

Moray Firth Partnership



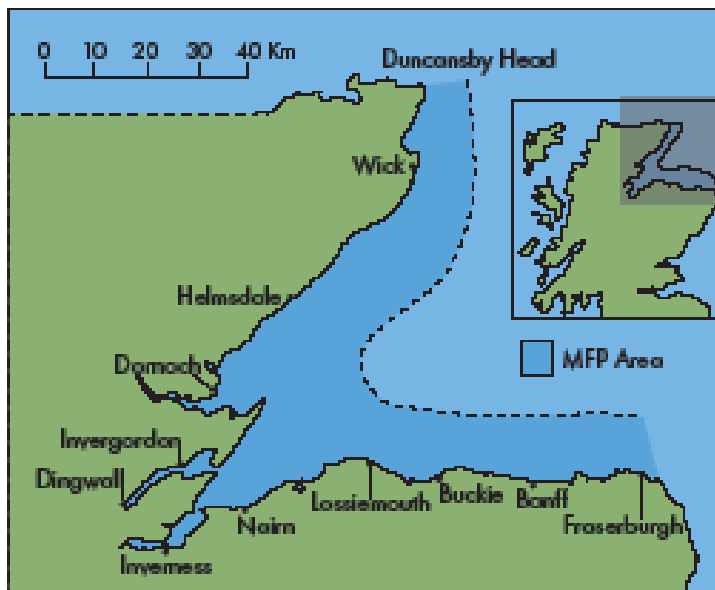
Business Plan - 2010 / 11

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1. Introduction

Moray Firth Partnership Area



The Board of the Moray Firth Partnership (MFP) presents this Business Plan for 2010/11 to outline the Partnership's key objectives for this financial year.

The MFP has been involved in developing and delivering Integrated Coastal Zone Management and promoting improved marine and coastal stewardship of the Firth since 1993. The passing of the Marine (Scotland) Act in March 2010 (in tandem with the UK Marine and Coastal Access Act in 2009) is a milestone achievement, and the MFP looks forward to working with the Scottish Government and other stakeholders to help put flesh on the bones of this enabling legislation.

There are many issues within the Marine (Scotland) Act framework that will require further consultation before they are finalised and can be delivered. The Moray Firth Partnership is committed to supporting this work during 2010/11 and beyond, to help develop future marine and coastal management mechanisms that are appropriate at local, national and international levels to deliver a sustainable marine economy and a healthy marine environment.

The future role of Local Coastal Partnerships in relation to the set up or management of the proposed Scottish Marine Regions and Marine Planning Partnership is not yet clear. Any role for LCPs is likely to vary from region to region, depending on a wide range of factors. Identifying what should be in regional Marine Plans and how these can be implemented to be both effective and administratively efficient for the bodies involved will be a major challenge and one with which the MFP is keen to be involved.

The MFP has ongoing project work commitments to August 2012. The work that we aim to deliver over the next year is set out within this plan. We seek the continued support of our key core funders to enable us to deliver this work and thereby contribute to their own organisational aims and obligations.

