



MORAY FIRTH PARTNERSHIP

UPDATE March 2007

Welcome to the first MFP members update for 2007. Find out the latest news on the Flotilla, Beach Guardians, Hands across the Firth and Moray Firth Trail projects and read about the outcomes of the Annual Conference and Produce to be Proud of Conference. Catch up on the latest staff news and find out more about our Community Networking Grant Scheme, which is still open for applications. Finally, with your help, we are about to embark on a complete review of the Partnership's membership system. See below for more info. We hope you find the update useful and look forward to your feedback. Enjoy.....

Membership Survey and Review

At present, membership of the Moray Firth Partnership is free and open to all. Although the current structure has worked well in the past, the Partnership wants to:-

- encourage more active interaction with, and between, members
- provide increased benefits; and
- offer members more direct input to the work and direction of the Partnership.

Thanks to sponsorship from LifeScan Scotland Ltd, we are about to carry out a complete review of the Partnership's membership system in consultation with you, our members.

We will be issuing a membership questionnaire at the end of March and would be delighted if you could participate and give us your ideas.

Once we know what you would like from the Partnership, we will complete our feasibility study, which may include the option of introducing a subscription membership scheme.

We will then produce a new leaflet about the MFP, identifying the benefits to you, and to the Firth, of becoming an active member.

Moray Firth Flotilla

The Flotilla is set to be one of the highlights of the Year of Highland Culture 2007 and the scope of the event continues to grow.

As well as Highland 2007 funding (£22,650), we have secured funding from the Scottish Co-operative (£10,000), the Crown Estate (£10,000), HIE Caithness and Sutherland, HIE Inverness and East Highland and HIE Moray (£14,360), Platform PR (£10,000 in kind), Old Pulteney (£2,000), Awards for All (£9,400) and Talisman (£3,000).



Our Marketing and PR Plan will ensure coverage in the local, national and boating press and other publicity, both for the Flotilla and the wide-ranging events

taking place at the ports of call. We have commissioned a special commemorative 12-page supplement in the Press & Journal, and the P & J is also going to run a special competition, so keep your eyes on the press for your chance to win! The Northern Provincial Press will be producing three local supplements, focusing more on the local activities. Over 30 boats have already confirmed they will take part, with the core being made up of traditional fishing boats from the Moray Firth.

In addition to the local boats, we are delighted to welcome boats from Norway, the Faeroes and Shetland.



The sailing schedule is :-

June 23 at Wick, 24 at Lybster, 25 at Helmsdale, 26 - 27 at Invergordon and Cromarty, 28 at Buckie and 29 June - 1 July at Portsoy as part of the Scottish Traditional Boat Festival.

For further information on the Flotilla please contact Sinclair Young, Flotilla Co-ordinator on 01349 877858 or ssyoung@msn.com

Conference Updates

What a Difference a Decade Makes!

The MFP Annual Conference took place on 24th November 2006 at the Highland Council Chambers in Inverness. We celebrated our 10th birthday with 70 delegates, reflecting on the achievements of the past decade and looking forward to the future.



Sir John Lister-Kaye, one of Scotland's foremost naturalists and a long-standing supporter of the Moray Firth Partnership opened the conference. He urged delegates to consider the vital need for integrated coastal and land management programmes. Community groups, from Sandhaven and Pitullie Harbour Trust and the Findhorn Heritage Village, who have benefited from MFP grant funding over the years shared their experiences of how their projects contributed to the better management of the Firth.

Peter Tilbrook, who chairs the MFP's new Strategic Group offered the group's vision for the Firth, then pupils of the Moray Firth School took to the stage to share their vision of the future of the Moray Firth in music and song and looked forward to the world they want their own children to grow up in.



A full report and photos are available online at

<http://www.morayfirth-partnership.org/work-ACO6report.html>

MFP Chair Mike Comerford with pupils from the Moray Firth School.

The 2006 Annual conference was supported by:



"Moray Firth - Produce to be Proud of"

This groundbreaking conference investigated opportunities to enhance and add value to the produce of the Moray Firth, including the consideration of a Moray Firth brand.

Delegates from fishing, agriculture, food processing, distribution, retailing, catering, health and public agencies attended to hear international experts and forward-looking local businesses from around the UK and to discuss potential Moray Firth opportunities.

The discussions revealed a need for this initiative to be taken further, with some initial ideas coming through for actions. We have agreed to hold a follow-up meeting with a small number of key players in the near future to discuss how this should progress.

One of the really positive messages coming through from the industry was that it has been proven that local food sells on the message of a good, clean, beautiful environment, and secondly on information about the producer/ community. A brief report of the day has been produced and can be viewed or downloaded from the Partnerships website at:

www.morayfirth-partnership.org/assets/files/TheWorkofMFP/ProduceConferenceReport-final.pdf



The Produce to be Proud of Conference was sponsored by



Community Grant Scheme 2007

Thanks to Scottish Natural Heritage and BG Group funding we have just allocated £15,000 funding to community coastal projects. Full details will be on the web site soon.

