

tidelines

Issue 55 Winter 2021

newsletter of the Solway Firth Partnership



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20/21
**COASTS
& WATERS**

Convenor's Column

Rupert Shaw MBE MA, SFP Convenor

Welcome to this edition of Tidelines, my first as Convenor. I had wondered if I would have enough to say, but like so many tasks in life once I reviewed all that we have done since the last edition and what we have planned for the remainder of 2021: I realise there's limited space to suitably comment, so inevitably I have had to leave items worthy of emphasis out of this frontispiece.

I confess to mixed feelings about the circumstances of my elevation to role: with Alastair McNeill's death in July, we have lost not only a great friend to the Solway, our Partnership and inshore fishing in particular but a calm and balanced advocate for our ongoing work. You will find what we hope is a suitable in memoriam piece on page 4. Alongside is a little about myself, to confirm my commitment to you that there will be no let-up in passion or advocacy for our Solway Firth, or the broad but interlinked areas of interest during my tenure.

We had the great pleasure of accepting Sheena Horner on to the Board of Trustees at our September meeting in Silloth. Sheena, well known in Wigtownshire, brings a strong network of related interests to the board and has already made a mark on the reach of some of our social media. So this seems a suitable opportunity to make a plea for those of you active on LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, to like, share and comment on the Partnership's posts and activity online.

The pandemic has been a catalyst for an increase in our online content. I would commend our YouTube channel: it contains the 2020 AGM offerings, which are a great way to get to know our fantastic staff. Our recorded shorts provide a useful resource for those new and old to the subjects and deal with the traditional frustrations of missing events due to work or family commitments.

The Partnership has made the leap to hosting what have been hugely successful webinars covering subjects as diverse as salt making and historic farmsteads to name just two. With the international reach of these, we understand that they are not just an opportunity for when we cannot meet in person: these will be an important part of our offering to you going forward.

It has been great to recommence in person events and we have been rewarded with good attendance. If I needed a reminder of the broad remit of our activity my lasting memory

of Ian Brown's fascinating North Cairn Radar Station walk; at its conclusion were revelations of the role played there by Leading Aircraftsman Tony Hancock – whose first public performance may have been the Radar Stations 1943 Christmas review. The connection to an icon of 1960s comedy seemed, as so often with our Firth's history, a fascinating juxtaposition to the quiet almost desolate site on the new Rhins of Galloway Coast Path.

The tail end of 2021 will inevitably be dominated by COP26 being held in Glasgow – it will of course provide appropriate emphasis and focus to many of the strands of our environmental work, and our Partnership staff will attend related events. With 70 percent of the oxygen we breathe generated by our oceans, interest in Blue Carbon in particular will continue to increase. In a domestic context the Solway

Firth will have yet another area of interest and related activities to take into consideration and I am confident that the SFP will be a useful stakeholder in the inevitable deconflctions required.

We all know however that while media attention is raised by the hosting of international conferences, SFP activity such as marine INNS (Invasive Non-Native Species) monitoring or projects such as our beach cleans can never be a one off – it will never be job done! We can all do our bit each time we go down to the sea, but so often the need to remove appropriately larger items and reach trickier sites benefit from coordination.

Do think how we can assist your projects with training, guidance or equipment. It was hugely rewarding to introduce the launch of the current Solway Marine Litter Project at The Isle of Whithorn, dovetailing the end of The Marine Conservation Society's Great British Beach Clean. That evening, I was struck by Mary Pattison's explanation of how MAC-CAN (Machars and Cree Valley Climate Action Network) had started with an attitude of just rolling sleeves up and making a difference. It's always inspiring when those for whom it's not a job, there's no remuneration, nor recognition just do their bit.

I'm sure that's also the case with many of the readers of Tidelines, so don't feel disheartened that tasks seem far from finished as we are all making a difference. As I said on the night, get in touch, see how SFP can help, let us build this network of networks and practically make real changes.



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Memorial for Alastair McNeill



Alastair McNeill, the Chair of SFP Board of Trustees, sadly passed away on 7 July 2021 peacefully after a long illness at the Alexandra Unit of Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary.

Alastair was born in Edinburgh, was 69 years old on his last birthday and would have been married to his wife Jean for 50 years in September 2021. He is survived by Jean and his son, also Alastair, and his daughter-in-law, Phillipa. He was a loved brother-in-law and uncle.

Alastair was one of the founders of Solway Firth Partnership (SFP) in the 1990s and became a board member in 2011 after retiring from SEPA in 2010 where he was widely known and admired, including by many current staff. He took up the position of Chairperson of SFP in 2014, a post he retained until his passing.

Alastair will be remembered as a private, gentle man, but one who spoke out with passion about issues he believed were important. He loved his pet Alsatian dogs, fast cars and loud music while driving. He was widely respected as a consistent and effective regulator who was committed to the protection of Scotland's environment.

In his working life, Alastair joined the North East River Purification Board in 1977 and worked in both the Elgin and Fraserburgh offices. He later moved to Dumfries as a Senior Inspector in the Solway River Purification Board before becoming Unit Manager when the SRPB transitioned to SEPA.

During his time in Dumfries, Alastair always championed environmental issues across Dumfries and Galloway. He worked closely with the Regional Environmental Education Forum (REEF) which promoted environmental education

across schools in the region, as well as chairing the Wetlands Group on the Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

Within SEPA, Alastair supported and looked after his team throughout the Foot & Mouth outbreak and dedicated time to developing his staff by committing to 'Investors in People'. He was a huge advocate of SUDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems) ensuring these were implemented in all strategic infrastructure projects such as the A74M upgrade project. During this project he worked resolutely to change contractors' attitudes and secured the largest fine against any one company, in Scotland, at that time. Alastair not only made a lasting impact on people he worked with, but he also contributed strongly to SEPA's work to protect Scotland's environment.

Alongside Alastair's work with SFP, he was instrumental in helping to set up the Regional Inshore Fisheries Group in 2013. The aim of the group was to improve the sustainable management of inshore fisheries and to give commercial inshore fishers a voice in wider marine management developments. He was Chair to the fledgling West Coast group until 2016 when the West Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries Group was formed and he then took on an even bigger area covering the whole of the west coast of Scotland. He only stood down from this role in 2019 on discovering his illness. At the last WCRIFG meeting a minute's silence was held as a sign of respect for Alastair's role in the group.

Alastair will be greatly missed at SFP and will be remembered as a hugely supportive Chairperson, friend and advisor to staff and an advocate of national and local work towards sustainable fisheries and the environment.