2. Moray Firth Partnership – Remit and organisation

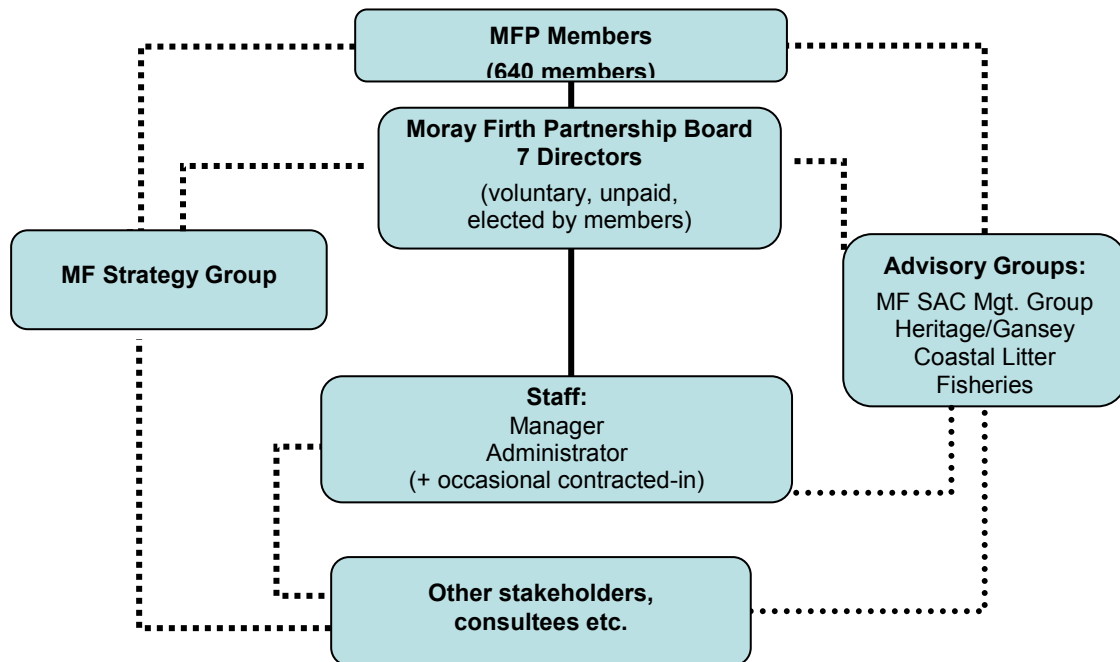
2.1 The Moray Firth Partnership

- The Moray Firth Partnership began in 1993 as one of the original five “Focus on Firths” projects, sponsored by Scottish Natural Heritage, in response to the Rio Earth Summit call for sustainable Integrated Coastal Zone Management.
- It became a separate limited company and a registered Scottish Charity in 1999. Following restructuring in 2004, the Board now has 7 Directors, elected on the basis of their individual merits and not as representatives of any interest group, employer or sponsor.
- The MFP’s key aims are:-
 - to increase local and general public knowledge about the wise and sustainable use of the Moray Firth’s many resources; and
 - to provide guidance to stakeholders on how to create sustainable management policies and to integrate their policies with those of other users of the Moray Firth’s natural, economic, social, recreational and cultural resources in order to protect and preserve the land, coastal zones and waters of the Moray Firth, for now and future generations.
- The MFP’s area includes the territorial waters from Duncansby Head to Fraserburgh (currently 12 nautical miles) and the landward area where it has impact upon the Moray Firth. This represents over 500 miles (800 km) of coastline from John O’Groats to Fraserburgh, including the inner Firths of Dornoch, Cromarty, Inverness / Beaulie. For general operational purposes, the landward area is taken to be within 10 miles of the coast, including parts of the water bodies that feed into the Moray Firth.
- Membership is free and open to all-organisations and individuals. The MFP currently has over 640 members representing a huge number of sectors, including local authorities, agencies, commerce, community groups, schools and individuals.
- The MFP provides a forum to share information and seek integrated ways, through dialogue and consensus, of addressing issues arising from the many competing demands on the Moray Firth. The Partnership’s ‘neutral’ status lets us bring together many diverse interest groups and help them to develop joint actions.
- The Partnership’s current corporate structure allows flexibility and streamlined administration while providing a suitable vehicle for fundraising, contract and project management. Wider stakeholder input has been maintained through Advisory and Action Groups and through liaison with the broader membership.

2.2 Staffing

- There are two full-time staff – the Partnership Manager and an Administrator. Other administrative or project assistance is contracted in as required.
- The staff are employed through Scottish Natural Heritage and seconded to the MFP. This HR and Payroll administrative service is a significant ‘in kind’ benefit from SNH.

2.3 Organisational chart



Note: Solid lines represent direct links – e.g. Membership / election of board members / staff management etc.

