

## SCOTLAND

**Involvement of Local Communities in  
Integrated Coastal Management of Scotland's Firths**

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**INTRODUCTION**

Firths are marine and coastal wetlands including large estuaries, sea areas and coastal hinterland. This case study will review the involvement of people who live and work around the Moray Firth (including the Cromarty Firth), the Firth of Forth and the Solway Firths (fig 1.) in Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) initiatives. It will place this involvement in a context of the framework for operating voluntary ICM in the UK. Management of the wetland interest of firths is only one component of the full range of environmental, economic and cultural issues which must be resolved in any management strategy for these large and diverse sites. Involvement of local people in management of firth wetlands, as described in this report, relates to their contributions to the overall ICM process.

Scotland's long coastline is highly diverse. It's environmental, cultural and economic importance arises from both the large sections which are wild and undeveloped and the areas which are urban and industrial. In the firths particularly, the pressures of (for example) development, transport, fisheries, agriculture aquaculture, aggregate extraction, power generation, recreation and leisure have caused major incremental loss of the natural habitats and species over recent decades. In common with coastlines in many countries, planning and management of firths is sectoral or locally based, by a diverse array of statutory bodies. It tends to be uncoordinated and without the communication between agencies required to ensure a clear overall plan is followed and with no overview of the extent to which resources are utilised or exploited across the whole site. Furthermore, the various activities in the marine areas are controlled by a wide variety of legislation, all this making co-ordinated and integrated decision making a difficult process. The principle means of development control in the UK is the Town and Country Planning legislation operated by local government but all firths include more than 1 local authority and powers under this mechanism extend only to land above mean low water of spring tides. There is no general mechanism for development control in sub-tidal areas around the Scottish (and UK) coast. Consequently, developments and increased activity pressure tends to occur in an uncoordinated piecemeal fashion. Proposals are assessed on a case by case basis, with no overall strategy to take account of their cumulative effect.

In recent years there has been much discussion about mechanisms to provide the additional co-ordination required for effective coastal management. The (previous) Government has been reluctant to institute additional administrative structures at the UK or Scotland level. The 'voluntary approach' now favoured is to supplement existing structures, modified where necessary with voluntary ICM partnerships (Scottish Office, 1996).

'Firth' is an old Norse word meaning 'arm of the sea'. It refers to a sheltered sea area and estuary of a river, such as the Firth of Forth, or the sea surrounding a coastal district such as the Solway Moray, and Cromarty. They are transition zones where water changes from salty

to fresh with a complex mosaic of different habitats. From huge expanses of mudflats and saltmarsh in the estuaries to sand dunes, beaches, rocky shores and cliffs at their outer edge, firths contain some of Scotland's most valuable and unique natural sites. The landscapes, habitats and species compete with a high diversity of economic and recreational human activities, and firths tend to have a strong community culture resulting from the historical links and dependence of local people on the sea. Today this history is reflected in an awareness of the improved quality of life which the sea and coast provide and sense of the importance of the wise use of these dynamic environments.

Focus on Firths was set up in 1992 by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) in response to the growing awareness of the need for better management, to promote and co-ordinate ICM of these areas. Focus on Firths is designed to promote the wise and sustainable use of these systems. It has 2 aims (Atkins 1994):

- To secure integrated management strategies for the Solway, Forth and Moray firths and other significant firths by facilitating consensus and co-operation among all users and statutory authorities
- To increase appreciation and understanding of the vital importance of the natural heritage of firths, through information collation and dissemination, the production of educational and interpretative materials, promoting community involvement and local ownership.

Separate ICM projects have been set up for each firth, each managed by a cross sectoral, non-statutory partnership or forum. The scale of the projects range from the relatively small Cromarty Firth Liaison Group, for the Cromarty Firth which is within the area of the overarching Moray Firth Partnership project, to the complex regional partnerships for the industrialised and urbanised Firth of Forth. The Solway Firth forms a national boundary between Scotland and England giving the Solway Firth Partnership an extra dimension of integrating different legal systems and cultures (fig 1.). The Moray, Forth and Solway projects are part of a UK Biodiversity Action Plan (HMSO 1994) objective of putting management strategies in place by the end of 1998. These partnerships are on target to achieve this objective. Their future remit will be to implement the management strategies through negotiation, voluntary agreement and action programmes. Each management action task will be assigned to the authority of the most appropriate forum member. The issues to be addressed by an ICM strategy will change over time; new development pressures will arise and new action plans or modifications to the management strategy will be required. The publication of the management strategy is not the completion of ICM but more the start of the actual management process. These projects exemplify the 'voluntary approach' to ICM advocated by (the previous) government in the UK.