Alastair, far right, at SFP / Solway Coast Conference 2016



Alastair, at the back, during a visit to RSPB Campfield Marsh





Rupert Shaw, centre, during an SFP Board visit to Sillioth Dunes

Rupert Shaw MBE MA

A New Convenor at Solway Firth Partnership

Having acted as stand-in Chair during Solway Firth Partnership Board of Trustee meetings for the last 12 months, including 2020's AGM: I am absolutely thrilled to have been nominated and endorsed by fellow Trustee Directors as the next Convenor, with effect from September 6th.

I feel it may be helpful to outline a little of my interests and relevant experience, as many knowing me only through my Borgue farm business and NFU Scotland roles may wonder why I have sought this position.

Christened at HMS Daedalus, the sea has been a constant feature in my life. My father took us powerboating in British Columbia and sailing in Europe during my childhood. Active in the RNLI, I witnessed his burial at sea when I was 19. A passion for the sea runs strong through the Shaws with a number of forebears being Master Mariners or Officers in the Royal Navy. In particular there's a strong Solway connection as the Shaw family were involved for many years trading our own General Cargo Schooners out of Garlieston. I have inherited the paintings of each ship we owned – but sadly no vessels!

Joining up straight from school, my own 24 year military career had me experience all the world's oceans (except the Indian) with the stand out maritime experiences being four months on the Sub Antarctic Island of South Georgia during an

austral winter, a 7 month posting in Belize with its Caribbean coast and cays and 3 months living aboard a Royal Fleet Auxiliary in Freetown Harbour, Sierra Leone. Needless to say all these adventures included a lot of time in small boats, and some up close and personal marine life experiences. The most foolhardy of which was an encounter with a Leopard Seal on the ice.... In my own time I have game fished, scuba dived, surfed (longboard) and participated in photo tagging Pacific Bottlenose dolphins in Monterey Bay, California.

I can see the Solway daily from my coastal farm and skirt its edge with almost every journey I make. I feel naturally entwined and therefore concerned with its wellbeing in all senses. In addition to environmental need I am also keen that the Partnership play a significant part in preserving our coastal heritage and actively look for projects that help arrest the continuing decline of employment and commercial outcomes from our Firth.

I feel well prepared for the role of Convenor: a Trustee since 2016, I have a Masters in Policy, understand the nuances of this unique cross border partnership and already have a strong working relationship with our fantastic staff team. I will strive to make a difference. Already a regular with my family at SFP events I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible at our project events.

FOCUS ON Nature Recovery at Mawbray Banks Nature Reserve



Aerial view of grazing at Mawbray Banks



Gate at Mawbray Banks



Belted Galloway cattle at Mawbray Banks

In the winter 2020 edition of *Tidelines* we introduced the programme of nature recovery work the Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Team and the Dynamic Dunescapes Project were starting at Mawbray Banks Nature Reserve. One year on and with a lot of work done we are taking the opportunity to report back on what has been achieved.



Mawbray Banks Nature Reserve

Coastal sand dunes are the most threatened habitat in terms of biodiversity loss in Europe. They are suffering from widespread overstabilisation, invasive species, nutrient enrichment, habitat loss and fragmentation. As a result, dunes have become overgrown with vegetation causing dune wildlife populations to suffer.

Mawbray Banks and the coastal dunes north to Silloth are designated as the Silloth Dunes Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Mawbray Banks Nature Reserve is particularly important for the dune heath (an increasingly rare habitat in Cumbria) that

makes up much of the site and the population of natterjack toads that call the reserve home.

What does nature recovery mean at Mawbray Banks?

We have been aware that the condition (that is the biological health and diversity) of Mawbray Banks has been declining for a number of years. Our participation in the Dynamic Dunescapes Project has given us access to both funding and support to halt and reverse that decline.

Healthy dune heath habitat is a creation of nutrient poor and slightly acidic soils through grazing by large

herbivores. Grazing has been absent from the site for over 30 years and as a result dense rank grasses have dominated along with encroachment of brush and gorse. Consequently the diversity and abundance of flowers and heathers that we would hope to see on the site has been smothered.

Mawbray Banks is also an important breeding site for the natterjack toad. Natterjack toads rely on shallow drying pools for breeding, surrounded by short grass that they can hunt through and bare sand where they can burrow.

Over the last two years we have constructed a number of pools in the centre of the reserve offering ideal breeding habitat for the natterjacks.

Grazing at Mawbray Banks

One of the key outcomes of the work at Mawbray Banks has been the introduction of grazing. Establishing this grazing on the site has involved the construction of a stock fence around the southern portion of the site and bringing a local herd of 8 belted Galloway cattle to munch their way through the rank grasses and browse encroaching brush.

A key consideration in introducing the cattle to the area was maintaining people's ability to roam across the site and access the beach, so we have included lots of gates in the fence and selected a herd of cattle used to people and dogs. All we ask is that people keep their dogs under close effective control, which is good for the cattle and wildlife, and of course pick up their dog poo.

And how are the natterjacks doing?

The new pools and habitat works have been a big hit with the natterjacks and we have had a great breeding year with successful spawning in all the pools. This is great news and building on success last summer, establishes the site as an important refuge for this endangered species.

Find out more

You can find out more about the nature recovery work at Mawbray Banks by visiting the project page at - <https://www.solwaycoastaonb.org.uk/our-work/nature-recovery/silloth-and-mawbray-dunes-and-dune-heath/> You can also view a video about the dune restoration work at RSPB Mersehead and at Mawbray Banks – Dynamic Dunes on the Solway <https://www.solwaycoastaonb.org.uk/video-gallery/>

Have you heard the 'buzz' about the churchyards?

Churchyards across the Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) have been brought to life by local communities coming together and backing the 'Get Cumbria Buzzing' Project. As the countryside in Britain becomes more industrialised and urbanised, there are fewer places for flora and fauna to find sanctuary. Local churches such as Holme Cultram, in Abbeytown, and Christchurch, in Allonby, are working hard to create pollinator havens in their church yards.

According to Cumbria Wildlife Trust, in the UK, over the last 75 years, we have lost 97% of flower rich meadows and 50% of hedgerows. Pollinators contribute to one third of the food we eat and pollinate around £690 million worth of crops each year in the UK. It is in our interest to actively manage these habitats and reduce further decline.

Churchyards provide a fantastic open living space and with the right kind of cutting regime, the perfect conditions can be created to produce a habitat suitable for a range of plants, providing a rich food source for pollinators such as bees and butterflies, in turn supporting local bird populations.

