

# Causeway COAST VIEW

The newsletter for the Causeway Coast AONB



## Chairman's View

At the time of writing we are still waiting for the outcome of the Executive's budget. What is clear is that some very hard decisions have to be made and resources in many areas will be cut to the bone.

There will be less money for schools, hospitals and a whole range of other important areas. There is no doubt that there will be less money for protecting our special areas and less incentive, for short term economic reasons, to recognise the benefits of that protection. Tourism at the Causeway Coast relies on our landscape: beautiful scenery, clean air and unspoiled beaches. Put simply without protecting our landscape less people will visit. Fewer visitors mean less income which means fewer jobs.

As we approach assembly and council elections candidates need to keep our long term interests to the fore and remember that what is good for the environment and the landscape is good for the economy.

**Graham Thompson,**  
National Trust



Chairman  
of the  
Causeway  
Coast AONB  
Management  
Group

## Whiterocks Improvement Scheme



**Whiterocks Beach and associated dunes system is a highly popular visitor amenity situated within the Causeway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.**

As site owners, Coleraine Borough Council is currently attempting to address many challenges facing the site, aiming to strike a balance between accommodating increasingly popular and diverse recreational activities and protecting the site's biodiversity and conservation value.

The Council is working in partnership with Conservation Volunteers NI (Coleraine branch) over a 3-5 year period, and work to date has included fencing off part of the dunes in preparation for conservation grazing later this year, aimed

at eradicating the invasive bracken which is dominant within the dunes. Additionally CVNI have constructed sections of board walking and wooden steps linking the overflow car parks with the main car park. Currently Council is developing a new bridle path to link a small car park with the beach, thereby creating safer dedicated facilities for the horse riding fraternity and simultaneously protecting the sensitive environment. Council is appreciative of the offer of financial support from CCGHT and Ulster Rural Riders Association (URRA) towards the cost of this scheme.

Future proposals, funding dependent, include improvements to the existing toilet block, upgrading of the overflow car parks, improvements to parking and traffic flow and a new board walk access on to the beach, including viewing area.

**Mark Strong**

Countryside Development Officer  
Coleraine Borough Council

## Giant's Causeway World Heritage Site Visitor Centre



Things are beginning to take shape at the Giant's Causeway. The preliminary works for the new visitors' centre have been completed and the foundations are in place. The new building will be completed by the summer of 2012. Even considering the bad winter weather the project remains on target and on budget.

The preliminary works included building new car parks, providing a park and ride service between Bushmills and the Causeway and making changes to the Causeway Hotel in order to minimise disruption during the build. The Hotel continues to operate its full range of services in addition to providing extra retail and tourist information space.

The next year will be difficult and the National Trust is working with local communities and businesses to

ease congestion in the area and continue to provide a high quality visitor experience. It won't be easy but with goodwill and pulling together it can work.

Central to the overall project is the regeneration of the wider area and Bushmills. The park and ride service will become a permanent feature encouraging more visitors to spend more time in the village. As a result of the project new employment and volunteering opportunities have opened up; these will continue and increase over the next while.

**It's not business as usual at the Causeway but it is certainly open for business!**

For further information contact Esther Dobbin on 028 2073 1582.

## Causeway Coast AONB Management Plan Review



Image Credit: Tower of Stones - Maeve Milliken, Dunseverick Primary School

**In April 2003, the Environment and Heritage Service (now called Northern Ireland Environment Agency) an agency within the Department of Environment developed the first management plan for the Causeway Coast AONB.**

Recommendations for action were produced as part of the process, however at that time no management structure was set up to develop and deliver these recommendations. Since then a management group was set up in 2004 and the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust took on the coordination of the management of this special area developing a series of actions based on the existing management plan.

Over the last few years other issues and opportunities have arisen including the production of a management plan for the Giant's Causeway World Heritage Site that highlighted the need to review the Causeway Coast AONB Management Plan to ensure that this special area remain cherished and protected.

The Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust has now started the process and you will have the opportunity in the near future to have your say on how you would like the plan to develop especially as the revised management plan will not be a plan for a particular organisation but for all of those who have an interest in ensuring that the Causeway Coast AONB remains as special as it is currently.

In the coming weeks we will be in contact with all the stakeholders who have an interest in the area: central and local government, private businesses, community groups, landowners... with all the people who live, work and/or enjoy the Causeway Coast AONB to gather data on what makes the area special and how we can ensure that the reasons why this area was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty remain and are enhanced. This will be carried out through a series of questionnaires, meetings, formal and informal discussions. This will lead towards the definition of a long term vision and aims for the Causeway Coast AONB which will, in term facilitate the development of a series of objectives and actions to deliver the vision.

If you wish to be kept informed of the process please contact us either by phone or email ([maxime@ccght.org](mailto:maxime@ccght.org)) and check our website on a regular basis ([www.ccght.org/causeway-coast-aonb](http://www.ccght.org/causeway-coast-aonb)).

