A partnership to care for the Clyde: its environment, its people and its visitors

Clyde Breakers

FIRTH OF CLYDE FORUM NEWSLETTER

Firth of Clyde FORUM

Spring 2012 Issue 13

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Front cover photograph: Stuart Bithell - in action in Perth in 2011

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Firth of Clyde Forum Update

Welcome to the Spring 2012 edition of Clyde Breakers!

It has been a busy winter for us all. Kirstie Dyson has now had her baby boy and left the Forum to join SNH fulltime. We wish her the best of luck in her new role. After a short quiet period, Sarah Brown has joined Fiona in the office and we are back up to our full staff complement. You can find out more about Sarah on the next page.

The work to bring the Marine Spatial Plan to life continues at a pace and the Landscape/Seascape Assessment work is now underway as is the implementation of the Biosecurity Plan. See page 6 for a full update on that work.

Also on the agenda is a project mapping the recreational access points in the Clyde and work on marine litter. New pages covering litter and biosecurity will shortly be added to our growing online resource at www.clydeforum.com.

We will also be watching the progress of one of the Clyde's famous sons at the Olympics this summer; details of Helensburgh born Luke Patience can be found on pages 10 and 11 so read on!

Best wishes,

Isabel Glasgow,
Firth of Clyde Forum Chair

Fiona Mills
Sarah Brown
Firth of Clyde Forum Project Managers

Clyde Forum Welcomes new Project Manager

Sarah Brown, who joins Fiona Mills as Project Manager, tell us a little about herself and her new role.

"I come from a boating background and have been sailing the west coast of Scotland since I was a child. Some of my earliest memories are of Troon marina and waiting for the old twin tub to wash our clothes; things have changed a bit since then!

My working life has been pretty varied, and sometimes a long way from the ocean, from relocating antelope in Zambia to working with The Wildlife Trusts in Lincolnshire. I couldn't stay away from water for long and I joined the Royal Yachting Association to work on The Green Blue programme almost 6 years ago.

I am delighted to be joining the Firth of Clyde Forum at this exciting time, just as the Marine Act is really starting to come to life and all sorts of interesting things are happening with marine planning. I have a great range of projects to work on with lots of practical actions and perhaps even some time on the water. If you would like to get in touch about any aspect of the Clyde Forum please drop me a line at clyde@clydeforum.org or call 0141 951 0820."

Core Group meet at Ocean Terminal

The Firth of Clyde Forum Core Group met at the Clydeport facility at Ocean Terminal in Greenock recently.

After a useful and productive meeting the group was given a guided tour of the site by the General Manager Andrew Hemphill. Taking in the massive cranes on the shore side and the impressive new welcoming facilities for cruise ships (see page 7) the group were interested to learn that most of the paper used in the newspaper print industry in Scotland and the north of England comes through the terminal, each reel can weigh a staggering 2,600kg!

Photos © P Cowie

Examining some of the huge paper reels in the warehouse.

Dates for the Diary

- **18 – 28 May** – Oban Festival of the Sea - www.obanseafestival.org
- **25 June – 4 July** – 470 Championships at Largs Sailing Club – come and cheer on Clyde born Olympic hopeful, Luke Patience (pages 10 and 11) - www.largssc.co.uk
- A wide range of fun and exciting sailing and racing events - www.clydesailing.co.uk
- **2 June** – Prestwick Promenade - www.comebacktoayrshire.com
- **14 -17 June** – Arran Folk Festival - www.arranevents.com
- **14 -16 September** – Tarbert Music Festival - www.tarbertfestivals.co.uk

This is just a selection of the great events happening in the Clyde, if you would like to promote an event in the next edition get in touch, clyde@clydeforum.org.

Invasive Non-Native Species update

A Biosecurity Plan for the Firth of Clyde

By Fiona Mills

Awareness of land-based invasive species and the problems they can cause is on the up – most of us have heard of Japanese knotweed, Giant hogweed or Himalayan balsam. Unfortunately there is now a growing problem of marine non-native species due to the rise in marine-based activities such as shipping, aquaculture, recreation and tourism.

Non-native species become 'invasive' when they thrive aggressively and threaten native species, ecosystems or natural features (such as riverbanks) or interfere with manmade structures and business interests such as aquaculture or fisheries. To date this aggressive behaviour has not been seen in the Firth of Clyde. In other parts of the UK, where invasive species have become a problem, native species and aquaculture installations have been smothered and water intakes clogged.

We are aware of 11 invasive non-native species (INNS) in the Firth of Clyde, some of which are pictured here. They can be transported through various "pathways" including fouling of hulls or trapped water in boats and equipment, ballast water, relocated structures, floating debris or via natural dispersal.

The UK and Scottish governments have responsibilities under the European Water Framework Directive and Marine Strategy Framework Directive to ensure Good Environmental Status of our marine waters including a target that non-native species do not have any adverse impacts on the native ecosystem.

