



FRIENDS OF LOCH LOMOND & THE TROSSACHS

ANNUAL REPORT

For the YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2022

FRIENDS OF LOCH LOMOND & THE TROSSACHS

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FRIENDS OF LOCH LOMOND & THE TROSSACHS

Office Bearers etc.

Honorary President - Sir Malcolm Colquhoun Bart.

Honorary Vice-Presidents

William Petrie OBE JP (part of year only as now deceased)

Lord John McFall of Alcluith

George Boyd

Office Bearers

Mr James Fraser – Chair

Mr John Urquhart – Vice-Chair

Mr Tom Wallace -Treasurer

Executive Council

Dr Joyce Deans CBE

Ms Sheila Winstone

Mr William Dalrymple

Mr Paul Saunders

Mr Fergus Wood

Mr Duncan MacLachlan

Ms Elizabeth Bain (from April 2021)

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Bankers

Royal Bank of Scotland, Colquhoun Square, Helensburgh

Independent Examiner

Jean Murray, Loch Goil

Scottish Charities Registration Number: SC015389

Notice of Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the **forty second Annual General Meeting** of the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs will be held at Ross Priory, Gartocharn on **Monday 5th June, 2023 at 7.15pm**, for the transacting of the following business:

1. Receive apologies for absence.
2. To approve the minutes of the last AGM (P5-8)
3. Matters Arising- To receive an update from John Urquhart on the A82 Upgrading Parliamentary Petition
4. Receive the Chairman's Report.
5. Receive the Treasurer's Report and approve the independently examined Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2022.
6. To approve no increase in the Annual Membership fees
7. To re-appoint the office bearers and trustees and endorse other nominations.
 - (i) To note the retiral of Dr Joyce Deans; Bill Dalrymple, Paul Saunders and James Fraser
 - (ii) To re-appoint existing Trustees seeking re-election:
 - Mr John Urquhart – Chair
 - Mr Tom Wallace - Treasurer
 - Ms Sheila Winstone
 - Mr Fergus Wood
 - Mr Duncan MacLachlan
 - Ms Elizabeth Bain
 - (iii) To appoint other nominations- Dr Roddy Yarr and Stewart Gibb
8. To transact any other competent business

By order of the Executive Council

James Fraser
Chair

After the close of business there will an interesting talk on current and future priorities of the National Park by Gordon Watson, the National Park Authority Chief Executive followed by a short Q&A session.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday May 17 2022 at 7.15pm at Ross Priory, Gartocharn

Chair: J Fraser (JF).

Committee Present: J Urquhart (JU); W Dalrymple (WD); T Wallace (TW); J Deans (JD); P Saunders (PS); E Bain (EB); D MacLachlan (DM).

In Attendance: J Plunkett (JP), W Nisbet (WN), S Fraser (SF), B Fraser (BF), E Martin (EM), J. D Henderson (JH), C Darlaston (CD), C Fallon (CF), A McRae (AM), M McRae (MM), J Stirling (JS), I Stirling (IS), E Henderson (EH), A Etchells (AE), S Hume (SH), A Kerr (AK), G Kerr (GK), D Lawson (DL), A Lawson (AL), A Urquhart (AU), N Walden (NW), N Brownrigg (NB), T Brownrigg (TB), S Noble (SN), J Noble (JN), V Carroll (VC), S Braidwood (SB).

Apologies: J Baillie (JB), Sir M Colquhoun (MC), S Miller (SM), A Roger (AR), G Watson (GW), S Winstone (SW), R Anderson (RA), P Lynch (PL), S Paterson (SP), J Beveridge (JB), F Wood (FW), B Darracott (BD), S Corder (SC), F McKelvie (FM)

1. Welcome

JF welcomed those present to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance. He also expressed thanks to Ross Priory and staff for their hospitality and assistance in staging the AGM.

2. Minutes of last AGM

The minutes of the last AGM were approved with no queries arising. They were proposed by DM and seconded by SN.

3. Chairman's Report

JF spoke to his Chairman's Report on the charity's activity over the last year and this was accompanied by a power-point presentation highlighting some of the Friends projects and initiatives and a range of current topical issues.

JF commented that the Friends have been busier than ever and provided a brief overview of how the charity had worked to further the key aims of protecting and nurturing the special qualities of the National Park, promoting and celebrating the National Park's cultural heritage, and providing support to projects to make the National Park a better place for people and nature.

JF highlighted that over the past year there were huge numbers of visitors to the National Park, many of whom had travelled further than the 5 mile Covid limit stipulated by the

Scottish Government. JF commented that sadly 6 people drowned in lochs in the National Park last year. The National Park Authority are looking at a new water safety strategy.

JF mentioned that Storm Arien in January had caused significant damage in areas of the National Park, destroying 100-year-old tree specimens.

JF pointed out the Friends' strategic priorities and mentioned that Young Friends projects have suffered the most due to the Covid situation. The Friends are looking to catch up with this by arranging for circa 100 young people to attend Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre for either one day of activities or an overnight stay by way of a grant obtained from West Dunbartonshire Council pre-covid.

Campaigning and consultation issues covered in the presentation included the Friends calling for a much bolder and inspiring solution for the planned upgrade of the 17km stretch of the Loch Lomond-side Road north of Tarbet. JF commented that it is the single biggest capital investment in the National Park and that we should look at examples from Europe for inspiration.

The organisation "Camping in the Forest" decided against opening any of their campsites last year. JF advised that the Friends lobbied on this and after 18 months the campsites were bought over by the Government for the benefit of the public.

