



# The Ythan Project &

the

# Formartine

formartine  
partnership

# Partnership



Two organisations working for the benefit of people in the Formartine area

Newsletter

September 2004

This newsletter contains information about the work of **BOTH** the Ythan Project and the Formartine Partnership. The Ythan Project is a 3.5 year project which was developed by the Formartine Partnership and aims to improve the river environment in the area. The Formartine Partnership continues to operate both as a partner in the Ythan Project and as a separate organisation, aiming to improve the lives of Formartine residents in a variety of ways. Information about the recent work of the Ythan Project can be found on pages 1 and 2 and information on the Formartine Partnership's recent activities can be found on pages 3 and 4.

## What is the Ythan Project?

The Ythan Project was developed by the Formartine Partnership and is now managed by a partnership of organisations which includes:

Aberdeenshire Council; Forestry Commission Scotland; Formartine Partnership; Macaulay Land Use Research Institute; River Restoration Centre; Scottish Environment Protection Agency; Scottish Natural Heritage; Ythan District Fishery Board

The project is financed by a combination of these groups and a grant from the European Commission's Life Environment fund. The project runs until February 2005 and aims to work across the whole river catchment area, undertaking a variety of river based actions.

## What's happened recently?

### Working with farmers...

The project works with farmers in two main ways. One is raising awareness of the grant schemes that farmers can use to create wildlife habitats on their farm and the second is through assisting farmers with nutrient budgets on their farms.

In the winters of 2002/3 and 2003/4 we have been visiting farmers around the catchment area to make sure they know about the various grant schemes they may be able to use for wildlife habitat creation. One important scheme is the Scottish Executive's Rural Stewardship Scheme, which funds farmers for various actions, including creating uncropped strips of land next to burns. These strips protect the burn from any soil that is being washed off the field and also help to keep livestock out of the water, which will improve water quality. The Project has

raised awareness of the scheme amongst local farmers and has also written letters of support for farms who are applying to the scheme and whose applications will benefit the burns of the Ythan catchment. If all the Ythan applications are successfully implemented, large sections of local burns should be protected by new areas of bankside vegetation, like the one shown in the photo.



River-side buffer strip

On the nutrient budgeting side the project has developed software which enables farmers to complete nutrient budgets for their farms. So far the software has been used on 55 farms to undertake field by field budgets which assess the nutrient recovery of each crop and soil type. Farmers can then use the results to tailor their fertilizer and manure applications to ensure the crops get maximum benefit and the risk of any nutrients being washed into the burn is reduced. If you'd be interested in knowing more about nutrient budgeting and how it could help your farm, please contact the project team (contact details on back page)



The Ythan at Gight

# The YTHAN Project

www.ythan.org.uk



## Restoring the river...

The project has funding to undertake restoration work on the river, but didn't want to make all the decisions about how to use this money. So in both 2002 and 2003 we asked local people to help us prioritise a list of sites around the catchment and decide which sites would be undertaken. In 2003 six sites were selected by the voting public, and work was completed on four of the sites. In 2004, we hoped to complete the remaining 2 sites, plus some additional sites which had been suggested to the project. An update on these sites is included below:

- The creation of a wetland area next to the water in the Modley burn in Ellon – this was one of the sites selected in 2003, but work was undertaken in early summer 2004 to ensure the site had a chance for good vegetation growth before the winter. The area next to the burn banks was lowered to allow water to spill in naturally and the site replanted by local people with a mix of native wetland plants. We now need to wait and see how it develops over the next few months.



