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The Voice

The Voice is the magazine of the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, the only independent conservation charity working to protect, promote and provide projects and services for this most precious part of Scotland – The Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park. To join us or to find out more about our work please visit www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk or use the form inside.

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

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Message from the President

Since I last wrote I have been laid low with a virus which entailed a month in hospital. This meant the civic celebration party at the Lodge on Loch Lomond Hotel in my honour had to be postponed.

I eventually came home on 16th May and recovered in time for the re-arranged big party on 17th August. What a splendid occasion this was with many longstanding supporters of the Friends present to enjoy the event with me. I was also delighted that Lord John McFall of Alcluith and former Provost Billy Petrie, who have both served the area so well for many years, were also present and have agreed to become Honorary Vice-Presidents of the Friends.

Memories of other parties linked to furthering the work of the Friends come flooding back to me. A particular highlight was a visit to Washington when I was guest of honour at the National Geographic Society's headquarters in 1984. This was courtesy of Row Findlay, the editor of the National Geographic magazine who stayed with me when he was researching an article on Scotland Ghosts & Glory in which Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs got special mention.

As part of this trip I went on a coast to coast recruitment drive for the Friends and attended a series of parties in Boston, New York, San Francisco and I was guest of honour at the popular Stone Mountain Highland Games in Atlanta, Georgia. I was well looked after by the Clan McNeil and Clan Buchanan Highland Societies and the National Geographic Society who were all very interested in our efforts to protect Loch Lomond. The trip was a great success with many Americans recruited as long term members of the Friends as a result.

Returning to the recent party, it was a splendid gesture and a great surprise that as his last civic duty before stepping down as Provost of Argyll and Bute, after serving the lochside area for 45 years as a councillor, that Billy Petrie decided to host a civic reception in my honour. This I am sure was his way of recognising the contribution of so many Friends volunteers and others who have given so generously of their time since our formation away back in 1978 to champion the protection and promotion of Loch Lomond and latterly the wider area that falls within the boundaries of Scotland's first National Park. We have achieved much together over the years and as I reflect back in this the 10th anniversary of the National Park I think our biggest achievements have been securing National Park status for this very special place after many years of hard work and vigorous campaigning, and securing the future of the West Highland Way and Ben Lomond with the Craigmoyon hydro dam and road scheme being scrapped and ownership of the Ben transferring to the National Trust for Scotland.

We can take much satisfaction and pleasure from knowing we have played, and continue to play, a major part in helping to safeguard Loch Lomond and the Trossachs for current and future generations to enjoy and cherish.

All the best, yours aye Hannah

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Message from the Chairman

WELCOME to this Autumn edition of the Friends Voice magazine. We have received positive feedback from many readers on the new format of Voice introduced in the Spring. The inclusion of more news and articles on different aspects of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park has also been welcomed and we have tried to build on this further in this edition as we reflect on the ten years since the creation of Scotland's first National Park and the years of struggle in the lead up to its formation in July 2002.

We are proud to be the only truly independent conservation and heritage charity covering the National Park area and I hope you enjoy reading this edition of Voice and it encourages you to get involved in supporting some of the Friends activities celebrating different aspects of the National Park and helping to ensure the Park remains a special place for people and nature.

Despite the poor weather for much of the summer with the cancellation of many local events, the distractions of the spectacularly successful Olympic Games in London and the uncertain economic climate, the National Park has continued to play host to millions of visitors attracted to the area to enjoy its special scenic and cultural heritage qualities as well as the diverse range of things to see and do.

The Park can justly still lay claim to being Scotland's most popular countryside destination and it is encouraging the Scottish Government is increasingly recognising the important contribution the area makes to the social and economic well being of the nation with a much welcome boost in funding to the National Park Authority to accelerate improvements to key recreational assets such as the West Highland Way and visitor facilities around the five most popular lochs in the Trossachs. Congratulations to the Park Authority team for being able to respond quickly to the Government's request for 'shovel ready' projects that has led to an extra £1.1 million of funding in the current year. This is over and above the increase of almost £1million to the base budget earlier in the year. It is worth noting that this is happening at a time that English National Parks have suffered a massive 30% cut in their budgets. At long last the National Park is starting to secure the level of funding it needs to tackle a number of pressing visitor management and conservation issues. Hopefully this can be built on further in future years to ensure more resources are invested in the communities around the Park as it is important some of the economic and social challenges facing the many scattered and fragile

communities are tackled in a more effective way to ensure the Park is a better place to live, work and play. Helping to secure and sustain the vibrancy of local communities is as important as making the Park a better place for visitors and nature. With the recent launch of the new 5 year Park Partnership Plan, and the recognition by the Scottish Government that the National Park is one of Scotland's greatest assets, there are grounds for optimism that public sector bodies will work together more effectively for the benefit of the area with local communities and other interests to ensure taxpayers money is spent in a more coordinated way to make a difference on the ground. Here at the Friends, in partnership with others, we will continue to play our part by being a strong independent voice for the area and contributing positively to protecting, promoting and providing for this special place with its outstanding natural beauty, iconic landscapes and rich and diverse communities.

It has been a busy period for the Friends in recent months with a presence at a number of events that survived the wet weather; a good turnout of volunteers at the Caledonian Challenge which raises much needed funds to support the Friends Our Park visitor giving scheme and associated access and conservation projects; a successful golf charity event at the Carrick organised on our behalf by Daivid Mouldsdale and his Optical Express team with sponsorship from Cameron House and many other businesses; development work on our new website; submission of bids to the Heritage Lottery Fund to support our new 'Celebrating Park People' initiative we are working on with the Community Partnership; increasing

the number of outlets selling our popular National Park DVD and other publications; submitting responses to the Loch Lomond byelaws review and a robust objection to the Merkins wind turbines proposal on the southern edge of the National Park that will have significant adverse visual impacts on Loch Lomond if it is approved; and running a series of informative visits to Inchcailloch and Morelaggan led by Friends Trustee John Urquhart of Lomond Guides.



We have also been going through a period of staff changes that has seen the departure of our part-time Director Simon Lewis who is pursuing his crofting and tourism interests in Argyll after several years contributing positively to the work of the Friends. As part of living within our means we have replaced Simon with Support Officer, Sandra Dyson from Balloch who was appointed in May and is settling in well. She is based mainly at our Helensburgh office that is now open on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 10am-4pm. We had a setback with the rejection of a European LEADER funding bid to support the next phase of the Our Park visitor giving scheme but thankfully the Park Authority, Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Natural Heritage have agreed to provide funding for a further two years which has meant we have been able to continue developing this important project with almost 100 local businesses now actively involved. We have recruited Eileen Calveley from Gartmore who is providing part-time maternity cover for the Project Officer role until the end of the year. We have also welcomed Philip Norris from Dunoon as a new Trustee to strengthen our representation for the Cowal part of the Park.

Have an enjoyable, and hopefully drier, Autumn exploring the wonders of the National Park and I look forward to seeing some of you at our future events. 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

Far right: Simon Lewis, the Friends Director for almost three years is pictured receiving a water colour painting of Loch Lomond from Dr Joyce Deans on his departure with other Trustees looking on.

Friends Chairman James Fraser, National Park Convener Linda Mackay and Scottish Campaign for National Parks Vice-Chairman Ross Anderson are pictured at the Ministerial launch of the new five year National Park Partnership Plan at the Royal Highland Show.



Backing for National Park



The Friends response to a negative Herald article marking ten years of the National Park

Dear Editor,

I read with interest Richard Bayne's feature in the Herald Magazine (Visiting Rights and Wrongs) that gave a fairly damning verdict on the success and effectiveness of Scotland's first National Park.

Anyone reading the article would be left with the impression that all is not well in the 720 square miles covered by the Park and they would be right as parts of the area, which is Scotland's most heavily visited countryside destination with 4 million visitors annually (not the 2.2 million quoted by Richard), are under increasing pressure from a growing minority of irresponsible visitors.

There is a need to invest more heavily in positive visitor management measures if we are not going to destroy the special magical natural qualities that attract people here in the first place and we are pleased the transformational work undertaken by the Park Authority, the Forestry Commission, Stirling Council and Central Scotland Police along the eastern shores of Loch Lomond has been such a success.

This has led to some visitors and local residents describing the impact of the introduction of byelaws on outdoor drinking and camping with increased ranger and police patrols and more investment in visitor facilities, as resulting in 'paradise being rediscovered'. There is also evidence of a growing number of families returning to some of their favourite spots on the bonnie banks in the knowledge they can enjoy themselves in a safe and peaceful environment and this could not be said a few years ago.

Would this have happened without the existence of a National Park Authority and additional resources being allocated to them by the Scottish Government? We think not as over the past 10 years the Park Authority has brought a real focus and much needed resources to tackle some very challenging visitor management issues. They of course had a solid foundation to build on following the substantial investment in infrastructure and visitor management by public sector bodies working jointly for many years prior to this and contrary to what is asserted in the article.

Our independent conservation and heritage charity, with an interest in protecting and promoting the special qualities of the National Park for the enjoyment of all in a responsible manner, is also pleased the Park Authority is considering a range of options for improving the management arrangements on a number of the more popular Loch Lomond islands with investment in the provision of dry toilets, informal camping pitches, BBQ pits and enhanced ranger services at busy times.

This we believe should help rid some of these areas of natural wonder of their reputation as 'Islands of Shame' due to the despoilation caused by heavy littering, toileting and other anti-social behaviour at busy periods.

Contrary to the misconceptions being peddled in some quarters, this too could have a positive transformational impact on the quality of the visitor experience as well as enhancing the protection of what rightly are some precious areas with the highest conservation designations in the Park. This would also ensure the islands can be enjoyed by all, irrespective of backgrounds and means.

The creation of the National Park was widely welcomed in 2002, following decades of lobbying by the Friends of Loch Lomond and many others, as it corrected an anomaly whereby England and Wales had enjoyed the benefits of National Parks for more than 50 years with increased resources to tackle visitor management and conservation issues, while Scotland missed out.

In this tenth anniversary year we should be reflecting on some of the successes of the Park Authority and its partners who are responsible for managing this special part of Scotland, as all too often it is easy to criticise as they grapple with some of the very challenging visitor management, conservation and development issues facing the area.

We should also all get fully behind the ambitious new 5 year National Park Partnership Plan and work constructively with the Park Authority and others to ensure the benefits are maximised from the planned £100 million investment in over 40 specific actions under the themes of conservation, visitor experience and rural development.

It is worth remembering our National Parks are still relatively young compared to their counterparts elsewhere in the world. It would be nice to think in years to come a future feature in the Herald on the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park and other National Parks -we need more to cover some of the other iconic scenic parts of Scotland- might be described as 'Scotland's Best Ever Idea', in the same way as the long established North American National Parks are.

National Parks have great potential to deliver positive benefits for the people of Scotland and visitors from these shores and beyond who come to enjoy the wonders of our rich and diverse natural and cultural heritage. Let's cherish and nurture them and put 'family squabbles' firmly behind us.

Yours faithfully,

James Fraser,

Chair, Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs

Wind Turbines

Our Battles Continue...

