

The
friends
OF LOCH LOMOND & THE TROSSACHS

Voice

Autumn-Winter 2014 | No. 14

The magazine of the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs



**ALSO INSIDE
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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 The 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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Cover photo – The massive snow-capped mountains of Ben More and Stob Binnein dominate the skyline near Crianlarich. Some beautiful photographs of the National Park are available to purchase as framed or canvas wrap pictures from our online shop at www.lochlomond-trossachs.org.uk



Articles published in The Voice do not necessarily represent the views of The Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs.

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Message from the President

Dear Friends,



I continue to be housebound as the years take their toll but I was delighted that the Friends Trustees decided to mark my 100th birthday last month by arranging with my neighbours Stuart, Marie and Fred at Cruise Loch Lomond to have their latest vessel named after me. This was a very pleasant surprise and one which I very much appreciated. It is heartening to know that thousands of visitors will be able to enjoy the beauty of Loch Lomond and the magnificent backdrop of Ben Lomond on the MV Lomond Hannah as she criss-crosses the loch from Tarbet to Rowardennan and Inversnaid for many years to come.

I understand the Friends Trustees have also installed a panel on board the vessel with the story of my involvement with the Friends and, in particular, the successful efforts to save Ben Lomond for the nation and from the ravages of a major hydro dam scheme in the late 1970s. It only seems yesterday when, at a packed meeting in Balloch in 1978, the decision was taken to form the Friends of Loch Lomond and get underway with campaigning to protect Loch Lomond for current and future generations.

We were very fortunate in these early days in having some very able and persuasive Friends Council members including the leading planner in the country, the late Sir Robert Grieve and prolific writer and broadcaster, the late Tom Weir. They and many others, including tens of thousands of ordinary folk who signed our petition, helped us mount a very successful campaign to stop the massive hydro dam scheme in its tracks and secure the protection of Ben Lomond and East Loch Lomond for people to enjoy their magical scenic and recreational qualities.

We of course went on to work through the 1980s and 1990s campaigning tirelessly for the creation of Scotland's first National Park which eventually came to fruition in 2002. We also undertook a range of practical tasks with the help of our MSC funded task group and generous sponsorship from a number of private and public sources to improve footpaths, viewpoints and other amenities around the loch which have stood the test of time and have helped people to enjoy and appreciate Loch Lomond.

I am pleased that in recent years we have returned to our roots with funds being raised for a range of projects that make a difference on the ground and complement, in a small but well targeted way, the work now being undertaken by the Park Authority with millions of pounds from the Scottish Government and the Heritage Lottery Fund. Protecting this special place and ensuring the people of Scotland and visitors from further afield can enjoy the Park's outstanding natural heritage remains at the heart of the Friends core purposes

As we approach another winter, and the nights start closing in, my thoughts have turned to the many gallant men who fought in the Great War which broke out 100 years ago and, in particular, those who paid the ultimate sacrifice. We are very fortunate to enjoy the freedoms they and their successors fought so bravely to protect in both World Wars.

I hope you too will take time to think of the sacrifices made by others during these wars and there is no better place for some quiet reflective time than the Ben Lomond Memorial Park at Rowardennan which we had a hand in securing from the then Scottish Secretary of State, Michael Forsyth MP.

All the best,
yours aye Hannah

Dr Hannah Stirling MBE

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Chairman's Introduction

WELCOME TO THIS AUTUMN EDITION OF VOICE that includes a range of interesting articles on the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park and news on recent activities of the Friends and others working to make the Park a better place for people and nature.

As the only independent conservation and heritage charity covering the National Park, we continue to be active on a number of fronts as we strive to make a difference through our campaigning, fundraising and volunteering efforts.

It has been a busy summer in the National Park with large numbers of visitors and local residents enjoying the great outdoors and the many things to see and do. Some all too familiar visitor management issues, including excessive littering and toileting and irresponsible camping, have been to the fore again with some areas under particular pressure including Loch Earnside and the more popular Loch Lomond islands. Thoughtless campers who leave their tents and camping equipment behind are also becoming more of an issue. The Park Authority are very much aware of the hotspots and hopefully appropriate action can be taken in future years as part of any emerging plans to strengthen visitor management arrangements across the National Park without undermining the freedoms and special qualities visitors to the Park currently enjoy and cherish.

One of the highlights of the summer has been the hugely successful Commonwealth Games in nearby Glasgow. No one could have failed to be moved by the powerful and memorable rendition of 'By Yon Bonnie Banks' by the very talented violinist Nicola Benedetti at the opening ceremony, in front of billions of viewers worldwide, and against the giant backdrop of Europe's largest screen with images of Loch Lomond. It was also encouraging that so many Commonwealth Games spectators and participants found time to visit the National Park and I am sure they will have returned home with fond memories of their time in Scotland.

It has also been a busy period for the Friends with another very successful Kiltwalk fundraising effort by over 130 volunteers who took part in the event either as walkers, marshals or raffle ticket sellers on the day to support our work with hundreds of disadvantaged and special needs children who, as a result, are able to enjoy adventure days out and short breaks in the Park. Some other legacy projects such as play areas in Balloch and Luss and educational initiatives for children are also being supported with the funds raised and, of course, a percentage of the funds are also being used to support national children's charities. A very big thank you to everyone for such a great effort and helping to make this happen.

We have continued to support a range of other projects with funding from the Friends of OUR

Park voluntary visitor giving and volunteering scheme. Recent projects that have benefited from the funds raised by the many businesses involved have included the Cowal Red Squirrel initiative, the Callander Geodiversity Trail, the three-month long St Kessog's SummerFest programme in the former Rob Roy and Trossachs Visitor Centre in Callander, a wheelchair for disabled anglers at Lake of Menteith and the ongoing roll out of life saving public access defibrillators at popular visitor locations with new additions at Balquhider Glen and Balmaha and a further one planned for Luss. A significant funding commitment to the plans for village enhancement works and the siting of the Tom Weir statue at Balmaha has also been made by the Friends.

There has been a change in the Friends support staff in recent months with Sandra Dyson leaving to join the Tulloch Trust, one of the children's charities we are supporting this year. We wish Sandra every success in her new post. She has been replaced in the Support Officer role by Andrew Galloway from Dumbarton who has joined us after a lengthy spell at the Lennox Herald as a reporter.

We were pleased to recently mark our President, Dr Hannah Stirling's 100th birthday with a special ceremony to name a boat on Loch Lomond in her honour, with the support of the Directors of Cruise Loch Lomond who operate a fleet of passenger boats from Tarbet Pier near the bottom of Hannah's garden. We believe this is a very fitting way to mark her great contribution

over many decades of successful campaigning to protect the special scenic qualities of Loch Lomond. On the page opposite Friends Vice-President George Boyd reflects on Hannah's remarkable life and achievements.

The National Park Authority is continuing to gather some momentum and deliver some practical improvements on the ground with the strong financial backing of the Scottish Government. Two particularly welcome announcements recently have included the completion of jetty facilities and dredging work at Drumkinnon Bay that will enable the million plus visitors to Loch Lomond Shores each year to have the opportunity to take a cruise, and enjoy Loch Lomond in an environmentally friendly way, and the multi-million funding commitment from the Heritage Lottery Fund to support the repair of a number of popular mountain paths in the National Park.

Have an enjoyable Autumn and Winter exploring the National Park and I look forward to seeing some of you at our popular Christmas event on Sunday 30th November at Ross Priory overlooking Loch Lomond. Thank you for continuing to support the work of the Friends, which is very much appreciated.

All the very best.

James Fraser
Chair - Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs

Below: Friends Chairman James Fraser hands over a defibrillator to Stuart and Sandy Fraser of The Oak Tree Inn, Balmaha. Looking on is Stuart Ballantye (second left) of The Trossachs Search and Rescue Team



Hannah's Happy 100th Milestone

George Boyd, Vice-President and former Chairman of the Friends reflects on the remarkable life and achievements of Friends President Dr. Hannah Stirling MBE who recently celebrated her 100th birthday at her home at Auchendarroch on the banks of Loch Lomond.



Hannah is a truly inspirational lady who has achieved great things throughout her rich and varied life, and particularly during her time as the driving force behind the Friends, which has flourished over the past 36 years and made such a difference to securing the protection of Loch Lomond for current and future generations. It is difficult to do justice to her achievements within the confines of this short article and I am only sorry I didn't get to know Hannah sooner and before I became involved with the Friends in 1994.

Hannah (Ness) was a first World War baby, born on 26th September 1914 in Glasgow's West End. She was the eldest of three children and the family moved to Helensburgh when she was seven years old. Hannah was the only day pupil at the former St Brides School (now Lomond School) and tragically her mother died when she was 17. Hannah nursed her mother for several years and also helped bring up her younger brother and sister. She went to Commercial College in Glasgow to learn secretarial skills before working for several years in her father's solicitors firm. She later used her secretarial skills to great effect editing letters in the War Office's Censor's Office in Glasgow ensuring there was no sensitive information about shipping routes in letters between sailors and their loved ones. As part of her time as a Wren she also worked in Inveraray, Troon and Dunoon.

