



News Review

Habitat improvement project on Spey tributary

Foreword

by Lord Seafield

Welcome to the first issue of the Seafield and Strathspey Estates News Review.

Land ownership and management in Scotland are increasingly in the spotlight, and we feel we must take a positive approach in letting those who live and work on the Estates, and those who come into contact with staff and management on a regular basis, know more about what we are doing and the projects in which we are involved.

Historically, the Estates have been shy of publicity. We got on with our business, and perhaps gave too little thought to how we were perceived from the outside, and by those who are involved on the inside also.

If I say that a change in policy has been forced upon us, I do not see that change as a bad thing. We need to be more open, more accountable, more transparent. We need to take the lead from the new Scottish Parliament in this respect, even if we may take issue with some of the measures it is proposing.

I hope you find the information contained in this News Review of interest. It is intended to illustrate particularly how we interact with, help and support the needs and aspirations of local communities, and how we are responding to the needs of conservation and the environment.

If you wish to know more about the Estates, we also now have a web site containing useful information on history, the size and scope of the estates' businesses, land use, policy, and sporting tourism.



Log and brash revetment work was demonstrated on the Batten Burn by Duncan Glen of the Tweed Foundation at an open day last Autumn.

A habitat improvement project on Strathspey on the Batten Burn (Allt Ruighe Magaig) was launched in October by a partnership of organisations including the Spey District Fishery Board, Cairngorms FWAG (Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group), the Forestry Commission, Scottish Natural Heritage and Seafield and Strathspey Estates.

The project covers 1030 metres of the Batten Burn, a tributary of the Dulnain, which itself is a tributary of the Spey. The initiative is a pilot study to demonstrate the positive benefits of stream management to the stability of the water course, to juvenile salmon, and to wildlife in general.

The burn's banks at the project site had been grazed extensively by sheep and horses. Consequently, bank vegetation was poor, with the banks seriously eroded in a number of areas. This had resulted in siltation in the stream, and its becoming wide and shallow with a loss of suitable habitat for juvenile fish.

Measures to improve habitat included stock exclusion on both banks, with water gates to allow stock access to the river. Existing bankside woodland is being supplemented with the planting of native

species, as well as willow and alder along the stream to encourage bank stability and promote invertebrates - a valuable food source for fish.

In badly eroded areas, stream banks are being restored using a 'log and brash revetment' technique, and, to promote habitat variety instream, large boulders may be introduced.

A survey programme is also being undertaken by the Spey Board's Research Trust at two to three yearly intervals to monitor bankside change, fish populations, invertebrates, and the effect of improvements on other wildlife populations.

Speaking at the project's launch, Colin Whittle, Chairman, The Spey District Fishery Board, said:

"The Spey Board is delighted that Seafield and Strathspey Estates are taking these positive steps to enhance this habitat for juvenile fish, in a programme which will also impact positively on the wider environment. We hope that the Batten Burn project will demonstrate to others the type of improvement measures which can be introduced, and the benefits that they can bring."

Kinveachy Forest to receive European recognition



View from the Lady's Cairn at Foregin looking towards Kinveachy Moor SAC.

Kinveachy Forest, Strathspey Estate, has been put forward by the Scottish Executive to Europe for special recognition of its distinctive habitat and bird population.

The proposed designation as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) acknowledges the importance of its remaining Caledonian pine forest - the remnants of native forests of Scots Pine, which once covered much of the central and north-east Grampian region, and the northern and western highlands of Scotland. The pinewood at Kinveachy is one of the major tracts of remaining Caledonian pine forest in Strathspey with dense stands of woodland separated by open moorland and scattered trees. The combination provides some breathtaking scenery.

The equally prestigious recommendation for recognition as a Special Protection Area (SPA) recognises the importance of the area for birds including the Scottish crossbill with 13 per cent of the world population residing there. Kinveachy Forest itself is part of a wider Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and this larger area extends to some 5,237 hectares (12,940 acres) and supports a number of internationally significant bird populations including an estimated 3 per cent of the British population of capercaillie. Other important birds are present on the site including a nationally important breeding population of crested tits.