In the last edition of Voice we carried articles about the growing threat of giant wind turbines on the scenic qualities of the National Park and here we provide updates on current developments and the emergence of more acceptable low visual impact run of the river hydro schemes

Large Scale Wind Turbine Schemes

Merkins Farm – This application to develop a cluster of 10 wind turbines, with a height of 120 metres to the tip of the rotor blades, has still to be determined by West Dunbartonshire Council despite the application being submitted in January check. The Friends have submitted a robust objection to the planning authority arguing that the extent of the visual impact of the large-scale turbines will be significant in the National Park and in particular in the Loch Lomond area which is of international importance in landscape quality and touristic appeal. Photo montages and visual impact drawings submitted in documents by the developer show the turbines will be clearly visible from most parts of Loch Lomond and as far north as Tarbet.

Ard Ghaath to the north east of Drymen - This proposal for a cluster of 10 turbines, with a height of 115 metres, is currently under review as the results from the initial wind speed trials were not as promising as the developer would have liked. The trials are being continued for a further year before a decision is taken on whether or not to proceed to the next stage. This has been widely welcomed by many residents in the surrounding villages but it does still leave some uncertainties and the local wind turbine action group is continuing to monitor the situation closely. If an application is eventually submitted the Friends will make strong representation against the development on visual impact grounds.

New Park Plan Confirms Wind Turbine Victory

Tucked away in a footnote on page 45 of this new five year Partnership Plan launched by the Minister for Rural Affairs, Richard Lochhead in June is a very welcome definition of what constitutes large scale commercial wind turbines that will not be permitted within the National Park. They are defined as *'more than one turbine over 30 metres in height'*.

This is great news and vindicates the vigorous campaign mounted by the Friends and the Scottish Campaign for National Parks to tighten what were originally fairly weak policies in the draft Local Plan relating to wind turbines. In the original plan there was still the potential danger of larger wind turbine projects being acceptable and the policy framework would also have also permitted clusters of 60 metre turbines in certain circumstances.

We believe this is a victory for common sense and represents a major step forward in protecting the iconic landscapes of the National Park from the worst visual impacts of large-scale wind turbine development. However, we are not going to be complacent as the battleground moves to protecting the National Park buffer zones where large-scale wind turbines could still have a very damaging visual impact on the special landscape qualities of the National Park that are such a strong magnet for attracting 4 million visitors to the area each year.

Small Scale Hydro Schemes Projects on the Increase

The Friends have consistently argued that the National Park area can make a positive contribution to the Scottish Government's renewable energy targets by focusing on realising the potential of the area's water resources with a series of small-scale run of the river hydro schemes as this is much more preferable to high visual impact wind turbine structures.

It is therefore encouraging that Gordon Watson, Director of Rural Development & Planning was able to report recently that six schemes have already been built with a further three recently approved by the Park Authority and another 17 at pre-application stage. Most of the large estates and some local Community Trusts are progressing schemes. One of the more ambitious schemes is being progressed by Callander Community Development Trust who recently secured planning consent for a £1million 400kw scheme in Stank Glen by Loch Lubnaig that will have minimal impact on the landscape and generate healthy revenue streams to support a range of community projects.



Ardvorlich turbine house



Loch Lomond Byelaws Under The Spotlight

In the last edition of Voice we carried a two page feature on the byelaws review and the options for improving visitor management on four of the more popular Loch Lomond islands with some of the highest conservation designations. Here we provide a brief update, including the main points highlighted in the Friends response submitted to the National Park Authority.

The byelaws review consultation exercise generated several hundred responses as well as considerable media interest, with features on national television and radio and in the press. At a recent meeting of the Park Authority the suggested minor changes to the water byelaws were recommended for approval by Scottish Ministers and sensibly revised proposals for the islands will be consulted on further. The majority of the responses to the consultation support the byelaws proposals relating to the waters of Loch Lomond that are primarily concerned with retaining speed limits in close proximity to the shoreline and in the popular Luss Narrows with a minor amendment to include an area next to Inverbeg Caravan Park. However, some of the options proposed for the Loch Lomond islands have met with stiff opposition from boat users and the Loch Lomond Association who argue the status quo should be retained as they do not consider there is a problem, with declining boat numbers on the loch in recent years and what they consider are isolated instances of misuse.

While accepting boat use on the loch may be in decline, the Friends have taken a different view in the response to the consultation as we do not believe the status quo is the best option for managing these popular but environmentally sensitive islands. We share many of the concerns of the island owners, Luss Estates about the need to take some positive measures to improve the situation with the provision of 'light touch' dry toilets, barbeque pits and informal camping pitches in selected locations combined with increased patrolling at the busier periods. We believe this has worked well on Inchcailloch, which continues to be enjoyed by 15,000 visitors annually, and there is no reason why it won't be equally successful on some of the more popular islands such as Inchmoan.

We are fully aware that for generations many individuals and groups, with deep affection for the loch and the islands, have been able to enjoy informal camping on the islands and we believe this should still be possible through the introduction of informal camping pitching areas and zones where isolated 'wilderness' camping is allowed under a simple permit arrangement not dissimilar to what happens in many North American National Parks very successfully. Irrespective of what the final outcome of the camping byelaw options are, there is an urgent need to introduce dry toilets on some of the more popular islands as the current level of despoliation is unacceptable and has led to a poor quality of visitor experience. It is also unfair to ask Friends volunteers, rangers and others to continually clean up what we have described in the past as 'islands of shame.' A balance also requires to be struck between protecting the high nature conservation value of the islands and continuing to allow responsible recreational use.

We very much welcome the Park Authority's efforts to address some of these challenging issues by opening up the debate on options for improving management of these special islands.

In response to the Editor's feature on the byelaws review in the last edition of Voice Friends founder member Sam Gibson from Hardgate, Clydebank sent us a passionate and well argued letter expressing the view that 'a tradition whereby the local, not so rich people, could enjoy their access to the loch and their birth right should be allowed to continue'. He included a timely reminder from well respected Friends founding member, the late Sir Robert Grieve, who wrote a poem expounding people's rights to have access 'to the places that are open and free' and we reproduce this here.

The Open Road

*The lure of the road before me,
The open sky above,
The weight of the pack upon my back,
These are the things that I love.*

*The loch far-outstretched and hushed'
The heave of the swell beneath,
The steady pull and rhythmic sway,
And the sigh as the winds softly breathe.*

*The grate of the keel of sand,
The first curling wisp of smoke,
The laughter and talk as we each do our task,
And the silence of the island broke.*

*The red dancing light on each face,
As we take up position of ease,
The hiss of the foam of the waves on the beach,
And the hush of the wind in the trees.*

*These are the things I love,
These are the things that pull me,
To the silent places and windy places,
And the places that are open and free.*

Robert Grieve, 1926



Nature of the Park

Keith Graham writes about the challenges that have faced Park wildlife during one of the wettest summers on record and looks forward to nature's seasonal delights including the arrival of thousands of babbling geese

Autumn arrives, perhaps this year with our blessing, for the summer simply failed to materialise. It was, dare I say, a damp squib! Indeed, such was the impact of the wettest summer in living memory, that the productivity of many birds was disappointing to say the least. Amongst the worst sufferers were the Park's golden eagles with as far as I know, none of them rearing young this year ... a missing generation perhaps?

The breeding process for eagles is of course, extremely prolonged. The process begins around the turn of the year, when established pairs decide which of the eyries within their territory – usually two or three – they will use. Refurbishment of the chosen eyrie follows and then the pair begin their courtship rituals. When young are successfully raised, they may be dependent upon their parents well into the autumn! Thus the entire process lasts for most of the year!

Although eagles generally pair for life, the bonding is re-affirmed each year with the two birds putting on a marvellous show during these important days of courtship, often clasping talons during their amazing aerial gyrations. All this is of course, yet to come. Such events are a springtime speciality, albeit that for eagles spring is inclined to come early with the first eggs often laid by the time the Ides of March are with us. Thankfully, eagles are renowned for their longevity and so next year, with hopefully better conditions prevailing, should see normal service resumed.

The Tourist's Eagles

The fact that the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park is, at its southern boundary at least, so close to the highly populace Central Belt of Scotland, might imply that most of the resident birds of prey are located in the northern reaches of the Park. In fact, they are relatively widely distributed throughout the Park, albeit that the eagles as might be expected, are located in the more mountainous areas. Of course, it is often the case that those visitors who come to 'eagle watch' in the park are misled by the sighting of buzzards, known locally sometimes, as 'the tourist's eagles'.

Buzzards, much commoner than eagles and widely distributed in both Lowland and Highland areas of the Park, are big birds with a wingspan sometimes reaching over three feet. Yet that is to be compared with the wingspan of an eagle at over six feet! Sea eagles, some of which have recently been

released in Eastern Scotland, do sometimes venture into the Park. They even put the golden eagle to shame with a wingspan going up to an astonishing eight feet! They are colloquially known as 'flying barn doors'!

Despite the popularity of the Park and its ever-increasing numbers of visitors, the spectrum of wildlife to be found within its boundaries is quite remarkable. Indeed, the monitoring of, and where necessary, the protection of this rich panoply of wildlife, is very much a part of the NPA's agenda. There are for instance, a surprising number of ospreys to be found fishing in the many lochs of the National Park, although these are of course, migratory birds which, by the time you are reading this, will be well on their way to West Africa. They usually re-appear at the end of March and in early April.

In more easterly parts of the Park, red kites are to be seen, much the same size as buzzards but more slender and easily recognised by their long, forked tails. Sparrowhawks abound throughout the park and although their numbers have declined in recent years, the delightful, hovering kestrels are also a fairly common sight. During the month of October especially, much hooting and screeching will emanate from woodlands as tawny owls seek to establish winter territories. The strange calling of long-eared owls – resembling the sound of a squeaky gate – may also be heard from deep in woodland. These are elusive owls! Ghostly barn owls largely haunt the more marginal parts of Lowland areas whereas short-eared owls – seen more readily in daylight hours – are



denizens of the treeless moors. Here too, if you're lucky, you may see hen harriers.

Monarchs of the Glen

Of the mammals, the 'monarchs of the glen' – our red deer - although most often associated with the Highland glens, are now to be spotted in many of our forests and in recent years in Lowland areas too. Autumn of course, brings these, our largest land mammals, to the climax of their year and the annual rut. The sonorous roaring of the stags echoes through many of the Park's glens during October and occasionally the clashing of antlers can also be heard as rival challenges rival. The shortening days of autumn certainly produce their fair share of drama wherever there are monarchs of the glen to be seen ... or indeed heard! In woodland and forest, the much smaller and daintier roe, gradually becoming darker as the rich, red summer coat is replaced by darker brown hues, emerges each evening from its woodland cover to graze nearby fields.

In September and October, whilst most of the summer migrant birds have departed, Africa bound, new, wilder sounds permeate especially the Lowland landscape as thousands of geese seek solace here from the far north. Pink footed geese are the most numerous whereas Loch Lomond's southern reaches are the destination for Greenland, white-fronted geese. Thus, although the bird-song that so characterises spring and summer, has now diminished, there is nevertheless the continuing, constant babbling of the geese to provide truly wild sound throughout the winter months.

One songster however, persists. Robin redbreast is often the lone musical vocalist on autumn and winter days. His exceptionally territorial nature impels him to constantly warn rivals of his presence with sharp, short bursts of bell-like music, a tumbling, sweet melody to brighten up even the darkest of winter days. Yet the lull of silence is relatively short lived and as soon as January, the first assertive, 'tea-cher, tea-cher' calls of great tits begin to flow. It is a new awakening. In mild winters, others may be tempted to join in the chorus. Blackbirds may give voice and thrushes too. Perhaps they sing to remind the Viking raiders from Scandinavia, the fieldfares and redwings, that spring is nigh. These fast moving thrushes descend like locusts on our landscape in October and remain until the spring, stripping the last of the berries and the plundering the fields for invertebrate life as they career about the landscape in loose, chattering flocks.

