

The Ferry News

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DEVELOPMENTS IN WEST BAY

There was good news for West Bay in November when Fife Councillors agreed to grant long term control of the bay and surrounding land to a Community Company for a nominal rent. This means that the West Bay, its green spaces, the boat club and the piers will now be in the hands of the people of North Queensferry. This decision is stage one of a plan developed by Save Our Bay, in co-operation with Fife Council Officials, The Community Council and The Boat Club to provide a secure future for the area and to maximise the benefit to the community.

Stage Two of the plan is the formation of a democratically accountable Community Company and the election of a board of directors. After Save Our Bay's fantastic fundraising Ceilidh on St Andrews Night we now have enough money in place to properly constitute the company. The next step will be to invite candidates for election to the board. The Community Company will belong to residents of North Queensferry, all of whom will have a vote. This means the bay really is in the hands of all village residents.

The proposed community company will then work in partnership with Fife Council, The Lottery and Historic Scotland to develop a viable project plan for the bay area. This plan will cover

- a) The repair of the piers.
- b) Developing a project of community benefit (e.g. a Queensferry Crossing interpretation centre and café)
- c) Building a high quality, low impact single structure to house The Boat Club and the community project.
- d) Environmental protection of the mud flats.

- e) Preservation and enhancement of existing green spaces.
- f) Producing a business plan to ensure the long-term viability of the project.

Once this project plan has been developed there are then several funding stages which must be gone through before a full scale lottery bid can be put in. However all the early indications are that there is interest in and support for our scheme from Historic Scotland and The Lottery Communities Fund.

In an interesting new development Fife Council put forward the North Queensferry project to be part of 'The Forth Dimension' scheme - a 25 Million pound lottery bid put together by a consortium of local councils with the aim of revitalising the use of the Forth River from Stirling down to The Bridges. This is a bid focused on harbour repairs and community projects associated with the river. This bid is in its very early stages but if successful it could bring 2.5 million to North Queensferry. If it's unsuccessful, the village remains very well placed to make its own, large scale independent lottery bid when the bay project is prepared.

The West Bay project needs the support and effort of village residents to keep it going. The St Andrews Night Ceilidh was a fantastic success and raised over one and a half thousand pounds to go towards company formation. But this is only the start of a long journey. The new company will need a board which represents the views of the whole village and which has the energy to guide the project forward. If you are interested in becoming involved you don't need to live beside the bay, you don't need to have experience, you don't need to be a member of Save Our Bay, the only qualifications needed are energy and an interest in the future of West Bay.

If you would like to find out more please contact David Greig on 412 316.

Ferry Birds - September 2005 to January 2006

Our avian winter visitors seem to be a little scarcer this year with numbers of ducks on the sea and waders in West Bay perhaps lower than usual. There are **eiders** around now, but they were very few and far between in October and November. There are often several around the ruined pier off Carlingnose Point, with the males resplendent in their fresh multicoloured breeding plumage. I just hope it impresses the females when the time comes for pairing and breeding. Other sea ducks are also around and the **goldeneyes** and **red-breasted mergansers** males are also in full breeding plumage. Groups of males are starting to display and you can hear the calls as they show off to other males and any female who happens to be passing. The male **goldeneyes** are particularly noticeable as they throw back their heads and call. A **long-tailed duck** was off Port Laing for several weeks in the autumn. It was a female or possibly a young bird so it wasn't that obvious and didn't live up to its name as it didn't have a long-tail. **Long-tailed ducks** do not breed in the UK, but several hundred winter in the Forth estuary, so they are not that rare. The main breeding grounds are in Russia and Iceland, but the origins of those wintering here are not known.

Other birds on the sea are the usual kind with the **little grebes** again readily seen from the coastal path and in Inverkeithing Inner Bay. There have also been a few **great-crested grebes**, but nowhere near the numbers of a few years ago when a flock of about 120 was near Port Laing. Two or three **red-throated divers** were seen in the autumn, again off Port Laing, but I have not seen any recently. All our wintering sea birds feed on fish, crustaceans and molluscs and are often accompanied by a few **herring gulls** when they are actively feeding. The **gulls** are hoping for an easy meal as they harass the **eiders** when they return to the surface with a crab after diving to the sea floor. You can often see the unfortunate crab being vigorously shaken by an **eider** before being swallowed whole (minus most of the legs). A study in the Forth showed that the main winter food of **eiders** was blue mussels followed by shorecrabs and periwinkles.