Cathay House, Cullen after reharling.

Strathspey ospreys having migration monitored

Four ospreys from Strathspey Estates had transmitters fitted to monitor their progress by satellite as they migrated to West Africa.

The tracking system allows the birds' positions to be checked, at times to within 300 metres, on their 3000 mile journey to West Africa, and back in Springtime. One bird carrying a tiny transmitter was just three months old when it was moved from Strathspey Estate in July under licence to the Anglian Water Osprey Project site at Rutland Water, as part of the project to restore breeding ospreys to England. This bird's mother is one of two breeding females from the Estate being tracked. The fourth bird was hatched on Strathspey Estates in 1988, and now comes back to breed regularly near its original nest.

The Estates have been involved in the conservation of ospreys since the 1950s when the famous Loch Garten osprey site was set up by the RSPB, and have allowed birds to be taken for the Rutland Water project for the last three years. Last year for the first time, two two year old birds, previously relocated from Scotland, returned from Africa to the Anglian Water Osprey Project site.

In Scotland there are now 130 breeding pairs of ospreys ranging from South Perthshire to Sutherland.



Frank Law of Strathspey Estate (left) with Osprey expert Roy Dennis and juvenile ospreys being ringed and weighed

This ongoing project is now showing real signs of success, and it is hoped that once a number of birds become established at Rutland Water they will start to breed there also.

Active conservation programmes are an integral part of the management of many privately owned Scottish estates, which are working to protect and promote the birdlife and wildlife not just in Scotland, but in this instance elsewhere in the UK also.

Roy Dennis MBE, the Scottish osprey expert, who has worked with ospreys on Seafield Estates for the past 40 years, said:

"This project enables us to monitor these birds via a tracking station in France, allows us to establish where they stop to rest and feed, where and how they are spending this winter, and the exact nature of their return to Scotland.

"It is a very exciting development in conjunction with Anglian Water's Osprey Project."

The ospreys' progress can be monitored on the Internet at: www.rutlandwater.u-net.com/osprey

Cullen Charity Clay Shoot

Since 1984 Seafield Estates' head keeper Sandy Cruickshank has organised a charity clay shoot at the Seafield Shooting Ground, Cullen.

Each year a different charity is selected to benefit from the event. In the past these have included Cancer Research, Multiple Sclerosis, Guide Dogs for the Blind, Action Research for the Crippled Child, Riding for the Disabled, the Assisted

Reproduction Unit, Neuro Surgery, and the Brittle Bone Society.

In total, Sandy Cruickshank's annual event has raised £28,000 for charities, with £2,400 being raised last year.

This year's charity shoot takes place at Cullen on 15 April with the money raised going towards a special needs room at Millbank Primary School, Buckie.

For details of the event contact Sandy Cruickshank on 01542 840622.

Estate congratulated on Cathay House reharling work

Seafield Estate has been congratulated by Nick Brown, former principal planning officer, The Moray Council, on its decision to carry out lime harling work on Cathay House, Cullen, despite the lack of grant support.

In his letter to Lord Seafield, Nick Brown says:

"Not only is lime harling more historically correct, but a wealth of evidence suggests that lime harling, unlike cement, allows moisture in a wall to evaporate rather than be trapped, allows future maintenance without permanent damage to stonework below, and also allows for structural movement.

"I am delighted to witness a striking improvement which will improve the aesthetics, not just of the house itself, but the wider environment."

Grantown viewpoint walk

The first phase of a 90 minute walk with some of the finest views in Strathspey was officially opened in December by Grantown Highland Councillor Basil Dunlop.

To be complete by Spring 2000, the walk will take users on a scenic route through birchwoods, via Dreggie Falls, and on to a number of panoramic viewpoints overlooking the Cairngorms, Grantown and Ben Rinnes, near Aberlour, returning by the former Highland railway line.