### **Who participates and the benefits they expect**

Individual local people can and do participate in firths projects to feed into the management planning process their own interests and concerns and those of their neighbours and local community. In the UK however, there are in place so many statutory controls and sectoral mechanisms that, inevitably, an integrated management initiative tends to become dominated by organisations and bodies each contributing their statutory role or sectoral interest. Actual grassroots community involvement tends to get squeezed from the work programmes of project officers trying to satisfy the demands of organisations and the administration of the forum. Despite this dominance by 'organisations' it must be recognised that all the

representatives of these organisations are also local people with local community interests and concerns. Firth Fora are, therefore, an effective mechanism for community involvement although the type of involvement may be different from sites which have a much less developed administrative (bureaucratic) framework.

<b>Box 1: Organisations typically represented on fora management groups, their remit and the reasons for their involvement</b>		
<b>Organisation type</b>	<b>Remit</b>	<b>Benefits expected</b>
Local Government: Councils	Planning to LWM most local functions & services	Improved liaison, closer links with community, better management, improved image, resource savings.
Scottish Environment Protection Agency	Government agency: Air land and water pollution control	Better understanding of community concerns, raised awareness of community about pollution leading to greater willingness to control at source, resource savings
Scottish Natural Heritage	Government agency to work with Scotland's people to care for the natural heritage	More sustainable management, better liaison with other interests, raised understanding & awareness, wider involvement in conservation including communities.
Regional tourist boards	Promote all forms of tourism	More attractive tourist venues, more strategic approach to tourism planning.
Harbour authorities or trusts	Operate port & harbour regulations, manage shipping	Better integrated management framework for shipping & ports, improved liaison with local community & other sectors
Ministry of Defence	Land owners and managers of Defence establishments	Improved liaison & environmental management on MOD sites. Many have valuable relatively undisturbed conservation interest & designations
National or local Fishing associations	Represent fishermen and fisheries interests	Inclusion of fisheries interests in management strategies, improved liaison with other organisations
Scottish Sports Council or local recreation bodies	Represent recreational sports and other interests in the management strategies	Local groups such as Yachting Associations or the British Association for Shooting and Conservation want their views incorporated
Scottish Crofters Union	Small scale farming interests	Better integrated and sustainable management for the benefit of small scale subsistence farming
Scottish Landowners Federation	Landowners, large and small scale, mostly agriculture or forestry	Advice on more sustainable integrated management, better liaison, improved public image
Crown Estate Commissioners	Landowners of much of the sea bed and quasi planning authority below LWM	Better integrated and sustainable management for the sea bed, improved liaison with other bodies, improved public image
Community Councils and	Local community interests, voluntary	The inclusion of local people's views in the management strategy. Opportunity for

community projects	bodies for a village or part of a town	discussions with larger bodies. A key route for the community voice to be heard
Royal Society for protection of Birds	Conservation of birds and wider environment	Better integrated and sustainable management for birds and wider conservation interests
Scottish Wildlife Trust	All conservation	Better integrated and sustainable management for all conservation interests. Improved liaison

Fora have been established with SNH funding (and English Nature for the Solway) of about £40,000 per project per year over 5 years to initiate the management process. Contributions 'in kind' of staff time have been received from all partner organisations represented on management and topic groups. In the early years firth projects have had varying levels of success in generating funding from other partners. Most contributions (other than SNH) to core funding of the forum administration have been small and received from statutory bodies. The private sector have sponsored publications and meetings. A new funding structure will be required for implementation of the management plans based on cost sharing of actions by responsible organisations. A key indicator of the success of Focus on Firth is the extent to which it can generate shared partnership resourcing of management.

Non-statutory ICM depending on support of partners, has the potential to put in place a process to provide long term protection for wetland sites. Statutory instruments can only protect to the extent of the regulation: they create an attitude amongst users of testing the regulations to their limits and are expensive to create and police. They are also unlikely to be extended in the UK while a voluntary approach is under trial.

The non-statutory nature of firth projects has been raised as their weakness because of the lack of actual authority to implement policies and recommendations. Voluntary agreements may be highly effective in circumstances where consensus can be obtained, but it is argued that without effective policing, they are unlikely to be respected by users of the site when conflicts arise. They have also been dismissed as environmental lobby groups. However, the strength of a voluntary approach lies in the partners who are there and see the project as sufficiently important that they are involved. Thus the influence which a coastal forum can exert may be very strong by virtue of the statutory remit of the organisations represented and the backing of the local community. The attendance of all sectors gives the resulting policies and recommendations a strong credibility from the wide range of views which are included. Community involvement is also crucial to demonstrate that the project speaks for all stakeholders. Recommendations from such a broadly based group can reasonably be expected to influence the policies and programmes of the statutory bodies which are able to effect change in the firth.

Cross sectoral representation and community involvement prevents firth partnerships becoming side-tracked towards a narrow environmental agenda or other single issue. They can only publish management recommendations which have the very broad agreement of members. They will not be respected and will not retain wide representation if consensus cannot be obtained or if the partnership attempts to 'lobby' on issues without broad agreement. Firth fora promote economic, cultural and environment objectives.

