



Dr Kate Brookes

PhD & Research Fellow • 2005 - 2012



Portrait by Artist Sue Jane Taylor



What did you do at the Lighthouse ?

I was at the Lighthouse from 2005 to 2012, as a PhD student and a Research Fellow. My PhD (2005-2009) looked at techniques for monitoring seabirds around offshore wind farms, using the Beatrice Demonstration Project as a case study. After that I worked on a large scale project looking at the effects of seismic surveys on harbour porpoise in the Moray Firth, and contributed to work on assessments of the impact of new offshore wind farm developments on marine mammals in the Moray Firth.

What are you doing now ?

I've been working at Marine Scotland Science since 2012, initially as a marine mammal advisor and now as both the lead marine mammal advisor to Scottish Government and as the Renewable Energy Environmental Advice group leader. The group I lead has 18 staff with specialisms from ornithology and marine mammal biology to benthic ecology and commercial fisheries. We carry out research and provide advice to regulators and policy makers on environmental effects of marine renewable developments, other marine construction projects and the management of the marine environment. I've also just returned to work after my second period of maternity leave, and I'm juggling having two small children with working from home at the moment!

What advice would you give someone who wants to follow in your footsteps ?

My advice would be that while it's important to fully understand the detail of the science you're working on, it's also really important to look beyond that and really understand the context of your work. Being technically skilled will get you so far in your career, but understanding why your work is important (other than to you!) and what about it could be applied to industry or management is crucial to help you get funding or work after your studies. Take all the opportunities you can to better understand where your work fits into the bigger picture. And don't be too narrowly focused about the areas you consider working in – sometimes the most interesting questions that you can use your skills to answer may be outside your immediate comfort zone.

