

## BEACH CLEANUP GIVES BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

Offenders on Community Service Orders are taking part in a beach cleanup this weekend, working alongside the Marine Conservation Society in Aberdeenshire, Moray, Angus, Dundee and Perth & Kinross.

The cleanup has been coordinated through the Criminal Justice Social Work Services which ensures that people placed on community service orders carry out work that has a direct benefit to their community, makes proper reparation for their actions and also encourages the development of personal and practical skills that might hold future benefits for those taking part.

**Harriet Dempster**, president of the Association of Directors of Social Work said the work of criminal justice teams within local authorities was vital to balance appropriate and visible punishment with the provision of additional support to prevent re-offending.

“Community sentences which promote change, ‘payback’ and reintegration works for less serious offenders,” she said. “In 2006-07 8,436 Community Service Orders and 8,404 Probation Orders were made by Courts across Scotland. Criminal Justice Social Work Services (CJSWS) are working with these individuals to encourage and support them take responsibility for their actions, make informed choices and change their behaviour.

“In 2006-2007 Courts in Scotland imposed in excess of 1 million hours of unpaid community service. The range of unpaid work is considerable, and includes gardening for the elderly, removal of graffiti, maintenance of pathways and a range of other tasks that improve local communities.”

**Justice Secretary, Kenny MacAskill** said: “Low level offenders need to pay back their dues to communities through swift, tough and visible justice. While serious, dangerous criminals should quite rightly expect to be sentenced to lengthy jail terms.”

“This project shows exactly what can be achieved by those serving community sentences. This coordinated annual beach clean will see offenders from across Aberdeenshire, Moray, Angus, Tayside and Perthshire join volunteers from the Marine Conservation Society for a weekend of hard graft to clean up local beaches. Instead of getting free bed and board from serving a short term sentence in our prisons at taxpayers’ expense.”

“We live in a beautiful country and beaches should be enjoyed by communities and visitors. It is fit and proper that those who harm and damage our communities should repay their debts with relevant and meaningful projects. Beaches are often blighted by litter or dumping and who better than offenders to help restore our coastlines to places of pristine beauty. Clean beaches mean a safe environment for all to enjoy.”

“This Government is determined to ensure that Scotland has a penal policy that protects the public, reduces reoffending and builds safer, stronger communities for all our people.”

**Anne Saunders**, Scottish Projects Officer for the Marine Conservation Society (MCS), said: “To have Criminal Justice Social Work Services taking part in MCS Beachwatch 2009 is a real benefit to us and the communities where the work will be carried out.”

“MCS Beachwatch 2008 results showed that litter on our beaches had increased by a staggering 110% since the annual survey began in 1994. By getting involved with Beachwatch 2009 CJSWS is helping us highlight this problem and directly benefiting local communities by cleaning up these specific beaches.”

This weekend’s cleanups are a forerunner to a national community service scheme event taking place in April 2010 to coincide with Keep Scotland Beautiful Spring Clean Campaign which will again involve teams of offenders co-ordinated by the Criminal Justice Social Work Services.