



Stakeholder Advice Making a Difference

Priority catchment approach in the South Esk working well

SEPA have now visited 170 farms in the South Esk priority catchment, the next stage in the priority catchment approach in the South Esk. These visits concentrated on the Lemno, Melgund, Pow, Noran, Quharity and lower South Esk sub-catchments. This work was carried out between October 2011 and March 2012. During these visits SEPA staff carried out pollution assessments of the farm steadings and also walked every water margin on each farm assessing compliance with the Diffuse Pollution General Binding Rules (DPGBR's).

Where possible SEPA staff gave verbal feedback to the land managers at the end of the visit, and a letter was sent to each land manager with the results of the findings along with mitigation options if breaches of the DPGBR's were found. SEPA would like to thank all of the land managers visited for the universally warm welcome which they received during these visits.



SEPA, in conjunction with SAC, NFUS and Airlie Estates also held a workshop on alternative livestock watering techniques. This was held at Gella Bridge in Glen Clova on 14th June and was attended by around 35 land managers and advisors. The purpose of this workshop was to display various methods of using water from watercourses to provide drinking water for livestock to reduce livestock poaching of riverbanks. Livestock poaching within 5 metres of a watercourse is a breach of the DPGBR's (Rule 19) which is a common breach found not only in the South Esk, but throughout Scotland, and if an alternative supply can be provided this can reduce the diffuse pollution potential significantly.



© SEPA (both images) - livestock watering techniques event at Gella Bridge.

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Third phase of Funding for Tree Sparrows

Species in decline given a helping hand

Having 44% of the boxes producing a potential expansion in Tree Sparrow populations bodes well for the species at these sites.

Littlewood Land Care was recently awarded SITA TBAF funding for a third phase of the successful Supporting Tayside Tree Sparrows Project. The project, which Carol Littlewood started whilst working for FWAG Scotland, has worked to secure known Tree Sparrow populations at 10 sites in Angus.

Phase I and II of the project saw 12 Tree Sparrow nest boxes put up at each sites selected and a further 12 boxes were put up at a neighbouring site under phase II. One of the ten project areas is within the South Esk catchment and another is just outside it, but chicks fledging from this second site could well spread into the catchment. These two project areas have been very successful, with results from the 2011 nesting season seeing 21 of the 48 boxes being used for nesting by tree sparrows, 5 being used as a winter roost by Tree Sparrows and tit species taking up residence in 18 others. Having 44% of the boxes producing a potential expansion in Tree Sparrow populations bodes well for the species at these sites.

Phase III of the project has funded not only monitoring of the existing boxes, but has also paid for another 48 boxes to be put up in each area, a little further away from the original populations. It is hoped these will provide nest sites for birds spread-

nest. Some of the new boxes that have been put up at the site within the South Esk catchment were made at the Volunteer Centre Angus and four of the centres' volunteers helped Carol put up the boxes they had made and some of the purchased boxes at another site in the area.



ing out from the successful breeding areas. Some of the project sites are being checked by members of the Tay Ringing Group over the summer months. They hope to put tiny metal leg rings on some of the chicks in the boxes, which may provide information in the future about how far the young travel when they leave the

The attached photo shows a typical untidy nest made by a Tree Sparrow in one of the project boxes.

For further information please contact: Carol Littlewood at carol@littlewoodlandcare.co.uk

Mink Monitoring in Catchment

Volunteer effort continues



Scottish Mink Initiative

Working with Communities to Protect Native Wildlife

These two new mink rafts near barnhead and on the pow burn in the lower catchment are being monitored weekly by a local Angus volunteer. There hasn't been any mink activity at all yet which is a positive sign. There has been a very faint print on one that was possibly an otter. If you would like to look after similar rafts please contact **Ann-Marie McMaster – Mink Control Officer (North Tayside)** at annmarie@rafts.org.uk



Brechin Townscape Heritage Initiative

5 year heritage led regeneration project drawing to a close

Following on from the success of a similar scheme in Arbroath, Angus Council successfully obtained additional funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic Scotland, for a 5 year heritage led regeneration project in the historic centre of Brechin, Angus. Primarily centred on the High Street, the £2.9m City of Brechin Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) was launched in January 2008.

The scheme is now in its final



six months and grants have been awarded to owners of over 30 buildings, allowing for the repair and reuse of a number of key buildings, many of which are listed by Historic Scotland and all are constructed in the attractive local sandstone. The results are most obvious in the centre of the town where a group of 6 gable ended buildings to the eastern side of the High Street have all been enhanced through appropriate repair in traditional materials. In the late 1700's the gables of these buildings were added onto earlier existing buildings as Brechin's textile production and fortunes flourished. They are an increasingly rare example of a group of Scottish merchant's houses where mer-

chant's lived above their shops, with warehouses and workshops located to the rear.

Further down the High Street, overlooking Skinners Burn and the policies of Brechin Castle, is the building known locally as the Merchant's House (no. 68-70). This category A listed building is one of the oldest surviving residential buildings in the burgh and has an exceptional ashlar post roof construction which contains Baltic oak timbers from 1470 and Scottish Oak timber from 1575. The striking

lime rendered ochre façade is typical of Scottish buildings where render was applied to rubble stone-work where it was never intended to be exposed. The building has been converted into two residential townhouses

and is fully occupied for the first time in over 50 years.

