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Forth Estuary Forum

e bulletin

October 2017

Forth Estuary Forum AGM to be held on Thursday 23rd November 2017

Since our conference was held jointly with the Tay Estuary Forum, our own AGM will be held separately on **Thursday 23rd November 2017**, at the North Queensferry Hotel, at 9:30 for a 10:00 start.

In addition to normal AGM business and a presentation on "**Assessing the Condition of the Forth and Tay**" by the Forum Manager, there will be a talk from **Alison Baker** of the **Forth Fisheries Trust** on "**Anadromous fish fisheries in the Forth - diversity and connectivity**", so please put the date in your diaries. Papers will be circulated shortly; everyone is encouraged to attend but only members will have voting rights.

Volunteers collect 500,000 'nurdles' from beach at Bo'ness

An estimated 540,000 plastic pellets were collected from a small section of beach on the Firth of Forth.

Volunteers spent eight hours collecting the lentil-sized pellets, known as nurdles, from

"barely noticeable" and nurdles still make up a large proportion of beach sediment.

The pellets are melted down to make plastic products ranging from bin bags to bottle tops.

The UK processes around three million tonnes of plastics a year, almost all in nurdle form. The pellets are easily spilled during handling, and if they are not cleaned up, they can end up down drains, in waterways and eventually at sea.

Fish and seabirds can mistake them for food and they can release potentially toxic chemicals into animals that eat them or feed near them. The beach clean on the western edge of Kinneil nature reserve in Bo'ness was organised by Fidra and the Marine Conservation Society Scotland earlier this month as part of [The Great Nurdle Hunt](#).

More details can be found [here](#).

Forth to Farne Way Pilgrimage Route formally opened

A new Pilgrimage route winding through "outstandingly beautiful" coastal scenery from North Berwick to Lindisfarne was launched on 15th October.

The Forth to Farne Way, one of five long distance Pilgrims' Ways currently under development in Scotland, will take modern-day pilgrims along pathways and through places linked to Christianity's earliest days in Scotland.

Several of the ancient Celtic saints are identified with places along the Forth to Farne Way including St Baldred, St Cuthbert, St Aidan and St Ebba.

Pilgrims travelled the coastal route from Lindisfarne to St Andrews in mediaeval times, crossing the Firth of Forth by ferry from North Berwick. The modern day 72 mile pilgrim route follows parts of three well-marked designated footpaths: the John Muir Way, and the Berwickshire and Northumberland coastal paths.

A steering group of local volunteers have worked for three years to develop the route, identifying 11 stages, varying from two miles to 13 miles, where waymarkers and support services are planned to be sited.

Secretary of the Scottish Pilgrim Routes Forum, Nick Cooke, said: "The route goes through some very important places with a strong pilgrimage heritage, from Whitekirk, East Lothian, to Coldingham Priory which was one of the largest Benedictine monasteries in Scotland in its day.

Places of interest along the route include the Scottish Seabird Centre at North Berwick; St Andrews Kirk, also in North Berwick; Preston Mill; Fast Castle; St Abbs harbour and the Lindisfarne causeway and Priory.

More details can be found [here](#).

£325 million Rosyth biomass plant could still go ahead

A proposed biomass plant in Rosyth which went into hiatus could still happen. The £325 million project was approved by the Scottish Government in 2014, just two months before the applicants pulled out.

Forth Energy Ltd, a joint venture between Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE) and Forth Ports, wanted to build a combined heat and power biomass plant that would create 570 jobs at the Port of Rosyth. After they withdrew the scheme lapsed but an application to renew the consent could see it being revived by another operator.

A Scottish Government spokesman said: "Consent to construct and operate the Port of Rosyth Biomass Electricity Generating Station was issued to Forth Energy Ltd on January 24, 2014 subject to certain conditions, one of which being that it should be implemented within five years from the date of the decision.

"At this time, the consent has still to be implemented. Forth Energy Ltd has requested a further extension of the timescale for implementation of this consent, which is under consideration."

The plans for a wood-burning biomass plant in Rosyth were first announced in 2009. Forth Energy said the £325m investment would provide low carbon energy to the local area, more than 40 per cent of Fife Council's electricity needs and an economic boost in West Fife of £26m a year.

The plant would provide 500 jobs during construction and 70 operational jobs at the port. Forth Energy also had plans for similar biomass plants at Grangemouth and Dundee.

More details can be found [here](#).

Progress hailed on future of Fife Power Station site

"Major progress" is being made in determining the future of the site of the former Longannet Power Station. Fife Council co-leader David Ross said discussions with neighbouring local authorities and complex owner ScottishPower are proving productive.

Since closing in 2016 there has been uncertainty about the future role of the site, though a screening opinion request to demolish the local landmark was lodged with the council in July.

As part of the process to find a future use for the vast area, Mr Ross said a recent meeting with Scotland's Business Minister was one of several progressive steps. "We had a very positive meeting with Paul Wheelhouse and have made major progress with regards to the future of the site," he said. "ScottishPower...have now agreed to a meeting.

“We have also had a wider discussion between the three council authorities – Falkirk, Clackmannanshire and Fife – looking at economic development of the Upper Forth area.”

The coal-fired power station's demise came at a price of 230 direct jobs and an estimated 1,000 indirect jobs and at a cost of £50 million a year to the local economy. Since then, there has been a concerted effort to try to ensure a brighter future for the locality and £300,000 was granted to Fife Council to help projects in communities affected by the closure, particularly Kincardine, Culross, Valleyfield, Newmills and Torryburn.

The future of the vast site has remained in the news following the power station's closure, with householders nearby having complained about ash clouds forming, a legacy from the lagoons where coal for the power plant was stored. ScottishPower has since moved to address these concerns, though health chiefs denied that there was any danger to the public.

It is thought it could take up to five years to demolish and remediate the complex, however.

More details can be found [here](#).

From sea to plate: how the fishing industry is staying afloat in Fife

An interesting article on the fishing industry in Fife can be found [here](#).