Hannah was engaged to be married to her late husband Bill in 1941 but as Bill was a fleet surgeon throughout the second World War they didn't marry until 1945. She left the Wrens in 1946 and accompanied Bill on a surgical medical tour of America which included a function at the White House where she saw Eisenhower. This was the first of many trips to far flung places such as Japan, China and India. She later returned to America on an eventful coast to coast tour as an ambassador for the Friends of Loch Lomond attending the Stone Mountain Highland Games in Georgia, having lunch as a guest of honour at the National Geographic Building in Washington. She also met Martin Luther King at a White House garden party before he became famous. After a period living in Glasgow's West End, she and her husband, Bill moved to Loch Lomondside when they bought Auchendarroch in 1965. This is when her love affair with the loch began to take stronger roots and it was no surprise when she became so active campaigning to protect Loch Lomond. Amusingly, as she became more involved in campaigning issues Bill often said to her "can you not talk about anything other than Loch Lomond."

It was in March 1978 that she had a letter published in the Glasgow Herald that led to a chain of events and her being dubbed many years later 'the Queen of Loch Lomond' after she very effectively set about tackling the North of Scotland Hydro Electric Board head on when they announced plans for a major hydro dam scheme at Craigroyston on the north face of Ben Lomond. Her letter triggered a massive response and led her to form the Friends of Loch Lomond with some influential like-minded people at a packed meeting in Balloch in October 1978. The rest is history!

As an independent conservation charity, the Friends became a formidable force under Hannah's feisty and determined chairmanship. The hydro dam scheme was scrapped and the Friends worked on many fronts, to protect the special qualities of Loch Lomond and to raise funds to provide improved recreational opportunities for people to enjoy the loch and surrounding area. Particular successes Hannah is proud of are the Friends efforts to help secure the long term future of Ben Lomond, with ownership transferring to the National Trust for Scotland and the relentless campaigning to secure the creation of Scotland's first National Park in 2002 with the help of the late Donald Dewar and many others.

Other highlights in the 36 year history of the Friends for Hannah are the string of awards she had bestowed on her which she always, in her own very thoughtful way, attributed to the work of many who were involved with the Friends. In 1983 she received a Queen Mother's Birthday award. Ten years later she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate Degree by the University of Strathclyde and this was quickly followed in 1994 with the award of an MBE when she recalls the band playing the Bonnie Banks of Loch Lomond as she stepped up to collect the honour from the Queen. In 1996 she was presented with the prestigious Europa Nostra Award for her outstanding conservation work. She was the first Briton to have this honour bestowed on her which is a great tribute to her sterling work.

Hannah's string of awards are well deserved as she has led the Friends with distinction since its formation away back in 1978. I can think of no better way to finish than by using an extract from the Lennox Herald newspaper from 1995 headed "Lady of the Loch" shortly after Hannah collected her MBE award from the Queen at Buckingham Palace. This gives a glimpse of the true spirit of the Hannah we know and cherish: "Hannah Stirling MBE has many dreams for the future of Loch Lomond, not least for it to be given National Park status. And as she looked from her window at the glorious view over the loch, it was clear how close it was to her heart. She said: "You can see where the lure comes from and why it is worth fighting for"

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Above: 1. Hannah in her days as a Wren; 2. Hannah at her 90th surprise party in 2004; 3. George Hood, George Boyd, Hannah, John Brown and Gavin Arneil at the Friends 25th anniversary dinner in 2003; 4. Hannah receiving her Honorary Doctorate from Strathclyde University Chancellor, Lord Hope
Header pic: The first Friends Council meeting in 1978.
Front line: Hannah, Josephine Colquhoun, Tom Weir, William Friend, Gavin Arneil and Alan Lowden

Hannah's Landmark Anniversary Celebration

To mark the 100th birthday on 26th September of Friends President Dr Hannah Stirling MBE, and to recognise her enormous contribution to the protection and promotion of the special qualities of Loch Lomond over many decades, a refurbished passenger boat that plies the waters of the loch has been named after her at a recent special naming celebration event and inaugural cruise.

The Friends have worked closely with the Directors of Cruise Loch Lomond who operate from the pier at Tarbet beside Hannah's home to rename their latest acquisition MV Lomond Hannah. Until recently the passenger boat has been owned and operated by Lochs and Glens Holidays on the Inveruglas to Inversnaid ferry route but it has undergone extensive re-modelling and refurbishment this summer and will now be used to host groups of up to 48 who want to enjoy the scenic splendours of Loch Lomond.

The Friends Honorary President Professor Gavin Arneil said: "The naming of a passenger boat in Hannah's name is a very fitting way to mark her 100th birthday and also her tireless campaigning and hard work over many year to ensure Loch Lomond remains a special place

for people and nature. She is pleased the vessel will enable many thousands of visitors from both home and abroad to enjoy Loch Lomond at its best and she is thrilled her name will be associated with this for many years to come."

Stuart Cordner, one of three Directors of Cruise Loch Lomond, said: "We were delighted to agree to name our latest passenger boat in honour of Hannah when we were approached by the Friends Chairman, James Fraser, earlier this year. Hannah has been very supportive of our business since we began operating from Tarbet Pier in the late 1970s. She also had the foresight to establish the Friends away back in 1978 to ensure Loch Lomond was protected and promoted as the jewel in Scotland's tourism crown."

MV Lomond Hannah is pictured on Loch Lomond with Hannah's house in the background with Friends Chairman, James Fraser and Cruise Loch Lomond's Directors Stuart and Mairi Cordner on board.



A Fond Farewell and a Warm Welcome



Sandra receiving a farewell gift from Friends Trustees

After a very successful two year spell as the Friends Support Officer, Sandra Dyson left us in the summer to join the Tulloch Trust charity, who we are working closely with to deliver activity days out and breaks in the National Park for disadvantaged and special needs children with some of the funds raised from our Glasgow to Balloch KiltWalk fundraising activities. Sandra spearheaded the Friends KiltWalk efforts which resulted in over £50,000 being raised for kids' charities and projects over two years, as well as being responsible for the smooth running of the Friends very busy office. We wish her well in her new role at the Tulloch Trust.

Our new Support Officer is Andrew Galloway from Dumbarton who joined us from the Lennox Herald where he was a reporter for seven years. He will be responsible for the day to day running of our office and supporting a range of the Friends projects, including the successful Friends of OUR Park visitor giving and volunteering scheme with Project Manager Alice Blazy-Winning. Andrew can be contacted on 01389 298008 Tuesdays to Fridays between 9.30am and 4pm at our office in Balloch above the VisitScotland Information Centre.



Andrew Galloway, the Friends new Support Officer

Final Phase of Lochside Views Project Planned

Over the past couple of years the joint efforts of the Friends and the National Park has led to some of the finest views of the bonnie banks of Loch Lomond and Ben Lomond being opened up again for the millions of visitors using the A82 tourist route each year to enjoy. The last phase in the three year tree and shrub removal programme, which will result in several more miles of views between the A82 and the lochside near Luss being opened up, is scheduled to take place later this year. This practical demonstration project is part of a wider Friends "Views from the Road" campaign to encourage Transport Scotland and other bodies to focus more attention and resources on improving and maintaining the views from busy scenic routes throughout the National Park. Earlier this year the Friends called on Transport Scotland to develop comprehensive scenic route action plans with partners to improve the quality of the visitor experience for travellers using some of the busiest tourist routes that currently fall well short of expectations due to the poor quality of laybys, inadequate litter management, crumbling stone dykes and many fine views being hidden by overgrown trees and shrubs.

New Move to Save Cowal's Hills

Friend's Trustee, Philip Norris, has played a leading role in helping to set up a new group, Save Cowal's Hills (see www.savecowal.org) in the Dunoon area, with the mission to support the conservation of quality landscapes and to oppose proposals for inappropriately sited developments, including large scale industrial wind turbines.

The Save Cowal Hills Group consider Cowal is an area of outstanding natural beauty with hills of great character and high landscape value, as well as numerous lochs. It is a special place with northern Cowal forming the western part of the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park and the coastal resort of Dunoon being strongly promoted as the "Maritime Gateway to the National Park."

The move to set up the new group was taken to ensure there was a more co-ordinated effort to oppose the latest in a series



of large wind farm development proposals by the German-owned developer PNEwind for 20 turbines directly above Dunoon.

Since the proposed site is on the prominent Kilbride Hill range of hills directly above the town, there is naturally great concern about very serious visual impact across the Upper Firth and southern National Park areas, including the Kilmun area, Glen Fruin and the Conic Hill.

The proposed turbines would stand at least 110m high (with an

alternative plan for turbines 145m high), and the scheme is so large it would be determined directly by Scottish Ministers, who also own the Forestry Commission land in question.

Disappointingly, PNEwind has recently refused to attend a public meeting planned for Dunoon and also refused to continue with its 'Community Liaison Groups', citing them now as unhelpful and having too many members who are opposed to their plans. The application will probably go live in November.

Award Winners Recognised by Friends



The Fraser Family from Balmaha National Park Business Supporters of the Year Award Winners

The **Fraser family from the Oak Tree Inn, Balmaha** were presented with the inaugural National Park Business Supporters of the Year Award for helping make the National Park a better place for people and nature.

