

The Voice

The magazine of the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs



Mountains and the People Milestone Achievements

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Chairman's Introduction

WELCOME TO THIS SPRING EDITION OF VOICE, which features interesting articles about different aspects of the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park and news on recent activities of the Friends and others working to make the Park a better place for people and nature.



As the only independent conservation and heritage charity covering the National Park, we continue to strive to make a difference through campaigning, fundraising and volunteering activities, working closely with partners such as the Park Authority, local communities and tourism groups. Sadly, during the past winter we said farewell to Professor Gavin Arneil who for almost 40 years played a major role in the work of the Friends as well as being one of the world's leading children's doctors. We were also greatly saddened by the tragic fire which claimed two lives and caused considerable damage at the flagship Cameron House Hotel on Loch Lomondside last December. Hopefully, Cameron House, which is such an important tourism asset and major employer on the lochside, will be rebuilt soon so that it can once again welcome many thousands of visitors from home and abroad to Loch Lomond and the wider National Park. We wish Resort Manager, Andy Rogers and his team every success in re-opening the hotel as soon as is practically feasible after re-building work. It is encouraging to see healthy levels of investment taking place in new and improved visitor facilities throughout the National Park. Many hoteliers, holiday parks operators, caterers and boat operators are investing heavily to ensure they meet the increasingly discerning needs of visitors. It is also encouraging to see the Park Authority and charities such as the Steamship Sir Walter Scott investing in new campsites beside Loch Achray and Loch Katrine which

I am sure will be very popular with visitors. Some of the operators shared their stories on growing sustainable tourism businesses at the recent National Park tourism conference organised by the Friends. We sincerely hope some of the visitor management challenges, and litter management in particular, will be dealt with more effectively this year following the inadequate litter clearance arrangements in busy tourist hotspots such as Luss, Balmaha, Callander and along the A82 last year. The Park Authority assure us they are stepping up their litter management efforts and they are striving to work more closely with relevant local authority departments to ensure there are more coordinated and better litter clearance service arrangements in place to cope with busy periods. It is encouraging to see a number of the 'back to basics' issues we highlighted in our formal response to the draft Park Partnership Plan featuring in the final version endorsed recently by the Scottish Government's Environment and Climate Change Cabinet Secretary, Roseanna Cunningham. Since this is an action orientated document that all agencies with an interest in the National Park sign up to, we are looking forward to seeing real progress on the ground for the benefit of people and nature over the next five years. Along with other voluntary groups, we have pledged to make a positive and practical contribution to some of the projects and actions that feature in the Plan. We have ambitious plans to open new and

improved family friendly path networks on West Loch Lomondside in partnership with Luss Estates and power companies and hope to continue to support the Mountains and the People initiative and other projects with funding from the successful Friends of OUR park visitor giving scheme. This year we are also planning to press ahead with a further phase of improvement works at the Lauder Monument in Cowal and to continue lobbying for a much-needed improvement scheme at the popular Duck Bay Picnic Area at the southern end of Loch Lomond which is in fragmented ownership and suffering from under investment. As part of the national theme Year of Young People we intend to step up our support for youth initiatives that involve youngsters having more opportunities to get out and be inspired in the National Park. We also have organised some special events such as a series of cruises on Loch Katrine to celebrate the International Day of the Child which involves performances from young local musicians. We hope you will come along to this and other events we have planned to provide opportunities to enjoy the special qualities of the National Park. Please enjoy reading this edition of Voice and thank you for continuing to support the work of the Friends..

All the very best.

JAMES FRASER

Chair - Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs



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The Voice is published biannually in spring and autumn. Submissions on topics relating to Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park are welcome. Please send submissions to the editor at the address below or email info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk
Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs; Carrochan; Carrochan Road; Balloch G83 8EG
Telephone: **01389 727761** Email: info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk
www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk

Cover image by Paul Saunders..

Professor Gavin Arneil (1923-2018)

Professor Gavin Arneil, Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs founding member and Honorary President, who was late President Hannah Stirling's "right hand man" for many years, sadly died on January 21st after a lengthy period of illness. Gavin was a founding member 40 years ago and has served the Friends with great distinction over the years. He also served on the Secretary of States' Working Party on Loch Lomond and the Trossachs and for 11 years on the Loch Lomond Park Authority, the predecessor of the National Park.

He made an enormous contribution to the work of the Friends over the years and the various bodies that preceded the creation of Scotland's first National Park. In recent years despite failing health he continued to show a keen interest in the work of the Friends.



A gentle giant of the Friends and one of the world's top children's doctors

Here we share a tribute to his distinguished life as a leading children's doctor.

Born in Glasgow in 1923, his father was a senior lecturer and mother an infant teacher. He went to school at Jordanhill College school and from 1940-45 was a medical student at Glasgow University, while he also served in the Home Guard for the duration of the Second World War. He served as a major for three years on emergency service in the Royal Army Medical Corp.

Gavin became one of the most famous children's doctors in the world. He began work in 1944 and rose from houseman to professor and honorary consultant at Yorkhill Children's Hospital in Glasgow. He retired from hospital work but not child health in 1988. By that time he was deeply involved in International Child Health and after decades of hard work rose to be President of the International Paediatric Association (IPA) which includes 170 countries and nearly all the children's doctors in the world. He is the only British doctor in the first 100 years who has held this post. The work included travel to more than 50 countries, many with severe problems, to help and advise. These included many countries behind the iron curtain during the Cold War, Nigeria during the Biafran war, Kampuchean camps, Bosnia during the emergency, old countries such as Nepal, Afghanistan, Korea, China, Cote D'Ivoire, Uganda, Brazil and Malaya, also new countries such as Uzbekistan, Khazakstan and Kirgystan. He eased out of Child Health activity after his 80th birthday in 2004 but continued to be deeply interested.

Unusually, Gavin was a doctor in triplicate, that is in Medicine, Science and Philosophy. He received many honours from abroad and at home. Outstanding were the Nobel Medal of the Swedish Medical Association and the 1983 St Mungo Prize of the City of Glasgow then awarded only triennially. A number of institutions in Britain and abroad gave him an honorary award.



Professor Gavin Arneil, third from right, at the Friends' first executive council meeting in 1978.

On the lighter side he had a good sense of humour, sailed, golfed, gardened, once imported wine, quoted Burns and wrote poetry! He once even successfully treated a sick chimp in the Kelvin Hall Circus.

In the 1950s he tackled and solved the problem of toddler rickets in Glasgow. Two decades later rickets appeared in Pakistani adolescents, a difficult problem to tackle because of communication, but he had a cartoon dubbed in Urdu and Hindi to educate non-English speakers shown between the main films for immigrants in the Cosmo cinema. Dr Krishna Goel was an invaluable asset. This and help from Dr Dunnigan solved the problem long before other cities did so. In the 1960s Gavin, Dr Margaret Kerr and Prof J Hutchison pioneered BCG vaccination for Glasgow children and in eight years pre-school tuberculosis, a previously common problem, virtually disappeared. He had two major projects in kidney disease and cot death.

Throughout the decades at Yorkhill he treated over 30,000 children in his ward and thousands more in outpatients, saving the lives of many children suffering from kidney disease. He chaired the committee which commissioned the new RHSC Yorkhill in 1971, recognised worldwide as one of the world's top hospitals. In 1983 with the late Doctors Bentley and MacPherson he founded the Yorkhill Children's Trust that raised millions for scanners and other equipment for children.

Realising that there were no British postgraduate textbooks in Paediatrics (which had previously led the world) still on the market and post war these had been replaced by American books Gavin with the help of Professor Forfar produced a 1,500 page textbook which now has had seven editions and become recognised as the world's best.

In 1950 he started the first unit in Europe specialised in all aspects of children's kidney disease. Doctors came from all over the world to learn. In 1967 he got together with doctors from both Eastern and Western Europe and founded the European Society of Paediatric Nephrology in 1967. This led onto the International Paediatric Nephrology Association (IPNA) which now includes more than 100 countries providing expert doctors in kidney disease.

In 1977 his interest was raised in cot death and the persecution of grieving parents. Persuaded of the need for action he carried out surveys which showed the danger of laying babies on their front as well as smoking and sharing parent's bed. In 1985 helped by Dr Gibson he founded the Scottish Cot Death Trust which has contributed to cot deaths being halved in the community.



Bumper Numbers Visit Tom Weir Statue

Over 300,000 people have visited the Tom Weir Statue at scenic Balmaha Bay, which recently marked its third anniversary. The Loch Lomondside statue paying tribute to Scotland's most-loved mountain man was unveiled to the public on Monday, December 29 2014, and has proved to be a runaway success. The statue site has continued to evolve, with the creation of a mountain garden named after Tom and his late wife Rhona, picnic facilities and storyboards. It also had donation posts installed which have collected almost £4,500 for maintaining the site. The Friends worked closely with the Tom Weir Memorial Fund to raise almost £150,000 to transform the former run-down picnic site at Balmaha Bay, which opened over three years ago in front of hundreds of people wearing Tom's signature red toorie hats.



James Fraser, Chairman of the Friends, said: "The success of the site continues to exceed expectations and it has clearly captured the public's imagination making it a top visitor attraction on Loch Lomondside. Sadly, Tom's wife Rhona passed away last year, but while she was alive she regularly visited the site and was delighted to see just how popular Tom's statue and the mountain garden were with residents and visitors alike." Susan Taylor, Administrator for the Tom Weir Memorial Fund, added: "All those years ago when we first considered the idea of locating a statue in honour of Tom at Loch Lomond, we could never have envisaged the success it would enjoy in its first three years. Tom Weir is a hero to so many people not just in Scotland, but further afield, and the number of visitors to the site, as well as it standing the test of time in its first three years, proves exactly that."

A wintry scene at the Tom Weir Statue, which continues to go from strength to strength.



Lauder Monument Improvement Plans



The Harry Lauder monument

Following the great success of the community led programme of events sponsored last year by the Friends to celebrate the Harry Lauder connection with Dunoon and Cowal and an earlier scheme to improve the path to the Lauder Monument and Viewpoint at Inveroaden a package of further improvements at this site are planned. With the support of the local landowner, John Montgomery, Forestry Commission Scotland and Tom Wallace of the Scottish Outdoor Access Trust, the Friends have prepared and costed a scheme which involves creating a new car park with a new path link to the existing path, the restoration of the Monument, the surrounding railings and the installation of storyboards and advance signing to raise awareness of this historic site which has stunning views of Argyll Forest Park. Funding bids have been submitted to Landfill Trusts and other funding bodies to assist with this project and the Scottish Outdoor Access Trust, through their Mountains and the People initiative, have agreed to undertake some of the site works.

