

STRANGFORD LOUGH SPRING CLEAN 2010

Clean up Strangford...and bring the Nippers!

Picking up the gauntlet to clean up our beautiful landscape is the Strangford Lough Management Advisory Committee (SLMAC) which, in partnership with Ards Borough Council, Down District Council, the National Trust, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, will launch it's 2010 annual Strangford Lough Spring Clean next week from Monday 19th April to Friday 7th May.

Coordinated from the Strangford Lough Office in Portaferry. over 400 volunteers of all ages are expected to descend on the Lough shores during the event - and you can help swell that number by joining up today!

Dr Pat Boaden, marine biologist and member of SLMAC says;

"Litter on Strangford is killing wildlife, looks disgusting, is a hazard to our health and the cost implications of cleaning up are huge. Litter also affects tourism and recreation industries. Marine wildlife and seabirds get entangled in packaging. Turtles often mistake plastic bags for their favourite food - jellyfish, but the plastic causes stomach blockages and often leads to death from starvation. Even after hundreds of years plastic just breaks down into small pieces but does not disappear and microplastic particles are now found inside filter feeding animals and amongst sand grains on our beaches. Litter comes from many sources - the public, fishing activities, sewage pipes and shipping, but it is all preventable and education and awareness is the key. That's why events such as our Spring Clean are so important."

Elaine Bingham from the Strangford Lough Office agrees and says:

"Our younger generation are increasing environmentally aware, which is very positive news, and it is fitting that children from Kircubbin Primary School will launch our clean up on 19th April. While the issue of litter is a very serious one, we also want everyone to have fun and learn something about the importance and diversity of the amazing natural environments on our doorsteps.

"Local children's author, Catherine Charley and local artist, Angela George will be there to inspire the children and encourage them to take a longer term view of our wonderful Strangford Lough, its heritage and its resources. Plus on the Saturday 1st of May we will have a fantastic Seaweed & Spring Clean Family Day in Portaferry with an extravaganza of workshops such as seaweed art and cookery plus lots of experts with sensational seaweed facts!"

While the clean up is extremely important as an event in itself, SLMAC also sees it as just one of the ways that people can get involved with Strangford Lough - to enjoy and use it and to help look after it.

For more information and to book a place on the Strangford Lough Spring Clean, contact the Strangford Lough Office on 02842728886 or 028 4272 9005 or email admin@strangfordlough.org <<mailto:admin@strangfordlough.org>> .

This year's Spring-Clean is just one of the many events that will encourage people to get out and enjoy Strangford Lough as part of the the Strangford Lough Management Advisory Committee's Turn O' The Tide 'journeys of discovery' events programme funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Spring Clean is also part of this year's Lough Lively Festival co-ordinated by Ards Borough Council . Lough Lively brochures are available from Ards Tourist Information Centre, Portaferry Tourist Information Centre and local retailers.