Dotted lines represent two way communications, through membership of advisory groups, MFP membership on external groups, liaison with other stakeholders etc.

3. Key Achievements

3.1 Integrated Coastal Zone Management

- **Moray Firth Management Guidelines & Action Plan** (published '98, reviewed '06)
 - Development of the guidelines and action programme informed much of the partnership's initial and ongoing work on ICZM and helped to forge strong links and shared targets with a wide range of stakeholder organisations.
<http://morayfirth-partnership.org/work-2-MGAP.html>
- **Moray Firth Special Area of Conservation**
 - MFP established and closely supported the SAC Management Group which developed the MF SAC Management Scheme as part of a major three year project with European Funding from the LIFE Environment programme 1999 - 2001.
 - MFP provides the Secretariat to the SAC Management Group
 - MFP led the update of the Management Scheme in 2008/09 to include a SMART 3 year Action Plan, as well as managing long-term, ongoing actions.
<http://www.morayfirth-partnership.org/assets/files/MF%20SAC%20MANAGEMENT%20SCHEME%20REVISION%202.pdf>

3.2 Fisheries

- **Moray Firth Fisheries Action Group** (2004 - 2008)
 - Set up the Fisheries Action Group in 2004, initiating a ground-breaking partnership between fishermen, fishing organisations, scientific bodies and other interests to provide a constructive forum for debating integrated fishery management issues.
 - Carried out a feasibility study to inform the development of a collaborative stock assessment programme and to consider a number of cross-sectoral management actions, as a precursor to formation by the Scottish Government of a Moray Firth Inshore Fisheries Group during 2009.

3.3 Marine and Coastal Litter

- **Beach Guardians Project** (2006 – 2008)
 - Focused on identifying sources of coastal litter and engaging with communities and businesses to reduce litter at source. Work continues through other projects.
- **Eco Schools Project** (2008 – 2009)
 - Worked with 10 coastal schools, in liaison with Eco-Schools officer, to help them achieve Bronze/ Silver Eco-School Awards. Work continues to support schools with talks, beach cleans etc.

3.4 Economic Surveys

- **Bottlenose Dolphin Economic Survey** (2009)
 - Working with the Scottish Government, Scottish Natural Heritage and five Local Councils from Highland to Fife, the MFP initiated this project to address the current lack of data relating to the direct and indirect economic tourism value to the East Coast of Scotland from bottlenose dolphins.

- The final report (commissioned through Aberdeen University -Aberdeen Centre for Environmental Sustainability) will help highlight areas of future work to develop a sustainable marine tourism industry that could be taken forward by the project partners and other relevant organisations.
- The information from this survey will also be provided to the Scottish Government for incorporation in their separate study on the Economic Impact of Wildlife Tourism in Scotland and for inclusion in the State of Scotland's Seas Atlas.

3.5 Public Consultation Meetings / Stakeholder Engagement

- **Scottish marine legislation (2008 – 2009)**
 - Organised & facilitated three public consultation events around the Moray Firth re the Scottish Marine Bill, and contributed directly through responses to consultation documents, attending workshops and seminars.
- **Beatrice offshore wind farm (2004 – 2005)**
 - Set up a number of public and sectoral consultation meetings on behalf of Talisman re: their planned pilot offshore wind farm development.

3.6 Coastal Heritage

- **Moray Firth Gansey Project (2009 – 2012)**
 - This three year heritage project focuses on traditional fishermen's jumpers, and incorporates conservation, research, skills development, business development and diversity of opportunity in coastal communities.
 - Funding of £100,000 secured from Heritage Lottery Fund, LEADER and others.
- **Moray Firth Flotilla & Traditional Boats Workshop (2007, 2009)**
 - As part of the Highland Year of Culture (2007), the MFP Flotilla of traditional boats sailed from Wick around the coasts to Portsoy to highlight the importance of the sea as a means of transport and communication and the importance of a healthy environment.
 - Workshop held in 2009 to teach traditional boat building / restoration skills to new generations.