Squirrel Stores

Whilst many of our summer visiting birds, escape the winter by migrating to warmer climes, other creatures, namely the bats and hedgehogs, choose the long sleep – hibernation – as their escape route. Contrary to some oft-voiced opinion, squirrels do not hibernate. There are still the alien grey squirrels to be found in southern reaches of the Park but in the more northern areas it is the native red that dominates. Indeed, the arrival some years ago, of pine marten in many parts of the Park, has seen a rapid decline in grey squirrel numbers, a vacuum that has been happily filled by the

more attractive reds. During the winter months, squirrels may 'hole up' in their dreys for several days during bad weather and of course, famously, squirrels lay down stores for the winter months during Nature's autumn harvest.

Nor do badgers hibernate. They too may spend days tucked up in their underground setts when conditions are poor. They however, store food in a rather different way to get them through bad bouts of weather. They feast frenziedly during autumn and lay down lots of body fat which sustains them when they cannot get out to scavenge for food. Well distributed throughout the Park, there are particularly good populations of these curmudgeonly animals on Loch Lomondside.

As the days dwindle down and autumn begins to burnish the fantastically varied landscape of the Park, from the gentle Lowlands of its southern reaches to the dramatic mountains of the north, it is as if the rapidly strengthening colours – the golds and browns of the leaves, the reddening of the hillside brackens and the last of the purple heathers - is staging a last, magnificent finale in celebration of the fading year. A brief encounter with winter's whiteness, with mountains suddenly transformed into a winter wonderland is however, but a prelude to the beginning of a new cycle. Spring's first stirrings – the faintest of signs that the season of re-birth approaches, slowly but surely – evokes instant response from the plants, insects, birds and animals that are the beating heart of the Park.



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Local historian Louis Stott writes about the contribution of local novelist Tobias Smollett over 200 years ago to the popularisation of the area as one of Scotland's top tourist destinations.

Smollett and Loch Lomond



Tobias Smollett was born at Dalquhurn in the Vale of Leven in 1721 and died near Leghorn in Italy in 1771. He is best known as one of the first novelists. He was an original whose worth has rarely been properly acknowledged, perhaps because his contemporaries like Fielding and Defoe were in the same class as he was, but also because he was an Anglo-Scot whose countrymen have never really identified with him. Scott said Smollett made him laugh out loud, and Sheridan, Thackeray, Dickens, and James Joyce are all said to have been influenced by him. Smollett put the Vale of Leven in Roderick Random (1741), but it is his last novel, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771), probably written in Italy during the last two years of his life, that describes Scotland best. The novel deals with sex, politics and religion in resorts for gentlefolk in Britain. The Scottish passages are probably based on Smollett's long visit in 1766 when he saw his sister in Edinburgh, and his old friends in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Smollett is a powerful descriptive writer with a keen interest in social life, but, above all, he is funny.

He was probably much more widely read than other authors who wrote about Scotland in the second half of the eighteenth century. It would not do to exaggerate his significance, but if he had written a journal comparable with his *Travels in France and Italy* about his travels in Great Britain he would be recognised as one of the founders of the tourist trade.

Both Gray's *Observations on the English Lakes* (1772) and Pennant's *Tour of Scotland* (1771) gave a tremendous impetus to travel for pleasure, and many writers have interpreted Humphry Clinker as Smollett's journal. The novel is in the form of letters from half a dozen characters, but Smollett's voice is evident throughout. In the book a group of travellers visit Clifton, Bath, London, Harrogate, Scarborough, and other places.

The topography of Scotland in *Humphry Clinker* is exact. His tone is warm, no more so than in his calf country. "We went to Loch Lomond, one of the most enchanting spots in the whole world," says one of his characters. "This country would be a perfect paradise, if it was not, like Wales, cursed with a weeping climate."

Another of the characters states that Loch Lomond "is a surprising body of pure transparent water unfathomably deep in many places six or seven miles broad, four and twenty miles in length, displaying above twenty green islands, covered with wood, some of them cultivated for corn, and many of them stocked with red deer. They belong to different gentlemen, whose seats are scattered along the banks of the lake, which are agreeably romantic beyond all conception."

Matt Bramble, the character most like Smollett in *Humphry Clinker*, describes the loch as follows: "What say you to a natural basin of pure water, nearly thirty miles long, and in some places seven

miles broad and in many above a hundred fathoms deep, having four and twenty habitable islands, some of them stocked with deer, and all of them covered with wood, containing immense quantities of delicious fish, salmon, perch, trout pike, flounders, eels and powans, the last a delicate, kind of freshwater herring peculiar to this lake, and finally communicating with the sea by sending off the Leven through which all those species (except the powan) make their exit and entrance occasionally."

He goes on "I have seen the Lago di Garda, Albano, De Vico, Bolsena and Geneva, and, upon my honour, I prefer Loch Lomond to them all a preference which is certainly owing to the verdant islands that seem to float upon its surface, affording the most enchanting objects 'of repose to the excursive view. Nor are the banks destitute of beauties which even partake of the sublime. On this side [near Cameron] they display a sweet variety of woodland cornfield and pasture, with several agreeable villas emerging, as it were, out of the lake, till, at some distance, the prospect terminates in huge mountains covered with heath which being in the bloom, affords a very rich covering of purple. Everything here is romantic beyond imagination. This country is justly stiled the Arcadia of Scotland, and I don't doubt but it may vie with Arcadia in everything but climate. I am sure it exceeds it in verdure, wood and water."



- 1: *The Smollett Monument*
- 2: *Sandby*
- 3: *Loch Lomond engraving by Wm Miller*

National Park Pioneers Celebrated

The Friends of Loch Lomond founder and long standing President Dr. Hannah Stirling MBE was the guest of honour at a lunch at the Lodge on Loch Lomond Hotel hosted by Freeman of Argyll and Bute and former Provost Billy Petrie OBE JP DL. The civic lunch was held to recognise the outstanding contribution of Hannah to the protection and promotion of Loch Lomond over many years.

Right: Friends members and business supporters are pictured at the celebratory lunch with (seated) Billy Petrie OBE, JP, DL, Dr. Hannah Stirling MBE and Lord John McFall of Alcluith



The event coincided with the 10th anniversary of the National Park and the 34th anniversary of Hannah's representation in the Herald newspaper against the massive Craighrostan Hydro Scheme on the shoulder of Ben Lomond. This eventually led to a petition being backed by 200,000 people to safeguard the mountain for future generations and the creation of the Friends of Loch Lomond in 1978.

In attendance at the event was Lord John McFall of Alcluith whose contribution to the creation of Scotland's first National Park was also recognised with him accepting the position of one of the Friends Honorary Vice-President.

Professor Gavin Arneil, a former Chairman of the Friends said: "John did a great job in keeping the campaign for a National Park covering the Loch Lomond area in the limelight by organising a series of one day conferences in the early nineties and has always passionately promoted the interests of the Loch Lomond area in parliamentary circles and the media".

"It was largely through his efforts that one of the first pieces of legislation the late Donald Dewar pushed through the new Scottish Parliament was the National Parks Act that led to the creation of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park in 2002."

Billy Petrie, who has been a great ambassador for both the lochside and the wider National Park, was also made an Honorary Vice-President of the Friends in recognition of his outstanding contribution to enriching the lives of many people and ensuring the National Park is a better place to live, work and visit.

Billy served as a Councillor for 45 years and for much of this time he represented lochside communities. In addition to having the distinction of serving as Provost of no less than three Councils he was also heavily involved in four tourist bodies covering the Park and served as Chairman of the Area Tourist Boards and Tourism Partnerships with great distinction. He also served on the Park Authority and its predecessors. Commenting on the contribution of all three individuals the Chairman of the Friends, James Fraser said: "These are three remarkable individuals who all in their own way have played a major part in securing the creation of the National Park and they have consistently over many decades selflessly worked hard to promote and protect this special place which is home to 16,000 local residents and plays host to 4 million visitors from other parts of the UK and overseas annually."

"We were delighted to mark the

contribution of Lord John McFall of Alcluith and Billy Petrie by appointing them both as Honorary Vice-Presidents of the Friends and we were also pleased that the guest of honour Dr. Hannah Stirling MBE received a commemorative engraved quaiich from Billy Petrie on behalf of Argyll and Bute Council to mark her outstanding contribution to the protection and promotion of Loch Lomond."

At the celebratory lunch both Billy Petrie and Lord McFall described Hannah as a truly remarkable lady who has done so much over so many years as the 'Queen of Loch Lomond' through her work with the Friends and also her own charitable Trust. They referred to the successful campaign led by Hannah in the late 1970s to safeguard Ben Lomond from a major hydro dam scheme; the support to bring the Ben into the ownership of the National Trust for Scotland followed by the creation of Scotland's National Memorial Park to commemorate the fallen in two world wars; the many conservation and access projects delivered under her watchful eye and her passionate and prolonged lobbying to convince respective Governments and senior politicians of the merits of designating the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs area as a National Park.



The Long Struggle for a National Park



It took over 100 years to secure National Park status for the world famous Loch Lomond and The Trossachs area and some of the milestones in the long journey are set out here. For a fuller explanation of the long struggle read the excellent book entitled 'Loch Lomondside' by local author, John Mitchell.

The First Stirrings

- 1849 Local man John Colquhoun published 'A Plea for the Wastes' in his book Rocks and Rivers and this began with an impassioned appeal for the retention of the wilderness character.
- 1904 In a landmark essay entitled 'A National Park for Scotland' Charles Stewart of Appin, proposed protected status for a large tract of the western Highlands possessing a high degree of natural beauty and grandeur.
- 1915 The Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves included Ben Lui in their list of potential reserves in Britain.

The Addison Report

- 1929 Several countryside organisations, including the Association for the Preservation of Rural Scotland pressed the Government for an inquiry into the need for National Parks in Britain and a National Park Committee was set up under the chairmanship of Dr. Addison.
- 1931 The 'Report of the National Park Committee' did not recommend a National Park for the area but some of the bodies giving evidence did and their suggestions and were included in an appendix.
- 1934 A Standing Committee on National Parks was set up by voluntary bodies to keep alive public interest and support.

The 1930s and 1940s

- 1930 The Duke of Montrose offered the Chancellor of the Exchequer Rowardennan Estate-which included Ben Lomond- in lieu of death duties for a National Park but this was turned down.
- 1937 The Argyll National Forest Park, the first large scale park in Britain, was formally opened in May by the Forestry Commission.
- 1942 The Association for the Preservation of Rural Scotland set up the Scottish Council for National Parks and pressed for an assessment of potential park areas in Scotland and the Council's own nominations included Loch Lomondside.
- 1945 The Scottish National Parks Survey Committee, under the chairmanship of Sir Douglas Ramsay, published their report entitled 'National Parks: A Scottish Survey' with Loch Lomond and The Trossachs heading the list in order of priority.
- 1946 The 'Clyde Valley Regional Plan' included detailed proposals for a National Park embracing Loch Lomond, the hinterland and a link up with Argyll Forest Park.
- 1947 In a second Ramsay report entitled 'National Parks and the Conservation of Nature in Scotland' the area remained the recommended first choice for a National Park. Powerful vested interests including major landowners, the hydro-electric and forest industries and others gathered together to strongly oppose National Parks for Scotland.