Construction work on the Modley Burn

- Remeandering the river near Fyvie – this site was also selected in 2003, but again needed a long summer of vegetation growth, so work was delayed until 2004. However it became clear that there could be problems with this work under the new European Water Framework Directive legislation. It was decided between the landowners and the project that the work should be postponed until there is clearer guidance from Europe on how this sort of river improvement work fits with the new legislation.
- Methlick village fish pass – not undertaking the work at Fyvie left us with some spare funding, so it was decided that this should be used for a site at Methlick, where fish passage up the Burn of Sauchentree was being blocked by various old concrete blocks and other debris.
- Fyvie castle removal of Japanese Knotweed – this is an invasive plant which is not native to this area and which can spread rapidly along burns and rivers. The plant is starting to spread along the river at Fyvie, so we hope to undertake some removal work during late September 2004.
- Bat and bird boxes – the project has commissioned Wood Recyclability in Pitmedden to create a variety of bat and bird boxes which will be put up around the catchment area. These will help to create nesting and roosting sites for a variety of water loving species, such as Daubentons bat, wagtails, warblers and others. If you know of a good riverside site for a box, please contact the project team (contact details on back page).



Tree planting in Ellon

## Tree planting

One of the aims of the project is to increase the number of riverside trees in the catchment area, and this has been done by the planting of 26 riverside sites so far. These sites have used over 1 400 trees of various native species, such as willow, alder, wych elm and others.

## Spreading the word around Europe...

In order to receive a grant from the European Commission the project has to act as a 'demonstration project' for other areas in Europe. To do this we need to make sure that people are finding out about the project and what it's doing. One way we hope to do this is by having a conference on October 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> 2004, where people can see some of the work we've undertaken in the project, and find out more about the river Ythan in general.

## What's coming up next...

Over the winter months we'll be undertaking tree planting at various watery sites around the catchment and also visiting farmers in the northern half of the catchment. If you have a burn or pond side site in the catchment where you'd like to plant some trees, please contact the project team as we may be able to supply you with trees and rabbit guards. The project's funding finishes at the end of February 2005, so you'll need to catch us before then! We then have to submit all our findings and accounts to Europe to finish off the project. The future for other river based projects in this area will then be in the hands of you the public and the Formartine Partnership...



Methlick village fish pass

# The FORMARTINE Partnership

[www.formartine.org.uk](http://www.formartine.org.uk)

## Partnership News

Since the last issue of the Newsletter, Craig has become a part time development officer for the Partnership and now shares the post with Lorna Harris who has been involved with the Partnership for a number of years through her membership of Turriff Community Council.

## Community Planning

Building on the successes at Rothienorman and Woodhead & Windyhills, Turriff held a successful Planning for Real day in June, which saw a model of the town centre used as a focus for discussion. Over 500 suggestions were logged at the event, and are now being made into an action plan which will be used to seek improvements in roads, housing, education, health, leisure, and business interests in and around the town.

If you would like to become involved in Community Planning, the Formartine Partnership can offer funding and advice on a number of ways which could help your community



Pupils at Turriff Academy with their model of Turriff town centre.  
Photo courtesy of the Advertiser series

to realise its own particular goals and aspirations. For more information, contact Craig or Lorna at the Formartine Office.

## Grants and Funding

Last year was another successful one for giving out money, with more areas in Formartine than ever before making applications to improve their communities.

Funding from the Partnership is currently still available for a number of projects, including Community Planning events, Town & Village enhancement schemes, environment and access projects and the Rural Youth Transport scheme, which helps youth groups to finance their trips to various venues.

Application forms for these grants are available from the Formartine Office, or via the Web site, along with information on other sources of funding.

## Photographic Competition



seasons of  
**Formartine**

After much deliberation, 6 photos were chosen as overall winners for the competition which was run by the Formartine Partnership and sponsored by Jessops Photographic Shop. The winning photographs by Sandy Milne, Phil Morris, Ronnie Milne and Gwendoline May Dunbar will be made into postcards, which will be available from local outlets across the North East.

## Formartine in Bloom

In support of the increasing number of Communities in Formartine who have applied for grants to improve and enhance their areas, we have decided to run an 'in Bloom' competition across the area in 2005.

Guidance notes on the categories and judging criteria will be available from October, to give communities an early opportunity for winter planting schemes. Entry forms will be available in late February when the competition will have an official launch. Publicity from the campaign will offer a great opportunity for your Community to show itself off in its summer finery, and this will undoubtedly increase visitor numbers across Formartine, as we prove ourselves to be the most attractive area in Aberdeenshire!

