

Coastal Notes

Fiona MacKenzie from Helmsdale came to MRI (Maritime Rescue Institute) in the summer as a student taking part in the STEP (Shell Technology Enterprise Programme). Last week she won the award as the most enterprising student in Scotland. She received this award at a ceremony held in the Merchants Hall in Edinburgh, where she beat 10 other Scottish finalists. Fiona, a mathematics student studying at Aberdeen, managed in just eight weeks to implement a quality assurance system especially designed for charitable and voluntary organisations; on the back of that she was also able to secure some further funding for MRI. Her prize was a trophy and a cheque for £400, no doubt a welcome addition to a student budget.

Director of MRI, Ann Laing commented after Fiona's win that "This has been a very successful project. Fiona will continue to work with us in her free time, and she made a huge contribution to our organisation"

On Wednesday of this week, Fiona, accompanied by Ann, is in London for the UK final. Here, she and the Scottish runner up will face stiff competition from 16 other finalists. They, along with their company representatives, face a gruelling day of presentations and questions from the judges. The winner will be announced that evening at a black tie dinner hosted by James Smith, the new Shell UK Chairman; guest of honour is Nigel Griffiths, MP and Minister for Small Business and Enterprise. Whatever the outcome of the evening, we are all extremely proud of Fiona's achievement. Fiona herself found STEP a really exciting and rewarding project that she would thoroughly recommend to any other student.

STEP is a UK wide opportunity for students and small businesses to acquire mutual benefit – the business gets the opportunity to have a sharp brain look at some of the issues that they just don't have the time to address, while the student gets real hands on time the real world of work. In Scotland STEP is supported by the Scottish Executive, Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. It started 18 years ago as Shell Community Investment Initiative. Since its inception, the scheme has seen overseen 20,000 projects, with 2,000 of those being in Scotland.

The need for funding to support the local SAR Team continues however. On the run up to Christmas, those who buy on the Internet can support MRI at the same time by going to www.buy.at/mri. This is a gateway site to numerous major reputable Internet sites. The benefit to MRI is that all purchases made through this gateway generate a donation; the level ranges from 3 – 15%. This donation comes out of the company's marketing budget, not added to the purchase price; it's an easy and painless way to give to a charity.

For further information or to get involved with MRI as a volunteer, please contact 01569 765768 or email hamish.mcdonald@btconnect.com.