

# Antrim Coast & Glens View

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

Issue Four

Autumn/Winter 07

## The Antrim Coast and Glens Management Plan gets started!



Since the last newsletter consultants Red Kite Environment have been gathering information to prepare a management plan for the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB.

Management plans are important documents for AONBs. They identify what is so special about the area, highlight any changes that are taking place and then describe what needs to be done to look after the AONB better in the future. Red Kite started on the plan

earlier this year and have been gathering information about the AONB and meeting people from communities and the many organisations who work in the area. In May they organised a series of public meetings and distributed a questionnaire with the last issue of this newsletter. We had some good responses and many of the concerns you have about the area, and your ideas for the future, will be going into the plan.

The first draft of the plan will be completed in November. We will send it out to organisations and groups within

the area and to anyone who has an interest in the AONB. Peter Seccombe of Red Kite said this management plan is a milestone in the history of the AONB. It is a real opportunity to bring together organisations and communities in looking after this wonderful area. We want everyone who is concerned about the AONB to have their say on how it should be cared for in the future.

If you want to know more about the draft plan, or you would like to see a copy when it comes out in October, contact us at the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust office.

## Antrim Coast and Glens AONB - Stakeholder workshops



Representatives of over 40 organisations including the Department of the Environment, the Environment and Heritage Service, the Forest Service, Ulster Wildlife Trust and many community organisations and village committees, attended a series of workshops in Carnlough on 19th, 20th and 21st September to discuss the preparation of the management plan for the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB. The workshops were held to gather people's thoughts



and ideas on what needs to be done to protect the special features of the AONB's landscape and character and to look after it better in the future. They were hosted by the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust.

The management plan is an opportunity to bring together a wide range of interested organisations and individuals to assess what makes the Coast and Glens so special, and find out what needs to be done to make sure these features are protected while



allowing communities to thrive and prosper. All the participants of the workshops recognised that the area needs careful planning and management and that organisations need to work closely together to find solutions that will work for everyone.

Following these workshops the consultants working on the plan — Red Kite Environment and ELP — will draw up a first draft which will be produced in November.

## The Chairman's View



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

Welcome to the fourth issue of the Antrim Coast and Glens View. Since the last issue work has progressed on all our Antrim Coast and Glens AONB projects especially on the AONB Management Plan.

Since the last issue of the Newsletter, eight successful AONB Management Plan public meetings have been organised followed by three more recent stakeholder workshops. The consultants appointed to undertake the preparation of the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB Management Plan are now collating all their findings and your views to produce a draft Management Plan by the end of November. This will be followed by further public consultations for a publication of the final plan early next year. The management plan is an opportunity to bring together a wide range of interested organisations and individuals to assess what makes the Coast and Glens so special, and find out what needs to be done to make sure these features are protected while allowing communities to thrive and prosper.

Work is also progressing on our AONB raising awareness project with the publication in June of a Guide to the Coastal and Marine Life off the Antrim Coast, the publication of an AONB poster and the organisation of a series of evening talks this winter (see complete programme in this issue). A series of AONB postcards will also be published soon.

With regard to staff, Peter Harper left the Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust at the end of August to take up a new position as a Planner with Colin Buchanan and Partners Limited. Peter had been with the organisation as Trust Director since it was established in May 2002. Helen Noble will replace Peter as the Trust Director of the Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust. (see Helen's profile inside).

The Antrim Coast & Glens AONB Management Group wishes both Peter and Helen success in their new posts.

If you wish to be kept informed on progress with all the projects carried out by the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB Management Group please contact the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust office. I hope you will enjoy this issue of the Antrim Coast and Glens View.

*Harry Connolly*



Dr. John Barry  
Co-Chair, Green Party in Northern Ireland



part work-out, part history  
lesson and a complete joy

We recently stayed with some friends who have a house in Glendun and on the Sunday morning decided to go to Murlough Bay. It was a windy, cold, crisp morning with uninterrupted sea-views across to Scotland, causing my friend to remind me that in times gone by it was easier and quicker to travel to and from Antrim to Scotland than to travel over and through the Glens. I had never been to Murlough bay before, though its name (like so many other place names in Ireland) was familiar to me, though I could not trace exactly what song or poem or story I had heard it in. Driving to Murlough Bay was, in places, an adventure in itself, having to navigate narrow and steep roads along the way, and trying to not take one's eyes off the road to drink in the spectacular views across the sea.

