

CatchUp

Dee Catchment Partnership news

Summer 2015

Crackdown on non-native invasive plants

A three year project is underway to tackle non-native plants on the lower Dee

Invasive plants are causing serious problems on the River Dee, where Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam, giant hogweed and skunk cabbage are the main culprits. They are spreading rapidly along the riverbanks, out-competing native species and forming dense stands that shade out smaller plants.

In winter, they die back completely, leaving riverbanks bare and exposed to erosion. During high flows, soil washes into the river and damages riverbed habitats. Giant hogweed is a particular concern because its sap causes severe burns to human and animal skin; it should never be handled without proper equipment and training.

Tackling these plants is the focus of a new three-year project led by the River Dee Trust. The work is focussing on the lower river, from Drumoak down to Aberdeen harbour, using herbicide, strimming and hand-pulling. The first step was a detailed survey this spring which showed that 26 miles of riverbank need to be treated. Work is well underway, with eradication between Lower Durris and Upper Drum complete.

Plants further upstream also need to be controlled as they are a source of seed that will re-colonise the banks downstream. Last year, staff from the Dee District Salmon Fishery Board and River

Dee Trust treated plants between Ballater and Drumoak and will re-visit the area this year. A linked study by Aberdeenshire Council is identifying areas in the wider catchment that need to be tackled.

To find out what these plants look like and what to do if you spot them see www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/nonnative-species/managing-problem-invasives. Report sightings to www.nesbrec.org.uk.

The project is funded by Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and Transport Scotland through the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route offset mitigation fund.

Volunteers needed

The success of this project depends on the work of volunteers, like the group from Culter in Bloom who have recently cleared Himalayan balsam from part of the Deeside Way.

There are many ways to get involved - you can be trained and certified in herbicide application or help out with strimming or hand-pulling. Your work will help to protect the river and its wildlife, and is a great opportunity to gain some new skills.

If you are interested in volunteering please get in touch by email info@riverdee.org or telephone 01339 880411.



Volunteering is a great way to get outdoors and help the River Dee

Out and about with the Dee Catchment Outreach Officer



As Outreach Officer for the River Dee, Joanna Dick covers the whole catchment, from the Cairngorms to Aberdeen harbour, working with land owners, farmers, ghillies, outdoor groups, householders and schools. Please get in touch if you want to learn more about the river and how you can help to look after it. Tel: 01339 880411 or email: joanna@riverdee.org.

A burning issue

The dry weather at this time of year means a heightened risk of wildfire in areas of grass, heather and woodland. Last summer, Mar Lodge Estate suffered two wildfires, causing considerable environmental damage, significant cost to the taxpayer, and the diversion of emergency services resources.

One fire, the consequences of the careless use of a disposable barbecue, led to the deployment of eleven fire crews from as far as Dundee and Tomintoul, staff from Mar Lodge and surrounding estates, and a helicopter used to water-bomb the blaze, while three ambulances were on standby.



Mar Lodge policy is that no open fires are permitted anywhere on the estate. Please take great care when out and about, bear safety in mind, and always act responsibly. Simple measures, such as taking care that smoking materials are disposed of properly, help to protect the countryside and its wildlife.

See the Scottish Outdoor Access Code for guidance on how to enjoy the River Dee and surrounding countryside responsibly: www.outdooraccess-scotland.com.

How you can help the Dee

Despite the lack of a proper summer this year, warm weather and low rainfall combined with increased demands for water can still put pressure on the river. You can help by taking a few simple steps:

Save water

Try to use water sparingly. Garden borders will benefit from a deep mulch to hold in moisture and so need less watering. Restrict watering to one good soaking every few days in the evening or early morning. Consider using a water butt to collect rainwater.

Keep garden waste away from watercourses

Never dispose of grass cuttings and hedge trimmings in or near a watercourse. They add nutrients to the water, reducing water quality and damaging habitats for wildlife. All garden waste should be taken to a recycling centre or composted.

Use chemicals with care

Keep chemicals such as oils, weedkillers and pesticides well away from watercourses and drains. See our Drain Care Guide: www.theriverdee.org/publications.asp.

Let water drain away

If you are planning a new patio or driveway, choose porous surfaces like gravel or permeable block paving. These materials absorb water, unlike tarmac or concrete that shed water, contributing to flooding.