Owners Sandy and Lucy Fraser, who run the Oak Tree Inn and the Village Shop with other members of their family, have been strong supporters of the Friends of OUR Park Voluntary Visitor Giving and Friends Business Supporters schemes. They have raised over £7,500 since they became involved in the schemes several years ago. This funding has been used to help with the purchase of life-saving defibrillators for the Lomond Mountain Rescue Team and the village of Balmaha, way marking footpaths, a village environmental improvement programme and the wider work of the Friends.

They became enthusiastically involved in the annual Glasgow to Loch Lomond KiltWalk fundraising event too, through taking part in the event and introducing a special KiltWalk beer brewed by their Balmaha Brewery Company. The event raises hundreds of thousands of pounds each year for children's charities, including days out in the Loch Lomond area for disadvantaged and special needs kids that are coordinated by the Friends. They have also strongly supported the introduction of improved visitor management measures by the National Park Authority on East Loch Lomondside that has helped transform the area and ensure it is now a safe and family friendly destination.

Commenting on the Fraser family's success, Friends Chairman James Fraser said: "Sandy, Lucy and son Stuart, who manages the Oak Tree Inn, have fully embraced our fundraising schemes and the funds raised are helping to ensure many worthwhile projects designed to improve people's enjoyment of the National Park can happen. They also have a strong commitment to delivering high quality family-friendly services in their range of successful and increasingly diversified businesses in Balmaha which are geared to ensuring visitors and locals enjoy truly authentic National Park experiences.

"They fully deserve their success as the Friends' first National Park Business Supporters of the Year Award winners for their combination of fundraising efforts and the delivery of high-quality visitor experiences on a consistent basis through their sheer enthusiasm, commitment and hard work."

Sandy and Lucy Fraser said: "We are delighted to be recognised by the Friends with this prestigious award and we would like to thank our customers and staff for their great support in raising funds to help make the National Park a better place for people to enjoy. We are passionate about making a difference and contributing to enhancing the overall quality of the visitor experience here in Balmaha and the wider National Park area. It is gratifying our efforts are being recognised by others.

"It is important we all work towards protecting the special qualities of the National Park but also ensure there are a range of good quality facilities and services available for the 4 million visitors attracted to the National Park annually. We would therefore encourage other businesses to get involved in supporting the Friends' work."

Sandy and Lucy, with the support of their family, many who are involved in the day-to-day running of their hospitality and electrical businesses, are major employers in the National Park with 60 staff. Earlier this year they expanded their operations further with a £500,000 investment in additional tourist accommodation and a character stone clad coffee shop and ice cream parlour in the village of Balmaha on East Loch Lomondside.

Sandy, Lucy (centre) and daughters Holly (second left) and Emma (second right) are pictured above receiving their National Park Business Supporters of the Year Award from Friends Vice-President, George Boyd (left) and Friends Trustee Dr Joyce Deans (right).

Two new prestigious annual awards have been introduced to recognise the contribution of volunteers and business supporters to the work of the Friends and the first winners of the awards are featured below



John & Anne Urquhart from Helensburgh National Park Volunteers of the Year Award Winners

The enormous voluntary contribution made by Helensburgh couple, **John and Anne Urquhart** to helping make the National Park a better place for people and nature was recognised when they were presented with the inaugural National Park Volunteers of the Year Award.

Over a period of many years John and Anne have participated in Friends volunteer conservation and access improvement activities and have been strong supporters of the Friends of OUR Park voluntary visitor giving scheme that has helped fund a wide range of projects in and around the National Park. Among their many achievements, through their leadership and involvement with the Helensburgh and District Access Trust, has been the successful delivery of the 34-mile Three Lochs Way Great Trail, which weaves its way in and out of the National Park and links Balloch, Helensburgh, Garelochhead, Arrochar and Tarbet. Earlier this year they organised a couple of successful events to mark the opening of the coast-to-coast John Muir Trail, linking Helensburgh and Dunbar, and helped raise £1,500 for the Tom Weir Statue planned to mark his contribution to the protection and promotion of Loch Lomond. They also actively campaigned to ensure the John Muir Trail was extended from Balloch to Helensburgh to help spread the benefits of this new national trail.

Commenting on the couple's success, Friends Chairman, James Fraser said: "John and Anne have selflessly devoted many thousands of hours on a voluntary basis to help improve the Loch Lomond and Clyde Sea Lochs area as a visitor destination. They regularly roll their sleeves up and get involved in practical tasks such as path building and maintenance works, organising and helping out at fundraising events, researching and writing guide books and preparing funding bids to make projects happen on the ground. They are a great advert for the value of volunteering in making a real difference in and around the National Park and richly deserve their award as the Friends' first National Park Volunteers of the Year."

John and Anne Urquhart said: "We were taken by surprise when it was announced we were the winners of this inaugural Friends award to recognise volunteering efforts. We have enjoyed playing our part in helping to make a difference in the National Park and the Clyde Sea Lochs area through our link with the Friends and bodies such as the Helensburgh and District Access Trust and Love Loch Lomond. This is a truly special place and we believe it is important we keep it this way while at the same time ensuring visitors have the opportunity to enjoy the area at its best with well-maintained footpaths and scenic viewpoints and good quality information.

"We would encourage others to get involved in supporting the Friends work by becoming a member or simply volunteering a little time to help out with their efforts to protect and promote the National Park."

John is Chairman of the Argyll and Bute Access Forum, a Trustee of Helensburgh and District Access Trust and a former Chairman of Love Loch Lomond while Anne is currently the Convener of the Helensburgh and District Access Trust, a Director of Love Loch Lomond and Chair of the Love Loch Lomond Connectivity Group. They also run a successful bed and breakfast business at Balmillig in Helensburgh.

Anne and John Urquhart (centre) are pictured above receiving their National Park Volunteers of the Year Award from Friends Vice-President George Boyd (left) and Friends Trustee Dr Joyce Deans (right).

.....
**We would
 encourage others
 to get involved
 in supporting the
 Friends work**

Record Year for Friends

The Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs has enjoyed a record-breaking year with just under £100,000 raised and 550 volunteers helping to support a range of community and heritage projects geared to helping make the National Park a better place for people and nature.

Commenting on what has been a busy year for the charity at a well-attended AGM, Friends Chairman James Fraser said: "A large number of projects have benefited from the Friends' activities, including access, conservation and environmental improvement projects throughout the Park, but we are particularly proud of two flagship schemes - the provision of public access defibrillators at busy visitor locations in partnership with The Trossachs Search and Rescue Team and local communities to improve public safety; and the provision of adventure days out and activity breaks to introduce hundreds of disadvantaged and special needs children to the National Park's great outdoors."

He added: "It simply would not be possible to deliver these projects without the generous support of local businesses and individuals who are contributing in many ways to our work through the Friends of

OUR Park initiative that helps to generate a steady flow of donations from thousands of visitors to the National Park and acts as an umbrella for a series of very practical Make a Difference Days involving hundreds of volunteers."

In his review of the year at the Friends' AGM, the Chairman also highlighted:

- The continuing success of the campaign to protect the scenic qualities of the National Park from the visual impact of large-scale wind turbines with the refusal of the Merkins windfarm at the southern end of Loch Lomond.
- Improvements to the views from busy scenic routes, such as the A82, with stretches of tree tunnels removed with the help of the National Park Authority.
- Bumper attendances at Celebrating Park People and Stories events throughout the year including themed cruises and musical events.

- The increasing level of volunteer efforts to help with litter clearance, tree planting and other conservation work.
- The great efforts of many Friends volunteers who took part in the recent 26-mile Glasgow to Loch Lomond KiltWalk as part of a 6,000 strong team who raised over £1million to support children's charities.

At the meeting an excellent overview of the National Park Authority's work in the fields of conservation, visitor experience and rural development was also provided by Gordon Watson, Director of Operations, and many examples of joint working between the Park Authority and the Friends were featured in the illustrated talk.

One of the popular Celebrating Park People events on Loch Katrine



Vote of Confidence for Love Loch Lomond



Love Loch Lomond, the trade led Destination Organisation for Loch Lomond and the Clyde Sea Lochs received a massive boost in the summer with Scottish Enterprise confirming approval of a grant award of £500,000 to support the collaborative work being undertaken to improve the quality of the visitor experience, for business networking and the development of a food and drink initiative in partnership with the National Park. £40,000 of the award has been ring-fenced by Scottish Enterprise to support Friends projects, including the Friends of OUR Park visitor giving and volunteering scheme over a three year period and the popular

Celebrating Park People & Stories initiative. Love Loch Lomond has moved swiftly to provide funding support for a raft of visitor experience projects including better cycling and footpath links between Drymen and Balmaha; footpath upgrades at Balloch Country Park and Whinneyhill; and improved interpretation along the car touring and cycling Clyde Sea Lochs Trail that winds its way from Arrochar to the Rosneath Peninsula, Helensburgh and Dumbarton. £10,000 has also been earmarked for a network of cycle racks as part of a joint initiative with the Park Authority to make the area more cycle friendly.