Major New Path Project Takes Shape

The Friends continue to be heavily involved in working with Luss Estates and the two electricity transmission companies, Scottish Power and Scottish and Southern Electricity, as they refine and cost proposals for a major new multi-million path and landscaping project that will provide family friendly long-distance path links between Helensburgh, Luss and Arrochar and transform safe walking and cycling opportunities in this area of the National Park. This has now been identified as the number one priority project as part of a joint initiative designed to mitigate the visual impact of pylons and powerlines in and around the scenic areas of the National Park and it is anticipated after a period of consultation in late Spring this year a fully costed scheme will go forward as a funding bid to OFGEM for consideration. This flagship project has been promoted jointly by the Friends and Luss Estates and has the enthusiastic backing of Sir Malcolm Colquhoun, Honorary President of the Friends and custodian of the extensive landholding where the new path will be created. Friends Vice-Chair, John Urquhart has been providing

practical input to the route survey work drawing on his local knowledge and his experience of developing the Three Lochs Way. The detailed survey work is being undertaken by the Scottish Outdoor Access Trust on behalf of the power companies and the local working group and the intention is to re-route the popular Three Lochs Way walking route away from existing power lines to create better opportunities for people to enjoy the special scenic qualities of this part of the National Park. John said: "The realigned route through the Luss Hills has to take account of existing land uses like forestry and agriculture as well as areas which may be ecologically sensitive or important to rare and iconic species such as Golden Eagle. As well as the benefit to mountain bikers and walkers who will use the new route, there should also be benefits to Luss Estates, who own the area. The new trail will be 'quad bikeable' which should assist the estate with shepherding work and the management of the area's deer population."



National Park Tourism Summit

In early March the Friends organised a very successful tourism conference on the theme of Growing Sustainable Tourism Businesses in the National Park, with support from Scottish Enterprise and the National Park Authority.

The event was organised to coincide the publication of the next five-year Partnership Plan for the National Park and was well attended by local tourism businesses.

Friends Chairman, James Fraser, said: "We had an impressive range of speakers including some local businesses who gave useful insights to how they developed and grew their businesses over the years. We were also joined by the Vice-Chair of Cumbria Tourism who provided an interesting overview of how the Lake District is developing as a sustainable tourist destination, while a speaker from VisitScotland gave some useful practical tips on how to introduce inexpensive sustainable business practices."

The event was part of the Friends eco-tourism initiative which is receiving funding support from Scottish Enterprise via the two-year Collaborating for Success Programme involving the Friends, Love Loch Lomond and the Park Authority.



TRIBUTE

An Appreciation of Liz Evans

17 March 1952 – 31 December 2017

Liz had lived in Carrick Castle since the '80s when she joined Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre as an Instructor. She then became Head of Centre for 17 years until she retired in 2009. During the early period she saved Ardroy from closure and turned it around with her Trainee Instructor Scheme and around 100 AIs as they were called, mostly became instructors themselves. In 1998, Liz was the driving force to obtain a lease to use

Cormonachan Woodlands as one of the outdoor education areas for the centre and over the years that followed, she raised money to put in the 2.5km of paths and the resource centre, Jan's Hideaway. Tens of thousands of children have since used the woodlands for outdoor experiences and local people for walking. Following her retirement, the centre was run down by Fife Council and eventually closed in 2011. However, Liz was asked to become a director and trustee of the new Ardroy Trust (AOEC Trust) to help guide the Ardroy ethos of the past with outdoor education for the future. She did this voluntarily but realised that Cormonachan Woodlands was not part of the Trust's initial plan. She felt that Cormonachan Woodlands should continue to be an important aspect of outdoor education at Ardroy and so set up the Cormonachan Woodlands Association.

The Association was officially formed at the beginning of 2015 and with the agreement of the woodlands land owners Forest Enterprise Scotland, the land area to be managed by the Association was increased from 20 ha to 58.9 ha. The Association then increased its membership to 76 by the end of 2017 and has achieved funding support from many funders. Liz's drive and inspiration led the Cormonachan Woodlands Association to leave a legacy that will live on. A 'Contemplation Shelter' is to be built in Cormonachan Woodlands for members and visitors to use for the future. Liz asked for people to contribute to this by way of donations and the Ardroy Trust, Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, Carrick Castle Community Trust and Forestry Commission Scotland have been the first to offer large donations to the shelter as well as very many private individuals who have been donating as well. All have said that this shelter will be a fitting memorial to Liz Evans for the work she has put in to Ardroy and the Cormonachan Woodlands over very many years.

Donations for Liz's Contemplation Shelter have exceeded £6,000 and the shelter is on order and should be delivered for placing on a stunning site overlooking Loch Gail soon..

Contributed by Douglas Locke

PASSENGER CRUISE VESSEL LAUNCHED

Caption



The newest vessel to carry passengers on Loch Lomond, MV Lomond Monarch was launched last Autumn at Tarbet Pier and is now in full service, giving visitors to Scotland's first National Park more opportunities to experience its natural beauty.

Weighing 50 tonnes, the vessel measures 16.5m long, 5.3m wide and 6m high and carries up to 120 passengers. This brings the Cruise Loch Lomond fleet of boats up to eight with a total passenger capacity of 700 passengers to cater for a diverse range of tour programmes for UK and international visitors featuring Loch Lomond.

James Fraser, Chairman of Friends of Loch Lomond and

The Trossachs, who launched the MV Lomond Monarch, said: i am pleased to welcome this latest addition to the Cruise Loch Lomond fleet of passenger boats and wish this long-established family business every success as they continue to expand and innovate to meet of increasingly discerning visitors to Loch Lomond.

"Loch Lomond is facing greater competition from other destinations and it is important that local business continue to invest in product innovation. Cruise Loch Lomond has done just this on a consistent basis over the years and this latest addition to their cruising fleet will ensure they are well positioned to grow their flourishing business."



John Muir Award eBook

A new John Muir Award Record eBook has been created in with funding support from the National Park Authority. The aim of the online Record eBook is to make it easier for people to share their experiences whilst completing the John Muir Award and encourage others to engage with the natural world. The National Park's Education team work in partnership with the John Muir Trust to provide a framework for outdoor learning experiences for people and groups throughout the Park. In the past year just under 1,500 John Muir Awards were completed in the National Park.

Charlotte Wallace, Volunteer, Education and Engagement Manager at Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park, said: "We are really excited to see the Record eBook coming to life and being used to help support and enrich the experiences of anyone taking part in the John Muir Award especially those within the National Park. 2018 is the Scottish Government's 'Year of Young People' so this addition to the John Muir Award is a fantastic vehicle to reach a whole new audience and encourage young people across the National Park and beyond, to go outside and learn about nature."



Railway Path Project Steams Ahead

An ambitious community led project to create a path link between St Fillans, Lochearnhead and Comrie using the former route of the Loch Earn railway line recently took another major step forward with the completion of the third phase of the £1million path improvement scheme. St Fillans Community Trust has been one of the major drivers of this scheme which will eventually become part of the cross-Scotland Pilgrim's Way from Iona to St Andrews, a priority national walking and cycling route. Funding support for this latest stage of the route was provided by Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority, Sustrans Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage.

Kenny Auld of the National Park Authority said: "This project is a great example of a community working with others to deliver a path which will be used daily by all types of residents and visitors to the village."

Local resident and Chair of St Fillans Community Trust, Cecil Smylie, officially opened the section of the path which he uses every day on his mobility scooter.



New Balmaha Cruises

A stunning picture of the new £100,000 pontoon introduced recently at Balmaha Pier, Loch Lomond by Sandy Fraser of the Oak Tree Inn. The new facility has opened up opportunities for new cruises and is the first pontoon on the eastern shores of Loch Lomond to have disabled friendly access.



NEW CAMPSITE PROVISION

A new 17 pitch campsite overlooking Loch Achray beside the Forest Drive in the heart of the Trossachs is currently under construction. The £245,000 project is being funded and provided by the National Park Authority as part of the major Your Park camping initiative which enters its second year with a mix of formal and informal camping provision in camping management zones that encompass many lochsides in the National Park.

The Your Park camping initiative was introduced last year following pressure over many years from local communities to tackle visitor management, environmental damage and anti-social behaviour by some associated with camping and visitor pressures more generally on the more popular lochshores in the National Park. It also followed on from the success of the East Loch Lomond camping and no drinking byelaws which, combined with extra patrolling, helped to transform the overall visitor experience and led to families returning to what many considered to be a much safer and pleasant area for quiet recreation. The initiative has not been without its critics, particularly amongst some national recreational bodies, but it has been widely welcomed by local communities and others. The Friends have also welcomed the direct provision of camp sites by the Park Authority as there is a shortage of camping facilities in the National Park. This latest campsite development follows on from the new £350,000 26 pitch campsite developed at Loch Chon last year which has proved to be popular with

campers. In 2017, more than 16,000 people camped in the new permit areas and the new Loch Chon campsite and it is anticipated with new and improved facilities coming on stream this will rise to over 20,000 in 2018. Meanwhile, the new eco camp at Loch Katrine, that was developed by the Steamship Company and opened in January this year is proving to be very popular with the eco lodges on site being well booked up and good use also being made of the campervan hook up facilities. An eight-pitch campsite beside a new toilet and shower block beside the eco lodges is due to open in May. (Word count 351- plus picture of camping from cover of last Spring edition of Voice)

New Rural Business Hub

The long-established Fraser C. Robb family engineering business on the outskirts of Drymen is currently upgrading their showroom to showcase more of their garden and ground care equipment. Whilst planning the work the Robb family saw the opportunity to build a new floor and introduce a much needed Rural Business Hub to the area. Drymen Business Hub will provide businesses of all sizes with access to office and meeting facilities, as well as offering local businesses a place to network and exchange ideas about opportunities to grow their businesses. The Hub will also be providing training courses and is due to open this summer.

The Friends supported both the planning application and the European LEADER funding bids for these developments which were successful.

CONTROVERSIAL GOLD MINE APPROVED



Revised plans for the controversial Cononish Gold Mine near Tyndrum were recently approved by the National Park Authority despite some puzzling comments from planners in their 72 page report to the Board on whether or not the plans were at odds with the adopted Local Development Plan. In their conclusions the planners state: "During the construction, operational and decommissioning phases of the mine, years 1-17, this development will be contrary to the Local Development Plan as it will not safeguard, protect or enhance the landscape, visual amenity, wild land, special qualities recreation and access. However, the impacts will be temporary, transitional and less acute than the previously consented proposal."

They then go on to state: "It is clear that significant impacts identified are temporary and with successful restoration on site and in the wider Glen, then there will be a positive impact in the longer term. As a result, over the longer term (beyond 17 years activity) it is considered that this development will comply with the Local Development Plan."

The revised plans stretch the development out over 17 years as opposed to the original consented 10 years and involves creating a series of tailing stacks in the shape of moraines with mine waste as opposed to building a dam and settling lochan and putting some of the waste back in the mine. The various financial bonds are also much less than previously agreed to cover restoration and visitor management in the Glen and the wider National Park.