Maintain your septic tank

Summer is a good time to give your septic tank some attention. Trim nearby vegetation, check the outflow (if possible) and if in any doubt arrange for it to be emptied. Replace household products with eco-friendly versions and ban the bleach! Neglected tanks can cause pollution and health risks, and are costly to put right. See www.theseptic-tank-guide/info.

Do you visit Cambus O' May suspension bridge?

Cambus O' May suspension bridge is a popular spot for walking, picnicking and swimming, but with so many visitors the site suffers from some environmental problems. Visitors are being asked how they use the area and what improvements they would like to see. The results will be used to make a plan of action for the site.

If you see me at Cambus O' May with a clipboard this summer, please help by completing a questionnaire. You can also give your views on our website or get in touch by email.

IntroDee: primary schools take to the riverbank

This year 28 schools and over 280 young people have enjoyed hands-on trips to the riverbank as part of the River Dee Trust's IntroDee education programme. Pupils have learned about the river, its importance to wildlife and man, threats to its wellbeing and how it is managed. Some mastered the basics of fishing at Raemoir Trout Fishery, with a lucky few even catching their first fish. IntroDee will continue after the school holidays.

Please get in touch if your school would like to take part in IntroDee next year.



Cairngorms photography posts

A project designed to capture long-term landscape changes has been set up in the Cairngorms National Park. Using pictures taken by members of the public, the project will record natural changes like the growth of woodland, or the extent of snow cover.

Fourteen photo-posts have been set up in the Park, from Strathdon and Deeside, to Speyside and Glen Tilt. There are three posts on Deeside: Parkins Moss (Muir of Dinnet National Nature Reserve), Morrone (Braemar) and on the road from Braemar to Linn of Dee.

To take part, simply locate a post using the website, place your camera on the post and take a

photograph, then upload it to the website. The picture collection is creating a valuable long-term resource, so get out there with your cameras, phones and tablets and take part in this unique project.

Register, view and upload photographs at www.cairngorms.co.uk/photo-posts.



New lease of life for Torry's East Tullos Burn

Over the last year, Torry's East Tullos Burn in St Fittick's Park has been transformed. The burn has been neglected in the past, and suffered from very poor water quality and litter problems.

During 2013, Aberdeen City Council worked with the local community to produce a new design for the burn that would be more natural and as a result improve water quality, provide habitat for wildlife and create an area more attractive to local residents and visitors.

The burn has a new meandering course, with wetlands and ponds planted with a variety of wild species. The plants are not just for show - special reeds filter out toxins from the water and so clean the burn. There is also much better access, due to improved footpaths and a new bridge.

Children from St Fittick's primary school helped to put the finishing touches to the planting. Afterwards, the site was alive with insects and birds taking advantage of the new and improved habitat, and awash with colour.



Aberdeen City Council

The East Tullos Burn has a new lease of life following last year's restoration work

In brief

New information boards for Potarch

Potarch is a popular site with visitors, for walks, picnics and dogwalks. Information boards have been installed to show the range of facilities at Potarch, promote responsible enjoyment of the site and give a little bit of the area's history.

Rural skills training grant

The Cairngorms National Park Authority is continuing to offer financial support (30% of costs) for short courses in rural skills. Contact pennylawson@cairngorms.co.uk 01479 870519.

Banchory croys removal

Croys in Banchory are due to be removed this summer to improve habitat for salmon and freshwater pearl mussel.

Yellow Fish project

Well done to guide groups and schools who have completed our Yellow Fish project, learning how to help the Dee by taking care about what goes down household drains.

Deeside Way geocaches

A new geocaching trail along the Deeside Way between Aboyne and Dinnet launched on 12 July. See www.geocaching.com.

New Deeside Way website

The Deeside Way has a new website www.deesideway.org, where you can get information about distances, read a description of the route and things to see along the way, and download maps.

Dee to the Sea fundraiser

Thank you to staff from the ERM Foundation who, on 25 July, walked, cycled and ran the 88 miles of the Dee in just 20 hours, raising over £1100 for projects on the river. Learn more and donate at www.justgiving.com/deetosea.

theriverdee.org/projects

Conservation work for Polhollick Bridge

Polhollick Bridge will be closed until October 2015 for essential conservation works that will safeguard the future of the iconic Victorian bridge.

Polhollick Footbridge crosses the River Dee just upstream from Ballater. Built in 1892, it was commissioned by Alexander Gordon following a tragedy on the old ferry crossing. The bridge is the fourth bridge on the popular Seven Bridges circular trail which takes walkers over the Rivers Dee and Muick and past the 17th-century Knock Castle.

