

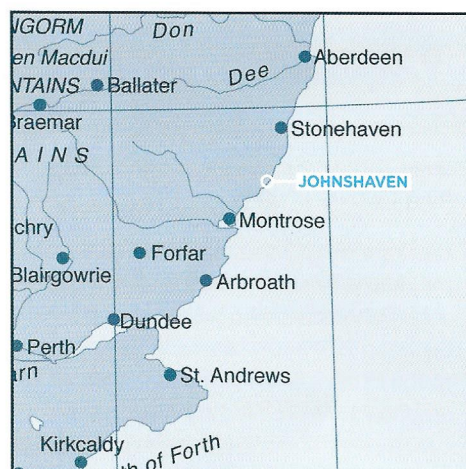
SHARK Johnshaven

Small but active

By **Rebecca Chambers**, Chairperson



Johnshaven's Environmental Group



SHARK Johnshaven is a small environmental group based in the North East fishing village of Johnshaven, Aberdeenshire, with a population of approximately 660. Established in 2006, the group aims to promote and protect the wildlife and habitats of our local area. We also aim to encourage a more sustainable lifestyle for the residents of Johnshaven, and in particular carry out and promote activities which reduce our village's contribution to global warming. Though small we have a very active membership and are involved in various projects:

Garden waste composting

We take some pride in having pioneered community-led composting schemes in Aberdeenshire. Our garden waste recycling project sees green waste from the village composted at our own compost site. The scheme is entirely volunteer operated with around 20 residents taking part in a rota which provides a fortnightly collection service of garden waste from 90 residential households within the village. Residents join our group as members and are then entitled to have a reusable garden waste bag collected from their kerbside. Since 2011 we have used our own tractor and trailer to do this, and we are continuing to make improvements to the composting site. Our tractor 'Polly' is used to turn the compost regularly, and once it is mature we sieve it and offer it back to members for use in their gardens. Through the kerbside collection scheme we divert approximately 13 tonnes of garden waste from landfill every year.

Village clean-ups

We're always looking for ways to improve the environment of our village. Amongst these have been participation in Keep Scotland Beautiful activities (always popular), and we have also helped to keep the gorse at bay on the footpath following the old railway line North of the village.

Beach cleans

One of our regular activities are beach cleans to keep the foreshore North and South of the village free of litter and to protect wildlife. We carry out 3 beach cleans a year, and during each one we survey the rubbish collected as part of the Marine Conservation Society Beachwatch campaign.

The latest beach clean was held in September during which we collected an oil container, 1 bag of cement, 2 bikes, 3 plastic fish boxes and 10 bags of assorted rubbish. In the 12 years we've been doing this we've collected over 60,000 items of litter!

A living roof

Living roofs are becoming more common as communities recognise the benefits they bring. We decided to create one for the container we use at the compost site as an illustration of what can be done and to improve the container's appearance. This was an ambition of ours for quite a long time before we finally managed to complete it in 2016. The method we used was to purchase a "Living Meadow" turf in rolls, used with some of our own compost, and placed on a wooden frame. More information about green roofs is available at www.livingroofs.org



The Inverbervie balsam bashers are barely visible amongst the forest of Himalayan balsam.

Plastic bag free

Our hope is to make Johnshaven plastic bag free! Following on from the Scottish Government's introduction of the charge for disposable plastic bags we wanted to build on this by focusing on the damage such bags cause in our environment. So we organised a competition for pupils at the local primary school to help in the design for a reusable jute bag, which was then distributed free of charge to village households.

Helping other places

Our environmental efforts sometimes take us outwith the village. For example, we did some bracken bashing a few miles down the coast at St Cyrus National Nature Reserve, one of the most diverse nature reserves in Britain. And we recently joined the Brighter Bervie group in neighbouring Inverbervie to help them clear a patch of the invasive non-native Himalayan Balsam before it gets out of control.

Tom Campbell, Chairperson of the Bervie group says:

"I reckon we cleared over 90% of the flowering plants. Some were in the midst of prickly gorse which we didn't manage to penetrate. So next year we're planning a better prepared follow-up attack to eradicate the invaders."

Funding

We have benefitted from a number of grants to help support our activities and we also organise our own fundraising events. Our Drop-in Cafes during the North East Open Studios event are always popular and help us raise funds.

Community Network

Our group joined TCV's Community Network in 2010, primarily to access the insurance scheme for our volunteers. The Network Bulletin is a useful publication which I read cover to cover, sometimes removing articles and thinking - we could do that!

Looking ahead

Throughout our history we have tried whenever we can to introduce fresh ideas into our little community. Looking to the future, we intend to keep doing new and innovative things to benefit the village and its environment.

More information about our group is available on our Facebook page and website at:
www.shark-johnshaven.btck.co.uk