

Spokespersons Report

Councillor Bruce Marshall, Spokesperson for Environment

Marine Protected Area Workshop

The Council's Marine & Coastal Development Manager attended a two day workshop in Edinburgh where the Scottish Government, SNH and the Joint Nature Conservancy Council presented their work to date on establishing a network of nature conservation Marine Protected Areas (MPA) in Scottish waters. The workshop allowed a wide range of stakeholders to review and comment on an initial suite of proposed search locations for MPAs, with additional search locations still to be identified for mobile species such as basking shark, cetaceans and seabirds. Five potential search locations were discussed within Argyll and Bute coastal waters. Comments from stakeholders are to be reviewed by the Scottish Government and SNH with updated search locations published in a workshop report in December.

Argyll and Bute Coast and Countryside Trust - Development

The proposal to investigate the formation of an Argyll and Bute Coast and Countryside Trust has emerged as a result of Planning Services Service review. The Local Development Plan team has developed a draft profile for the trust with a view to carrying out a feasibility study which will inform us of our options. We are currently finalising the tender document with partners who are also making a financial contribution to the study. The partners are Argyll and Bute Council (3k), Argyll and Bute Social Enterprise (5k) Network, Scottish Natural Heritage (2K) and Forestry Commission Scotland (1K). We expect the tender process to commence by mid December 2011.

Woodland and Forestry Update

Argyll & Bute Council and Forestry Commission Scotland recently held a two-fold event on the 9th December. This was a networking day for Community Woodland Projects with speakers from a variety of Community Woodland projects sharing knowledge about their work. Lessons learned and the opportunities for development of existing, and creation of new projects and accessing funding were discussed. In addition Argyll & Bute's Woodland and Forestry Strategy was formally launched by Cllr Neil Mackay. This Strategy recognises that woodland and forestry have the potential to contribute a range of benefits for local people, including employment, opportunities for leisure and recreation, land for housing, and a source of cost-effective and environmentally sound energy, in addition to important quality-of-life factors. This strategy is one of 34 finalists selected from an entry of 140 across nine categories in the prestigious UK Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Planning Awards.

Local Development Plan Update

The consultation period on the Main Issues Report (MIR) the first formal stage of the Local Development Plan (LDP) finished on the 18th of July with 699 responses received. Work is now underway to analyze the responses which are generally very positive with regard to the preferred policy options set out in the MIR with a view to reporting back initial findings to the respective Area Committee business days in December and January. Meetings have also taken place or been arranged with a number of individuals, key agencies and community groups to discuss their comments with a view to making changes. Given a range of different issues that are likely to impact

on the content of the proposed LDP, such as the successful TIF bid for the Lorn ARC it is intended that the publication of the LDP will be re-scheduled to August 2012. The public consultation period will last for three months and will employ a variety of public engagement techniques to stimulate interest in the plan. This is subject to Executive approval at their December meeting.

Argyll and Bute Design Competition

The second bi-annual Argyll and Bute Design Awards competition will be launched in January 2012. The design awards are intended to recognise, promote and celebrate examples of exceptional design quality within both an urban and rural context across the whole of the Argyll and Bute Council Planning area. The awards provide a means of stimulating greater public awareness of good design and drawing attention to good examples on the ground. The design awards also help to promote the use of a suite of design guides prepared by the Council which recently won a Scottish Government Planning award.

Landscape Capacity Study Update

Work is well underway with a landscape capacity study for on shore wind in Argyll and Bute. Landscape Consultants are working with SNH staff and Council Planning Officers on site to produce a document that will help determine the sensitivities of our outstanding landscape to change from different scales of on shore wind development. An initial draft is scheduled for the end of December and a follow on design guide for smaller scale turbines is scheduled to follow in February 2012. The total cost of the study is £65k with £5k coming from the council and £60k coming from SNH. It is intended to hold a workshop with key stakeholders in the new year to discuss the findings of the study and seek comments.