The project, which will cost £24,000 in total, is being promoted by Grantown Community Council, and funded by Highland Council and Scottish Natural Heritage.

Councillor Dunlop said, at the opening of the new bridge over Dreggie Falls:

"This scenic walk offers a number of tremendous views from natural viewpoints and will prove to be a very worthwhile tourist and community asset. I am delighted with the involvement of the Community Council, and the enthusiasm of Seafield Estate in progressing this environmental improvement with the support of SNH, who are co-funders of the project.

"The viewpoint walk is part of a community initiative which includes environmental improvements in the Grantown area. We have already started to tidy up various prominent areas and will soon be upgrading the riverside beach area by the Spey."

Anne Elliot, SNH area officer for Nairn and Kinveachy, said:

"SNH is pleased to be involved in the development of the footpath network at



At the opening of the new bridge over Dreggie Falls are (left to right): Lyndon Westlake, Highland Council Project Officer; Alison Black, Grantown Walks Committee; Highland Councillor Basil Dunlop; Andrew Norval, Factor, Seafield Estates; and Ewen Sutton, Grantown Walks Committee.

Grantown in association with the Council."

The project is being coordinated by The Highland Council's Planning and Development Service.

Highland Schools Orienteering training

Up to 200 school children aged between 9 and 12 took part in a mammoth orienteering training course on Strathspey Estate in the Anagach Woods, Grantown on Spey, last summer

The event was organised by the Highland Schools Orienteering Association to teach children orienteering skills. Organiser Howard Edge, Head Teacher of Abernethy Primary School, said:

"This is the third time in the last four years that we have held the event in the Anagach Woods - which have the advantage of being suitable for all ages and abilities."

Recreational activities of this kind provide the opportunity not just to learn about orienteering but also to appreciate the countryside, wildlife and birdlife for which the area is renowned.

Tenanted Farm visits

In the last 12 months, Lord Seafield and senior members of the Estates' management team have made a number of visits to tenanted farms. Six visits have been made at Strathspey, and nine visits at Cullen.

These visits have been well received by tenants, acknowledged as an important way to improve communications, and provide a valuable opportunity for discussion. More are planned in the near future.

Future of Peter Fair secured

Working with the organisers of the Peter Fair which visits Buckie every July, Seafield Estates have agreed a solution to the drainage problems at the Rathven fair site which had threatened to force the event to move to another location.

In recent years the fair has been plagued by poor weather and the ground has become easily waterlogged. Now Seafield Estates have agreed to meet the cost of drainage works, and have confirmed an extension of the Fair's licence agreement. The licence extension provides confidence for the operators to improve the standard of roads to the site.

Peter Fair is an important social event for the area. The Estate is keen that it should continue to come to use the Rathven site and that continuity should be maintained. In addition the event makes a valued contribution to the local economy, and it is hoped that by providing this assistance, and perhaps with a run of better weather in future years, it can maintain popularity.

Edward Percival, of the Fair's organisers, commented:

"We are delighted with the progress that has been made. These have been major steps in securing the future of the Peter Fair for Buckie - especially considering that these improvements are for an event which only happens for three days each year. With this work, the Peter Fair should be a firm fixture in Buckie's calendar for years to come."

New footpaths and cycle ways in Strathspey

The Estates are involved in a number of initiatives to provide recreational footpaths and cycle ways around Aviemore, Boat of Garten, Grantown on Spey and Carrbridge, including the development of sections of the Sustrans National Cycle Network.

Working with Sustrans, Highland Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, local councils and other local groups including the Nethybridge Interpretative Project Group, eight miles of the Speyside Way between Cromdale Bridge and Aviemore have been agreed, linking into the Aviemore Orbital Footpath.

Work is underway on a section of the Speyside Way at Kinchurdy near Boat of Garten - a shared route with the National Cycle Network, and further north, the National Cycle Route runs through farmland and woodland to Carrbridge, with another section following General Wade's old military road through Sluggan and Insharn to Slochd.

