

**FAIR ISLE MARINE ENVIRONMENT AND TOURISM INITIATIVE**  
**NEWSLETTER No. 1**

**January 1998**

*Edited by Elizabeth Riddiford*

It had been intended to announce the start of an ambitious and innovative project in 1997, which consisted of a 5 year programme with a large element of marine archaeology. The cost, however, was nearly £1 million and could only go forward if major grant was received from the Millennium Fund and Europe (Objective One).

Both, sadly, were rejected. Perhaps the scheme was too ambitious, too innovative and, without the support of a designation, such as a Marine SAC, lacked sufficient official support. Even a much smaller re-application to Objective One through the Highlands and Islands Partnership Programme will almost certainly be rejected in a month's time.

This much smaller scheme has not been entirely unsuccessful in raising funds. The Rural Challenge Fund has given a grant of £45000 over 3 years. The National Trust for Scotland has found, to date, £25000, partly funded through our raffle; RSPB sponsored *Managing the Sea for Birds* and FIBOT have offered help in kind, which is particularly valuable. Accepting there are timing problems, the elements which can be implemented under the Rural Challenge grant are set out later in the Newsletter.

It is interesting to look back at the beginning of this story. Why was the Marine Initiative invented in the first place?

The idea grew from a desire by the Fair Isle community, first voiced at an island meeting in the late 1980s, to seek ways to safeguard the marine environment. The community had become very concerned about an alarming deterioration in marine resources and its negative effect on traditional activities and sea bird populations, and their respective roles in attracting tourists to the Isle. They voted unanimously to find ways to halt this trend and many contacts and consultations followed. Eventually this led to a partnership with the Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust and the National Trust for Scotland, as owners of the Isle, to form the Fair Isle Marine Environment and Tourism Initiative, so named to address all the issues pertaining to the marine area, from environmental concerns, the Isle's traditions and culture, social well-being and economic fabric, to which tourism is a particularly important contributor.

It is unusual, and possibly unique, for a maritime community and voluntary bodies to take so pro-active a stance. The only other example is St. Abb's Head, near Eyemouth, which is also a National Trust for Scotland property.

Above all, the health of the marine environment underpins so much of what is quintessentially Fair Isle that not only is its conservation essential, but it is not really surprising that the community should take such a strong lead.

Planning began in 1995 and appeared to receive wide support. The work was shared between the partners, NTS taking the lead on funding, the community and FIBOT on the work itself and all partners doing all they could to widen interest in the proposal, (for example, at the Copenhagen Seas at Risk Conference 2 years ago and 'Scotland's Living Coastline' this October).

The Newsletter gives the background and work plan.

## News from the larger island

'Policy without money is just conversation' so fund raising has been a major part of the work here, sometimes successful and sometimes not.

The major disappointment is the reluctance of HIPP, who look after Objective One monies, to agree our application, the reasons for which are not entirely clear.

However, the next step is to form the committee recommended in *Managing the Sea for Birds*, which has not yet got an agreed name, and at its first meeting on 13 January 1998 in Edinburgh, it will, amongst other things, give itself a name, start to work out who else should be involved and how a Marine Management Plan can be implemented through voluntary agreement with all maritime users.

Links will be formed with initiatives elsewhere, e.g. the Firths Initiative and Coastal Management schemes (SNH), the Marine Campaign (RSPB) and NTS's proposed Coastal Project for the twenty first century (rather like the NT's Operation Neptune).

In short, we plan to do as much as possible with what we already have, and can do without grant, to strengthen the case for more resources before making further applications to Europe.

There is a long way to go.

***Anthony Bryant, NTS***

The above puts the Initiative into perspective. The rest of this newsletter comprises:

1. The FIMETI proposal summary, which gives details of the background to the project, the participants, the project aims and objectives, and an outline plan of the programme to achieve these.
2. The elements of the Initiative which will be implemented under the flag of the Rural Challenge in its first year.
3. An account by participants of the activities planned for 1997.