A pair of **shelduck** and 2 or 3 **mute swans** have paid fleeting visits to West Bay. The **swans** may be commuters as I often see a pair by the pier in South Queensferry as I travel by train into Edinburgh. The most obvious water-side bird is the **grey heron**. It seems they are doing very well in The Lothians and Fife at the moment. They will have benefited from the recent mild winters and there is often one in West Bay, up to 6 on the ruined pier and several in Inverkeithing Inner Bay. The medium size waders are using West Bay as usual. There are probably at least 50 **redshanks** scattered about

on the mud being pushed up the beach as the tide comes in. They are joined by a similar number of **oystercatchers** which tend to feed more on the rocks and seaweed and perhaps 10 to 15 **curlews**. A small group of **turnstones** are also present and I have seen a few **dunlins** on one occasion. There were also a few **dunlins** on the beach at Port Laing at the beginning of September.

I have had several sightings of more unusual birds. Just like last year an immature **common** or **Arctic tern** was off Port Laing in the middle of November. A **kingfisher** was at the mouth of the Keithing burn on the 22nd of November and a flock of **jackdaws** was heard and briefly seen flying through the mist on the 4th of January. **Jackdaws** are common birds in South Fife, but I don't often see them in the village, although they seem to fly over the village accompanied by **rooks** at dusk, probably going to their roosting sites inland. I have also heard that a **treecreeper** has been seen in the lower part of the village. These aptly named birds are very inconspicuous as they search tree trunks and branches for insect and other invertebrate food. They invariably start at the bottom of the tree and work their way upwards before flying back down to the bottom of another tree. They do search on smaller branches

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as well and often join flocks of **blue, great and coal tits, goldcrests** and **long-tailed tits** in winter to forage in the trees. According to the ringing records collated by the British Trust for Ornithology **treecreepers** in Britain are sedentary creatures. The majority of birds which were studied had moved less than 1 kilometre. There are probably **treecreepers** around the whole year, but we just don't see them.

Many of you may have seen **buzzards** perched on fence posts by the motorway or on the dead trees by the railway near Turnhouse Airport. They are quite large brown birds with pale patches on the underneath of their wings. **Buzzards** have increased markedly over the past 30 years and are now considered to be the commonest bird of prey in the UK. North Queensferry has several and they may well nest in the woodland south of St Margarets Marsh. You can often see one soaring over the village. Other birds of prey have also been seen. A **peregrine falcon** is around, but I've not seen it that often and the old quarry at Carlingnose is a good spot for **kestrels**.

There are several signs of spring to be seen or heard. The displaying male sea ducks already mentioned is one. The **song thrushes** who have started singing near The Brae are another. Some of the **shags** fishing near Inchgarvie and Long Craig are also in breeding plumage. **Shags** are common sea birds in the estuary. They are greenish-black, long-necked birds that dive for fish from the surface of the sea. **Cormorants** are closely related and from a distance are very similar. The **cormorant** is the larger and has a white chin and white thigh patch in breeding plumage. Their overall colour is black tinged with brown. Breeding **shags** have a yellow line along their beaks and a distinct wispy crest. Unfortunately some birds don't acquire these distinctive features and identification outwith the breeding season can be a problem. **Shags** and **cormorants** also share a strange habit of hanging out their wings to dry.

For once the weather for the bird walk was good. We had excellent views of many of the commoner birds by West Bay and along the coastal path. Other sightings included a **red-throated diver** near the ruined pier, 2 or 3 **great-crested grebes** off Port Laing, small groups of **eiders, goldeneyes** and **red-breasted mergansers** from the coastal path and skein of about 100 **pink-footed geese** overhead. In fact, the weather was probably too good so that the sea birds didn't need to be sheltering off Port Laing from the wind and were further out to sea. I made a total of 33 species on the walk including **lapwing** and **ringed plover** which only the most determined of the group saw in Inverkeithing Inner Bay. Thanks to all who came on the walk.

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Bus service

The new bus service for the bottom of the village is the number 84. It runs Monday to Saturday from North Queensferry to Dunfermline via Ferrytoll, Inverkeithing Station, Duloch Park (Tesco) and Woodmill Road.



Times are 6:49 (Weekdays), 7:49 and every hour until 18:49. It is timed to arrive by the Albert at 48 minutes past.

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Neighbourhood Watch

We should all be pleased that North Queensferry is considered by the police as a very low crime area. Nevertheless, we are being warned about a continuing spate of thefts from unlocked cars; this seems to be particularly prevalent in the Carlingnose area. However we are all being asked to be vigilant ---- and to lock up, even if we are just dashing in with the shopping from the boot !