The Friends were involved in lobbying on the Scottish Government's decision not to allocate any new funding in 2022 towards visitor management. There was a change of heart by the Government whereby funds were made available to the National Park Authority, Naturescot and Forestry & Land Scotland.

The Friends were the driving force behind the Two Lochs Visitor Management Project in 2021, comprising of the employment of temporary Visitor Services Wardens, temporary toilets installed at Duck Bay and Arrochar, 40 information panels and directional signs installed around the Tarbet area, and the installation and twice-weekly emptying of 20 litter bins along a stretch of the A82. A survey undertaken in 2021 highlighted that local people were of the opinion that the area was the cleanest they had ever seen it. The Friends have arranged for the bin emptying to continue until March 2023 at a cost of £26,000. The Friends have raised the funds via a combination of 12 funding partners and agencies who will be contributing to the cost. JF thanked JU for all his work as Project Champion of the litter bin pilot scheme.

JF said that Friends had obtained a grant of £8,000 from Naturescot for a study to identify measures to improve Visitor Management in the Lake of Menteith area.

JF advised that the Trossachs Trail Visitor Management Project was a community and Friends driven project to refresh a 40 mile circuit of road signs and also involved the production of information panels to showcase the Trossachs Trail area. Improvements were made at Ben A'an and Stronachlachar car parks, both of which increased in size. The Roderick Dhu path and viewpoint are going to be sensitively reinstated above Trossachs Pier, which will give thousands of people access to one of the best views in Scotland.

JF mentioned that the Friends had organised two successful volunteer events – one on West Loch Lomond along the A82 in November 2021 and another at Loch Lubnaig in April 2022.

JF advised that the Windows on the Loch project, involving the removal of vegetation along West Loch Lomond to reveal views of the loch has progressed well and has been funded partially from the Hannah Stirling Loch Lomond Trust fund and partially from cash raised as part of the Friends of OUR park scheme.

JF mentioned that the Friends are involved in conservation and access projects including contributing to the cost of the Dumpling Path repairs (Duncryne Hill) and various improvements in Drymen. Friends have also been involved in the Steamship Sir Walter Scott Restoration heritage project and other projects such as red squirrel conservation and tree-planting at Cashel Forest.

The Callander Visitor Information Centre has been relocated to a building previously occupied by the Royal Bank of Scotland in Callander and JF stated that the Friends have contributed towards the cost of new signage and orienteering.

With regard to the Loch Lomond Byelaws Review, JF commented that there has been growth in the use of motor-craft on the Loch during lockdown, which is a difficult topic for the National Park Authority to take forward. The Friends will comment on this when they see the options put forward.

In conclusion, JF thanked all Trustees and Friends staff for their efforts over the past 12 months and expressed sincere thanks to Business Supporters, Friends of OUR Park Supporters and members for their continued support.

This was followed by a brief exchange of questions and answers. NW asked why sustainability is not mentioned in our priorities and objectives and stated that extending car parks will encourage an increasing amount of traffic. JF responded that the Friends continually review their priorities and that the Friends had submitted a detailed bid to establish an electric bus and boat in Balmaha, and also an electric bus in the Trossachs area, however the bid was rejected by Scottish Power in the final round. JF also advised that sustainability was at the heart of the Trossachs Trail project, which promoted the Trossachs Trail as an area to visit by foot, bike and boat. WN commented that over the last two years, due to Covid, people were discouraged from using public transport and that hopefully this summer, this can be turned around and people will travel more sustainably.

CD mentioned that she would like to see the Friends have a policy opposing the use of plastic tree tubes. JU responded that we are on the case and that removing plastic tree guards is a task which has been undertaken during Make a Difference volunteering days.

DM expressed appreciation for all the hard work undertaken by JF as Chairman over the last year.

4. Treasurers Report for year ending 31 December 2021

TW spoke briefly to the accounts. TW advised that what is seen on the Financial Report is in accordance with the Friends activities which JF has previously mentioned.

TW highlighted some areas under the "Income" heading, notably £90,000 for the Two Lochs Visitor Management Project, £8,500 from Naturescot for the Port of Menteith Visitor Management Project and £31,000 from an Adapt & Thrive grant. Under the "Expenditure" heading, TW advised that there will be aspects of residual funding which will be carried forward to this year from the Adapt & Thrive grant and the Two Lochs Visitor Management Project and there are also grant funds of £13,500 from West Dunbartonshire Council which are to be spent on Young Friends activities.

NW questioned the income figure from HMRC. JF advised that this was furlough money.

The accounts were proposed by VC and seconded by EB.

5. Membership Fees

It was unanimously agreed that annual membership fees should remain the same - £20 for individual membership and £28 for family membership. This was proposed by TB and seconded by AU.

6. Re-appointment of Office Bearers

JF gave notice that this will be his last term as Chairman of the Friends. The remainder of the Board agreed to stay on and remain in their current office bearer's roles. JF expressed thanks to all Trustees for their work and also invited interest from anyone who wished to become a Trustee of the Friends.

The reappointments were proposed by SF and seconded by SN.

7. Any Other Competent Business

There was no other competent business.

8. Guest Speakers

The AGM concluded with two very interesting talks.

The first talk was from Scott Braidwood (SB) from Sunax Ltd who used story boards to update the audience on the plans for Inchconnachan Island which has recently been bought by Nick Jones and Kirsty Young. SB advised that Sunax Ltd commissioned a team of experts to look into water levels, trees and natural habitats on the island to ensure that any new buildings will be designed in keeping with the environment. The plan is to take the whole island, aspects of which are in disrepair, and restore it back to its' former glory. The storyboards were passed around the audience for a closer look.

