27 November 2018

Thirty Fifth Meeting of
Strangford Lough & Lecale Partnership Committee
Tuesday 27th November 2018 2pm Down Arts Centre, Downpatrick

Notes

Present:
Jade Berman  Ulster Wildlife Living Seas Manager
Isabel Hood  Deputy Chair SLLP Committee, NIEL,
Ellen MacMahon  NI Marine Task Force Office Group
Mike McClure  Sport NI
Frances McCormick  Co. Down Rural Community Network
David Sandford Farmer / Conservationist
Andrew Upton - National Trust
David Williams  Royal Yachting Association

In Attendance:
Colin Armstrong  DAERA Marine Division
Judith Caldwell  SLLP AONB & Marine Site Officer
Alex Irvine  Tourism Manager A&ND BC Deputising for Rosemary Richardson
Abby McSherry  SLLP AONB Officer
Darren Rice  SLLP Acting AONB Manager

Apologies:
Arthur Birt  Ulster Farmers Union
Cllr Jim Fletcher  A&ND BC
PJ Gault  SLLP Chair Association of Strangford Lough Yacht Clubs
Rosemary Richardson  Head of Tourism A&ND BC
Harry Wick  NI Fish Producers Organisation

In the Absence of Chair PJ Gault, Isabel Hood Chaired the meeting

Minutes of the Thirty Fourth Meeting of SLLP Committee 06.09.18
The minutes were signed as being a true record of the meeting.
Proposed David Sandford
Seconded David Williams

Matters Arising

Audit of Access  Commissioned by SLLP from Outdoor Recreation NI, on behalf of NM&D DC and A&ND BC and funded by both councils. The completed report is currently with both councils to be put forward to committee for sign off, NM&D DC committee meets in December.
Key elements of the report were to provide:

1. An assessment and description of current access for water based recreation.

2. A consideration of potential future access.

3. Recommendations relevant to the development of access to the waters of Strangford Lough for sustainable water based recreation while conserving the area’s conservation features and biosecurity.

4. A Habitats Regulations Assessment of the recommended system of access relevant to Strangford Lough
In brief, the report finds that there is currently sufficient access to the lough but improvements and development of existing infrastructure are required.

**Environment Fund** The joint application for Environment Fund 2019 – 2022 for Ring of Gullion & Strangford Lough & Lecale Partnership, has been held up, and the NIEA is unlikely to issue the full application form until December or early January. It is anticipated that there will be a request submitted to NM&D DC to bridge fund the AONB’s for six months but a final decision cannot be made by council until February when rates have been set.

**Geopark Application** Newry Mourne and Down’s Geopark application, which had been deferred, has been now been brought forward to November 2019. The area will include Ring of Gullion, Mourne and the NMDDC portion of Strangford Lough and Lecale AONB.

**Peace IV funding** has been secured to train 12 Ambassadors to OCNI level III, this training is for the whole of the Geopark Area and will be offered to those on a “first come first served” basis to those that have previously received heritage guide / ambassador training. This funding is now going to be made available in the summer of next year and not April as originally proposed as there has been a delay within the PEACE team to tender for the works. Alison Brady is managing the project from the Ring of Gullion Partnership.

**Outdoor Recreation Plan** This was Commissioned by SLLP, on behalf of both councils, DAERA and Sport NI. Final comments to be submitted by committee members to Abby McSherry by Friday 30th November. The report will then be finalised by ORNI and an Executive Summary produced. It is hoped the final completed version can be signed off by February and made public at that point.

**SLLP Office Move**
The Portaferry Office had to be closed at short notice as it is to be redeveloped, SLLP were given a month’s notice.