## **The Fair Isle Marine Environment and Tourism Initiative**

### **Project executants:**

**Lead:** *The National Trust for Scotland*  
**Partners:** *The Fair Isle Community*  
*The Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust*

### **Project co-ordinator:**

*Nick Riddiford (The Fair Isle Community Association)*

## **Background**

### *1. About the isle*

Fair Isle is a small (1089 ha) island, 39 km SW of the southernmost tip of the Shetland archipelago and 43 km ENE of the nearest Orkney island, North Ronaldsay. It is administratively and culturally part of Shetland. Historical records and archaeological evidence show that, despite its isolation, it has enjoyed a long period of continuous human occupation dating back at least 2,000 and possibly as many as 5,000 years. The only community farther from land in the British Isles was St Kilda, which became depopulated this century. Fair Isle may have gone the same way but for the intervention first of George Waterston who bought the island and set up a bird observatory in 1948, then the substantial efforts of the National Trust for Scotland which accepted ownership of the isle in 1954. Their involvement, in partnership with a determined and resourceful community, led to improvements in infrastructure and socio-economic development, assisted by regional and national bodies - not least successive Shetland councils. In response, the population grew from a recorded all-time low of just over 30 people in the mid 1950s to the current level of approximately 70. The population is a mix of island families, tracing their ancestry back in time, and more recent settlers. Irrespective of descent, the community has retained its cultural identity and is proud of its heritage and traditional ways. Transport services and other facilities ensure that isolation is a thing of the past, but not by many years: the first regular boat service between Fair Isle and Shetland did not come until this century, and money became the currency of income and expenditure only with the Second World War and the coming of troops to the isle. In the past, tourism to Fair Isle was left to adventurers such as Sir Walter Scott, a visitor in 1814, but now tourism is recognised and welcomed as playing a key role in sustaining the island economy and, indirectly, the viability of the community. The marine environment has always been central to the island's culture and heritage and it is this resource, above all, which draws visitors to the isle.

### *2. The marine environment*

Fair Isle's marine environment is pollution-free, relatively unspoilt and rich in marine life due to upwellings, currents and the juxtaposition of North Atlantic and North Sea water bodies. In response to these factors it shares with Shetland the highest diversity of breeding seabirds in Europe. The offshore sea bed is a major spawning and feeding area for fish, particularly sandeels. Fair Isle's large seabird populations have been under recent stress from prey shortages. Though some of these shortages reflect environmental changes, Fair Isle's seabirds must compete with a modern commercial fishery for the same prey species. Fair Isle's seabirds are important not merely because of diversity of species and nationally significant population size but because of their educational and recreational role (as one of Britain's best and most accessible sites for seeing seabirds), their position at the top of a complex but fragile ecosystem and their role in attracting tourists (to the economic benefit and maintenance of a viable Island community). They are also very well known, having been subject to one of the longest continuous studies of any seabird community in Britain. Fair Isle's coastline is recognised as a Site of Special Scientific Interest for its seabirds and, along with the moorland, is a Special Protection Area for birds. However, realistic

conservation of the seabird community cannot be achieved if the feeding areas are not protected.

The small human community is also part of Fair Isle's delicate land and marine ecology. The economic impact of an industrial fishery offshore (occurring in the same areas as those used by seabirds) is not restricted to damage to seabird populations, but has already been felt by the Island inhabitants who can no longer obtain the quantity and quality of fish previously caught for local consumption and small-scale commercial gain. By 1989, the island community became so concerned about the deterioration of the marine resource and its negative effect on traditional activities, seabird populations and their respective roles in attracting tourists to the isle, that they voted unanimously at an island meeting to halt this trend. Their recommendation to seek ways of safeguarding the environment by careful management of the resource, as traditionally practised by the islanders over millennia, was taken up immediately by the National Trust for Scotland. The Trust, in partnership with the Fair Isle community, has striven to implement this recommendation, with the view of returning the marine environment to a sustainable state to the benefit of islanders and tourists alike, before the opportunity was lost. Implementation of the programme proposed here has very wide ramifications because it will set the national and international standard for the New Millennium in integrated protection, interpretation and appreciation of the marine environment, one of the twentieth century's most neglected conservation issues.

### *3. Environmental recognition and value*

Fair Isle holds The Council of Europe Diploma. The Diploma is awarded to sites of outstanding natural quality where man lives harmoniously with his environment. The four-year Diploma was first awarded in 1985 and has been renewed twice. In 1995, the isle won the Scottish Crofting Township Environmental Award.