It does seem odd that the planners and the National Park Authority Board members think it is acceptable to breach the Local Development Plan in a wild land area for 17 years. Admittedly, the proposals for dealing with the spoil waste are better than the previously

flawed scheme and it will be interesting to see if the ten large artificial moraines planned will have a positive impact in the long term given the restoration technique is largely untried. This does seem a high-risk strategy and is at odds with the Sandford precautionary conservation principle which is enshrined in the objectives of the National Park as there is danger of long term damage being done to the special scenic qualities of this area of the National Park.

Two Lochside Hotel Expansion Projects

Plans to add 20 bedrooms to the Woodbank Inn in Balloch and to upgrade and expand the historic Rowardennan Hotel have recently been approved by the National Park Authority. Both schemes which provide a welcome boost for tourism in the Loch Lomond area at a time when there will be a shortage of hotel bedrooms following the tragic fire at the flagship Cameron House Hotel last December. The Friends submitted supporting letters for both these hotel upgrade and expansion schemes.

NEWS IN BRIEF

National Park Info Centre Closures

As part of a Scotland wide tourist information centre closure programme five strategically located info centres, which serve the needs of visitors to the National Park area, are being axed by VisitScotland. The gateway centres on the approaches to the National Park in Dunoon, Inveraray and at Pinnhall (Stirling -M9/M80 motorway junction) and the info centre at Tyndrum have already been closed and there are plans to close the information centre in the busy tourist town of Callander in March 2019.

The closures have been met with disbelief locally and efforts are being made by some local community groups to ensure there are still information services available in places such as Tyndrum and Callander. In Tyndrum, villagers are looking at the option of taking over the existing info centre and using it as a community hub with a range of services being provided including visitor information while in Callander, discussions are ongoing amongst various bodies and local groups to try and come up with a solution. VisitScotland's PR spin ("a dynamic strategy") on the reasons for such a massive closure programme (a reduction from 64 to 26) are unconvincing. They cite declining numbers due to the way visitors now access information digitally but fail to mention that in many parts of the National Park and rural Scotland internet and mobile signal access is still poor. It is also perhaps no coincidence that this announcement has come at a time when local authority funding support for VisitScotland activities has completely collapsed going down from around £5 million 10 years ago to almost nothing today.

Sadly, there will now be only two information centres in the National Park at Balloch and Aberfoyle while the Park Authority will continue to provide an information service at the Park Centre in Balmaha. The National Park Gateway Centre in Balloch, which has been closed for several years, is being re-opened shortly as a functions and spa venue.

Extra Ferry Linkspan for Park Gateway

Western Ferries, who provide frequent ferry services between Inverclyde and Cowal are currently investing £2.5 million in a new linkspan at McInroy's point terminal. The new linkspan will allow, at peak times, two linkspans to be used at the same time to help ferry the 1.3 million passengers and 650,000 vehicles that annually use the service. The ferry company provides a vital transport link to the western part of the National Park, the gateway town of Dunoon and rest of the Cowal peninsula. The work is due to be complete by late summer.

The Last Straw

The Friends are backing a several local initiatives to crack down on the use of plastic straws and to replace them with more environmentally friendly products as part of a wider effort to reduce plastic waste on lochshores and river banks throughout the National Park.

One of the more successful local initiatives is being led by Luss Estates who recently launched the StrawLUSS campaign focusing on biodegradable alternatives. Loch Lomond Arms Hotel, Luss Seafood Bar, Luss General Store, the Clan Shop, Cruise Loch Lomond, Lomond School and Arrochar and Luss Primary schools are all backing the scheme.

Meanwhile, a local task force in Arrochar, chaired by Jackie Baillie MSP, is hoping that long term solutions for dealing with the large accumulations of plastic and other marine waste on Arrochar beach at the head of Loch Long will emerge from a planned study being backed by Marine Scotland following a recent visit by Rosanna Cunningham, Cabinet Secretary for the Environment.

Mountains and the People

Milestone



In January 2018 The Mountains and The People project reached its half way mark with two and a half years of work, to repair paths and conserve the fragile mountain habitats of Scotland's two National Parks, complete and ambitious plans for the years ahead.

This five-year project from 2015 to 2020 is led by the Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland and supported by Heritage Lottery Fund Scotland in partnership with the National Park Authorities in Loch Lomond & the Trossachs and Cairngorms as well as Forestry Commission Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage.

The project aims to promote RESPECT for the natural heritage of our mountains, RESKILL the next generation of conservation workers and REPAIR some of the most eroded yet popular hill paths in our Parks. With high aspirations this £6.4million project's activities have included designing, tendering and managing complex mountain path repair contracts as well delivering vocational training and establishing a volunteer workforce to assist with the monitoring and maintenance of the repaired routes.



Cobbler before and after

HIGHLIGHTS IN LOCH LOMOND AND THE TROSSACHS

Good progress has been made with the Mountains and the People initiative within the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park area in the past few years. Here are just some of the highlights and milestones we have reached.

1. MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS TO POPULAR MOUNTAIN PATHS

The capital programme, which sees specialist contractors work at altitude in all conditions has been a major focus for the project with over £950,000 of contracts delivered. This has seen over 18km of path work constructed, much of which has been done by hand. To date the worst sections of the following routes have been repaired:

The Cobbler, Stob Binnien, Ben More, Ben Ledi, Ben A'an, Ben Venue and lower Ben Lomond.

Works are also currently underway on:

Ben Ime, Ben Narnain, Ben Vorlich, Ben Lui and Ben Dubhchraig with the latter having received a well needed bridge replacement.

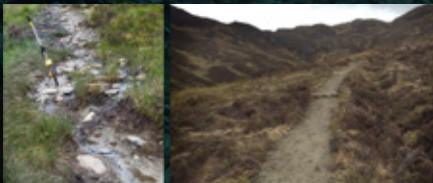


Achievements

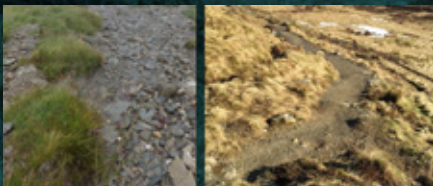
Contributed by
Project Manager,
Tom Wallace.

2. TRAINING SUCCESS

The project's Balloch Training Centre has trained candidates in Environmental Conservation as part of their SVQ level 2 training programme. Trainees worked on Ben Lomond, Craigmore, Ben A'an and The Cobbler as well as supporting the work of RSPB and the National Trust for Scotland whilst learning the practical skills and technical knowledge to equip them to start a career in conservation. Success from the programme includes a 2016 trainee establishing his own mountain path repair company, one gaining a contract as a Ranger with the National Park and five being offered full time work with experienced contractors.



Ben Venue Before and After



Ben Ledi Before and After

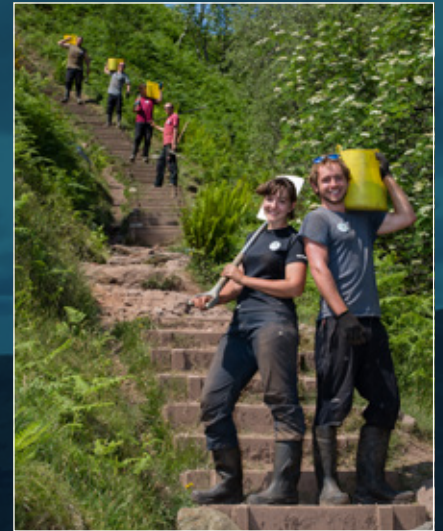
3. VOLUNTEERS REACH NEW HEIGHTS

With volunteering already a popular activity within the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park this project aimed to engage a different audience, one which was keen to get out, get dirty and give something back. Over 1,700 volunteer hours have been given in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park over the past two years to undertake essential path maintenance and habitat management. Volunteers also got on board with the unique Adopt a Path Scheme which empowers them to become custodian of the mountains, reporting on potential damage and allowing repair works to be targeted.

More details on all aspects of the project and how you can get involved can be found at www.themountainsandthepeople.org.uk.

Delivery Statistics for Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park:

- 18,201m path work complete
- 6 High Level Health Walks
- 2 training courses with 16 trainees trained
- 37 volunteering events
- 292 Volunteer days (1751 volunteer hours) given
- £950,566 capital spend to date



Trainees at work at Craigmhor

The project is being coordinated by Tom Wallace who in his spare time is involved with the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs. The Friends are providing some support to the conservation and access work delivered by this major project with annual grants from Friends of OUR park visitor giving scheme which involves dozens of local businesses collecting donations from visitors to the National Park. Through grants from the Friends of Our Park Scheme the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs have also contributed to the conservation and access work this project delivers within the local area.

It is five years since RSPB Scotland purchased the Loch Lomond National Nature Reserve at the southern end of the loch and here Paula Baker reviews the progress made over the past year and makes a plea to readers to provide ideas and suggestions for taking the Reserve forward over the next five years.



Airey Woodland trail and chainsaw carved wildlife bench during bluebell season

© RSPB

RSPB Scotland Loch Lomond Gears Up to Welcome Visitors

When April arrives, it will be the first anniversary of the two new trails at RSPB Scotland Loch Lomond. These trails were completed just in time for bluebell season last year and have been proving popular since then.

Airey Woodland trail is just under 1km long and winds its way through a coppiced alder woodland and out onto a wildflower meadow and pond. This trail is stunning in all seasons but when the bluebells are out in May, it is particularly special. Viewpoint Trail is a short, fully accessible path leading to the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Scenic Routes structure named Gaels View. This is the perfect point for looking over the site and has spectacular views of the surrounding hills. In spring and summer you might catch a glimpse of an osprey soaring high up in the sky, and in winter you can see skeins of geese coming into roost in the evening. This past year, with the trails and the Nature Hub opening extended to 7 days a week, many more people have been able to come to explore and get an insight into the special habitats and wildlife found here.

For our next project, the pond along Airey Woodland trail is getting some much needed attention. With funding from the Scottish Power Foundation we'll be clearing the pond and making



Newly completed Scottish Scenic Routes Structure (SSRS) named 'Gaels View' © RSPB

it a better habitat for water creatures and installing a pond dipping structure and shelter overlooking the meadow. All being well this should be ready for the summer season and will open up exploring water wildlife in a whole new way.

With the addition of residential volunteers in 2016, our capacity has grown and we're able to deliver more practical conservation onsite. Over the winter this focusses on Greenland white-fronted goose monitoring and in the summer invasive non-native species management takes over their diaries. Over the past 14 years the invasive non-native species (INNS) programme has been undertaken by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) within the Loch Lomond National Nature Reserve (NNR). Since 2015 the RSPB has taken a lead on the

monitoring and management of INNS on the south side of the NNR. Although there are continuing problems such as new patches of invasive plants being discovered and the spread of plants, the programme continues to deliver positive results. In total last year 9,094 invasive plants were removed from the reserve. As we move towards our sixth year, we'd like to ask readers and members of the community to think about how RSPB Scotland Loch Lomond might progress in the future. We're taking this year to speak to as many people as we can, look at our options and start to seek some funding. We will be speaking to the National Park, Community Councils, local businesses, SNH, Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, and many others and we want to get the views of as many local people as possible. We plan to use these suggestions and ideas to form proposals that we hope to share later this year. You could help by sharing with us how you feel RSPB Loch Lomond could progress to link in with local plans and ambitions and also by giving us your ideas and aspirations. We'd love to hear about any stories from the area that you think visitors should know about and also how we can support local businesses. Please drop in to the hub when it's open for a chat or email loch.lomond@rspb.org.uk or call the office on 01389 830670.