- 1949 Due to the level of opposition, Scotland was passed over in the 'National Parks and Countryside Act' that led to the creation of National Parks in England and Wales. Much weaker National Park Direction areas were introduced in Scotland with one covering the core of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs area. These Orders empowered the Secretary of State to scrutinise any development proposal within the designated boundaries.

The Queen Elizabeth Forest Park

- 1954 The Queen Elizabeth Forest Park was officially opened in June and this time Ben Lomond and the Rowardennan Estate was included as it had been purchased 5 years earlier through the National Land Fund set up to acquire land of high scenic value and to be dedicated to those who died in the Second World War and made available in perpetuity to everyone seeking the peace and tranquillity of the countryside.

The 1960s and 1970s

- 1962 W.H.Murray was commissioned by the National Trust for Scotland to undertake a survey of all the Highlands' key scenic areas and he published his findings in Highland landscapes which identified 21 places of outstanding beauty including Loch Lomond and the Trossachs.
- 1962 The Loch Lomond National Nature Reserve, made up of Inchcailloch, Clairinsh, Torrinch, Creinch, and the



The Long Struggle for a National Park

HRH Princess Anne formally opens the National Park watched by Park Convener, Cllr Gillie Thomson

Aber Isle, together with the grazing marshes of the River Endrick, was declared on 4 December.

- 1965 Following a conference - 'The Countryside in 1970' - Study Group 9, under the chairmanship of Professor Robert Greave, singled out the Loch Lomond-Trossachs area as an obvious candidate for National Park status.
- 1978 A report by the Countryside Commission for Scotland entitled 'Scotland's Scenic Heritage' named part of the area as requiring special planning control and two years later in 1980 designated the Loch Lomond area as a National Scenic Area.



The Friends of Loch Lomond and Ben Lomond

- 1978 The Friends were founded and attracted a worldwide membership dedicated to the protection of the area's natural beauty. Steadfast in support for National Park status for Loch Lomond, with strong leadership of Dr. Hannah Stirling MBE, the Friends successfully galvanised public opinion against plans to construct a pumped storage station and reservoir on the slopes of Ben Lomond.
- 1984 Following another vigorous campaign by the Friends of Loch Lomond, and the announcement of the Forestry Commission was to sell off Ben Lomond, the National Trust for Scotland purchased the mountain with a grant from the Countryside Commission for Scotland.
- 1996 Following a skirmish between the Friends and Forest Enterprise over plans to plant non-native Sitka spruce on the lower slopes of Ben Lomond, the Secretary of State for Scotland established the long delayed Ben Lomond National Memorial Park in remembrance of the thousand of Scots who died in military service during the Second World War and this was linked with a more sympathetic native tree planting long term plan.

The 1980s and 90s - The Final Push

- 1986 The publication of the ground-breaking Loch Lomond (Subject) Plan for Tourism, Recreation and Conservation by four District and Regional Councils working together helped set the scene for the final push to secure National Park status.
- 1988 The four local authorities and Countryside Commission for Scotland joined together to fund the Loch Lomond (Regional) Park under the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1981.
- 1990 The Countryside Commission published 'The Mountain Areas of Scotland' report and recommended Loch Lomond and The Trossachs as a prime candidate for a National Park. Powerful landowners opposed the recommendations of the report and this led to a watered down Natural Heritage (Scotland) Act in 1991 with powers to designate Natural Heritage Areas founded on the voluntary principle with no supporting independent administrative body.
- 1992 A Scottish Office sponsored public opinion poll indicated that 90 per cent of Scots favoured the introduction of National Parks in Scotland.
- 1993 After two years of deliberation by a

working party set up by the Secretary of State, under the chairmanship of Sir Peter Hutchison, a report entitled 'The Management of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs' was published and a National Park was recommended in all but name as their terms of reference had specifically excluded them from recommending a National Park.

- 1999 The Loch Lomond and The Trossachs Interim Committee was established with the area covered by the former Regional Park extended.

The Scottish Parliament and Success at Last

- 2000 One of the first pieces of legislation passed by the new Scottish Parliament was the enabling bill to establish National Parks which represented the culmination of decades of dedicated campaigning work by many in the voluntary and public sector and against stiff opposition of vested interests.
- 2002 Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park is established and formally opened by HRH Princess Anne in July at the new National Park Gateway Centre in Balloch. Success at last with the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs area joining the worldwide family of National Parks!

The Early Years A Personal Perspective



Bill Dalrymple gives a personal insight to the build up to the creation of Scotland's first National Park and his role as the Park's first Chief Executive. Bill has now retired and is an active Trustee of the Friends.

In July 2002 some two years after the passing of the National Park Act, Scotland had its first National Park. We Scots can be a canny lot indulging in much deliberation and debate even in dealing with the concept of National Parks tried and tested across the globe for over 100 years.

I can remember my personal feelings in July 2002. To be honest it was a feeling of relief rather than joy but certainly one of excitement. By July 2002 I had spent 27 years of my professional life as a planner and subsequently as a Park Manager preparing for this day.

The 1986 Loch Lomond Local (Subject) Plan on Tourism, Recreation and Conservation, which I was a co-author of, laid out a strategy for planning and managing the Loch Lomond area across four local authority boundaries, albeit unlike Hannah Stirling and her Friends we had sat on the fence with regard to the then controversial proposed Craigroyston Pump Storage Scheme. I still can't work out how we managed that. Unlike elsewhere in Scotland the local authorities deserve much credit for recognising the importance of a coordinated approach to the care of such an important part of Great Britain's natural heritage. In the absence of National Park legislation, but with the support and encouragement of the then Countryside Commission for Scotland, the opportunity was taken to promote and eventually establish a Regional Park in 1988. The Loch Lomond Park, under management of a Joint Committee was born but in its naming any reference to "Regional" was quietly, but deliberately, deleted as those involved had greater aspirations to create Scotland's first National Park.

In 1989 a major step forward was taken when the Joint Committee appointed Nick Pennington as its first Park Officer and he brought with him highly relevant experience of English National Parks. I joined Nick in 1990 with the intention of focussing on Planning matters but I also found myself managing a Countryside Ranger Service with staff inherited from Dumbarton District and Central Regional Councils.

Under Nick's guidance the Loch Lomond Park Authority adopted a 'hands on' approach to management and development. The landscape quality of Loch Lomond was (and is) world class but closer examination in the early 1990's revealed real problems ranging from widespread litter and lack of visitor facilities to conflicts on the Loch from competing visitor pressures. The first major development undertaken by the Park Authority was Luss Visitor Centre. By the mid 1990's it became evident that the Park Authority required additional professional help

and we were fortunate to recruit Carron Tobin. Carron takes up the story of her involvement in the next page.

With a key role played by Jack Bisset, who was experienced and knowledgeable on loch water management issues, 1996 saw the introduction of Byelaws on the Loch requiring all powered pleasure craft to be registered and imposing speed limits on sensitive parts of the Loch. Unfortunately 1996 also saw Nick's early retirement - a major loss to the Park. Overall the 1990's witnessed continued progress on the ground including simple but practical initiatives such as the introduction of a litter 'hit squad'. An expanded Ranger team and visitor centre assistants helped to enhance customer services.

At a national level the political scene was changing in the latter part of the 1990's. A working party chaired by Sir Peter Hutchison had earlier came up with a scenario whereby the Loch Lomond Park would be replaced with a joint committee covering Loch Lomond and the Trossachs at a time the Government expressly prohibited consideration of a National Park designation for the area. This indeed happened but with the prime purpose of preparing the way for The National Park backed by far sighted local authorities and individuals. I was pleased to be appointed as Chief Officer serving that Joint Committee.

Enough of this preamble - what of the early years of the National Park and the new Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) with its board of 25 members? Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the role of Jane Hope as Interim Chief Executive. Jane performed this role in an exemplar fashion and her skills were subsequently recognised by the Cairngorms National Park on her appointment as permanent Chief Executive. The new Board also benefitted greatly from the appointment of Cllr. Gillie Thomson as Chairman and Sir Peter as Depute, a formidable team leading a multi-talented and diverse Board.

I have mentioned my level of excitement in July 2002 but this was tempered by the knowledge that with the demise of the Interim Committee I could soon be redundant. Imagine my pleasure when I was appointed Chief Executive to the NPA as of December 2002 immediately to face the controversy over the controversial CHAS Hospice development on the edge of Balloch Country Park. Although this was a highly emotive issue early in the life of the new National Park, this gave me an opportunity to adhere to a long held professional principle that no matter the final decision, planning application recommendations

should be founded on sound analysis and not influenced by popular public or political pressure. In the early days much time had to be spent in establishing The National Park Authority as a proper organisation meeting the requirements of the Designation Order and the regulations and practices expected of all NDPB's - at times somewhat frustrating but nevertheless essential. Given the composition of the senior management team, it should have come as no surprise that the new National Park Authority continued to build on many of the initiatives set in motion by the Interim Committee. I was particularly pleased to continue the Community Futures Project affording a real opportunity for local people to influence the future of their local communities. I was not so keen on carrying out a review of the Loch Lomond Byelaws as I considered a key priority was the preparation of the first National Park Plan and the establishment of a full Planning service under Gordon Watson as Director. One of the most difficult tasks was that of setting priorities. By the time of my departure in 2007 a great deal had been accomplished, including an approved National Park Plan, but in truth this was only a start. I was disappointed, for example, that other popular lochs suffering from visitor pressure in The Park had still to have the attention historically paid to Loch Lomond and the potential of gateway towns such as Callander had still to be realised.

As I view the National Park now I accept that change is inevitable. I can only imagine the financial constraints being experienced and the even greater need for prioritisation to tackle the many challenges and opportunities that exist in such a diverse and wonderful area that continues to be Scotland's most heavily visited countryside area. I wish the current Board and Management team well.

Looking back over my years as Chief Executive of the National Park Authority and previous Joint Committees I am reasonably satisfied with my contribution but above all I have valued the experience of working with individuals whom I hold the highest regard. In addition to those previously mentioned, the late Duncan Mills immediately comes to mind - his tenacity in campaigning for Loch Lomond to become a national Park was legendary. Thomas Huxley, Bob Aitken, Billy Petrie and the Friend's own Professor Gavin Arneil are among the many who have been of great help and support over the years. My thanks is due to them and to all my former colleagues and the staff of the many partner organisations who all played their part in ensuring the National Park made a real difference in the early years of its existence.

The Early Years **Delivering the Ambition**



Carron Tobin, who held senior posts with the National Park and its predecessors over a 15 year period between 1994 and 2009, reflects on some of the legacy projects developed on her watch. Carron is now a Friends Trustee running her own successful consultancy business.