There were two options for relocation:
1) Portaferry option could only be taken on five month lease as only secure funding until end of the financial year, also there would have been substantial infra structure cost involved in bringing the premises up to a workable standard.
2) Down Civic Centre option no lease involved, savings on daily running costs, downside loss of community engagement. To get over this it is proposed to hold Out & About Clinics around the area and invite communities to engage with office activities. Another idea being looked into is to have a hot desk in the community that could be manned once a week. This will be addressed as part of the AONB review

**New Office Contacts** susan.mcclay@nmandd.org Tel No. 07548159835
Downshire Civic Centre, 6 Ardglass Road, Downpatrick, Co Down, BT30 6RA

**Chair Welcomed New Committee Members**
**Ellen MacMahon** replacing Jade Berman on the Committee who is stepping down. Ellen is the NI Marine Task Force Officer, and has been in post for five months. Previously she has worked as a researcher in New Zealand and the for the Department of Conservation as a marine policy adviser; working on Marine Spatial Planning, Ecosystem Based Management and Marine Protection. Before heading to New Zealand she worked for Marine Renewable Energy Ireland in Cork and for the Commissioners of Irish Lights. Ellen will represent NI Marine Task Force Group on the committee.

**Alex Irvine** Deputising for Rosemary Richardson, Alex is Tourism Manager for A&ND BC and has been in post for 5 years.
Chair thanked Jade Berman for her valued and measured input to the committee during her time as Living Seas Manager with Ulster Wildlife. Jade is moving from Ulster Wildlife to be with Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, the committee wishes her well in her new post.

Judith Caldwell – Officer Update for SLLP Committee

- Coastal Marine Litter
  - LHLH funded project - shore clean-up in partnership with NI Fishing Harbour Authority held on 22nd September - 30 volunteers (incl. those on land and in canoes), 1.2 tonne of litter collected in skip. LHLH funded skip hire and hire of Cuan Marine Services to act as safety boat.
  - Grant is also funding purchase of 3 x 2 minute beach clean boards. These will be sited along the Lecale Coast (Ballyhorman, Minerstown and possibly Ardglass if we can find a suitable site for it). Launched Spring/summer 2019 depending on delivery and permissions.
  - Also funding Litter lifting equipment and pollinator friendly planting in Ballyhorman & Ardglass
  - Attended Better Beaches Forum 11th Oct. Following discussions at the forum DAERA have now set up a working group to produce infographic literature/posters. Limited wording but will be in different languages. SLLP Judith Caldwell on this working group. Working in partnership with Northern Ireland Fishing Authority (NIFHA). Meeting in Ardglass to be arranged.
  - Knockineelder beach-clean with 1st Kirkistown Cub Scouts in October – keen to “adopt this spot”. Therefore they will commit to clean it 4x per year. Lots of small micro plastics here. This is a Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful (KNIB) program and KNIB will supply group with litter lifting equipment.
  - Total litter collected during SLLP clean-ups in 2018 = Approx 2.5 tonnes litter removed to date, with 200 volunteers
  - Planning ahead for 2019 – continuing clean-ups
    - Down Cruising Club are keen to do another beach/island clean in June 19
    - Possibility of extending work with sailing clubs/coastal rowers to get every club out doing a clean-up of the islands and nearby foreshore to their clubs.
    - Further SLLP adopt a spot groups
    - Ardglass harbour clean-up is not complete – further clean-ups to be arranged
    - Revisit Killough coastal path
    - Other hard to access areas

- Portaferry Squirrels – after a lengthy period of absence grey squirrels are now being sighted in Portaferry area. SLLP has a small group of volunteers who will be working to monitor and trap these greys. Work commencing asap. Working as a part of Ards Red Squirrel Grp. Need to develop volunteer numbers and training.

- Fixed Point Photography project - The Fixed Point Photography (FPP) project will enable each management body to monitor and evaluate patterns of change within their respective AONBs but it will also importantly record evidence that the AONB landscape is retaining its special qualities and unique characteristics.
  - Images must be representative of components that make up the landscape
  - Strangford Drumlins and islands, Ards farmlands & estates, Portaferry and north Lecale, Ballyquinint & Lecale coast, Quoile valley lowlands, Tyrella coastal dunes, Scrabo
  - Sites to be agreed with NIEA Countryside Coast & Landscape Protected Landscape
  - Image’s metadata v important (information embedded in the image file)
  - 4 x visits per year (each season)
Out & About panels – all panels are now installed around the AONB except the final panel for Minerstown, which now has permission and is due to be installed next week.