The second talk was in the form of a presentation from JU, Convener of Helensburgh and District Access Trust (HADAT), entitled "Take the High Road....and not the Low Road". The presentation was in relation to the current controversial plans for the upgrade of the A82 between Tarbet and Ardlui. JU mentioned that there was concern that Transport Scotland had not adhered to normal procedures and that the cost would run to several hundreds of millions of pounds. JU commented that HADAT were alarmed at the very little provision for countryside access in the proposed Transport Scotland plans. Under these plans, members of the public could be walking or cycling with speeding traffic close by. JU stated that HADAT have proposed that the new road should be sited inland and not on the loch-side: the loch-side should be used for nature and recreation. If the new road is sited on the loch-side, the proposed viaducts will destroy the area and the traffic noise will transmit easily across the loch.

JU concluded by saying that HADAT's proposal would improve parking, cycling, walking, loch access and biodiversity.

Both talks were very well-received by the audience and each was followed by an exchange of questions and answers.

Chairman's Report

1. Introduction

2022 was a very busy year as we continued re-building activities following the impact of COVID19 and the related restrictions. We managed to re-introduce all our core activities including our popular Make a Difference Days, Young Friends outdoor programme and progress our two major Visitor Management Projects. We also printed and distributed two editions of our Voice magazine and strengthened our online presence with the magazine available on an easy-to-use flick page feature on our new and updated website. We held off actively recruiting more businesses to the Friends of OUR park visitor giving scheme as most businesses focussed on trying to get back to pre-COVID 19 trading levels, although a number did readily commit to sponsoring our ground-breaking 'Adopt a Bonnie Banks Bin Scheme' which we successfully introduced in 2022.

Our overall purpose continued to be working for the benefit of people and nature in the National Park and this was underpinned by our three main aims:

-to **protect** and nurture the National Park's special qualities;

-to **promote** and celebrate the National Park's rich and diverse natural and cultural heritage; and

-to **provide** support for projects to make the National Park a better place for people and nature.

As we do every year, we review our priorities and programmes linked to key themes. We added a sixth theme to our priorities relating to help sustaining local communities as increasingly we have become involved in helping support local community projects or backing some community lobbying efforts. Some of the actions under some of the thematic priorities have also been adjusted to take account of funding opportunities or to align the Friends with some important emerging agendas such as the ambitious Future Nature Action Plan and Route Map which has recently been published in response to the nature and climate crises.

We have steadfastly protected our role as a truly independent conservation and heritage charity covering the National Park area which remains one of our strengths. This has enabled us to campaign and lobby freely without being hindered by public agencies who are in a difficult position at times due to the bulk of their funds coming from the Scottish Government. A good example of this was the recent successful campaign led by our Vice-Chair John Urquhart who led the effort to try and persuade the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland to re-think the disastrous plans for upgrading the existing A82 along the shores of Loch Lomond between Tarbet and Ardlui and to properly assess a 'high road' option that both the Helensburgh & District Access Trust, which John is Chair of, and the Friends believe is the more sensible option. Thankfully, the parliamentary Petitions Committee agrees and has recently written to the Transport Minister and the Scottish Government to seek a fuller review of the options for this major public sector infrastructure investment.

Visitor management issues continued to be to the fore during the year and due to the proximity of the National Park to major population centres and the gradual return of UK and overseas visitors there continued to be large flows of visitors with some major visitor management challenges at some of the busier hotspots around Loch Lomond and in the Trossachs areas. Particular problem areas continued to be Balloch and Luss and we participated in a series of community led Luss Summit meetings to support residents in trying to secure an increased presence on the ground from Police Scotland, Argyll & Bute

Council and the Park Authority Rangers to help deal with traffic management and litter issues and importantly the rise in anti-social behaviour and the dangerous use of powered water craft in the busy Luss Bay area. We took direct action as well by stepping in for a second year to coordinate practical visitor management initiatives in the West Loch Lomond, head of Loch Long and Trossachs areas.

As in previous years, where appropriate, we worked in partnership with the National Park Authority, local businesses, tourism groups such as the Destination National Park, community councils and community development trusts. We took an active part in meetings of the Destination National Park Group and various visitor management and place infrastructure consultation groups coordinated by the National Park. We also contributed pro-actively to a number of consultations on specific policy and byelaws reviews and commented on a number of planning applications.

We continued to enjoy a good working relationship with the National Park Authority. We appreciated the National Park Authority's 'in kind' support through the provision of office space which we continue to use. We also appreciated support from the National Park Authority, Argyll & Bute Council, the Hannah Stirling Loch Lomond Trust, VisitScotland, NatureScot, local businesses and community hydro funds for assistance with funding some of our visitor management activities.

Details of some of our main activities during the past year are briefly summarised below.

2. Funding

For a second successive year we assembled an impressive £75,000 funding package to support the successful Two Lochs Visitor Management Project in response to local representation about the gaps in basic visitor infrastructure provision at the visitor hotspots of Duck Bay Picnic Area and Arrochar as well as along the busy A82 where toileting and littering had become major issues. Funding for this initiative was secured from the NatureScot Green Recovery Fund, the Hannah Stirling Loch Lomond Trust, the Park Authority, Argyll & Bute Council and from local tourism businesses who readily stepped up to sponsor the newly introduced Adopt a Bonnie Banks Bin Scheme. Business sponsorship 'in kind' was also secured from the Cawley Group to cover the costs of toiletries and regular cleaning of the temporary toilets at Duck Bay and from Honeywagon who discounted their normal temporary toilet hire rates.