It's fascinating to look back at how project funding and ambition has changed over the years. I joined the Regional Park Authority in the mid 1990s shortly after the Sir Peter Hutchison Working Party Report had been published. I had the title of Projects/Land Management Officer and my first challenge was the heavily used Milarrochy Bay on the east side of Loch Lomond. The Milarrochy Bay we know and love today was a different site altogether back then. The site was seriously eroded partly from the changing water levels but largely because of the free for all access from the road right on to the beach. Tree roots were exposed and several lost each year. Many of the trees that were surviving were used as bonfire nests... the bank was eroding further and further towards the road each year. It was decided that a management presence on site was needed if there was going to be any long-term solution to the issues being faced. To do this some form of toilet block and ranger station was desirable. Funding was a major challenge but so too was disposal of the effluent from the toilets. The scheme was developed and at a cost of £400,000 the new toilet block and two car parks with the link footbridge was built. Much of the money spent was buried underground with a large holding tank for the toilets but also a concrete retaining wall buried under the beach and faced with riprap. This ensured the car park was stable, and also provided a managed slipway down on to the beach. Did it provide that long term solution? I certainly think so. The main way to fund capital projects in the 1990s was through the public agencies and the European structural funds. The Lottery didn't exist and community development trusts were few and far between with very few signing up for the 'we can do it for ourselves' approach. The Loch Lomond (Regional) Park was set up with the Countryside Commission for Scotland (latterly Scottish Natural Heritage) being a core partner. Through an agreed funding formula, SNH and the parent councils (Stirling, Argyll & Bute and West Dunbartonshire) would each put funding on the table that then formed the backbone to a rolling capital programme and the basis for ambitious bids to the European Partnerships, and significant input from the Enterprise Companies. In addition SNH built in an allowance for the revenue funding implications of these new facilities. This ensured the annual grant to the Park Authority flexed each time a new facility was built to cover the salary costs of site wardens and interpretive staff to operate these new top quality facilities. I distinctly recall the phrase 'to a quality commensurate with National Park status'

appearing within each and every funding application I submitted and this seemed to strike a chord. If this area was being designated a National Park we had to have facilities that matched the quality of our outstanding scenery, natural and cultural heritage and met (if not surpassed) visitors' expectations. National Parks hold a sense of quality, authenticity and international appeal – if you have only a few days in a country and you want to see the best... cities and National Parks tend to be top of the list! But at the most basic level we needed toilets which met current day standards and were open when people most needed them. We wanted to ensure there were plenty opportunities for people to picnic, walk and learn more about this fascinating place. And when we built something we wanted it to embody the best in design, materials and workmanship. Milarrochy was followed by the Balmaha Visitor Centre which has just been refurbished 15 years after it first opened its doors. Then came Inveruglas, Tarbet, Rowardennan, the Loch Lomond Piers Restoration, The Duncan Mills Memorial Slipway, the Balmaha Millennium Forest Trail and the Luss Village Trail.... all benefiting from significant public sector funding. As formal National Park designation came closer and the Interim Committee was set up to pave the way for Scotland's first National Park, the ambition accelerated and the funding possibilities changed gear. The Forestry Commission secured £5million to upgrade visitor amenities in both Forest Parks and the Interim Committee, working closely with the Enterprise Companies and the Area Tourist Board, devised an 'Early Actions' programme. Funding from 10 different sources totalling £1.83 million was secured for a package of works designed to ensure the Park hit the ground running. In July 2002 visitors would find their way to the Park by following 118 distance directional signs from the motorway network which recognised that the route to follow to Argyll Forest was different from the Trossachs. They would be welcomed across the threshold of the Park (and beckoned to 'haste ye back' as they left). Every Tourist Information Centre in the area (at that time 11) had National Park welcome panels with an integral plasma unit and film footage promoting the four different areas of the National Park. There was 1 million copies of an introductory leaflet with a relief map, interpretive panels at all the key places where there was a story to be told or people arriving by bike, bus, train or car would want to orientate themselves. New bins were designed and manufactured using recycled plastics and bespoke furniture was

installed at key countryside sites using top quality natural materials. The Park's first logo emerged almost by accident but was unanimously approved at the first National Park board meeting... and this provided the colourway for the Ranger's uniform and Park Authority literature. A suite of hugely evocative posters were commissioned, two from each of the four areas of the Park plus the image that became the Park logo, and these were produced as postcards and mugs for the eager souvenir hunter. This has to be the most complex project I have ever worked on but it came together so well quite simply because everyone wanted it to work – there was a shared ambition for and belief in Scotland's first National Park, from the campaigners and the funding partners to the designers, the contractors and the staff. And on the day HRH Princess Anne joined our first Convener Cllr Gillie Thomson to formally launch Scotland's first National Park at Loch Lomond Shores in Balloch in July 2002, they also launched the National Park Gateway Centre. This stunning glass pavilion designed by Bennetts Associates was funded by no less than thirteen different partners and quite literally represented the pinnacle of so many individual's ambition to showcase the National Park and orientate millions of visitors. The state of the art interpretive display was developed with Scottish Natural Heritage and the Centre was jointly operated by the National Park and the Area Tourist Board. The Centre was integral to the overall Loch Lomond Shores development being located at the entrance and providing a light and airy transition from urban to rural, from land to water. Looking back it was indeed heady days for Scotland's first National Park! But one thing was consistent throughout – a shared ambition for this Park that so many had fought for and for so long... to make a real difference... to hit the ground running... and to embody a quality ethos that 'was commensurate with the truly outstanding natural and cultural heritage it embraced'. A special thank you to Bill Dalrymple and Nick Pennington who offered me that temporary post back in 1994.





Since its designation as Scotland's first National Park in 2002, Loch Lomond & The Trossachs, which represents some of Scotland's finest landscape, has continued to grow in popularity. What else has happened in those ten years? Here are just a few highlights.



Conservation

- Our Biodiversity Action Plan pools the actions of people and organisations to help protect some of Scotland's most iconic species and habitats. It sets out a series of actions for habitats and species, including black grouse, otters, red squirrels and water voles and details programmes for dealing with invasive species. Partners include RSPB, Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), landowners and community groups.
- The National Park Natural Heritage Grant Scheme has funded over £635K to landowners, estates, conservation groups and farmers, landscape and conservation projects. Projects include protecting bat roosts, red squirrel monitoring, deer fencing to aid black grouse survival, invasive plant species control, new paths, bridge installation and directional signage.
- The Park has an army of 353 active conservation volunteers. The recently introduced role of volunteer ranger proved successful, working closely with their full time and seasonal colleagues to welcome visitors.

Visitor Experience

- Around 7 million visitor days are spent in the Park each year – 60% of visitors come for the day, the main activities are walking, fishing or simply sightseeing.
- From June to September 2010, more than 44 events in ScottsLand attracted thousands to celebrate 200 years since Sir Walter Scott wrote *The Lady of the Lake*, which was set at Loch Katrine and helped to spark modern tourism.
- Under an agreement with SNH, we manage recreation on Inchcailloch, an island in Loch Lomond National Nature Reserve. This includes holding events and guided walks. It's also an ideal outdoor classroom for rangers to take educational groups.
- Operation Ironworks, led by Central Scotland Police with National Park and Forestry Commission rangers and Strathclyde and Tayside Police, has been running since 2007. Together they provide high profile patrols to tackle antisocial behaviour and crime at visitor hotspots.

Rural Development

- Since 2002, our planning team has processed nearly 4,000 planning applications, including 677 housing applications, 475 individual residential units, 60 hotel applications, 352 additional hotel rooms approved, 173 holiday accommodation applications.
- Our planning team received one of the UK's highest planning awards from the Royal Town Planning Institute for its work on the Carrick Golf Resort on the shores on Loch Lomond
- Through the Community Futures Programme we supported 24 communities to produce community action plans and most went on to set up development trusts to deliver local projects.
- The Community Partnership, established in 2004, became a membership organisation in 2010, run by its members for the benefit of all Park communities.

Find us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter

www.lochlomond-trossachs.org

Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs

Golf Day

Tuesday 26th June

A big thank you to David Mouldsdale and his Optical Express team and Cameron House for their generous support in ensuring the combined Mouldsdale Foundation and Friends charity golf event was such a great success at the Carrick on Loch Lomondside on the 26th June despite heavy rain for much of the day as 22 teams battled it out for victory in challenging conditions. Thanks to our many participating team sponsors that included Optical Express (3teams), DST, Monkey, SPD, Continental Eyewear, G1 Architects, Harper Macleod, Media Vision, Essilor, SD Healthcare, XL tech, Tube Developments, Cooper Vision; Sauflon, Baker Tilly, Capital Radio, Hamilton Grand, Luxottica, Yes Graphics and DM Design. A number of national and local companies also sponsored prizes the the golf raffle and particular thanks to Loch Lomond Seaplanes, Monachyle Mhor Hotel, Cameron House and Optical Express who sponsored a number of the prizes as part of their contribution to supporting the work of the Friends.

As a result of the event the Friends will be able to use their share of the proceeds to lever further funds from a variety of sources to support a range of conservation, heritage and access projects in the Park as part of the Our Park Voluntary Giving Scheme. Last year with funds from the event and funds collected via Our Park businesses it was possible to support improvements to the Three Lochs Way, the Rob Roy Way and the Bracklinn Falls footpaths as well as helping to secure the future of Ardroy Outdoor Centre and supporting red squirrel survival and Maid of the Loch educational programmes.

Projects likely to be supported with this year's funds include access improvements at the south end of Loch Lomond, tree planting in Balloch Castle Country Park to replace some of the 100 year old oaks damaged in the January storms, volunteer conservation action days, a heritage project in Arrochar and small scale village enhancement schemes.

David Mouldsdale, Chairman and CEO of the Optical Express Group said: "Following the success of last year's inaugural Friends charity golf event, which we were delighted to sponsor and organise, I am pleased we were able to work jointly again with the Friends. The Friends demonstrated the ability to leverage additional funds with the monies raised to deliver a wide range of worthwhile projects throughout the National Park; something I am confident will be replicated this year, making a real difference in such a special place that is enjoyed by millions of people each year."

John Keating, General Manager of Cameron House on Loch Lomond said: "We have been delighted to support the Friends again this year and we are pleased the golf charity event has been such a great success. We are also pleased that the funds raised will enable the Friends to invest in a number of local conservation and access projects to enhance this wonderful destination for the enjoyment of visitors and local residents."



Donnie MacLeod(captain) and the winning DM Design team are pictured receiving the trophy from June Mouldsdale, Communications Manager at Optical Express along with Friends Vice-President, George Boyd and Chairman, James Fraser.

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to support the Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs. For over 30 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. As the only independent conservation charity working across the whole of this precious part of Scotland, The Mouldsdale Foundation & Optical Express is pleased to be associated with such a worthwhile cause.

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Luss and the World Green Pilgrimage Network

The Rev. Dane Sherrard, who has been Minister of Luss Parish for the past 14 years outlines, the remarkable community efforts being made to welcome modern day pilgrims to the popular Loch Lomondside village of Luss through green tourism initiatives.

It all began ten years ago in 2002. Our Church was closed for a year to be massively restored and while it was being restored we worshipped in other churches, on cruise-ships on the loch and on the hillsides overlooking the loch.

As we made plans for all that we would do once we returned to our church we researched our congregation's history -- what a story emerged! Christianity was brought to this little corner of Loch Lomond in 510, fifty years before Columba set out from Ireland. It was brought here by Kessog, a Celtic saint whose name means 'little spear' and who came to Luss not because it was a beautiful place but because this is where three of the ancient Scottish kingdoms met, exactly the place to be if you are a courageous Christian missionary who is seeking to change the world.

Kessog was already fifty years old when he came to Luss and for ten years he laboured with the people here and made at least one memorable missionary journey which took him up the east side of the loch and from there through Comrie and Elgin to Inverness. He was martyred in 520 a mile south of Luss and buried beside our church. Luss immediately became a place of pilgrimage.