The role of firth partnerships is that they are advisory and influencing organisations promoting all aspects of sustainable management. They can act by demonstration to show the

potential of integrated management. They are not lobby groups to press a particular agenda or new administrative bodies looking to take over management of the coastal zone

The structure of a typical firth ICM project is simple, consisting of a secretariat, usually a single project officer, a management committee, topic groups and the wider forum of community stakeholders (residents, users, businesses, voluntary organisations). The Solway Firth Partnership has added a working committee in addition to the management committee due to the large number of statutory bodies who must be represented at the top level including local government and statutory agency representation from England and Scotland.

The Forth Estuary Forum and Moray Firth Partnerships have a legally formulated constitution to regulate their structure and procedure. These projects have also developed business plans to provide a framework for their work programme with timescales, costs, and products. The business plan also serves as a fund-raising tool to generate the resources required from members.

Each forum is initially constituted as an unincorporated association, membership is informal and resources are provided unevenly by a few member organisations. They depend on members contributions to provide administrative costs (Box 1). The Solway Firth Partnership has remained with this structure. However, the unincorporated structure can lead to concern about the forum's independence making the achievement of consensus more difficult. For example the SNH sponsorship of firths projects has created a perception amongst some partners that the conservation agenda has a disproportionately high profile. The unincorporated association also carries the potential exposure to risk of liability among members in the event of mismanagement of assets. To overcome these difficulties, the benefits of incorporating fora as companies under UK law are under examination. The Forth Estuary Forum has now taken this step and the Moray Firth Partnership is considering such a step. It should facilitate a more transparent and equitable holding and management of assets and remove the responsibility of staff employment from any single partner. If legally possible fora may become independent 'not for profit' company trusts, limited by guarantee and having charitable status.

#### **Box 2: Summary of functions which an ICM partnership may need to deliver**

1. Use dedicated staff such as a project officer to carry out its functions. Staff may be partner or forum employees and may be based in offices of a partner or dedicated offices of the forum.
2. Obtain and manage resources from funding bodies in public and private sector, e.g. forum partners, EC funds, Millennium funds, Charitable funds and grants.
3. Purchase goods and services and hold assets.
4. Maintain databases and mailing lists
5. Disseminate information through publications and communications networks
6. Progress the aims of the forum such as may be outlined in a business plan
7. Progress the management strategy and action programmes agreed by the forum

Effective integrated management proposals must be based on good data and argument if they are to generate broad ownership and consensus among local people. Some collation and analysis of existing data and information is, therefore, required. The firths approach is to use topic groups to analyse and report on a specific area of interest. The collation of these reports then contributes to the development of a targeted review or issues report which addresses the needs of the forum.

Many topic papers and issues reports have been published (Forth Estuary Forum 1995, 1996, Solway Firth Partnership 1996, Cromarty Firth Liaison Group 1995). Topic groups have drawn over 100 people around each firth with a wide range of expertise into the management process.

Box 3 shows a list of specialist subject areas typically covered by a set of topic group in a firth partnership. The groups are cross sectoral, comprising usually 5 to 10 representatives drawn from various bodies with an interest in the topic. There is inevitably a degree of overlap between the groups but that should be eliminated when the reports are amalgamated to develop the management strategy. The reports would usually be structured with a review of the present situation, an analysis of management issues and recommendations for action.

<b>Box 3: Topic groups and their work programme</b>	
<b>Topic group specialist subject</b>	<b>Work programme and material to be covered</b>
Pollution	Environmental quality, water quality, litter, sources
Natural heritage	Habitats and species, restoration and enhancement
Landuse	Balance of urban, agricultural, industrial etc. land use on the coast
Fisheries	Scale and type of fishing interests, requirements of the industry
Coastal defence	Review of existing installations, requirements and opportunities for soft engineering and managed retreat. Shoreline management.
Economic development	Review of scale and type of existing business and industry, trends
Sport and recreation	Review of existing activity, facilities, trends future requirements
Tourism	Scale and type of existing industry, infrastructure, trends
Historic buildings	Built and other cultural heritage, archaeology
Data and research	Review of data held by all partners relating to the firth, in Scotland the use of GIS is being tested for storage, analysis & update
Education & awareness	Existing materials, audiences, gaps in provision, use of different media, publications etc required
Community involvement	Ways of increasing community involvement, audiences not participating, use of latest techniques

The state of the environment review becomes the basis for analysis of the issues requiring management and the development of an agreed management approach. It further facilitates consensus on the research needs to address the issues identified. For example, there has commonly been insufficient information available on coastal processes, and landscape assessment. Research projects to address these needs have been carried out. All these project stages provide opportunities for community consultation, participatory workshops and seminars.

#### **Box 4: Focus on Firths Interpretation, Education and Awareness products**

- Focus on firths leaflet (1993) widely distributed to promote the project in the early stages
- Focus on Firths Poster
- The 'Sea Chest' (1997) Over 40 books, videos, tapes and practical activities to help community education groups learn about marine and coastal environments. There is

something in the Sea Chest for all ages and group types. 50 Sea Chests have been distributed to community education centres around firths.