Other sources of funding included Friends of OUR park donations which haven't grown to previous levels yet with businesses still recovering from the impact of COVID19, business supporters' subscriptions and advertising and annual membership fees. The later invoicing of Business Supporters and Voice advertising meant that £7,000 of income was paid early in the next financial year otherwise the operating deficit would only have been £12,000 for the year. The deficit is largely accounted for by the later delivery of a youth activities scheme supported with a grant from West Dunbartonshire secured before the outbreak of COVID19 and the use of some funds from the Thrive & Adapt grant for extending the hours of the friends Support Officer post.

The main items of expenditure during the year included core staffing costs, the Two Lochs Visitor management and Trossachs Trail projects and implementation of the Young Friends outdoor activities programme. A significant amount was also spent on two editions of voice magazine but there was a healthy level of advertising and sponsorship support from businesses and the Park Authority to help offset most of these costs. Some grants were awarded for various local projects from the Friends of Our park visitor giving scheme which also included contributions to our major visitor management projects.

We ended the year with a healthy bank balance, but it should be noted the Thrive and Adapt income is designed to support us over a three-year period with strengthened staffing and some funding is being carried forward for a legacy Young Friends initiative. We are in good shape financially to tackle future challenges and to build on previous and current programmes of activity to support the six themes identified in our strategy summary which are *Windows on the Park; Celebrating Cultural Heritage; Nature Conservation; Protecting the Park's Special Qualities, Young Friends and Sustaining Local Communities*.

3. Summary of Main Priorities and Activities

(i) Consultations

We were invited to contribute to a growing number of consultations and working groups throughout what was a busy year of policy and plan reviews at local level to take account of emerging new policy initiatives at national level and the need to address a growing number of local issues. Some of the more significant consultations included the review of the Loch Lomond Byelaws which the Park Authority is required to undertake every 10 years and has led to a series of changes being recommended to Scottish Ministers to strengthen the management and control of powered water craft in busy areas of the loch; the important Future Nature Review and Route Map which was coordinated by the Park Authority but is aimed at stimulating more partnership working and action to address the nature and climate crises; a Park-wide Transport Study looking at the options to strengthen public transport and water transport links and services throughout the National Park. We also contributed to a series of sub-area place studies commissioned by the Park Authority to address visitor infrastructure investment priorities in the Loch Lomond and Trossachs areas and we are pleased as a result of the first of these studies that much-needed improvement schemes are likely to proceed at Tarbet Bay and the Cobbler car parks which include upgrading coach and car parking, provision for motorhomes and improved toilet facilities as well as other public realm improvements.

We submitted a detailed response to the NatureScot review undertaken on behalf of the Scottish Government on the role and aims of Scotland's National Parks. This review recently concluded that the overarching purpose should be refreshed to focus on the leadership of nature recovery and just transition to net zero efforts and with the existing aims being updated to tie more closely with Scottish Government policy documents. While we were generally supportive of the new overall purpose, in our consultation response we emphasised the importance of not diluting the current four aims of Scotland's national Parks and especially those relating to promoting the social and economic well-being of local communities and responsible enjoyment of the area.

(ii) Planning

We continued to monitor planning applications and made comments on a limited number of proposals taking account of the aims of the National Park and our watchdog remit. Most of our submissions were in support of specific developments and included several small-scale glamping and camping site developments which were in line with our green and sustainable tourism initiatives as well as some strategic developments such as the revised Lomond Banks scheme for the derelict Hamilton House Hotel beside the old A82 and the restored railway and gravel pits between Balloch Pier and the centre of the village. In a detailed submission to the Park Authority, we set out eight reasons why the outline application should be granted consent but requested stringent planning conditions should be attached to any consent relating to the adoption of a travel and transport action plan

and a requirement for the developer to enter a legally binding agreement to guarantee community use of the indoor and outdoor recreational facilities. We also supported several public access projects including the upgrading of the Tarbet Bay site. A housing development we objected to along with the local Community Council was refused on the grounds it did not conform to the Local Development Plan.

We contributed to the new framework planning policy plan for Aberfoyle & Strathard which marked the introduction of a new style of planning for a specific area with strong involvement of the local community and other stakeholders. Subsequently, several communities have been preparing and adopting new local Place Plans which the Park Authority must take account of in the next Local Development Plan. They all feature familiar issues such as the need for more affordable housing to stem rural depopulation and the need for public transport improvements. We fully support the actions which have been identified by local communities and will be checking to ensure the issues feature in the new Local Development Plan which the Park Authority are due to prepare in 2023/24.

(iii) Young Friends

Following a pause during the period of Covid 19 restrictions it was once again possible to progress several Young Friends initiatives designed to introduce youths to the great outdoors through a range of outdoor and environmental awareness activities.

Thanks to funding support from the West Dunbartonshire Council's Year of the Young People Legacy Fund and the Friends of OUR Park visitor giving scheme, it was possible to organise outdoor events in the National Park for young people from youth groups in the West Dunbartonshire area. This included visits to Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre at Lochgoilhead and some activity programmes at Loch Lomond. Feedback from all groups has been extremely positive, with the young people enjoying all activities while also learning about the natural environment and acquiring new skills.

We continue to support Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre which was rescued from permanent closure back in 2011 with some start-up funding from the friends and the Mouldsdale Foundation. The centre continues to play a valuable role in introducing thousands of children to the great outdoors every year and two of the Friends Trustees are members of the Ardroy Board to provide practical advice and input to the charitable body. Masterplans for upgrading the complex of buildings at Ardroy is currently underway as part of exciting plans to develop Scotland's Family and Young People Well-Being Centre with support from the leading Children 1st charity.

