

RSPB CONNECTING COMMUNITIES WITH WILDLIFE PROJECT FINAL REPORT TO DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY LEADER PROGRAMME JUNE 2012

Background

Introduction

This is a final report to Dumfries & Galloway LEADER Programme in respect of their funding support for the above project, which began in April 2010 and was completed in March 2012. The project involved connecting local and visiting communities with the varied wildlife and natural environment of Dumfries & Galloway, including a significant educational element with school children in line with the Scottish 'curriculum for excellence'. This was achieved largely through the employment of dedicated Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) and Field Teachers and involved undertaking a range of events and activities on and off RSPB sites in association with various communities, partnerships and organisations. In addition, there was an element of interpretational and other work on RSPB sites to enhance the visitor experience and generally promote the wildlife and environment of Dumfries & Galloway.

1 How the idea for the project was developed

The idea for this project came from the document 'Rural Dumfries & Galloway – The next step – 2008-2013' and the process leading up to its publication. RSPB Scotland owns and manages a number of nature reserves on behalf of our members, several thousand of whom live in Dumfries & Galloway and therefore form part of the community. The reserves are managed for both wildlife and people and the key D&G LEADER Priorities offered an ideal opportunity for the Society to apply to LEADER and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) for partnership funding support to expand our work with local communities on several reserves and on the Galloway Kite Trail to deliver benefits for wildlife, local communities and visitors alike.

2 Partners in the project – who was involved

Essentially all of our existing staff in Dumfries & Galloway were involved to some degree in delivering the project, as indeed were supporting staff from our offices in both Glasgow and Edinburgh. However, most visitor- and community-engagement was delivered by three Community Liaison Officers, employed at Mersehead, Galloway Kite Trail and Mull of Galloway respectively, but who also undertook much work off-site in the region and occasionally beyond – in a promotional sense. Three Field Teachers undertook educational activities both on and off-RSPB sites across the region. A large number of volunteers were also engaged in the project, delivering an incredible amount of work across a whole range of work areas, from people-engagement to habitat management and surveying. Forestry Commission Scotland, South Rhins Community Development Trust and Cree Valley Community Woodland Trust were also involved at Galloway Kite Trail, Mull of Galloway and Barclye reserve respectively. Finally, SNH were also involved in the project and indeed were match funders.

3 Aims and Objectives of the project

This project aimed to reach out to and enthuse people from across Dumfries & Galloway to learn about, appreciate and take an active interest in the amazing countryside and diverse wildlife of their region. Thereby, we believed this would help instil a sense of pride and ownership, encouraging people to protect their local wildlife and environment.

We aimed to grow our local field teaching and outreach programme, giving more children the opportunity to experience and learn about the natural world, to increase their physical activity levels and boost social skills and motivation.

The project aimed to significantly improve physical access and viewing opportunities at popular visitor destinations across the region, opening up more opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to benefit from our work.

The project also aimed to deliver considerable benefits for biodiversity, contributing towards the sustainable investment in the region's important and growing nature based tourism sector, making an important year round contribution to the local economy.

4 How the funding package was put together – detail of package.

Firstly, we had to internally bid to increase RSPB Scotland spend in the region over the two year period, securing the go-ahead providing we could secure match funding. SNH were approached locally with our project plans and costs and they were satisfied that the outcomes and outputs met their own strategic aims both regionally and nationally, which they did. We also successfully bid to Sulwath Connections, a local Landscape Area Partnership, part-funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Finally, the application was put to Dumfries & Galloway LEADER Programme in a co-operative bid put together by our Area Manager in Dumfries & Galloway and support staff in our Scottish headquarters in Edinburgh.