### **Participants**

This initiative comprises a proposal put forward by a partnership of the National Trust for Scotland, the Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust, the Scottish Institute of Maritime Studies and the Fair Isle community. The proposal is many faceted and the participation of a number of institutions is planned to achieve the initiative's aims.

Project participants and supporters are

*The Fair Isle community through the Fair Isle Community Association*

*The Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust*

*The National Trust for Scotland*

*The Scottish Institute of Maritime Studies*

*The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds*

*Scottish Natural Heritage*

*The Seawatch Foundation*

*The Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen*

*The North Atlantic Fisheries College*

*The Shetland Fishermen's Association*

*The Shetland Amenity Trust*

*Shetland Museum*

*The British Oceanographic Data Centre*

### Project Aims

- to provide adequate protection for the marine environment surrounding Fair Isle in recognition of its cultural as well as its environmental values and traditions, for the benefit of the Isle, its inhabitants, its visitors and the nation.
- to demonstrate the continued role and value of safeguarding the marine resource through sustainable management as traditionally practised by Fair Isle folk.
- to maintain and enhance the marine environment and related traditional activities for and into the new Millennium.
- to provide facilities and interpretation which will
  - a) benefit and serve tourists;
  - b) widen the range of tourism attractions offered by the isle;
  - c) make Fair Isle a model and focal point for environmentally positive tourism.
- to initiate and act as a model for integrated protection, interpretation and appreciation of the marine environment, setting national and international standards for the new Millennium for one of the twentieth century's most neglected conservation issues.

### Objectives

1. To develop a comprehensive marine environment baseline to achieve a better understanding of Fair Isle's marine environment at the Millennium and to allow for the planning of future management.
2. To provide resources for and development of interpretive programmes and dissemination in all appropriate forms which will demonstrate the richness and importance of the marine environment, particularly as it applies to Fair Isle.
3. To serve as a focus for visitors of all age groups and levels of interest through a programme of participation which will introduce members of the general public to active study and understanding of the marine environment.

An integrated approach is envisaged, combining all three objectives outlined above, to meet the aims of providing a resource for education, conservation and general public access to and appreciation of the marine environment; and to develop a standard in marine protection and interpretation which will provide a model for marine sites at the national and international level.

All these elements will be used together to achieve a fourth objective:

4. To develop the processes for an integrated approach to management of the marine nearshore environment by involving the entire local community in partnership with other users of the marine resource to establish a voluntary marine nature reserve, encompassing a 5 km belt around the entire island, **to be declared at the Millennium.**

## **Outline Plan of Work**

### 1. Information gathering programme (Objective 1).

*Objective:* to develop a comprehensive marine environment baseline to achieve a better understanding of Fair Isle's marine environment at the Millennium and to allow for interpretation and planning for sustainable management.

*Means of achievement:* an information gathering programme, related to fish population dynamics, breeding seabird success in relation to fish availability, catch records, marine archaeology and other historical research and the establishment of a comprehensive baseline in all aspects of the marine environment. This will be achieved through organisation of the information gathering programme by category. A number of institutions will be participating in the programme.

### 2. Interpretive programme (Objective 2).

*Objective:* to provide resources for and development of interpretive programmes and dissemination in all appropriate forms which will demonstrate the richness and importance of the marine environment, particularly as it applies to Fair Isle.

*Means of achievement:* the main dissemination programme will be based at a Fair Isle Visitor Centre which will employ a range of traditional and state-of-the-art interpretive materials including audio-visual presentations, permanent and evolving displays, and interactive display materials. Interpretation of the maritime heritage will also involve some restoration of artefacts. The bodies and individuals involved in the information gathering process will work together to provide the basic material. They will also advise on interpretation, but responsibility for conversion into interpretive materials and displays will be taken by other specialist bodies, including the National Trust for Scotland, the Shetland Amenity Trust and Shetland Museum.

### 3. Active participation programme (Objective 3).

*Objective:* to serve as a focus for visitors of all age groups and levels of interest through a programme of participation which will introduce members of the general public to active study and understanding of the marine environment.

