

Action to reduce flooding in Aberdeen

A new transnational greenspace project will alleviate the effects of heavy rainfall in the city

Maidencraig
site design



Extend
wildlife
habitat



New safe
route to
school



Designing
with pupils



Frequent heavy rainfall due to climate change is a widespread problem for many cities, and Aberdeen is no exception. Aberdeen City Council has been working since 2017 to alleviate its effects and create new green spaces at sites at Maidencraig, Fernielea school and Summerhill.

The work is part of a three-year Interreg project called BEGIN (*Blue Green Infrastructures through Social Innovation*) which brings together ten cities and six research institutes from across Europe to share experience while developing blue-green infrastructure.

'Blue-green infrastructure' is a term for attractive, sustainable green spaces within urban settings that can accommodate large volumes of water, thereby reducing the impact of flooding and creating reserves to draw on during drought conditions.

These spaces are designed to be more attractive and accessible, better for wildlife, and more resilient to the effects of climate change. They can take a variety of forms, from permeable paving and green corridors – thin strips of land which provide habitats for wildlife – to rainwater harvesting and purpose-built ditches called bio-swales, which slow and collect surface water.

The first phase of works at Maidencraig was completed in June, including a new wetland, open watercourses to create space for nature, and a small bridge and a new path. The second phase will improve access and further enhance habitat for the area's biodiversity.

The second year of the BEGIN project will focus on Fernielea School and the third will develop the Summerhill site. Each project involves extensive consultation with the public. We had very positive feedback about the Maidencraig site and the pupils at Fernielea School gave crucial input about the kinds of things they would like to see in their playground, from rain gardens to snake-shaped swales.

To find out more or have your say, see deepartnership.org/blue-green-infrastructure or email flooding@aberdeencity.gov.uk. You can download a leaflet about the works at Maidencraig.

For information about BEGIN see www.northsearegion.eu/begin.



Out and about with the Dee Catchment Outreach Officer



As Outreach Officer for the River Dee, Marina Piper covers the whole catchment, from the Cairngorms to Aberdeen harbour, working with land owners, farmers, ghillies, outdoor groups, householders and schools. To learn more about the river and how you can help to look after it please get in touch by calling 01339 880411 or email marina@riverdee.org.

Catchment models on tour

Our new model catchments have been busy at events throughout Deeside this year. From the May Festival at Aberdeen University to the Cairngorms Nature BIG Weekend in Braemar the response to these innovative models of river systems has been fantastic.

The models show two very different landscapes. One has many more natural features (trees, peatlands, meanders) while the other is a more intensively managed catchment. The models generate 'rain', which gathers and flows down towards to a town. We ask people to work out which town will flood first, and why?

The models will feature in the James Hutton Institute tent at the Royal Highland Show in June.



Tree planting

For many areas, tree planting is the next step in returning the riverbanks to a healthy state in which native plants and animals can thrive. We have been working with the River Dee Trust to plant trees where invasive plants have been eradicated, with over 5000 trees planted at Inverdee and Garthdee this year. This will increase the stability of the banks, improve the local biodiversity and protect the sites against flooding. We are extremely grateful to our volunteers who help to make these initiatives a reality on the ground.

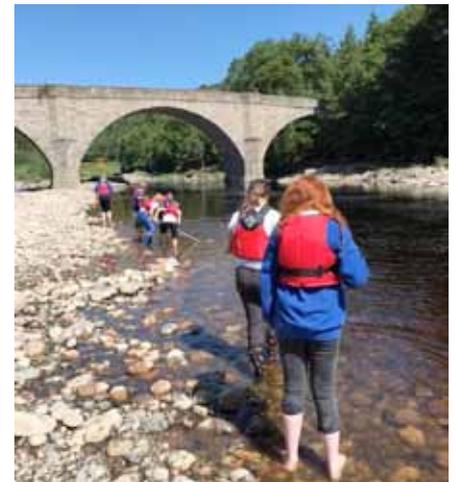


Promoting rain gardens for schools

We were delighted to speak at the SNIFFER Flood Risk Management conference in Strathclyde in February. We shared our techniques and lessons learnt from working with the community in Aberdeen in the BEGIN project. Lots of great ideas and actions came out of the discussions, which we look forward to developing in the near future.

Out and about with Deeside schools

We have had several brilliant days out river dipping with Deeside primary schools. Most recently we were out with Lumphanan primary at Potarch, where caddisfly larvae, freshwater mussel shells and salmon were exciting finds.



Invasive species action steps up

Non-native invasive plants and animals are having serious consequences for the region's ecology and economy. Plants such as Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed are a particular problem, out-competing local plants and becoming dominant along our riverbanks.

The Dee District Salmon Fishery Board and River Dee Trust have led the fight on the ground, working systematically from Ballater to Aberdeen harbour, and continue to make major progress with the help of a dedicated army of volunteers.

The new North East Non-Native Invasive Species project will extend the scope across the region. Led by Aberdeenshire Council and partnered by the River Dee Trust, the project is co-ordinating activities in both catchments, working to engage local communities, raising awareness and providing training and support to volunteers.

In a linked initiative, Scottish Natural Heritage was awarded Heritage Lottery funding earlier this year for a project aimed at helping communities across Scotland to tackle invasive species.

These projects - at the river, regional and national scale - are working closely and together they represent a joined-up and powerful approach to tackling invasives.



Giant Hogweed sap causes severe burns on contact with skin and should be left to trained experts to tackle.