Share the Shore – 6 panels now installed and postcards have all been distributed. Potential for future study/survey to assess the impact of panels, update logos on postcards and reprint education programme with local schools.

Swift boxes – Portaferry Men’s Shed have now built us our first batch of Swift nest boxes. SLLP paid for materials. In the New Year I will be working on early May. Locations / permissions to site these boxes in Portaferry & Strangford areas need to be in place by late April, along with a team to put them up.

Abby McSherry – Officer Update for S LLP Committee

Coastal and Marine Issues

- Assisted in clean up at Portavogie on 14th September with sponsorship and staff from Coca Cola taking part as part of corporate social responsibility programme. Outside broadcast van attended from Downtown radio and a good amount of coverage was had. A large amount of industrial fishing gear was collected along with all the usual litter, including a surprising amount of clothing.

- Attended conference Valuing the Marine Environment as part of NI Environment week held at Castle Espie on 28th September
  Natural capital can be defined as the world’s stocks of natural assets which include geology, soil, air, water and all living things. These stocks can provide us with economic, social, environmental, cultural or spiritual benefits. Natural capital accounting calculates the value of these benefits in financial terms and the natural capital approach works to illuminate the value of an intact, protected natural world. By valuing natural capital in a similar way to financial, manufactured, social or other forms of capital we can take better decisions on the natural environment based on economics. Valuing natural capital can therefore help to develop an economic case for restoration, catalyse business engagement/funding, encourage private funding for environmental projects. Understanding this approach is therefore crucial for S LLP going forward with the aims to protect and conserve Strangford Lough and Lecale within the context of a healthy community and thriving economy.

- Contacted by local residents on Coney Island concerned about large-scale removal of beach material – sand, stones, drift wood and seaweed particularly by tourists staying in the 7 Air BnB properties on the beach. Following site meeting with residents, money was found from the tourism department of NM&D DC for a leaflet to be placed in the Air BnB homes and used by residents to educate holidaymakers. The writing/drafting is finished and it will be designed by McCaddens shortly. They will also produce a new sign/panel to explain the status of the beach as an ASSI. We hope that the links made with local residents will also form the core of a new beach tidy group. Need to develop an AONB “style” that will be used going forward on future leaflets and publications.

Outdoor Recreation plan

- Collating comments as they arrive and would welcome any more from the S LLP committee
- Added staff comments on contents and a limited first proof read
- Reviewed plan and identified a number of projects that S LLP could deliver or lead on as part of the AONB Management
- Attended Ards and N Down Community Planning meeting with Mike McClure – there are a number of projects in the Outdoor rec plan that would fit nicely in with the Community Big Plan and can be led on or delivered by council as part of this.
- Represented AONB at coastal sports consultation to encourage attendees to input comments on draft of Plan and to meet user groups involved in angling rowing and canoeing. New booklet has been published by Cadogan Enright about trails and pads on Lecale.
Red Squirrels

- Attended red squirrel forum at Mount Stewart, to meet volunteers and discuss issues particularly linked to squirrels at the Portaferry end of the peninsula

Geopark

SLLP AONB Officers took part in geopark schools day on 23rd October 8 schools during a day held at Delamont Park. Lessons were given to small groups on a round robin basis. Effort was made to link the geological processes with local landforms within the AONB.

Personal Development/Training

- Attended geology/geography training provided by Geological survey NI as part of Geopark preparation
- Training in Managing safely from Institute of occupational safety and health, completed and exam passed
- Ongoing training from Interpret Europe – webinar in Heritage interpretation for Youth

AONB Review

There is to be a review commissioned of the two AONB’s Ring of Gullion and Strangford Lough and Lecale, along with the council interface with the Mourne Heritage Trust. This review will take into account management structure, implementation of plans and actions, funding consultations and opportunities. Currently these bodies all have differing models of execution of their roles so it is expected that the review will build a stronger foundation for the bodies to work well alongside and in partnership with one another, and mitigate the ever constant threat of funding cuts, and competing demands. The tender for this will be awarded in December and report completed by end of February 2019

Strangford Lough & Lecale Heritage Management Strategy

This document although dated 2013 – 2018 will stand for a further five years until 2023 after which it will be reviewed. The management plan actions are being reviewed.