Artist's impression of what the completed pond dipping area will look like, © WWT Consulting

Main Pic: Blue skies over Ring Point, RSPB Scotland Loch Lomond © Rebecca Austin

A Ripple of Hope

Those of us lucky enough to live and work in the National Park know how special it is and how much our beautiful natural surroundings can lift the spirits. A unique building on the tranquil southern shore of Loch Venachar is giving families going through very difficult times a chance to spend precious time together.

If you travel along the A821 between Callander and the Trossachs and look across to the opposite side of Loch Venachar you might catch a glimpse of a very special place. Standing out against its scenic backdrop, is a unique and striking building whose gently undulating roof reflects the surface of the waters on whose shore it proudly sits and whose endless glass facade mirrors the water, trees and grounds surrounding it.

THIS IS NO ORDINARY PLACE. Everything from the stunning location to the design, the quality and attention to detail tells you it's special. And it is. Opened in May 2017 by Patrons Lorraine Kelly and Grant Stott, the Ripple Retreat is the jewel in the crown of charity It's Good 2 Give. It offers families with children suffering cancer the chance to spend quality time together in situations where families are often forced apart as one parent is at hospital while the other must remain at home for work and often to look after other children. Families can stay here for up to six days during treatment or in the year after treatment at no cost to themselves. Looking around it is easy to see the thought and effort that has been put into every detail here; from the electrically adjustable beds to the design of the disabled adapted shower rooms, from the wheelchair friendly layout to the accessible gardens. But, as stunning as this place looks, it is how it makes you feel that makes it truly special.

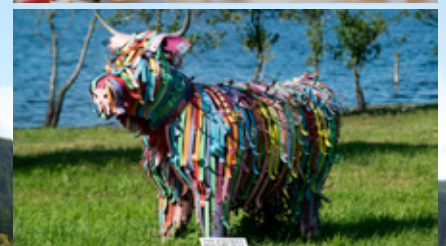
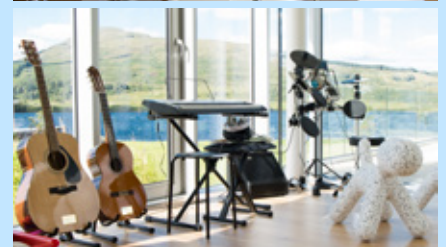
As you walk through the door you feel yourself breathing out a little more fully and your shoulders drop and relax a little. Yes, the building, the decor and the surroundings are breathtakingly beautiful, but it is more than that. There is a feeling of being taken care of, of being cocooned in a warm hug, a feeling of being at peace and of love.

All of this is the culmination of the vision, hard work and determination of Lynne McNicoll OBE and her husband Ian, who founded It's Good 2 Give in 2010. This amazing couple have a special talent for inspiring others to give of their time, energy, services and money to work together for the betterment of others. This is what made the Ripple Retreat possible.

The land on which the Retreat stands was donated by a neighbour, the house itself was designed by renowned architect Tony Kettle (of the Falkirk Wheel fame) who gave his services and those of his team free of charge. Over 31 other businesses and many individuals donated goods and services, from the fully fitted designer kitchen and bathrooms to cushions and books and even the 15,000 daffodils planted along the driveway. The names etched onto the windows along the hallway tell of the many who have been involved and this is perhaps a clue as to where that special feeling starts. The Retreat has been embraced by the local community too. Venachar Lochside provides lunch to families staying, Blair Drummond and the Sir Walter Scott steamship donate vouchers and support from the butcher and other local businesses offering discounts demonstrates their commitment.

So, if you are passing by and catch sight of this very special place, spare a thought for the families staying there and why not consider lending your support in whatever way you can.

www.rippleretreat.com



The space itself has been designed to offer a connected, shared area of relaxation, with a family-friendly environment that offers easy access for individuals of all abilities. Wide expanses of glass connect the interior of the house to the tranquil setting, while providing vital visibility to the available indoor and outdoor play areas.



The Tetrarch of Aberfoyle

Local historian and literary expert Louis Stott provides an interesting overview of one of the historic 'rulers' of part of the National Park.

Louis Stott was born in Brighton in 1934 and now lives in Aberfoyle. He is the author of a number of books on Scottish history and literature, including Smollett's Scotland, two volumes on Robert Louis Stevenson, The Enchantment of the Trossachs, Literary Loch Lomond and The Waterfalls of Scotland.

"My dearest Marion, the King's well, the Queen's well, and if you're well, all's well..."

JOHAN GRAHAM of Duchray was known both as 'Highland Hector', and as 'Tetrarch of Aberfoyle', a tetrarch being the ruler of a fourth part of a province (i.e. a quarter of Menteith). Indeed, a glance at today's Ordnance Survey map will reveal "Tetrarchy Wood", adjacent to Duchray Castle. Duchray became a brother-in-law of Alexander Colquhoun of Camstradden when Colquhoun's younger sister, Anne, married him, and, curiously, we learn more of Duchray from William Fraser's Chiefs of Colquhoun (1869) than from his Red Book of Menteith (1880).

Without comment, Fraser states that Duchray was 'born in 1600, and died in 1700', and, whether he lived to be a hundred or not, he certainly had a remarkable life. He is known to have loaned money to Charles II, and Fraser states that he fought with Montrose, who presented him with a silver pistol: 'The souvenir, which is still preserved in the repositories of the Duchray family, John Graham would at no time part with, wearing it by day, and putting it under his pillow at night'

In 1653-54 Graham played a key part in the Earl of Glencairn's Rising. The ninth Earl of Glencairn came to Duchray in August, 1653 with the King of Scots' commission to raise a rebellion in his pocket, and it was at Aberfoyle that he raised his first



Duchray Castle

troops. Duchray accompanied the earl to the Highlands, and is said to have written the account of the campaign later published by Scott.

Pass of Aberfoyle Skirmish

Duchray was involved in the first successful skirmish at the Pass of Aberfoyle in early September 1653. There was another skirmish in Menteith in April 1654, but this resulted in victory for the Republicans. This latter episode probably provoked a letter from General Monck, who had just arrived to rule Scotland on Cromwell's behalf, desiring the Earl of Menteith to give an order for the cutting down of woods about Milton and Glassert which harboured "loose, idle and desperate persons." The Earl failed to do this, and, towards the end of the Rising in August 1654, Monck himself camped in the neighbourhood of Aberfoyle. "We are now destroying this place," he boasted, "which was the chief receptacle for the enemy last winter". However, there were press reports

oyle

from Perth in December 1654 of 'a few moss troopers with Duchray on the braes of Menteith'. Indeed, John Graham of Duchray was the last rebel laird to lay down his arms, on 17th July 1655, almost a year after the Rising was supposed to have ended. Duchray was described by a contemporary historian (Baillie) as 'amongst the most honest, stout and wise of them all'.

During the campaign Duchray looked after the Marquis of Montrose's son and heir, then a young man rising twenty, later known as 'the Good Marquis'. The Grahams of Menteith were distant relations of the Grahams who became Dukes of Montrose. Monck drew up a treaty with Duchray, as he had with such distinguished lairds as Tullibardine and Seaforth. Graham was to give up his arms, but was permitted to keep a small band of armed men to defend his land, provided that he ensured that rebels and thieves were not harboured there.

The forty-two soldiers raised by Duchray were not stood down, and they eventually became part of the Black Watch (co-incidentally the 'forty-twa'). However, such companies as Duchray raised were called 'Watches', and their function was to guard against the depredations of cattle and sheep thieves, nowhere more prevalent than in West Perthshire. They were sustained by a rent - black mail or watch money - and it would be

surprising if they were not referred to as the 'Black Watch'. Thus the names the 'Black Watch' and 'the Forty-twa' perhaps carry these significant echoes of Graham of Duchray.

Montrose Funeral

After the Restoration, in 1661, Duchray played a prominent part in the true funeral of Montrose, and in 1671 he was involved in a notorious fracas at the Bridge of Aberfoyle with the then Earl of Menteith. Duchray and his son, Thomas Graham, were going to the baptism of a grandchild. The Earl perceived the ceremony as an opportunity to recover money from Duchray. When the Earl's troops turned up the baby was set down on the ground and a skirmish took place. The Earl's troops were driven off, but Duchray was later cautioned to keep the peace in Edinburgh. In 1686 James VII recompensed Graham 'for his loyalty, services and sufferings'.

It was Graham of Duchray (whether John, or his son Thomas, is not clear), who was also present at an even more famous baptism, that of Rev. Robert Kirk's posthumous daughter, Marjorie. Kirk was, of course supposed to be captive in fairyland. It is said that when Kirk's wraith appeared at the baptism Duchray was so astonished that he failed to cast his dagger above Kirk's head. The dagger was supposed to release the imprisoned

minister. This famous story was told by Rev. Patrick Graham in *Sketches of Perthshire* (1812), who says that Kirk's wraith first appeared to 'a mutual relation of his own, and of Duchray', probably Thomas Graham, as both he and Kirk having married Campbell sisters. It can be observed that Duchray senior would have been 92 years of age when this incident took place.

Whether this is an accurate account of John Graham of Duchray's life or not, we know enough of him to assert that he must have been a remarkable man. Fraser reports that he was laconic, writing to his wife from London in the days of Charles I: "My dearest Marion, the King's well, the Queen's well, and if you're well, all's well, your affectionate husband, John Graham." Fraser also states that, unlike some of his equals, he was literate, and could draw up documents, having perhaps been educated as a notary. We also know that he was honest, wise, loyal and brave. He should occupy a respected place in the annals of the National Park.



The ninth Earl of Glencairn



Widening the benefits of the National Park...with a little help from our friends

Gordon Watson, Chief Executive, Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park



Scotland is blessed with beautiful landscapes, unique eco-systems, high levels of tourism, and strong communities; all the ingredients necessary to make our National Parks world-leaders in Conservation, Visitor Experience and Rural Development.

From helping to tackle climate change to improving people's health, our National Parks can provide a wide range of benefits for Scotland. This is why Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority is launching an ambitious vision for widening the environmental, social and economic benefits the Park has to offer.

The National Park Partnership Plan 2018-2023 is our overall guiding vision for how all the organisations and groups who play a role in the management of the Park can work together to deliver a successful, sustainable future for the area and deliver benefits for the whole of Scotland. It is an exciting time for the National Park and this Plan embodies the ambition we and our partners share for this iconic place.