- Focus on Firths touch screen multi-media package for 6-10 year olds which introduces the types of environmental decisions which must be faced and the potential impacts on the wildlife
- Firths (Atkins 1997) Part of SNH's 'Scotland's Living Landscapes' series

Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and the World Wide Web provide rapidly expanding opportunities to achieve much improved data collation, analysis and collaborative data exchange between partners. The data management systems are created with the flexibility to address future environmental issues and conflicts as they arise.

The internet provides opportunities for information exchange and communication with the wider forum. The Forth Estuary Forum has set up its own web site and is exploring the potential for communication and data exchange between partners. The web site is increasing awareness about the project among the whole Forth community and helping to facilitate the involvement of many more stakeholders.

**Box 5. The degree of involvement at each stage of the Focus on Firths process:**

<b>ICM Process stage</b>	<b>Level of Involvement</b>
Making the case and generating support from statutory bodies	Series of 1 to 1 meetings. Community workshops or other events may be used
An open seminar or workshop about the firth. Aim being to obtain agreement to formulate ICM project	Open invitation. All stakeholders targeted including community
Establish a cross sectoral management committee	15-20 key stakeholder representatives
Agreeing core basic objectives for the partnership. Identification and agreement on main subject areas requiring management	Management committee consulting with their parent organisation or group they represent. Community level workshops may be used.
Set up a secretariat, prepare and agree a business plan for the forum	Management committee with appropriate consultation of members
Establish communication network. This usually starts with mailing list and newsletter	Managed by secretariat with contributions from whole forum
Set up specialist sub-committees or topic groups for each subject area	Specialist experts, organisations and individuals with an interest in the topic
Topic groups study and report with recommendations	Topic group reports published and circulated widely around firth area
Draft audit and/or issues report compiled for consultation - a key stage where stakeholder involvement and feedback is important.	Wide consultation round firth area. Community level workshops should be used
Draft management guidelines or framework with detailed recommendations and draft action programme identifying bodies responsible for each action	Wide consultation round firths area. Community level seminars, workshops and other events should be used.
Publication of agreed management guidelines with recommendations and action programme	Whole firth community should have some responsibility for implementation

identifying bodies responsible for each action and other contributing partners	of ICM
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Firth projects have placed strong emphasis on formal and informal education to raise awareness amongst local people about the environmental importance of firth wetlands (box 2). Products are designed to disseminate good environmental information about the importance of firths, and generate support for voluntary ICM. Materials are aimed at all age groups and sections of the community to promote individual and local community ownership and understanding of the issues and management strategy. The variety of publications for the Moray Firth (box 4) have generated widespread interest and increased awareness of the project throughout the area. Firths publications are being used in both formal and community education. Newsletters, leaflets, posters and displays keep the local community well informed about direction and progress.

#### **Box 6: Community involvement initiatives: Moray Firth**

- 'Future Firth' community events: 1 day (Saturday) held in September 1992 and September 1993 with exhibitions, workshops, presentations and discussions about the Moray Firth environment and its future management
- Attitude Survey of Moray Firth people using questionnaires and done by Community Enterprise Agents (pilot of technique).
- Local Landscape Workshop using Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques to examine local values and usage of a short stretch of the Moray Firth coastline.
- Community Radio: Moray Firth Radio. 12 regular weekly 3 minute programmes in 1995 about different aspects of the Moray Firth Environment.

#### **Interpretation, Education and awareness products**

- Moray Firth Review 1992, 3rd reprint 1996
- Moray Firth Slide Pack and teachers notes 1995
- Guide to Sites for Education Field Work 1995
- Moray Firth Leaflet 1995
- Moray Firth Educational Poster and teachers notes 1995
- 'Under the Sea' Exhibition displayed in museums around the firth.
- Newsletter of the Moray Firth Partnership 'Moray Firth Matters' 1996 onwards.
- Moray Firth 'Oceanwatch' - a community and schools seashore survey (approximately 500 people took part in summer 1995).
- Education Award scheme for school work about the Moray Firth, 1995 and 1996.
- Moray Firth Interpretative display for museums, schools libraries etc.
- An educational 'treasure chest' of sea artifacts and wildlife

Focus on Firths was set up with a commitment to community involvement in management and with the aim of increasing local people's participation in the decision making process. Wide ranging and well informed commitment to the management process from the whole community of users and occupiers around the firth will promote a genuinely integrated strategy. Local people are involved in firths projects at many levels: local government, commercial sector representation, voluntary organisation community council and individual resident or user participation. Statutory agencies, industries, voluntary organisations, landowners and local



people are all represented in various roles in the committee structure. Representation and participation in the stages of the firths ICM process is summarised in box 3.