Transforming these sites was no easy feat and took long days of hard labour by the local communities and the Solway Coast AONB volunteers, who rose to the occasion with smiles on their faces.

Work started by creating the right environment for native meadow seed to thrive. This required extensive ground preparation including cutting and collecting the grass cuttings to remove excess nutrients from the ground; removal of invasive species; chain harrowing – dragging a chain across the surface of the ground to expose bare earth; and the sowing of yellow rattle



Christchurch, Allonby



Solway Coast AONB volunteers



Holme Cultram, Abbeytown



Volunteers collecting grass, decreasing excess nutrients from rotting down in to the soil

seed which is semi-parasitic to grasses. These steps created the right environment in sward and the top layer of soil for sowing of other native meadow seed and the planting of plugs such as red clover and greater bird's foot trefoil.

Walk from the Discovery Centre to Grune Point and back

*A gentle
6.5 mile walk*



Grune - Skinburness aerial shot

Before leaving Solway Coast Discovery Centre in Silloth it is advisable to check tide times, as the Grune itself can be dangerous on exceptionally large tides. It is therefore not advisable to visit at high tide unless with an experienced guide.

Turn right outside the Discovery Centre, and walk past the community school entrance, the sports hall, then onto a small path beside the Silloth Primary School playground. This takes you to the main B5300 road, which you cross and go straight ahead into the car park beside the pine tree compound (a major Rookery in Spring and Summer). Pass the public toilets and carry straight on to the promenade.

Heading north follow the promenade past the Coastal Way finger post, and second car park with toilets, (NY114546) then towards East Cote

Lighthouse, an interesting feature which was built in 1914 and is still in use today.

Carry on along the promenade until you reach a narrowing of the pathway which guides you up a ramp on to the grass (NY117551). At this point you have a choice: you can stay on the lower narrow promenade path or join the grass footpath on the roadside verge. If you decide to stay on the lower promenade footpath there are breaks in the sea defences to allow you to leave the lower path in an emergency.

As you now approach the back of the seafront houses at Skinburness you will be guided up on to the grass path, which will then lead you through a narrow

gravel track to a tarmac lane between the houses.

On your left are the former longhouses of Skinburness, which are reputed to be the haunt of smugglers from Scotland. It was said that this area was the place in which Sir Walter Scott modelled the Crackenthorpe Inn mentioned in his book the Red Gauntlet. The longhouses are now converted into family homes.

Carry on along this small secluded lane, with the sea defence on your left. This was put in place to prevent coastal erosion and flooding. Cross the top of Dick Trod Lane and go through the gate with the cycle rack (NY127559). Pass the large retirement home and its well-manicured lawns on your right hand side.

Your walk will now continue over gravel and eventually drop down on to the beach, where the footpath was severely eroded during heavy tides of 2007. After a short distance you will be guided back on to a grass path which will lead you past a detached house which is in an idyllic location overlooking the Scottish coast; on passing this property note the viewpoint opposite. The outward views of the walk are of shingle, open sea and dunes.

Progressing along the path you will find yourself surrounded by gorse bushes, nesting areas for many passerine birds including linnet, stonechat and whitethroat. In the summer you may also hear the occasional cuckoo which will be up to no good laying her eggs in others' nests. As the footpath narrows take a left turn through the gorse which will lead you to

Gorse at Grune





WW2 pillbox on Grune

the next kissing gate on your walk. You are now entering sheep grazing areas; it is advisable to keep dogs on a lead from here on.

For a short distance the coastal fringe will be out of view, however, there is a well-marked footpath which will bring you to another gate. You will be guided through a narrow gorse area leading to a well walked path with plenty of way markers pointing the way.

In the distance, on the horizon to the left of the Anthorn masts, you will notice a former WW2 pillbox. Here you can sit and enjoy the spectacular views over Moricambe Bay; a birdwatcher's paradise when the tide is coming in, flowing up the River Waver Estuary. You are now at the half way point of the walk.

For your return journey, turn right from

the pillbox and follow the shingle-mud track by the River Waver Estuary, taking in the vast views of saltmarsh, creeks and on a clear day, the Lake District Hills. Follow the track through a series of fenced off areas with public kissing gates. Along this footpath you will notice some large blocks of concrete rubble. These were dumped here after the wartime coastal defences were removed. They now form part of a sea defence protecting the Grune from erosion, also providing habitat for rabbits, stoats, weasels and other wildlife.

On your way up this track, you will also notice that you are climbing a slight gradient which eventually leads to a series of gorse and hawthorn hedgerows. It is worth spending a little time to look over the Skinburness Marsh,

where large numbers of geese can often be seen and heard in winter. There is also the chance of seeing peregrines hunting these marsh areas in pursuit of wading birds.

You should now have gone through a series of gateways, and will be approaching the little Grune hamlet with Marsh Cottage, on your right, the first of these quaint coastal properties. As you pass this cottage you will come to a three way marker post (NY129560). Turn right in-between the houses and follow the secluded country lane, which will guide you back on to the Coastal Way.

You have now gone full circle, and simply need to retrace your steps along the Cumbria Coastal Way, before returning to the Solway Coast Discovery Centre.

Thrift in flower



Aerial shot of Grune Point





Crammag Head Lighthouse

Heritage Highlights on the Rhins



There are around 1,500 archaeological sites on the Rhins of Galloway and new online guides have been created to provide an introduction to heritage highlights as you explore the coast. The three downloadable guides are designed to assist 'digital exploring' of coastal archaeology prior to the completion of the Rhins of Galloway Coast Path.

Available on the Solway Firth Partnership and Rhins of Galloway Coast Path websites the guides focus on three lengths of coast; North Rhins, South-west Rhins and South-east Rhins. The Rhins of Galloway Coast Path is currently being developed and early next year you will be able to start exploring the coast on waymarked paths and mapped routes.

The first guide, North Rhins, examines the coast between Stranraer and Portpatrick (what will be sections 1 and 2 of the coast path). From an ancient standing stone near Portpatrick to the intricately carved Kilmore Stone; earthworks of Iron Age promontory forts to tower houses; limekilns to saltworks; and cable house to radar station, the North Rhins has an amazing variety of archaeology that can be discovered with the aid of the guide.

The second guide, South-west Rhins, includes the remote and windswept coastline between Portpatrick and the Mull of Galloway (what will be sections 3 and 4 of the coast path). Dramatic clifftops provide the setting for castle ruins and earthworks of promontory forts, there is evidence of prehistoric farming at Cairnmon Fell and the remains of a home of an Iron Age farming family beneath the modern

Castle Ban

At Castle Ban a steep-sided artificial mound was once the site of a medieval castle. A ditch and bank cross the neck of the promontory. The bank may have been topped by a tall fence, or palisade. The castle sat on top of the mound, or motte, and was probably made of wood. The first mottes in Scotland were built in the 10th century. They were the predecessors of the large stone castles we see today.