3.7 Moray Firth Community Grants Scheme

- Since 2001, this annual Community Grants Scheme (funded through Scottish Natural Heritage and other key partners) has paid out £102,000 in "seed corn" grants to 125 different community-led projects, enabling work valued at over £1million for the benefit of Moray Firth communities.

3.8 Coastal Paths / North Sea Trail

- The "**Moray Firth Trail Project**" (2005 – 2008) was one of 26 partner areas from six countries in the international "North Sea Trail" Project, which promoted the development of coastal trails, provided information on access and sites of interest, and encouraged walking as part of a healthier lifestyle.
- The "**North Sea Trail Association**" (NSTA) was set up in 2008 to maintain the international network of partners around the North Sea and is actively seeking new partner areas to extend the trail network. The MFP is the Scotland representative on the Steering Committee and Treasurer.

3.9 Other recent outreach and education projects

- **Dolphin Defenders** (2004-2005) encouraged people to make small lifestyle changes that would, cumulatively, have a big impact on protecting the Firth and its wildlife.
- **River Basin Management Planning/ Water Framework Directive** - The MFP is a member of two **Area Advisory Groups** for the North East Scotland and North Highland areas, focusing on coastal waters and river systems that feed into the Firth.
- **CATCH – Catchment Management Planning Handbook (2009)** - MFP was part of the Working Group that developed the Catchment Management Planning Handbook, written by the Macaulay Institute.
http://catch.macaulay.ac.uk/sites/catch.macaulay.ac.uk/files/Catch%20Booklet%20Web%20Version_3.pdf

4. Ongoing programme

- **“Towards future marine planning, sustainable marine & coastal recreation and tourism development”** (2008 – 2010).
Project contributes to requirements for future marine planning by filling information gaps and identifying where additional work may be required. The aims are to:-
 - build up the marine and coastal recreation profile, through a recreation and tourism activities survey, including outline economic data
 - carry out Marine Traffic and Recreational Boat Usage Surveys (desk-based)
 - identify “top ten” areas for different activities around the Firth
 - identify key areas with environmental or socio-economic sensitivities under future pressure from increased recreational usage, population increases etc.
 - consolidate and update information on MF harbours and make this publicly available to web and mobile phone users
 - create a web-enabled Moray Firth Directory (key organisations and facilities)
 - create a register of Environmental Impact Assessments for the Moray Firth and procedures for future updating and maintenance of data.
 - identify coastal and marine related Bye-laws, Codes of Conduct and other environmental mitigation measures; assess their potential effectiveness and uptake / public awareness.
- **“Engaging with Young People and Businesses”** (2010)
Funding secured through Talisman Energy (UK) Ltd. to:
 - create structured opportunities for team building / corporate responsibility and personal development that also benefit the environment.
 - create and promote volunteer opportunities, such as biodiversity-recording.
- **The Scottish Coastal Way**
Through the North Sea Trail Association, contributing to ongoing discussions re development of the Scottish **coastal way** (with cross-border partner links to the English long distance coastal path (through the UK Marine & Coastal Access Act).
- **Stakeholder consultation for Moray Firth renewables projects**
Significant projects are proposed to generate electricity from offshore wind turbines situated just north of the Beatrice Oil field and on the Smith Bank, 25km southeast of the Caithness coast. The MFP has offered its services to the sites’ developers to set up public and sectoral consultation meetings.