It sets out how we will tackle key issues and achieve a wide range of targets across conservation and land management, visitor experience and rural development. The focus is on big priorities for action that are most likely to make a lasting difference.

These include helping to tackle the impacts of climate change through extensive peatland and woodland restoration, creating sustainable communities through affordable housing and the creation of employment and training for young people, and the opportunities to help improve the health and wellbeing of people from all backgrounds through recreation and enjoyment of the great outdoors, plus many more.



Water vole © FCS/Isobel Cameron

We ran a 12-week consultation on a draft of the Plan last year and I'd like to thank everyone who took the time to provide feedback on this. It was vital to hear from as broad a range of organisations, groups and individuals as possible. I'm proud of the Plan we have jointly produced and am eager to see it put into action over the next five years.

We've already seen some great partnership successes in recent years. For instance, some of the native species which give the Park its unique character have been saved thanks to ambitious projects with some of our key partners.

Invasive non-native species, such as Rhododendron, have also been tackled thanks to many hours of joined up working with Park Authority staff and local land managers.





Our Outcomes

Conservation & Land Management

Outcome 1: Natural Capital

The Park's natural resources are enhanced for future generations: important habitats are restored and better connected on a landscape scale.

Outcome 2: Landscape Qualities

The Park's special landscape qualities and sense of place are conserved and enhanced with more opportunities to enjoy and experience them.

Outcome 3: Climate Change

The natural environment of the Park is better managed to help mitigate and address the impacts of climate change.

Outcome 4: Land Partnerships

New landscape-scale partnerships deliver better integrated management of the land and water environment providing multiple benefits for nature and people.

Visitor Experience

Outcome 5: Recreation Opportunities

The National Park has a wide variety of well promoted and managed outdoor recreation opportunities providing for a range of abilities and interests.

Outcome 6: Water Recreation

There are more opportunities to enjoy water-based recreation and sporting activities across the Park's lochs, rivers and coasts while maximising safety for all users and protecting the quality of water environments.

Outcome 7: Visitor Economy

The Park's visitor economy is thriving with more businesses and organisations working together to create a world-class destination.

Outcome 8: Visitor Management

The most popular parts of the National Park which experience pressures are managed to ensure that the quality of environment, visitor experience and community life are protected and enhanced.

Outcome 9: Health & Learning

People from a wider range of backgrounds are enjoying, valuing and helping manage the National Park. It is used more as a place for people to realise the personal health and wellbeing benefits of connecting with nature.

Rural Development

Outcome 10: Placemaking

The National Park's towns, villages and countryside are enhanced with investment in the built and historic environment, public spaces and infrastructure.

Outcome 11: Sustainable Growth

The rural economy has been strengthened through sustainable business growth and diversification.

Outcome 12: Sustainable Population

Population decline is being addressed by attracting and retaining more skilled working age and young people within the National Park and a better range of housing options.

Outcome 13: Community Empowerment

The Park's communities are supported to influence and deliver actions that improve their quality of life and place.

But it is not only conservation of the Park that has benefitted. In the last five years we've also seen:

- joint initiatives to extend the network of recreation routes and help more people of different abilities become more active
- investments in community projects such as the Callander Landscape Partnership to help empower our communities and encourage them to work in partnership with others to deliver large scale projects with multiple benefits
- public consultations in partnership with other agencies to find out how we can improve many of the special places in the Park to help drive local tourism and support businesses
- increased investment in more affordable housing provision, including new developments in Luss and Kilmun



The objectives we've set for the next five years are ambitious and will not be easily achieved. The National Park is only as good as the sum of its parts and by working collaboratively with all of our partners we can achieve a much greater impact.

There are over 70 delivery partners listed in the Plan and we look forward to working with every one of them to achieve the 13 outcomes we have set out. By working together we can deliver huge benefits for the whole of Scotland.

Read more about our plan on our website

www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/partnershipplan

www.lochlomond-trossachs.org.uk





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As part of a major village green improvement scheme, led by Joe Twaddle of East Loch Lomond Community Trust, local stone has been used to create attractive boundary walling and to interpret the Highland Boundary Fault, which runs to the immediate north of the village and can be distinctively seen through local natural features such as the nearby Conic Hill and the islands of Loch Lomond. In addition to several storyboards, with the help of funding from the Friends of OUR park visitor giving scheme and sponsorship from the Frasers at the Oak Tree Inn a special large 'talking boulder' has been prominently located in the centre of the village green. Below the boulder tells its own unique story.

balmaha's talking boulder



"Hi, I am new around here. I used to be down by the loch, but some humans moved me up here in 2017 - so folk could get a better look at me. Some even say, from the right angle I look a bit like those amazing figures on Easter Island! I really feel part of the scene now and I am fair enjoying all the attention. I am not so sure about the dogs though!"

"My time as a boulder began quite recently, only about 15,000 years ago in fact, but my grains have been around a lot longer than that! About 600 million years ago, I wasn't even hard rock, I was just mud, sand and grit lying on the seabed quite near the South Pole. Then two huge plates of the Earth's crust began slowly colliding and my gritty sand and mud was forced deep down in the collision zone where the temperature was so high my grains started melting

together into solid rock. At that time I was several miles down! By about 400 million years ago the colliding plates had crumpled us rocks into mountains as high as the Himalayas are now. And the ocean floor I started out on had completely disappeared - forced deep under colliding continents. The Highland Boundary Fault that passes just north of here marks the join between the two continents.

"As well as colliding, the plates were also drifting north. And the mountains were being worn away. Rivers did most of the damage and by about 180 million years ago they had worn the mountains right down to sea level. Round about then a huge crack had begun to open up as Eurasia and Africa started drifting apart from North and South America. The sea flooded into the gap between the separating continents - creating the Atlantic Ocean. The Atlantic is still getting wider by the way - a few centimetres a year - about as fast as your finger nails grow!"

"Anyway, to get back to me becoming a boulder - about 60 million years ago the Earth's crust along the western edge of Europe started rising. Soon

the surface of the ground was thousands of feet above sea level - the mountains were back! Then a couple of million years ago the climate started chilling down - it was the start of the Ice Age. I was okay at first because I was still well down inside the mountains, but by about 15,000 years ago the glaciers had worn the rock away so much they got right down to my level - by that stage 'my level' was on the side of Ben Lomond! The ice soon got into cracks in the rock around me and before I knew it I had been prised right out of the mountainside and was being carried along by the moving ice with lots of other stones, rocks and other boulders.

"The flowing ice ground all of us stones and rocks together scratching and smoothing our surfaces. You can still see the scratches on my sides. Run your hands over them and feel how smooth the moving ice has made me. Try making a wish as you feel the scratches and I will do my best to make it come true - it has to be a good wish mind - I only do good wishes! If you put some money in the donation posts over at Tom Weir's Rest, that might help your wish come true. Good luck!"





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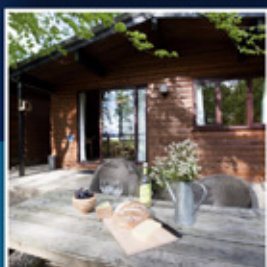
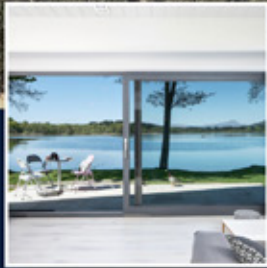
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Lochend Chalets

A flourishing family business beside Scotland's only lake



From iron age settlement to a scenic and vibrant holiday resort, Lochend, by Lake of Menteith, has undergone a major transformation over centuries. Nowadays, it is home to Lochend Chalets, whose own history can be traced back to 1958 when Grandma and Grandpa Abell came to the village and set up a caravan park. Sixteen years later their daughter Irene and her husband Jimmy Nairn took over the resort and put in place the first chalets overlooking the Lake of Menteith. In 1987, the couple retired and handed control to their youngest son, Topher, and nine years later their daughter Victoria, and her husband Chris Carroll, joined the team with cousin Kate taking control of housekeeping after returning from a childhood split between Africa and Kent. Here we chart the success story of the holiday venue, which is a keen supporter of the Friends through the OUR park visitor giving project.

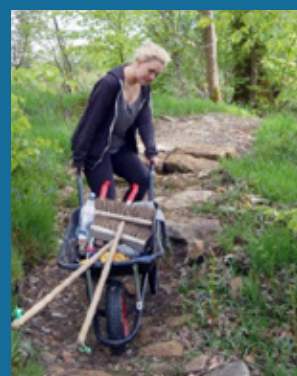
With 18 holiday chalets available to let, Lochend has become established as an attractive spot for visitors to the National Park who enjoy the great outdoors. There are six different designs of chalet, with a typical facility consisting of kitchen, living area and dining facilities as well as bedrooms. Most chalets can sleep up to six, but the Coach House is capable of housing 10 people. There are a range of on-site activities, including a games room, tennis courts and fishing facilities while bicycles can also be hired. The resort is also ideally situated for visitors to get out and explore the Trossachs and nearby towns and cities. Also nearby is the famous Cook School run by Victoria and Topher's brother, TV chef Nick Nairn.

As well as running the resort, Victoria, Topher and Chris are not afraid to muck in and get their hands dirty with maintenance of the site. From landscaping to gardening, to fencing and grass-cutting, the trio work hard by themselves, but have a skilled team of local tradesmen to assist if needed. A local recycling company is also employed to pick up all plastic, tin, paper, aluminium, cardboard and food waste. Eco cleaning products,

recycled whisky barrels for rain water collection and eco-lightbulbs are used, and recycled picnic table seats for bird feeders ensure that as well as being a family-friendly resort, it is also an eco-friendly one. They are lucky enough to have a large population of mallard ducks at Lochend and so they sourced some specially formulated duck food and the profits from the sale of that to their customers became an important part of their annual contribution to the Our Park visitor giving scheme.

Victoria said: "Chris and I have been involved in the day-to-day running of Lochend now for more than 20 years, and Topher, Lochend's king-pin, for more than 30. Our three children, Bunty, Cooper and Pippin, have all come through our cleaning programme starting work at 14, with hundreds of other local teenagers, and they've done more Saturday morning shifts than I think they'd really have wanted to! We are celebrating 60 years this year since the family came to the area and set up holiday accommodation, and it is still as much of a pleasure for us as it would have been for our grandparents all those years ago. The scenery around us says it all, the Lake of Menteith is simply a beautiful location."

"We remain extremely keen to ensure that visitors to this special area of the Trossachs can get the most out of their stay. Given the number of people who keep coming back to visit us, we feel that we are on the right track, and we hope that visitors will keep enjoying our site for many years to come."



Left: Bunty working on bike trail maintenance

Meet the Team

Bunty Carroll, Chris and Victoria's eldest daughter, joined them after having studied jewellery at Glasgow Kelvin College. She can work in a small workshop at Lochend and take on the role of 'Trainee Operations Manager'. Cooper Carroll, Chris and Victoria's son, plans to travel, stopping at New Zealand first but is working at Lochend on grounds maintenance a short-term contract which should help him reach his goal! 'We are delighted that they are interested in our family business but love that they have a wider view on the world too. Their help is particularly useful just now as we are embarking on three building extensions and a tree pod!!' said Victoria.