## Walking in Formartine

The Formartine Partnerships' tourism group has now produced a series of leaflets on walks across the Formartine area. Compiled in partnership with groups including the Forestry Commission, Community Councils, Haddo Estate, and Aberdeenshire Council, the leaflets offer 16 walks over the Formartine area, taking in established tourist attractions as well as highlighting some of the 'local' features which are not so well known out and about. The leaflets which are in a plastic 'pocket' are available from several outlets including the Formartine Area Office and cost £3.



Leaflets produced by the tourism group.

# The FORMARTINE Partnership

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## Formartine Festival of Land and Sea

The first Formartine Festival of Land and Sea took place in May and June 2004. The festival aimed to raise awareness of the natural and cultural links between the people of Formartine and the natural environment of land and sea.

The Festival opened on 27<sup>th</sup> May with 'Tales of Land and Sea', an energetic performance by local storyteller, David Brown, at Meldrum Library. This was the first of three such sessions, Turriff & Ellon Libraries hosting the other two events.

The following night, the first of two guided walks by local ecologist John Malster took around 20 visitors on a spring evening ramble through the

community-owned woodland at Windyhills, by Fyvie. The Ellon Community Transport mini-bus, driven by local volunteer Alan Forrest, was at hand to convey walkers to and around part of the site. The Woodland Trust Scotland site at Den Wood, near Oldmeldrum provided the venue for the second woodland walk 5 days later.

The Wooden Games at Haddo Country Park was the most popular event of the nine-day festival. Formartine Ranger Pam Tateson, Forest Education Initiative's Jackie Cumberbirch, along with a team of dedicated volunteers ran a successful 'Games' on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> May.

As well as taking part in the activities, kids took delight in making wooden equipment such as bows and arrows, even making their own medals to cap their own 'Olympic' day

'What a Waste!', a composting and recycling fun day featuring the Northeast Master Composter Project and Aberdeenshire Council's Waste Awareness caravan, took place the following day – the holiday Monday – at the same venue.

Other events included a family treasure hunt at Forvie National Nature Reserve, organised and run by SNH's Annabel Drysdale, which gave kids and parents alike a chance to enjoy the surroundings of some of Scotland's prime coastal habitats.

The Festival culminated on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> June – World Environment Day – with an Environmental Fair at the Kirk Centre in Ellon. Local organisations including the Ythan Project, Aberdeenshire Environmental Forum, the local bat group, Aberdeenshire coastal ranger, Ellon LETS and the recycling group Ellon Can-do, provided information, games and challenges to a steady flow of visitors throughout the day.

That evening, the Festival closed with an excellent concert performed by Jim Malcolm, singer with well known Scottish folk band Old Blind Dogs, and local musicians of the Ugie Folk Group, all of whom dipped deep into the cultural traditions of land and sea for their material. People who had attended the Environmental Fair during the day benefited from a reduced entry fee, enjoying a fitting end to the nine day celebration of the land and sea of Formartine.



Members of Ellon LETS at the Environmental Fair

## What Next?

The generous award from Direct Grants has allowed us not only to run the festival but also to build on the theme of Land & Sea, enabling communities throughout Formartine to develop ideas relating to the natural and cultural heritage.

In June, for example, the Partnership - in conjunction with the Aberdeen & Region Oral History Association (AROHA) - organised a one-day training workshop for people interested in recording the history of their local area as recounted by those who have lived it. This is a vital work if the traditional ways of life on the land and the sea during the 20<sup>th</sup> century are to be appreciated and understood, and the language preserved. The Partnership and AROHA are now working with 7 local groups to safeguard the oral history of our land and sea.

A new group, the Formartine Community Garden Project, has recently been established, and is looking for new members! This Partnership-led initiative will also build on the link between local people and the land, encouraging community groups and individuals to become involved in such activities as composting, the creation of a sensory garden, and production of flowers, herbs and berries free of artificial fertilisers or pesticides.

If you'd like to learn more about, or become involved in any of the Partnership's initiatives, please contact us.

**The Partnership can also provide funding for environmental projects; town & village enhancement; access work; and community consultations such as 'Planning for Real'**

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