5..Funding package			
Name	Date	Amount £	Public/Private/In kind
SNH	Secured May 2008	£ 4,342	Public
Heritage Lottery Fund	Secured August 2009	£ 4,500	Private
Volunteer time	Secured in anticipation 2009	£64,578	In kind
RSPB	Secured August 2009	£73,619	Private
LEADER	Secured January 2010	£111,961	LEADER
		Total	
		£259,000	

The Project Experience

6 Project timing

The project took place between April 2010 and March 2012. We believe that it was an extremely successful project and achieved virtually everything that was intended. Unfortunately, the proposed wildlife garden at the Mull of Galloway has had to be put on hold as the landowners, Northern Lighthouse Board, are currently reviewing ownership and management of their properties and we simply could not proceed with this work until the uncertainty over the future of the site is resolved. However, they remain supportive of the idea and we are very hopeful that the garden can be created over the next few years.

The following table sets the achievements against numerical outputs projected at the start of the project. This helps to demonstrate the success of the project, but only partly captures the sheer scale of the project and the breadth of information and experiences shared with local communities and visitors. Our feedback has been fantastic and we have no doubt that there has been a huge benefit right across the broad spectrum of our targets, from schoolchildren to community groups and wildlife.

7 What happened – outputs

Three Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) were employed (2 full-time, 1 part-time) and they enabled us to develop new community and awareness raising work on and around the Galloway Kite Trail, Mull of Galloway Nature Reserve and Mersehead Nature Reserve. These officers linked local communities and visitors with the land through a variety of means including face-to-face interpretation, talks, guided walks and special events. In doing this, they improved the experiences of visitors to the area and encouraged the involvement and participation of a wider Dumfries & Galloway community. Much of this new work had been made possible by recent developments at each of these sites: the Sulwath Education Centre of Environmental Excellence at Mersehead, Barclay extension to Wood of Cree, The Catstrand, new sites and partners on the kite trail, and new facilities and other developments at Mull of Galloway.

Work undertaken by the Community Liaison Officers included:

Providing opportunities to learn and undertake new skills, helping to establish locally trained volunteers.

Developing a series of beach combing walks at New England Bay, engaging with people from the local caravan park, raising their level of environmental knowledge and contributing towards the enjoyment of their visit to the area, thereby adding value to local businesses.

Undertaking a programme of information events, helping us to enthuse communities across the region and promoting community use of our sites. This helped to build on the successful Community Biodiversity Action programme undertaken by Dumfries & Galloway Council through Sulwath Connections.

Creating community link registers of community groups and outlets around our reserves and the kite trail. This enabled us to identify gaps in our community engagement, both geographically and by sector, and to proactively approach new groups to deliver talks and nature walks, raising awareness of conservation in Dumfries & Galloway

Working with local businesses to help identify new potential customers and provide information and interpretation of the land and its dependent wildlife to their visitors.

Demonstrating and promoting greener lifestyles through publicising the new solar panels and wood pellet boiler recently installed at the new Sulwath Centre at Mersehead

The production of dedicated wildlife watching manuals to educate, inform and help generate community involvement and business development. The demand for these arose from local and business communities, and there is significant potential to expand this work in the future.

Three part time field teachers were employed, allowing us to deliver new and innovative elements to our award winning education programme, including:

Developing a new programme to achieve personal contact with schools that hadn't previously benefited from our work, including those in the west of the region which had been identified as having less access to outdoor education. For example, for the first time we introduced field teaching on the Rhins of Galloway and Wood of Cree.

Developing a secondary school programme for the first time.

Integrating new information technology to our field teaching work.

Working in partnership with specialist organisations such as The Carbon Trust, supporting them with their educational remit, and showing a 'united front' in tackling big issues such as carbon emissions and related climate change

Improved Access

We investigated the feasibility of transmitting live pictures from a red kite nest onto screens in CatStrand, the community venue in the heart of Dumfries & Galloway.

We installed new cameras and TV screens at the Mull of Galloway allowing local people and visitors to view the seabird colonies from within the visitor centre

We produced innovative new displays and interpretation panels at the Mull of Galloway visitor centre and at the Wood of Cree nature reserve to help all visitors navigate and understand not only the biodiversity but also the rich local archaeology.