5. Main Objectives for 2010 /11

- To continue tackling strategic ICZM and marine planning work identified by the MFP Board and Strategic Group as a result of the Strategic Review of Priorities carried out in 2007/08. This will include:-
 - any particular key work / issues arising from the MFP Sustainable Marine Recreation and Tourism project which will complete in spring 2010, including the marine traffic survey.
 - issues arising from the Bottlenose Dolphin Economic Survey including sustainable development of marine wildlife tourism.
- To work with Marine Scotland and other stakeholders to progress issues arising from the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, likely to include:-
 - helping to develop criteria for the creation of Marine Plans and Marine Planning Partnerships, such as:-
 - consideration of what should be included in a Marine Plan
 - identifying most appropriate geographic / administrative boundaries (following on from the Scottish Coastal Forum and other Committee recommendations)
 - consideration of the structure, membership and remit of Marine Planning Partnerships appropriate for the Moray Firth area
 - setting up and facilitating public consultation meetings around the Moray Firth area as required
 - consider practical measures to facilitate implementation of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive / linkages with the UK Marine Plan and UK Marine Policy Statement
- To consult with MFP members (and wider stakeholders) regarding the future role that they would wish the MFP to play in relation to future Marine Planning issues, and wider ICZM and coastal stewardship work. This would follow on from and be subject to the outcomes of the main consultation, and Marine Scotland's recommendations for the Moray Firth area. Decisions may be required on whether the MFP should consider applying to take on the role of independent Lead Partner for the new Marine Planning Partnership covering the Moray Firth area, what changes would be required to the MFP constitution, what independent work we should continue to pursue in order to maintain our wider stewardship promotion role, etc.
- To continue to manage existing projects, and develop new projects that both help meet strategic aims and that will attract funding for core staff time. These may be restricted to short-term projects to avoid accumulating financial and staffing contract commitments beyond 2012, pending future guidance from Marine Scotland and members on the future focus, funding and role of the MFP.
- To continue to work with other stakeholders and organisations, including representation on local, area and national working groups and committees to promote the sustainable marine / coastal management perspective.

6. WORK PLAN 2010 / 11			
	Action	Specific Outputs due in year to 31.03.11	Funding source
1. Strategic projects identified / follow-on work	Review strategic project proposals (2008) in consultation with MF Strategic Group and /or other stakeholders and take forward initiatives to meet current needs.	-MF strategic issues review (timing will be dependent on consultation for Marine (Sc) Act.	Core
	Follow-on work based on completed Sustainable Marine Recreation and Tourism Project report (Spring 2010). (to be agreed with stakeholders following consultation)	-Identify key areas where further work is required and which organisation(s) can best deliver.	
	Follow on work from Bottlenose Dolphin Economic survey (t.b.a. with stakeholders), such as review of measures to sustainably increase value and quality of marine wildlife tourism	-Identify key areas where further work is required and which organisation(s) can best deliver.	Core / Project
2. Manage existing projects	MF Gansey Project (launched Feb 2010) -recruit project officers, re-establish MF Heritage Group, deliver project plans	-Set up Heritage Working Group -Deliver Key project targets.	Gansey Project funding
	“Engaging with Young People and Businesses” Project -create practical opportunities for young people (outwith schools and colleges) to learn about and care for an area of the Moray Firth coast -promote opportunities for businesses, groups and individuals to achieve their own goals of team building / corporate responsibility / personal development by developing tailored events that will also benefit the Moray Firth environment and biodiversity.	-Develop portfolio of 10 practical projects that businesses can choose from for corporate and team development events. -Work with up to 20 individuals or small groups. -Develop new material to attract younger volunteers.	Project funding (secured)
	Progress work and link volunteer input to International Year of Biodiversity / Marine Biodiversity Implementation Plan / SAC / and other work	- attract & support 20 volunteers	Core / Project
	Potential work with Renewable Energy Industry re offshore wind farms in Moray Firth	-Contribute towards consultation process for marine renewables.	Core / Project
	Work to increase effectiveness of MFP networking and information dissemination services -Develop new promotional material, leaflets etc for distribution	-Launch new website as gateway to info re Moray Firth. -Launch new electronic Moray Firth Directory. -Launch new MF Harbours Database. -Publish 4 newsletters. -Hold annual conference.	Core (supplemented by Project funding)
	2010 Community Grants Scheme – administer scheme and complete final report / evaluation	Promote community stewardship and volunteering initiatives	-Grants from SNH (secured) -Core staff time