*Means of achievement:* the form of hands-on experience will be determined by studies undertaken in the years leading to the Millennium. Nevertheless, some aspects of the programme have already been identified. The participation element requires all chosen studies to be suitable for the general public at all levels of knowledge and interest, and will involve careful, well-planned supervision and training through field schools. The lead bodies for these activities will be the Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust through their SNH Ranger scheme, the Scottish Institute of Maritime Studies, the National Trust for Scotland and members of the Fair Isle community.

### 4. Integrated interpretation and activities programme (particularly in relation to appreciating, supporting and sustaining the voluntary marine nature reserve - Objective 4).

*Objective:* to benefit from the establishment of a marine nature reserve by combining elements of the

interpretive and active participation programmes to facilitate tourist involvement in, and education about the marine environment.

*Means of achievement:* Integrated activities will be designed to cater for general tourists and as an education resource. Some will incorporate aspects of appreciation, support and planning for sustainability which directly address the issue of the voluntary marine nature reserve and its partnership approach to planning and management (Project objective 4). Others will be designed purely to instruct or to engender appreciation of the marine environment generally at an aesthetic, conservation and/or scientific level.

## **The Fair Isle Marine Environment and Tourism Initiative**

### **The Rural Challenge sponsored development**

The Rural Challenge award was the impetus to launch the Initiative. It was awarded to the Fair Isle community and members of that community are currently involved in implementing the programme. To implement other elements of the Initiative, it will still be necessary to bring in our partners and other participating bodies; and great efforts are being made to obtain the necessary funds to do this. In the meantime, a first phase programme has been developed which applies the grant money directly to the objectives of the Initiative and targets those key issues which can be achieved using the expertise available on the Isle.

Fortunately, the range of expertise on the Isle is wide and this has enabled us to tackle a number of subjects. The Initiative calls for a first phase of information gathering, and this takes time. Nevertheless we felt that, without losing sight of our overall objectives, we should set as a target for ourselves the production of tangible evidence that the work was being done. We wanted to do this to demonstrate that the grant was being used effectively and that the Rural Challenge had been truly engaged.

A Framework was drawn up, therefore, identifying outcomes which would meet these requirements.

### **The Framework**

This section lists the items identified for inclusion in the Rural Challenge part of the Initiative.

### **Outcomes**

1. REPORT: Management Plan for a Marine Protection Area in Fair Isle offshore waters.

Responsibility for this has been taken by Nick Riddiford and the partnership body is the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. This report outlines the many issues involved in planning for a marine protection area and looks at ways in which management may be implemented effectively. It takes as its starting point the feasibility of extending the Special Protection Area, designated under the European Union's Birds Directive, from its current terrestrial area to the marine area beyond - essential if the objectives of the SPA are to be fully achieved. The final report *Managing the sea for birds - Fair Isle and adjacent waters* was published in October 1997.

2. REPORT: An integrated plan for sustainable management of the marine resource.

This report builds from the first to establish an integrated approach to sustainable management of the marine resource. Responsibility is being taken by Nick Riddiford and the partnership body is the National Trust for Scotland. Before embarking on the report, the Initiative will consult widely to establish areas of common ground which may form the basis of sustainable management, to the long-term benefit of all users of the marine resource. It will emphasise the many reasons over and above mere protection of birds which qualify Fair Isle as a site of exceptional maritime interest, requiring sensitive, sustainable management with

the benefits such actions would bring. There is expected to be a great deal of input from the Fair Isle community. The report will be compiled during the course of 1998.

3. INTERNET WEB SITE: Fair Isle's marine environment and human activities relating to the marine resource.

In our quest to inform about our Initiative and the issue of marine environmental management, we shall be disseminating news through a range of media. An Internet Web site is one such avenue we shall be employing to keep interested parties informed of our efforts and progress. Responsibility for establishing and up-dating the site has been taken by Dave Wheeler. The material he uses will be supplied initially by Nick and Elizabeth Riddiford on aspects of the marine environment and Anne Sinclair and Emma Perring on aspects of human activities relating to the marine resource.

4. MARINE INITIATIVE NEWSLETTER. Fair Isle's marine environment and human activities relating to the marine resource.

The Initiative will not ignore more conventional or traditional means of dissemination. A regular newsletter will allow us to present summaries of FIMETI Initiative work done, planned and in progress, with examples. Responsibility for editing the Newsletter will be shared by Dave Wheeler and Elizabeth Riddiford, in partnership with the National Trust for Scotland. It is anticipated that contributors to newsletters will include Anne Sinclair, Emma Perring, Nick Riddiford, Stewart Thomson, children from the Fair Isle School and many others of the community and friends.