To enable access to all areas of Barclye, access points were created through existing dykes to enable visitors to safely move between different habitats and keep to tracks and paths. Wall-ends were repaired to allow access gates to be hung.

Conservation Activities

The Galloway Kite Trail officer contributed towards the conservation of red kites through encouraging local interest, which in turn created a sense of community pride, helping to protect and expand the range of these special birds.

We undertook dyke construction work at Barclye to conserve the habitats for wildlife and to improve access on this new part of the (Wood of Cree) reserve for the enjoyment of visitors.

The exclusion of livestock is important as grazing would have been potentially devastating to newly planted or regenerated woodlands. The dykes have facilitated the necessary seasonal management of other habitats, such as herb-rich rushy pasture, which supports breeding snipe, curlew, grasshopper warbler and small-pearl bordered fritillary, and pasture woodland, which supports breeding tree pipit, redstart and wintering thrushes.

We further contributed to conservation by providing suitable land at Barclay for the Cree Valley Woodland Trust to set up a new (part LEADER funded) tree nursery.

Volunteers

The employment of our Community Liaison Officers in particular enabled us to engage a large number of volunteers right across Dumfries & Galloway, both on- and off- RSPB sites. The range of tasks undertaken by volunteers on the project has been quite staggering, from radio-tracking red kites and people engagement, to survey, monitoring and habitat creation. This activity has been extremely worthwhile and satisfying for both the volunteers themselves and for our staff, and has left an invaluable legacy for the future for us all.

Summary table of outputs

Project Outputs	Number	Achieved?		Comments
		YES	NO	
Improvement in rural community capacity	80	Yes		In fact, achieved 121 in 2011
No of communities participating	14	Yes		Actually achieved 24
No of individuals trained, gaining new skills or re-skilled	100	Yes		Achieved 100.
No. of FTE jobs safeguarded	3.5	Yes		Field teachers and Community Liaison Officers
No of jobs in voluntary (third or non-profit) sector	3.5	Yes		As above.
No of projects that primarily address Social Cohesion	1	Yes		This project achieved this in large measure.
No. of community facilities created	1		Part	Mull of Galloway wildlife garden delayed beyond end of project because of uncertainties over future ownership of land.
No. of community facilities improved	2	Yes		Achieved. New interpretation in place at Mull of Galloway and Wood of Cree.
No of promotions undertaken	80	Yes		Over 100 events undertaken.
Marketing activity undertaken	2	Yes		Achieved. Web site upgraded, Wildlife manuals

				distributed. New trail guides and press activity. GKT fliers.
No of new/innovative methods introduced which improve quality of life	1		Part	Mull of Galloway wildlife garden delayed beyond end of project because of uncertainties over future ownership of land.
No of new/innovative methods of adding value to local products	1	Yes		Achieved. Wildlife Watching guide printed and distributed.
New markets accessed	4	Yes		Greatly exceeded target.
Feasibility study	1	Yes		Achieved. Copy sent to LEADER and Catstrand.
Heritage sites with interpretation introduced	2	Yes		Achieved. New interpretation in place at Mull of Galloway and Wood of Cree.
No of Tourism projects supported	1	Yes		This project.
No of environmental access and biodiversity projects	1	Yes		This project
No of environmental sustainability projects	1	Yes		This project
No of new/additional visitors attracted	1200	Yes		Achieved 1,491
No of best practice models transferred	1	Yes		Mersehead as wildlife friendly farming exemplar.

8 Project Delivery

The project was managed by RSPB Area Manager, Dumfries & Galloway and administrated by the Area Administrator. Some sub-management was undertaken by Site Managers (3) and wardens (2) on our reserves.

People engagement delivery was largely achieved through the three Community Liaison Officers, employed at Mersehead, Galloway Kite Trail and Mull of Galloway respectively. The three Field Teachers undertook educational activities both on and off-RSPB sites across the region.

Over 148 volunteers were engaged in the project in 2010/11 financial year alone; learning and applying skills and delivering an amazing breadth of work. The social cohesion and wider community benefits of this level of volunteering is enormous.