A large model of the centre of Brechin, as it was in the 1820's will shortly be installed upstairs at the Town House Museum. The Museum was extended into the upper floors as part of the THI project and offers visitors a glimpse into the history of the small city and a chance to view the permanent exhibition of the work of local artist David Waterson. Visitors can also pick up a newly published Heritage Trail leaflet which takes in many historic buildings as well as the one of only two round towers in banks Scotland and believed to be over 1000 years old.

For further information please contact:

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© Sarah Kettles - the Merchant's House and the gable ended Merchant's house

Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*

In the UK the plant was first introduced in 1839 at the same time as giant hogweed and Japanese knotweed



Himalayan balsam is a tall growing annual, 2-3m (6-10ft) in height. Between June and October it produces clusters of purplish pink (or rarely white) helmet-shaped flowers

Aggressive seed dispersal, coupled with high nectar production which attracts pollinators, often allows the Himalayan Balsam to outcompete native plants.

Each plant can produce up to 800 seeds. These are dispersed widely as the ripe seedpods shoot their seeds up to 7m (22ft) away.

The Bionic Control of Invasive Weeds in Wiesbaden, Germany is trying to establish a self sufficient project to conserve their local biodiversity by developing several food products made from the *Impatiens* flowers. Eventually, if all goes well, this project will have the Himalayan Balsam financing its own eradication.

Catchment event for agricultural advisors, consultants and contractors

Learn more about the rural diffuse pollution plan for Scotland

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) is hosting an event for agricultural advisors, consultants and contractors on **Thursday 26th July 2012** at Strathearn House, Broxden Business Park, Lamberkine Drive, Perth, PH1 1RX. This event is primarily aimed at (but not limited to) those working within the River Tay and River South Esk diffuse pollution priority catchments. The event will cover the rural diffuse pollution plan for Scotland, Interpretation of the diffuse pollution GBR's and what to expect from the 1:1 farm visits. Places are limited, so if you would like to come along, please register your attendance to guarantee your place.

Please contact Susan Arnott
River Tay Catchment Coordinator at Susan.arnott@sepa.org.uk
Or call Tel: 01896 754797

Diffuse Pollution Priority Catchment: Technical Summary

The South Esk



What is a priority catchment?

Priority catchments are river and coastal catchments that are currently failing to meet water quality standards, and which will not achieve improved water quality without a focused management approach. They contain some of Scotland's most important waters for bathing, drinking water, conservation and fishing. As agreed by stakeholders, SEPA has used a risk based approach to select 14 priority catchments throughout Scotland for restoration and protection.

Our approach has three phases:

- desk based study, catchment walks and ongoing monitoring
- awareness raising;
- farm visits and advice on solutions.

For more detail on our approach, and how priority catchments are selected, please see our diffuse pollution website¹.

What is diffuse pollution?

Often driven by rainfall and land use activity, diffuse pollution occurs when sediment, nutrients, bacteria and chemicals are lost from the land to local burns, rivers, lochs and groundwaters. The impacts of diffuse pollution include:

- silting up of river beds;
- faecal contamination of bathing waters;
- excess nutrients causing algal blooms in lochs and estuaries;
- toxic substances affecting drinking water quality.

Changes in water chemistry also affect protected species such as salmon, freshwater pearl mussels and water voles in and around rivers, lochs and coastal waters. Although water management has led to huge improvements in water quality over the last 50 years, diffuse pollution is now the largest source of pollution in Scotland's waters and a national, co-ordinated approach is being taken to address it.

¹ www.sepa.org.uk/water/river_basin_planning/diffuse_pollution_mog.aspx

Available at: <http://theriversouthesk.org/our-projects/sepa->



For any comments or to join our mailing list, please contact:

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About The River South Esk Catchment Partnership

To address the many issues which affect the South Esk catchment, representatives of some organisations have been meeting regularly since 2004 with the development of an integrated Catchment Management Plan at the forefront of their aims. Gradually an informal Steering Group was formed*. The process of developing a Catchment Management Plan began in earnest in 2008 with the employment of a part-time Project Officer to oversee an intensive two year consultation phase which would capture people's views on what they considered the key environmental, social and economic issues to be within the catchment. These views were used to form the basis of the plan's strategic aims, catchment objectives and actions. Phase one of the plans implementation is now complete and development of the next phase of implementation is at the forefront of the Partnership's mind.

The River South Esk Catchment Partnership would like to thank all its funders and supporters. Without them it would be impossible to carry out the work we are undertaking. The logos on display denote the funders of the 2011/12 phase. Their funding will allow us to work towards enhancing and promoting many facets of the catchment .

*The Esk District Salmon Fishery Board, Angus Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, Esk Rivers and Fisheries Trust, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Atlantic Salmon Trust, Scottish Agricultural College, Forestry Commission Scotland, Littlewood Land Care, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Macaulay Institute, Scottish Water, National Farmers Union Scotland, Scottish Rural Property and Business Association Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate.