(iv) Protecting Loch Views

With support from the Hannah Stirling Loch Lomond Trust and the Friends of OUR Park visitor giving scheme further work was undertaken clearing shrubs and small trees to maintain open views of Loch Lomond and Ben Lomond between Luss and Tarbet on stretches of the busy A82 and the adjacent cycle and footpath for the enjoyment of visitors. This was part of a long-term scheme to tackle opening up stretches of the 'tree tunnel' between Arden and Tarbet which meant that views of Loch Lomond were hidden.

This work was undertaken by a contractor on our behalf and following a gap of several years due to the impact of Covid 19 we are now back on top of maintaining the views along some sections of the A82 north of Luss. More recently some other trees have been removed by Transport Scotland contractors due to an outbreak of ash disease which is affecting the western part of the National Park.

(v) *Volunteers Make a Difference*

Over 50 volunteers participated in a series of Make a Difference Days this year, coordinated by Friends with support from the National Park. The events took place at Tom Weir's Rest site in Balmaha and alongside the A82 between Luss and Tarbet. At Balmaha volunteers opened up the overgrown views behind the Tom Weir statue, planted flowers beside the village green and tackled the removal of weeds in the mountain Garden which forms part of the popular Tom Weir site. On West Loch Lomondside volunteers augmented the Windows on the Loch and Bonnie Banks Bin schemes with the removal of overgrown shrubbery beside the cycleway and tackling some of the deeply ingrained litter accumulations in thorny shrubs beside laybys.

(vi) *Two Lochs Visitor Management Project*

We stepped in for a second year to coordinate the provision and maintenance of temporary toilets between April and October at the two busy visitor hotspots of Duck Bay on Loch Lomondside and the popular Cobbler Car Park at the head of Loch Long in Arrochar. These heavily used toilets were jointly funded by the National Park, Argyll & Bute Council, the Hannah Stirling Loch Lomond Trust, and the Friends through the Friends of OUR Park visitor giving scheme. The Cawley Group provided sponsorship in kind, with staff from the Duck Bay Hotel & Restaurant regularly cleaning the Duck Bay toilets and stocking them with toiletries, while Honeywagon provided significant in-kind sponsorship by discounting the cost of temporary toilet units hire and associated effluent emptying services. Luss Estates funded the provision of additional temporary toilets in Arrochar which were cleaned by seasonal wardens employed by the Friends working in partnership with the local Development Trust and Luss Estates.

There are also positive signs that a more permanent toilet scheme will be progressed at the Cobbler site in Arrochar by Argyll & Bute Council who are drawing up plans that include extending the car park and the careful siting of a new toilet block. Sadly, there is little progress with plans for much needed toilets and other improvements at Duck Bay which has more than 300,000 visitors annually.

We were successful in securing some seasonal top up funding from the NatureScot Green Recovery Scheme and funding from the Hannah Stirling Loch Lomond Trust, the Park Authority, and the Council to employ 3 Village Visitor Welcome Wardens between April and October to work in Arrochar and Tarbet. They undertook a range of duties including regular cleaning of the temporary toilets, litter picking, other local amenity works and engaging proactively with visitors to provide them with advice and guidance on making the most of their stay in the area. This service was well received by residents, businesses and visitors and made a real difference and was ably overseen on a day-to-day basis by locally based Trustee Duncan MacLachlan.

(vii) *Adopt a Bonnie Banks Bin Scheme*

The ambitious pilot A82 layby litter bin scheme, which involved the installation of 20 bins and regular emptying during the period June-March in 2021/22, proved to be a great success. For 2022/23 we developed a more sustainable scheme with a mixture of public and private sector funding as part of the ground-breaking '*Adopt a Bonnie Banks Bin Scheme*' to continue to tackle the litter problem along the busy A82 corridor on West Loch Lomondside. Sponsorship of individual bins was secured from local tourism businesses and Luss Estates and funding support was secured from the National Park and Argyll & Bute Council.

It is now seen as a model collaborative initiative and is attracting interest from other parts of Scotland and national bodies such as Keep Scotland Beautiful. The Friends Chair, James Fraser, was invited to outline details of the scheme on a special BBC Radio Scotland programme following the publication of a report by Keep Scotland Beautiful on what they described as 'Scotland's Litter Crisis'.

The scheme is not cheap and will cost £30,000 for the next 12-month period with recycling and emptying costs increasing significantly due to increased fuel and labour charges. The scheme involves weekly emptying of bins at quieter times of the year building up to twice weekly at busier holiday periods. Importantly, the scheme, along with other supporting initiatives by public sector partners and volunteers, has transformed the litter and fly tipping situation along the busy Loch Lomondside A82 corridor, which is the main gateway to the West Highlands with 6 million vehicle movements a year.

Since the scheme started two years ago, over 50 tonnes of litter have been collected from the Bonnie Banks Bins with an impressive 97% of it being recycled or baled for use as industrial fuel stock. This equates to the equivalent of 12,000 bin bags of litter collected overall. The public have responded well to the initiative with a noticeable drop in litter being discarded out of vehicle windows and greater use of the bins. The pilot bin scheme has been augmented with some other litter management measures undertaken by partners such as the Council's Community Service squad and the Park Authority with the A82 corridor between Arden and Tarbet cleaner than it has been for many years.