Bogus callers have also been active in the surrounding villages at Rosyth and Aberdour. These people try to pass themselves off as official workmen for the Water or Gas Boards, but are unable to provide any valid identification and have particularly been targeting the elderly. There have also been a number of people selling around the doors in the village but without the proper pedlar's certificate.

If you have any doubts or concerns about callers in your area contact the police at Dalgety Bay with a description and car/van registration if possible. In fact, the police are asking us to report any suspicious events or suspected crimes to enable them to have a true picture of North Queensferry. Dalgety Bay Police phone number is 318900.

Rejuvenation of our Neighbourhood Watch scheme continues to make progress and volunteers have been identified to act as co-ordinators for each area in the village. Window stickers are available and leaflets have recently been circulated giving advice on preventing thefts from cars as well as some ideas on how to protect property for those who had to be away from home at Christmas.

We are currently working with the police to improve communications so that in future we will be informed of incidents or concerns in the surrounding area and will be able to pass these on. The system is still suffering a few hiccups, but will hopefully be up and running soon.

If you have any questions or suggestions for Neighbourhood Watch please contact the Chairman, Jill Brown. Telephone number 419054

Communication

Village groups already take advantage of the Ferry News emailing service to alert villagers to forthcoming events. There are only three paper Ferry News a year, so events come and go between issues.

An issue on paper means running off 550 copies and spending 6 hours or so tramping round the place. That's fine now and again but it's not something you can expect volunteers to do regularly.

For regular communication, email is a godsend. It takes moments and the cost is too small to measure.

Ok, not everyone has a computer but over half the population is now online and that's probably true in the village. Some can use work email addresses.

Nearly everybody must know someone with email.

The more that sign up, the better it works. Email addresses are not disclosed to anyone else and anyone who signs up can drop out at any time.

Simply send a blank email to alert@ferrynews.co.uk with subject "Please Add Me To The Mailing List".

Crime in NQ

Anyone receiving a copy of the monthly newsletter from Dalgety Bay Police would assume that the village is pretty well crime free. The monthly police report given at Community Council meetings tells the same tale and it's true as measured by the number of calls to the police.

Nevertheless, the village does suffer from vandalism and antisocial behaviour, as evidenced by the bin on the Brae, the noticeboard at the station, the storage unit outside Wilma's and disturbances at the Community Centre.

There are seldom any police about, precisely because they get so few calls from North Queensferry. So, if you see someone where you think they shouldn't be - in the school playground after dark, for example - phone the police on 318900 and tell them. They can't be expected to act on something they never hear of. Don't assume it's someone else's job - it's yours.

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Greetings from North Queensferry Church

After several weeks dominated by Christmas preparations and celebrations, how quickly life slips back into a "normal" routine! But it wasn't like that for Christ and his parents in the weeks following his celebrated birth. According to Matthew's Gospel, they had to flee for their lives from King Herod who saw this helpless baby as a threat and so plotted his death. As a result, they found themselves living as "asylum seekers" in neighbouring Egypt until it was safe to return home.

It was a far cry from the cosy stable in Bethlehem depicted on countless Christmas cards and as a consequence Jesus spent his childhood living among foreigners, dependent on their hospitality and goodwill. Perhaps this is the reason why, building on legendary middle-eastern hospitality, the Christian church (at its best) has attached great importance to practicing hospitality, especially "welcoming the stranger".

We've probably all had the experience of feeling like a stranger; when we moved to a new home, started a new job or school, or even just went to a social gathering where we didn't know anyone. We can feel so insecure and vulnerable - what a difference it makes when someone welcomes us and makes us feel at home! Moira and I are personally very

grateful for the warm welcome we have found from so many in the Ferry since we came here a year ago and I know other "newcomers" have found the same.

Throughout Scotland generally, the challenge to extend a welcome and to show hospitality has been heightened by the arrival of many asylum seekers, some of whom have come here fleeing for their lives. With political instability in so many parts of the world, as well as greater mobility of the work force within an expanding European Union, we are likely to see many more people coming to live and work in Scotland. Will they find a welcome here or will they be seen as a threat in some way?

Any system that seeks to show compassion to those in need will always run the risk of being abused. But would it not be a greater risk to close our doors to those whose need is so very real? In one of his parables, Jesus identifies with exiles the world over when he said of those who have welcomed others, "I was a stranger and you took me in". I hope Scotland's traditional reputation for hospitality will rise to the challenge and that we will not only open our doors to those who come to live among us, but open our hearts as well.

