

Antrim Coast & Glens View

The Newsletter for the Antrim Coast and Glens Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Issue Two

Autumn/Winter '06/'07



Cushendun

At last!...Funding secured for Management Plan

Although Northern Ireland has 9 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) few of these have Management Plans. The exciting news for the Antrim Coast & Glens AONB is that the Environment & Heritage Service have provided funding for the preparation of an AONB Management Plan. Work has already begun and there will be further update in the next edition.

Commenting Peter Harper Trust Director with the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust said 'Over the next few months there will be an opportunity for everyone to have their say in how we manage our AONB. Everyone needs to realise the Antrim Coast and Glens has been designated as a landscape of national importance. It's our collective duty to try to safeguard everything that makes it special. Landscape is not just about the fantastic natural habitats we sometimes take for granted

it's as much about the people, the stories and traditions of the area. Put these together and you start to understand what makes the Antrim Coast and Glens special. The Management Plan will provide a framework to manage our special landscape.'

Anyone interested in hearing more about the proposed plan should contact Maxime Sizaret at the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust. We would love to hear your views.

Antrim Coast & Glens represented on National AONB Association

The National Association of AONBs (NAAONB) is an umbrella body representing the needs of 49 AONBs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It acts as an important networking organisation and as a lobby on government for additional resources to be directed to protected area management.

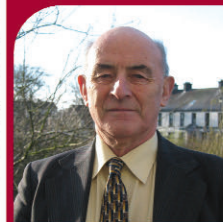
Earlier this year Peter Harper, Trust Director with the Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust was elected to the Board of the National Association of AONBs at their annual conference in Swansea. This is the first time that Northern Ireland's AONBs have been represented on the Board. Commenting Peter said "It's important to ensure the

Association is relevant to all parts of the UK including Northern Ireland. Whilst management structures and funding arrangements are different our AONBs are just as much a national asset as any of those within England and Wales. It's clear they should also be managed and resourced accordingly".

The Chairman's View



In June 2006 I was elected Chairman of the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB Management Group. As a resident of Magherahoney and a previous forest Manager on Altarichard Forest this is a landscape I know well.



Chairman Ald Harry Connolly
Antrim Coast & Glens AONB
Management Group

For 33 years I have also served as a Councillor on the Ballymoney Borough Council and although only a small part of the AONB lies within the Council area I can

still appreciate how much it contributes to the quality of life enjoyed by everyone. For me it's one of the most beautiful parts of Northern Ireland with scenery second to none. The Antrim Coast and Glens is above all a living landscape with great character and a strong sense of place ... ask anyone in Ballycastle, Cushendall or Glenarm and they'll usually tell you they come 'from the Glens'.

As a special landscape it deserves to be looked after and I'm personally delighted to hear that Environment & Heritage Service has committed funding which allows for the preparation of an Antrim Coast and Glens AONB Management Plan. This is great news for the area and will help to ensure that everyone can continue to enjoy the Antrim Coast and Glens for many years to come. As a non statutory plan implementation will require the support and commitment of everyone and I am asking you to back us as we seek to prepare and implement a plan to help safeguard everything that's special about our Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Harry Connolly

50 Outstanding Years!



Blackthorn blossom

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are just that! They contain some of our finest landscapes and countryside and are home to some of our most exquisite and unusual wildlife species.

Created by the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act in England and Wales and by the 1965 Amenity Lands Act superseded by the Nature Conservation and 1985 Amenity Lands Order in Northern Ireland there have been 50 AONBs designated since 1956 (36 in England, 4 in Wales, 1 straddling the English and Welsh border and 9 in Northern Ireland) the most recent of which is the redesignation of the former North Derry AONB as Binevenagh AONB this year. Collectively the AONBs are very diverse in character: areas of lowland heath; upland

areas; rolling hills; dramatic coastal scenery; each with its own unique and fascinating landscape features.

2006 marks the 50th anniversary of the first AONB designation at Gower in South Wales. Since then millions of people, both residents and visitors have enjoyed these special landscapes, many without realising they are in a protected landscape. This year's celebrations offer everyone the opportunity to discover or in some cases re-discover what the UK's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty have to offer.