Community Networking Grant Scheme 2007

New for 2007, thanks to additional funding from BG Group, we have been able to extend our grants scheme to help coastal communities work together to share best practice and learn from their experiences. We can help pay for travel and other expenses.

For a networking application form and guidelines please call the Moray Firth Partnership office on 01463 225530, e-mail info@morayfirth-partnership.org or download them from the MFP website at www.morayfirth-partnership.org

The Moray Firth Trail

Competition for amateur photographers around the Moray Firth

We had a fantastic response and Charlie Phillips, the renowned wildlife photographer who judged the competition found the standard of entries very high. Calum Davidson from Cromarty won the adult section, with a dramatic image of an oil rig at sunrise at the South Sutor, Cromarty.

Fiona Boyd from Inverness won the junior section, with a close up of Chanonry Lighthouse. (Fiona bought a camera with her prize money, and recently went on to win another major photo competition, so well done Fiona.)

The winning entries are displayed on our Trail website - www.morayfirth.org



Fiona and Calum pictured with their winning photos. Picture © Kathryn Logan

Many thanks to the following venues, who staged a display of photos as part of our North Sea Trail Day celebrations: Wick Heritage Centre, Wick, TimeSpan Centre, Helmsdale, The Eastgate Shopping Centre, Inverness, The WDCS Wildlife Centre, Spey Bay, The Cullen Bay Hotel, Cullen

This project officially ends in March 2007, but we will continue to develop the Moray Firth Trail / North Sea Trail through inclusion within our future projects. We hope you will continue to send in new ideas for walks and sites of interest to include on our on-line walks database at www.morayfirth.org.

"Hands Across the Firth"

Based on the ideas you put forward during the consultation meetings last summer, we developed a basket of nine potential projects that would interlink, add value to each other and incorporate a range of

heritage issues. We plan to take two projects forward initially:-

- 1) hand knitting of traditional fishing ganseys and associated fishing lore ; and
- 2) bird watching for beginners.

The hand-knitting project will explore the traditions and stories of gansey hand knitting among the Firth's fishing communities as a way of introducing the craft - and the area's wider fishing heritage - to new audiences of all ages and backgrounds.

We hope it will bring ganseys into the 21st Century with new materials and fabrics, and encourage people to use the traditional patterns within smaller articles.



Men will be encouraged to take part too, whether trying knitting, or using traditional net making skills to produce superb articles. Who knows, we might find the Moray Firth's answer to the internationally renowned male knitter and designer, Kaffe Fassett.

The Bird Watching for Beginners project aims to attract people who may not have considered this activity before, and will help people learn about birds in new and exciting ways. The range of side-benefits will include health and well-being, social skills, learning / IT skills, helping to look at climate change and conservation issues etc. We aim to produce a guide to sites around the firth and have backpacks with guidebooks and binoculars on loan. Special "sensory" events will allow people with visual or other impairment to experience the smells and sounds of bird colonies and to identify birds by their calls.

We will start fundraising soon, in liaison with those groups and individuals that have already expressed an interest in these projects. Once these two projects are underway, we will develop some of the other projects in our Hands Across the Firth "basket" .

For further information on the "Hands Across the Firth" project, please contact Kathryn Logan on 01463 225530, e-mail info@morayfirth-partnership.org.

The first phase was supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Scottish Natural Heritage, Aberdeenshire, Highland and Moray Councils.



Beach Guardians

This has been a busy time for the Beach Guardians team. Beach Cleans have been high on the agenda, with community clean up events taking place in Golspie, Alness, Rosemarkie and Invergordon in September and October. These events were timed to coincide with the Marine Conservation Society's annual "Beachwatch" weekend on 16th and 17th September. As part of this national survey, beaches are cleaned and the amount and type of litter collected is recorded. The information gathered is used to help tackle the problems of coastal litter in an integrated and long-term way.

This year, 19% of the beaches surveyed for Beachwatch in Scotland were in the Moray Firth Partnership patch, and we hope to build on this next year! Businesses also got involved, with Wick-based Subsea 7, of Keiss, Caithness, tackling nearly four miles of sand on Keiss and Reiss beaches on 15th September. The dedicated clean-up team collected almost 90 bags of rubbish, weighing in at 1200kg! The clean up was undertaken as part of the companies ISO commitments to protecting the environment.



The travelling exhibition (above) visited the Easter Ross Libraries over the Autumn and Winter and making its way around the Moray Coastline. It has proved very popular with library visitors and is constantly growing with new pledges and artwork added.

The Schools programme too is well underway with a total of 10 schools in Moray and Highland visited to date. The remaining school visits in the Highland area will be concentrated over the next 6-9 months.