### **Involvement in the Moray Firth Project and partnership**

The Urban areas around the Moray Firth and associated infrastructure are shown in Fig. 2 and the environmental resources in fig. 3. The Moray Firth Partnership was launched in summer 1996 after 5 years background work of awareness raising, community involvement and seminars (Box 4). These events and publications achieved their objective of raising awareness about the pressures and threats to the environmental resources of the Moray Firth and the need for integrated management. They also helped to generate the commitment needed from key partners to establish a voluntary forum for the area.

The committees of the partnership including management and topic groups involves mostly organisation representatives (box 5) although individuals and community representatives are welcome to contribute to topic groups. Topic groups are proving to be highly effective in improving communication and exchanging information. The partnership plans to hold regular open participatory workshops seminars and larger meetings such as an annual general meeting and conference. It has also made a commitment to hold at least some meetings in a range of locations around the Moray Firth and at times outside regular office hours. This commitment will significantly increase opportunities for broad community involvement and travelling expenses can be paid to those who do not have a parent organisation from which they can be claimed. Many individuals, community councils and local community groups of all types and sizes are included on the partnership mailing list and receive information, opportunity to contribute to and comment on the developing thinking and invitations to conferences and events.

<b>Box 7 Representation on the Moray Firth Partnership Management group</b>			
Moray Council	Highland Council	RAF Kinloss	Portsoy community project
Scottish Natural Heritage	Scottish Wildlife Trust	Royal Society for Protection of birds	Scottish Landowners Federation
Cromarty Firth Port Authority	Aberdeenshire Council	Scottish Environment Protection Agency	Inverness Harbour trust
Scottish Crofters Union	North of Scotland Yachting Association	Caithness and Sutherland Community Councils	Highlands of Scotland Tourist Board
<b>Over 100 people from around the Moray Firth are contributing to the work of these topic groups</b>			
Environmental quality	Natural Heritage	Landuse	Fisheries
Geomorphology and coastal defence	Economic development	Education and Interpretation	Information, research and GIS
Fishing	Sport and recreation	Tourism	Management strategy
Built heritage and archaeology	Community Involvement		

Two issues required resolution in the early stages of the Moray Firth Partnership:

1. Agreement of common ground as a basis for a partnership was obtained by drafting very general initial aims:

- to discuss management issues and develop management guidelines
- to involve a broad and balanced membership of users and communities
- to develop and sustain effective management of the partnership

These aims do not include any environmental or other targets or even an objective of developing an integrated management plan. Such targets were found to be too controversial in the absence of well developed understanding and trust between partners.

2. Defining the role and remit of the 'non-statutory partnership. Fears that the partnership would try and 'take-over' existing statutory functions forced detailed consideration of what the management planning process could do, and equally importantly, what it could not do. The partnership concluded that a typical management plan with prescriptive detail was inappropriate for such a geographically large and complex area as the Moray Firth. Therefore, 'strategic management guidelines' will be developed, which will provide a management framework, a mechanism for resolution of issues and an action programme.

These Guidelines will:

- Set out long and short term management needs
- Promote understanding of existing management systems and recommend new management measures where appropriate,
- Provide a framework for members to work together to co-ordinate initiatives, exploit opportunities and resolve conflicts
- Establish action priorities to implement the guidelines

However, the guidelines will not:

- Solve all management problems at a stroke
- Be statutory (but statutory bodies will be encouraged to implement them)
- Be locally or site specific to areas within the firth
- Remain static - they will need to be renewed and updated as circumstances change

The 13 Topic group reports due by December 1997 will be used to draft an 'Issues and Opportunities' report. Community involvement plans for 1998 include a series of issue resolving workshops and a Moray Firth Partnership conference in the spring, wide consultation on draft strategic management guidelines during the summer before publication of final agreed guidelines by the end of 1998.

### **Involvement in the Cromarty Firth Liaison Group**

The CFLG is the oldest firth partnership. It was set up as an industry, local authority, environment discussion forum pre-dating Focus on Firths to consider how the important environmental resources of the firth could be managed alongside major industries crucial to the economy of the Scottish Highlands (figs 2 and 3). After looking at the new firths projects, the CFLG expanded their membership and remit and adopted full ICM objectives, setting out to produce a management strategy for the Cromarty Firth.

An information audit and issues report was published in 1995 (CFLG 1995) after 6 topic groups had reported. The consultation process on this report included all residents, users and stakeholders in the Cromarty Firth. Two community workshops were held, north and south of the firth when local people were invited to contribute how they used the firth, problems and opportunities from their use and how they would like to see the community involved with its further development and implementation. They were well attended and the feedback from these workshops was used in the production of the Management Strategy, the development of ideas for its implementation and the community's on-going involvement.