The Firth of Clyde Forum has spent the last year putting together a Biosecurity Plan to tackle the problem. Eradication of marine non-natives is extremely difficult and costly; the Biosecurity Plan therefore focuses attention on prevention and monitoring of INNS. During 2012 Sarah Brown will be taking the lead on INNS and the Forum will be creating and distributing a range of relevant publications to raise awareness among users of the Clyde and we will be running a training programme to develop a network of industry monitors who will be keeping an eye out for invasive species.

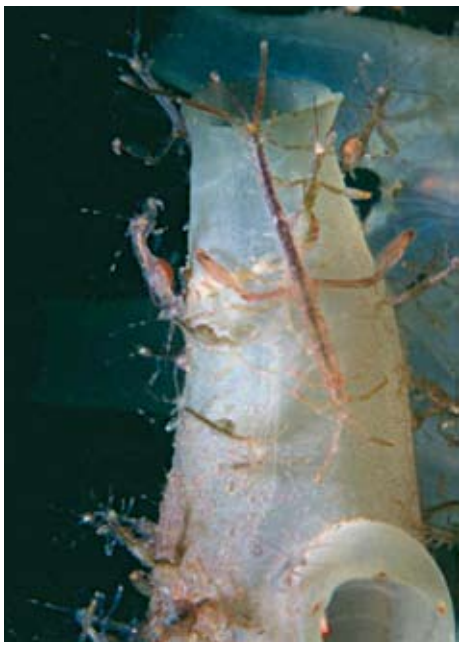
If you are planning to be out on the water this summer, follow the Check, Clean, Dry guidelines above.

For a copy of the Firth of Clyde Biosecurity Plan visit www.clydeforum.com, click on 'marine planning' then 'live projects' and for further information on all non-native species, visit the GB Non-Native Species Secretariat on www.nonnativespecies.org. If you would like to be kept informed about developments in this area please email clydeforum@snh.gov.uk.

© CCW

Didemnum vexillum - a smothering carpet seasquirt

Skeleton Shrimp - originally from Japan they have been found in densities of more than 300,000 per square metre.



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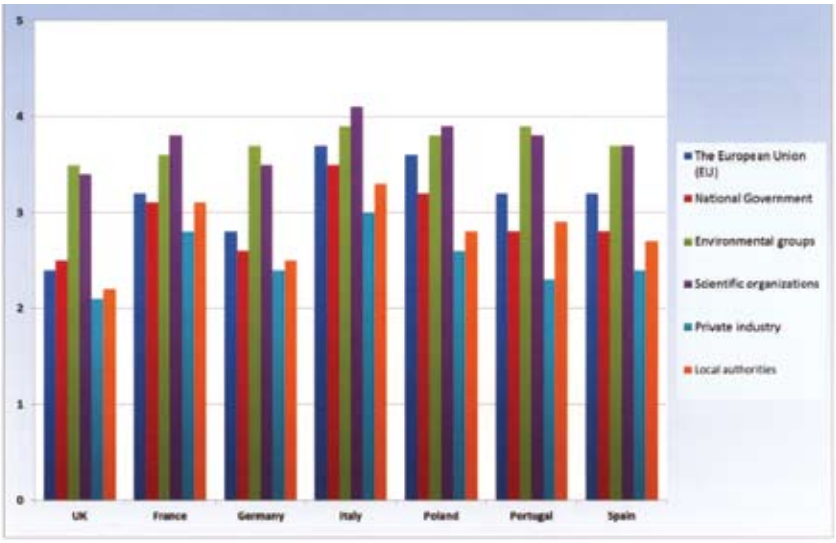
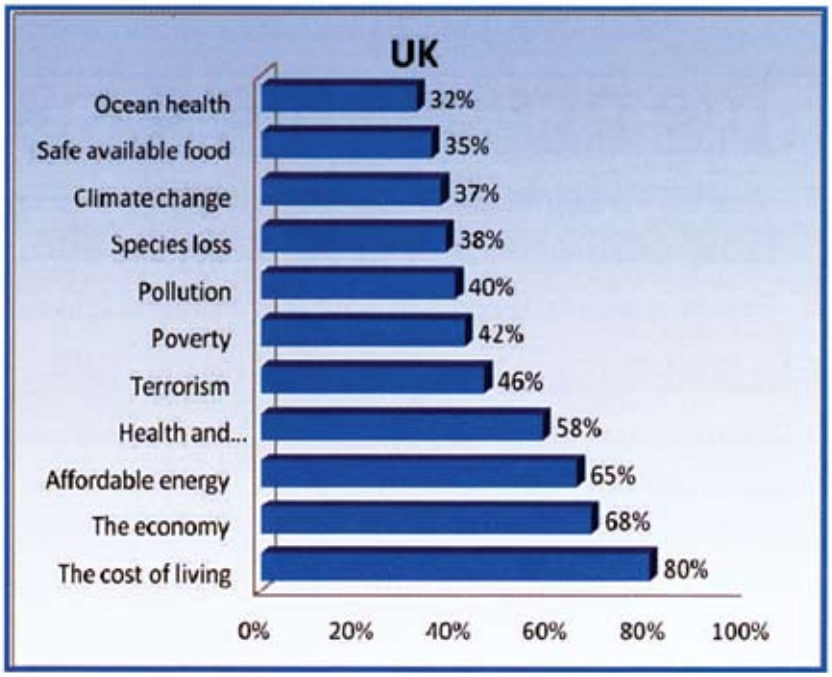
© E Cook,SAMS