5. MUSEUM DISPLAY, George Waterston Centre.

The Initiative has the flexibility to incorporate islanders and visitors alike into the information gathering process. This is already being planned with one such group, the Fair Isle school bairns. Fair Isle is an Eco-School, which means that it actively espouses environmentally responsible practices. The children's participation includes assisting with the collection of marine environmental baseline information and monitoring the bruk (discarded materials) washed up on Fair Isle beaches. As follow-up to this work, they have prepared a super display of their findings for the Island Museum at the George Waterston Memorial Centre. Responsibility for this work is being taken by Nick Riddiford, in partnership with the Fair Isle Eco-School and its Head, Ruth Stout. Members of the Fair Isle Museum Committee have acted as advisors.

6. NEWS REPORTING, The Fair Isle Times.

The Fair Isle Times was winner of The Scotsman's schools newspaper of the year award in the first two years of its existence. The paper, which appears once a week in term time, was such a success that it expanded to include contributors of all ages, thus disqualifying itself from future awards! Nevertheless, the paper still thrives, with the school bairns taking the front pages and other contributors the rest. The "Times" is already being used to disseminate FIMETI information and the activities of the school bairns in assisting with the Initiative in particular have been reported extensively. The paper, which appears once a week in term time, has a surprisingly wide readership, with subscribers in many parts of the World. The Fair Isle Times is therefore a good way of keeping both the island and "overseas" supporters of Fair Isle informed of FIMETI developments.

## **Involvement**

Many of the individual projects have been outlined above. However, for completeness, the following outline of participants and their subjects of study is given below.

Nick Riddiford

Subject area:

Management Plan for a Marine Special Protection Area in Fair Isle offshore waters.

Outcome:

REPORT (RSPB): *Managing the sea for birds - Fair Isle and adjacent waters.*

Subject area:

An integrated approach to sustainable management of the marine resource.

Outcome

REPORT (NTS)

Subject area:

Fair Isle's marine environment - baseline.

Outcomes:

WEB SITE; NEWSLETTER; MUSEUM DISPLAY

Less tangible outcomes:

Collection of reference materials; development and establishment of database resource.

Dave Wheeler

Subject area:

Input of marine environment/marine resource material onto web site.

Outcomes:

WEB SITE; NEWSLETTER

Anne Sinclair

Subject area:

Human activities relating to the marine resource - the historical perspective.

Outcomes:

WEB SITE; NEWSLETTER; MUSEUM DISPLAY

Emma Perring

Subject areas:

Changes in fish stocks; changes in human activities - the socio-economic perspective.

Outcomes:

WEB SITE; NEWSLETTER

Elizabeth Riddiford

Subject areas:

Fair Isle's marine environment - database computerisation of information gathered; photographic record and mapping of Fair Isle coastal environment.

Outcomes:

WEB SITE; NEWSLETTER

Less tangible outcomes:

## Photographic & environmental database

Ruth Stout and Fair Isle Eco-School

Subject areas:

Flotsam and jetsam surveys (using Marine Conservation Society methods); shoreline surveys, collection of reference materials and baseline information. Museum display preparation based on findings.

Outcomes:

WEB SITE; NEWSLETTER; MUSEUM DISPLAY; FAIR ISLE TIMES REPORTING

In addition, baseline information about fish and other marine life abundance, distribution, diversity and population structure has been gathered during routine fishing excursions by Fair Islanders. Stewart Thomson has taken responsibility for collating this information which continues to be gathered by all those who go fishing from boat or land.

### **Individual reports**

Each newsletter will include examples of work planned or done. For this first issue, Elizabeth Riddiford, Anne Sinclair and Emma Perring describe aspects of their work, and in particular the steps they have taken to establish a framework for addressing the requirements of their particular projects.

## **MARINE ENVIRONMENT DATABASE**

### **Aims and Objectives**

There are two main elements to the Marine Environment Database. They are:

1. *The establishment of a species database for all biota.* This will give information on distribution, abundance, seasonal variations, habitat preferences (vertical as well as horizontal, e.g. position in the water column) and associations with other biota.
2. *To provide a description and location of habitats and/or biotopes.* This can be achieved by survey, photographs etc. for an overview of main physiographic and biological types (e.g. dominant species). Finer details, particularly about the faunal/floral communities of each habitat can be drawn from the Species Database.