That pilgrimage disappears into the mists of the dark ages but it emerges again in 1314 after the battle of Bannockburn. Robert the Bruce knew Luss and came here before the battle, borrowing Kessog's bishop's staff to be carried in front of his soldiers at Bannockburn and returning to Luss after the battle to give thanks. Pilgrimage took off in earnest as ordinary people thought that if Kessog had been able to inspire the Scots troops to victory the least he could now do was to ensure that the prayers of the faithful reached the ears of the Almighty. The numbers of pilgrims swelled and Luss became a busy place.

Not so different from today, perhaps - except that today 750,000 folk a year come to visit: then they came in smaller numbers as pilgrims. So our task became clear: to help visitors to become pilgrims. Our newly restored Church became our first asset. It is now fitted out with a sound and light show which tells the story of Luss over fifteen hundred years, and we welcome more couples to be married than in any other church in our country. Our services are broadcast through the internet to a congregation drawn from more than fifty countries world-wide. But we had bigger plans. With help from Scottish Enterprise we rebuilt the derelict outhouses at the manse and created a pilgrimage centre which tells the story of Luss over fifteen hundred years, contains a small cinema, a pottery and a candle-making unit. In time a weaving room was added with its 1820 Armstrong loom on which we weave the Mackessog tartan and export it around the world to people for whom Luss is special.

In 2006 a detachment of Royal Engineers rebuilt our glebe bridge across the Luss Water providing access to the twenty-five acres of woodland, meadowland, river bank and loch shore which belongs to the church. Over the next five years young people from all over the world came to help us build a pilgrimage pathway through the glebe -- a network of paths surrounded by plaques with poems and Bible passages, artefacts, sculptures and so on, all designed to encourage the walker to think about those things that are ultimately important so that they may recognise God's handiwork in all that they see. An accommodation unit, 'our Pilgrim's Palace', was donated to us by the naval base, transported free of charge by the generosity of local business, and the Lodge on Loch Lomond designed, installed and paid for a

commercial kitchen within the manse in which there was also created a lounge and a dining room for our thirty young folk (always ten from Scotland to join two parties of ten each from overseas). Our youth project has grown and developed, helped by our extensive web-site, and now we work with Prince's Trust teams, with secondary schools and with parties from all over Scotland as well -- even Prince Charles came to spend an afternoon with us! Last year we were invited by the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (a section of WWF) to become Scotland's first Green Pilgrimage City -- in company with St. Albans, Jerusalem, Amritsar and Assisi and several others all infinitely larger and, at first sight, more appropriate than our small village. But we are certainly all about pilgrimage and, sitting on the banks of Loch Lomond, we have green credentials too. But 'city'? Well, as we found out about it we discovered that the word had been used to differentiate between a faith community and a faith community in partnership with a secular authority; it is that partnership which is important. Here we are spoiled for choice in terms of partners but our major partner is Argyll and Bute Council who have responded enthusiastically to the opportunity of sharing with us in this wonderful new adventure. The then Provost, Billy Petrie, would have liked to have attended the inauguration ceremony at Assisi in Italy himself but instead sent as his representative James Fraser of the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, so another partnership was forged. As I write we are drawing up an agenda of shared activity, faith community and secular authority, with the Council. We hope to major in a project with young people helping them to learn about conservation, looking after God's world. We hope to develop faith tourism in our area -- we have already created a Green Room at the Pilgrimage Centre telling the story of this stage of our adventure and there is a plaque about each of the twelve world-wide Green Pilgrim Cities on our glebe. It is all summed up in our new action statement: 'to help visitors become pilgrims, and to help pilgrims to walk lightly on God's earth'.



Friends Chairman, James Fraser (6th from left) presents a watercolour of Loch Lomond to Martin Palmer, Secretary General of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation with the Rev Dane Sherrard (4th from left) looking on with other guests during a recent visit to Luss.

The Magic of Inchcailloch

Friends Trustee and operator of Lomond Guides, John Urquhart writes about a visit to Inchcailloch he organised as part of the Friends new series of 'Windows on the Park' programme of events.



Inchcailloch is the largest of a cluster of four islands which form part of the Loch Lomond National Nature Reserve in the south east corner of Loch Lomond. Cloaked by mature oak woodlands, the islands are renowned for their distinctive and rich variety of flora, birds and geology. The island owes its existence to the relative hardness of a band of Old Red Sandstone conglomerate rocks which forms an erosion resistant 'backbone', a feature of the Highland Boundary Fault repeated in three other islands, Torrinch, Creinch and Inchmurrin which, along with Inchcailloch, form a 6 kilometre long set of 'stepping stones' tracing the line of the fault southwest across the loch from Balmaha to Arden. Inchcailloch also has a rich cultural history, its gaelic name translating as 'island of the old women', a reference to an 8th century nunnery founded here by St Kentigerna. Because of its church, it became an important burial ground for the local clans including, Buchanans, Macfarlanes and the Macgregors, the most notable of whom was Gregor Macgregor, chief of that clan and uncle of the infamous Rob Roy. In the 18th century the island's oak woods were managed to produce bark and timber for leather tanning and charcoal production and ironically it is this industrial use which explains why today the island is covered in oak woodlands with many of the trees now over 200 years old. Arguably, Inchcailloch is one of Loch Lomond's most beautiful and interesting islands and lying just 200 metres out from Balmaha Pier it is also uniquely accessible, attracting around 15,000 visitors a year who come to enjoy its special magical qualities.

There is indeed something magical about a visit to Inchcailloch. I first went there as a boy, paddling my home-made lath and canvas canoe out from Macfarlane's boatyard at Balmaha. Loch Lomond and its islands captivated me then and nearly half a century later, they still do. My journey this time was also an inaugural one - the first of a series of 'Windows on the Park' guided walks exploring some of the most beautiful and interesting places in the National Park, part of The Friend's growing "Provide, Protect and Promote" agenda. A sparkling June morning certainly provided us with an auspicious beginning - and the short trip out to the island in Sandy Macfarlane's venerable and sturdy launch Jean was an absolute joy - all too quickly over as Sandy expertly brought the Jean alongside the little jetty at the North end of the island.

At one level these walks are quite simply about showing off the National Park's most beautiful places, but at a deeper level The Friends want to explain to people why these landscapes exist and how they have developed and changed. We also want to increase awareness and understanding of the conservation issues that often surround such beautiful places and the need to nurture and care for them to ensure



future generations can enjoy them too.

We chose Inchcailloch for our first walk because the island has a fascinating tale to tell in terms of its geology, history, landscapes, flora and fauna. It is also a great model for how the Friends would like to see some of the other islands on the loch being managed with the adoption of simple but effective 'light touch' measures. Despite being visited each year by 15,000 people, the island is remarkably unspoiled - a scenic and conservation gem, probably amongst the finest in the UK. This is down to the excellent management regime that is in place there. With funding support from its owners, Scottish Natural Heritage, the National Park Authority manages the island and provides simple BBQ facilities, a composting toilet and a small number of informal bookable camping pitches. And during the height of the summer season a ranger is present to provide information and generally keep an eye on things and to help ensure visitors get the most out of their visit.

Like so many who visit Inchcailloch, the members of our group were awe struck by the beauty of the place, but they also came away with a better understanding of what needs to be done if we are to protect and preserve these stunning places for future generations to enjoy. After a leisurely walk along the island's nature trails taking in some of the stunning views it was time to take the short boat trip back to Balmaha for an enjoyable lunch at the popular Oak Tree Inn which is run by the Fraser family who are one of the Friends longstanding Business Supporters and where the motto is 'Muddy Boots are Welcome.'

For details of future Friends events, which are open to members and non-members, log onto the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs website www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk or look out for details in the local press.



Also look out for a new series of documentaries on National Parks on ITV, coming soon, and catch a flavour of the magic of Inchcailloch featuring Caroline Quentin (left) who camps overnight on the island.





Volunteering for OUR park

After the huge success of the *"Make a Difference to Loch Lomond Day"* last October, more Friends volunteers made a big difference to some of the weary walkers on the Caledonian Challenge in June, handing out hot drinks and support along the way. Later this year, we will be spreading our wings and looking for volunteers for projects in the Trossachs and Breadalbane as well as around Loch Lomond in late October/early November. We are working with the National Park and others to identify a range of fun and exciting projects to maintain the area's outstanding beauty and enhance the natural environment. Look out for updates on activities in the OUR park e-newsletter and let us know if you would like to take part by contacting **Sandra Dyson** on info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk or 01436 677733.

New Faces at OUR park

We are pleased to welcome two new faces on board to help deliver the OUR park scheme.

Sandra Dyson has joined the Friends team as Support Officer, and brings a wealth of experience in IT, business and financial management and administration. Sandra will divide her time between the Friends' operational requirements and supporting the OUR park scheme.



Eileen Calveley will be covering for Alice Blazy-Winning as the Project Officer until Alice returns from maternity leave. Eileen will be known to many businesses from her role with the former Area Tourist Board for the National Park area, where she spent many years supporting businesses through advice, training and grant programmes, along with developing tourism-related projects. She will be out and about visiting old and new OUR park members over the next few months and can be contacted on eileen.calveley@lochlomond-trossachs.org or 01389 727817.



OUR park welcomes new and upgraded members

One of the earliest supporters of the OUR park scheme, Monachyle Mhor Hotel in Balquhiddy, has recently signed up for the opt-out donation method. Renowned-chef, Tom Lewis (pictured right), and the rest of the team at this family-run business recognise that the National Park is an amazing area of natural beauty and are adding £1 per person to the bills of each of the guests at the 14-roomed boutique hotel to keep it that way, although guests will be free to opt out. The hotel's commitment to top quality food and the environment can be seen in their approach to farming to produce the best quality products for the restaurant but, at the same time, planning to reduce stock levels to increase wild flowers, just one example of a wider range of proposed conservation initiatives. After a romantic stay in luxury rooms with Italian stone bathtubs and spa-sized steam rooms, we're hoping guests will be more than happy to donate to local projects!



We have also welcomed on board the Sir Walter Scott steamship cruises at Loch Katrine where the management team have created a sponsored drink for passengers to enjoy while taking in the fantastic scenery in the heart of the Trossachs. Visitors can enjoy the "Trossachs Special", a coffee or hot chocolate laced with rum and topped up with cream and marshmallows, with a small donation from each drink going to OUR park projects. A warming and very enjoyable way to take in some of the best views in the National Park.

In addition, Luss Estates has agreed to take their refurbished 14-bedroom Loch Lomond Arms hotel into the scheme, as has Scott Squires with the long established Ardlui Hotel on the lochside. This will take us up to an impressive 92 local businesses participating in the scheme which is very encouraging. A big thank you to all the businesses for their support and recognising the value of the visitor giving scheme.



Supporting OUR park's continued growth

Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority, Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Natural Heritage have once again made very welcome commitments to provide core funding to allow the OUR park scheme to continue to grow and develop. Experience from the long-running Lake District scheme shows that it can take a number of years to build the membership of a voluntary donation scheme to a point where it raises substantial amounts of funding for local projects. The first few years of OUR park have already generated funding for 15 conservation, heritage and environmental enhancement projects across the National Park, including a recent contribution to the work of the Arrochar, Tarbet and Ardlui Heritage Group. The ongoing support from the agencies and the member businesses means that it can continue to gather momentum over the next year.

We are also grateful for the LEADER funding from both the Argyll & the Islands and the Forth Valley programmes in the start up years of OUR park which was crucial to laying the foundations of the scheme, although this funding has not been extended beyond the initial pilot period.