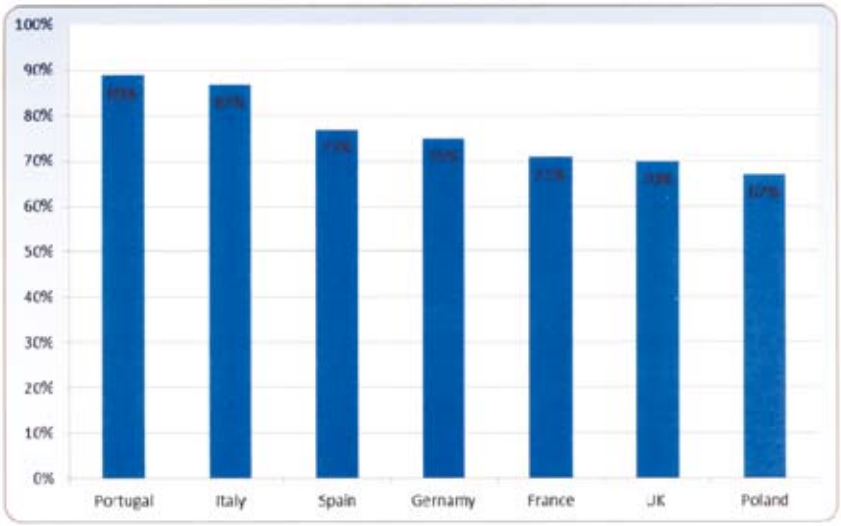
Wireweed grows in long, strong strands which choke propellers and out compete native seaweeds.



Public perception of the institutional competency to manage the ocean environment.



National ranking of public priorities and issues of concern.



Ranking of public support for marine spatial planning.

68% of people want marine national parks

By Sarah Brown

Recent research gives us a valuable insight into what people think about our seas and how we should manage them. Amongst other interesting findings, the survey showed that 68% of people in the UK would like to see designated marine protected areas.

The 'KnowSeas' project surveyed 7000 randomly selected people in 7 European countries before collating all the data into a policy brief for decision makers. The findings make interesting reading.

Responses show that UK attitudes to the sea are not necessarily what you might think. For example, the survey shows that people still believe that industrial pollution is at the top of the list of threats to the marine environment when most scientists today will agree that climate change (which came 4th) actually tops that list.

The work has been spearheaded by Tavis Potts and Tim O'Higgins from the Scottish Association for Marine Science. Tavis says "Perhaps what surprised us most was how people viewed the management of the seas. There is very clear data to show that people trust environmental groups and scientists over other groups to manage our marine resource. You can't read too much into the data but a clear pattern emerges over the role of science and civil society in policy process."

Another more worrying trend to emerge is how people in the UK rank the importance of ocean health, it sits at the bottom of the list of 11 topics behind the cost of living, affordable energy, climate change and safe food. Only 32% of people in the UK ranked ocean health as 'important or very important', there is clearly still much work to be done on raising the profile of marine health and its role in these other issues.

On the positive side 70% of UK respondents agreed that marine spatial planning was important and 68% believed that the government should designate protected areas of the ocean in the same way as they do with national parks on land.

"There appears to be considerable goodwill in the public mind for the development of marine planning initiatives and marine protected areas." continued Tavis, "It is a good starting point, and with genuine engagement, participation and accountability it provides a platform for delivering a healthy marine environment."

To download the full report go to www.lwec.org.uk/publications/public-perceptions-europes-seas-policy-briefpolicy-brief

Developments and Planning

Argyll and Bute Coastal Development Strategy

By Mark Steward, Marine & Coastal Development Manager, Argyll and Bute Council

Local Development Plan

Argyll and Bute Council is required to produce a Local Development Plan (LDP) which will set out our long-term vision for future development and land use across Argyll and Bute. The plan will set out planning policy on how land will be used across the whole area and will be supported by Supplementary Guidance, providing more detail on the policies to help ensure everyone involved in the planning process, particularly people putting forward applications for development, are more aware of the Council's stance on particular development proposals.

What about coastal development?

The LDP will set out planning policy for development on land adjacent to the coast and in marine waters for aquaculture. Given the importance and complexity of Argyll and Bute's coastline a Coastal Development Strategy is being developed as Supplementary Guidance to the LDP.

What's important about the Argyll and Bute coast?

The coastal area of Argyll and Bute is an exceptional asset, providing a unique resource from which present and future economic, social, and environmental well-being can be derived. It is home to a large proportion of Argyll and Bute's population and hosts a great diversity of industrial and recreational activities, each playing an important role in the area's economy.

