

GlaxoSmithKline donates £10,000 to seabird nesting raft in Montrose Basin

A £10,000 donation from pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) is being used by a wildlife partnership to provide an unusual home for nesting seabirds in Montrose Basin.

A purpose-made nesting raft is to be anchored in Montrose Basin Local Nature Reserve, in the hope that it will attract species such as Arctic and Common Tern. The initiative is being managed by a partnership of Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), the Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) and the Angus Council Ranger Service.

The floating platform will be covered in crushed shell to imitate shingle on which the birds nest and will have raised sides to prevent chicks from falling off.

GSK manufactures active ingredients for pharmaceuticals at Montrose on a site on the north side of the River South Esk estuary. Each spring, Arctic and Common Terns home in on areas of gravel at the factory site and it is hoped that this year breeding pairs will find the raft in the Basin a more attractive 'des. res'.

The raft is part of a wildlife management strategy which includes using decoy dummy birds to persuade the terns that the 750 hectares tidal Basin offers a better sanctuary to raise their broods.

"In previous years, once the birds had established their nests we left them to get on with raising their young," said a GSK spokesperson. "However they can be a bit of a problem, particularly if any members of staff get too close to what the birds consider their territory. We have had incidences of staff being dive-bombed as the birds attempted to protect their nest sites."

"By helping to support the work of the wildlife partnership we hope that birds will take up residence in the Basin rather than the factory."

Neil Mitchell, SWT Montrose Basin Ranger, explained that the aim was to have the raft in position by May in time for the terns' return from their winter migration.

"Final details are being discussed with the Oban-based company building the raft. It is being purposely designed to use materials recycled from fish and mussel farms," Neil said.

"The raft will be moored in front of the Scottish Wildlife Trust's visitor centre. The goal is that it will both provide an acceptable alternative to nesting in unsuitable places and increase the Basin's biodiversity."

It is hoped that up to 40 pairs of terns will use the raft. Similar nesting rafts have been used successfully in Britain and abroad.

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Editors' notes

The attached image is available free in conjunction with this press release and must be credited to "Scottish Wildlife Trust".

Montrose is home to three main species of terns: Arctic, Common and Little Tern. All three flock to Montrose to feed on small fish found in abundance in the rich waters around Montrose Basin.

Montrose Basin was designated as a Local Nature Reserve in 1981 and the reserve is managed in partnership by SWT, Angus Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, National Trust for Scotland, British Association of Shooting and Conservation and local landowners.

The Tayside LBAP Tern Working Group is part of the Tayside LBAP Coast & Estuaries Forum who are working together to conserve and enhance tern populations in the area. This group consists of representatives from SWT, Angus Council, RSPB, SNH, and GlaxoSmithKline.

SWT is the largest voluntary body working for all the wildlife of Scotland, representing more than 30,000 members who care for wildlife and the environment. SWT seeks to raise public awareness of threatened habitats and species and manages more than 120 reserves Scotland-wide.

Montrose Basin Visitor Centre is open daily, 15 March – 15 November from 10.30 am – 5.00 pm and from 16 November to 14 March (Friday – Sunday only), 10.30 am – 4.00 pm.