Above: On the Rob Roy Way overlooking Loch Lubnaig near Strathyre. Photo courtesy of john.g.henderson@btinternet.com

The Rob Roy Way Another Great Trail in the National Park

Jacquetta Megarry of Rucksack Readers and publisher of the Rob Roy Way Guidebook describes this 77 mile walk which weaves its way across the National Park and is one of the latest access projects to benefit from the Friends Our Park visitor giving grants scheme.

The Rob Roy Way is a 77-mile walk from Drymen to Pitlochry, rich in association with Rob Roy MacGregor (1671-1734), especially around Aberfoyle and Killin. Rob Roy was a superb outdoorsman as well as an educated and intelligent man, but ill fortune made him Scotland's most famous outlaw, and even the use of his surname was proscribed. The route was devised back in 2001 by Walking Support in partnership with Rucksack Readers and quickly became a popular alternative to the West Highland Way. Until this year, it existed only as a website (www.robroyway.com) and a guidebook www.rucksacs.com/rrw and had no specific waymarking on the ground.

All that was changed by a donation from the Friends in August 2011. This allowed further funds to be leveraged from the Martin Currie Charities Foundation (which runs the annual bike-and-hike team Rob Roy Challenge). This much larger pot then attracted further support from Scottish Natural Heritage and the National Park Authority. A small hinge can indeed move a large, heavy door! It is one of several recent access projects to benefit from funding by the Friends Our Park visitor giving scheme that now involves almost 100 businesses throughout the National Park collecting donations from visitors for conservation work. With the waymarking assured, the route was awarded Scotland's Great Trail status by Scottish Natural Heritage early in 2012. The National Park now has three Scotland's Great Trails, including the West Highland Way and the Three Lochs Way.

The route begins in Drymen's village square, heading north to enter Loch Ard forest, where it passes the splendid Corrie Aqueduct and other heritage from the Loch Katrine water scheme, with glimpses of Ben Lomond. It follows a glorious right of way through the Menteith Hills from Aberfoyle to Callander, and soon after there's an option to climb Ben Ledi. It follows Cycle Route 7 for a long stretch beside Loch Lubnaig, then passes through Forestry Commission land between Strathyre and Kingshouse. From Locheearnhead, the route heads north along the disused railway track up the glen to Killin, passing over the wonderful Glen Ogle Viaduct (1870).

Some walkers will overnight in Killin, others will take the high-level bypass with super views over the Tarmachan ridge, south-west to Ben More and Stob Binnein and west

all the way to Ben Lui. The routes converge before Lochan Breachlaich, and the Way then follows a scenic descent to Ardeonaig beside Loch Tay. There is then no alternative to road-walking until Ardtalnaig – where a 17.5-mile extension branches offroad through Glen Almond to Amulree and loop back to reach Aberfeldy via Glen Quaich.

Those without enough spare time and energy for the extension then stay on the South Loch Tay road as far as Acharn. Loch Tay has the Ben Lawers group as its backdrop, and its constantly changing surface and dappled light is an attraction of this section. At Acharn, the main Way turns right up past the Hermit's Cave and Falls of Acharn, later following the Queen's Drive above Loch Tay and descending through the Birks o' Aberfeldy, celebrated by Robbie Burns in his famous song of 1787. The last section is my favourite: first a riverside walk, then the disused railway track to Grandtully, then upstream beside the Tullypowrie Burn and into Fonab Forest, passing a 3600-year old stone circle, finally descending gently to Pitlochry.

The support and funding of the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, Rucksack Readers, Walking Support, Martin Currie Charities Foundation, Scottish Natural Heritage, Stirling Council, Perth and Kinross Council, Forestry Commission Scotland, private landowners and the coordinating support from Gordon Forrester of the National Park Authority have, in combination, achieved this accreditation to join the ranks of Scotland's Great Trails.

The physical work to install waymarking along the route from Drymen to Pitlochry was carried out by the Abernethy Trust, National Park Volunteers and the National Park Ranger Service. Although devised as a route for walkers, the Way is potentially multi-user with additional options and extensions for cyclists of varying abilities and horse riders.



Friends Film Promotes the National Park to Millions



The Friends new 48 minute film that showcases the National Park and was launched in January is proving to be hugely popular with constant viewings in the Luss Visitor Centre and the Balmaha Park Visitor Centre along with steady sales through outlets in the area and via a stream of requests for copies from different parts of the United States and elsewhere. Some of the stunning aerial footage from the film will also feature in opening sequences of an hour long documentary on the Park due to be televised by ITV to a projected 10 million viewers this Autumn that is being 'fronted' by Caroline Quentin. The Friends film was produced by Norman Strachan, one of Scotland's top cameramen and it features original music by well known Scottish composer and musician Phil Cunningham who recently played to a packed audience at the Loch Lomond Folk Festival. The main DVD sponsor was Optical Express and the National Park Authority purchased bulk supplies in advance to support the production costs. All proceeds from sales of the DVD are being used to support Friends activities. Copies can be purchased by contacting the Friends office in Helensburgh or using the order form on page 27.



Above –Representatives from the various bodies participating in the visitor information services review meeting are pictured with John Urquhart, Love Loch Lomond Chairman and Friends Trustee welcoming Malcolm Roughead, Chief Executive of Visit Scotland to Loch Lomondside.

Park Information Services In Focus

In the last edition of Voice we were critical of the closure of the Breadalbane Folklore Centre in Killin and Ardgarten Information Centre in the Argyll Forest Park. They were the latest in a series of five information centre closures and poorly executed franchising arrangements for former Park Visitor Centres in recent years, and at a time when the latest research for the National Park Authority revealed that 66 per cent of all visitors are looking for information when they are in the Park. We also highlighted the lack of a coordinated approach to the delivery of information services between the various agencies responsible for helping the 4 million annual visitors to the National Park to get the best out of their time here. In our response to the draft National Park Partnership Plan we reinforced this and called for a more joined up approach to the delivery of visitor information services with an integrated and forward thinking action plan. We were therefore delighted that this was included as a specific action in the final Partnership Plan endorsed and launched by the Rural Affairs Minister, Richard Lochhead in June. Since then a number of positive steps have been taken to improve visitor information services in the Park:

- **The Park Authority has completed the £225,000 refurbishment of Balmaha Visitor Centre;**
- **The Court of Session legal action taken by the Park Authority to evict the tenant at Luss Visitor Centre has been dropped and positive steps have been taken jointly to reintroduce attractive information displays which are proving to be popular with some of the 750,000 visitors attracted to this busy village each year;**
- **Some much needed new Park information panels have been installed in the National Park Gateway Centre at Loch Lomond Shores in Balloch which is now attracting around 1 million visitors annually;**
- **The Scottish Government has allocated an extra £700,000 to the Forestry Commission to assist with the £2million plus upgrade of the David Marshall Lodge above Aberfoyle;**
- **The trade led Love Loch Lomond Destination Organisation has completed the installation of innovative touch screen iSigns at key locations including Loch Lomond Shores in Balloch, the Winnock Hotel in Drymen and the Oak Tree Inn at Balmaha and has published an attractive free map and min-guide;**
- **The Park Authority has installed a series of high impact stone threshold Park welcome signs and is underway with a review of other information and interpretation signs in the Park;**

Encouragingly, Love Loch Lomond, with support from the Friends, took the initiative to organise a meeting in August with a range of public sector bodies to explore ways of improving information services. In attendance at the meeting were the Chief Executive of VisitScotland, along with colleagues, and senior representatives from the National Park Authority, the Forestry Commission, West Dunbartonshire Council, Love Loch Lomond and the Friends.

It was recognised at this meeting that more could be done to improve information services in the area and without necessarily spending significant sums of money. Issues explored included the role of businesses in providing better information services to their customers; staff training needs; better deployment of branded information leaflet racks; the increasingly important role of digital media including mobile phone platforms and iSigns; the future of existing visitor information centres; the scope for small partnership information with local businesses such as village shops; the role of rangers and volunteers; signage and interpretation needs and gaps in information provision.

There was also a commitment to work jointly on the development of a practical information services action plan and this was welcomed by the trade and the Friends as a major step forward in better serving the needs of visitors to part of the Park. Hopefully this will be the forerunner to a Park wide and buffer zone plan that also involves a range of local community and business partners instead of the taxpayer funded agencies working in silos on this important topic.





Following a £3 million makeover the new look Loch Lomond Arms Hotel, situated in the heart of Luss, has recently re-opened as part of a lochside regeneration initiative led by local landowner and Friends Honorary President, Sir Malcolm Colquhoun of the Luss Estates Company.

The project has been a labour of love for Sir Malcolm who is committed to revitalising lochside villages such as Luss and creating

LOCH LOMOND ARMS HOTEL RE-OPENS

much needed employment. Over 30 jobs have been created at the hotel, with a third of new staff coming from the village and the rest from surrounding localities.

On cutting the ribbon to officially open the Loch Lomond Arms Hotel, Sir Malcolm Colquhoun said: "The opening of the hotel is the culmination of several years of hard work. It also marks the beginning of putting Luss back on the map not just as an appealing tourist destination, but as a vibrant village with much to offer.

"The launch starts the process of revitalising the area through generating employment, attracting visitors and potential further inward investment to the area; while also providing an establishment that can play a pivotal role in the life of the community."

Dating back to the 18th century, the building has been expertly restored and now offers a timeless interior. Each of the individually styled 14 en-suite bedrooms, named after a different Scottish Clan, include LCD television, iPod

docking station and Wi-Fi connection.

At the heart of the Loch Lomond Arms Hotel is a traditional pub, which is sure to become a popular watering hole with villagers and visitors, due to its relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Patrons can enjoy sampling several of the pub's locally produced ales within the secluded beer garden. Accompanying the range of home grown ales, including Loch Lomond Ales, and also a well stocked gantry, head chef Peter Wilson has created a menu from the finest and freshest local produce for the pub's two restaurant areas. Alastair Borland, General Manager of the Loch Lomond Arms Hotel, commented: "Reaction from locals has been really enthusiastic. They have been fully onboard with the aims of the project and we are greatly encouraged by their response to the launch. Along with the staff, I look forward to welcoming residents on a regular basis to enjoy all that the hotel has to offer."

LOCH LOMOND ARMS HOTEL



SITUATED WITHIN THE LOCH LOMOND AND THE TROSSACHS NATIONAL PARK, ENJOY GREAT SCOTTISH HOSPITALITY AT THE NEWLY OPENED LOCH LOMOND ARMS HOTEL, LUSS.

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The hotel is also the perfect venue to celebrate the festive season and we are now taking enquiries for December 2012.

t: **01436 860 420** | www.lochlomondarmshotel.com

New Park Plan Launched

The Friends have welcomed the launch of the new National Park Partnership Plan earlier this summer and this should result in over £100 million being invested in conservation, rural development and tourism activities over the next five years.

It is also encouraging that a number of the Friends suggestions to strengthen the detailed action plan have been taken on board including specific actions to do more to recognise and celebrate the rich cultural heritage of the Park and the introduction of an annual meeting chaired by the Minister for the Environment, Stewart Stevenson for agencies to report back on progress made in delivering actions.

In the past we have been critical of some agencies just going through a tick box exercise and not addressing some of the key actions in previous plans in an effective and coordinated way. We are hopeful these new arrangements will result in all agencies 'stepping up to the plate' and contributing proactively to the delivery of the priority actions identified.