Some key facts about our coast highlight the need for additional guidance to assist sustainable economic development of the coast:

- Coastline exceeds 3700km in length;
- Almost 80% of people live within 1km of the coast;
- 25 inhabited islands support 17% of the population;
- Outstanding coastal environment with many areas of special landscape or ecological significance;
- One third of Scottish production and employment for shellfish farming and second highest economic contribution from Salmon farming of all Scottish local authority areas;
- Tourism and recreation heavily focussed on the marine and coastal environment;
- Essential ferry transport links and increasing sea transport of commercial cargoes;
- Sea fishing industry of significant cultural and economic importance;
- Significant potential for offshore wind, wave and tidal energy development.

What land and sea area will be considered by the Coastal Development Strategy?

The Strategy does not have a defined landward boundary as the influence of the coast penetrates far inland in some areas and not so in others. The marine limit of the strategy will be 3 nautical miles from mean high waters springs, which is the current extent of the marine area within which the council has the responsibility for granting planning permission for aquaculture development.

What does the strategy aim to achieve?

The overall aim of the strategy is to promote sustainable economic development of the Argyll and Bute coast and key objectives are to:

- Promote the environmental, social and economic coastal assets of Argyll and Bute;
- Inform new coastal development policy in the Local Development Plan;
- Help prioritise investment in existing ports and harbours infrastructure and identify other coastal areas where specific development may be required to support marine renewables, aquaculture and tourism;
- Provide an interface between the LDP and future statutory marine planning under the Marine (Scotland) Act;
- Assist the Council in achieving the correct balance between competing interests in the coastal zone;
- Increase use of ports and shared use of infrastructure and services at key ports and harbours; and
- Maximise opportunities to secure external national and European funding for capital development projects to develop and improve coastal infrastructure.

The Strategy will take into account the existing Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plan for Loch Fyne and the Firth of Clyde Marine Spatial Plan and other constraints such as areas that may be subject to coastal flooding and erosion, natural and built environment constraints including areas of wild land and areas that have a recreational value, including public access.

Timescale for development of Coastal Development Strategy

As the Coastal Development Strategy will be supplementary guidance for the Local Development Plan it needs to meet the same timescales, with a draft strategy ready to go out to public consultation with the proposed Local Development Plan in Autumn 2012.

How can I get involved?

Many people have already contributed to the development of the Local Development Plan through the Main Issues Report consultation over summer 2011.

The main opportunity to influence the Coastal Development Strategy is during the three month formal consultation on the proposed Local Development Plan in the autumn of 2012. Progress on the development of the strategy and details of any opportunities to provide views will be posted on the Council website at www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/coast.

Further information

Local Development Plan – www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/ldp

Coastal Development Strategy – www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/coast

Contact – mark.steward@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Greenock Ocean Terminal – Cruise Ship Numbers Climb

Greenock Ocean Terminal's deep water quay combines modern quayside facilities with a fantastic location and it is set for a significant increase in arrivals in 2012 with a record 41 vessel calls now scheduled to bring over 65,500 passengers to the town, a 13% rise on 2011. The 2012 schedule means Clydeport has more than tripled passenger numbers in just five years, from 19,803 in 2007 to the predicted 65,522 of 2012.

Cunard's Queen Elizabeth is high profile visitor this year along with a variety of cruise vessels operated by Fred Olsen, P&O and Princess Cruises among others.

The town was originally built on herring fishing which developed the shipbuilding industry, bringing prosperity to the region in the 19th and 20th centuries. This is evident in the many examples of fine Victorian architecture such as the Municipal Buildings, Sheriff Court, Custom House and the McLean Museum which is most certainly worth a visit to learn more about the fascinating history of Greenock and the local area.

For more information on all that Greenock Ocean Terminal and the surrounding areas have to offer, visit www.cruiseglasgow.com.

Meet the team, front right: Peter Sloan, front left: Jamie Sillars, back right: Graham MacArthur, back left: Duane Coetzer.

A day in the life - The Scottish Salmon Company team in Arran

By Rebecca Dean

A sometimes controversial sector, aquaculture is a large employer in Scotland. In this edition of Clyde Breakers we get a valuable insight into the management of the 14 cage site at Lamlash which can handle up to 380,000 fish a year.

The seven-man team at Lamlash Bay, Arran is headed up by Manager South African born Duane Coetzer.

The team has five full-time and two part-time staff and a combined experience of the Lamlash Bay site of over 65 years. This is largely made up from two of the site's original staff Charles Todd and Peter Sloan. One of the site's newest recruits is Charles' 17-year-old son James who is just embarking on a career in salmon farming. The other team members are Jamie Sillars, Peter Graham MacArthur and Jim Burns.

Duane said: "The salmon farming industry is one of Scotland's biggest sectors and definitely a good place to build a career. We've got a great team here at Lamlash Bay with a good blend of experience and young people with new ideas. This is an industry that's ever evolving and makes for an interesting workplace. I know everyone here is proud to be Scottish salmon farmers.

"It's also a beautiful location, particularly when the sun shines."

Duane inspects a salmon for signs of infection and general health.