Over the years the bridge has deteriorated and is in urgent need of conservation work. This will include a full repaint to stop rusting, replacement decking and structural work to the towers.

During the closure there is no alternative River Dee crossing. The bridge will be inaccessible to canoeists and kayakers most of the time until October, but those requiring access should contact Linda Mathieson at Aberdeenshire Council: linda.mathieson@aberdeenshire.gov.uk, 01467 628380.

What's on?

Until 3 August River of fish exhibition Over 230 ceramic salmon made by local groups, Braemar Castle.

30 July Butterfly bonanza children's event Church Square car park, Ballater, 2.00pm - 4.00pm, Balmoral Estate Rangers: 01339 755059.

1 August Casting instruction and fishing Crathes Castle, 9.00am - 1.00pm and 2.00pm - 5.00pm. Ross MacDonald: ross@riverdee.org 01339 880411. All abilities; booking essential.

8 and 22 August Bat lovers walk St Peter's heritage centre, Peterculter, 8.30pm - 11.00pm, Aberdeen City Council rangers: 01224 897400. Booking essential, bring a torch.

18-19 August Holding water in the landscape Talks and field trip on land management to combat floods, droughts and soil loss, James Hutton Institute www.hutton.ac.uk/events.

26 August Marr Community Ward Forum: 'How you can help the Dee' talk/discussion Finzean Hall, 6.45pm. Booking: roisin@marrareapartnership.org.uk.

27 August Marr Community Ward Forum: 'How you can help the Dee' talk/discussion MacRobert Hall, Tarland, 6.45pm. Booking: roisin@marrareapartnership.org.uk.

6 September Mar Lodge Estate open day Mar Lodge, Braemar, 10.00am - 4.00pm. Contact: 01339 720164.

12-20 September River of fish exhibition Over 230 ceramic salmon made by local groups, Heckleburn, Blackhall, Banchory www.northeastopenstudios.co.uk.

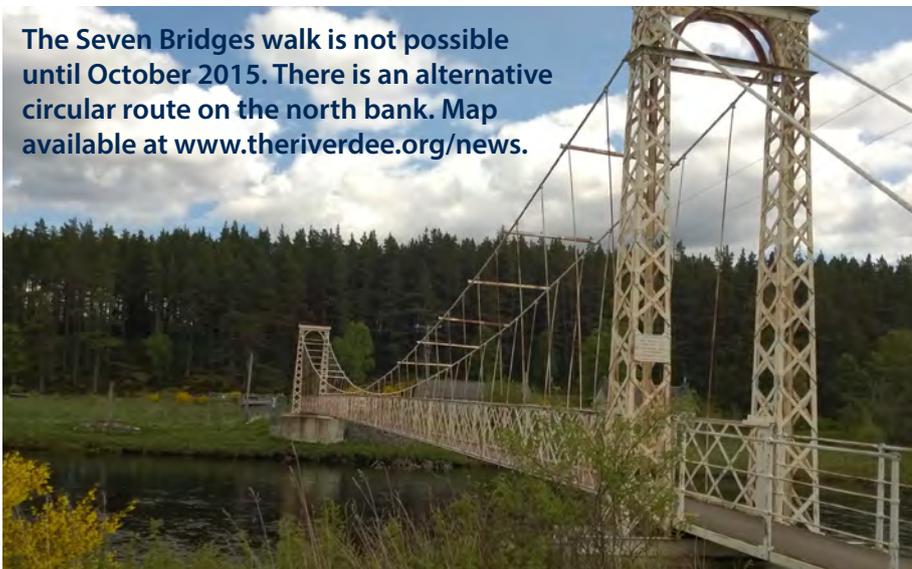
Get in touch

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 Dee Catchment Partnership
 @DeeCatchment

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

The Seven Bridges walk is not possible until October 2015. There is an alternative circular route on the north bank. Map available at www.theriverdee.org/news.



Discover the Dee: our water supply

For weekly facts about the Dee follow us on Twitter @DeeCatchment #DiscoverTheDee.

The Dee provides domestic water for the whole of Aberdeen City and over half of Aberdeenshire, supplying more than 300,000 people with around 100 million litres every day.

Water is abstracted at Invercannie (Banchory) and at Mannofield (Aberdeen) through large gratings in the riverbed.



Nigel Corby