With best wishes for the coming year,
Chris Park.

Community Council

Options for NQ Railway Station

The building at NQ railway station is owned by Network Rail and leased to First ScotRail. The building is vulnerable in its present, ruinous condition. Many other old station buildings in Scotland have already collapsed or been destroyed. Thus, as an example of its sort, it is beginning to acquire rarity value. It could be renovated and used, in which case it would be less vulnerable. First ScotRail is keen to find a use for the station and to bring about its renovation. The new use would have to be acceptable to First ScotRail and to the local community. If such a use could be found it seems likely that the Railways Heritage Trust would fund the renovation. The new use would also have to be acceptable to RHT. It would favour a use with railway associations. Apparently RHT is looking for good projects in Scotland. Our railway station is a good project.

EDLEC is a club for model railway enthusiasts. It has few members and probably very small resources. Previously it had premises in a power station. It now uses a container for storing its equipment. EDLEC has expressed interest in using the station building at North Queensferry for storage and as a workshop. First ScotRail favours EDLEC as a tenant as this would provide an avenue for preserv-

ing the building. Probably EDLEC is also acceptable to RHT.

At its meeting on 12 January the Community Council considered the future of the station. There was general agreement that the station building should be preserved and used. But it was thought that premature acceptance of EDLEC's bid could result in a missed opportunity. The disadvantage of EDLEC's proposal is that there would be no public access to the building. Accordingly the community council decided to attempt to revive an earlier proposal that the station be used a bridge centre and museum, possibly incorporating a cafe/shop but that failing a better use, they would support EDLEC's proposal.

Anyone interested in the future of the railway station building should contact the community council (Peter Dean, 418781).

Next Issue

Articles to be with Dave & Mary by
Friday 12th May 2006
to 7 Carlingnose Park (415022)
or e-mail mary@ferrynews.co.uk.

We would prefer articles to arrive
either on disc or by e-mail if possible,
failing which a paper copy is fine.

Small ads, items of interest, letters etc. all welcome

Heritage Trust

If anyone has any free time and is interested in the long term heritage of this village, then the committee requires a SECRETARY who would be responsible for recording and producing minutes, at the monthly evening meeting.

This person would also be responsible for all correspondence relating to the ongoing business agenda of the committee. Stationery would be provided and other out of pocket expenses (e.g. postage/telephone calls) would be reimbursed.

In the first instance please contact James Lawson, tel. 414 324 or email jj.lawson@btinternet.com.

Recent events


Friday 18 November saw a good crowd at the ever popular Antiques Evening. This year Trevor Kyle, of the Edinburgh Auction House, Lyon and Turnbull, gave a most interesting, informative and light-hearted view on the wide range of objects brought for discussion and valuation. On this occasion no great treasures were discovered but the entire evening was much enjoyed by all present.

Saturday 14 January was an excellent day for walking and was the first of our series of walks with John Done. All who attended had a most enjoyable two hours both observing and discussing bird life and natural habitat. Many thanks to John for his time in preparing and undertaking this enterprise.

Beachwatch

Photographs taken at the U.K. Marine Conservation Beachwatch September 2005 events are on the web and include one taken at Port Laing of our volunteers. You will find them on www.mcsuk.org -- go to "mcs action" and drop down to "Photo Gallery". Port Laing photo is number 22. All groups are

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displaying a poster to promote Marine Conservation Reserves. The next Beach Clean is on Sunday April 23rd 2pm at Port Laing.

Thank you to all who support our environmental events. We would welcome more help and especially someone to do the organising. Anne Monteith Tel 412365

Heritage Trust Calendar of Events - 2006

- February **"North Queensferry (A Love Affair)"** - Talk by Peter Dean
Tuesday 28th at 7:30pm. Admission £2.00. Refreshments
- April **Beach Clean Up**
Sunday 23rd at 2.00pm
- "Unicorns, Merks, Bawbees - A turbulent history of Scotland's coinage"** - Talk by Iain Whyte
Friday 28th at 7:30pm. Admission £2.00. Refreshments
- May **Spring Bird Walk** - John Done
Wednesday 17th May at 7:00pm. Meet at War Memorial
- Nostalgia Evening** - Viewing of films. Bring along any previously unseen photographs for the second CD-Rom
Tuesday 30th at 7:30pm. Admission Free. Refreshments
- August **Village Show**
- September **Autumn Bird Walk** - John Done
- October **AGM**