A typical day

It is a seven-day week at the Arran farm. A typical day starts at 8am, when the staff gather at the shore base before being split into teams and embarking on the day's activities.

One group will undertake the 'site containment' duties; a visual inspection of the site which includes checking the moorings, nets, bird nets, pens and electrical equipment. They will also monitor for any unusual behaviour amongst the fish using 360 degree smart eye cameras and then move onto monitoring feed input for the day.

Duane explains that these are the most vital jobs on the site and are rotated to ensure that everyone understands fish behaviour and feeding responses. Good observation is best practice and enables any issues to be detected and dealt with quickly.

The other team will do health checks on the fish, which involves inspecting the gills and eyes and ensuring the conditions are best suited to the fish. Each month a percentage of fish in each pen is

measured by weight and length to provide accurate records of the fishes' growth progression. Environmental checks of the tides, water temperature and dissolved oxygen in the water are done daily.

Seabed sampling is also carried out each production cycle to assess the ecological and chemical status of the seafloor and ensure that the SEPA defined environmental quality standards are maintained.

The site staff are also responsible for daily maintenance, which can range in size and complexity from removing boats from the water for cleaning to the servicing of a generator which powers the feed systems.

Many of the jobs on the farm change depending on the cycle of the current stock. When the site is fallowed for eight weeks between cycles, there is a 'deep clean' of moorings, nets and cages. This period is vitally important for the local environment.

The salmon's life stages:

Every second year, around March time, the farm receives the young salmon 'smolt'. Weighing around 70g these fish will be on site for up to 22 months.

In winter, the team will spend around three days grading the fish, splitting the large from the small fish, to ensure the fish receive the right levels of feed for their size.

The company contracts in well boats to help with this movement and the well boats return again when it is time to take the fish away for harvesting. The 'big' group goes first, when they have reached around 4.5kg in weight.

Setting standards:

Training in the many skills needed to farm salmon is another aspect of Duane's role. On one level this covers manual operations such as safe handling of site equipment, including sea cranes, landing crafts, forklifts and small boats, as well as certificate and mandatory procedures like first aid, health and safety and sea survival.

On another, the Scottish salmon industry is one of the most highly regulated in the world and keeping up to date with constantly changing legislation, sustainability and health and safety practices requires ongoing training in husbandry skills such as fish health, handling and welfare. To do this Duane is in regular contact with governing authorities and very soon the Scottish Salmon Company will be piloting a new work-based qualification with Barony College.

"To meet the many requirements needed to obtain Global Gap, Code of Good Practice and other accreditations necessary to produce Scottish salmon, means we are constantly innovating and developing our skills," concludes Duane.

All photos © David Ingham

The salmon farm at Lamlash Bay

For more general information about other things happening in Lamlash Bay including the No Take Zone, sailing and outdoor activities go to www.coastarran.co.uk, www.arranyachtclub.co.uk or call Arran Outdoor Education Centre on 01770 600532.

Luke (helming) and Stuart Bithell power up their 470 at the Miami championships

Golden future for the Clyde

The Clyde has been responsible for many world records in its time. At one time it was responsible for building the fastest ship, the Cutty Sark, the largest passenger ship, The Lusitania, it is the deepest port and at one stage it was the busiest ship building area in the world. This year the Clyde stands a good chance of adding to its accolades and bringing home a Gold medal from the Olympics, writes Sarah Brown.

The Olympic sailor Luke Patience first got his feet wet at the tender age of seven when he took an Optimist out from his local sailing club, Royal Northern and Clyde Yacht Club, in Rhu. "In those days the racing fleet was pretty small, sometimes there would be only me out there with the mountains and the sea." Said Luke, "There is no sailing venue like it in the world, especially on a clear day, when you look north you feel like you are looking right into the heart of the highlands. There is such a different perspective out there on the water, you leave behind the busy hustle of the cities and roads and suddenly you are in the marine domain with a very different set of priorities."

Since then Luke has gone from strength to strength and in 2009 he teamed up with Stuart Bithell and formed what is now one of the strongest teams on the UK sailing scene and the number one sailing the '470'.

Winning smiles - Luke and Stuart are aiming for a podium finish at Weymouth.

"I feel so privileged and am so excited to have been selected for the Olympic team. We're absolutely not just going for the t-shirt. It's been hard work getting to this point and we have just one goal and that's to win gold this summer in Weymouth." said Luke.

Luke credits the Clyde with helping to make him such an outstanding sailor, "the Clyde is challenging place, there is no ocean swell but the sea can kick up a tremendous fuss when the wind and tide combine. The mountains play havoc with the wind so you get unpredictable changes in direction and strength. These days I thrive on those conditions, The windier and wetter the better!"

The first Scot to qualify for the 2012 Games he is not the only Clyde sailor to make it to the Olympics, as far back as 1908, Rhu born David Dunlop won Gold in London.

Luke will be sailing the 470, a fast and exciting high performance mono hull racing dinghy which requires precision and teamwork to get the most from the boat. The large sail area and low boat weight gives the boat great speed. The power is further enhanced by using a spinnaker to more than double the sail area and a trapeze to balance the planing hull.