Some of the works were undertaken by local contractors, including Barclye dyking, design and printing of leaflets, wildlife watching manuals, camera upgrades and replacement, web site

upgrade etc. In addition to delivering the project outputs and benefits, this work therefore also provided direct economic spin-offs for the local economy.

9 Marketing undertaken

The project was marketed in several ways. Firstly, by the Community Liaison Officers directly engaging face-to-face with local communities, visitors and the wider general public. This was achieved both on RSPB reserves, around the kite trail and in talks and events throughout the region and beyond.

Promotional posters carrying LEADER and other partners' logos were produced and distributed for events. Various press releases carrying logos and details of the project were produced, with a variety of press activity relating to these. Project details and LEADER recognition were listed in various RSPB publications, including Birds Magazine and Scotland News.

The Galloway Kite Trail web site carries details and LEADER logos etc.

10 Beneficiaries of the project

The beneficiaries of our Connecting Communities with Wildlife project number in their thousands in terms of the numbers of people we have engaged with and who have directly benefited from the knowledge and experience of our staff. These beneficiaries range from visitors to our nature reserves and the Galloway Kite Trail to local communities and schoolchildren. There are also immeasurable benefits to the quality of life of these people in terms of the health spin-offs of spending time enjoying and communing with nature and the outdoors on these sites.

The economic spin-off for local communities will have been considerable and our draft analysis of visitors to the kite trail over the past two years shows that over one million pounds has been spent by visitors to the region who were specifically attracted to watch the kites. Our main locus with these visitors has been through our Community Liaison Officer.

In educational and development terms, the positive impact on schoolchildren will have been huge in helping to stimulate an interest in the environment, sustainability and an awareness of climate change and the threats facing our environment. Some of these experiences will no doubt result in being life-changing and the benefits to our region and beyond will be felt for many years to come.

Our project staff and many volunteers have enjoyed the benefits of employment and in learning and applying skills. This has been of great benefit to local communities, partner organisations and to social cohesion. In general terms the awareness raising of environmental issues and the benefits of looking after and enjoying wildlife and the countryside will have been considerable. In wildlife and sustainability terms, though difficult if not impossible to measure, there is no doubt that there will be a considerable benefit from local people and visitors understanding

more about the environment and having their enjoyment of it enhanced. In turn, this must in some way translate to an increased ethic of care to look after our natural heritage and to ensure we pass it on in good heart to future generations.

The following summary table is included for easy reference as to how we achieved numerical targets against the various beneficiary groups identified, but of course these tell only a small fraction of the real story in terms of benefits and the actual number of beneficiaries.

LEADER Target groups	Approved target	Total achieved
Male age under 25	2000	1,285
Female age under 25	2000	1,206
Male age 25 and over	50	330
Female age 25 and over	50	375
Micro businesses	21	28
Social enterprises	1	1
Unemployed	40	68
People with disabilities	100	43
Over age 60	40	870
Farming Community	20	26

In fact, our staff engaged with several thousand children (or rather under 25s), and well above target, but the number in the table only reflects those who we were able to capture in feedback forms from field teaching sessions and/or dedicated group visits etc. There were many situations where many under 25s benefited from staff at our sites and on the kite trail, but whose details we were unable to capture. For example, in one school session a field teacher spoke collectively to an assembly of some 250 children, but whose details were not captured.

Having said that, school visits were severely affected by drop in their transport budgets, by closure of Mersehead due to severe weather in 2010/11 winter and by prolonged unavoidable absence of the Lead Field Teacher. Outreach visits were been increased in attempt to compensate. The other target where we were unable to gather sufficient numerical evidence was people with disabilities. Whilst there is no doubt that we would have interfaced with over 100 disabled people, we found it very difficult to gather information on this. In fact, this project was not specifically aimed at disabled people and rather we selected the target as an indicative one of how many disabled people we might engage with, which I'm sure we would have achieved.

