

SPKA Meeting 10 & 11 March

For the week leading up to the planned Scottish Power kite Association meeting at Balmedie, Aberdeen, some of us locals were out regularly making sure the beach was clean and tidy for our visitors from various parts of Scotland. Well actually we were out kitesurfing and buggying as the conditions were favourable and skiving off work was a lot more fun down the beach than doing the garden.

Balmedie beach is a 10 mile plus stretch of continuous golden sand with extensive dunes, stretching from the river Don at Aberdeen to the Ythan at Newburgh. If conditions are right it is possible to buggy the entire distance with only half a dozen small streams to cross that are no more than a few inches deep. With the tide out and the wind straight onshore this can be an uninterrupted blast in a buggy as the entire stretch is uninhabited with a distinct lack of people most of the time. With a strong southerly parking the car at the Bridge of Don in Aberdeen and scudding all the way to Balmedie (5.5 miles) or doing the same from Balmedie to Newburgh can be an interesting challenge that provides new experiences every time it is done. And when the winds are cross onshore and you have developed your Kitesurfing skills enough to not be put off by mile after mile of glorious surf, this stretch of beach provides some awesome conditions with practically nothing to get in your way apart from mother nature.

Saturday 10th proved to be sunny and windy so a few of us locals made our way to the beach as early as possible and decided the buggy was only to be used for getting our kit to the beach. From lunch time onwards the wind blew from the south east and the sea was chucking some consistent surf at us that kept you on your guard at all times. On the beach our first guests arrived for the weekend in the shape of Tom and son from Irvine. they were later met by local rider Gordon, who has to be held responsible for generating the first interest in the sports of power kiting in the north east over 10 years ago. As the beach got smaller due to the incoming tide buggies and mountain boards were pointed towards our "desert region" where play could continue, whilst on the water we continued to get maximum exposure to the elements. Late afternoon more SPKA members started arriving and I think for most of them it was their first visit to this location. Without exception they were all well impressed with the natural beauty potential. Unfortunately some checked the weather and expected offshore conditions so didn't bring any kitesurfing kit with them and had to spend the next couple of hours watching us play till the energy levels collapsed. Next time guys and girls, bring all the toys!

Most of the committee were staying in the Whitehorse inn just up the road from the beach so we all met there for one or two jars.....The food took a long time to come but everyone enjoyed a relaxing evening chucking around kite stories. When midnight arrived we were chucked out which was probably a good idea as getting up in the morning was going to be difficult. When it did arrive the committee met once again in the lounge bar and we discussed as quickly as possible the important points which can be looked at in the official minutes. There was very little wind but the sun was shining and everyone was keen to get to the beach to play.

When we did get there the tide was out, there were vast flat areas of firm sand, glorious sunshine and hardly enough wind to keep a kite made of tissue in the air. For

almost the entire day it was only delta kites that could really keep themselves up in the sky although the occasional bit of wind did blow. Despite the lack of puff there were loads of people there compared to a normal day at Balmedie with lots of different kites on show for locals to view and have a go with. I never did a head count but there must have been over 40 people with many many more spectators. I don't know who travelled the furthest but we had SPKA members from Irvine, Edinburgh, Inverness and many places in between.

It was encouraging to see so many people willing to travel to a venue like this to help promote the SPKA and the sports of power kiting. With the SPKA agenda to represent all power kite sports things are looking good for meetings at other venues where everyone who attends can enjoy the opportunity to experience all aspects of the sport with qualified people in all disciplines present who can offer advice and training at all levels. As a local representative for the area I would like to thank everyone who came and hope you all enjoyed yourself. I look forward to visiting your stomping ground over the summer months, and we look forward to seeing you back at any time.

Mark Ward