In addition, 40 coastal litter CD-ROMs were distributed to schools, including 8 in Moray and 32 in Highland. The education packs were also sent to Ranger services across the Moray Firth Partnership area.

More activities are planned over the next few months including a community seminar, local authority event

and community beach cleans around the Firth. Keep up to date by visiting www.beachguardians.co.uk

For more information please contact Hazel Bews on 01463 715225 or email beachguardians@morayfirth-partnership.org

Beach Guardians is funded by Talisman Energy, LEADER+ SNH, Moray Council, MCA, RSPB, VisitScotland with in kind support from The Big Picture, Marine Conservation Society and the Highland Council.



Strategic Group

The group has identified some Strategic Priorities for the Firth, and staff have already started to plan how to take forward two of the priority themes:

- 1 Marine and coastal ecosystems: a Biodiversity project has been worked up and submitted to the Board for consideration.
- 2 Integrated management processes: a draft paper on Marine Spatial Planning will be presented to the Strategic Group for discussion on March 16, and the possible remit for the MFP in developing a project, will then be considered by the MFP Board.

Fisheries Action Group

The MFP continues to co-ordinate the Moray Firth Fisheries Action Group. Thanks to funding from The Highland Council, Moray Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Fishermen's Association Limited and the Scottish White Fish Producers Association Ltd., we held a meeting on Friday 2nd March at the Banff Springs Hotel. About 40 delegates from across the fishing industry gathered to learn more about the forthcoming Moray Firth Inshore Fisheries Group (IFG), being introduced by the Scottish Executive, and to start to explore stock assessment issues. We have been helping to support the rapid implementation of a Moray Firth Inshore Fisheries Group and to broaden industry and stakeholder representation.

A report of the meeting and its outcomes will be available on-line at www.morayfirth-partnership.org or by contacting the Partnership office on 01463 225530

Future Work

We will be working with partners to develop new projects and to sustain and enhance projects just completed ; this will include

- community heritage initiatives developed through Hands across the Firth, including the traditional gansey knitting and bird watching projects
- Working with the MF SAC Management Group to revise and update the SAC Management Scheme
- working with key stakeholders to help promote a local food network for the Moray Firth
- local food events associated with the MF Flotilla.
- Developing a project on key issues and actions for marine biodiversity in the Moray Firth and what can be achieved at a local level
- MF-ACE project (attract-connect-engage)-integrating new communications technology and heritage to attract a younger audience and provide information to locals and visitors about the area and local attractions.

Retiring MFP Chairman

Mike Comerford, who has chaired the MFP since 2004, has stood down due to work commitments, but will stay on the Board. We are most grateful to Mike for his guidance to the Board and his continuing support.

New MFP Chair

We are pleased to announce that Sinclair Young was elected Chair by the other members of the Board on 05/02/07. Sinclair was one of the first directors of the Partnership, so we are delighted that he has offered to take on this role.



Pictured above is Sinclair Young (right) with Prof. Mark Horton of the BBC Coast programme at the launch of the Moray Firth Trail. Picture courtesy of Charlie Philips.

Staff News

Joint Partnership Managers, Rachel Harding-Hill and Vanessa Halhead are, coincidentally, both leaving the Partnership to take up new posts. Rachel, who has been with the Partnership since it started, will be joining SEPA this month as River Basin Management Planning Co-ordinator. Vanessa joins SNH's National Strategy unit as policy advisor for Rural Development.

We wish them well in their careers and look forward to working with them in their new roles.

Post of Manager of the Moray Firth Partnership

The post of Manager will be advertised soon and will be for a fixed term to March 2008. Full details will be advertised and on the MFP and SNH websites. Kathryn Logan is the acting partnership manager.

Funders

Many thanks to all our funders and supporters, who include: -

Aberdeenshire Council; Awards for All, BG Group; BP Oil UK; Chevron Upstream Europe; Cromarty Firth Port Authority; The Crown Estate; The Fishermen's Association Ltd.; Fish Industry Training Authority; HIE-Caithness and Sutherland; HIE-Inverness and East Highland; HIE-Moray; The Highland Council; Highlands & Islands Enterprise; Highland Marine Resources and Communities Scheme (HiMaRCS); Heritage Lottery Fund; Interreg IIIB; Inverness Harbour Trust; Leader +; LifeScan Scotland Ltd.; Marine Conservation Society; Moray Council; Old Pulteney; R.S.P.B.; Scottish Co-Operative; Scottish Enterprise Grampian; Scottish Natural Heritage; Scottish White Fish Producers Association; Spey Fishery Board; Talisman Energy UK Ltd. and VisitScotland.

If you wish to receive future updates by email only, please let us know.

For more information about any of the Partnership's work, please contact Kathryn Logan, the acting Partnership manager, at:

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