"The 470 is a joy to sail, I have never helmed such a stunning boat," continues Luke, "she is so responsive, definitely the formula 1 of the sea. It requires great finesse but when you get the perfect set up and she finds her slot and takes off it is the best feeling you can have. I feel I have times of true harmony with that boat, not many boats can become such an extension of yourself. "

On his road to sailing stardom Luke has also found a deeper connection with the health of the oceans and is very concerned about the state of our seas and marine wildlife, "If I wasn't doing this, I think I would be working for Greenpeace trying to prevent the Japanese slaughtering literally tens of thousands of whales every single year. It is an absolute disgrace that this sort of thing is allowed to continue." He says.

"One of my greatest fears is the impact

Kit maintenance is an essential part of the Olympic routine.

Getting ready for the Olympics

of global warming on our seas. One of my dream destinations is the Maldives, but they are threatened by sea level rise. Closer to home we are seeing changes to the migration of fantastic marine creatures like turtles and basking sharks. We are messing with something so much bigger than ourselves and we just don't know what the consequences are. I have seen the Clyde cleaned up dramatically in the last 10-15 years but I wish the politicians and decision makers all over the world would get their act together and make some significant improvements right now.

I know global warming is a big issue but I look at it like this, in our racing we have to break everything down into small chunks so we can improve. My coach will tell you, tiny changes for the better, when you add them up, create Olympic class sailing. It is the same for the environment, if we add up a lot of small positive changes we can really make a difference, on the other hand if we let everything slip out of our control then we will just end up with a mess."

A strong message from a man passionate about his sailing and the seas which will hopefully see him take Gold in Weymouth this year. The Firth of Clyde Forum would like to wish Luke, Stuart and the rest of TeamGB the very best of luck in the 2012 games. If you would like to follow their progress go to www.ryascotland.org.uk.

Strandlines and beach cleaning

Newly deposited strandline, Kames Bay

Sandhopper - Amphipods are an important part of the ecosystem.

The dark, sweet smelling jumble of weed at the top of the beach can be an eyesore or nirvana depending on your point of view. Dr Phillip Cowie is a lecturer and researcher at the University of London's Marine Biological Station, Millport, Isle of Cumbrae (UMBSM) and he gives us an insight into the fascinating world of the strandline.

Strandline habitats are created by the accumulation of organic matter around the high water mark. Strandlines often consist of a combination of dislodged seaweed, carrion and other organic material as well as marine litter, all stranded as a result of recent storms or natural lifecycles.

The strandline forms an integral part of the beach ecosystem, providing food for a wide variety of creatures and stability for the sand structure. They are a unique fringe habitat, neither exclusively marine nor terrestrial and colonized by organisms from both systems. Many small crustaceans live in or feed on the strandline material including isopods and amphipods such as 'sand-hoppers'. These organisms feed on the dead and decaying material and thus recycle nutrients back into the beach ecosystem.

The nutrients can 'fuel' the ecosystems in the upper regions of the shore providing an important energy exchange between the sea and the land. Amphipods can also act as a direct food source for other invertebrates, including predatory rove beetles, spiders, birds and fish. Kelp flies are another strandline inhabitant – these in turn attract swifts and swallows and even bats at night!

Unfortunately, as well as gathering natural organic material, strandlines are often cluttered with litter, including fishing gear, plastic, sewage related debris, wood, glass, and many other discarded items. This means that many regional authorities undertake frequent and thorough beach cleaning in order to maintain high aesthetic standards, especially on bathing and amenity beaches. Cleaning takes several

A Jackdaw picking over rubbish in search of food.

Meadow pipits are more usually found inland but they can often be found feeding in the strandline.

forms, ranging from simple litter-picking by hand which is both desirable and non-damaging, to mechanized operations involving custom-made machines or modified agricultural equipment that remove all natural material as well as rubbish.

There is growing concern internationally about the use of beach-cleaning machines and their damaging impact on overall strandline-related species diversity and abundance. Large-scale, persistent removal of this material can cause great problems, not only for biodiversity but as strandlines are often the first stage in the formation of coastal sand dunes, their removal has significant implications for coastal protection against erosion and flooding.

Municipal authorities have beach management policies in place to clean beaches during the bathing season to make them more attractive to tourists, to fulfill bathing water legislation and the cleanliness criteria required to obtain awards such as Blue Flag. Consequently, councils have a sensitive balancing act in trying to meet the expectations of people (both locals and visitors), whilst sustaining the needs of wildlife.

One of the problems which inhibit effective beach management is the lack of information about the impacts of different cleaning regimes on strandline organisms and how that impacts on biodiversity, such as terrestrial and sea birds who feed along the strandline.

At UMBSM we are conducting research in both these areas. Ongoing studies show that strandline use depends on the bird species, type of strandline, season and state of the tide. Several species have been recorded using strandlines for food and/or nesting materials during our research; including adults and juveniles of birds such as turnstones, plover, sanderling, knot, dunlin, mallards, shelduck, widgeon, teal and gulls; and, perhaps surprisingly, blackbirds, robin, wrens, pipits, thrush, starlings, jackdaws, rooks and pied wagtail.