### **Initial Work**

To achieve these aims the following steps are being implemented:

1. *Species and habitats*

- List all possible habitat/biota types. Lists can be added to and amended as more information becomes available.

## 2. *Species database*

- Construct database.
- Begin entering data already available.
- Collect further data from literature and other sources.
- Collect field data from accessible sites.

## 3. *Locations and descriptions of habitats*

- Walk perimeter of the Isle taking photographs.
- Prepare initial maps, using photographs and notes showing habitats and zonation. This will probably need a series of maps for different features and/or locations.

### *Species & Habitats*

In making lists the following requirements were taken into consideration:

- The need to achieve comprehensive documentation of the types occurring.
- The need to achieve uniformity of labels for each type, both for consistency of use here on the Isle and to make them compatible with national classifications.
- The usefulness of adopting a nationally compatible coding system for entries to the types in the database. This is required to save space and makes entries easier - once mastered.

Compatibility with national systems was considered to be vitally important, so the JNCC's Marine Nature Conservation Review was contacted. This contact proved very useful because MNCR has provided substantial guidance, and made available to us its own standard classification & coding system. The Marine Nature Conservation Review has also given us access to data collected from Fair Isle waters during the MNCR Survey of Shetland, Foula and Fair Isle, undertaken for the Nature Conservancy Council by the Field Studies Council and the Oil Pollution Research Unit in 1987. This includes a marvellous collection of underwater photographs, which have been scanned on to computer and prepared as professional quality slides.

### Species Database

FIMETI Marine Environment Database has been set up on the spreadsheet program Excel, with the long-term view of transferring in to a relational database, using Access. Considerable advice has been sought and received from the Marine Nature Conservation Review.

The Database is organised as follows:

1. Each **file** represents one group (e.g. sponges)
2. Each **page** within that file represents one species
3. Each row represents an individual **field**

The **Fields** included so far are: DATE; LOCATION; GRID REFERENCE; ABUNDANCE; HABITAT; BIOTOPE; SUBSTRATUM; EXPOSURE; DEPTH; ASSOCIATIONS; SOURCE; NOTES

Definitions of these fields follow those used in the Marine Nature Conservation Review.

To guide field workers and information gatherers, and as a reference to the definitions for data entry, the following written instructions have been prepared:

- *Location*: where possible, use specific names as on the 1997 (Wendy Christie) Fair Isle map. Mark boundaries of "location" on maps.
- *Grid reference*: not essential, particularly where species are widespread within location. Most useful for unusual records, notable species or locations not named on 1997 Fair Isle map.
- *Abundance*: assess using Marine Nature Conservation methodology and codes (given in FSC/OPRU 1988).
- *Habitat*: general description of site based on physiographic features or suites of biotopes (e.g. shingle shore). For example, zonation patterns involving long, thin biotopes or those that are found near vertical surfaces can be treated together as a single unit above the biotope level.
- *Biotope*: site of uniform characteristics based on **life forms**, the life forms being its dominant or prominent biota (e.g. barnacle/furoid dominated shores).
- *Substratum*: could be physical (e.g. on boulders) or biotal (e.g. on kelp stipe or frond).
- *Depth*: see FSC/OPRU 1988 entries.
- *Exposure*: we need to define levels (e.g. very exposed, moderately exposed, moderately sheltered, sheltered).
- *Associations*: see FSC/OPRU 1988 entries.
- *Source*: probably best to enter a code (e.g. FSC/OPRU) then cross-reference to a full bibliography held elsewhere (e.g. on a *Word* file).
- *Notes*: for items which do not easily fit in, or expand on, categories listed above.

The database has the flexibility to cope with both casual and quantitative records.

- Casual records include occasional records made by ourselves or others - this will give an opportunity to anyone resident on or visiting the isle to contribute.
- Quantitative records will be collected using specific, nationally established methodologies. For the database, the quantitative records will require the use of abundance notation keys. We shall have to carry a card or sheet of these notations into the field (at least at first) to remind us of the various categories. The notation keys will follow those used by the Marine Nature Conservation Review.