Himalayan Balsam is the main culprit on the Dee, with an estimated 40 hectares growing in the catchment before treatment began, of which around 14 have now been treated. Japanese Knotweed, with roots that can break through concrete, is also prevalent, but after several years of continual pesticide spraying its coverage has decreased by 90%. Himalayan Balsam and Giant Hogweed have increased since 2015 due to Storm Frank, which spread the seeds far and wide across the catchment. Treatment of these plants has proved very effective, so we are confident of being able to control their spread.

Raising awareness is the key to success so that problems can be dealt with before they establish. We have produced a leaflet to help people to identify the target species, with images of the four main invasive plants found on the Dee's banks, and descriptions of the harm they cause. The leaflet can be downloaded from our website.

The work of volunteers has been crucial in the success to date in tackling these plants. The work is tough, but also great fun and very rewarding. Volunteers are given full training and can gain national certifications for herbicide use.

You can help to tackle invasives by knowing how to Recognise, Report and React when you spot a suspect plant. See our website and leaflet for more information deepartnership.org.

If you are interested in volunteering please email calum@riverdee.org.



In brief

Cairngorms Forest Strategy

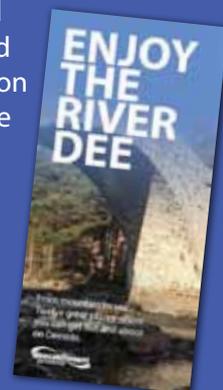
The draft Cairngorms National Park Forest Strategy was out for consultation earlier in the year. This key document, which provides strategic direction on forest management and the restoration of woodlands over the next 20 years, will be presented to the CNPA board in September 2018.

Water vole reintroduction

A small-scale experimental reintroduction of water voles by Aberdeen University in the Tarland area has been successful and the population is showing signs of further expansion. Large scale recovery of water voles will be aided by strategic mink control through the SISI project.

Enjoy the Dee leaflet

Over 5000 copies of our access leaflet have been distributed through Deeside. The leaflet features a map of great places to walk, cycle and enjoy the outdoors and includes clear and helpful information about responsible access.



Suspension bridges

Work to remedy the damage to Polhollick has been ongoing for some time. A plan is in place to restore it to its former glory. See <http://bit.ly/2k6Lalp>.

Fishing season well underway

The salmon fishing season is well underway, with 753 salmon caught to 9 June.

Round the park for Parkinson's

Congratulations to our Management Group chairman Will Boyd-Wallis who has completed a 250 mile circuit of the Cairngorms National Park, raising over £8000 for the Cure Parkinson's Trust.

Deeside welcomes Newton Harrison, leading pioneer of the ecological-art movement

A new ecological arts project for the Dee and Don catchments which considers long-term options for water management in the face of a changing climate is underway. Along with his wife Helen Mayer, Newton Harrison has been a leading figure in global arts and ecology since the 1960s.

Harrison and his team from the Centre for the Study of the Force Majeure in California visited Deeside last September to open the project. They met with the

many environmental, scientific, academic, community and creative agencies who are already engaged with this critical issue.

On 9th March, the Barn hosted the launch of Harrison's vision for Scotland *The Deep Wealth of This Nation, Scotland*. The event, attended by over 80 people, premiered a short film and an exhibition of six art works.

More information is available at www.thebarnarts.co.uk/learning.



Leading ecological artist Newton Harrison is working with us to develop ideas for climate change resilience for the Dee and Don.

The Wild North East: Scotlands Natural Gem

A new short film, produced by the North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership working with Scotland the Big Picture, offers a glimpse of the incredible biodiversity that the North East of Scotland has to offer, from dolphins and humpback whales to eagles, otters, mountain hares and capercaillies.

Watch it here:
youtu.be/4owglBdMx3U



What's on?

16 June Hands on conservation 10am - 4pm. Tools and instruction provided, wear warm clothes and bring a packed lunch. Call Glen Tanar Ranger Service on 01339 886072 or email ranger@glentantar.co.uk. Booking essential.

20 June Mar Lodge evening stroll 5pm - 7pm, £5 per adult. Contact Mar Lodge ranger service on 01339 720164 or email marlodgeestate@nts.org.uk.

21-24 June Royal Highland Show See our catchment models in action in the James Hutton Institute marquee on Avenue Q.

30 June Balsalm Bashing on the Don Come and help the Countryside Rangers pull up these invasive plants before they can set seed. Gloves and hot drinks provided but bring water and a packed lunch. Meet at the Persley Walled Garden car park. First Bus 17 & 18 go to Mugiemoss Road. Booking essential.

24 July Pollinator safari Join a Countryside Ranger to plant wildflowers to attract more pollinators then go on safari to see bees, wasps, butterflies and moths. Meet at the Nature Reserve car park on Skene Road. First Bus 11 or Stagecoach X17 go to Queen's Road. Booking essential.

11 August From Duthie to Dee 2pm - 4pm. Join Countryside Ranger Rob to discover heritage, archaeology and natural history along the riverside between Duthie Park and the Bridge of Dee. Limited car parking is available by the boating pond off Riverside Drive. First Bus 17 & 18 go to Great Southern Road. Meet at the Duthie Park Rangers Office at the old bowling pavilion in the Park. Booking essential.

Get in touch

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 Dee Catchment Partnership

 @DeeCatchment

Contact us if you would like to receive CatchUp by email.