11 How the budget turned out

Overall, in terms of proposed and actual spend, we feel that the budget has turned out very well, remarkably even, given the size and complexity of the project. However, this was partly achieved through re-directing impending under spends to other agreed project outputs. We are very grateful to LEADER for this flexibility as it has helped deliver key outputs and prevented significant under spend.

Some of the original under spend on the project was due to staff changes that were outwith our control or anticipation. The original Mersehead CLO (Keeley Spate) moved south to take up a new post in mid June 2010 and her replacement (Becky Jones) started in mid August, resulting in a two month under spend in salary and associated transport and other costs, together with engagement shortfall at a key site in holiday period.

We also lost our original Mull of Galloway CLO (Paul Tarling), who moved to take up a new post at our new Crook of Baldoon Reserve, but because this was an internal move, we were able to achieve this with little loss of staff time and Hannah Doyle took up the post and delivered the remainder of the project. Our Galloway reserves Site Manager (Gus Keys), with responsibility for delivery at Wood of Cree and Mull of Galloway, left the Society in late May 2010 and wasn't replaced (by Andrew Bielinski) until early September. However, considerable in-kind support from myself and other staff ensure that there was no loss of delivery in the project.

Unfortunately, the unavoidable absence of our Lead Field Teacher reduced salary spend to a degree and therefore affected the budget. This was also true to a lesser extent with a second Field Teacher. Whilst this in itself didn't interfere with the our spend budget, as naturally we continued to pay both, we were dismayed to find that this wasn't eligible for LEADER grant, even though the staff remained in employment and the Society paid sick pay entitlement.

ELIGIBLE PROJECT COSTS		
Item	Total approved in application	Total claimed
3 Community Liaison Officers	103,214	96,658.28
CLO travel	5,000	4,599.67
Mull of Galloway vol. time.	11,500	10,681.21
Galloway Kite Trail vol. time	9,234	10,055.00
Mersehead vol. time	43,841	47,300.00
Wildlife Watching manuals and web site upgrades.	2,400	2,066.00
G. Kite Trail post & stationery	600	195.06
Field Teachers x 3	47,808	40,476.18
Field Teaching equipment	2,003	576.91
Education linked transport.	5,000	2,155.61
Barclye dyke work	8,000	10,747.00
Wood of Cree interpretation.	6,500	2,478.16
Wildlife Garden setup	2,500	1,065.00
Cameras, Mull of Galloway	6,500	23,443.50
TV screens, Mull of Galloway	900	765.95
Mull of Galloway interpretation panels	4,000	4,127.14
EXPENDITURE	259,000.00	257,390.66

Leader Grant Approved	£111,961
Total Grant Claimed	£106,912.45

12 Lessons learnt

A great many lessons have been learnt in undertaking and delivering this project, claims and reports. These are extremely varied, but include being very careful in not setting indicative or inappropriate targets for certain groups – especially when these are sensitive or otherwise difficult to gather information on – eg disabled people and unemployed people. This project was not directed towards these target groups necessarily, but the figures agreed were rather indicative estimates of how many in each target group we might achieve. Having said that, I'm sure we would have exceeded all of the targets in reality, but the level of information required for the claims can be prohibitive and extremely time-consuming and onerous to gather, and this should be borne in mind in designing a project and forming an application.

The lesson learnt is to be realistic in terms of the focus of the project and in relation to the sensitivity and difficulty in achieving the required evidence, although overall I feel we have done extremely well in meeting the set targets and indeed I have no doubt that we will have achieved all of them. Indeed, we have evidence of greatly exceeding most of them.

On top of this, we were slow to put a system in place to gather the required target evidence and indeed only got onto this after the first few claims on finding out that the evidence we'd gathered didn't satisfy the criteria. This was extremely frustrating, as was finding out on occasions that staff had missed major opportunities to gather such evidence through complacency or forgetfulness.