	2011 Community Grants Scheme – proceed if suitable funding identified including core administration costs.	Promote community stewardship and volunteering initiatives	Subject to funding.
	-Continue to promote schemes to tackle coastal litter including annual Beachwatch event -Continue to identify key areas affected by tidal litter drop and arrange additional cleaning initiatives	-Work with six schools and organise at least one Beachwatch event. -Work with local communities and local authority services	Core staff time, (+ project funding for on-costs)
3. Marine (Scotland) Act – development work	work with MS to deliver local input to creation of marine plan, identification of geographic boundaries, Implementation of MSFD etc.	-Contribute towards Marine Act Consultation process	MS / Core Core
4. Future Role for MFP	Consult with members re future direction for MFP re Marine Planning Partnerships / future progression	-Identify key areas where further work is required and which organisation(s) can best deliver	Core
5. Actively contribute to local, area and national working groups and organisations	Including: -SAC management Group (MFP = secretariat); -North Highland and North East Area Advisory Groups; -Moray Firth Inshore Fisheries Group- Advisory Group; -Dolphin Space Programme Steering Group; -Highland and North East Biodiversity Partnerships; -Cross Party Working Group on Boating and Marine Recreation ; -North Sea Trail Association / Scottish Coastal Way; -Scottish Coastal Forum – LCP input	- Continue Secretariat Function for MF SAC Management Group. - Carry out first annual review of new SAC Action Plan (Sept 2010). - Attend meetings and contribute to various groups etc.	Core
6. Ongoing Management of MFP / staffing / Fundraising	Staff Recruitment (New Administrator April 2010) , Ongoing core and project fundraising, Company Secretarial and Financial Accounting	Prepare final accounts and hold Annual General Meeting	Core
7. Training	identify additional training for MFP Staff or directors in relation to new marine planning initiatives	Skills development	Core

7. Funding

The MFP remains heavily reliant on core funding provided through a small number of key partner organisations. Main funding has been provided by Scottish Natural Heritage since the outset. The Inverness and Cromarty Firth Ports and Harbours and three Local Authorities having been key long-term supporters, although Highland and Moray Councils have not felt able to provide core funding for the last two years.

In order to broaden the funding base and to supplement the core funding available, the MFP made a conscious decision some years ago to support itself as far as possible through project delivery and project management fees. In 2008/09, approx. 25 % of core funding was provided through project management fees. This however has a knock on consequence in terms of core staff time required for business development and project management, and there is a limit to how many projects can be successfully managed at one time. It has been widely recognised that the overall portfolio of work completed has provided added value to the key core funders, however core funding from strategic partners is, and will remain absolutely essential to the long-term sustainability of the MFP, if it is to retain its present role and remit.

Past difficulties in securing funding have been attributed to a lack of awareness or acceptance of the obligations of certain agencies and others with regard to more integrated planning. It may be that key responsibilities placed on stakeholders through the Marine Act will facilitate this process, although the current financial recession will mean a continued struggle for funds.

8. MFP Core Budget 2010 / 11

8.1 Budget Notes

- The following budget identifies the expected core costs and income for the MFP for 2010/11 (with comparative figures for 2009/10 showing expected results to 31/03/10.)
- The staff costs shown include an estimated 40 days staff time allocated specifically to Marine Act consultation and related work, which is seen as a key activity for 2010/11 of benefit to all stakeholders.
- The budget does NOT include additional Marine Act events costs, which would be recharged.
- Project costs are not included here, other than contracted-in staff costs relating directly to project management where management fees for core staff time are included in income.
- Costs of holding the annual conference have been included, and the in-house costs of printing and postage for the quarterly newsletter.
- The MFP estimates it will have free (unrestricted) reserves of around £32,960 at April 2010 (after allowing for the projected deficit in 2009/10). If necessary, these reserves will be used to fund any core deficit in year 2010/11. In line with current financial good practice, the MFP aims to have free reserves equal to at least three months', and preferably six months' operating costs (= approx £40,000).