Stuart Cordner, Chairman of Love Loch Lomond, said: "I am delighted that Scottish Enterprise is continuing to strongly back us to enable us to deliver a series of priorities identified by the trade to improve tourism in the area. It is also pleasing that a number of projects we are able to support feature in the National Park Authority's and Friends' plans which means a number of projects geared to strengthening the area's appeal as a family friendly outdoor destination can be taken forward."

The village of Drymen will benefit from a grant award for improved footpath and cycleway links



Familiar Faces Back on Park Board

Following a hotly contested local election in July the existing five locally elected members have all been voted back onto the National Park Authority Board for another four year term.

Returning to the National Park Board are David McKenzie for Cowal and North Loch; Owen McKee for Breadalbane and the Trossachs; David Warnock for Callander; Willie Nisbet for East Loch Lomond and Port of Menteith and David

McCowan for West Loch Lomond and Balloch and four of them are pictured with Linda McKay, Convenor of the National Park Board.

The Board has 17 members, made up of the five locally elected representatives, six people nominated by the Scottish Government and six people nominated by the four local authorities that cover the Park.



Top Award for Lodge Visitor Centre

Following the £2.4 million refurbishment by Forestry Commission Scotland, The Lodge Forest Visitor Centre at Aberfoyle has been awarded a top five star accolade by VisitScotland.

Perched high on the hill above the village and off the Duke's Pass - the road from Aberfoyle to Loch Katrine - the Lodge offers some of the most spectacular views of the area's stunning landscapes. The building was gifted to the Forestry Commission by the Carnegie Trust in 1960.

VisitScotland Chairman Mike Cantlay said: "The Lodge Forest Visitor Centre has acted as a hub for visitors for over 50 years, but following its refurbishment it is now a major asset for the National Park and a thriving, first class attraction in what is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful parts of the Queen Elizabeth Forest Park."

Airport National Park Showcase

Over 1 million visitors arriving at Glasgow Airport are being given a flavour of a woodland experience on the banks of Loch Lomond as they step from their flight into the international arrivals corridor that has been transformed with a dappled woodland scene, complete with the sounds of birdsong and the scent of the forest.

Travellers are being led along part of the West Highland Way and can rest on wooden benches to take in views of the loch, islands and the mountains between the trees. The interactive display also features strong messages reinforcing how close the National Park is to Glasgow Airport.



The innovative display has been funded by the National Park Authority with support from the National Park Destination Group who want visitors passing through the airport to understand how accessible the National Park is and what it has to offer in terms of outstanding scenery and a rich variety of wildlife.

Glen Fruin Wind Turbine Plans

The controversial plans for a community wind farm 2km north of Helensburgh close to the boundary of the National Park were submitted to Argyll and Bute Council in July and are currently under consideration. Five 800kw wind turbines 86.5 metres high to the blade tip are proposed along with a new vehicular access and a substation by Green Cat Renewables, land owner Luss Estates and Helensburgh Renewables. The turbines will have an adverse visual impact on the southern end of Loch Lomond if approved.

Mountain Paths Funding Support

A £6.2 million joint mountain paths improvement project between Loch Lomond and The Trossachs and Cairngorms National Parks has recently received a grant award of £3.28 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Heavily used and worn paths that will be upgraded and restored as part of the People and the Mountains project include Ben A'an, Ben Ledi, Ben Venue, Ben More, Ben Lui and Ben Ime.

Top left: Pictured with the award plaque are Mairi Buchanan, visitor centre supervisor with Forestry Commission Scotland and Jill Aikman, café/shop operator at the Lodge Visitor Centre

Middle left: Airline staff enjoy the new woodland experience provided by the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park



Cunninghame Graham COUNTRY

Local historian and literary expert Louis Stott provides an insight to some of the writings of Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham about some parts of the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park he fell in love with in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham's first book *Notes on the District of Menteith* (1895), is a series of elegant, witty, and quite inimitable essays about the country he loved. His views about Menteith are neglected in comparison with those of, say, Scott, but they are more genuine, and as evocative.

His *Notes*... written "half in idleness and half out of that affection which is common to a man and trees for the soil in which they have been for ages rooted" is a highly unusual guide book. In this extract he describes some of the lochans of the district:



Lochan Balloch

"Hard by Craig Vad is the desolate hill tarn known as Loch Reoichte. In the district there are many of these curious black hill-lochs, generally in peaty hollows, with the water black as jet, peopled with little muddy trout, and often overgrown with water-lilies. Each has its legend, as in duty bound. Loch Mac An Righ, close to the Lake of Menteith, is sacred to the memory of a king's son, who, in the days when princes of the blood-royal perambulated the world at a loose end and unattended, almost lost his life whilst chasing wild deer, by his horse bogging down with him. Tradition hath it that one Betty or Betsy, for there is room for doubt on the forms of the name that the royal maiden bore, extracted him like a royal cork, from the mud and saved his life. The field is known as Achnavesity, said by Gaelic speaking men to mean the field of Betty."

One of his most interesting Scottish books is *Doughty Deeds* [1925], the biography of his ancestor Robert Graham, politician and poet, which begins with a fine description of the country between Gartmore and Aberfoyle:

"The silvery waters of the Lake of Menteith, dotted with its two dark wooded islands, shrouding the Priory of Inchmaholme and the Castle of Inch Talla, the fortress of the Earls of Menteith, the poet's ancestors, and with the fir-clad promontory of Arnmauk cutting the lake almost in two halves, lay just below the hills. The moss that flowed right from the Hill of Gartnore through the Carse of Stirling to the sea bounded the lake upon one side. Upon the other rose Ben Dearg and Ben Dhu. Between them ran the Pass of Glennie, an old Fingalian track, whose stones, polished of yore by generations of feet shod in deerskin brogues, even today show white amongst the heather in places now disused, that once it traversed like a dull silver streak. Only two miles away to the north-west by the hill-road behind the Drum, crossing the burn where the stones form a rude bridge, lay Aberfoyle with the change-house immortalised





Lochan Reoidhte

by Walter Scott, and half a dozen black Highland cottages, all thatched with rushes or with ling. A rough hill-track skirting the waterfall, known as the Grey Mare's Tail, passing Craig Vadh and coming out upon the shore of Loch Achray, led to the Trossachs, in whose fastnesses lurked broken men from all the highland clans."

Graham's Scottish Sketches (collected by John Walker in 1982) are more unusual and original, conscious efforts to achieve an effect. Most quoted is Mist in Menteith, evoking the way in which the district can resemble the sea it once was, when the Firth of Forth extended to the fringes of Gartmore. A Braw Day describes Gartmore House when Cunninghame-Graham was taking his leave of it. These stories and sketches ought to be recalled at the same time as the poetry of Wordsworth and the novels of Scott by visitors to the eastern parts of the National Park, but they remain relatively unknown. Salvagia [1899], for example describes a bathing pool on the Forth:

" A little river, in which, before the days of knowledge, kelpies were wont to live, flows past the town. Its glory is a pool (we call it linn) known as Linn-a-Hamish. Here the stream spreads out and babbling in its course wears the stones

flat as proverbs in the current of men's speech get broadened out. The boys delight to throw these flat stones edgeways in the air, to hear the curious sound they make when falling in the water, which they call a 'dead man's bell'. Alders fringe the bank, and in the middle of the pool a little grassy promontory juts out, on which the cows stand, swinging their tails, and meditate, to at least as good a purpose as philosophers. The linn lies dark and sullen, and a line of bubbles rising to the top shows where the under-current runs below the stream. In a lagoon a pike has basked for the last thirty years. In our mythology, one Hamish met his death in the dark water, but why or wherefore no one seems to know. Tradition says the place is dangerous, and the country people count it a daring feat to swim across."

Lochan Falloch [1909], describes Lochan Balloch, in the easternmost corner of the National Park. Graham has changed the name; 'falloch' means 'hidden':

Nature seems, now and then, to have suspected that a time would come when all her secrets would lie bare and open to the prying eye of vulgar curiosity, and to have hid away some of her chiefest beauties in places

where they are in sanctuary, hallowed from human gaze, which at the same time worships and violates them. So she set this little gem, remote, hiding it as a hind conceals her young, deep in the heather, underneath the tallest bracken and in a wilderness of hills."

There are references in these pieces to Highland superstitions and it can be argued that Cunninghame-Graham's most significant local work was his introduction to an edition of The Secret Commonwealth by Reverend Robert Kirk. Kirk's work is a highly regarded, very detailed description of fairies in Scotland. RB, typically, referred to Kirk as "the astral vicar of Aberfoyle".

These sketches describe what might be called The Cunninghame Graham country.

It deserves exploration.



SAILINGS IN THE TROSSACHS
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On Callander's Geodiversity Trail

One of the projects recently supported by the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs from the Friends of OUR Park grants scheme was the production of an interesting booklet that showcases the rich geology of the Callander area. Visitors can follow an informative Geodiversity Trail retracing events in Callander's past. Here John Snodin briefly describes the booklet.

