

Antrim Coast & Glens View

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

Issue Three

Spring/Summer '07

Rathlin Sponges

Incredibly researchers from the Ulster Museum believe they may have discovered 15 new species of sponge off Rathlin Island. A six week scuba diving survey revealed 143 different species, 15 undiscovered, 3 of which have never been recorded in the UK and 7 others new to Northern Ireland. 3,000 photographs were taken as part of the survey highlighting these attractive and brightly coloured underwater animals.

Commenting Bernard Picton Curator of Marine Invertebrates at the Ulster Museum said 'We knew Rathlin was important but the results of our survey have far surpassed any expectations. These findings confirm Rathlin as one of the most important areas for sponges in Europe.'

Sponges filter particles from sea water playing a key role in the marine environment. Part of the reason Rathlin provides such a good habitat is because of the strong tidal streams which



sometimes reach speeds of up to 8 knots. There are also dramatic underwater sea cliffs extending to depths of over 200m. Together these have combined to produce a rich marine habitat protected under European law as a Special Area of Conservation.

Joe Breen head of Aquatic Science with Environment and Heritage Service said 'The findings from this survey greatly contribute to our knowledge of the biodiversity of this important marine area. It re-enforces the need to ensure its proper management.'

The Rathlin Sponge Biodiversity Project was part financed by the European Union Building Sustainable Prosperity programme. It will be featured in a new BBC Waterworld series this Autumn.



Scottish Coastal and Marine National Park

The Scottish Executive has recently completed an extensive public consultation on the possibility of establishing Scotland's first Coastal and Marine National Park. Although there are already two National Parks in Scotland it is proposed that the third Scottish National Park should include the adjoining marine area.

Following a survey of possible sites Argyll and the Islands has been identified as the frontrunner and if designated the proposed western boundary could extend to within 5-6 miles of Rathlin Island. Should the proposal go forward it will attract significant central government funding aimed at managing this special resource.

It also has the potential to become a major tourist attraction. The new initiative further highlights the need for an Antrim Coast and Glens AONB Management Plan and Coastal Zone Management this side of the North Channel. Or how about thinking outside the box..... an Argyll and Antrim National Park incorporating both

the coastal and marine area? Historic links re-established, Central Government and European funding opportunities, East West co-operation, an opportunity for integrated coastal zone management, and the creation of an international tourist attraction which could really put both areas on the map. Anyone interested?

The Chairman's View



Welcome to the third edition of the Antrim Coast and Glens View. Whilst the main focus is on progress with the preparation of an Antrim Coast and Glens AONB



Ald Harry Connolly
Chairman, Antrim Coast and Glens
AONB Management Group

Management Plan we also highlight Rathlin. Our lead story features the amazing news that 15 species of sponge previously unknown to science have been found in Rathlin waters. This is quite unprecedented and underlines the importance of our marine resource.

Our new AONB management plan needs to reflect the close relationship between land and sea and in this respect the possibility that Argyll and the Islands could be designated as Scotland's first Coastal and Marine National Park is of particular interest. The newsletter provides details of workshops scheduled as part of the consultation process for the new plan. Anyone with an interest is welcome to attend and I would encourage you to do so.

Recent Assembly elections have given politicians the opportunity to move protected area management up the agenda. I remain convinced of the benefits good environmental management can bring for the local economy particularly tourism and as before I would ask for your continued support as we seek to provide a vision and an overall management strategy for our special Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Harry Connolly



the vivid colours of the landscape which change almost on an hourly basis



Pamela Ballintine
UTV presenter

It is through my work for Farming Ulster on UTV that I first had the chance to explore the Glens of Antrim. I will never forget the hospitality we received from the people we met — standing as a reporter in cold fields with snow blowing sideways then afterwards being brought into someone's house to warm ourselves by the fire. The sense of peace and tranquillity that hangs over the glens is amazing along with the vivid colours of the landscape which change almost on an hourly basis. If you ever feel that life is getting you down, take time out and find a secluded spot in the Glens. The world will seem a better place.

Our Heritage

Rathlin Island – Rathlin Island has been designated as both a Special Protection Area and a Special Area of Conservation. Both have the same boundary and are part of a European network known as Natura 2000. These sites have been designated because of their importance to both flora and fauna but are particularly important for breeding seabirds and marine life. There are a number of other designated sites on Rathlin including several Areas of Special Scientific Interest and a National Nature Reserve.



Kelp House – The old Kelp House east of Church Bay was once the centre of a thriving island industry. Kelp was harvested across the island then burnt in kilns, before being transferred to the Kelp House for storage. Iodine extracted from this process was exported to Scotland for use in industry.



Puffins – Puffins are some of the most popular and colourful visitors to Rathlin. They nest in burrows on the seacliffs close to the West Light. Unlike many other animals they form long term partnerships and can live for up to 29 years. Females lay a single egg which is incubated by both parents. They have a brightly coloured beak and feed by diving to catch small fish and sand eels.