Due to not receiving grant income on agreed and paid staff salaries during time spent off work in hospital and illness etc, we are extremely disappointed that our budget has a hole that needs to be made up somehow. Therefore, perhaps we need to put some other provision in place, though it is largely impossible to predict such events, far less arrange for monies to cover for them. We feel this technical issue should be reviewed and revised by LEADER. Some small community groups could be financially crippled through paying staff sick pay, but receiving no grant against it, and as a charity we cannot afford this either; we need the income to secure and undertake the agreed work.

13 & 14 Sustainability

We had hoped to apply to LEADER to develop this project as there is still so much to do, and we have various project ideas. However, we were advised not to apply as all money had been committed. For the meantime, we have continued to employ the Community Liaison Officers and have tried with only limited success to secure match funding against this work (SNH has continued to provide their match funding for 2012/13). Now we find that more money has become available to LEADER, but the staff are ineligible for funding due to being in existing employment (contracts have been extended for one year). We therefore have a significant hole in our budget. Currently the CLOs and Field Teachers are undertaking similar work and continuing the project in effect, which is good, but in the current financial climate we have major concerns over the sustainability of this beyond this financial year.

We have retained virtually all of the volunteers who contributed to the project and we hope to maintain this at least as long as the CLOs remain in post, and indeed beyond. The experience of volunteers has been excellent and the individual benefits to most of them will continue for many years, and some for life in terms of assisting them in gaining employment.

In terms of the other outputs, these remain in place and will continue to be maintained by RSPB Scotland and to deliver benefits to local communities and visitors. For example, there is huge potential for expansion in use of the wildlife watching manuals and their distribution. We very much want to continue to develop this vital work and we are looking toward the existing and future LEADER programmes to assist with this.

15 LEADER issue addressed – Link communities and land together

We are extremely proud of our achievements through our Connecting Communities with Wildlife Project. The achievements detailed in this report and in previous claims and evidence supplied amount to a truly remarkable and worthwhile body of work. Geographically, we have operated from Mersehead in the east to Mull of Galloway in the west, a distance of some one hundred miles, raising awareness of the land and its dependent wildlife with a range of target audiences. In doing so, we have educated people, given enjoyment, provided healthy experiences and significantly enhanced the local economy through increasing visitor numbers from outwith the area.

Hopefully, in doing this we have also impressed on both local people, decision makers and visitors alike the vital importance of the land, how it's managed, and the importance of its dependent wildlife to all of us.

The numerical and event detail of our successfully addressing this issue is self-evident throughout this report and in the following appendices. We are happy to provide more if required.

Chris Rollie, RSPB Area Manager, 14 June 2012

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Most of all I would like to thank the very many volunteers who helped us deliver this project. I wish to thank Alison Robertson for her superb attention to detail in claims and the evidence supplied with these. This has been a huge effort and I know was much appreciated by the D&G LEADER team. I would also like to acknowledge the unstinting efforts and enthusiasm of the project contract staff engaged: Calum Murray, Hannah Doyle, Becky Jones, Ella McLellan, Jacqui Lamb, Kirsty Griffiths, Keeley Spate and Paul Tarling. RSPB staff who helped deliver the project were Catherine Markey, Dave Fairlamb, Colin Bartholomew, Gus Keys, Andrew Bielinski, Will Cranstoun and George Christie. Finally, thanks to our partner individuals, organisations and local communities who were so supportive and appreciative of our work, and to the project team at Dumfries & Galloway LEADER Programme.

APPENDICES

Connecting Communities with Nature

Section 1.5 - Condition of Grant

Evidence of having built strong links with 6 community led non RSPB sites per annum for a minimum of 20 days per year per site (ie per Community Liaison Officer)(3 sites and 5 days pro rata for p/t Mull of Galloway).