AONB Strangford Lough & Lecale Action Plan

This SL & L AONB Action Plan was produced alongside the Management Strategy to flag up actions to be undertaken to improve the management of Strangford Lough & Lecale AONB, it was a very broad document. It is being redrafted to deliver tangible outcomes for the two councils, DAERA, the community and the partners who make up the SLLP for this special area. Discussion ensued with several committee members reserving judgement on the advisability of the change, feeling that it threatened the notion of the Partnership and a comprehensive focus on the needs of the AONB. There will be a period to comment on this revised action plan. Only actions that can be delivered by SLLP and partnerships where SLLP have an active role, or where partners have requested the inclusion of actions and those not covered under the statutory requirements of the councils and the department will be included. Darren Rice met with councils and DAERA to review what actions they wanted SLLP to achieve, and improvements to the area they wanted to be contained within the SL & L AONB Action Plan. This AONB Action Plan links with other strategies from around the lough so that they can feed into one another without duplication, and be complementary. The redrafted plan will allow SLLP to become more proactive, rather than reactive, and build stronger working relationships among the partners. Concern was expressed that the role of SLLP committee was being changed and should not be considered as merely reactive.
Marine Protected Area Management Scheme
Management Plan for Strangford Lough SPA & SAC is being produced by DAERA, this will take into account work carried out by the National Trust on their Conservation Management Plans lands in their ownership/management. Mapping to be finalised by the department, with a GIS layer for risk of coastal erosion aligned with this. Condition Assessments will be complete by the end of 2018.

Evidence based gaps are being filled in to give a complete picture, this is to include intertidal and subtidal mapping, the National Trust are carrying out habitat mapping of their terrestrial shore based areas and are producing a Management Plan for their lands. Combining of the two plans is slow but in the end will be a better more detailed document.

Management Plan to include sustainable recreation strategy, which will be developed through the Outdoor Recreation Plan commissioned from ORNI.

Proposed to hold the next stakeholder workshop for this scheme with the main agencies involved in the management of the area, to give progress report followed by stakeholder comment and agreement, this will be held early January 2019, date tbc. Prior to this meeting there will be an update on Modiolus a management success story from within the area.

Pilot Project for Testing Social Value of Coastal Rowing
Mike McClure Sport NI gave a presentation on how funding had been acquired to carry out this project, and how this report would be modelled. The benefits of sport on mental health are well documented, as are the benefits to health and wellbeing of being in the great outdoors, this pilot project takes this a step further to rate the value of these benefits to the community, along with benefits to council and the area. Coastal Rowing has been picked as a pilot project under this scheme as it is a project in its infancy so the project has a clear starting point, and can be monitored as to where it stands at the current time, any values can be clearly monitored. This initial pilot will be completed by April. Copy of the presentation is attached.

Atlantic CultureScape
Atlantic CultureScape, a new €2million innovative project to collectively develop sellable experiences rooted in the Atlantic Area’s intangible cultural heritage in seven areas on Europe’s Atlantic coast, has been granted funding and will official launch early in 2019.

The three year project involves Newry, Mourne and Down District Council as lead partner, working collaboratively with Brecon Beacons National Park Authority in Wales, Rio Maior Municipality in Portugal, Cork Institute of Technology in Ireland, the University of Vigo; Regional Government for Cantabria and Andalusian Agency of Cultural Institutions in Spain. There are also eleven associate partners involved.

Atlantic CultureScape seeks to support rural communities in transnationally generated but locally appropriate sustainable economic development. It will focus on enhancing the tourism offering through the sustainable integration of Intangible Cultural Heritage thereby stimulating increased economic gain from tourism along the Atlantic Area.

Atlantic CultureScape aims to stimulate innovative products by working collaboratively with networks and to assist them in bringing such product to market. The products will be conglomerated into an Atlantic Area Route, allowing the project to raise the profile of the sector through transnationally organised marketing.