Dunskey Castle

Perched high on a cliff, Dunskey Castle has one of the most dramatic settings for a castle. What you can see today dates to the 16th century, but there was certainly a castle here as early as the 14th century, and perhaps even earlier. Like many castles it is said to be haunted by a prisoner who died in the dungeon. Prime locations like this were always desirable, from prehistory to the medieval period and beyond!

Ardwell Motte

One of six medieval mottes in the Rhins, all probably dating to the 12th or 13th century, the site at Ardwell sits on a wooded escarpment behind the village. A wide ditch surrounds an artificial mound that the principal tower of a castle would have sat upon. Although nothing remains of the original timber structure Ardwell Motte is easily visited as it is part of the Ardwell Pond Walk which is accessible from the car park on the shore at Ardwell village.



lighthouse at Crammag Head. Perhaps the most interesting are the unusual remains of a broch (a prehistoric circular stone tower) at Doon Castle which are currently being investigated as part of the Rhins Revealed Project.

The third guide, South-east Rhins, follows the edge of Luce Bay from Scotland's southernmost point at the Mull of Galloway back to Stranraer. It is the most accessible part of the coast with a path currently waymarked as the Mull of Galloway Trail (what will be sections 5 and 6 of the coast path). The guide features a standing stone and holy well as

well as the extraordinary carved stones at Kirkmadrine. More recent highlights include a redundant windmill, remains of a brickworks and the remains of WW2 bombing targets on Luce Sands.

Managed by Solway Firth Partnership and produced by AOC Archaeology, the Rhins Revealed Online project is supported by Kilgallioch Community Fund with funding from ScottishPower Renewables' Kilgallioch Windfarm and Dumfries and Galloway Council.



Beach Clean Survey on the Machars coast



Many hands make lightwork, Machars Beach Clean

Helping Hands Provide a Head Start

Solway Firth Partnership's ambition to have over 200 miles of cleaner coastline in Dumfries and Galloway has been given a boost by support from Marine Fund Scotland for the Solway Marine Litter Project.





Volunteers tackle 'hotspot' on Machars Beach Clean

In collaboration with Machars and Cree Valley Climate Action Network (MAC-CAN) community group a launch event was held at the Isle of Whithorn and the next day volunteers took part in the Great British Beach Clean on the Machars coast.

The Solway Marine Litter Project aims to work towards a cleaner coast by collaborating with local communities, landowners and businesses to take a closer look at the problem and trial solutions. The project will focus on targeting marine litter 'hot spots' on the Machars Coast, identified through the aerial surveys undertaken as part of the SCRAPbook Project.

The first event was held on Saturday 25 September at the Isle of Whithorn when we were joined by Kirsty Crawford from the Marine Conservation Society who spoke about the issues of plastic and litter in the marine environment. The next day Kirsty helped lead a beach litter survey at the MAC-CAN community beach clean on the Machars coast. Over 20 volunteers took part in the beach clean and assistance was provided by a local environmental consultancy and farmers

who provided transport to carry the marine debris from a remote beach to a skip.

Usually, the Great British Beach Clean surveys a 100 metre stretch of beach but this is impractical on beaches where years of debris have collected and so a short stretch of 10 metres was surveyed by 4 volunteers while the others gathered together debris in piles ready for collection.

The survey revealed that 502 items were picked up – the equivalent of 5,020 items per 100 metres compared with a Scottish average of 72 items per 100 metres. Most of the debris was plastic (93%) and the item that most frequently found was drinks bottles (75 number). Many of the large items, such as fish boxes (8 number) and oil containers (5 number), were from commercial fishing and although most of it is unlikely to have a local source, we will be encouraging local fishers to help us remove and reuse fishing gear.

A vast amount of marine litter was removed from 1 mile of beach and although much will depend on how many storms wash debris ashore this winter it is anticipated that future beach cleans at this location will be much easier to carry out.

Solway Marine Litter Project

While the first phase of the project has a Machars focus the project also has a region-wide remit and we want to work with existing groups and support those who want to get involved in beach cleans across Dumfries and Galloway. By collecting data and monitoring volunteer effort we will have a better understanding of the problem. We will provide practical advice by sharing information about where and when beach clean activities are planned, offering advice on health and safety and risk assessments as well as seeking solutions to barriers that are preventing beach cleans taking place. From first aid courses to lending litter pickers, we want to help communities to target areas of marine litter on the Scottish Solway coast. Let us know what we can do to help you at bit.ly/solwaylitter To get in touch please contact Nic Coombey: nic@solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk



With support from local farmers

Kirkcudbright Pebble Detectives

at the Scottish Geology Festival

At first glance the shingle beaches of Dumfries and Galloway seem very grey but take a closer look and you will find an amazing variety of pebbles at your feet; from red jasper to black basalts, milky white quartz to speckled granites. Every pebble has a story to tell that explains how they were created, and the journey undertaken before they arrived on our shores.

Pebbles are formed by the erosion that physically breaks up exposed rock surfaces. Many are local, derived from rock exposures where weathering processes have created fragments that have been worn down to become pebbles. These pebbles are usually easy to identify because they can be compared with nearby rocky outcrops such as sandstones from nearby cliffs laid down 430 million years ago in a deep ocean or igneous rocks formed in a volcanic vent and exposed at a nearby beach.

Often pebbles have been moved by water and are tumbled smooth by the action of waves or rivers. The greatest mover of stones in the Solway was the power of ice that over the last million years reshaped the landscape and created the one we recognise today. Ice sheets hundreds of metres deep fed the glaciers that flowed under their own enormous weight. Glaciers scoured off layers of rock and moved boulders great distances but when the ice melted, they were dumped far from their place of origin. A large boulder that has been moved by ice is known as an erratic but many pebbles on the shore have moved a similar distance.

While most pebbles in Kirkcudbright Bay have been moved by natural forces sometimes there is a surprising explanation for the discovery of strange stones.





Flint Bay



Nickel ore

Flint

A small creek or indent on the east side of Kirkcudbright Bay affords good shelter for small fishing boats and is known by sailors as Flint Bay because of the flints found only in this location. A wreck in January 1816 provides an explanation for this geological oddity. The Port William registered sloop, Ellen and Agnes, laden with beef, hides and flint was lost here and three crew were drowned. All that remains is a bay scattered with the cargo of flints and a place name that has become part of our oral tradition.