Considering their ecological importance, how can strandlines be protected whilst accommodating the needs of people using our shores? One of the main reasons strandlines are removed on a routine basis relates to the rubbish which accumulates there. Ideally, this pollution should be tackled at source, and prevented from occurring in the marine environment, strategies such as the developing Marine Litter Strategy by the Firth of Clyde Forum are important in this respect.

Another reason that strandlines are removed is because of the public perception that they are 'dirty.' We are working with North Ayrshire council to develop information boards for Kames Bay, Millport, to enable the public to become aware of their ecological importance. This may dispel the view that a pristine-looking beach is a healthy one.

When beach cleaning has to occur, hand-picking of rubbish is the preferred option. However, where this is not possible and mechanical cleaning occurs there is the potential to mitigate some of the deleterious impacts for example by avoiding areas where ground-nesting birds are present, or the use of 'strandline islands' where areas of strandline are left in place in-between cleaned areas to fuel natural processes and support invertebrate populations. Councils can also reduce the number of times individual beaches are mechanically raked as daily cleaning is unnecessary in many cases – lowering the level of environmental impacts.

For more information about the work at UMBSM contact pcowi001@udcf.gla.ac.uk.

Turnstones live up to their name searching for food amongst the peddles on the beach.

All photographs © Phillip Cowie

New funding for Taste Ayrshire

Taste Ayrshire has been awarded funding of £97,500 for a Rural Food Initiative. The TORE (Tastes of Rural Europe) Project will see the Food Tourism group work in partnership with organisations across Ayrshire and is a collaboration between LEADER groups in several EU areas, including 3 groups in Poland.

Activities will include Food Festivals, a new website and a Taste Ayrshire app, developing a brand for Ayrshire food products.

Ayrshire Food Network (AFN), who will benefit from the funding, is developing an Ayrshire Experience Box – a box of Ayrshire food products suitable for use in marine tourism, self catering, B&B establishments and for sale by e-commerce.

Howard Wilkinson of AFN said "we are very pleased to be working in partnership with Taste Ayrshire on the TORE project. The Experience Box represents an excellent opportunity for us to showcase the outstanding produce of Ayrshire to our all our visitors on land and sea."

Part of the funding is for a full time Project Co-ordinator, Executive Director Lisa Tennant said "Taste Ayrshire are delighted to be awarded this LEADER funding and are excited about working in partnership to boost the profile of the Ayrshire Food & Drink offering across Scottish and International Markets. I look forward to working closely with the new Project Co-ordinator to reach our goals."

For any further information on Taste Ayrshire or the TORE Project, please email Lisa Tennant at lisa@tasteayrshire.co.uk

Storm blown spray obscures the pontoons at Rhu Marina in January.

Rhu Marina Storm Damage Repairs

On Tuesday 3rd January, Rhu Marina was hit by the exceptional storm which affected much of the Central Belt of Scotland and which was described by weather experts as the worst storm in Scotland this century.

The storm caused damage to a significant number of boats and the marina's floating infrastructure was badly affected. Marina staff did their best to minimise damage at the time but there came a point when conditions were so severe that working afloat became unsafe.

The damage is now being repaired under the marinas' insurance and The Crown Estate have announced that it is undertaking a further round of investment at the marina to replace the wooden decked walkways, pontoons and fingers with more robust concrete decked equipment supplied by Scottish company, Varis Engineering.

Quay Marinas Managing Director, Simon Haigh, said 'This is very welcome news and the improvements massively upgrade the level of facilities at the marina and provide a more secure environment to keep boats afloat all year round. The contract has been awarded and work will be starting shortly.'

For more information contact the marina on 01436 820238.

Take a walk on the Clyde side

By Danielle Casey

It's that time of year again - time to dust off the sunglasses, slap on some sunscreen, and pull the walking boots out of the back of the cupboard.

The Firth of Clyde has plenty of recreational opportunities to offer, from sailing and kayaking to scuba-diving and angling. But if none of these activities tickle your fancy, why not take a step back and simply enjoy the views the Firth has on display? If you're looking for something a bit strenuous, you could head to Arrochar and climb the Cobbler (sometimes referred to as Ben Arthur) and enjoy the views down Loch Long. If you prefer a relaxed walk somewhere more accessible, try the Kilpatrick Hills.

The Kilpatrick Hills stretch from Dumbarton in the west to Strathblane in the east. If you start in Old Kilpatrick and take the road to Loch Humphrey, you have great views up and down the Clyde, including Glasgow and the Erskine Bridge to the east and Dumbarton Rock to the west.

The walk up to Loch Humphrey takes about 30 minutes to an hour depending on your pace and how often you stop to drink in the views of the Firth and the surrounding area. On a clear day you can see Rothesay in one direction and Glasgow University in the other. The path is very well defined and climbs at a gentle gradient all the way except for one section of less than 100 yards which is a bit steeper. It is used by ramblers, dog walkers, mountain bikers and bird watchers alike. If bird watching is your thing, keep an eye out for White-fronted and Canada geese, mistle thrush and buzzards.