MORAY FIRTH PARTNERSHIP	2010/11 Budget	2009/10 Estimated expenditure (inc. actual to Feb 2010)
(1) CASH EXPENDITURE		
Salaries - Manager and Admin Assistant – (2 x F/T posts)	50,450	47,390
Contract admin assistance & agency staff	5,000	5,135
Travel & Subsistence, conferences etc (staff & directors)	1,800	2,560
Staff Training	1,000	0
Office services (£5k to SNH for tel., IT, copying, postage etc), insurance & overheads (including in-house newsletter printing)	9,500	9,490
Legal & Prof. Fees (audit, legal & co. secretarial)	2,000	1,915
Annual Conference (no conf. in 2009/10)	3,000	0
Website, PR etc.	750	600
Total Cash Expenditure	73,500	67,090
(2) IN KIND EXPENDITURE (Scottish Natural Heritage)		
Superannuation	6,000	5,735
Recruitment (Admin post- Feb 21010)	-	2,500
Office Accommodation	4,000	4,000
Total In Kind Expenditure	10,000	12,235
TOTAL CASH AND IN KIND EXPENDITURE	83,500	79,325
	Year 2010/11	2009/10

CORE INCOME PROJECTIONS – 2010/11 (Including applications **still to be agreed)	2010/11 Income projections	2009/10 Est'd Income (inc. actual to Feb.2010)
(1) Core Funding - CASH		
Marine Scotland (per SNH)	32,000	32,000
Aberdeenshire Council **tbc	6,000	6,000
Highland Council	0	0
Moray Council	0	0
Cromarty Firth Port Authority ** 2010 tbc	4,000	4,000
Inverness Harbour Trust ** 2010 tbc	4,000	4,000
Sub Total	46,000	46,000
Project management fees (contribution to core) -expected		
North Sea Trail Association ** 2010 tbc	1,000	2,000
Sustainable Marine Rec. Project	0	1,000
Gansey Project	3,000	1,500
Engaging Young People and Business Project	-	5,000
Misc projects / conference sponsor /delegate fees ** 2010 tbc	3,500	2,670
Sub Total	7,500	12,170
Total cash income	53,500	58,170
In Kind Income	10,000	12,235
TOTAL CASH AND IN KIND INCOME (secured / expected)	63,500	70,405
Total Expenses – as above	(83,500)	(79,325)
CURRENT FUNDING DEFICIT / INCOME STILL TO BE SECURED	(20,000)	(8,920)

CASH RESERVES (assuming a worst case scenario where no further funding secured for 2010/11)	2010/11	2009/10
Cash Reserves b/f at start of year (core)	32,960	41,880
Estimated Cash Reserves c/f at end of year (at Feb.2010)	12,960	32,960

Applications for additional core funding for 2010/11 to include:-

Marine Scotland contribution towards staff time for Marine Act consultations and related work

(Note: 2007 Scottish Government funding for Marine Bill work included £6300 towards staff costs – approx 40 days work @ cost)

The Crown Estate Marine Stewardship Fund contribution towards follow on work on Marine Planning project

Highland, Moray and Aberdeenshire Councils

Landfill Trust / BIFFA

Big Lottery / Awards for All

Scottish Community Foundation

Various other small trusts and foundations

Appendix 1**Links to Key Stakeholder Business Objectives & Priorities**

The Moray Firth Partnership's projects contribute towards achieving, supporting and adding value to other stakeholders' key strategic objectives.

The Scottish Government's current key strategic priorities are to make the nation:-

- **wealthier and fairer** – enabling businesses and people to increase their wealth and more people to share fairly in that wealth
- **smarter** - expanding opportunities for Scots to succeed from nurture through to life long learning ensuring higher and more widely shared achievements.
- **healthier** - helping people to sustain and improve their health, especially in disadvantaged communities
- **safer and stronger**; helping local communities to flourish, becoming stronger, safer places to live, offering improved opportunities and a better quality of life
- **greener** – improving Scotland's natural and built environment and the sustainable use and enjoyment of it.

