

# Da Voar Redd Up – Secrets of Success

## Involving Communities

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## **1. Introduction**

Da Voar Redd Up is an annual clean up of Shetland's beaches and roadsides after the winter storms to get the islands clean for summer visitors, wildlife and the residents. The cleanups are undertaken by local residents on a voluntary basis and, out of a population of 26,000, the event regularly attracts over 3,000 volunteers.

The East Grampian Coastal Partnership has a major aim to reduce the amount of litter on the area's beaches and involves volunteers to achieve this aim. A project was undertaken to investigate the success of the volunteer recruitment of the Shetland event and how it is managed. In April 2007 a research trip was carried out which included interviews and participation in a cleanup. This report presents the results of that trip.

## **2. Shetland Amenity Trust:**

Da Voar Redd Up is organised by the Shetland Amenity Trust (SAT) and it is important to understand the nature of the work this organisation do, and their public image, to understand the success of the Redd Up.

The SAT was formed in 1983 and its aims are set out below:

- to protect, improve and enhance buildings and artefacts of architectural, historical, educational or of other interest in Shetland
- to provide, develop and improve facilities for the enjoyment of the Shetland countryside and its flora and fauna
- for research, study and recreation

The SAT employs about 70 staff delivering a range of services including archaeology, biological recording, woodland development, architectural heritage (renovation of historic buildings for public use), heritage and culture service and environmental improvement. The construction, woodland and "muck and bruck" squads are often visible out and about in the community.

### **2.1 Relationship with Council**

The SAT is a charitable trust separate from Shetland Islands Council but they have close links. There are three to four councillors as members on their Board of Trustees (out of a total of 12 Trustees), they work in partnership and have service level agreements.

One example of working in partnership is recycling. The Council purchased and sited amenity recycling bins, the SAT manages the recycling and any profits. Cans are sorted and sent away for processing but the SAT has it's own glass recycling plant, Enviroglass, which produces various types of quality products for sale on and off the islands.

The SAT also has service level agreements with the Council such as for Archaeology and Heritage Services. The Council pays the SAT to undertake

what are usually local authority duties such as curating, researching, Museum & Archives and managing archaeological resources.

The SAT also maintains biological records for the islands.

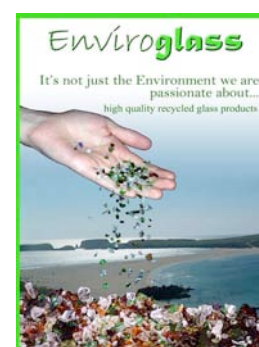
## 2.2 Income

The SAT performs a number of services to the islands and employs a number of staff so obviously needs an income to do this. Money comes from a variety of sources. As previously mentioned it receives money from the Council from service level agreements. As it is a charitable trust it can apply for grants, awards and to the Lottery. It has it's own money making projects and receives money from partnerships. A considerable sum is also annually received from the Shetland Charitable Trust - when Sullom Voe Terminal was originally built, BP agreed to annually donate a small percentage of the profit from each barrel of oil passing through to the local community. The Shetland Charitable Trust manages this income.

## 2.3 Environmental Improvements

The SAT implements a number of ongoing projects for environmental improvement of the islands. The list below illustrates how much they are involved in.

- Environment Group – the SAT lead the local group
- Closure and clearance of illegal fly-tipping sites
- Muck and Bruck squads uplift large scrap items e.g. dumped vehicles – this is a major problem on the islands and a very visible one to all residents and visitors
- Facilitate the collection and processing of aluminium cans and send for recycling enabling local groups to raise funds
- Collect agri-plastics from participating crofts for recycling
- Collect Christmas cards for recycling in association with Royal Mail
- Community re-paint scheme
- Salvage and re-use of building materials
- Glass recycling
- Environmental awards to local groups – not only do the SAT apply for awards they also give money to local groups doing environmental work



## 2.4 Litter Prevention

The SAT are also specifically involved in litter prevention as part of their environmental work. Again a list illustrates how much they are involved in this area:

- Litter prevention education programme within most primary schools delivering the Litter Prevention and Recycling Roadshows.
- Provide litterbins to youth groups and schools and provide free hire of dome-top bins for community events.
- Monitor Shetland's roadsides for the presence of litter (in partnership with Shetland Islands Council).
- The SAT is a partner in a number of Litter Prevention Committees.
- Attend local events and shows giving information and raising awareness of litter prevention.
- Dunna Chuck Bruck stickers, other merchandise and litter prevention posters.