The Callander Geodiversity Trail 'Stories in the Landscape' is a new booklet written by Mike Browne, a geologist from Edinburgh, with input from members of the Callander's Countryside Group under the auspices of the Callander Community Development Trust. It describes the major events that formed the landscape around Callander, which lies just south of the Highland Boundary Fault. Around 400 million years ago enormous volumes of sediment eroded from ancient mountains were carried along river channels and down on to flood plains. Over the millennia these sediments were deeply buried and 'cooked' under pressure into solid rock – the puddingstone which is used for many of Callander's buildings is the result of this process, which also tilted the sediments from horizontal to vertical. In the last 2.5 million years a series of ice ages have changed the landscape, and when the last glacier retreated around 12,000 years ago it left evidence of its passing that can be seen today.

Amongst the many walks and features identified in the booklet are the Bracklinn Falls circuit along the Keltie Water via the Bracklinn Falls and the Scout Pool, where vertical beds and rocks showing evidence of life millions of years ago can easily be seen. Huge boulders known as erratics, moved and deposited by the glaciers, can be seen on the Three Bridges walk, and the final signature of the last glacier, the Callander Moraine, is the dramatic conclusion of the Glacier Trail. The booklet has been funded by donations from Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, Stirling Council Community Pride Fund, Cemex (the operators of Cambusmore Quarry) and the Stirling and Clackmannan RIGS Group. It has also been supported by Forestry Commission Scotland and by Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority who supplied the map on the fold out pages at the end of the booklet.



Copies of the booklet are available from the VisitScotland Information Centre in Callander.



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Coming soon... our winter menu! Here's a wee peek at some of our new dishes...

- Confit Ayrshire pork belly, Stornoway black pudding and leek hash, cider reduction, bramby apple sauce, crisp sage, crackling
- Pan roasted half-hunter venison haunch,celeriac dauphinois, buttered spinach, redcurrant reduction, parsnip crisps
- Pan seared Scottish salmon fillet, horseradish and fine herb potato sauce, curly kale, crispy bacon, red wine and shallot dressing
- Some of our most popular fishes will stay on the menu too: our smoked fish platter, shrimping board, steamed Shetland mussels and some others are staying!

Over the winter, we will be open for coffee, tea and rustic cake from 10 to 5pm with lunch served from 12 to 3pm



We will be closed for our winter break from 1st December to 5th January. All the team at Venachar would like to thank all our lovely customers this year!



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Nature of the I

Keith Graham writes about how the rich variety of wildlife in the National Park deals with the transition from summer to autumn and winter and some striking changes in behaviour.



THE CHANGE OF MOOD from summer to autumn and then from autumn to winter, is startling.

This has been an exceptionally good and productive summer and therefore, as always, a busy time for the animals and birds with which we share the wonderful and varied landscape of our National Park. But now the mood changes, or at least for most, what lies ahead, is the inevitable challenge of survival. As days shorten and temperatures begin to fall, whilst the natural harvest of autumn provides a bonanza for many, these riches are short-lived and food will inevitably eventually start to become scarcer.

Thus, there are choices to be made. Many of course, elect not to face the vagaries of a Scottish winter and instead, gird up their loins and leave us for warmer climes where in insect ridden landscapes, their survival chances are better. Many, as August dwindles into September, will have already begun their journeys, for some of our migrant birds do not waste much time in deciding to set out on their voyages of discovery. Adult cuckoos for instance, safe in the knowledge that dedicated foster parents are ensuring the continuance of their kind, leave us as early as July, having spent as little time here as they deem necessary to fulfil their destiny.

Nor do swifts linger any longer than necessary, rearing but one brood of young and taking flight from here in mid-August. Suddenly, village roof-tops fall silent; the 'devil screamers' are gone! Meanwhile, some have not finished the tasks they set themselves, when they arrived from darkest Africa in the spring. Swallows for instance, and especially martins, may linger much longer, with many martins not departing these shores until October. If swifts are content with one brood, martins often produce three, in a single breeding season. All these summer visitors however, sooner

or later, will inexorably begin journeys which are often perilous to say the least, requiring those that launch themselves southwards in their efforts to avoid the descending cloak of winter, to fly sometimes vast trans-Continental voyages across seas, mountain ranges and deserts. They may encounter hostile conditions too as equinoctial storms rage, and some of them will have to be smart enough to avoid predators that lie in wait en route.

Challenges for Youngsters

For the year's crop of youngsters, some no more than a few weeks old, such travels must come as something of a shock and surely represent an astonishing challenge so early in their lives. And whilst some, such as the fascinating array of warblers that come to breed within the Park, at least may travel under the stewardship of experienced, older birds, others, such as this year's crop of young ospreys, must make these immense journeys alone. After receiving an abundance of TLC during the first waking months of their lives, now young ospreys find themselves suddenly abandoned and very much on their own to navigate a migratory journey of over 3,000 miles.

Migrations on a vast scale therefore, see millions of birds meet these physical obstacles head on. Losses are inevitable of course and perhaps because they generally journey that bit later, martins may thus be more vulnerable to suffering at the hands of inclement conditions, which is doubtless why they are so much more productive.

Yet whilst all these birds, most of them insect feeders, flee these shores, others are only too happy to leave more northerly quarters and spend their winters here. Most noticeable among them are the wild geese which, when the vanguard of them arrive in

Park

mid-September, bring with them a haunting reminder of their Arctic origins. The loud cackling of geese on misty autumnal mornings is evocative of wild places and so much a sound resonant of autumn and winter around the Park.

There are many other birds that spend their winters here but none are quite so vocally obvious as the geese in announcing their arrival and continuing presence throughout the darker days of winter. Across the North Sea and the North Atlantic, come many others such as whooper swans, woodcock, the Scandinavian thrushes, fieldfares and redwings, along with short-eared owls, goldcrests and crossbills, to swell our winter populations, to name but a few of the winter visitors to the Park. The swans add an extra dimension of the Arctic as they glide effortlessly, necks noticeably erect, compared with the more sedentary mute swans, across our lochs or fly in formation, sometimes at extreme altitudes during their flight from Iceland.

Yet, if all these changes seem to signal the inevitable decline of the year towards winter and thus a 'closing down' of activity, for the red deer of the Park, this is, rather than a fading of the passing days, a new beginning and indeed, a climax to their year. Now, they must prepare themselves for the high point of their annual cycle, the rut, when master stag must challenge master stag in the eternal bid for supremacy and the right to father the next generation of these, our largest land mammals. This annual event is perhaps the grand finale of the wildlife year, a time of great drama as the sonorous roaring of the stags echoes from the glens.



Autumn Harvest

Animals of course, do not have recourse to the advantages of migration. Thus, their survival must depend largely upon the autumn harvest. Famously, our squirrels cash in on that bonanza by establishing great caches of food in the form of nuts, which will enable them to keep going in times when the available food supplies run short. Happily the recent growth of pine marten populations within the Park, has had the effect of addressing the imbalance which occurred when the alien and much more aggressive grey squirrel was introduced to this part of Scotland back in the nineteenth century.

Since that fatal day, the American interloper has prospered whilst populations of our much prettier, smaller and native red squirrel, have dropped, in many places in the UK, sadly to the point of complete disappearance. Here, where Lowland meets Highland, the red has clung doggedly on in the Highlands where happily the grey squirrel has not really penetrated. But the arrival of pine marten and their subsequent breeding success, has redressed the balance with their predation upon the greys. Greys are of course, bigger than reds, much less agile and consequently easier to catch. They are therefore much more vulnerable to hunting pine marten and their numbers in many parts of the Park are rapidly declining, the void more often than not, filled by the more acceptable reds.

Autumn evenings are further animated by the weird hooting and shrieking of tawny owls as this year's crop of youngsters seek to establish territories in our woods. The silent and seemingly ghostly progress of barn owls across the fading evening landscape further enriches the wildlife experience that is at the very heart of the Park, whilst the curious hooting of long eared owls is also to be heard deep in our forests and woods.



Wild Winter

Hedgehogs take great advantage of the autumn's plethora of invertebrate life, by eating and eating and eating, putting on layers of fat before descending into a deep sleep. Hibernation is their answer to the advance of winter, as it is for the many species of bats resident in the Park. But badgers, whilst always eating well during the autumn months and laying on extra fat, do not hibernate. However, if the weather turns nasty, they will literally hole up for days on end, surviving on those surplus fat reserves. Yet, even on snowy days, badgers can be active, if like the Park's otters they are much more active under the cover of darkness.

As the Yuletide season approaches, so many of the symbolic attachments of the traditional Christmas can be seen and heard in the Park. Christmas trees of course, abound. Ancient holly bushes gleam red with berries, as red as the breasts of our carol-singing robins, one of the few birds that continues to express itself vocally during those shorter days of mid-winter, its bell-like notes breaking the silence of even the frostiest of days. Jenny Wren often joins this lone chorus with his startling rat-tat-a-tat explosion of song. Yet even in early January, the first meaningful sounds of spring are stirring. The sweet notes of blackbirds and thrushes may be heard even this early in the year and the challenging two-tone proclamation of great tits may already be echoing across the landscape. Slowly but inexorably, those early hints of spring grow, as like a sleeping giant, the Park awakens to a New Year and a fresh start. A new cycle of life is already beginning to stir.

Lengthening days and the unseen influence of the Gulf Stream warming the Park's western seaboard stimulate more of the Park's vast variety of wild creatures into action. In truth winter's reign is short and as the constantly changing kaleidoscope of wildlife continues on its inevitable journey, each lengthening day brings new sights and sounds. There really is never a dull moment! New beginnings fill the Park with new life and we hold our breath in anticipation of the return of the first of our migrant birds, crossing endless miles to begin the story all over again.