## Who's Who? Causeway Coast AONB Management Group



**Ann McNickle**, Project Manager of Causeway Rural & Urban Network has over 10 years experience in community development. Throughout Ann's work she endeavours to deal with issues concerning

the environment, recycling, tourism and rural development. She has a keen interest in golf.

Ann feels that the Causeway Coast really deserves to be a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and hopes that through her involvement the community will be made aware of events and places of interest which can be appreciated by

both locals and visitors.

**Rachel Bain**, AONB Officer from November 2009 to December 2010, has commenced a new post with Coleraine, Ballymoney and Limavady Borough Councils as Biodiversity Officer. A new AONB Officer is due to be appointed shortly.





## The Causeway Coast AONB

# A farmer's perspective

**An interview with Bill Harpur OBE, retired Principal, CCGHT Director, farmer and resident within the Causeway Coast AONB.**

### **Tell us a little bit about yourself, and your interests.**

I have lived in this area since I was five years old. On completing the 11+ I attended Bushmills Grammar School where I played hockey with much enthusiasm but very little skill. I eventually graduated from university with a primary degree in Geography. I commenced working life as a Geography teacher and remained in education, filling a variety of roles, for the next 36 years.

I have always been interested in the countryside. Nearly all of the landscape in N.Ireland is man-made; even the 'non-farmed' parts have at some time in the past been heavily influenced by human activity. Spring and summer are my favourite seasons, I still marvel at the 'miracle of new birth' which can be seen everywhere in the spring. The countryside emerges from winter and is reborn with fresh enthusiasm for another growing season.

### **What got you into farming?**

I was born on a farm and I think it's in my blood – just like an incurable disease!

### **How do you and farming relate to the landscape of the Causeway Coast AONB?**

Farming and the aesthetic beauty of the landscape are not as much in conflict as is sometimes portrayed. The effects of farming are transient: e.g. in the 1980s I uprooted hedge rows on my farm, they were seen as a barrier to productivity; thirty years later I am reinstating hedgerows. Very few farming decisions result in irreversible change. The effects of sporadic residential development are much harder to eradicate and I think our planning service deserves to be congratulated for 'holding the line' in much of the countryside. The difficulty of getting planning permission for rural dwellings has made the planners deeply unpopular on many occasions but I think future generations will enjoy a better landscape as a result. I see my farming as helping to perpetuate this rich and varied landscape.

### **Does it make any difference farming in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty?**

AONBs in N.Ireland are not protected by statute; hence farming inside an AONB is not really different. I'm not sure whether it has been deliberate policy or merely a happy accident but good landscape quality in N.Ireland is being achieved by example and encouragement rather than coercion and restriction. The Department of Agriculture administers an excellent scheme called the Countryside Management Scheme. This agri-environment scheme provides financial incentives for farmers to undertake conservation measures aimed at improving biodiversity and conserving landscape features. It's an excellent scheme, available to all farmers in N.Ireland and has delivered environmental benefit in a most cost-effective manner. Well done DARD!

### **Do you see yourself as a guardian of the landscape – looking after it?**

The overwhelming majority of farmers take pride in their farms and are committed to farming in a manner that delivers a landscape that looks well managed and in which there is good biodiversity.

### **Describe a typical day for us?**

A typical day begins at around 6.30am. It takes approx. 11/2 hours each morning to feed the cattle when housed and about the same amount of time to check them during the grazing season. At this time of year the remainder of each day is spent repairing fences, maintaining or planting new hedges, sowing fertilizer, repairing water troughs, ploughing, cultivating and planting or doing a wide variety of other jobs in preparation for the incoming growing season. The working day ends at 6.00pm.

### **What do you enjoy most about living and working in the Causeway Coast AONB?**

I count it a privilege to work in this landscape with its marvellous views, its unpredictable weather patterns and the fact that each season is very distinctive. We are fortunate that annual productivity remains fairly constant from one year to the next, i.e. in N.Ireland there is little variation in total plant growth from one year to another; farmers in some other parts of the world have to cope with crop failures, droughts, hailstorms etc. Fortunately, we can rely on a constant



supply of rain to keep plant growth moving along nicely during the growing season. We have what I would describe as a 'soft' landscape, fully clothed with a mantle of vegetation. Our seasons are temperate rather than harsh and while all farmers grumble about the weather we know in our heart of hearts that it isn't really too bad.

**Where and what would you recommend someone to do if they were visiting the Causeway Coast AONB for the day?**

There is so much to see and do that the day will fly past. Take the narrow gauge railway from Bushmills to The Giant's Causeway and walk back to your car via the Black Rock beach and Portballintrae. We are spoilt for choice when it comes to beaches. The White Rocks beaches at Portrush or White Park Bay are both equally beautiful. Take the coast road to Ballycastle, visit Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge close to the village of Ballintoy, and enjoy some of the best scenery in the world. If the visitor is a golfer there are excellent courses at Portrush and Ballycastle; if he is a fisherman there is the River Bush and its tributaries. There are craft shops and museums to explore in Bushmills and Ballycastle and many top class restaurants located throughout the area. A single day will not be enough!