Spring is in the air



Keith Graham reflects on nature's response to the impact of last winter in the National Park and provides some pointers on the behavioural patterns of wildlife over the spring and summer months.

NATURE'S RESPONSE to what therefore were relatively hostile weather conditions was to put many events on hold. In previous years, the very numerous blackbirds that grace the Park have been heard singing in full voice in December before the old year was even out. This year, the first blackbird wasn't heard singing until early February. If the birds have therefore been rather reticent, other events have happened according to normal protocol. For instance, foxes have produced their litters of cubs as indeed, have badgers. Of course, both fox and badger cubs remain hidden from view in their earths and setts for the first few weeks of their lives.

Fox cubs, being pretty precocious, are quite quick to emerge from their underground nurseries at about four weeks of age. However, they remain close to their dens for the first few weeks of their lives, which are initially dominated by seemingly endless appetites for play and of course for food. Foxes are extremely dedicated parents with the dog fox initially the 'bread winner' catching food and bringing it to a pre-appointed meeting place with the vixen. Generally, he is not permitted to enter the earth once the cubs have arrived. However, with sheep farming a major activity throughout the park, foxes are not necessarily very popular in the farming community!

Controversy

Of course, badgers have been at the heart of controversy in many parts of England due to the link between them and the disease Bovine TB. Indeed, against the advice of their scientific advisors, the Government has deployed a policy of culling in particular areas where the disease is prevalent. Here in Scotland, however, we

are officially Bovine TB free and so there is no policy of culling here. The Park has a healthy badger population but of course, badgers are by nature, nocturnal in habit. However, the cubs generally emerge in late April or early May when of course, the hours of daylight at this northern latitude, are lengthening. By mid-June, as we reach Midsummer's Night, the hours of daylight here are almost endless.

Badger cubs too, spend much of their time playing. Watching them can therefore, be extremely entertaining! In May, more new life arrives as roe does have their kids, usually twins. They are sweet, Bambi-like little creatures, heavily spotted and hidden away in dense woodland. Twins are immediately separated by their mother for security reasons and for the first weeks of their lives, if discovered, instinctively freeze, staying absolutely still. However, it is important to remember that should you stumble across such a kid do not on any account be tempted to stroke it. In fact, even the merest touch would leave the alien scent of a human being on the wee creature, which would be enough to cause its mother to abandon it. It would therefore be a sentence of death!

As April merges into May, the air is full of the sound of music as thousands of migratory birds return to the home of their birth in the Park, most of them completing marathon journeys from Africa. Among the first to arrive are ospreys, now present in several parts of the Park, where the fish-filled lochs are of course, the attraction. Ospreys winter in West Africa and whilst the location of their eyries is naturally a closely-guarded secret, from late March onwards, the sight of ospreys quartering the waters of the lochs is merely a prelude to the spectacular dive that follows. The denouement culminates in the birds hitting the water feet first with an almighty splash and seizing their slippery prey, before rising in triumph, shaking off surplus water, adjusting their grip on the victims and flying off in triumph.

Flying Barn Doors

Other birds of prey to be seen in the Park are the magnificent golden eagles, which inhabit the more mountainous areas and fast-flying peregrine falcons, also most likely to be seen among the hills



*It was late January
before we's seen
the first delicate
Snowdrops bloom*

and mountains. In more wooded areas, sparrow-hawks and, increasingly, goshawks are present in healthy numbers. Kestrels may be spotted hovering deliciously above rough grazing land or field margins and from time to time, huge sea eagles can be seen patrolling some of our glens. Well do they deserve the pseudonym, 'flying barn-doors'! Circling buzzards abound and nowadays, red kites also may be seen in many parts of the Park, their graceful flight to be much admired.

If ospreys are among the early birds, so too are wheatears, often to be seen flaunting their flashing white rumps at hill-walkers as they emerge to roam our hills. House martins, also noticeably white-rumped, dart low across many a loch in early April while the even more athletic swallows arrive to hurtle across our skies from late April onwards and like the martins almost always nest on or in man-made buildings. Finally, swifts arrive later than all the other migrants, generally in mid-May. They too nest in the eaves of buildings. Cuckoos are seldom heard until May, even though they begin their migratory journey from darkest Africa in early February. Chiff-chaffs, plain little brown birds, herald the forthcoming arrival of a whole host of rather more tuneful warblers. The monotonous 'chiff-chaff' of this wee bird is often heard before the end of March. Then as April comes, the sweet incantation down the scale of the willow warbler, the mellow voice of the garden warbler, the churring of the wood warbler and if you're lucky, the reeling of the grasshopper warbler, amongst others, swell the avian choir until music literally fills the air.

Red Squirrel Havens

Many of the Park's woodlands are now home for growing numbers of red squirrels. Although some grey squirrels persist in the lower reaches of the Park, once you enter Highland terrain, our native reds completely dominate. The recent decline of the grey squirrels, introduced in the early twentieth century from North America, is largely due to the increasing numbers of pine marten. These animals – each about the size of a slender cat

- had come close to extinction in Scotland by the turn of the last century; in England they had disappeared considerably earlier. But a more enlightened attitude towards them in recent times has enabled them to rapidly extend their range and this new generation of marten preys extensively upon the alien grey squirrels.

And with so many beautiful lochs and sparkling rivers, otters are well distributed throughout the Park although they are of course quite elusive. However, those iconic animals of the Scottish Highlands, the 'Monarchs of the Glens' – our largest land mammals, red deer – are much easier to see, albeit that as spring merges into summer, they generally head for higher ground. Indeed, it is usually in June in the Highland glens of the Park that the hinds give birth to their calves. However, in recent years more and more red deer have been taking up residence in lowland woodland too which was their original favoured habitat. The stags and hinds keep to their own single sex herds through the spring and summer. In March, the stags begin to cast their antlers and immediately begin to grow a new set. The rate of growth is remarkable and their new antlers are complete by August when they are covered in the velvet. This velvet is then rubbed off so that by September they are ready for the climactic event of their year, the annual rut, when stag will vie with stag for the right to father the next generation.

Trembling Snowdrops

Meanwhile, the progress of the year is charted by the emergence of a succession of flowers. Because of the relative severity of the winter, it was late January before the delicate first flowers, our trembling snowdrops, burst into bloom. However, they were beaten to it by yellow gorse, which it is said, you will find in flower somewhere in every month of the year. Primroses then add their pale yellow to the colour chart together with the stronger yellow of the Wordsworth's famous daffodils. In May, it is the heady scent of our beautiful bluebells that greets the fresh green of the woodlands as the trees burst into full leaf. As temperatures rise along with the volume

of bird-song, our landscape, from the softer Lowlands to the imperious mountains, comes increasingly alive. More flowers add colours of many hues, hedgerows froth with May blossom and fields and hill pastures are filled with ground hugging arrays of yet more flowers. In July, the first of the heathers, bell heather, adds a purple hue to moor and hillside before in August, the slightly paler ling continues that colour theme.

Many of the more sedentary birds are already busy with the production of new generations. Bluetits, great tits, coal tits and long-tailed-tits collect caterpillars by the hundred to feed their broods of youngsters, whilst in the dark green forests, tiny goldcrests and siskins build their intricate nests and also welcome new generations into the world. The eminently successful blackbirds, thrushes, robins and wrens, sing anthems to new life too.

Wild Cackling

And although all the migrant birds have arrived to prosper in our long hours of summer daylight, their main ambition to produce and nurture the next generations, while other migrants have meanwhile left. Winter migrants such as geese and countless waterfowl, which sought solace here during the winter months, have all headed back to their homelands far to the north in Iceland, Greenland, Scandinavia, Russia and even Siberia. Winter sounds such as the wild cackling of geese are gone, now we enjoy the sweeter sounds of spring and summer. And then, as the work of most of the birds is done and a new age of birds is fledged, a strange silence falls across the landscape. In July and August, most birds enter the moult to renew their plumage. For migrants soon to face epic flights of thousands of miles, it is vital that they are in pristine condition. The same applies to those that stay here throughout the year. They too must be in tip-top condition to face whatever winter may have in store for them. During this process, which may take anything between three weeks and several months depending upon the species, flight is seriously impaired. Thus, as it is not a good idea to advertise their presence as predators are always looking for vulnerable prey, so bird-song fades. August seems more somnolent for that lack of song. All that song; all this frenzied activity; all these burgeoning colours; all this new life; all those extraordinary journeys, tell us that life in our Park is blooming in all its many forms. Can there be any doubt at all that this, Scotland's first National Park, in its many beautiful guises, is a vibrantly living landscape, no matter what the season?

Friends of OUR Park is a very successful voluntary visitor giving and volunteering initiative led by the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs with support from 100 local businesses, Scottish Enterprise and the National Park Authority. Here we briefly feature recent grant awards, activities of OUR Park participant businesses and profile one of the OUR Park businesses helping to make a real difference in the National Park.



David and Stuart Fraser with their new machine

Loch Lomond Coffee Co. Support for Red Squirrels

Brothers Stuart and David Fraser, Directors of the famous Oak Tree Inn and St. Mocha Coffee Shop in Balmaha have formed a unique partnership with the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs as part of the Friends of OUR park visitor giving scheme to help save the red squirrel which is fighting for survival along the Highland Fault Line which passes through the village and across the islands of Loch Lomond.

They have recently installed Loch Lomond's first coffee roasting facility within their St Mocha Coffee Shop with funding support from the Forth Valley & Lomond LEADER programme. They have set up the new Loch Lomond Coffee Co. to produce and promote bags of their coffee and they are using the red squirrel in their branding. 50p from every small bag of coffee sold is going to support initiatives designed to save the red squirrel locally via the Friends of OUR park visitor giving scheme.

Stuart Fraser said: "We have been strong supporters of the Friends of OUR park visitor giving scheme since its inception and we have raised almost £50,000 over the past 10 years from patrons of the Oak Tree Inn to support a range of worthwhile local projects. More recently some of the donations raised have helped purchase new red squirrel interpretative material for Balmaha Visitor Centre and the associated red squirrel trail to raise awareness of the challenges being faced by this popular animal which is one of Scotland's big five."

He added: "We would like to do more to help save the red squirrel from predators such as the stronger grey squirrels and pine martens and add to visitors' overall enjoyment of the rich natural heritage in the Balmaha and wider Loch Lomond area. Providing practical support through a voluntary supplement of 50p on every bag sold of our new coffee brands seemed a good way of doing this."



Volunteers Open Up Loch Lomond Views



Volunteers open up Loch Lomond views - Volunteers hard at work on Make a Difference Day

As part of one of the recent 'Make a Difference Days', led by Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, a group of volunteers helped to open up views Of Loch Lomond along a stretch of the A82 north of Inverbeg.