In February 1997, the CFLG were the first ICM project in Scotland to publish, a consultation draft Management Strategy (CFLG 1997) with an action programme for implementation. The strategy is based on an overall aim and 4 strategic objectives:

**Aim:** To promote the maintenance and enhancement of the natural, economic and cultural resources of the Cromarty Firth

1. To safeguard and enhance the natural, cultural and economic resources.
2. To promote sustainable use of all these resources.
3. To improve understanding of the Firth
4. To involve all interests in the integrated management process

The draft strategy contains 30 policies under 9 topic headings and over 90 specific actions or projects to be carried out. In addition an action plan is included to which participating organisations have committed themselves for a 3 year programme of action and monitoring.

The advanced stage which the CFLG has reached, highlights an issue which will be faced by all the other firths projects by the end of 1998: that of implementation of the management plans. An application has now been made for European funding of an implementation officer for the Cromarty Firth from April 1998. If successful the management planning work will start to deliver results in 1998.

### **Involvement in The Forth Estuary Forum**

The Estuary and Firth of Forth has several large cities including Edinburgh and many smaller towns and villages around its shores (fig 4). There are around 3 million people living in the river catchment of the Forth. There are also huge industrial complexes including chemical works at Grangemouth, oil and gas handling facilities and large ports. Despite all this development, a large proportion of the coastline of the Firth carries a range of national and international designations (fig 5).

FEF has laid emphasis on building networks and linkages in its early years. The funding from SNH which commenced in 1993 has resulted in significant further contributions from many partners such as Edinburgh City Council where the project is now based, also SEPA, Forth Ports, and Crown Estate Commissioners. It has also provided collateral for successful applications to the European LIFE fund and to Objective 2 for Economic Audit of the Forth. The Forum has most successfully created a very high level of commitment to the work programme from a wide range of organisations and individuals. For example, there is a marketing specialist leading the education and awareness work, an industrialist leading the

economic audit (supported by in kind donation of staff time from another agency) and IS expertise providing advice on GIS and the web site.

The LIFE funding of the FEF has provided the opportunity to record progress of a project with very significantly increased resources. There are now 3 staff and budgets for the economic audit, information systems, education and communication products. Effectively, the Forth Estuary Forum is able to start implementation of agreed action programmes before the overall strategy is completed.

The significant feature of the Forth project is that the 'hands on' involvement of other partners, assisting with the work programme with both financial donations and 'in kind' contributions has enabled the project to expand far beyond the limitations of the project staff alone. This support is a measure of the success of the initiative and the high importance which is attached to it by partnership members. It is widely recognised as contributing to not just nature conservation objectives but also to the economic development objectives of key partners.

### **Involvement in The Solway Firth Partnership**

The Solway Firth coast is essentially rural in character. The towns and villages are mostly small and the infrastructure is less developed than other areas of Scotland (fig 6). Designated sites cover a large proportion of the Solway and the landscape is a particularly important contributor to the local economy by way of the visitors it attracts (fig 7).

The Solway Firth Partnership (SFP) was launched in 1994 to develop an integrated and sustainable management strategy for the Solway. It is open to everyone with an interest in the area and works by promoting better co-operation, agreement and understanding between all users, planners and managers on both the English and Scottish side of the firth. The steering group meets quarterly to review progress and overall direction and day to day management is provided by a smaller advisory group. Both these groups are cross sectoral but mostly statutory bodies are represented. The SFP has obtained European structural funding in addition to core support mainly from SNH and English Nature.

The SFP is striving to include as many people as possible in developing and implementing the Solway strategy. It has, uniquely, tested a range of approaches to community participation and consultation with a programme of discussion, and participation workshops, seminars and conferences throughout the strategy development process. Along with 10 topic groups which consulted widely before reporting in 1996, the SFP held participatory seminars in 1994, regional issues workshops in 1996, and a firth wide strategy seminar earlier this year. The partnership has also published leaflets, a touring exhibition a regular newsletter and co-ordinated environmental education events and training workshops.

Plans leading to the publication of the 'Solway Firth Strategy in 1998 (fig.8) include specialist working group meetings considering aspects of the proposed strategy in late 1997, followed by 6 community level participatory workshops around the Solway in the winter. There will be full public consultation on the draft strategy and action programme before publication.

Like the Moray Firth 'Strategic guidelines', the SFP propose an overview management strategy rather than a prescriptive management plan. The action programme to be published with the strategy will have a more targeted local focus based on the proposals from the 6 community participatory workshops. The approach of developing local action programmes within a strategic framework seems appropriate and sensible for these large firth areas.

The Solway Firth Strategy will:

1. Discuss strategic options to achieve sustainable management of the Solway
2. Provide a framework to promote the principles of sustainability in decision making
3. Discuss issues within the remit of partnership members
4. Discuss existing plans, policies and programmes of partners and show how they relate.
5. Present agreed guidance for managers, planners and users
6. Influence partnership members to create the conditions for its implementation
7. Involve local users in the planning process
8. Acknowledge that existing authorities and responsibilities are not changed

However, The Solway Firth Partnership or strategy *will not* directly manage any aspect of the Solway Firth resources.