The path down to the bay was steep, steep enough to make sure I kept a firm grip on my two year old daughter Dearbhla who was wont to run rather than walk, and also littered with broken branches, debris from the storm the night before. As we walked down the views over to Scotland were simply spectacular, the sea was choppy but not rough and our enjoyment was only interrupted by those who for whatever reason, laziness, in a rush or whatever, insist on driving rather than walking down from the upper car park. We passed the plinth which is all that is left of the cross to commemorate Sir Roger Casement (reminding me once again of the intimate connection of people, politics and place in Ireland) and then onto the highlight (at least for my daughters) of the walk — the Seven Dwarfs House

as my 8 year old, Saoirse, named it, which lies at the end of the pathway. It was much colder down at the bottom, given the weak winter sun was already behind the hills above us and while the adults were happy to stand, look and chat, the children were getting restless and we decided to go. The walk back up was bracing! Not least when you have a tired 2 year old on your shoulder, but it was good to get the blood pumping and build up a sweat as well as build up a good appetite for some hot soup for lunch! So there you have it — a walk down and back to Murlough Bay — part work-out, part history lesson and a complete joy to experience the beauty of this part of the world. Now if we can only find ways to encourage people to walk rather than drive down to it!!



What a landscape!



Peter Harper

The Coast Road, Sallagh Braes and the view from Scawt on a winter day. Glenarm River, the Bull's eye, Walls Pool and the Barbican Gate. Big Trosk, Little Trosk and Cranny Falls. Garron Point, Galboly village and Glenariff. The footbridge across the river on Cushendall Beach. Glendun in early spring. Slemish Mountain and Slievanorra. The view from the Corkscrew. Torr road, Torr Head and Murlough Bay. Fair Head above and below. Ballycastle and the House of McDonnell. Rathlin Island, the West Light, Rue Point and the Calmac Ferry. Where do you stop? What a landscape! Let's make sure we aim to keep it that way.

## Our Heritage

Stretching from north of Ballymena up to the Garron Point, where dramatic cliffs with a distinctive stepped profile plunge into the sea the Garron Plateau follows two of the Glens, Glenariff to the north and Glencloy to the south. Part of the volcanic Antrim Plateau, the **Garron Plateau** remains largely undisturbed by human activity. It has been designated internationally both as a Special Area of Conservation and a Ramsar Site for its extensive area of intact blanket bog the largest in Northern Ireland. Special Areas of Conservation are part of the European Natura 2000 network. The Ramsar Convention recognises wetlands of international importance, 1676 have been designated in the world.



Garron Plateau

**Blanket bogs** usually form in upland areas above 200m with heavy rainfall and low temperatures. Because of the undulating nature of this ground, the thickness of peat can vary between 1m and 6m. Blanket peat began to form in Ireland around 5,000 years ago. As rain seeped down through the soil it deposited a thin layer of iron, known as the iron pan, in the soil. As this layer of iron built up, it prevented water from passing through, so the soil above became waterlogged. The wet conditions and lack of oxygen allowed peat to form and cover extensive areas of land, like a blanket - hence the name. The most important plant found in bogs is the **sphagnum moss**. It can absorb up to 20 times its dry weight of water. Its ability to absorb liquids and its antiseptic qualities resulted in its use as a dressing for wounds during the First World War.



Sphagnum moss

At the northern extremity of the Garron Plateau, standing at a high ledge at Garron point and looking down at the Antrim Coast Road is Garron Tower. Frances Ann, Marchioness of Londonderry built it in 1850 as a summer residence. The Tower and grounds were purchased by McNeill's Hotel in Larne in 1915 and during the Second World War the residents of Clifton House, Belfast were evacuated there. It became St. MacNissi's College in 1951.



St. MacNissi's College



Culed Octopus

## Cuckoo wrasse, Dead men s fingers and Basking Sharks!

Find out more about the fantastic marine life of the Antrim Coast & Glens AONB!

Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust launched on 20th June *Life in the sea off the Antrim Coast*, a guide to the coastal and marine life along the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB.

Commenting Maxime Sizaret, Natural Heritage Officer for the Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust said the publication of this guide is part of a three year project co-funded by the Environment & Heritage Service aimed at raising awareness of the Antrim Coast & Glens AONB. This guide is the first of a series that will look at the rich heritage we have on our doorstep!

Dr David Erwin, Marine Biologist and Chairman of the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust added The spectacular coastline of the Antrim Coast and Glens is well known for its dramatic scenery and diverse wildlife making it an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. However much less is known about the superb marine habitats just offshore. This short guide provides an introduction to the fantastic marine life of the Antrim Coast and Glens .

This new guide will be distributed widely throughout the AONB areas and copies will be available in libraries, schools, tourist information centres and from the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust offices.

