

BRITISH EMPIRE MEDAL FOR STEVE SUTCLIFFE

Steve Sutcliffe of Mullock Cottages was awarded the British Empire Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours this year for his work leading the Skokholm Island refurbishment project.

The refurbishment of the buildings on the Skokholm Island Nature Reserve has been a most remarkable, ambitious and successful volunteer project. There are three main buildings on Skokholm and the commercial quotation to render them habitable was £1.1 million, a figure beyond the reach of the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales which owns the island. Without the use of accommodation it is not possible to manage and protect effectively the seabird colonies on the island. These colonies have immense international significance.

Knowing how crucial proper management of the Reserve is, Steve Sutcliffe persuaded the Wildlife Trust to allow him to undertake the refurbishment project using volunteers from the Friends of Skokholm and Skomer, and under his leadership it was completed in two years for £70,000. This involved 20,000 volunteer hours and 80 volunteers. It is even more impressive when you consider that all the materials for a complicated refurbishment of old buildings (50 tons over two years) had to be listed, purchased and transported to the island, unloaded by hand and stored ready for the work parties before April each year. The work parties had to be recruited and transported to and from the island as well as housed and fed there. The whole project was governed by the vicissitudes of the weather and all the while fund raising had to continue.

All this was achieved through Steve's leadership, commitment and skills that motivated the team of volunteers and maintained the momentum of the project through to its completion. It is hard to imagine the number of emails, telephone calls and hours involved but he never flagged. As a result the island now accommodates two full time wardens with two assistant volunteer wardens, and up to twenty people which includes qualified bird ringers, researchers and visitors who come to enjoy a few days on this spectacular island. Skokholm has also been reinstated as an official Bird Observatory. The Marloes and Dale community can be proud of what has been done for one of Britain's most iconic Nature Reserves.

JPW