Granite

The wreck of the Monreith can be seen at the beach commonly known as The Doon on the west side of Kirkcudbright Bay. The schooner was built at Port William in 1880 and owned by Alex Hill. In November 1900 she was on passage from Newcastle County Down to Sillioth with a cargo of 100 tonnes of granite kerbstones and put into Kirkcudbright Bay but struck a sand bar and was driven onto the shore. All the crew escaped before the local lifeboat reached them and they returned to Ireland with assistance from the Shipwrecked Mariners' Society. While the kerbstones are likely to have been removed from the wreck some of the granite on the shore may be remnants of the cargo.

Nickel

Strange green pebbles are sometimes found on the shore at Abbey Burnfoot east of the mouth of Kirkcudbright Bay. The Clynder was an iron barque on a voyage from the South Pacific Island of New Caledonia to Glasgow when a navigational mistake led to it being wrecked in December 1890. Her crew of 24 all got ashore safely and the cargo of 1,800 tons of Nickel ore was salvaged but pebbles of green nickel can still be found on the beach.



Wreck of the Monreith

Why not visit the SFP website to find out more about the geology of the Solway –
www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk/environment/geology/





Oystercatcher

Life on the Edge

Chantal Macleod-Nolan,
Life on the Edge Project Officer



The UK has lost more than 15% of intertidal habitat, 46% of shingle and 18% of dunes since 1945 due to coastal development and sea level rise. The remaining habitats are considered in poor condition. As the loss of habitat continues, this will likely impact both the breeding and wintering populations of waterbirds and seabirds.

“LIFE on the Edge” is a four-year EU funded partnership project between the RSPB and the National Trust focusing on the creation and improvement of habitat at nine key coastal sites in England (www.projectlote.life). The project is using innovative techniques such as using dredged materials to recharge shingle habitats, restore salt- and freshwater marshes and create new islands within coastal lagoons.

These important habitats are home to a multitude of wildlife including breeding terns, gulls and waders which are vulnerable to human disturbance, predation, and coastal squeeze due to sea level rise and the loss of coastal habitats limited by seawalls. In addition, during

winter the coast provides safe roosting areas for migrating and wintering birds like brent geese and bar-tailed godwits.

In Cumbria, RSPB has been working with the Cumbria Wildlife Trust to help improve the anti-predator fencing around important sites home to nesting herring, great- and lesser black-backed gulls such as South Walney. We have also created new breeding habitats at RSPB Hodbarrow.

Hodbarrow was once an iron ore mine, however when mining operations came to an end in 1968, the former workings were flooded, forming a lagoon, which became home to a colony of nesting terns. The established colony is now of international importance. As populations of nesting birds grew, space was at a premium, and it became clear the islands would need to be expanded to accommodate

the colonies. As a result, through this project, a new artificial island was formed in the tidal lagoon.

Located behind the sea wall, the reserve is protected from high tides, storm surges and future sea level rises. Bird hides



Dunlin



Newly created island

overlook the islands, making Hodbarrow the ideal site for watching not only the nesting Sandwich, common and little terns, but also other species nesting on the lagoon. The creation of the new island was completed in January 2021, alongside an extension to the eastern side of the main island, extending it from 1.5 to 2 hectares. More than 12,500 tonnes of slag, taken from the adjacent bank, was used in the creation of the islands. In the summer of 2021, there were 765 breeding pairs of Sandwich terns nesting on the main island which successfully fledged 308 chicks. Additionally, the new island has already attracted interest from breeding birds. A pair of ringed plovers produced two chicks earlier in the summer, and there are also oystercatchers and common tern nesting on the new island.

Another key aspect of the LIFE project is to reduce disturbance and work directly with visitors. Local communities and visitors can help protect and raise awareness so these beach nesting birds can successfully nest and raise chicks safely as well as have a safe place to roost during winter. This work includes engaging local volunteers to find nests, protecting them during the breeding season and engaging

with site visitors. Regardless of the time of year, if a bird appears distressed, we recommend that people give them space by moving away quietly and prevent any dogs from chasing wildlife. Birds don't store energy in the same way we do and must constantly eat and rest if they hope to survive. They often perceive movement as a threat, which means a dog running across the mudflats or a shadow passing over them can cause them to fly away, burning up valuable energy. Through working with people across areas including organisations like the Morecambe Bay Partnership we can exchange knowledge and improve our solutions to be more effective in protecting these vulnerable birds.

A bit further north, the Solway Coast is no exception. Designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, it is renowned as an important haven for wildlife all year round. Wading birds like dunlin, grey plover, turnstone and curlew regularly use the estuary during winter and face similar pressures and threats due to coastal erosion and disturbance. By #WatchingYourStep, when out enjoying the coast, we can help share these special places with our wildlife.

Little tern with chicks



Robin Rigg Community Funds More Projects

Communities around the Solway have been busy working on great projects funded by the Robin Rigg Community Fund (RRCF) 2021. Catch up with the progress of two projects which focus on enhancing nature and helping the community to get outside and engage more with the environment.

Friends of Silloth Green make Tranquil Spaces

The Friends of Silloth Green work to maintain and enhance Silloth Green. The funding from RRCF enabled the group to install raised beds within the Community Garden.

The beds were planted with unusual vegetables, sensory plants and edible flowers. The beds have been built at varying heights to enable people with various disabilities to get involved. The beds also have explanatory cards to help people who might want to try and grow their own. When the vegetables are ready they will be donated to Silloth Community Hub to help those in need.

Carol Doran, Treasurer and Volunteer Coordinator reports, "The residents and

holidaymakers have already shown an interest in the raised beds and the comments made have been exceptional. Our local schools have also begun to bring the children along to hopefully promote an interest in growing food and flowers.

"We have been visited by the Green Flag Award judge who was very impressed by the potager beds and we hope that we will be awarded our 9th year Green Flag".





Caerlaverock Primary School Builds a Better Garden

Caerlaverock Primary School applied to the Robin Rigg Community Fund to improve their outdoor areas and expand their vegetable garden. This was to help support the local community by allowing the children to help with voluntary projects. The outdoor area could be used by a breakfast club before school and other local sports and community groups that wished to use the area after school times.

The new garden area was also to provide stimulus for school clubs to take part in gardening and use creative ideas to design various aspects of the garden. The garden area was to be extended to plant vegetables, trees, bushes and

other plants, install seating areas and provide an area for wildlife to flourish.