Northern Ireland has 9 AONBs. These include the Causeway Coast, Antrim Coast and Glens, Sperrin, Binevenagh, Lagan Valley, Strangford Lough, Lecale Coast, Ring of Gullion and Mourne AONBs. Two further AONBs were proposed by EHS in Fermanagh.

Causeway Coastal Route commended

There was more success for the Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust at the Northern Ireland NRRTI awards. A series of infrastructure improvement projects undertaken along the Causeway Coastal Route won the Tourism Infrastructure Category. All of these projects were funded as part of the Natural Resource Rural Tourism Initiative (NRRTI) under the European Union Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation. Earlier in the year the Causeway Coastal Route Infrastructure Improvement programme was also commended at the NITB (Northern Ireland Tourist Board) Tourism Awards.



Council representatives at the NRRTI Awards ceremony

In total 23 projects have been completed or are underway along the Route including improvements to existing stop off points and public amenities. In some cases these were new facilities such as the new stop off point at Ardclinis near Glenariff. Many of the projects are within the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB including those at Drains Bay, Ballygally, Glenarm, Slemish, Carnlough, Waterfoot, Ballycastle and on Rathlin Island. Often these have incorporated children's play facilities and every effort has been made to ensure these are environmentally friendly. Commenting Ainsley McWilliams from Larne Borough Council said 'These projects have been a great boost for tourism in the Larne Borough Council area. There is no doubt that when combined with the new white on brown directional signing they will help to position the Causeway Coastal Route as a world class attraction.'

This doesn't mean the job has been completed. There is still plenty of work for everyone to do before the Causeway Coastal Route can start to compete with other touring routes across the world. As well as further improvements to public amenities and stop off points Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust hope to help implement a strategic interpretation project. This will focus on the unique natural, cultural and built heritage of the Causeway Coast and Glens and aim to further enhance the visitor experience.

Two other projects from the Antrim Coast & Glens AONB were shortlisted for consideration at the NRRTI Awards. These were a range of different environmental improvement works undertaken by Larne Borough Council at Carnfunnock Country Park and the 2005 St Patrick's Day event at Slemish organised by Ballymena Borough Council.

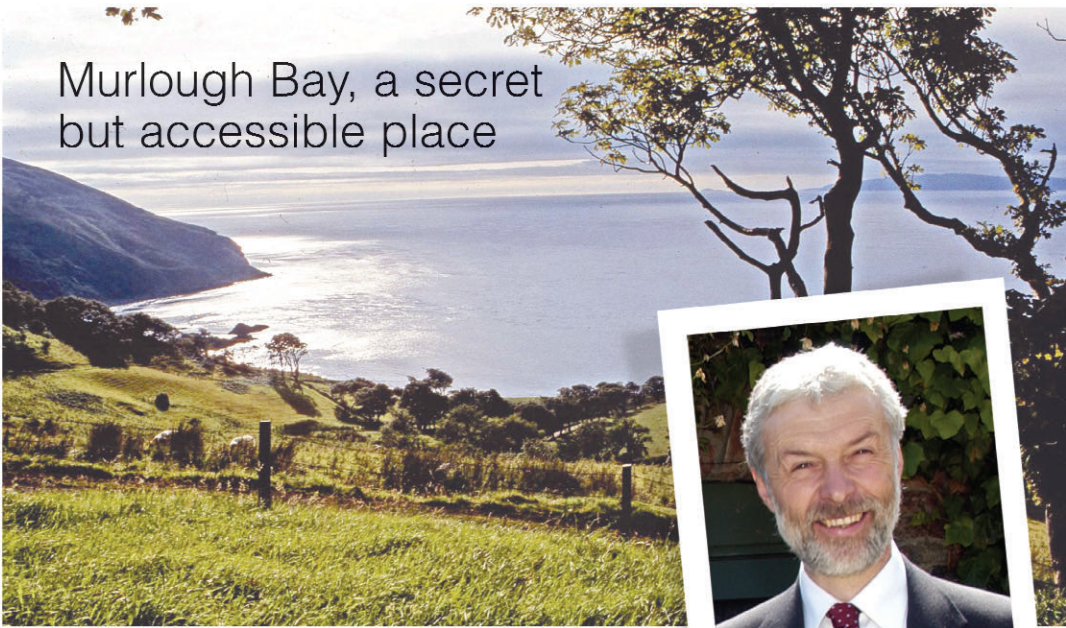
Commenting David Erwin Chairman of Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust said '