(viii) The Trossachs Trail and Trossachs Visitor Management Project

Over £1 million was secured over the past two years by the Friends and the Steamship Sir Walter Scott Trust, working in partnership with local communities and others, to invest in the Trossachs Trail sustainable tourism initiative which encourages visitors to enjoy the area by boot, bike and boat and has led to improvements in basic infrastructure such as signage, paths, toilets, cycle repair stations, campervan facilities and car parks.

This 3-year initiative is nearing completion and has been a great success, building on the original award-winning Trossachs Trail tourism and the environment project developed in the early 1990s to improve visitor infrastructure as part of Scotland's first ever geographic trail. The Trail is based on the famous Trossachs Tour, popularised by Sir Walter Scott and other writers in the 1800s, which led to the growth of Callander and Aberfoyle and the development of tourism in other villages around the 40-mile scenic circular route.

In the early part of 2021 the focus was on refreshing the 'tired' Trossachs Trail road signs and this was followed by the production of attractive information & map panels with details of things to see and do, which are now sited at 40 different locations throughout the area including in the foyer areas of local tourism businesses and in laybys and car parks, to assist visitors with making the most of their stay in the area.

The signage and panels were complemented in 2022 with the launch of the website www.trossachstrail.co.uk and an informative leaflet and map. These elements of the initiative were largely funded by Love Local and local charities including the Friends, Steamship Sir Walter Scott Trust and the Strathard and Callander Community Hydro Funds, with some funding coming later from VisitScotland to assist with the production of extra information map panels.

As part of phase two in 2022/23 a sum of £600,000 was invested in doubling the size of the Ben A'an car park in partnership with Forest & Land Scotland; creating a new woodland car park, campervan and cycling hub facilities at Stronachlachar Pier; and

developing extended car parks and toilets at the busy Trossachs Pier hub which, along with the reinstatement of a historic viewpoint path, are due for completion by June 2023. This package of works would not have been possible without securing a £375,000 grant from the VisitScotland Rural Infrastructure Fund (RTIF), facilitated by the National Park, with the balance being provided by the Steamship Trust, Forest & Land Scotland and the Friends.

While these early action improvements have been led by local charities, the National Park has recently commissioned a series of studies to review other desirable visitor infrastructure improvements in the Strathard, Trossachs and Callander areas and costed detailed design proposals are currently being finalised in consultation with local stakeholders. This will involve a mix of improvements to signposting, car parking and paths and a priority is being given to piloting a public transport shuttle link between Callander, Aberfoyle, and busy visitor locations in the heart of the Trossachs where there currently is no public transport service.

(ix) Tom Weir's Rest and the Lauder Monument

The Friends continued to be responsible for the popular Tom Weir's Rest site in Balmaha and the Lauder Monument site in Cowal. Tom Weir's Rest has become a very popular site and remarkably since it was developed back in late 2014 it has been visited by over 1 million visitors. Site maintenance works are regularly undertaken by Sandy Fraser and his grounds staff and despite the high volume of visitor numbers, the site was maintained to a very high standard. The maintenance works were sponsored by Sandy Fraser and the Oak Tree Inn which was greatly appreciated during a period when income through the Friends of OUR park scheme and donations on site remained low due to the Covid 19 recovery period still taking its toll. Very encouragingly, with grant support from the Hannah Stirling Loch Lomond Trust and sponsorship from Sandy Fraser in 2023 there are plans to refresh the site with new path surfaces, stone wall pointing, and revarnishing and upgrading of picnic tables and benches as well as further planting in the mountain garden.

The Lauder Monument site in Cowal, where we restored the railings and provided a new car park and path link, signing and interpretation several years ago, is much less busy but there is now heightened awareness of its existence with a steady flow of visitors. The wilder nature of the site means that minimal ongoing maintenance is required. Our Vice-Chair makes periodic visits to the site and undertakes some small-scale maintenance work when required.

(x) Friends of OUR Park Visitor Giving Scheme

During the second half of 2022 as businesses gradually got back to some form of normality a number reactivated their participation in the Friends of OUR park visitor giving scheme, but we do not anticipate getting back up to previous fund-raising levels through this scheme until 2023/24. This is due to the range of pressures currently facing tourism businesses throughout the National Park. They are facing unprecedented trading conditions due to several factors including extraordinarily large increases in operating costs and UK households having less discretionary spend for leisure and holidays.

Nonetheless, an encouraging sum was raised from visitors via businesses participating in the Friends of OUR park scheme which we used to support a range of projects throughout the National Park including Callander Visitor Information Centre; the Trossachs Trail refresh, Breadalbane Play Area upgrade in Killin; Cashel oak woodland

tree planting and creation of a red squirrel hide; the purchase of a defibrillator for a site at the start of busy Ben Lomond path; toilets, wardens and bins as part of the Two Lochs Visitor Management Project; Cormonachan Woodlands path extension; and the continuation of the long term Windows on the Loch Project which involves opening up and maintaining views on West Loch Lomondside.

(xi) *Promoting the National Park and the work of the Friends*

We produced two editions of the popular Voice magazine during the year with a mix of topical news and features on different aspects of the National Park. Copies of the magazine were widely circulated to members, visitors, MPs, MSPs, Councillors and staff in key agencies that we work with. We continued to publish a flick through online version of Voice and stepped-up distribution via online channels which has greatly increased circulation and extended the readership reach. The magazine continues to fulfil a useful purpose and we continued to receive positive feedback from many quarters on the quality and content of Voice. We are grateful to local business supporters and the National Park Authority for supporting the production costs by taking advertising and sponsoring specific pages.