## 3. Da Voar Redd Up

In 1988 the SAT decided to do something about the state of the islands' beaches and roadsides. The geographical nature of the islands mean these areas collect large amounts of rubbish during the winter storms producing unsightly views and hazards to visitors and wildlife. A press release was issued and a few posters displayed calling for volunteers to help clean up the islands. 400 volunteers replied and took part in the first ever Da Voar Redd Up. A phenomenal number in itself, yet this year, as of 27<sup>th</sup> April 2007, 3921 volunteers were registered. As mentioned previously, the nature of the SAT contributes to the success of the event but the organisation also plays a part so is described below.

### 3.1 Organisation

In January a mail shot is sent to all previous volunteers, including the results of the previous year's event, asking if they wish to volunteer again. If they reply that they do they are sent a personalised registration form with their name, their beach name and where to leave the rubbish for collection. They are asked if they want any sponsor forms, how many gloves, bags and safety vests they require, how many volunteers they expect and when they plan to conduct the cleanup. If they do not reply they are deleted from the volunteer database and sent no further correspondence. A press release is issued and posters are put up before the event to attract new volunteers. Personalised packs are sent on receipt of registration forms including gloves, bags, vests and a reply form to confirm the clean up was completed. Volunteers are again written to in September to thank them for their efforts and with a summary of the results of the cleanups.

### 3.2 Packs

Packs are sent to registered volunteers with resources provided by the SAT paid for with their own funds and from sponsorship. The packs include gloves, bags and safety vests. High visibility safety vests are issued because the cleanups include roadside verges. Initially the vests issued were re-usable but cost £3-4 each and few were returned. Disposable recycled plastic vests are now used and possibilities for recycling are being investigated. They have the Dunna Chuck Bruck slogan and familiar logos of SAT and Keep Shetland Tidy. The bags also have these familiar logos and those of the sponsors, are made from recycled plastic and are a unique colour.



Each pack is personalised – the groups may be individuals or whole schools, companies or churches – there is a whole range and selection of communities involved and they each receive a pack unique to their requirements.

Also sent in the pack are guidelines about safety and disturbance to wildlife, an information sheet including where to place the bags after collection and a very basic recording sheet for types of litter – e.g. plastics – none, a little, a lot, massive.

### 3.3 The Clean-ups

Da Voar Redd Up is focussed on one weekend but volunteers can undertake their cleanup whenever is most convenient for them, and accounting for the weather. Announcements are made over the local radio station to alert traffic and remind people of the event. Volunteers clean their chosen beach or roadside on their chosen day and put all the rubbish in the recognisable bags provided and leave in the designated place for collection. The SAT Muck and Bruck squad collect and remove the rubbish in the days after the cleanups. If it has been sorted into recyclables these are kept separate. The Council pays any landfill tax. The volunteers return their survey and confirmation forms and once these are received some community councils offer up to £50 to groups.



### 3.4 Does it make a difference?

Environmentally – yes. Beaches were visited during the investigation and the picture below on the left shows one that had never been cleaned under the Redd Up initiative. The Beach on the right is just up the loch from the first and has been regularly cleaned as part of the initiative. The difference is clear.



However, it is not easy to get all beaches this clean. The pictures below show a cleanup in progress and it can clearly be seen that there is a large quantity of pieces of fishing net over the beach. It is very difficult to clear the beach entirely of these bits of cord and the volunteers did their best but a lot was left behind. However, there was still a vast improvement.



Community involvement – yes. The numbers illustrate the success of the initiative. Approximately 15% of the population take part, and do so year on year. All ages, walks of life and sections of the community are involved.