Galloway Kite Trail Community Liaison Officer

Year 1 (1 April 2010 - 31 March 2011)

1. RSPB North Ayrshire Group talk 23.4.2010
2. Newton Stewart Walking Festival (locals and visitors) led walk 12.5.2010
3. Kirkcudbright Primary School 13.5.2010
4. Penpont SWRI visited trail 20.5.2010
5. Kirkmaiden Naturalists' Group talk 14.6.2010
6. RSPB Phoenix Club 'PEEWITS' visited trail 19.6.2010
7. Wiggonby School visited trail 28.6.2010
8. Castle Douglas Rotary Club talk 29.7.2010
9. Thornhill Rotary Club talk 11.8.2010
10. Dalbeattie Community Initiative visited trail 21.8.2010. Talk 22.8.2010
11. Kirkmichael SWRI talk 9.9.2010
12. Irongray Senior Citizens talk 7.10.2010
13. CTC D&G Discovery Ride 16.10.2010
14. Arthritis Care Link Group, Dumfries talk 20.10.2010
15. Lochmaben Friendship Group 3.11.2010
16. Kirkcudbright Academy talk on Managing Environmental Resources 20.1.2011
17. Wigtownshire Antiquarian and Natural History Society talk 20.1.2011
18. Kirkmichael XYZ Club, Parkgate talk 24.1.2011
19. Glencaple SWRI talk 3.2.2011

Total for year 1: 19 groups and 20 days (Dalbeattie Community Initiative two days)

Year 2 (1 April 2011 - 31 March 2012)

1. Brownhall SWRI talk 7.4.2011
2. Dalbeattie SWRI talk 19.4.2011
3. Lorton School from Cumbria visited trail 8.7.2011
4. Attended RSPB Galloway Local Group meeting 20.9.2011
5. Dalry School (activity) as part of Bird Town Celebrations 30.9.2011
6. RSPB Aberdeen Local Group visited trail 8.10.2011
7. Thornhill SWRI talk 11.10.2010
8. D&G CTC guided bike ride 15.10.2011
9. NTS Rangers' Conference at Galloway Activity Centre 8.11.2011
10. Auchencairn Church Guild talk 10.11.2011
11. Galloway RSPB Local Group talk 15.11.2011
12. Wild Seasons meeting 31.1.2012
13. Renfrewshire RSPB Local Group talk 3.2.2012
14. Talk at Leighton Moss RSPB reserve, Lancs; open to the public 27.3.12

The Community Liaison Officer was off sick for 4 weeks during Nov and Dec and a further 3 weeks during Feb and March. The following talks were planned but had to be cancelled:

- Lincluden Ladies' Club, Dumfries, 23.2.2012
- St Mary's/Greyfriars Church Guild talk 6.3.2012
- Talk to Dumfries campus of Glasgow University students 7.3.2012
- Devorgilla Rotary Club, Dumfries, wanted a talk during the time the Community Liaison Officer was off sick so no date was booked.

Total for year 2: 13 groups and 14 days (excluding cancelled events).

NB – Virtually all of the GKT CLO's visitor and community engagement time is spent off RSPB sites, principally on and around the Galloway Kite Trail. During this work he has engaged with several community led initiatives, including the GKT itself, the Catstrand (New Galloway), Stewartry Show (Castle Douglas) etc over very many days. Therefore, the above listed events and talks represent only a small proportion of his true community engagement time.

Mull of Galloway Community Liaison Officer

Year 1 (1 April 2010 - 31 March 2011)

1. New England Bay Caravan Club Park (four talks for residents of the Park and seven beachcomber walks for the public)
2. Wigtown Talks and Walks (talk and walk Sep and Oct 2010)
3. Logan Botanics (three events: bird-box making, dawn chorus and Geese in Galloway talk)
4. Kirkmaiden Naturalists' Group (talk)
5. South Ayrshire RSPB Group 15 Nov 2010
6. Belmont Nursery School, Stranraer (visited reserve 8.6.2010)
7. Glenluce Primary School (reserve visit then beachcomber walk 14.6.2010)
8. St Joseph's RC Primary School, Stranraer (visited reserve 16.6.2010)

The five "Meet the Seabirds" sessions attracted 0, 0, 0, 6 and 5 participants.