Our website was completely overhauled and updated by Paul Saunders, one of our Trustees at no direct cost which saved the Friends over £10,000 in design fees. This gesture by Paul who is a specialist PR, photography, video, and marketing consultant in his day job was greatly appreciated. The website was transferred onto a new platform and the opportunity was taken to re-design the website and refresh photography. Much of the rich copy on the website has remained the same with updates where required. The website is becoming increasingly well used as a source of information on different aspects of the National Park.

During the year we issued 10 news releases which were well picked up in the local and regional media and occasionally in the national press. Most of these related to Friends activities and initiatives but a couple related to campaigning issues including the flawed A82 upgrading proposals and concerns about the loss of family hotels in the National Park. We were also invited to take part in 6 BBC Radio Scotland programmes including the morning show with Kay Adams and Newsdrive with John Beattie on a varied range of topics including water safety, the national litter crisis, road infrastructure investment, road charging proposals and visitor management issues and tourism trends.

4 Staff, Trustees and Partners

Sadly, during the past year we lost one of our Honorary Vice-Presidents, Billy Petrie OBE who passed away after a long period of illness. Billy made a huge contribution to public life in his many and varied roles and has always been closely associated with the National Park area as a local Cllr, former Park Board member, Chairman of the Area Tourist Board and as Provost of Argyll & Bute Council and, prior to this, as Provost of Dumbarton District Council. He had a particularly long association with Loch Katrine through his involvement with the water authorities for more than 30 years and, latterly, as Chairman of the Steamship Sir Walter Scott Trust. He cared deeply about the issues which affect the National Park and showed a keen interest in the work of the National Park Authority, the Friends, and the efforts of the Steamship Trust to restore the 122-year-old steamship right up until his death.

I would like to thank Jennifer Plunkett, our Support Officer for all her efforts and hard work supporting the smooth running of the Friends and providing back up support to the volunteer Trustees during what has been a very busy and challenging period taking

forward a range of projects and activities. Jennifer has settled well into her role, and I am pleased it was possible to increase the hours of her post to a full-time position with funding support from the Thrive and Adapt funding scheme, the Friends of OUR park scheme and other income sources. It is important there is some staffing support to assist with projects and initiatives as well as to assist with the day to day running of the Friends.

Throughout the year the Board of Trustees was able to hold regular face to face meetings to deal with the business of the Friends and the growing workload overseeing projects and reviewing and commenting on a range of consultations and planning applications, as part of working for the benefit of people and nature in the National Park. Several sub-groups also met to progress specific projects such as the Two Lochs Visitor Management Project and the Trossachs Trail initiative. Many Trustees readily gave their time freely to be project champions and made an enormous contribution to the work of the Friends which continued to flourish and contribute in a positive way to the future well-being of the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park area.

In concluding what is my last Annual Report review, I wish to place on record my sincere thanks to all Trustees past and present for their sterling and selfless work over many years. I would also like to thank our business supporters and sponsors, our loyal members, and various partners, including the National Park Authority, for all their support, commitment, and encouragement during the past 12 years I have been Chair of the Friends which is greatly appreciated.

It is vital there continues to be a vibrant independent charity championing the aims of the National Park and supporting the delivery of projects for the benefit of people and nature. I am confident I leave the Friends in good hands and with the continued support of members and other partners there is a bright future for the Friends and the National Park despite the many challenges that lie ahead.

James Fraser

Chair
Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs

Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs
Financial Statements
For the year ended 31st December 2022

Financial Report and Accounts
Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs
for the year ended 31st December 2022
SC015389

	2022	2021
Income		
Membership	1400.39	1,519
Donations /Appeals	2025.87	8,642
Business supporters	2795.00	2,885
Voice Advertising	5220.00	3,200
Project Funding:		
Two Lochs Project	74994.39	90,348
Trossachs Trail	1500.00	1,000
Port of Menteith		8,500
OUR Park Business Donations	6295.44	8,053
Adapt & Thrive		31,000
Events		
AGM	270.00	-
Christmas Event	682.30	-
Lauder Events	-	-
Other events	-	-
Loch Lomond Cruise	-	-
Merchandising	514.33	673
HMRC		3,457
Bank interest	138.74	12
Tom Weir Statue	838.57	979
<u>Income TOTAL</u>	<u>96675.03</u>	<u>160,268</u>

Expenditure	2022	2021
Salaries and on-costs	19014.99	12,555
Employment Costs	1404.50	1,003
Travel & Expenses	177.71	712
Recruitment		230
Office Costs	495.77	1,322
Voice	7818.00	4,412
Insurance	1024.11	
Projects:		
Friends of OUR park	3097.00	3,054
Trossachs Trail	4575.00	6,185
General Expenses	75.00	
Website Redevelopment	-	-
Young Friends Project	6577.50	-
Lauder Project		241
Port of Menteith		7,975
Tom Weir Rest	672.00	300
Two Lochs Project	69610.59	81,377
Events		
AGM & awards	682.00	-
Christmas Event	692.59	-
<u>Expenditure TOTAL</u>	<u>115916.76</u>	<u>119,366</u>
<u>Income TOTAL</u>	<u>96675.03</u>	<u>160,268</u>
Income/Deficit in year	<u>-19241.73</u>	<u>40,902</u>

**Balance Sheet for year
ended 31/12/2022**

CURRENT ASSETS	2022	2021
Bank account 00192916	-775.53	
Bank account 00154755	59424.61	77890.00
Total assets	58649.08	77890.00
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
NIL		
TOTAL FUNDS	58649.08	77890.00
Represented by:		
Funds brought forward at 01/01/22	77890.81	36988.00
Less: Deficit in year	<u>-19241.70</u>	<u>40902.00</u>
Total Funds	58649.08	77890.00