#### 4. Conclusions

There are a number of factors that contribute to the success of Da Voar Redd Up and these are described below:

- Organisers are familiar and respected – The SAT are involved in so many projects, which must touch most people's lives on the islands in some way. What they do is **positive**, and seen to be so. For example removing abandoned vehicles, maintaining heritage, promoting environmental responsibility.
- Language – “Da Voar Redd Up” means The Spring Clean Up. Use of local dialect encourages a sense of ownership.
- Recognised images – The Dunna Chuck Bruck slogan is ever-present on roadside and lay-by signs and on litterbins. This, and the ongoing programme of litter prevention, constantly reinforces the message on litter. The use of logos on vests and bin bags give the event an identity and continuity year on year.
- Volunteers are attracted when they are young and continue to volunteer. One of the volunteers on the clean up attended by the author had been participating since he was a boy and his school took part in the event. He is still participating into adulthood.
- Community spirit and pride – The author was only there for one weekend but there was a very strong impression of a feeling of community on the islands, whether people had lived there all their lives and their families go back generations, or they were new incomers. There is also a strong feeling of pride. For the first ever clean up event to attract 400 volunteers the people must have already recognised the litter problem and wanted to do something about it.
- Incentives - Up to £50 are given to groups completing clean ups by some community councils. This is obviously not a huge incentive and would be unlikely to be a major factor in the success of the event but is a nice touch and makes volunteers feel valued.
- Personalised – Volunteers are provided with all the equipment they need in a personalised pack.
- Flexibility - Volunteers aren't dictated to about what they can do and when. They are asked to participate and given opportunities and resources to help them.

#### 5. Discussion

The aim of the investigation was to gather information and learn from the Da Voar Redd Up model if any aspects could be implemented in the East Grampian area.

One of the key factors in the success of the event appears to be the organisers. In East Grampian it would be logical to compare the Coastal Partnership with their role in beach litter prevention. However, the SAT has been in existence a lot longer, has a much larger remit and as a result has a far greater recognition in the local community. Maybe in time as the Partnership grows and becomes more familiar to the local communities it could cultivate the same respect and recognition, leading to volunteers willing to contribute and participate in projects.

The use of local dialect seems to be important. This could easily be implemented in east Grampian. The use of recognised images and slogans were also important. Until the Partnership has a greater public profile the use of their logo has limited value but obviously until it is used it can't be recognised.

The community spirit and pride, and schools involvement can be considered together. Whilst communities in East Grampian work well within their own area some are very isolated and possibly feel removed from the greater area. Whilst the same could be said of communities on the Shetland Islands it doesn't appear to hinder the recruitment for the Redd Up. East Grampian also has several large towns and the city of Aberdeen, which maybe have different community dynamics and can't be compared with those of Shetland. Without a doubt many residents of East Grampian have a great amount of pride for their local area but there are maybe a large number that don't. This is a problem beyond the scope of this report.

The East Grampian Coastal Partnership has been promoting the Adopt-a-Beach and Beachwatch litter survey schemes. The Redd Up model cannot be directly transferred to promote these initiatives. One of the factors contributing to the Redd Up success is its flexibility. Beachwatch and Adopt-a-Beach are quite restrictive to enable continuity of data. It was suggested in Shetland that the survey aspect of these schemes deterred volunteers. The beaches there get so dirty that people would rather get on and clean a large stretch of beach than spend all day surveying a few metres. The priority seems to be cleaning and improving the beaches for everyone, not obtaining data. From the author's experience this can be a problem in East Grampian too.

In conclusion, some aspects of the Redd Up experience can be of value in East Grampian but the differences in the nature of the communities will probably always hinder recruitment of volunteers. However, if all parties involved continue to raise awareness and promote respect for the environment, and the EGCP grows and raises it's profile, recruitment of volunteers and involvement with communities can only improve.

## **6. Acknowledgements**

A huge thank you must go to Mick Clifton of the Shetland Amenity Trust who gave up much of his time and contributed most of the information for this report.

The group of volunteers who cleaned Nesbister Beach must also be thanked for allowing the author to join them, take photographs and interview them.