Hopefully the area will become part of a community initiative where members of the community would come in and help maintain the garden area with the children – a community/school partnership garden allotment initiative.

Caerlaverock Primary School have been busy over the last year making their project a reality. The school has reported back that, “Through working with the children we have extended our garden area and provided the perfect environment for birds and insects to flourish. It is becoming an area of calm – for the pupils to enjoy and spend time in

– continually maintaining and taking pride in making this area theirs.

“We have managed to use some of the money from the grant to help buy various things for the garden such as compost, sheets of plywood to produce some signs for our garden, flowers that have been planted and seeds for vegetables to grow.

“We can’t thank the Robin Rigg Community Fund enough for providing us with the grant”.

The SMILE Project Comes to a Successful End!

The SMILE Project, funded through the European Maritime Fisheries Fund administered by Marine Scotland, and the Scottish Government, has now officially come to an end, but will continue to be updated.



The Solway Marine Information Learning and Environment (SMILE) Project ran from February 2018 to July 2021. After more than three years of engagement and knowledge gathering about the Solway Firth, the Solway Review is online, accessible and constantly being updated.

The Solway Review is an engaging and informative story-map style website where visitors are provided with up-to date data and information about the management and resources of both sides of the Solway Firth.

For anyone not familiar with the Solway Review online story-map, it has 60 sections, split into five main chapters:

- Engagement
- Clean and Safe
- Healthy and Biologically Diverse
- Physical
- Productive



Orchids in among wild flowers

These chapters cover living and non-living topics in a local, cross-border context. The Solway Firth is unique but is often overlooked in terms of the UK marine area due to its rural local communities, and relatively quiet marine space. It is hoped that the Solway Review can help spread awareness, knowledge and interest in the Solway.

There is something for everyone in this assessment which also has lots of photos, videos, and maps to accompany the text. Topics covered range from Coastal Change and Water Circulation under 'Physical'; Defence and Sea Fisheries under 'Productive'; Sub-tidal rock and Seals under 'Healthy and Biologically Diverse' and many more. Have a look at the Solway Review online at -

<https://www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk/solway-review/>



DG Environment Fair



Newspaper Articles



Stakeholder Engagement at Cumbrian Libraries

So many exciting milestones happened during this project, here are some of the highlights achieved over the course of the project.

- 967 sessions on the Solway Review website (to beginning of August 2021) tracked by Google Analytics
- 91 meetings and sessions with stakeholders
- 60 events attended over the course of the project
- 744 votes in the 'sector vote' stakeholder engagement question and 582 words/phrases from over 190 stakeholders sharing their future Solway 'vision'
- 193 photos submitted to the Solway Photo Series
- Featured in at least 6 local newspapers/magazines and on the BBC Radio Scotland
- Featured in 7 issues of Tidelines, the SFP magazine
- 230 social media followers over on all platforms (Twitter, Instagram and Facebook)

- 20 YouTube videos produced
- Completion of SEASS and SEAES Reports providing socio-economic analyses for the Scottish and English sides of the Solway Firth, available at <https://www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk/planning/seass-and-seaes/>

SMILE does not end with the project end date, however. One of the main aims of the SMILE Project was always to ensure that the Solway Review could be updated to reflect new data and developments for our coast and marine environment in the Solway. The Review is already being updated to reflect developments since sections were written and regular reviewing updating will continue into the future.

To read the report on the SMILE Project highlights visit the webpage - <https://www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk/planning/smile-project/>

Seaside flowers



Sandy bay / Blue mussels and barnacles





Stranraer Marina

Bring in the Rhins?

Biosphere Boundaries
Come up for Review



Corsewall Lighthouse | below: Oyster fishing

With its 10th anniversary approaching in 2022, Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere is reviewing its geographical boundaries and the question of whether to make the Rhins of Galloway part of the designation has been raised. Following discussion by the Biosphere Partnership Board in May, the proposal is now moving into public consultation with the launch of a digital survey to test public opinion on the potential benefits of 'bringing in the Rhins'.

The Biosphere is working with Solway Firth Partnership to create a range of both in-person and digital forums so that everybody who wishes to respond to the expansion proposal has ample opportunity to do so.

In its present form the Biosphere covers 5,268 km² of south-west Scotland across the three local authority areas of Dumfries and Galloway, East and South Ayrshire. It is part of a family of more than 700 Biosphere designations around the world, recognised by UNESCO for the commitment of their local people to live and work in harmony with their precious landscapes, wildlife and cultural heritage.

The Biosphere brings with it no regulatory control, rather it

works in partnership with other agencies in delivering a programme of initiatives which support sustainable land use and local enterprise, as well as developing research and learning opportunities, and enhancing community resilience to local climate change impacts.

The current Biosphere boundaries were based on river catchments which resulted in the Rhins being left out of the original designation, a decision which has been questioned on a number of occasions in recent years. Including this region would bring in Luce Bay and the Mull of Galloway, Scotland's southernmost point. Kirkcolum, Portpatrick, and Drummole would be brought into the fold, as would Stranraer, which with its population of approximately 13,000 would become the largest Biosphere town.

The time to discuss bringing in the Rhins is opportune, as Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere has its 10-yearly review with UNESCO in 2022.

The Biosphere team are keen that as many local residents as possible can participate in the consultation, and are inviting people to take part in an online survey at www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/BiosphereBoundaryReview





Portpatrick from the Southern Upland Way footpath

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Biosphere and what is its purpose?

A Biosphere is a special designation awarded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

It means that Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere has been recognised internationally as a world class environment for people and nature.

The UNESCO Biosphere designation in SW Scotland is a recognition of its fantastic array of landscapes, wildlife, and cultural heritage. The purpose of the Biosphere is to encourage people to make the most of opportunities it offers for communities, businesses, and visitors to celebrate the area in a sustainable way.

You can read more about the global network of UNESCO Biosphere Reserves here <https://en.unesco.org/biosphere>

Are there other Biosphere designations?

There are currently 714 Biosphere Reserves in 129 countries that belong to the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. Some nearby include Wester Ross, Isle of Man and North Devon.

Why was the Rhins not included in the first boundary?

The current Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere boundary embraces diverse countryside surrounding the Galloway Hills. It was originally defined by the rivers radiating out from the hills and their catchment areas, with the rivers providing a common theme to connect the natural environment with the cultural identity of the people who live and work in the region. Since these rivers do not reach the Rhins, this area was not included within the Biosphere's original boundary.



Map of current Galloway Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Reserve

Why is now a good time to review the boundary?