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total
Brought forward	14000.00	63890.81	77890.81
Added in year	20180.64	76494.39	96675.03
Paid in year	-32056.67	-83860.09	-115916.76
Total Funds	2123.97	56525.11	58649.08

Statement of Assets & Liabilities as at 31st. December, 2022

	31/12/22	31/12/21
Current assets:		
Bank:		
Combined balance at year end	£58,649	£77,890
Funds:	£58,649	£77,890

James B Fraser (Chairman)



Tom Wallace (Treasurer)



Jean Murray (Independent Examiner)



Date 25/1/23

Notes/

Notes to the accounts

Year ended 31 December 2022

Nature and purpose of funds

The aims of Friends of Loch Lomond & the Trossachs "the charity" are:

- To cherish, protect and enhance the natural beauty, amenity and character of Loch Lomond, its islands and the surrounding countryside.

- To protect and encourage the preservation, conservation and improvement of features of public amenity or historic interest within the above area.
- To promote and encourage an energetic and consistent implementation of good planning policies appropriate to the above area and consistent with these objects.
- To stimulate public interest in these objects by means of publications, meetings, exhibitions, appeals and other forms of publicity.
- To co-operate with other bodies to promote the foregoing objects.

Executive Council

None of the trustees received any remuneration in the year.

There were no transactions with trustees and connected persons in the year.

Other information:

At 31 December 2022 there the following outstanding debtors:

		Paid date
<i>Business Supporters</i>		
Cameron House	£550	19/01/23
Cruise Loch Lomond	£275	07/03/23
Lodge on Loch Lomond	£550	24/02/23
Luss Estates	£750	05/01/23
Poppies Hotel	£110	17/01/23
Tigh Mor Trossachs	£550	06/01/23
Travel Chapter – Holiday Cottages	£110	06/01/23
Travel Chapter – Cottages & Castles	£110	06/01/23
Wheels Cycling Centre	£110	
<i>Voice Advertising</i>		
Cawley Hotels	£400	
Cruise Loch Lomond	£220	07/03/23
Loch Katrine	£300	20/01/23
Lodge on Loch Lomond (Summer & Winter)	£800	24/02/23
Luss Estates	£400	05/01/23
<i>Bonnie Banks Bln Sponsorship</i>		
Lodge on Loch Lomond/Inn on Loch Lomond	£2,000	17/02/23
Total	£7,235	

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE FRIENDS OF LOCH LOMOND & THE TROSSACHS NATIONAL PARK

I report on the accounts of the charity for the period ended 31st December 2022 which are set out in the accompanying documents.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The Charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the Charities and Trustees Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Charities Account (Scotland) Regulations 2006.

The Charity trustees consider that the audit requirement of Regulation 10(1)(a) to (c) of the Accounts Regulations does not apply. It is my responsibility to examine the accounts as required under section 44(1)(c) of the Act and to state whether certain matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's statement

My examination is carried out in accordance with Regulation 11 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006. An examination included a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeks explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the views given by the accounts.

Independent examiner's statement

In the course of my examination no matter has come to my attention

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
 - a. to keep accounting records in accordance with Section 44(1)(a) of the 2005 Act and Regulation 4 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations, and
 - b. to prepare accounts with the accounting records and comply with Regulation 8 of the 2006 Accounts Regulationshave not been met, or
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Jean Murray
Darroch Mhor
Carrick Castle
PA24 8AF

Jean Murray
25/5/23

Date:

Core Purpose



Working for the benefit of people and nature in Scotland's First National Park

To cherish, protect and enhance the natural beauty, amenity and character of the National Park

To promote and encourage the preservation, conservation and improvement of features of public amenity or historic interest within the National Park

Charitable Objectives

To promote and encourage an energetic and consistent implementation of good planning policies, appropriate to the National Park and consistent with these objectives

To stimulate interest in these objectives by means of publications, meetings, exhibitions, appeals and other forms of publicity

To co-operate with other bodies to promote the foregoing objectives

Guiding Principles

Excellence

Authenticity

Integrity

Care

Collaboration

Independence

Vision

To be a vibrant membership body and the independent champion seeking to ensure that Scotland's first National Park fulfils its full potential as one of the world-wide family of National Parks by nurturing and celebrating the Park's rich and diverse natural and cultural heritage

Supporting the Vision

Increasing Membership

Business Supporters

Friends of OUR Park

Promotional Activities

Fundraising

Strategic Projects

Windows on The Park

Celebrating Cultural Heritage

Nature Conservation & Restoration

Protecting the National Park's Special Qualities

Young Friends

Sustainable Communities

Priority Activities

- Scenic Views
- Online/Print
- [Trossachs Trail](#)
- LL Skyline Path
- [Trossachs Trail](#)
- Other Active Travel Projects

- Tom Weir's Rest
- Lauder Memorial
- Loch Lomond Islands
- Characters of the Park
- Events

- Future Nature
- Saving Red Squirrels
- Promoting Green Tourism
- Make A Difference Days
- Lochs Water Quality

- Monitor Planning Applications
- Respond to consultations
- Visitor Management
- Campaigning & Projects: Litter, Toilets, Parking & Sustainable Transport

- Connecting with Nature Activity
- John Muir Awards
- Young Ranger Initiative
- Educational Resources

- Low Visual Impact Energy Initiatives
- Place Plan Support
- [Luss Summit](#)
- [Arrochar & Tarbet](#) Regeneration