SEAFLAG Committee
The SEAFLAG are now responsible to deliver Union Priority 4 of the European and Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF) 2014-2020.

The SEAFLAG currently has 16 members appointed which is representative of a wide range of sectors to include the fishing industry, private and voluntary sector, education and environmental sectors with a view to delivering an effective programme towards the fishing dependent villages in the two council areas, specifically Ardglass, Kilkeel (taking in Annalong) and Portavogie. Darren Rice sits on this committee without voting rights, but SEAFLAG felt that it would be better if there was an SLLP stakeholder on the committee who would be eligible to vote. This committee grants monies to fishing communities, and works closely with them on various projects, and with the harbours of Ardglass, Kilkeel, Annalong, & Portavogie.

Harry Wick NIFPO SLLP committee member is already on this committee, the CDRCN is also represented.

Cllr Jim Fletcher had nominated PJ Gault at the previous meeting but as there is a lot of time required for this involvement PJ felt he couldn’t commit to this at the current time. After discussion it was felt that because of the time involved in this commitment that Darren’s continued presence on the committee was enough.

Any Other Business

Medieval Down / European Year of Culture & Heritage (EYCH) HLF Application

HLF have invited expressions of interest along with Tourism NI for project to promote culture & heritage. QUB Colm Donnelly and SLLP Caroline Nolan submitted an application.

Journeying Beyond Westeros: Warlords and Gallowglass – Adventures in Medieval Ulster

The Application was successful and is underway with Dr Colm Donnelly, QUB leading. The project grew from collaboration of QUB & SLLP. The project will tell the real stories of Medieval Ireland, with a link to the success of Game of Thrones (GoT) as was filmed here in NI, working on the Dubrovnik model whereby GoT funded a museum that tells both the fictional and the real stories of medieval times. The project will tell the stories of The McDonnell’s of the Antrim Glens, the O’Neill’s of Tyrone and Armagh, and the De Courcy’s and Magennis’s of Down. Caroline Nolan has been awarded a contract to assist with the implementation of this project, Caroline will liaise with SLLP on the progress of the project.

Shellfish Collection

Shorebased shellfish collection is not illegal, it is however unregulated. Processing of the shellfish that are collected is, on the other hand, a licensed industry; licensed through the councils Environmental Health Departments. There is a need for more monitoring of the industry. It is now a recognised fishery, with legitimate collectors, processors and market. The issue is that not all collectors are legitimate / regulated and detailed records are not always available. The challenge is to gather evidence on where (specific location), when and the amount of shellfish that is being gathered. Processors should hold this information. They are required to maintain records detailing volumes of shellfish collected and from which specific locations. These records should be collated year by year. Other than from this source, DAERA rely on feedback they get from the public and agencies such as the National Trust. The evidence gathered will support the development of management measures. Potential measures include limits for gathering, closed season to take account of the life cycles of the birds, minimum size of shellfish collected, and sites to be avoided such as seal haul out sites and Tern nesting sites. However, it is also important that these zones are flexible as wildlife will move around. Marine and Fisheries Division have commissioned a study through AFBI on the minimum landing size for periwinkles in order to provide evidence for a sustainable fishery in the future. This initiative should be developed in partnership with the processors and be carried through in a joined up way with Food Standards Agency, Environmental Health Agency and Marine and Fisheries Division (DAERA).
Mapping of Areas or Islands Accessible Around Strangford Lough

National Trust do not map these accessible areas as from year to year nesting bird colonies, and seal haul out areas vary, so a map would become obsolete very quickly. It is proposed to set up a map on the SLLP website that will continually change, to profile the changing nature of these sites. This will be developed as part of the recommendations from the SLL Sustainable Outdoor Recreation Plan. As a rule of thumb National Trust recommend that folk don’t visit any site or island that has obvious signs of wildlife on it.

National Trust reported that ground cameras operating with nesting tern colonies showed there is no rat or mink disturbance, the main predators are otters, so they are investigating ways to control this problem.

Date of Next Meeting Tuesday 5th March 2019

Isabel Hood Deputy Chair

[Signature]

Date 05.03.19