself "The Hin-

terland Group" was the result of a meeting held about three years ago, attended by people from Findhorn village, the foundation and members of the two trusts, to try and mastermind a 'bigger plan for the wider area.

The trust also works to try and protect the sensitive dunes, which are designated a site of outstanding landscape value.

The main threat to the landscape is from motorised vehicles, which are banned from the site. During the summer, the group also has to contend with camper vans and cars which drive onto the dunes, unaware or unappreciative of the damage they are causing.

Walkers and cyclists are also expected to keep on the paths and stay away from the actual dunes, to prevent further damage.

Trustees of the Find-

horn Dunes Trust are the convener, Lambert Munro, Davina Thomas, Judith Berry, Joan Wilmot, Janet Waddington and Marek Durcacz, who look after the land which is located to the east of Findhorn village.

It was after the trust was visited by Dr Brian Coppins, the foremost UK expert on lichens, who is based at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh in 2004, that the idea to produce a report was formulated.

Spokesperson Davina Thomas said it was that visit which made the trust very aware that their land was a very special site for lichens, as well as its rare and unusual landscape value.

"Identifying lichens is often done with a microscope, or even using DNA analysis," said Davina. "It is definitely not a job for the amateur."

She said it was thanks

to the support of Scottish Natural Heritage and the Moray Firth Partnership, the trust was able to commission a survey by Dr Coppins.

A paper copy of the survey is available from the Scottish Natural Heritage office at 32 Reidhaven Street, Elgin, or a disc copy is available by contacting Davina on 01309 690223.



Laughter rings round

FORRES Varis Club president David Buxton welcomed 42 members to the monthly meeting in the Town Hall last Tuesday. Details of the club's Christmas lunch on December 9 were finalised, with around 55 people expected to attend.

The Rev Douglas Clyne, the guest speaker, had just returned from his 34th trip to the Holy Land, both visiting privately and escorting tours. With his extensive knowledge of that part of the world, he opened his talk with some interesting facts about its history and the significance of Jerusalem to Jews, Mormons, Freemasons and Muslims.

Returning to the subject of his own childhood in Inverness as the youngest of four brothers, he contrasted the minimal accommodation of the fam-

ily home with the sh with hot water and e/ fairly deprived backg the Inverness accen his brother's shadov bananas in the Co-o much laughter amon

In thanking the : lighted Mr Clyne's s ever-happy personal thoroughly enjoyabl

The next meeting the Findhorn and R preceded by tea or members will be wel

FORRES GAZETTE
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