

Portobello boat to take part in regatta this summer

✖ *Local teams to take part in biggest ever St Ayles skiff regatta at Aberdeen Asset Management Scottish Traditional Boat Festival*

Rowers from Portobello, South Queensferry and Newhaven will be participating in the nation's biggest ever St Ayles skiff coastal rowing regatta at The Aberdeen Asset Management Scottish Traditional Boat Festival will this summer. The local crews from Rowporty, South Queensferry and Newhaven Coastal Rowing will battle it out with 16 other wooden boats from around the country in a bid to be crowned kings and queens of the waves. The Festival, now in its 19th year, takes place in the village of Portsoy on the North-east coast of Scotland on June 23 and 24 and is the country's biggest celebration of maritime culture and heritage.

Roger Goodyear, chairman of the Aberdeen Asset Management Scottish Traditional Boat Festival, says the coastal rowing races will provide one of the most exciting elements of the event programme. He adds, "We are delighted that Portobello, South Queensferry and Newhaven will be sending their respective skiffs to take part in this historic event. This will be the third year that the Festival has staged a St Ayles skiff regatta, and the record numbers entered underlines the strength of the current coastal rowing resurgence. I know that all the teams are very excited in taking part in some very good natured competition against so many other community-built skiffs.

"Coastal rowing is nothing like the modern public perception of rowing as a sport – these crews have no streamlined, lightweight boats and instead of a flat calm surface they have to contend with the unpredictable waves and swells of the open

sea.”

Coastal rowing was a popular pastime in Scottish communities in the early half of last century, with rival towns and villages often battling against each other in local regattas. However, the sport almost died out with the arrival of motorised boats and the decline in traditional industries which led to these communities becoming little more than commuter towns.

The Scottish Coastal Rowing Project was launched three years ago to help encourage communities to return to their roots. Groups come together to fund-raise around £3,000 to buy their own St Ayles skiff kit – a design commissioned from internationally renowned boat owner Iain Oughtred by the Scottish Fisheries Museum at Anstruther in Fife – which they then build themselves. The boats are used in a number of ways, from competitive sailing, to leisure rowing and as the focus for community events. Around 50 skiff kits have been sold to date.

Although 19 boats have registered to take part in the Aberdeen Asset Management Scottish Traditional Boat Festival, each boat will be accompanied by several different crews as there are races for men, women, mixed teams and different age groups. There are classes for first year skiffs and more experienced crews and races will take place over a stunning 2km stretch of coastline before finishing at the historic 17th century Portsoy harbour.

Rowporty will be looking to emulate their success at last year’s regatta in Portsoy. Their teams of male, female and mixed group rowers took the overall championship after winning the lion’s share of races. South Queensferry will be looking to improve on their very credible seventh place, and Newhaven, who did not compete in 2011, will be looking to make their mark on the event this year.

Mr Goodyear adds, "It really is quite incredible how the Scottish Coastal Rowing Project seems to have captured the imagination of people up and down the country. The Festival has been a staunch supporter of the project since it was launched, so it is very fitting that it will play host to the country's biggest ever St Ayles skiff regatta."

The Aberdeen Asset Management Scottish Traditional Boat Festival draws in excess of 16,000 people to the shores of Portsoy every year. It attracts heritage vessels from far and wide, and there is an extensive programme of events including displays of traditional boatbuilding and associated skills, a crafts marquee, music from around the world, a food fayre and cookery demonstrations.

For further information about the Aberdeen Asset Management Scottish Traditional Boat Festival visit www.scottishtraditionalboatfestival.org.uk Updates about this year's Festival are also on Facebook and Twitter – search for @STBFestival. An adult day ticket costs £8, children aged five to 18 and concessions are £5. Adult weekend tickets are priced at £12 and children and concessions at £8. There are also family tickets available which allow entry for two adults and three children for £25 for a day ticket and £35 for a weekend. Children under five go free and there is no charge for parking.

The Reporter was at the launch of the Jenny Skylark last year. Here is our video:-