**Where is your favourite place in the Causeway Coast AONB?**

I have so many favourite places that it would be hard to choose just one. My favourite view is looking west towards Portrush from the conservatory of the Causeway School Museum. One can enjoy both seascape and landscape from this vantage point. Whitepark Bay is one of the places I enjoy visiting. It has a unique charm.

**What is your favourite time of day and why?**

My favourite time of day is between 6am and 7am during May or June. At that time of the morning the cattle have had their first grazing of the day and are lying contentedly chewing their cud. The morning is bright, clean and the air is often still. Early morning traffic has not yet appeared, hence it is quiet. One can often see a fox returning to his/her lair and the birds can be singing. It's a privilege to be alive on mornings like that.

***“a landscape that looks well managed and in which there is good biodiversity”***



**Image Credits:** Top Left: Farming in the Causeway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Top: Liam Ferris, St. Patrick's Primary School, Portrush. Above: Ethan McAlister, Dunseverick Primary School -Looking across from Dunseverick Castle.



## 2011 European Year of Volunteers



Young volunteers making a clean sweep of the beach



European Year of Volunteering 2011



**The efforts of the many thousands of volunteering organisations make a huge difference to our lives in countless ways. The world would be much worse off without volunteers!**  
[www.europa.eu](http://www.europa.eu)

As part of the 2011 EYV celebrations the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust is recruiting a small band of volunteers to assist us with promoting and protecting the landscape. If you are a keen environmentalist and would be interested in carrying out a range of practical work on sites, or taking part in walks and talks in the Causeway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty contact the CCGHT office for an application pack on [info@ccght.org](mailto:info@ccght.org)

## SAVE THE NEWSLETTER!

This publication has been produced to inform local people, visitors and businesses of projects undertaken by the Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust (CCGHT) to enhance and promote the unique beauty and heritage of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

We liaise with landowners, stakeholders, local authorities, tourism and community sectors to produce up to date information on the management of protected areas, projects within the area, issues that impact the landscape, historical, geographical and ecological facts, events and competitions. If you value your AONB newsletter and you want to ensure that the publication continues visit: [www.surveymonkey.com/s/QDRQKZY](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/QDRQKZY) to complete a 5 minute survey. Alternatively contact CCGHT office to complete the survey by email ([info@ccght.org](mailto:info@ccght.org)) or by phone on: (028) 20752100

**All completed surveys received before 30th June 2011 will be entered in a Prize Draw for a Canon SLR Camera, Case and Memory Card bundle.**





## International Year of Forests

The United Nations General Assembly declared 2011 as the International Year of Forests to raise awareness on sustainable management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.



Clare Wood Forest consists of ten small blocks of woodland including Cloonty Wood, Straidbilly Wood, Moycraig Wood and Carrmoon Woods which can be found on the fringes of the Causeway Coast AONB. There is also private

woodland of more than 100 acres within the Dunderave Estate, home of the MacNaghten family in Bushmills. A word of caution if you are walking through the local forests

be aware of Sudden Oak Death (Phytophthora ramorum) which has a potential to attack a wide range of woody plants and could cause significant damage to woodland and other habitat if it were to become established. As the disease can easily spread, especially on footwear, the public is advised to stay on the main paths, not take plant cuttings and keep dogs on leads. For more information visit: [www.dardni.gov.uk/forests-service/](http://www.dardni.gov.uk/forests-service/)

Visit CCGHT's newly refurbished website which features ....

a Learning Zone, Facts and Information on the 3 North Coast AONBs, Our Heritage, Image and Publication Libraries and links to the new CCR Alive website.

[ccght.org](http://ccght.org)



## European Charter for Sustainable Tourism

CCGHT has applied to the Europarc Federation for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism for the Causeway Coast, Binevenagh and Antrim Coast & Glens Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Charter is a practical management tool which helps protected areas to continuously improve the sustainable development and the management of tourism taking account of the needs of the environment, the local population and the local tourism businesses. In April 2011 CCGHT hosted verification officers for the Federation, Hans Schiphorst and Richard Partington. The Trust arranged site visits and an action-packed itinerary allowing the verification officers the opportunity to sample local produce, local activities and speak to local tourism businesses. For more information on Sustainable Development in the Causeway Coast & Glens area visit the Sense & Sustainability section of our website: [www.ccght.org](http://www.ccght.org)

## Causeway Coast AONB Fact File:

Date Of Designation	Area
22 March 1989	4200ha



## CAUSEWAY COAST & GLENS HERITAGE TRUST

For more information on the Causeway Coast AONB please visit the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust website: [www.ccght.org](http://www.ccght.org)

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[www.ccght.org](http://www.ccght.org)

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