Participation in the collection of records is open to all, and the Fair Isle School bairns have been helping us with some of the field survey work.

#### Location & Description of Habitat

This phase was begun in the summer, initially by taking a series of habitat photographs. Information recorded at the time included date, time of day, location and sequence of photographs for later cross-reference. Photographs were taken from fixed points which can easily be relocated. Photographs of the fixed points were also taken to assist relocation. Subsequent photographs from these points will be used to monitor changes in the characteristics of the locations photographed. Prints were considered best for this purpose. The initial photographic record concentrates on accessible locations and areas exposed at low tide (e.g. beaches). This is best done initially at low tide and during the summer months. With poor weather during the mid summer, 1997 photographs were taken in August.

The start of systematic recording of shore habitats is also planned. This will give an opportunity to test the methodology as well as produce a preliminary description of habitats which can be used in conjunction with the photographic results.

#### Final Remarks

Some records are already on the database. Many more records are to follow, from historical and literature sources as well as those which will be collected during this year and beyond. The usefulness of the database will grow as more records come in.

#### Reference

FSC/OPRU. 1988. *Marine Nature Conservation Review Survey of Shetland, Foula and Fair Isle 1987: Volume 2*. A report to the Nature Conservancy Council from the Field Studies Council and Oil Pollution Research Unit, January 1988. FSC/OPRU/15/87.

*Nick & Elizabeth Riddiford*

**HISTORICAL RESEARCH: Human Activities and Utilisation of the Marine Resource (up to circa 1920)**

AIM

To provide an accurate historical socio-economic perspective on which to base a comparison of the relative position of the present day marine resource and its social, dietary, environmental and economic viability.

INITIAL PLANNING

Assess and correlate archive material available, first locally (Fair Isle, Orkney and Shetland). The line must also be set further afield: Scotland, England, Scandinavia, the Low Countries and North America are all sources of relevant information. Often in private collections, hidden among miscellaneous information and rarely catalogued, the collection of relevant source material requires much detective work.

ULTIMATE GOAL

To demonstrate the role of the marine environment and its significance in the history and culture of the island.

*Anne Sinclair*

**HISTORICAL RESEARCH: Human Activities and Utilisation of the Marine Resource (from circa 1920)**

AIMS

- to obtain information which will illustrate the dynamic nature of changes in fish populations.  
Initially it will be established whether fish stocks have changed around Fair Isle since the 1920s, and if so what these changes have been, in particular regarding the dominant species in the area. It is presumed this will relate to the target species of commercial fishermen utilising the marine resource around Fair Isle.
- to relate this information to other data on events or impacts, to establish possible causes for these changes.  
The reasons for change in dominant/target species could be numerous, including physical factors such as successful fertilisation, food abundance for developing larvae, current direction and strength (normal, weak or strong), changes in water temperature (each species having an optimum temperature range for optimum growth), and human factors, which might be economic (eg. markets and size of boats), political (eg. regulations) and technological developments.
- to illustrate the impact of these changes on human activities  
These could be on economic (eg. employment), social (eg. leisure), and cultural (eg. diet) activities.

TO ACHIEVE THESE AIMS

- establish changes in commercial fishing
  - Relevant Literature incl.- Food from the Sea, James Nicolson
    - Fair Isle - an island saga, V, Thom
    - FAO yearbook of fisheries statistics
  - Internet
  - Shetland Times Archives
  - Harry's almanac
  - Shetland Fisheries Association
- establish changes in fish stocks and fishing on Fair Isle

- interviews with people on Fair Isle - this will require the formation of a semi-structured questionnaire
- museum archives, particularly photographs
- films made on/about Fair Isle
- literature written on Isle: diaries, writings about fishing
- interviews with individuals in Shetland, with knowledge of fishing around Fair Isle

As various avenues are explored to find information, it is inevitable that more will become apparent. Ultimately it is hoped that the changing utilisation of Fair Isle's marine resource since the 1920s with particular relevance to fish stocks, and the human activities related to it, will be recorded.

***Emma Perring***

*FIMETI Newsletter No. 1 was written by Anthony Bryant, Nick Riddiford, Elizabeth Riddiford, Anne Sinclair and Emma Perring*