More recently agreement has been reached with Highland Council and Grantown Community Council, and work has begun on the upgrading of a path and reconstruction of a bridge to the Viewpoint, Dreggie, Grantown on Spey (see *Grantown viewpoint walk item above*).

The Estates strongly support the concept of local footpaths, both for residents and for visitor use, and recognise the National Cycle Network both for its recreational value and the contribution it will bring to the local economy in Strathspey.

New Cullen tennis courts opened

The Earl and Countess of Seafield were kindly invited by the Cullen Restoration Committee to open two new courts at Cullen Tennis and Bowling Club last year.

The club's tennis courts had fallen derelict many years ago, but the hard work of a fund raising committee enabled sufficient money to be raised to match a Sports Council Lottery grant of £16,140 and for the two new all-weather tennis courts to be built.

The ground for the Tennis and Bowling Club was gifted to Cullen by the Seafield family around 1901, and the original courts were officially opened by the current Earl's mother in 1927. The new courts were appropriately opened during National Tennis Week.

Carrbridge War Memorial

An initiative by Carrbridge Community Council and The Highland Council has resulted in the Carrbridge War Memorial being refurbished and its site improved. The project, which also received financial assistance from Seafield Estates, involved cleaning of the stonework, replacing missing lettering, and the felling of trees so that the memorial which stands on a mound in woodland, can be seen from Main Street, Carrbridge.

Lord Seafield, whose grandfather is named on the Memorial in the roll of those who died, was present at an official inspection of the refurbished Memorial last July, with representatives of The Highland Council, the Community Council, and a number of local residents who lost family in the two world wars.

World Orienteering Championships

A section of the World Orienteering Championships took place on Strathspey Estates last summer.

The opening event of the Championship took place in birch woodland on Mullochard and Auchterblair, Speyside, with a full range of races from childrens competitions to ladies and mens elite events.

The national team relay championship also took place in the Loch Vaa area and in Kinchurdy Woods with teams from more than 37 countries taking part.

Seafield Estates go on-line

A new web-site has been launched to allow easy access to information about Seafield and Strathspey Estates.

The initiative is part of the Estates' ongoing management and development programme. The web site gives information on the Seafield family history, the family businesses, physical areas covered by the Estates and their split in terms of land use, numbers of employees, numbers of farm and residential tenancies, and turnover.

The web pages also outline the Estates' management policy for human resources, business and the built heritage, natural heritage, and involvement with the wider public.

The decision to make this information readily accessible has been taken because people want to know more about the land which the Estates own and manage, and the enterprises which depend on it.

Fordyce quarry and limekilns

Seafield Estate is gifting the former Fordyce quarry site and limekilns to the local community through the Fordyce Quincentenary Committee.

The Committee is currently securing funding to enable the development of the site into a community woodland and wildlife area. A final development plan is being worked up, and grant applications are in process.

As soon as these steps have been achieved and the necessary legal work concluded, then the site will be handed over to the community for work to begin.



Seafield Estates web address is: <http://www.seafield-estate.co.uk> and is linked to the Strathspey Estates site at <http://www.strathspey-estate.co.uk>

If you have any comment to make on the content of this news review, or wish to contact Seafield or Strathspey Estates on any relevant issue, then you can write or telephone our offices as follows:

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Carrbridge Primary Pupils visit Lorgie Burn

A visit was arranged last summer for 21 pupils from Carrbridge Primary School to the Lorgie Burn, a tributary of the Spey.

Frank Law, Sporting Manager, with a school group from Carrbridge Primary at the Lorgie Burn.



One of the aims of the visit was to demonstrate the importance of regeneration work being undertaken on the burn. Because of gravel movement from the top of the burn, the watercourse had become blocked lower down with the consequence that salmon and sea trout were unable to swim upstream to spawn.

Having cleared the blockages in the stream, the Estate has undertaken remedial work and stabilised the gravel beds to prevent further gravel being washed down the burn.

In total Strathspey Estates have been involved in five in-stream or bankside improvement projects within the Spey catchment over the last 12 months.