A 10-year periodic review is required by UNESCO (taking place in 2022) which offers an opportunity to take another look at the current boundary of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere. It is recognised that by omitting the most southerly part of SW Scotland the Biosphere boundary implies that the Rhins does not have a world class environment for people and nature when the opposite is very much the case. Over the last ten years the possibility of including the Rhins has been one of the Biosphere's most frequently asked questions, by individuals, visitors, and by community groups.

What new rules and regulations does a Biosphere impose?

The Biosphere designation brings no new rules or regulations but rather encourages us to work together to create a better future for people and nature. There are no costs involved.

What benefits does the Biosphere designation bring to my community / business?

The designation recognises SW Scotland as a special place using the globally respected UNESCO brand. A key goal of the Biosphere is to foster a sustainable economy and society by offering new opportunities for businesses and communities to 'do things differently' and safeguard the environment for future generations.

You can find out more about Galloway & Southern Ayrshire UNESCO Biosphere at: www.gsabiosphere.org.uk
Facebook / Twitter / Instagram

These most Frequently Asked Questions about what the UNESCO Biosphere designation means were collated for public perusal, in order to help people decide whether or not they support this idea. More information is available at gsabiosphere.org.uk or can be requested via email to info@gsabiosphere.org.uk and the survey is available on www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/BiosphereBoundaryReview

An Introduction to the Fishing Faces of Allerdale

Solway Firth Partnership has been lucky enough to work with Allerdale Borough Council to produce a series of photos and film to celebrate the men and women whose lives have a connection with fishing and the seafood industry along the coast of Allerdale. They all work tirelessly to source quality seafood or provide essential support to our fishing industry.

Photographer, Penny Watson and film maker, Paul Mitchell from Fluid Productions have travelled along many miles of Solway coast to take a series of images and film that capture the faces and voices of individuals whose lives and livelihoods are closely linked to the sea.

To give you a flavour of the tales that have been captured we've unveiled the journey of the brown shrimp below.



Brown shrimp fishermen, Danny and Tony Baxter

Solway brown shrimps

Brown Shrimp Story

Follow the story of the brown shrimp, from netting the catch in the Solway by Silloth shrimp fishermen, to the preparation locally at Ray's shrimps and finally delivery to the Fairy dust Emporium for you to enjoy! Brown shrimp is a delicacy like a small prawn with a distinctive flavour. Prawns are considered the poor man's shrimp.

Danny & Tony Baxter, shrimp fishermen, Silloth

Danny and Tony Baxter can date their tradition of shrimp fishing back through nine or ten generations to at least the mid 1800s when their ancestors were blown ashore in Annan. In 1911, the family moved all their furniture in their boat to Silloth where the harbour was more accessible. The family have fished from there ever since.

The brothers fish for brown shrimps by net from a beam

trawl, a system that avoids most bycatch. The catch is immediately cooked on the boat using a pot and burner. This keeps the shrimps as fresh as possible. You can tell if they were cooked in time as the shrimp is curled not straight!

When the boat lands the shrimps are immediately processed by removing the shells, packing, sealing and freezing them into 5lb blocks. These are then sent off to be turned into potted shrimp for the domestic market.

As the Baxters say, "No better job especially when the sun shines."





Joe Ray outside Ray's shrimps



Vicky Hope

Joe Ray, Ray's Shrimps, Silloth

There used to be around 15 shrimp boats in Silloth and 12 in Annan but now only two families fish for the Solway delicacy. Joe Ray fishes for Solway shrimps on his boat, the Jolanda.

Joe's father started the Ray's shrimp business in the mid-1960s. He passed down the shrimp fishery to Joe along with the name of his boat, Jolanda. The first Jolanda was built in Orkney and then sailed down to Silloth by Joe's father and uncle. There have been a few boats since. Joe's current boat is much newer but still has the same name.

Ray's shrimps specialises in potted shrimp where the shrimps are shelled and then put in pots with butter and spices. The recipe for the potted shrimp was brought to the Ray's by Nan Wilson who had worked for Youngs of Annan before that part of the factory closed. There are lots of different recipes for potted shrimp but this secret recipe has been in use for at least 80 years. The final product is sold locally from Joe's shop and in cafes such as the Fairydust Emporium, but it is also sent all over the UK.

Vicky Hope, The Fairydust Emporium, Silloth

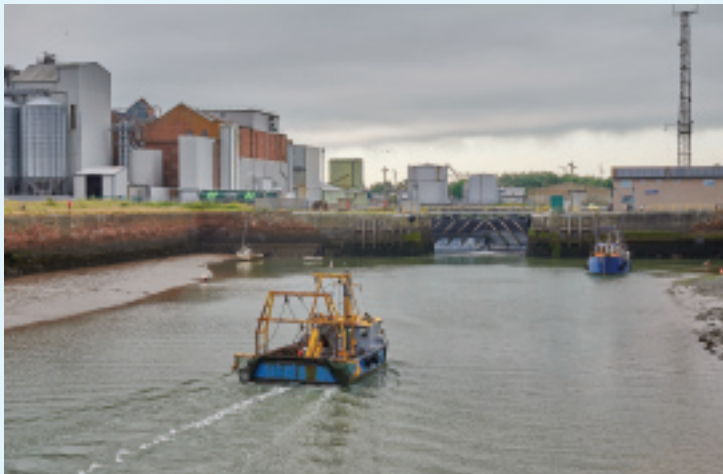
Vicky was born in Silloth but moved away to work as an IT sales manager in London. She was able to move back home when her sales remit covered Scotland and the North of England.

Vicky set up a cleaning and clearance business in Silloth and decided that rather than waste the items she was clearing out she should set up a shop to sell them. As part of this she sold teas and coffees. As this took off in a big way, she also started providing food. And so, the Fairydust Emporium was born! This very popular local café has now been running for seven years.

Vicky has a strong connection with the Solway as her grandfather was a shrimp fisherman from Annan. Her father and uncle were also shrimp fishers and she has many memories of them on the boats and her families all sat around the table "picking" shrimp. Picking involves pinching of the head and tail of the cooked shrimps to remove the shell.

Where possible Vicky uses local produce in her menu with one of her specialties involving Ray's potted shrimp.

Silloth Harbour



Vicky outside the Fairydust Emporium, Silloth



Have a look at the Visit Allerdale website at <https://visitallerdale.co.uk/this-is-allerdale/fishing-faces/> to reveal more stories from Fishing Faces. The Fishing Faces Growth Project was managed by Solway Firth Partnership (SFP) and aims to bring a new perspective to the Solway fishery by revealing the people behind the scenes in the fishing industry along the Allerdale coast. The project was funded by Allerdale Borough Council and mostly produced within the Solway Coast AONB.