'This is further recognition for the quality of the projects delivered as part of the NRRTI programme and the hard work put in by the promoters and everyone involved with the delivery of the programme'.

Projects from the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust area competed with nominations from 4 other NRRTI partnerships across Northern Ireland.

Under NRRTI £2.6m has been drawn down to benefit tourism projects within the Causeway Coast & Glens area.

Murlough Bay, a secret but accessible place



Patrick Casement
Chairman of the National Trust



Forming one of the four corners of Ireland, Murlough Bay is where the Causeway Coast merges into the Glens of Antrim. Here the great dolerite sill of Fair Head was forced through the softer chalk which itself forms crumbling cliffs, sitting over the ancient Dalradian schists.

As a result the angular grandeur and wildness of the headland becomes softened into a gentler landscape with native woodland and fertile grassland. The complex geology gives rise to a rich and varied vegetation, while the cliffs provide nest sites for birds of prey. The final layer is the influence of man, who created plantations, maintained open, grassy areas, and established drives and walks. Somewhat surprisingly, in the nineteenth century the bay was a hive of industrial activity, principally coal-mining, though the vestiges of this are now gradually blending into the landscape. One can enjoy Murlough on so many levels, but above all it is a stunningly beautiful place, with a remarkable tranquillity and quality of light. For me nowhere encapsulates the concept of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as perfectly as this secret but accessible place.

Our Heritage

In terms of scenery Glendun can rival any of the nine Glens. The Glendun River follows this beautiful Glen from the slopes of Slieveanorra to the beautiful conservation village of Cushendun where it meets the sea. Dun means brown in Irish and probably refers to the colour of the surrounding rocks or the river itself.



Bogland in the upper valley is home to a variety of interesting plants including the small insect eating sundew. The sticky hairs on the round leaves of the sundew are there for a purpose. They trap insects which then meet a grisly death as soft parts are slowly digested and absorbed into the plant. This provides the plant with most of the nutrients it needs to survive. Look closer and you might see the empty shells of former victims stuck to the leaves! The sundew is just one of many specialist plants found in bogland area but remember these are sensitive natural environments and be careful...wet conditions underfoot are often dangerous for walkers.



Travelling down Glendun you could also be lucky enough to spot an otter. Adult otters grow to 120cm in length and often weigh up to 13kg. Their bodies are perfectly streamlined and adapted to water and that's where you'll find them, close to a river or along the coast. Otters are secretive and usually only seen during the evening or early morning. Their diet can be very varied and includes fish, crustaceans, aquatic insects and even small mammals.

A new marine guide

In the coming months Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust aims to produce a new guide to the marine life of the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB. This project has been funded by the Environment & Heritage Service and the Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust and it is hoped it will help raise awareness of the rich variety of marine life within the area.

Commenting Maxime Sizaret Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust said 'Often people don't realise what we have. The range of life within our marine areas, particularly around places like Rathlin, is simply amazing. This guide will help to show everyone what there is!'

As well as featuring more familiar species the guide will look at some of the less well known species such as the sea cucumber, anemones, eelgrass and sponges. It is hoped to complete the new guide by Spring 2007.



Cushendun Old Church

Anyone who watched the BBC 'Restoration' series will know that Cushendun Old Church represented Northern Ireland in the UK final beating off stiff competition from Gracehill Old School and the White House, Newtownabbey. The Old Church was one of eight finalists selected from different regions across the UK. The eventual winner was Chedham's Yard, Wellesbourne a 19th century wheelwright and blacksmiths workshop.

