

Chair's Report 2008

It is very gratifying to look through last year's newsletter with all our plans, and find that GreenFerry continues to uphold its excellent record in delivering projects. We have had another very successful year.

We started off in February with a grand award ceremony for all our volunteers hosted for us by the Orocco Pier. Around 65 invited guests attended and keenest CleanFerry and GreenFerry volunteers received certificates to thank them for all their efforts. As well as this, each of our four primary schools and Queensferry High School nominated two pupils who were also deserving of awards for their environmental work. John Barrett, our MP, presented the awards and commended all the volunteers for all their efforts to improve or conserve the environment. That event got the GreenFerry year off to an excellent start.

Hanging baskets

We ordered 54 baskets for the town this year (these were positioned mostly in the High Street) and we must thank local businesses and other organisations for continuing to support this project.

The baskets are watered by an automatic watering system which GreenFerry installed two years ago. In May, and before the baskets arrived, we paid for these systems to be switched on and checked. However, this year we also asked traders to attend to their own systems if they had any problems, and this worked well.

Planters/Containers

I am happy to report that, astonishingly, we filled 64 containers of varying shapes and sizes, for both the summer and winter seasons.

Our planting operations are now rather extensive and carefully prepared by two of our committee members, Andrea and Jeana. They present us with a colour-coded sheet for each tub or box in a feat of planning which would put any military operator to shame. Between them, Andrea and Jeana have made the planting process much easier to operate and also easier to cost. We must thank them for this, as well as the volunteers, particularly the teenagers, who turned out for our two planting days. Planting days are now firmly established as "events" in our annual calendar, and the community undoubtedly appreciates the show of flowers we get following our efforts.

However, as the year progressed, we then went on to deliver much more. This brings me to...

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Garden Projects

We received a West LDC grant of £2,600 to improve some small forgotten garden areas in the village, as well as to install extra planters, and to buy additional tools.

Under the direction of Jeana, we began improvements to the police garden, removing and replacing old plants and soil and topping it all off with two tons of gravel – no small job let me tell you. We then tackled Brewery Close, and gave that area a similar makeover which was enhanced by the donation of a large palm tree from a resident. Moving that across the High Street and up the stairs at West Terrace was another story in itself -- see our website for the photographs.

We then put four large tubs at Scotstoun shops with the help of the lads from the Pool Hall (a project led by June) and these survived reasonably well.

Next, we turned our attention to West Terrace and Hill Court and installed six boxes on the railings, and three large tubs at the entrance from the Loan. Beavers and cubs helped with those as part of their anniversary celebrations, and once again under the direction of Jeana. Hill Court then saw improvements to garage doors and roofs thanks to our working in partnership with the council, to help bring this about.

Morison Gardens was next on the list. To start with, two GreenFerry volunteers, June and Jeana, engaged the residents there in a participatory exercise to gather their ideas. They then encouraged the residents to come out and paint the railings, which six of them did. At that point, the plan was to improve the planting area in the centre. However, we were pleased when the council became involved and drew up new plans with us to convert the area to a small play area with planters. This was to cater better for the young families who lived close by. Now, the area is a small sunny play area for young children with three large planters for older residents to enjoy.

Sam Smith, from Edinburgh Council, listened to our ideas, discussed new plans with us over two meetings, and organised contractors to do the necessary building work while we photocopied plans to show to residents. The council's input and support allowed GreenFerry to concentrate on getting the residents involved in choosing plants, planting up the containers, and taking over the maintenance. The height of the planters is such that older people can do a little bit of light gardening as they feel able to.

We are very grateful to Sam for the time he has spent with us on these projects. Both Hill Court and Morison Gardens are fine examples of partnership working and community engagement.

Dalmeny Bench

Somewhere in the middle of our garden projects and later into the summer, we saw our bench at Dalmeny installed as planned, with the help of a grant from Age Concern Scotland to finish off this project. Edinburgh Council also supported the project by installing the bench for us at no charge. Local people were generally

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delighted with their bench, not least members of Dalmeny Art Club who made the very first donation towards this project last year.