Following publication of the strategy the Solway Firth Partnership will continue to have a role in developing future local and firth-wide action programmes, resolving conflicts of interest between stakeholders, community involvement, improving liaison and communication.

### **Networking and liaison benefits of involvement**

Firths partnerships defuse conflict by education, increased understanding and consensus among partners and increased local involvement in decision making. Partnerships have resolved misinformation and misconceptions among members regarding the remit and responsibility of other organisations. They have further demonstrated the value of using multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary groups to identify and discuss complex issues which impact on many interest groups.

The benefits of improved involvement networking and liaison are becoming evident:

- Novel and innovative solutions to management problems developed by bringing together new groups of experts who have not worked together in the past. The economic audit of the Forth is one example of a joint project which has widespread support because it will answer questions posed by many partners on the Forum.
- Better understanding and awareness of the significance of the site by the whole community and an increased ownership of the management proposals by partner members. The management proposals are not imposed top down, they are the priorities as identified by the people who live and work around the firths. The draft strategies so far have not generated a lot of controversy perhaps because everyone is aware of where they've come from. The improved ownership of the site generates strong commitment to management by users and residents

## **Efficiency, Cost effectiveness and leverage benefits of partnership ICM**

Firth projects are cost effective by speeding and smoothing decision making. They facilitate the planning process by providing an early opportunity to test development proposals before a wide spectrum of interested parties, giving indications of possible problems and solutions. Legal, public inquiry and environmental assessment costs are reduced with a deregulatory effect, reducing UK and European court challenges to developments. Other economic benefits are generated through the enhanced environment increasing tourism and making the area attractive for business. The effectiveness of the structure plan process should be improved with a closer fit to the aspirations of firth users

Firth partnerships offer the potential for all members to deliver agreed objectives (e.g. the Forth economic audit) more cheaply and efficiently by acting in partnership. Any projects which require the integration of the remits of a group of partners or which contribute to the objectives of a number of partners could potentially be done more efficiently and effectively through a partnership than through acting alone. Partnerships currently provide improved access to delivery funding mechanisms and firth projects are starting to take advantage of these opportunities.

Each firth project will generate a comprehensive cross sectoral database of information allowing gaps in knowledge, research needs and priorities to be identified. Through the partnership approach resources will be pooled to facilitate the completion of large scale research and survey projects which would otherwise not proceed. There will be efficiency gains by exchange of information and removing duplication of effort in collecting data.

Up to date audit of data and information about the wetland, analysis of issues and management options, presentation of information, and exchange of information between partners, e.g. using information technology

### **What else could Firths community involvement projects deliver?**

- An internet based information management service including directory of contacts, directory of data and information holdings and map based information derived from partners GISs. This is a logical extension from the audits, directories and GIS work already published.
- Contributions to Agenda 21 and Biodiversity Action Plan objectives including supply of information for habitat and species action plans, co-ordinating local biodiversity action plans for coastal areas, or working with local record centres to manage data as part of the National Biodiversity Network initiative.
- Funding opportunities and delivery mechanisms. Many current mechanisms in UK, and more so in Europe, are linked to partnership working, community involvement and rural development, particularly in relation to Agenda 21 and BAP objectives. Firths projects could help partner bodies access this funding.
- Management of European designated sites such as Natura 2000. The Solway and Moray Firth Partnerships are contributing in this area.
- Education, Interpretation and guidance materials: All partners can make use of the newsletters and other communication networks to get their message out and raise awareness of their role in the firth.

- Promote the region for tourism and sustainable development: Firth partnerships could work with Tourist Boards and Enterprise Companies. The backing of such a broad based partnership would give strong support and credence to these sectors.
- A neutral forum for discussion and debate of controversial issues such as development proposals. This could be a key service which partnerships provide to enable a matter to be explored between partners before it reaches the stage of legal challenge.
- Shoreline management plans and managed retreat opportunities: This is another developing area of work in Scotland which requires the integration of the functions of a number of different organisations. Firth projects could co-ordinate these plans and in many cases much background work has been done through coastal defence topic groups.

### **Potential difficulties and constraints on the success of firth ICM projects**

A major factor in the delivery of the objectives of the project will be the success of the partnership approach in resolving conflict. The extent to which resources are provided by partners will control the speed and quality with which management proposals are developed. Similarly the enthusiasm and commitment to the projects by partner organisations will strongly influence the effectiveness of the implemented management proposals.

Although the principle mechanism for implementation of management proposals will be the “voluntary means” there will be requirements for further legislation at local or national level. The effectiveness and progress of such legislation will significantly influence the success of FoF projects. Also the strength of national UK and Scottish Office guidance on ICM could affect the implementation of firth management.

There can be pressure to pursue a more traditional "designation" approach to site protection, e.g. by notification of Sites of Special Scientific Interest, or designation of Nature Reserves or other protected area. This approach is required in some areas where there is particular interest but is somewhat contrary to the ICM approach which is looking for an accommodation of environmental, economic and cultural interests. It is not yet clear how new designation of Special Areas of Conservation under the EU Habitats Directive will fit with ICM initiatives in areas where there is overlap.