A huge THANK YOU to every single one of our 117 strong team who participated in this year's Glasgow to Loch Lomond Kiltwalk on 27th April, their hundreds of sponsors, the 20 others who helped with marshalling and selling raffle tickets on the day and our many business sponsors for some fabulous raffle prizes. Also a big thank you to Sandra Dyson, our former Support Officer for her sterling work coordinating the Friends Kiltwalk effort over the past two years.

Over £20,000 was raised by our team in sponsorship and from raffle sales, with £15,000 being used to support children's projects here in the National Park and a further £5,000 being allocated to children's charities for projects throughout Scotland. The event overall has raised a very impressive £1.2 million for Scottish children's charities.

The total number of participants more than doubled with 6,000 walkers taking part in this year's event which started at Glasgow's SSE Hydro and finished at the Moss o' Balloch in the centre of Balloch. 500 also participated in the wee walk around Balloch Country Park which we were involved in marshalling and providing a nature trail quiz for children.



Kirsty Wyllie, who was one of three staff from the Tarbet Bay Hotel who were part of the Friends' team, said: "It was a really tough walk and I burst into tears when I crossed the finish line, a combination of exhaustion and joy! Once I sat down I couldn't get up again and it took 2 to 3 days to be able to stand up straight and walk properly. Along with another team mate, I was walking about in slippers for several days afterwards because of the blisters! Despite all this, I would without hesitation recommend taking part in the Kiltwalk to anyone considering it. It was absolutely amazing to be part of the event, and knowing all your pain is ultimately helping enrich the lives of kids from both the local area as well as further afield." Children from the Vale of Leven and wider West Dunbartonshire area have already benefitted from the team's hard work.

Over 100 children have enjoyed a variety of activity days out in the National Park over the summer months and many more children from urban areas will be given the opportunity to enjoy activity days and short breaks in the Park as a result of the funds raised by the Friends Kiltwalk team.

See the feature from the Tulloch Trust for further details on how the team's fundraising efforts has supported disadvantaged and special needs kids get out and about the National Park.





Tullochan Young People are Friends of Loch Lomond



Helen Goode from the Tulloch Trust explains what it has meant to over 140 children to be sponsored on days out activities in the National Park this summer by the Friends. The Tulloch Trust was founded in 1996 by Friends Trustee Ian Stuart's wife Fiona in memory of her father Brigadier Alastair Pearson DSO***, OBE, MC, KStJ, TD. Alastair was one of the most decorated men in World War II and he exemplified and realised the value of courage and leadership; he also had total faith in, and commitment to, young people. The Tulloch Trust has gone from strength to strength, responding to social need among West Dunbartonshire young people. In 17 years the Trust has supported over 10,000 young people "changing attitudes and changing lives."



Thanks to the generosity of the Trustees of Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs and their team of KiltWalk volunteers we received a £5,000 grant contribution to sponsor our summer programme. This enabled over 140 young people to have the opportunity to take part in a variety of fun and exciting activities in and around a very sunny Loch Lomond.

Activities included water skiing, mountain biking, Bird of Prey and Lomond Sea Life Centre visits, climbing and abseiling, waterpark adventures on Kinlochard, speedboat trips on Loch Lomond and walks and barbeques on Inchcailloch near Balmaha.

Outdoor activities and trips are important to Tulloch's continued engagement with the youngsters. Not only do they enjoy an action packed summer supported by positive role models, they are made aware of the possibilities open to them on their own doorstep. They learn the importance of water safety, are encouraged to be active citizens, such as litter picking in Balloch Park. In the past they have repaired and built paths on Inchcailloch and Conic Hill, planted saplings in Cashel Forest and have been 'rhodie bashing' to make locally sold charcoal. All of these teach the youngsters the importance of being environmentally aware, of giving something back and of preserving the area for future generations.

Although many youngsters live locally, they had never visited the area and their feedback was overwhelmingly positive regarding the scenery and activities on their doorstep.

Some young people's quotes...

"I have never seen Loch Lomond or Ben Lomond like this before – it was amazing to be on the loch and above the loch"

"Water skiing was amazing and it was so cool getting to do this on the loch - I have been to the loch before but never knew I could do so much"

"I have spent lots of days with Tulloch this summer and we have been beside, in, on and all over Loch Lomond. I can't wait until next summer and do things again at Loch Lomond!"



As a result of recent fundraising activities through the Friends of OUR Park voluntary visitor giving scheme and the Kiltwalk it has been possible to award a number of grants to local groups to improve facilities and support initiatives that help increase people's enjoyment of the National Park. Here we feature some examples of projects supported in 2014.

Recent Friends Grant Awards

Improved Access for Wheelchair Users at Lake of Menteith



The Friends provided £600 towards a new simple push of a button electric start outboard motor for a Wheelyboat at Lake of Menteith Fisheries, which will help to provide disabled people, and wheelchair users in particular, with more independent access to the water.

The Wheelyboat has proven an extremely popular addition to the Fisheries' facilities and has already gained quite a few regular customers. On average it is being used about three times a week over 30 weeks of the year. The Fisheries, stocked with over 1,000 trout on a weekly basis, is reputed to be the best location for fly fishing for rainbow and brown trout in Central Scotland.

Fisheries manager Quint Glen said: "We are extremely grateful to the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs for their generosity in supporting this venture. The Fisheries are continuing to go from strength to strength as a facility and having the new electric-start motor for our Wheelyboat will further increase the ease with which wheelchair-bound anglers can access the water."

Lochend Chalets is located close to the Fisheries and participates in the Friends of OUR Park scheme. Director Victoria Carroll is delighted to be part of the initiative and said: "As a result of our association with the Friends we know how passionate they are about helping around the National Park so we have not hesitated to raise funds for them where possible and we are very pleased that monies are being used to improve water access on Lake of Menteith in this way."

Above: From left to right, Rab Chisholm, Friends Trustee Sheila Winstone, Lochend Chalets Director Victoria Carroll and Steve Pringle try out the Wheelyboat with the new outboard motor

New Luss Play Area

The Friends have made a £2,000 donation to support the development of a new children's play area in the scenic village of Luss.

Commenting on the award of the funding, Friends Vice-President, George Boyd said: "We want to help maintain and improve facilities in the National Park for current and future generations and the development of a play area at Luss means that local and visiting children can enjoy the Park more. We were very impressed by the Community Development Trust's plans for the play area and had no hesitation in helping to support their ambitions at Luss as this is one of the busiest places in the National Park with around 750,000 visitors each year."

Below: Friends Vice-President, George Boyd handing over the cheque to Fiona McEachern, from the Luss and Arden Community Development Trust



Support for Balquhiddier Glen

The Friends helped fund the installation of a public access defibrillator in Balquhiddier Glen after contributing £600 towards the life-saving facility next to the village hall. This is one of three public access defibrillators being provided by Balquhiddier, Lochearnhead and Strathyre Community Trust to improve public safety in this popular but remoter part of the National Park. Owen McKee, a Director of Balquhiddier, Lochearnhead and Strathyre Community Trust and recently re-appointed National Park Board member, was delighted with the donation.

He said: "The Friends donation is very much appreciated and it is reassuring that a defibrillator will now be on hand if it is needed in the Glen."

Above: Friends Trustees Joyce Deans and George Boyd with Sara Hesp (middle), Director of Balquhiddier, Lochearnhead and Strathyre Community Trust at the entrance to Balquhiddier Glen

Stop Press... Stop Press... Stop Press... Stop Press... Stop Press... Stop Press... Stop Press...

The Friends have recently agreed to contribute £5,000 to the Tom Weir Statue Campaign to assist with the installation costs and the works associated with improving the Balmaha picnic area where the statue will be sited overlooking Balmaha Bay.

A further grant of £500 has been awarded to the Cowal Red Squirrel project which is leading the battle to prevent the spread of grey squirrels and protect the red squirrel population in the western part of the National Park.

A grant of £800 was awarded to Callander Community Development Trust to support the re-opening of the former Rob Roy & Trossachs Visitor Centre in the heart of the town for a comprehensive Summerfest programme featuring over 130 events and exhibitions.



focus on local businesses

Tom Lewis, award-winning chef and co-proprietor at Monachyle Mhor, a former 18th century farmhouse turned luxury boutique hotel and foodie destination nestled on the banks of Loch Voil in Balquhiddier Glen, tells us a little about the history of the business and his involvement with Friends of OUR park

Tell us a little about the history of Monachyle Mhor

Our parents originally bought the farm in 1983, moving the family to Scotland from Wales. Mum starting doing Bed & Breakfast about 18 years ago, and 12 years ago me and my siblings, Melanie & Dick, took over the business and have developed it into what it is today. We are still a working farm, and have 1,000 ewes, 20 cattle along with 40 Tamworth Cross pigs and hens. I am deeply passionate about sourcing and celebrating the best of local produce, preparing menus in season using food produced on the farm, either from the garden or the livestock we keep, as well as the surrounding countryside.

Why did you join Friends of OUR park?