Painting Parties

The late summer also saw the resurgence of our painting parties who continued to paint the railings along the High Street and reached mid-Terrace. For this we must thank two more volunteers, Danny and Cath. They turned out most regularly, along with others, at least once a week to “paint the town”. This project is ongoing and will restart when the weather improves.

Alas, we had less success in tacking the gritting bins and were unable to arrange a day when the council would pressure-clean them so that we could spruce those up too. (Ah well, you can't manage everything.)

Garden tools

One day we will make an inventory of all our tools, which are now quite considerable in number. Suffice to say that our tool store has grown again this year with donations of a wheelbarrow, and some more rakes and spades. These (and all our tools) were cheerfully cleaned and sharpened by Rupert Crowe, a retired engineer, to whom we owe our thanks. We also acquired some power tools in the shape of a generator and alligator shears. All our tools are available to the community.

Freecycle

Freecycle continues to grow under the watchful eye of Graham Clarkson. This network is always busy as people offer and collect items which otherwise might go to landfill. Members have increased to a staggering 584 and Graham does a very good job of monitoring all the activity, on his computer.

Video

We were very pleased to see our video project complete thanks to the excellent filming and editing skills of Mike Spring. This video reflects a complete year of environmental work going on in South Queensferry, and we will use it now to secure grants for larger projects, as well as for publicity, and as a fund-raiser.

Publicity

This is where I like to think that my own skills are best used. Last year, I sent out articles about our activities fairly regularly to the local press, wrote and edited the Ferry Attractive newsletter, and gave two powerpoint presentations about our group and its activities, in neighbouring towns. (Kirkliston and Linlithgow.)

Agilent Technologies, who sponsor our newsletter, have agreed to increase our print run this coming year from 1000 to 1500, and we are very grateful for this added support.

GreenFerry also featured in BTCV's updated guide for new groups, “Supporting Communities and Environmental Volunteering” and we had full page coverage in the Forth Estuary Forum's magazine “Forthsight”.

I was also interviewed twice on radio (Jubilee FM and Talk 107) about the group's activities.

As well as this, GreenFerry became the subject of a masters degree research student, Susan Chaudoir, from Edinburgh University. In her dissertation, Susan commended GreenFerry Trust for our "bridging and bonding" abilities in the community and noted that people's understanding of environmental issues often begins by engaging with environmental activities at a local level. Susan's findings were also reported in the local press. We would particularly like to thank Susan for making her photographs available to the group afterwards. Which brings me to...

GreenFerry Website

Our website is maintained by our treasurer Andrea, in her spare time (!). She has systematically uploaded a fine collection of photographs project by project, showing what we have done. The website is helping us to build up a good archive, and allows grant-givers to quickly see the kind of work we do. Thank you, Andrea.

The website also shows pictures of our group at the Ferry Fair for which we must thank June, our "artistic director". June arranges all the costumes for this event, and somehow rustles up a team to parade elegantly down the High Street in front of an audience of thousands. It is all good publicity -- so she tells us. June made a particularly good set of costumes this year, including the "burry man and woman" from green plastic bags which are themselves well worth looking at on our website: <http://www.greenferry.org.uk>

Awards

Last year, you may remember, GreenFerry was runner up in the Calor Gas Scottish Community of the year. The cast-iron plaque has now been situated in the centre of the High Street opposite the Boat House steps, thanks to Kenny Sinclair.

For a fourth year in a row, the village of Queensferry won the "Best Urban Village" in the Keep Edinburgh Growing Competition and we are fairly sure that the contribution which GreenFerry makes is very significant.

(And I guess I have to include this) I was nominated for "The Edinburgh Award", and, though I was just pipped at the post by Ian Rankin, I had a lovely evening in the company of other volunteers around Edinburgh. For this, I must thank June for nominating me and making it possible for three GreenFerry volunteers to enjoy the slap-up meal courtesy of Edinburgh Council.

Continuing with our now "tradition" of awards, BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers) recently nominated GreenFerry for Community Group of the Year in its "Green Heroes" awards 2008. We will know the outcome of this in April.