## Trust Director



Helen Noble

Helen graduated in Public Administration BA (Hons) and English Law (LLB). She has over 15 years of senior management within protected areas throughout the UK and Europe working primarily within the national park and AONB family and for non governmental organisations, whose remit covers protected areas and landscapes throughout Europe. Over the years, Helen has been able to develop experience and expertise in strategic and policy development, management planning, financial and funding management, people skills and organisational development. She has applied these skills at international, national and local levels.

Her main career has involved working closely with and engaging key stakeholders, agencies,

partners and local communities to produce statutory plans including management plans, state of the park reports and local development plans. She has extensive experience and knowledge of consultation and facilitation processes.

Her European experience has enabled her to explore and experience many spectacular places, cultural and built environments.

Helen has two grown up children, who are currently studying. She enjoys outdoor activities including horse riding, sailing, jogging and walking.

# Wood cranesbill A gem in the Glens

the meadow at this time is a sea of pink geraniums



The glens of Antrim have long been recognised as important refuges for some of our rarer plants, and Glenarm is no exception. It is the only area in Northern Ireland in which wood cranesbill (*Geranium sylvaticum*) grows. The cranesbill is a perennial wildflower that likes open patches within hazel wood or along its fringe, old meadows with a bit of shade, and even roadside verges where allowed to flower. The plant's stronghold in Northern Ireland is the Ulster Wildlife Trust's (UWT) diminutive nature reserve at Feystown, a traditionally managed meadow packed full of the wild plants that are fast disappearing from our countryside. Despite its small size, it is not lacking in interest

or significance, as a stroll by in late May or early June will reveal; the meadow at this time is a sea of pink geraniums.

Though always confined to areas around Glenarm, the wood cranesbill has been lost from some of its former sites and there are serious concerns over its future. Small, isolated populations are difficult to sustain and extremely vulnerable to extinction. In recognition of this, special conservation measures have been proposed in a Species Action Plan, which are to be implemented through the Key Species Project. This is a 3-year project focusing on a number of priority plants and animals in Northern Ireland, funded by Environment and Heritage Service and delivered by UWT.

An initial aim will be to maintain the wood cranesbill populations on existing sites, expanding these with buffer areas and linking them up with cranesbill-friendly wildlife corridors. Luckily, there is already an established local conservation group, the Glenarm Wildlife Group, who have taken a keen interest in the plant's welfare. They have helped with surveys to identify its current range, assisted in practical habitat management and monitoring of the effects, and are now working with local landowners to highlight the plant's requirements. So far, there has been a positive response to the project, and target areas for habitat restoration work have been identified.

You can find out more about wood cranesbill and plans for its conservation by contacting Maeve Rafferty at UWT [maeve.rafferty@ulsterwildlifetrust.org](mailto:maeve.rafferty@ulsterwildlifetrust.org). A fact sheet covering the key points and ways in which you can help is available on request.

Alternatively, come along to the annual UWT coppicing event at Glenarm on Sunday 2nd December and learn how coppicing benefits woodland plants like the cranesbill as well as providing a useful harvest. Booking for this event is essential. Please contact UWT on tel: 028 4483 0282 for further information.

## Know your AONB

A series of evening talks on the Antrim Coast and Glens AONB has been organised for this winter. The talks are open to the general public and anyone interested is welcome to come along and join us to listen and discuss with our specially invited speakers.

These talks are free of charge. Tea and coffee provided.

As capacity is limited pre-booking is recommended, please contact the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust Office on 028 2075 2100 or [info@ccght.org](mailto:info@ccght.org)

7pm 15 Nov	7pm 19 Nov	7pm 21 Jan
An AONB Management Plan for your benefit Peter Seccombe Londonderry Arms Hotel Carnlough	A Design Guide as a tool to achieve high quality built environment Mary Kerrigan Marine Hotel Ballycastle	The Clachan Project Bill McAfee Mary Blaney Eileen McAuley Marine Hotel Ballycastle



Identify the photograph and win a framed poster of Rathlin Island. Competition entries must be returned to Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust office before 31 December 2007.

## Have Your Say Day Away!



A special thanks to everyone who participated in the 'Have your say!' questionnaire.

### Prize Winners

Mr & Mrs Peter Mackie and family from Loughguile won first prize which was a rib ride along the Antrim Coast. Peter Steele from North Irish Lodge took the group on a sea safari along the spectacular rocky coastline where they witnessed porpoises and bird

life along the Gobbins and seals playing at the Maidens.



Second prize, courtesy of P&O Ferries, a weekend

return to Scotland for a car and 2 adults was won by Judith Annett from Kilkeel, Co. Down.

Mrs Anne Rainey from Newtownabbey won third prize which was a bottle of Bushmills Whiskey.

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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### Photographic credits:

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design by:  
[www.elevator8.com](http://www.elevator8.com)  
028 7965 9886

printed on recycled paper