Part of the aim of the series is to get more people interested in built heritage and Cushendun Old Church is just one of many listed buildings and historic monuments within the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB. Following a decision by the Church of Ireland to deconsecrate the church in 2003 the local community started to think about how the Old Church could be adapted to a new use.

Cushendun has always been famous for its association with Charles McAuley

one of the best known artists from the glens and perhaps this prompted the decision by local people to try to redevelop the Old Church as a local arts centre. Of course the ability to deliver this will depend on funding and this was one of the main reasons for involvement with the BBC 'Restoration' series. Winning through to the finals was a great achievement however implementation will be an ongoing challenge for the newly formed Cushendun Building Preservation Trust.

Nestled at the foot of the Glen is Cushendun village one of the prettiest on the coast. Designated a conservation area in 1980 its distinctive architecture is associated with the architect Clough William Ellis famous for his design of Port Merion in North Wales used as the set for the cult BBC series 'The Prisoner'. The Conservation Area includes Maud Cottages commissioned by Ronald John McNeill to replace a former coastguard station. There are many other interesting older buildings within the Conservation Area including Cave House. Unusually the front driveway to this property is approached through an old sea cave. More recent development has included a large apartment block close to the former Cushendun Hotel which now dominates the seafront. Cushendun village is owned and managed by the National Trust.

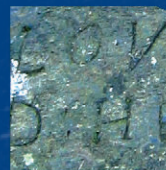
Fuldiew Stone



The Fuldiew stone has an interesting story. You'll find it in the old graveyard at Knocknacarry close to Cushendun.

Etched into an old gravestone is a picture of a sailing ship moored from bow to stern and an inscription which reads:

YOUR SHIP
LOVE IS MOR
ED HEAD AND
STARN FOR A
FULDIEW



The story behind the 'Fuldiew' stone is both haunting and tragic. It is said that a young girl from Cushendun carved it on the gravestone of 'John McAlaster' the man she hoped to marry.

According to the story John was killed at sea on his way back to marry the girl he loved. After John was buried, his bride to be stayed by his grave overnight where she carved the inscription and picture of the sailing ship on his gravestone. Heartbroken she was found dead the next day beside his grave. 'Fuldiew' is an old naval saying. Apparently when sailors docked after a long voyage they were awarded all their leave as a full due, hence the inscription.

Competition?

Do you know your AONB?

This photograph was taken somewhere in the Antrim Coast & Glens AONB. Do you know where it is?



Send your answer to:
Antrim Coast and Glens AONB quiz!

Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust, Tilly Molloy's, 18 Main Street, Armoy Co. Antrim, BT53 8RQ.

The winning prize will be a copy of Bernard Davey's recent book "Rathlin an Island Odyssey". The winning entry will be drawn from all the entries received before the 15th February.



Our last winner was Laura McCaughan from Ballycastle who won Alan Turner's book "The Glens of Antrim".

Laura correctly identified the photograph of the West Lighthouse on Rathlin Island. The West Lighthouse has been operational since 1919. Sometimes referred to as the "upside-down" lighthouse its construction was a considerable engineering feat. The viewing platform outside the lighthouse has been leased by the RSPB since 1989. It is a great place to get close to some of the thousands of guillemots, puffins, kittiwakes, razorbills and fulmars that come there every year to breed!

Kids competition time

Where is your favourite part of the Antrim Coast & Glens AONB? Send us a drawing showing us why! The best ones will be published in the next issue of the Antrim Coast & Glens View and the winner will receive a family ferry return ticket to Rathlin Island (2 adults and 2 children).

Our last winner of the Kids competition was Sacha McMullan from Ballycastle who won a free season pass to Carnfunnock Country Park. Sacha wrote this poem about Ballycastle:

*The place I like best is the place I call home
Cause my family is here so I'm never alone*

*I like to look and walk up big hills
Which I can see from my own window sill*

*And when summer comes it's really good fun
Taking a splash at the beach in the sun*

Sacha McMullan, 6

Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust provides a secretariat service for the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB. The Trust is grateful for support from the following organisations:



For more information on the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB please check the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust website.

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