Examples of MFP projects that contribute to these overall aims are:

National Outcomes:-	
2: We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for all our people.	Moray Firth Trail / North Sea Trail Bottlenose Dolphin Economic Survey Sustainable Marine Recreation & Tourism project Gansey project
3: We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation.	Dolphin Defenders Eco Schools project Moray Firth Trail / North Sea Trail Engaging with Young People & Businesses
4: Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.	Beach Guardians Eco Schools project Dolphin Defenders Engaging with Young People & Businesses
6: We live longer, healthier lives.	Moray Firth Trail / North Sea Trail Sustainable Marine Recreation & Tourism project
10: We live in well designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need.	Sustainable Marine Recreation & Tourism project Moray Firth Trail / North Sea Trail
11: We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.	Dolphin Defenders Beach Guardians Eco Schools Engaging with Young People & Businesses Gansey project
12: We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations.	Moray Firth Trail / North Sea Trail Beach Guardians and other coastal litter initiatives Eco Schools Dolphin Defenders Engaging with Young People and Businesses Contribution to North East Marine Habitat Action plan and support of / promotion of local Council's Ranger work
14: We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production.	Beach Guardians and other coastal litter work Campaign to reduce use of plastic carrier bags and reduce packaging

There are three local authority areas within the Moray Firth – **Highland, Moray and Aberdeenshire Councils**. Through Single Outcome Agreements, Community Planning Partnerships and other partnership working mechanisms, the Councils are contributing to the Scottish Government’s objectives, as well as improving the way that local needs are met.

The MFP helps deliver on a number of these objectives through its core work, in particular, by encouraging and assisting communities and individuals to :-

- take a more active stewardship role in their local coastal area
- develop community led and voluntary initiatives that engage with more people, including those with access issues;
- have a sense of “ownership” of their local areas, which encourages community cohesion and identity.
- realise the impacts of their actions on the wider community and the strength of local groups to get things done.
- create links between local community groups around the firth, to improve networks, knowledge and to share ideas on good practice.
- participate in community and business development initiatives, including through cultural heritage, recreation & tourism, skills transfer and creative industries

The MFP also aims to help other stakeholders and businesses meet their statutory requirements and contribute towards local community development. In particular, the MFP works with ports and harbours, including **Inverness Harbour Trust** and the **Cromarty Firth Port Authority** who are long term contributors to the Partnership’s work. These Trust Ports have a responsibility to ensure that their port is developed as part of the infrastructure of the area and contributes to the local economy, whilst meeting strict environmental standards, promoting and protecting biodiversity etc. Examples of project work with the Ports include:

- Cromarty Firth Data Project - project outputs contributed towards improving awareness and understanding of the estuarine environment, improving the knowledge base of the Firth and assisting developers and decision makers, by providing a single, easy access point for all information. This work is being carried forward with the new Moray Firth Directory.
- Sustainable Marine Tourism project – aims to help with the identification of and filling key gaps in local knowledge, to assist future Marine Planning work. Will include information about current and projected levels of marine recreation and tourism activities, the areas where these takes place, known pressures, sensitivities, mitigation measures etc., with particular reference to boat traffic and the bottlenose dolphin population. The full marine traffic survey is of particular interest to the Ports.
- Moray Firth Harbours Database – produced to address the need for more data for the recreational users visiting the Moray Firth to complement existing pilot handbook and navigational data.

The MFP provides a forum for open and transparent debate with a wide range of stakeholders. The Partnership’s membership of other initiatives such as SEPA’s North Highland and North East Area Advisory Groups for River Basin Management Planning and the Advisory Group for the Moray Firth Inshore Fisheries Group allows the sharing of best practice and information as well as enhanced opportunities for networking and engagement with local communities and other stakeholders.