Speedy implementation of some of the actions received a welcome boost in July with the Scottish Government announcing an extra £1.8 million for 'shovel ready' projects being taken forward by the National Park Authority and the Forestry Commission.

New Clan Heritage Centre Opens



After several attempts over many years the Clan MacFarlane Society has finally realised its dream of securing premises to develop a clan heritage centre in its homelands at the former Ballyhennan Church in Tarbet. Over the summer months Society members have worked hard to re-open the restaurant on the ground floor and they

have recently completed renovation works on the upper floor to create an interesting clan heritage centre and clan shop stocking a wide range of merchandise.

Michael MacFarlane from Los Angeles and other Society members have undertaken extensive fundraising to secure and redevelop the site at Tarbet and they plan to open on a year round basis. This is a welcome addition to local heritage attractions on Loch Lomondside and follows on from the re-opening of the Clan Colquhoun Centre in Luss earlier in the summer following completion of redevelopment works.

New Jetties Improve Access to Loch Lomond

In August a new passenger boat jetty developed by Friends Business Supporter Cruise Loch Lomond was opened alongside the busy Rowardennan Youth Hostel to improve access for visitors who wish to enjoy the loch and a range of attractive walk/cycle/cruise options developed by this award winning company. This builds on the success of the regular Luss to Balmaha waterbus service introduced a couple of years ago by Cruise Loch Lomond which includes attractively packaged options to visit the Inchcailloch National Nature Reserve and to enjoy discounted meals at the Lodge on Loch Lomond Hotel at Luss and the Oak Tree Inn at Balmaha which have great reputations for food.

The opening of the new jetty coincided with the introduction of a new bike hire service at Tarbet and the launch of some new bike and boat itineraries. One of the exciting options includes taking the 10.00am waterbus service from Tarbet to Rowardennan, cycling to Balmaha for a coffee break at the Oak Tree Inn before catching the waterbus to Luss for lunch at one of the many local hosteleries and cycling back to Tarbet on the Loch Lomondside cycle path.

Planning permission has also recently been granted for a new passenger boat jetty at Drumkinnon Bay, Loch Lomond Shores and involves limited dredging of the Bay and installation of a new jetty. This scheme should get underway in the Autumn. The project is being jointly funded by Friends Business Supporter Sweeney's Cruises and Scottish Enterprise and should allow improved access to a range of cruising opportunities on the southern part of Loch Lomond for the 1 million visitors attracted to Loch Lomond Shores each year. A limited number of much needed public moorings are also planned for day boats nearby.

For further details of cruise options see www.cruiselochlomond.co.uk and www.sweeneyscruises.com



'School children help to celebrate the opening of the new Rowardennan Jetty'

Plans to Enhance Community Spaces

Following the demolition of public toilets by Stirling Council in the centres of Balmaha and Callander, local community groups are actively pursuing enhancement schemes and have urged Stirling Council to work with them as opposed to selling the small strategically located sites off to the highest bidder for development.

The Callander Group are developing plans on the site next to the community library and police station for a garden scheme to mark the Queen's Jubilee and to create some open space in an otherwise built up area. The Council are receptive to the scheme and are considering leasing the site to the community for a peppercorn rent.

In Balmaha the local community is facing a bigger challenge as the Council, with no prior community consultation, has been promoting the site on the open market. A considerable amount of lobbying of the Council, MSPs and Government Ministers has taken place to try and halt the sale and allow the community to progress plans for an enhancement scheme at what is an important focal point in the heart of the village. Initial ideas include extending stone walling, improvements to the adjoining village green and the installation of a feature to mark the transition from the Lowlands to the Highlands to mark this staging post on the West Highland Way and at the entrance to the Queen Elizabeth Forest Park.

The Friends are actively supporting both proposals.

The site of the former public toilets in the centre of Balmaha.

Celebrating Park People

This is the theme of an exciting new initiative the Friends have submitted funding bids for with the Heritage Lottery Fund to showcase the rich and varied stories of people past and present associated with the National Park area. The strands of the project includes a joint Friends and Community Partnership 'Celebrating Park People Conference'; the production of a series of podcasts with local characters for use on the Friends new website; a series of storytelling visits and events; and the online publication of the interesting John Groome's Diaries collection that was gifted to the Friends some time ago.

Through this programme of activity the aim is to engage more with local people to capture and tell their stories and raise the overall awareness and appreciation of the rich cultural heritage of the Park. This is in line with the Friends plans to place more emphasis on cultural heritage issues alongside core conservation activities. Discussions are also underway with the National Park to explore how they can support the Friends aspirations to do more to celebrate Park people and their stories.

Quarrymen at Aberfoyle slate quarries in 1905

Recreation Plan Consultation

A new draft Outdoor Recreation Plan has been prepared by the National Park to improve recreational facilities and open up more opportunities for the millions of visitors attracted each year to enjoy what the Park has to offer. The Plan outlines some commitments from agencies over the next five years for a number of projects and the Park is seeking comments from the public on the plan's contents.

Kenny Auld, Senior Access Officer explained: "We're very lucky to have a strong network of paths and facilities running through the National Park. There are lots of things to see and do for our visitors and these are fundamental reasons why people come to the area. The aim of the plan is to build on the success of the network and expand on any future opportunities. Working closely with other organisations we now have 130 proposals that we hope to progress over the next 5 years. We're looking to get feedback regarding these proposals and we would also be interested to hear if we've missed anything or if there are any further opportunities to add."

Some of the proposals include:

- *Developing and promoting the Park's long distance walking routes, mountain biking network and park wide core paths*
- *Repairing the Park's eroded mountain paths*
- *Better path links to the Park from Glasgow, Stirling and Dunoon*
- *A Park wide network of semi-formal campsites*
- *Promoting activity trails and itineraries for kayaking and horse back*
- *Promoting a network of berthing opportunities for motor boats on Loch Lomond*

The public consultation runs until runs until 24th October.

Further details are available on www.lochlomond-trossachs.org





Philip Norris, the Friends newest Trustee, tells us why he thinks the National Park is so special.



New Friends Trustee from Cowal

I am delighted to join the Friends as a Trustee, as I care passionately about the National Park, with its stunning landscape qualities, which I believe fully deserve careful protection and preservation.

I know the Park area very well, having grown up in Glasgow and over the years I've climbed all the Park's 'Munros' - most of them several times, as well as numerous other hills, ranging from The Conic Hill at Balmaha to the Cobbler at Arrochar. I have also cycled extensively throughout the area, and still cycle in Cowal, when time permits. Despite having lived abroad for 11 years in my earlier life, on my return to Scotland I found the landscapes just as impressive as ever. Similarly, when 'repeating' climbs in the Park that I know very well, I have never been disappointed.

With my wife, I have run a small hotel and self-catering holiday business in Dunoon for some 13 years, and continue to keep well in touch with our tourism industry, not least through membership of our local tourism association, Cowal Marketing Group. I have been a past Vice-Chairman and Committee Member of the Group since its formation 12 years ago, and look forward to useful liaison between Cowal and the Friends on a range of issues.

I also believe that the Argyll Forest Park in Cowal which forms the western part of the National Park merits more publicity and more visitors, because it is not simply an extra 'lung' for the Park (as it was initially described), but a quite remarkable area of mountains, lochs, and above all, sea-lochs, two of which resemble

Norwegian fjords. One of the Paddle Steamer Waverley's best enjoyed excursions still takes place each Tuesday during the summer from Dunoon north via Blairmore Pier in the National Park to Loch Long and Loch Goil, providing passengers with top-of-the-range views and a 5-star tourism experience.

I care deeply about genuine conservation and protection of the Park's very special landscapes, and in the last 5 years have three times been closely involved, along with excellent allies such as James Fraser and the Friends, Bute Marketing Group, and numerous Community Councils, in successfully opposing totally inappropriate large scale wind farms on the hills above Dunoon and in the scenically sensitive buffer zone between the south-west boundary of the Park and the Kyles of Bute.

This made life particularly busy, since apart from our work running a tourism business, my wife and I continue to be active as professional musicians, this following on from earlier careers at Scottish Opera, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, and teaching. My wife continues to teach music at Dunoon Grammar School. Our two daughters are also highly appreciative of the landscape qualities of the Park area, and we all consider ourselves very fortunate to live in such a wonderful part of Scotland.

I am delighted to have been invited to join the Friends Trustees, and will endeavour to make a positive and useful contribution to the charity's work promoting and protecting this special part of Scotland.

I care deeply about genuine conservation and protection of the Park's very special landscapes

Friends Cash Boost For Three Lochs Way

The Friends recently awarded the Helensburgh and District Access Trust a grant of £5,000 for a package of improvements which has helped the Three Lochs Way gain a prestigious accolade as one of "Scotland's 20 Great Trails".

Commenting on the award George Boyd, Vice-President of the Friends said: "We are delighted to award the Access Trust what is our largest single grant for any project in recent years and it is very encouraging that this has enabled the Trust to lever over £30,000 from other sources to help create what is now one of Scotland's best walking trails for visitors and locals to enjoy" "I am also pleased that this level of funding has been possible due to the success of the Friends Our Park visitor giving scheme and our annual golf charity event which demonstrates what can be achieved by businesses and visitors working closely with the Friends and many volunteers to improve outdoor recreational opportunities in and around the National Park"

Right: Anne Urquhart of Helensburgh and District Access Trust is pictured receiving a cheque for £5,000 from George Boyd of the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs and looking on are other Trust volunteers Alistair McIntyre (left), John Stovell (third left) and John Urquhart (fifth left) flanked on the right by David McGlade, Manager of Hadrian's Wall Path and Tim Lidstone-Scott, Manager Peddar's Way and Norfolk Coast Path who were in the area on a study visit.



Photo Competition - Where Is It?

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Photos by Phil Crowder

If you do, please write to us either by email at info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk or by post at The Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, 63 West Princes Street, Helensburgh, G84 8BN.

Entries should be marked **Friends Photo Competition**, and should include your answer, name and contact details.

The winning entry will receive vouchers for two free lunches courtesy of Phil Crowder at the Forth Inn, Aberfoyle

(see www.forthinn.co.uk)

and two runners up will receive copies of the Friends National Park DVD film.

Entries to reach us by 30th November, 2012



1



2



3



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The (Spring) edition of VOICE will be published April 2013.

We would welcome your contributions - for these to be considered please contact the editor by 15th February 2013.

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the following funders for the 'OUR park' scheme: Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park Authority, Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Natural Heritage.

We also acknowledge the funding support of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, David Mouldsdale of Optical Express and Dr. Hannah Stirling MBE for the Friends new website: and the generous support of the companies in our Business Supporters' scheme. And a most special thank you to our members who are the basis of this charity and our work.

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There are a number of practical ways you can support our efforts and make a difference:

Becoming a member for a modest £15 – use the form below and not only help fund our work but add the

huge value of your name behind all we are striving to do for Loch Lomond and The Trossachs



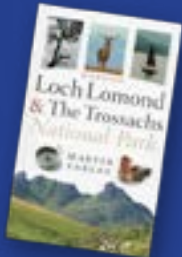
Make a donation many of our members do this each time they renew, adding £10 or so to their cheque and this gives us the funds to fight the dreadful proposals for wind farms with 100 metre high turbines all around the Southern edge of Loch Lomond, or you can just make a one off donation at any time.



Volunteer for a day we organise a range of litter pick-ups and other activities in the National Park – register with us and we'll let you know what opportunities to keep this place special are coming up!

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- restore or create a metre of footpath **for £45**
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