A group of 30 people travelled to Inverbeg, just north of Luss, to remove several hundred metres of overgrown trees and shrubs from the side of the road, giving motorists and walkers a clearer and more scenic view of Loch Lomond. Also part of the day was a litter clearance exercise, which resulted in numerous bags of rubbish being collected. The site was chosen as part of the Friends' 'Windows on the Loch' project, which aims to improve views of Loch Lomond from various sites including the A82.

The volunteers came from a variety of walks of life including Luss Estates, the Department for International Development, Scottish Water as well as motivated individuals who volunteer with the Friends and Loch

Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority. The nearby Inn on Loch Lomond Hotel also provided shelter and complimentary soup for the volunteers. Friends Vice-Chairman John Urquhart, who was among the volunteers who took part on the day, said: "Anybody passing this area of Loch Lomond now has a much better view of its natural beauty, and it is all down to the efforts of the volunteers, who turned out in force to ensure that this event went smoothly."

Niall Colquhoun, owner of the Inn on Loch Lomond, added: "We were very pleased to support the Friends and the volunteers on the day, helping the hard workers to enjoy a relaxed lunch in between their spells of unstinting efforts. The new views of Loch Lomond from the A82 have already been positively commented on by some of our guests and we are delighted with what has been achieved."

A further volunteers' day working on opening up the views of Loch Lomond is planned for xy May. For further details contact Andrew- info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk.

TWO BUSINESSES FUNDING BOOST

Two participating businesses in the Friends of OUR Park visitor giving scheme have used novel ways of raising £1,000 each from visitors during the past year to support conservation and access projects in the National Park.

Lochend Chalets, based in the Port of Menteith, raised their funds through a mixture of online donations linked to self-catering holiday bookings and profits from a duck feeding scheme they have in place.

Cruise Loch Lomond, based in Tarbet, also raised their funds through online donations for the Friends of OUR Park scheme linked to bookings for their varied programme of themed cruises. A mixture of projects have been directly supported through these donations, including improving hiking trails through the Mountains and the People project, improving outdoor access for people with disabilities, creating an educational booklet for visitors and supporting summer. A big thank you to both of these businesses and many other businesses and their customers for their generous donations during the past year which have helped to make a real difference throughout the National Park.

Victoria Carroll of Lochend Chalets with her OUR Park Visitor Giving Certificate. Over £4,000 has been raised by Victoria and her team from visitors in recent years to support local conservation, access and heritage projects.



RECENT GRANT AWARDS

An impressive amount is raised annually by businesses participating in the OUR Park visitor giving scheme and in 2017, this enabled the Friends to support 23 projects varied and worthwhile projects throughout the National Park. Some of the most recent grant awards are featured below.

Enchantment of the Trossachs

The Friends contributed £600 towards the re-publication of 'Enchantment of the Trossachs', one of a very small number of contemporary publications that explores the unique legacy left behind by Aberfoyle's 17th century minister, Rev Robert Kirk. The book's author, Louis Stott, is an award-winning historian and author based in Aberfoyle. The re-publication is a revised and updated version of the book and will help increase the interest of tourists and the local community in this unique strand of Aberfoyle's heritage. Copies of the book priced £4.99 are now on sale locally with all funds raised going to Loch Ard Local History Group to support other local heritage projects.

Cameron House to Rise from the Ashes



Cameron House and its facilities have been closed since a blaze ripped through the main building

Last November with the strong and enthusiastic support of General Manager, Andy Rogers, Cameron House Hotel went live with an opt out £1 donation on all hotel bookings as part of the Friends of OUR park visitor giving scheme.

Tragically, a few weeks later in December, the core of the hotel was destroyed in a devastating fire which ripped through the older turreted part of the complex. Two individuals sadly lost their lives but thankfully over 200 other guests escaped largely unscathed. There is still uncertainty about the extent of the damage with the older part of the building deemed unsafe for several months and this has meant there is still no clear timelines for rebuilding works to take place. Several options are under consideration and our heartfelt thoughts go out to the families who have lost loved ones and the 300 or so people who have lost their jobs for an indefinite period at the flagship hotel as a direct result of the fire. Events at the hotel have hit the local community hard

and the sentiments of everyone with associations and fond memories of happy times at Cameron House were appropriately summed up by an emotional Jackie Baillie, who is the local MSP, when she spoke shortly after the tragedy in the Scottish Parliament in December.

In a recent conversation with Andy Rogers he emphasised the determination that existed to re-build and re-open Cameron House as soon as possible and in the meantime the associated Carrick Golf Course, self-catering accommodation and marina will continue to operate. We wish Andy and his team every success and good luck with the rebuilding plans at what must be a very challenging time for him and the rest of his staff. It is testament to his commitment to the local community that he has been in touch to re-confirm his desire to continue to work with the Friends to support the Friends of OUR park visitor giving scheme in the various catering outlets that are still operational as part of the resort.

Cormonachan Woodlands Association

The Cormonachan Woodlands Association, who manage a large community woodland on the shores of Loch Goil south of Lochgoilhead, received two grants for £500 and £200. The first was to improve drainage along several of the key paths, which will improve visitors' overall walking experience in the forest. The money was used for hiring appropriate machinery to clear 2.5km of path drains that were full of leaf litter and rushes. This was match funded 'in kind' by Friends Business Supporter, Argyll Holidays who supplied the machinery and labour for this project. The second grant was a contribution towards the new 'Contemplation Shelter' being built in memory of Liz Evans (see page 6 for more information).

Mountains and The People

Friends of OUR Park funds are being used to support the Mountains and the People project (see pages 8 and 9), a unique five-year landscape scale project which aims to enhance and protect the wild and special qualities of the mountains within Scotland's National Parks. Over 125km of mountain paths are being improved as part of the project and includes many of the popular and badly eroded paths in Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park. To date this project has received £7,500 from the Friends of OUR park visitor giving scheme and this has been used to support improvements to some of the mountain paths.

Maid to Sail

The fundraising campaign to restore the Maid of the Loch has gathered some momentum recently as a result of a successful crowdfunding initiative to raise sufficient funds to buy a new boiler for the ship. Over £80,000 was raised and has been added to recently by an award of over £100,000 from Scottish Enterprise and Forth Valley & Lomond European Programme. Education and interpretation work has been boosted by a £2,000 grant from the Friends of OUR park visitor giving scheme.

Clyde Sea Lochs Trail Promotion

A couple of years ago the Friends and Love Loch Lomond Destination Organisation combined forces to provide funding support for a local initiative led by John and Anne Urquhart to upgrade and replace the attractive capstan style storyboards dotted along the Clyde Sea Lochs Trail. In a further boost for the Trail the Friends recently provided a grant to help fund a new Trail promotional leaflet that has just been launched in time for Easter by Lomond Chamber of Commerce. The attractive colour leaflet is available locally and promotes the scenic drive between Dumbarton and Arrochar along the A814 and encompasses the Rosneath Peninsula.

Focus on Business



LOCH LOMOND ARMS HOTEL

Iain Hamilton, General Manager at Loch Lomond Arms Hotel, talks about the involvement of owners, Luss Estates' involvement with the Friends of OUR park visitor giving scheme.

What attracted you to do business at the Loch Lomond Arms?

Luss is a beautiful village, which attracts a huge number of visitors from all around the world. To wake up every morning and enjoy stunning views of Loch Lomond right on our doorstep is a real privilege. We love sharing this wonderful location with our guests and welcoming them with our traditional Scottish hospitality.

Tell us about your inspiration and plans for the Loch Lomond Arms?

At the time of going to press we are mid-way through expanding our bar, transforming our library dining area into a library sitting room, refurbishing our self-contained holiday cottages, and improving our kitchens at Luss Seafood Bar. We always stay busy!

Our Head Chef David Hetherington re-joined the Loch Lomond Arms last year and has been instrumental in bringing a wide variety of local, seasonal produce to our menu including lamb, beef, pheasant and venison.

Why do you support Friends of OUR park?

Caring for the natural environment is a cause close to our hearts. The Friends do a fantastic job in supporting our National Park and the businesses that operate here. We were delighted when they gave their support for our StrawLUSS Loch Lomond campaign to turn the village of Luss free of single use plastic straws and stirrers and we will be working on encouraging other businesses within the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park to join us in this pledge. We are most excited about the Loch Lomond Faerie Trail and how this will help to encourage children to interact with our beautiful countryside..

What is particularly special for you about the Loch Lomond area?

The whole area is simply magical; there is dramatic scenery, an abundance of wildlife, and FabuLUSS food and drink. Really everything you could wish for! We are also very lucky to have some fantastic local talent working in our business and in the Loch Lomond area in general who are committed to constantly improving the visitor experience.



Dates for the diary

TUESDAY 15TH MAY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The annual member's event with a buffet meal and interesting guest speakers. To be held at Ross Priory in Gartocharn with stunning views overlooking Loch Lomond. An optional buffet meal will be served between 6.00pm and 7.30pm followed by the AGM and guest speakers with a 9pm finish. Please book the buffet meal in advance (£10).



SATURDAY 2ND JUNE INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S CELEBRATION CRUISES

Join us on one of a special series of daytime cruises with musical performances from youth groups such as Callander Kirk Junior Choir and McLaren High School Pipe on board the Steamship Sir Walter Scott.

For full details of any of the above events, or to make a booking, please email Andrew Galloway at info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk or call 01389 727761 between 9.30am and 4pm Tuesday to Friday. Our office address is Carrochan, Carrochan Road, Balloch G83 8EG.

The events featured below are being supported by the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs over the coming months. We hope you will take the opportunity to come along to one or more of the events which are designed to celebrate the special qualities of the National Park - its people and places

SATURDAY 7TH JULY LUSS HIGHLAND GAMES & FRIENDS WELCOME TENT

Come along and enjoy one of Scotland's oldest Highland Games events and visit our welcome tent to meet some of our Trustees and volunteers. The Games take place from 11am to 5pm and more details are available at www.lusshighlandgames.co.uk.

SATURDAY 14TH JULY TO SUNDAY 29TH JULY CALLANDER SUMMERFEST

Celebrate the summer holidays in Callander! Music, film, exhibitions, art & craft workshops, children's activities, walks and lots more and featuring Dougie MacLean on Thursday, July 19. Full details on incallander.co.uk or Facebook @CallanderSummerfest



WEDNESDAY 8TH AUGUST TO SUNDAY 12TH AUGUST

EUROPEAN OPEN WATER SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIPS AT LOCH LOMOND

The cream of European swimmers arrive at Loch Lomond for a fantastic festival as part of the 2018 European Championships. The action takes place each day, but times vary - please see www.glasgow2018.com for more details.

WEDNESDAY 15TH AUGUST A LOCH LOMOND SUNSET CRUISE

Held in conjunction with the Lennox Literary Society, this evening event offers members the chance to enjoy a scenic trip on Loch Lomond complete with musical entertainment. Leaves Sweeney's Boatyard in Balloch at 7pm, returning at 9pm. Tickets cost £12 and booking in advance is essential.