Total for year 1: 8 groups and 21 days

Year 2 (1 April 2011 - 31 March 2012)

1. New England Bay (litter pick 10.8.11; and seven beachcomber walks; talk 8.8.11)
2. Logan Botanic Gardens bird-box building event

The Community Liaison Officer's colleague was absent on sick leave for several week which meant the CLO had to remain on site. Hence there were no onsite or offsite school visits this year, nor any offsite talks. This will be a focus for the coming season.

Total for year 2: 2 groups and 10 days

Mersehead Community Liaison Officer

Year 1 (1 April 2010 - 31 March 2011)

1. Cream o' Galloway meeting 21.4.2010 to discuss future events, in particular Wild Scotland wildlife tourism initiative
2. Attended Colvend school fete 30.5.2010 to promote links with the reserve

The Community Liaison Officer (CLO) left on 3 June 2010 and her replacement started 16 July, meaning that for six weeks there was no-one in post. The new CLO then had to familiarise herself with the reserve and the local area before she could start to forge links with local organisations.

3. The new Dumfries & Galloway branch of Butterfly Conservation held their inaugural meeting at Mersehead on 26 June 2010 (invited and arranged by previous Community Liaison Officer)
4. Dalry Farmers' Market attended to promote the reserve
5. Moffat Wildlife Club talk 5.11.2010

Total for year 1: 5 groups and 5 days

Year 2 (1 April 2011 - 31 March 2012)

1. Dalbeattie Community Initiative (3 days. Day 1 the Community Liaison Officer promoted the reserve at the first-ever Dalbeattie Spring Fair; day 2 she met with their Development Manager to explore a possible visit to the reserve by partially-sighted people from the town; day 3 the actual visit in August 2011.
2. Dumfries Air Museum: promoted the reserve there 17.7.2011, 28.7.2011, 4.8.2011, 27.8.2011, running the Record Breaking Birds roadshow and art activities.
3. Solway Woolscapes: new organisation formed by a local crafter, Anne Arnold. They are organising future Mersehead craft fairs. The relationship is in its infancy but we expect to build on it in the coming months and years. Meetings with Solway Woolscapes were held on 8.11.2011, 30.1.2012, 7.3.2012 to discuss craft fairs at Christmas and Easter.
4. Cream o' Galloway gala day 1.8.2011, followed by joint events held on 17.8.2011, 24.8.2011 and 26.10.2011
5. Kippford Holiday Park: family events held 9.8.2011 and 23.8.2011
6. 12.8.2011 25 children from Dumfries YMCA organised by Shirley Skachill took part in Family Fun Friday.
7. Event at the Chocolate Factory at Twynholm 18.8.2011
8. Galloway Country Fair at Drumlanrig Castle 20-21.8.2011
9. Wild Seasons initiative: the Community Liaison Officer is RSPB rep on the working group of this new local organisation, a collective of local countryside professionals and business owners promoting nature-based tourism in the area. Meetings took place 1.9.2011, 21.9.2011, 24.10.2011, 7.11.2011, 9.11.2011, 2.12.2011, 12.12.2011, 16.1.2012, 31.1.2012, 8.2.2012, 8.3.2012, 29.3.2012.
10. Day of the Region: the Community Liaison Officer represented Mersehead at this event at the end of September.
11. Attended local Environment Day, organised by the Carbon Centre in Dumfries 3.3.2012.
12. Visited New Abbey primary school to promote the reserve and forthcoming sponsored walk 9.2.2012
13. Visited Palnackie primary school to promote the reserve and forthcoming sponsored walk 16.2.2012
14. Stargazing event at Mersehead run in conjunction with Dumfries Astronomy Society 17.2.2012. Included planning future astronomy events eg Transit of Venus 6.6.2012.
15. Visited Auchencairn primary school to promote the reserve and forthcoming sponsored walk 9.2.2012

Total for year 2: 15 groups and 38 days