Another "achievement" (not quite an award) was to get full charity status this year, but I will leave Andrea, our treasurer to say more about that.

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CleanFerry

CleanFerry, as you know, is now a sub-group of GreenFerry, concerned mainly with litter, and managed by two GreenFerry volunteers.

The highlight of CleanFerry's calendar this year was the BIG litter-clear-up organised jointly with Iain Jamison (Community Neighbourhood Action Unit) and Iwan Thomas (Park Ranger). This single event attracted -- wait for it -- **540** people in the biggest clean-up that Queensferry has ever seen.

It took place on 8 February 2008, and involved children from all four Primary Schools, Queensferry High School, two nursery groups, two eco-congregation groups, the Rotary Club South Queensferry, Lothian and Borders Police, Queensferry Ramblers Group, Tesco's staff team, Burger King staff, Scotmid staff, Councillors Norman Work and Kate MacKenzie, Environmental Services staff, the Park Ranger, Environmental Wardens, Community Council, and many residents who also joined in independently. Tesco's provided refreshments for the younger volunteers, and lunch for the volunteer adults and organisers.

The event achieved massive publicity in/on

- STV's "Scotland Today" (broadcast that evening)
- BBC News website
- Keep Scotland Beautiful Website (front page)
- The Queensferry Gazette (Three articles including one front-page spread beforehand, and double centre spread afterwards.)
- Evening News pre-publicity
- City of Edinburgh's Outlook Magazine
- (still to come) GreenFerry's newsletter, "Ferry Attractive"

Edinburgh Council's Parks and Gardens programme supported the BIG litter pick with a grant of around £1000 to buy 70 extra litter-pickers and gloves. We also bought and tried out six hoops for keeping the bags open which have proved incredibly popular and useful.

Now, you may remember from last year that CleanFerry worked with the Park Ranger to organise a clean-up of the cyclepath between Dalmeny and Kirkliston which involved residents from both villages. Following the success of that, I was invited to give a formal presentation at Kirkliston Community Centre about CleanFerry activities. This led to more litter-picks taking place in Kirkliston and, soon after, the establishing of "Kirkliston Environmental Group". Many thanks are due to Iwan Thomas, Park Ranger, for his part in this development.

In September, the annual BeachWatch clean-up went ahead as usual in September with June organising that (thank you June) and involving Queensferry Primary School.

CleanFerry's litter teams continue to be active every two weeks, and "Litter-pickers anonymous" now numbers over 50. (This is a group of individual volunteers who go out in their own time and pick up litter in an area near them.) It delights me to see such enthusiasm amongst our volunteers though it saddens me that this job must be done at all. CleanFerry will try to be more active in campaigning after this, for business and council support in tackling this growing problem.

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Future plans

Now to the future. It's always a little dangerous perhaps to outline your plans for the coming year, but it does rather concentrate the mind. This year, as well as continuing our established projects, we have four new possibilities.

Ferry Fringe Arts Festival

We would to put on an environmental art project in June which will bring more people into the outdoors. June has agreed to take charge of that.

East Terrace

The time has come for us to support the residents of East Terrace to work together to improve that area, and join in the "High Street" project. We hope to begin this with a small window-box project and (breaking news!) I have JUST heard that we have been awarded another grant of almost £1,000 to get this project underway.

Rosebery Court

Young Rotary (Interact) have now set up a committee which shadow GreenFerry and is interested in planting projects. We have linked them up with Sam Smith from Edinburgh Council, and hope to support them while they organise raised beds for this area so that disabled people there might enjoy gardening.

Priory Garden

We are presently looking at some rather dull areas around the Priory Church which need a bit of a facelift, and hope to work with the council and other groups in replanting some of this area.

Training

Funds are such that we can now, we hope, develop the skills of volunteers and we plan to make full use of the training programmes of BTCV, Greenspace, and others.

Finally, I cannot end this report without once again thanking **all** my fellow committee members who have, between them, taken on a great deal of the work you have heard about here. They are an extremely committed bunch of people, incredibly talented, and always, always, patient and good humoured.

Thank you.

Joyce Faulkner
GreenFerry Chair
March 2008