FRIDAY 5TH OCTOBER TO FRIDAY 12TH OCTOBER COWALFEST 2018

Cowalfest will last eight days instead of ten this year due to the Royal National MOD which is taking place in Dunoon. However, there will still be a packed programme for walkers and those who enjoy the great outdoors. See www.cowalfest.org for more details.

SUNDAY 25TH NOVEMBER CHRISTMAS AT ROSS PRIORY

Begin your festive celebrations with a popular informal gathering with musical entertainment, craft stalls and light Christmas fare. More details will be published in the autumn edition of Voice, but our annual get together is worth pencilling into your diary now.

For full details of the events, or to make a booking, please contact Andrew Galloway- email info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk or call 01389727761 between 9.30am and 4pm Tuesday to Friday

Join us on the banks of Loch Lomond for one of Scotland's oldest Highland Games

LUSS

HIGHLAND GAMES

Traditional heavies plus open events, pipes, dancing, trade stands, refreshments and more....

SATURDAY 7TH JULY 2018
11 AM TO 5 PM
THE GAMES FIELD, LUSS

Admission: Adults £6, Kids/OAPs £3, Families £14

www.lusshighlandgames.co.uk

HEALTHY START TO 2018...



The WALK IN THE PARK initiative celebrates ten years of walking in Callander on Tuesday 24th April.

WALK IN THE PARK health walks utilise the beautiful natural surroundings of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park to deliver a programme of weekly walks. This is now one of the best examples of a successful health walk programme in Scotland with currently 160 active walkers across groups based in five communities.

Over the ten years WALK IN THE PARK has encouraged more local people in Callander to explore the National Park and to be physically active, improving their health and well-being. The Project's simple aim is to introduce those recovering from illness or those who have experienced periods of inactivity back into gentle exercise.

The groups meet weekly in Callander, Killin, Aberfoyle, Balloch and Drymen. Some pilot work is underway to extend the reach of the walks into new parts of the National Park in the future. For the full walking schedules please visit www.trustinthepark.org/walk-in-the-park

To get in touch contact Cathy Scott, Project Coordinator cathy.scott@lochlomond-trossachs.org 01389 722600.



We Walk to feel Fitter

A WALK IN THE PARK GLEN FALLOCH

“Where the Mountain Breezes Blow”

In this the first of a series of articles covering some of best short walks in the National Park, Friends Vice-Chair, John Urquhart, checks out some recent changes which have affected a circular route by Glen Falloch.

(The variable spellings of Beinglas Farm, Ben Glas and Ben Glas Burn are the same as those used by the Ordnance Survey. “Ben Glas” means “Pale or Grey-green Mountain”)

It was over 50 years ago the first time I climbed the trail by the Beinglas Falls. Glen Falloch was featuring in something called “The Hiking Song”, although I don’t remember it ever making the charts! Then I was a raw teenager just starting out on a lifelong love affair with Scotland’s wild places; we were heading for the summit of Beinn Chabhair - I think it might even have been my first “Munro”. This time I was on a mission. Friends Chairman James Fraser had spotted a blog somewhere about the falls drying up because of a new hydro power development. Could I check it out? James had also been asking if I could put together a series of articles for Voice on some of the best short walks in the National Park. A revisit to Beinglas was already on my to do list so clearly it was time to renew acquaintances with this delightful waterfall trail.

Hanging Valleys

From your school geography lessons you may remember that waterfalls often go hand in hand with “hanging valleys”, a feature caused by glacial erosion and common throughout the Highlands. At Inverarnan and Beinglas, Glen Falloch is overlooked by no less than four hanging valleys, so in wet weather or times of snow melt, wherever you look you see white water tumbling down the hillsides. The easily accessible Beinglas fall however is the ‘piece de resistance’ and it must rank as one of the National Park’s finest examples of a hanging valley waterfall.

Fed by the tributaries gullying the high flanks of Bein Glas, Beinn Chabhair and Parlan Hill (presumably sharing the same etymology as ‘MacFarlane’), the Ben Glas Burn plunges from its hanging valley 300metres to the floor of Glen Falloch in a series of cataracts, most of which are well hidden in a deep rock cut ravine. However



just above Beinglas Farm, the churning water finally escapes its narrow channel and bursts out over a near vertical 40 metre rock face. In full flood, the resulting fan of foam makes a spectacular backdrop to Inverarnan’s Drovers Inn, but if you want to get close up, the car park at Beinglas Farm is your best access point. Nowadays of course Beinglas Farm has become a staging post on the West Highland Way. There was no camp site or pub when I first came there all those years ago, but the trail by the falls hadn’t changed much - perhaps a bit more boot and water worn than it was and our sticks certainly came in handy on some of the steeper sections where the erosion had got right down to the bedrock.

Impact of new hydro power scheme

The blogger had suggested the falls were being adversely affected by the new hydro power scheme and they certainly seemed somewhat depleted compared to my early memories. A reduction in water flow is of course inevitable with any hydro power scheme, however following overnight frost the ground was iron hard and I wondered if this might be a factor in the much reduced flow we witnessed. I made a mental note to come back another time when there was no frost. Three quarters of an hour saw us up the glacially steepened side of the glen and we are soon breathing more easily on the lip of Ben Glas Burn’s kilometre wide hanging valley. It was a ‘north westerly’ day, the cold clean air coming down from Iceland giving crystal clear visibility. Behind us, on the other side of Glen Falloch, the snowy tops of Ben Lui and Ben Oss, now clearly in view, sparkled in the late January sunshine. Ahead, backed by clear blue sky, rose the craggy ramparts of Ben Glas. The new hydro road offered an easy route skirting the base of the crags, so, with Kenneth McKellar’s “mountain breeze” at our backs, we set off to examine the scheme’s intake dam a kilometre to the south east. The pipeline is buried close to or sometimes directly underneath the road which mostly follows the route of a much older track put in by Glenfalloch Estate many years ago. The installation works were only completed in September 2016 so some of the road margins are still a bit raw, but we were pleased to see that the contractors had been careful to dress the disturbed surfaces with turfs and the revegetation



process was mostly well underway. Twenty minutes later we were standing by the dam and could see that in fact it was not The Ben Glas Burn whose flow had been harnessed, but a tributary (unnamed on the OS map) which joins it from the south. The dam has been built just above the confluence and the reason for the particularly low flow was now obvious - neither stream had much water, the frost having effectively switched off the supply of snowmelt and seepage from the sponge like peat bog which carpets so much of Scotland’s high country and keeps the rivers flowing even when there is little or no precipitation. Satisfied with our investigations, the hydro road’s zig zags took us back down into Glen Falloch where we found the scheme’s little stone built power house silent, presumably switched off automatically because of the low water. Given the area’s 3metres or so of annual precipitation, this must be a relatively rare occurrence and I daresay on most days the generator will be found humming away, quietly doing its bit to tackle global warming. The route back to Beinglas Farm lay south along the West Highland Way, enhanced here by the delightful woodland which clothes the banks of the Falloch, the “Rare Atlantic Oakwood Habitat” being conserved and regenerated by the Glenfalloch Estate and the Caledonian Partnership, funding input coming from, among others, the Forestry Commission, Scottish Natural Heritage and The European Union’s LIFE-Nature Programme. With a total distance of 7km and an ascent of 380 metres, we completed the round in a little under 3hours. All told a great wee route – it was good to be back where the mountain breezes blow!

Just to be absolutely sure the Beinglas Falls had not been switched off forever, we returned on a frost-free day. As the picture shows, they haven’t! And if you look very carefully you might be just about able to make out two figures near the top, which gives a sense of the scale.

Foundation Supporters £500 MINIMUM

• CAMERON HOUSE

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Tel: 01389 755 565 Fax: 01389 713 281

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www.hpb-trossachs.co.uk

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• OPTICAL EXPRESS & MOULSDALE FOUNDATION

Telephone: 0800 023 20 20

email: enquiries@opticalexpress.com

www.opticalexpress.com

The Mouldsdale Foundation & Optical Express are proud to support the Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs. For 35 years, the friends have been working to protect the area's environmental heritage, promote it as a most special part of Scotland, and provide for its future through a range of projects for people and for wildlife.

• ROSS PRIORY

Gartocharn G83 8NL 0141 548 3565

Ross Priory, on the banks of Loch Lomond, the Staff Educational and Recreational Centre of the University of Strathclyde, is proud to support the Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs.

• LOCHS & GLENS HOLIDAYS

School Road, Gartocharn, G83 8RW

Tel: 01389 713 713

email: enquiries@lochsandglens.com

www.lochsandglens.com

Lochs & Glens Holidays are proud to support the Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs

• LODGE ON LOCH LOMOND HOTEL

Luss, Argyll, G83 8PA

Tel: 01436 860 201 Fax: 01436 860 203

email: res@loch-lomond.co.uk

www.loch-lomond.co.uk

The 4-star Lodge on Loch Lomond Hotel has a unique lochside setting. It offers stylish accommodation, some with en-suite saunas and private balconies, Colquhoun's, a 2 AA rosette restaurant with panoramic views of the Loch and mountains and leisure facilities with swimming pool.

• LOCH KATRINE

Trossachs Pier, Loch Katrine, By Callander,

Stirling FK17 8HZ

Information and Reservations - (01877) 332000

www.lochkatrine.com

Loch Katrine - a special experience for everyone to enjoy. Cruising Loch Katrine in the heart of The Trossachs is a special experience - on the classic steamship 'Sir Walter Scott', or on 'Lady of the Lake'. Visitor amenities include lochside walks, shopping, cycle hire and Katrine Café. Cruises depart daily (April until October), with the first sailing at 10:30am.

• LOVE LOCH LOMOND

email: info@lovelochlomond.com

www.lovelochlomond.com

Love Loch Lomond is a recently formed industry led Destination

Organisation that operates in the Loch Lomond, Strathendrick, West Dunbartonshire and Clyde Sea Lochs areas. It is dedicated to working on a collaborative basis to capitalise on the area's strong tourism potential.

• ARDOCH

Gartocharn G83 8ND 01389 710401

email: luke@ardoch-scotland.com

www.ardoch-scotland.com

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email: info@winnockhotel.com

www.winnockhotel.com

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www.buchananarms.co.uk

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• CRUISE LOCH LOMOND

The Boatyard, Tarbet. Loch Lomond, G83 7DG

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email: enquiries@cruiselochlomond.co.uk

www.cruiselochlomond.co.uk

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email: info@sweeneyscruises.com

www.sweeneyscruises.com

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email: anne@balmillig.co.uk

www.balmillig.co.uk

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email: info@lochlomond-holidays.co.uk

www.lochlomond-holidays.co.uk

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email: cal-ent@incallander.co.uk

www.twitter.com/incallander

www.incallander.co.uk

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Email: info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk

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• WWW.HOLIDAYCOTTAGES.CO.UK

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• APPLEJACKS

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