Craignish Community Plan Update

The Development Policy Manager has been working with the Craignish Community Council and a local steering group to help deliver Argyll and Bute's first community led land use plan. With 147 members of the local community responding to questionnaires and participating in open days the plan will act as supplementary planning guidance and help inform the content of the new LDP. Once finalised by the local community the plan will be taken to the Mid Argyll Area Committee and the PPSL for their approval to help inform future planning decisions taken in the area. It is hoped that this new way of involving communities in the land use planning process can be rolled out to other areas of Argyll and Bute as resources permit.

Biodiversity

The Argyll and Bute Local Biodiversity Partnership are working with the Scottish Association of Marine Science on the 'Festival of the Sea' 19-28 May 2012. We will be hosting a Biodiversity Conference in Oban on 22 May 2012 to mark International Day for Biodiversity.

The partnership is currently hosting the Atlantic Hazel Gloves national project which is one of the species identified in Scottish Natural Heritages' Species Action Framework. We have set up a working group and have a project officer in place with funding from Scottish Natural Heritage, British Lichen Society and LEADER to the tune of £41,659 over two years.

The Rhododendron Ponticum project (INNS) has managed to change the SRDP funding support to 100% of standard costs. Landowners are being encouraged to apply for this grant with options to work collaboratively.

Recycle Scotland

I attended a photoshoot at McCaig's Tower on 17th November (torrential rain and retired to Corran Halls to finish filming). Recycle Scotland is funded by the Scottish Government and its remit is to encourage volunteers to spread the recycling message throughout the area. The local group is led by Katharine Usher. The following is my quote –

"I am delighted to support the local roll-out of Recycle for Scotland, an exciting national scheme to help inform people about what products can and should be recycled."

"Argyll and Bute's recycling, composting and recovery rate currently stands at 42%, and has been steadily above the 40% mark for the past 2 years (41.5% in 10/11 and 41.3% in 09/10) while waste sent to landfill has continued to fall (32,253 tonnes in 2010/11 compared to 33,736 tonnes in 2009/10). We hope to see this landfill reduction trend continue in 2011/12 and beyond."

"I am very pleased that we are maintaining our recycling and recovery rates, but there is no room for complacency. We continue to improve our recycling, composting and recovery through ongoing reviews of our operational practices in a bid to provide service improvements to our residents in a cost effective way."

"Having the second-biggest council area in Scotland, which includes 25 inhabited islands, clearly presents challenges not faced by most other local authorities. But our efforts – combined with those of the many volunteers who devote so much of their time to encouraging more households to recycle and reuse – are paying off in terms of conserving resources and reducing landfill."

"I'd like to thank all those across Argyll and Bute who are working to boost recycling levels, as well as the thousands of householders who take this issue seriously. I would urge them to take a moment to explore Recycle for Scotland's website, where they'll find plenty of recycling tips and other important information."

"I look forward to continuing to work together to ensure that Argyll and Bute continues to play its part in making Scotland more environmentally friendly."

Shanks PPP Contract

The Council continues to progress negotiating the settlement of outstanding Contract Variations with Shanks Argyll & Bute plc with encouraging progress made over the last month. Progress is being made with regard to the development of the model for the proposed introduction of co-mingled collection.

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has published a new set of waste performance indicators for the period July 2010-June 2011. These indicators show waste management performance in terms of Household Waste Recycled/Composted, Household Waste Recovered (e.g. Compost Like Output in Argyll & Bute and Energy from Waste in Shetland) and Household Waste Landfilled. The Council has lobbied hard for this reporting regime to be put in place, which provides the overall picture of waste management performance, rather than narrowly reporting on

“Recycling” only as now defined within the Zero Waste Plan; which changes the definition of CLO from being a “recycled/composted” material to being a “recovered” material. This is a real breakthrough thanks to the persistence of the Director and Officers, as previously the Minister For Environment had been unprepared to change the designation of CLOs.

Carbon Management Programme

At the half way point in the five year programme (2009-2014) an update of the plan is about to be published with officers applying finishing touches to the paper.