I care deeply about the local environment, protecting and nurturing this very special landscape we have here in the National Park. When we heard about Friends of OUR park we thought it was a great scheme to get involved with. The scenery and wildlife is a major draw for people coming to stay with us, and involvement in the scheme is a great way to give something back. I was initially apprehensive about including the voluntary £1 donation per stay on the bill at check-out, however we have been overwhelmed by how supportive and positive all our customers have been – not one has asked for the donation to be removed and many give

more. Just last week someone increased the donation to £20!

We have now raised over £1000 for the scheme and are delighted the first project supported was the public access defibrillator at Balquhiddier village.

What is special about Balquhiddier Glen?

Balquhiddier Glen is special as it is only an hour and a half from the rest of the world yet when I am here I am miles away from everywhere

Volunteers Make a Difference on Lochside

Many thanks to the many Friends of OUR park volunteers who did a fantastic job helping with a range of conservation and access improvement tasks around Loch Lomond at our Spring Make a Difference Day. As a result of this event, a large number of native trees were planted at Arden on West Loch Lomond and half a mile of footpath was improved on the popular Ardess History Trail in the shadow of Ben Lomond.



Tree planting on West Loch Lomond at The Carrick

Trees (Scots pine, birch, rowan, hawthorn and oak) were planted with the Carrick's Ranger James Elliot, creating a native woodland which as the trees mature will provide food and shelter for a whole host of wildlife.

Path Improvement on the Ardess History Trail, Ben Lomond

A half mile stretch of path was improved which included upgrading path surfaces, cutting back vegetation and drainage work, led by Alasdair Eckersall of National Trust for Scotland.



Our Autumn Make a Difference events

Our Autumn series of Make a Difference Days will take place in The Trossachs on 8 October and in Cowal & West Loch Lomond on 29 October. We have a whole host of tasks lined up for you including removing invasive species, improving public paths, removing litter and dismantling fire pits. Please help us to make a difference. To find out more or to register to come along on the day please contact Andrew on 01389 298008 or by email info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk

Wild PARK

LOCH
LOMOND
& THE TROSSACHS
NATIONAL PARK

Wild Park 2020 is our ambitious new action plan for nature conservation in Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park.

Officially launched in August, Wild Park 2020 sets out our long term vision for biodiversity. It highlights over 90 conservation projects which we and partners will work on together to help deliver this vision. At the heart of the plan are five flagship projects – we call them our 'Wild Challenges' – chosen for their potential to bring the biggest benefits to nature conservation.

Our five Wild Challenges...



Here's what we're doing to help

Red squirrels are native to Scotland but due to a long history of changes in land use and the spread of the American grey squirrel, numbers have been in steep decline. We are working to safeguard existing populations in the National Park by creating good woodland habitat free from grey squirrels.

The problem with **invasive non-native species** is that they're really good at taking over. They literally invade and spread leaving no room for our native species. We're working in partnership with landowners, fishery trusts, government agencies and volunteers to reduce the extent and damaging impacts of these species.

Our **mountain bogs**, also known as blanket bogs, store ten times the carbon of all Britain's forests combined. They also retain water that can help in flood and drought management, so it's vitally important we look after them. We're working with land managers to protect our mountain bog, by ensuring our forests are designed around them.

Black grouse are beautiful and enigmatic birds which are threatened in Scotland for several reasons, including habitat loss and predation from other animals. We're working in partnership with farmers, gamekeepers and wildlife managers to look after them by getting grazing levels right and controlling predators.

Some of our **woodland habitats** are so valuable they are recognised as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). This means that they, and the species they support, have international significance. We're working with land managers to manage or create woodlands, especially where these could improve links in our habitat network.

These projects really matter to us and we hope they will matter to you too. You can find out more about Wild Park 2020 and our five Wild Challenges at:

www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/wildpark



Friends member, Alistair McIntyre, takes us on the second of his Three Lochs Way series of outings. Here he walks the 6.5 miles between Helensburgh and Garelochhead. The increasingly popular Three Lochs Way has been created by Helensburgh & District Access Trust with funding from a range of sources, including the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, and is one of a number of nationally approved Great Trails.



Stone near the site of the battle

A Walk on the Three Lochs Way



With Helensburgh and its attractions well described in the official guide to the Three Lochs Way, suffice it to take up the narrative at the point where we leave behind the tarmac and make our way along the Helensburgh Upland Way footpath from the car park near Hill House.

The path contours along the hillside behind the town, and careful observation reveals an earthen embankment in places, running parallel to our route. This represents the embodiment of an estate landscaping scheme drawn up in 1733 by William Boutcher for the landowner, Sir John Schaw of Greenock, this being in the then fashionable French idiom.

Before long, our route makes a 90 degree turn to the right, taking us on to the Highlandman's Road, an historic route leading over the moors to Glen

Fruin. A great deal of improvement work has recently been carried out on the track, thanks to the assiduous efforts of Helensburgh and District Access Trust. As we gain height, it's well worth while savouring the extensive views stretching out before us, when the quality of the landscape in which Helensburgh is set can be seen to great effect.

Once again, you can make out an earthen embankment alongside the track, crossed in places by similar features running off at right-angles, and further demonstrating the scale of Boutcher's vision.

A gentle descent brings us down to the public road, the portal to Glen Fruin, a place forever associated with tragedy as well as beauty. The long and open nature of the Glen, much of which is inside the National Park, forms a perfect setting for the rolling hills which sweep down on either side. These hills, most of which are linked by convenient ridges, offer high quality walking. I look upon them as old friends- but friends to be treated with respect at all times, especially in winter. As we soak up the character of our surroundings, it's worth realising how different it all might have been. In the late 1970s, with offshore oil and gas coming onstream, plans were announced to build

a large petro-chemical complex here. Eventually, following a public enquiry, the plans were rejected, but it demonstrates that modern industry is never far from the door, even of the most treasured landscapes.

With traditional farming forming the mainstay of the economy, the Glen is one of the best places in the district for watching wildlife. Birdlife is outstanding - you can see four species of owl, along with raven, various birds of prey, martins, swallows and many others. Even so, there have been big losses, and it's a far cry from the 1970s, when Hector Galbraith was counting upwards of 70 pairs of nesting lapwing. Look out also for brown hare, and roe and red deer.

Approaching the summit of the road, we pass the cairn commemorating the Battle of 1603, when around 140 people lost their lives, some of whom doubtless lived nearby- glens like this once carried a much bigger population than they do now, and remains of large numbers of their summer dwellings can still be seen by the headwaters of surrounding streams. Soon after reaching the highest point, we can drop down to Garelochhead, or carry on to the next section of the walk.



The 57 pages of the beautifully illustrated Three Lochs Way guidebook are packed with fascinating information about the route. It can be ordered online at www.threelochsaway.com

Celebrating the legacies of Tom and John

As part of the John Muir Festival in April to mark the opening of the John Muir Way linking Helensburgh with Dunbar through the National Park, and the 100th anniversary of the death of the 'father' of the worldwide National Park movement, we organised two very successful events. They were also fundraisers for the Tom Weir Memorial Campaign that has well advanced plans to erect a statue on the bonnie banks at Balmaha in Tom Weir's memory later this year.

In front of a packed audience at the Victoria Halls in Helensburgh well known folk singer, broadcaster and conservation champion, Jimmie Macgregor, paid homage to John Muir with an illustrated talk and stories on his trip from the birthplace of John Muir in Dunbar to Yosemite in the United States where John Muir persuaded President Roosevelt to create a National Park in the late 1800s. Jimmie donated his services free of charge for the evening which raised almost £1,000 for the Tom Weir Statue Campaign.

The Friends also organised a unique walking event along the newly improved route which links Helensburgh and Balloch. A large number of walkers from Helensburgh and Balloch converged on Gouk Hill, a stunning viewpoint overlooking Loch Lomond, where in glorious late afternoon sunshine they enjoyed a meeting and conversation between 'John Muir' and 'Tom Weir'. Two actors David Kinnaird and David Nelson played the roles of John

Muir and Tom Weir and had an entertaining and informative exchange on conservation issues. This event raised a further £500 for the Tom Weir Statue Campaign.

Friends Trustee John Urquhart said: "This was a very special event which took place in sparkling sunshine with the bonnie banks of Loch Lomond looking at their magical best as the two famous conservationists and champions of National Parks held the crowd spellbound with their conversation on their lifetime work promoting the benefits of the great outdoors and the concept of National Parks to protect wild and beautiful places. Many of those who were present described the event as a very moving and inspirational experience."

Interestingly, John Muir died on Christmas Eve in 1914 and in the following week Tom Weir was born. The Tom Weir Statue Campaign is now working in partnership with the Friends with the aim of having a statue of Tom erected at Balmaha picnic area

against the scenic backdrop of Balmaha Bay by the time of what would have been his 100th birthday in late December to mark Tom's great contribution to popularising the Scottish countryside and conserving its special qualities.

Susan Taylor, the Administrator of the Tom Weir Statue and her band of supporters have attended a number of events over the summer to raise funds for the statue and they are well on their way to achieving their target of £55,000 which was boosted recently by a grant award of £5,000 from the Friends for enabling works and professional fees associated with the statue commission and the planning application lodged in the summer.