Pyramidal Bugle – The Pyramidal Bugle is one of a number of rare plants found on Rathlin. This beautiful flower was first discovered in the 60s and prefers to grow in heathy pasture near basalt outcrops which are common throughout the island.

People of the Antrim Coast and Glens

The crew of the M.V. Canna





Fair Head, Rathlin and the Mull of Kintyre



Antrim Coast & Glens AONB Management Plan

Consultants have been appointed to undertake the preparation of an Antrim Coast and Glens AONB Management Plan. Red Kite, the company appointed to undertake the work come with considerable experience having previously worked with the English Countryside Agency to produce guidance on AONB management plan preparation.

Commenting, Peter Seccombe lead consultant with Red Kite said, We are delighted to have been awarded the contract to produce the new Antrim Coast and Glens AONB Management Strategy. The management plan is a real opportunity to highlight the importance of the area, determine what needs to be done to care for it in the future and to attract the funding needed to enhance what's good or address what's bad. To date we've been gathering information and starting to meet some of the people and organisations with an interest in the area. To make the plan successful it needs to be not just our plan but your plan. We want to hear everyone's views about the area and what you think needs to be done to make it a better place. Red Kite will be organising a series of public meetings in late April/early May. This is an opportunity for everyone to come along and have their say.

Public Meetings

Venues and dates for the public meetings are as follows:

- **7pm 30 April** **Skerry Inn, Newtowncrommelin**
- **7pm 30 April** **Houston's Mill, Broughshane**
- **3pm 1 May** **McCuaigs Bar, Rathlin**
- **7pm 1 May** **Marine Hotel, Ballycastle**
- **7pm 2 May** **Millennium Centre, Loughgiel**
- **7pm 3 May** **Old Schoolhouse, Cushendall**
- **7pm 10 May** **Londonderry Arms, Carnlough**
- **7pm 10 May** **Dixon Hall, Drain's Bay**

The management plan is scheduled for completion by early 2008. It will only be as good as the input the consultants receive from the general public so if you're interested on how we agree to manage our Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty get involved and make your voice heard.

Alternatively, or additionally, complete the attached questionnaire and return for the attention of Peter Seccombe at Red Kite Environment Ltd, Pearcroft, Pearcroft Road, Stonehouse, Gloucester, England GL10 2JY. You can also email your comments to peter.seccombe@redkite-environment.co.uk Don't forget to fill in your contact details if you want to enter the prize draw.

Have your say!

How should we manage our Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty?

PRIZES

1st See the Antrim Coast AONB by boat. Rib Ride for family group along the Antrim Coast.

2nd Weekend return to Scotland (car and two adults)

3rd Bottle of Bushmills Whiskey

1. Tell us which of the following features are most important to you.

Please place a number in the box 1-5

5 = not important

4 = not very important

3 = quite important

2 = important

1 = Very important

Agriculture and local produce

Field boundaries

Settlement patterns

Local building style

Walks, trails and picnic sites

Wildlife and habitats

Visitor information

Outdoor activities

Arts, craft and music

Language/dialect

Folklore and tradition

Archaeology/Historic Monuments

Coast and sea

Landscape and scenery

Forest parks and gardens

2. Why do you think the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB is a special place?

3. How would you like to see your AONB improved?

4. Is there a particular issue which concerns you?

Now that you have completed the questionnaire please make sure you enter our free draw.

Name: _____

Address: _____ Postcode: _____

Tel: _____ email: _____

Please note your personal details will only be used by Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust. It will not be passed to any third party for any other use.

Cut along the dotted line and post to 'Have Your Say competition',
FAO: Peter Seccombe, Red Kite Environment Ltd, Pearcroft, Pearcroft Road, Stonehouse, Gloucester, England GL10 2JY.



Lucia Mulholland was the last winner of our competition. She correctly identified our photograph as the lettering above the doorway at the Londonderry Arms Hotel in Carnlough. This famous hotel has been owned by the O'Neill family for over fifty years. It was built in 1848 as a coaching Inn by Frances Vane Tempest, Marchioness of Londonderry and later inherited by Sir Winston Churchill. It forms an important land mark within the heart of the Carnlough Conservation area. Lucia won a copy of Bernard Davey's book Rathlin an Island Odyssey.



Winners: Drawing Competition. My Favourite part of the Antrim Coast & Glens AONB. The joint winners of the competition were Maggie (4) and Jeni (9) Dillon from Martinstown who won a family ferry ticket to Rathlin Island.

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:



Larne Borough Council



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

Tilly Molloy s
18 Main St
Armoyle, Ballymoney
Co. Antrim, BT53 8RQ

t: (028) 2075 2100
f: (028) 2075 2101
e: info@ccght.org
w: www.ccght.org

Photographic credits:
Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust
Northern Ireland Tourist Board
Environment & Heritage Service
Ulster Museum
RSPB
Joe Breen
Arthur Ward Photography

design by:
www.elevator8.com
028 7965 9886

printed on recycled paper