Potted Shrimp Recipe

Why Not Try Some Local Seafood - Potted Shrimp from the Solway

Now you've read about the journey of the brown shrimp from the Solway to our plate on the previous page, why not try it for yourself! The famous potted shrimp that is served in Silloth is from a secret recipe but we have it on good authority that this is a great dish too!

Method

Gently melt the butter in a small saucepan. Carefully pour the clear butter into another saucepan, leaving behind the milky solids.

Pour 2–3 tbsp of the clarified butter into a warmed, small jug and set aside.

To the rest of the clarified butter in the pan, add the mace, cayenne and bay leaf. Simmer very gently for 2 minutes. Discard the bay leaf, then add the cooked, peeled shrimps and a squeeze of lemon juice. Stir for a couple of minutes, season with a little salt and white pepper, and remove from the heat.

Ingredients

- 120g unsalted butter
- A pinch of ground mace
- A pinch of cayenne pepper
- 1 bay leaf
- 200g peeled, cooked brown shrimps
- Squeeze of lemon juice
- Fine sea salt and freshly ground white pepper

Spoon the shrimps and butter into two ramekins or small jars, pour on the reserved clarified butter to cover in a thin layer and put into the fridge to set.

Remove the potted shrimp from the fridge 20 minutes or so before you want to serve them.

Spread on to hot brown toast.

This recipe has been reproduced from the SFP Fishy Dishes publication - <https://www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk/fisheries/solway-seafood/>

Accounts to March 2021

Solway Firth Partnership aims to undertake activities in line with our mission statement: *To support a vibrant and sustainable local economy while respecting, protecting and celebrating the distinctive character, heritage and natural features of our marine and coastal area.*

Our accounts for the financial year end 31 March 2021 show an income of £183,809 of Restricted and Unrestricted funds (£181,702 in the previous financial year) giving us a surplus of £2,508 in our Unrestricted funds. An Unrestricted Reserve of £80,991 is carried forward into the next financial year.

Projects continued this year include the SMILE (Solway Marine Information Learning and Environment) Project, into its final third year; the Rhins Coast Path Activity Programme including the Rhins Revealed OnLine and the Kirkcudbright Bay Views Project (part of the Galloway Glens Landscape Partnership Scheme). Outputs from those projects include a Walks around Kirkcudbright Bay booklet and a downloadable guide to Rhins archaeology. These are available on the SFP website.

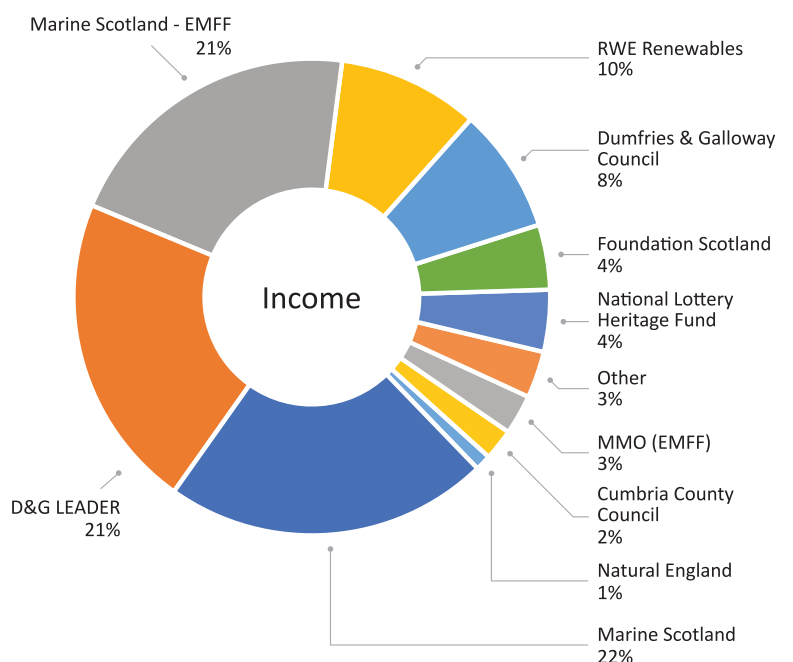
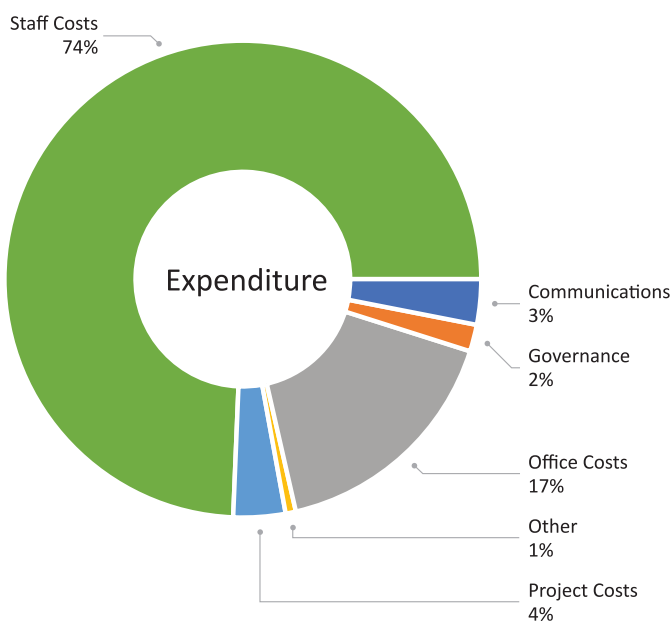
Our thanks go to the staff team who have worked hard to make the projects a success during the year.

We are very grateful to all the organisations that have provided funding in the last financial year: Marine Scotland, RWE, Cumbria County Council, Allerdale Borough Council, Carlisle City Council, Natural England, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Marine Management Organisation, European Maritime Fisheries Fund and Foundation Scotland.

We would also like to thank all the people who have given in-kind support in many ways, thereby enabling our core activities to continue as well as allowing a wide range of projects to go ahead. We appreciate that Solway Firth Partnership relies on the goodwill and expertise of many people and organisations in order to be able to carry out the work we do.

Our full accounts for the last financial year are available on our website: www.solwayfirthpartnership.co.uk

Clair McFarlan: Partnership Manager, Solway Firth Partnership




Solway Firth Partnership

For further information, to submit an article or to join the SFP mailing list please contact:
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