Structural uncertainty over local authority reorganisation and changes in other statutory agencies in recent years has caused resistance to making commitments to ICM from these bodies in 1995 and 1996 due to pressures on budgets and changing structures.

### **General Discussion of local community involvement in the firth projects**

The projects (the Solway in particular) are demonstrating new approaches to involving communities in decision making as they try to bring organisational and community views together. They are also achieving higher levels of consultation among all interests as projects try to achieve genuine integration. In the UK in general and Scotland in particular, the legal framework and culture of government regulation means that ICM is only likely to be effective if delivered firstly through the local government statutory bodies which exist. Local councils are democratically elected and in theory should be accountable through the election process. Indeed in the past the elected local authority was considered the only appropriate form of representation. The willingness of local councils to participate in a partnership approach to coastal management

is a measure of changing attitudes and a recognition that local people do not feel sufficiently involved in management of their areas.

Firth projects have shown that consensus can be achieved on:

- the role, remit vision and core objectives of a voluntary partnership,
- the range of data and information required to define and analyse management issues,
- the issues which require resolution and the management options,
- a broad strategic management strategy for the wetland site.

An important area of concern relates to the fact that voluntary partnerships for ICM are not elected therefore not accountable. More work is needed to get the message across that partnerships do not have any authority of themselves but can only act through influence of their constituent members.

The aim of involving the whole local community in the decision making process has not yet been fully achieved. This is due more to lack of resources and not due to any lack of willingness to involve people. Attendance levels at participatory meetings is low as a proportion of the whole invited community. It must be recognised that a large majority of the community does not (yet) have any desire to be involved in these management initiatives

New and more effective ways of determining the views of local people, and involving the whole of society in the decision making process are required. A number of techniques and approaches have been or are being trialed. Their success and value is being assessed and recommendations on future use will be made.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Should local community involvement continue?** Evidence from the Scottish firth projects is that there are significant benefits from involving local people in the management of wetlands. This should be extended both in firth projects and to other site management approaches e.g. the management of all Natura 2000 sites.

**Criteria** The following criteria will identify situations where involving local people would strongly support site management:

- Would the site benefit from the commitment of the local community to its management - is there a contribution they can make,?
- Would the site benefit if the local community understood better why it is identified, how it works, what the needs of the site are and how they can help,?
- Do the needs of the site require local people to modify their behaviour or traditional activity in the areas?
- Are there development pressures or uses which are putting the site resources under strain or causing local conflict?
- Is current management fully integrating all interests or are some sectors acting alone and not included in the overall site management process?

### Conditions for support of local involvement:

- A commitment from local government and statutory bodies to include the decisions and views of local communities in the decision making process



- Clear definition and understanding of the purpose of involvement and what involvement can achieve within the existing statutory management framework
- Funding and staff time to hold participatory workshops and collate results. Generally these should be run by trained facilitators and the aims of the meetings should be clearly defined. Voluntary facilitators could be used but some 'quality control' would be required.

**Explaining the Ramsar guidelines:** Special measures to explain the detail of the guidelines would probably not be required in firths areas. A short presentation followed by a workshop to look at relevance to different sectors would convey the message

**Negotiation:** Establish common ground however basic (such as: we all need this resource to be protected at some level) on which to build so that problem areas are clearly defined. Build up the management options without pre-determined conclusions so that the best solution emerges from the information, the analysis of the data and the range of possible options and solutions which are presented. The aim of consensus building must be to establish and maximise what is up for negotiation and also clarify what responsibilities (if any) organisations are not prepared to discuss.

**Written agreements:** The Solway Firth Partnership has no formal agreement between members while the Moray and Forth have legal constitutions and the Forth Estuary Forum is an incorporated company in UK law. I would not force this since I believe it is more important that all interest groups are kept in touch with the process. If an agreement can be reached it will have benefits later because parties can be held to their agreement. If it cannot be obtained without losing key partners then see how much can be achieved for the site without formal agreement. It may come later when partners have committed significant investment into the process, but must always be appropriate to the site and the needs of the participants.

**Enforcement:** There are no mechanisms to enforce decisions of voluntary ICM partnerships in the UK but within a comprehensive partnership leverage may be exerted on the interests of individual partners who do not act in the interest of the site. Ramsar sites in the UK are designated after notification of the site as Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which provides legal protection.

**Management Institutions:** The structures for management created for firth partnerships are probably the simplest possible management institutions.

**Monitoring and evaluation:** There are 2 parts of ICM which should be monitored. Process monitoring evaluates the effectiveness of the management approach. Firth projects use indicators such as attendance at meetings, conflicts resolved, topic papers published and educational products. Output monitoring evaluates the impact of the ICM project on the quality of the wetland. Indicators used should relate to the conservation objectives for the site such as the area of the wetland, the diversity of species or water quality.

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