TRANSPORT INFORMATION

The nearest town and train station is Old Kilpatrick (both about 5-10 mins from the start of the path). Old Kilpatrick is on First Bus routes 204 and 205 to and from Balloch and Glasgow. It is easily accessed from the A82 and, if you're feeling energetic, is just minutes from National Cycle Route 7. For the view of a map, visit Google Maps and search for directions from Old Kilpatrick to Loch Humphrey.

Stunning views await as you walk the Kilpatrick Hills.

Images courtesy of Paul Clifford

Dog's Life

Every week since 1995, almost without fail, Alison Rutherford has been down on the foreshore of Helensburgh picking up dog mess, beer cans and an assortment of other rubbish.

"It is a dirty job, but someone has to do it!" Says Alison who volunteers with the East Esplanade Protection Group, "I just look at the mess and I think if I only pick up one bag then that is one less in the soup and the Clyde is just that bit cleaner."

The volunteers of the East Esplanade Protection Group (EEPG) have made a significant impact on the litter in the area but they cannot rest on their laurels for long, a new report from the Marine Conservation Society shows that litter in the form of poop scoop bags filled with poop has increased by 71% in Scotland.

"We're delighted that Scottish pet owners enjoy dog friendly beaches and clearly think ahead by carrying poop scoop bags. But we need people to take the bag off the beach and bin it in one of the many receptacles provided for the job. Leaving a bag full of poo on the beach will result in preserved excrement, protected from the elements for years by the plastic bag which could take decades to break down," says Anne Saunders of MCS Scotland.

Despite an increase in poop scoop bags on our beaches, overall shore litter has dropped by 11% in the UK as a whole between 2010 and 2011 and by 28% in Scotland."

The EEPG are always looking for new recruits, it you have an afternoon to spare why not arrange to meet up and do a beach clean, call Alison on 01436 675603.

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Bottlenose dolphins, a rare and special sight in the Clyde

Whale, dolphin and porpoise sightings in the Clyde

A sightings report from the Hebridean Whale & Dolphin Trust.

By Morvern Summers

The Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust (HWDT) have been collecting sightings of cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises) from the west coast of Scotland for over a decade. In recent years they have received an increased number of sightings from the Clyde area and they are eager to get even more.

In 2011 HWDT received records of 53 encounters of cetaceans from the Clyde area between May and October, accounting for 120 animals in total. The majority of the sightings were from around the Brodick area of the Isle of Arran; however, the reports came in all the way from the southern tip of the Mull of Kintyre to Loch Fyne; to Erskine Beach and Loch Long.

There were 6 sightings of dolphins; 2 were of unidentified dolphin species and 3 were of bottlenose dolphins. The largest group was a group of 20 bottlenose dolphins sighted from Erskine Beach, Renfrewshire. The west coast of Scotland holds the UK's smallest resident pod of bottlenose dolphins, numbering about 50 individuals so a sighting of this many bottlenoses is special.

There was one sighting of a single Common dolphin near Tighnabruaich which is unusual as common dolphins are usually found in large groups, sometimes numbering hundreds. The total number of common dolphins reported from the Clyde area was 31.

23 reports of harbour porpoise sightings were received, numbering 61 in total. The largest group spotted was 13 in the Kyles of Bute, however the majority of the sightings were of lone animals.

11 sightings of minke whales were reported from all around the Clyde area. All sightings were of single animals. 10 of these sightings were between the 21st August and 1st October 2011.

13 Basking sharks were spotted from 9 different encounters, 4 of these were around the Island of Arran. 2 sightings were of groups of 3 basking sharks and the rest were single animals.

Also reported were a possible sighting of an orca (killer whale) 25 minutes from Ardrossan , a possible humpback whale, 2 miles south west of Little Cumbrae and a Pilot whale was reported in the Kyles of Bute.

Morven Summers, HWDTs Volunteer Coordinator adds, "By getting involved you are contributing to a growing dataset of cetaceans in the Clyde, an important resource when trying to conserve these enigmatic creatures. We really can't stress enough the importance of people getting involved and reporting their sightings. The nature of coastline makes it difficult to monitor so we rely heavily on people helping us out. Massive thanks to all those who have reported their sightings already".

Please help HWDT by reporting your sightings online at www.hwdt.org, remember to include photos if possible.

Tell Us What You Think...

Clyde Breakers is your newsletter; tell us what you think of this issue and what you would like to see in the future. Many thanks to those of you who contributed to this edition.

If you would like to become involved in the Forum and its work, contact us at the address below.

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The Firth of Clyde Forum has a broad membership base with representatives from industry, local authorities, community groups and charities. The opinions expressed by members within this issue are not necessarily the opinions of the Forum or its Core Group.

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marine scotland

Scottish Natural Heritage
All of nature for all of Scotland

GLASGOW and the CLYDE VALLEY strategic development planning authority

CLYDEPORT