However, they still need support in reaching their target and you can make an online donation to the campaign at www.lochlomond-trossachs.org or by post to The Tom Weir Memorial Fund, c/o National Park Offices, Carrochan Road, Balloch G83 8EG.



Tom Weir, who died in 2006, was a prolific writer and broadcaster on the great outdoors. He was also a great supporter of conservation and a campaigner for a National Park for Loch Lomond. Tom was one of the founder members of the Friends of Loch Lomond and served on the first Council. He supported the Friends' successful campaign to prevent a major pump storage hydro-electric scheme being developed on Loch Lomond's eastern shore which eventually led to Ben Lomond being protected for the nation with the transfer of the ownership to the National Trust for Scotland.

Sunset Cruise

A 90 strong party of Friends and Lennox Literary Society members enjoyed a sunset cruise on Loch Lomond in late August with some stirring renditions of well-known songs and ballads by popular local band, Hell for Leather. While the weather was mixed it provided an opportunity to enjoy the changing moods of the loch.



Christmas at Ross Priory

Mince pies, Mulled Wine, Music and Mini Craft Fair

on Sunday 30th November 2014 2.00pm to 4.30pm Tickets £8.50 each. By popular demand five local craft workers will have stalls again to sell a range of craft gifts (cash sales only). The musical entertainment this year will be provided by the Lomond School Senior Flute Choir & Traditional Music Group. Tickets available now. Book early to avoid disappointment. Tel Andrew Galloway on 01389 298008 or email info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk.



Continuing to Innovate and Expand



The very successful Cruise Loch Lomond passenger and charter boat business is run by Directors Fred Moore and Marie and Stuart Cordner Jnr (pictured left) from their base in the village of Tarbet and has remained true to the founding principles of the late Stuart Cordner Snr who recognised the need to continually innovate and adapt to meet the needs of an ever changing market. They now operate seven passenger vessels on Loch Lomond and are able to offer 20 different cruise products to visitors and travel trade clients. They are strong supporters of the Friends and have recently agreed to name their latest vessel after our President Dr Hannah Stirling MBE to mark her 100th birthday and contribution to the protection of Loch Lomond for current and future generations to enjoy. Here we chart the story of Cruise Loch Lomond and their success in developing a range of popular cruising options which are now enjoyed by around 120,000 visitors annually.

In the early 1970s the late Stuart Cordner Snr ran Ardmay Hotel on Loch Long with his first wife and he recognised there was a need to cater for fishing parties and to provide cruising opportunities on the Clyde. He set up the Arrochar Boat Hiring Company, operating commercial workboats and fishing charters, prior to entering the passenger cruise business with the purchase of the MV Viking Saga passenger boat and operated successful trips on Loch Long and the lower Clyde estuary for a number of years. He then identified a gap in the market for cruises at the north end of Loch Lomond to tap into the lucrative coach group business with thousands of coaches winding their way along the busy A82 tourist route. He managed to establish a foothold at Tarbet in 1978 and with the help of his nephew Fred Moore he started to successfully target coach tour companies with the offer of attractively priced short cruises on Loch Lomond. The business continued to expand gradually through the 1980s and 1990s with the acquisition of additional vessels and the introduction of a more varied range of cruise options for 'walk up' passengers and travel trade groups. With the construction of a purpose built boatyard at Tarbet in 1994 this enabled essential maintenance and refurbishment works to be carried out more easily and, along with their dedicated team of skilled staff, they painstakingly restored and modernised the fleet to meet the needs of increasingly discerning visitors. The company now has the capacity to carry 563 passengers at any one time and in a busy week can be carrying over 4,000 passengers generated from 100 coach tour group bookings and walk up passengers. With 30 staff in the main season, and 11 staff in the quieter winter months, now on the payroll Cruise Loch Lomond is a significant employer at the north end of the loch and makes a major contribution to the economic well-being of the

area as well as the overall quality of the visitor experience. Stuart Cordner Jnr takes up the story:

"We were very fortunate that Dad had the foresight to recognise the opportunities to capitalise on the tourism potential of the Clyde Sea Lochs and Loch Lomond almost 40 years ago. He understood the changing dynamics of the tourist industry and successfully catered for angling groups and the growing number of coach tour companies who were looking to incorporate a cruise in their itineraries. Since these early days we have continued to innovate and expand gradually and now cater for around 120,000 visitors each year and we work with numerous tour companies with guests from across the globe."

"We are particularly proud of our success in recent years diversifying into the outdoor adventure tourism market with a range of wildlife, cruise and walk, cruise and bike product offerings which have proved to be very popular. We have recently established a bike hire operation alongside our cruise business at Tarbet and this has enabled the more active visitor to combine cruising with cycling to see more of Loch Lomond in an environmentally friendly way."

Cruise Loch Lomond was recognised at national level in 2009 with the prestigious Thistle Award for their product innovation and the successful way they had targeted new and emerging markets. They continue to innovate with the recent addition of MV Lomond Hannah to cater for smaller groups and medium term plans to reintroduce some cruising options on Loch Long.

For further details of the cruise and adventure days out options offered by Cruise Loch Lomond visit www.cruiselochlomond.co.uk or telephone 01301702356

★ Staff Pen Profiles ... ★ Staff Pen Profiles... ★ Staff Pen Profiles...

Fred Moore (Director)

Fred started with the Company in 1980 helping Stuart (Snr) make Cruise Loch Lomond a compelling visitor attraction experience on the travel trade circuit. He has played an important role in ensuring the Company has gone from strength to strength. Fred sits on the Board of the UK Passenger Boat Association representing Scottish commercial passenger boat operators and has also served for many years on the VisitScotland Travel Trade Steering Committee representing the private sector. A keen sailor with his own yacht on the Clyde Fred has crossed the Atlantic in the ARC 2011 Regatta with wife Alison, General Manager of Lochs & Glens Holidays.

Bob McEwan (Skipper)

Bob originally worked for Stuart (Snr) from the age of 11 at Arrochar Pier helping with the fishing boat hire business. He went on to work and skipper numerous vessels for Arrochar Boat Hiring Co. operating supply and support vessels at Portavadie; Ardyne; Scapa Flow and Sullow Voe. Following a 10 year 'sabbatical' with the Forestry Commission Bob returned to the family business in 1989 and has been skippering vessels for Cruise Loch Lomond ever since.



Foundation Supporters £500 MINIMUM

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email: enquiries@opticalexpress.com

www.opticalexpress.com

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

• ROSS PRIORY

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

• LOCHS & GLENS HOLIDAYS

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email: enquiries@lochsandglens.com

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• LODGE ON LOCH LOMOND HOTEL

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email: res@loch-lomond.co.uk

www.loch-lomond.co.uk

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• LOVE LOCH LOMOND

email: info@lovelochlomond.com

www.lovelochlomond.com

Love Loch Lomond is a recently formed industry led Destination

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

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Help us by becoming a member of the Friends or donating today. Buy our new DVD providing fascinating insights to the lives of Park people and what is so special to them about the National Park. A range of other DVDs and informative guides are also available. Support our efforts in the knowledge every penny is reinvested in protecting the special qualities of Scotland's first National Park.

A Track Record of Achievement over 35 Years

For over 35 years we have been working to protect, promote and provide for this special part of Scotland that extends to 720 square miles and embraces precious mountains, lochs and landscapes made famous by writers and artists over many hundreds of years. The area is enjoyed by large numbers of visitors and locals each year and to ensure everyone can continue to enjoy and celebrate the special landscapes of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs we need your support.

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

Becoming a member for a modest £20 – 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



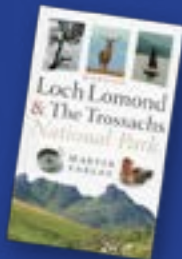
Make a donation many of our members do this each time they renew, adding £10 or so to their cheque and this gives us the funds to fight the dreadful proposals for wind farms with 100 metre high turbines all around the Southern edge of Loch Lomond, or you can just make a one off donation at any time.



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Just donations can help us to...

- plant a native tree with protective tubing and stake – **for £12**
- or help replace one of the great old trees blown down in the winter storms around Loch Lomond and the Trossachs **for £50**
- sponsor a red squirrel feeding station & feed **for £25**
- restore or create a metre of footpath **for £45**
- help a child's life chances with an inspiring environmental and outdoor activity **for £40**



To help make a difference please tick the relevant boxes below and complete your details. If you prefer you can send us an email us at info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk or phone us on **01389 298008** with the details of your order and we will get back to you within a couple of days. Further details of membership rates and benefits can be seen on www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk

- I am interested in becoming a Friends member- please contact me
- I am interested in volunteering opportunities
- I would like to make a donation of £

I would like to order:

- Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Scenic DVD £9** plus £2.00 P&P
- Discover Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Guide £9.99** plus £1.50 P&P
- The Islands of Loch Lomond Historical Guide £5.00** plus £1.50 P&P
- Celebrating Park People & Their Stories DVD £9** plus £2.00 P&P

PAYMENT DETAILS

I enclose a cheque (payable to 'Friends of Loch Lomond & the Trossachs') for the sum of £.....

email info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk

YOUR DETAILS

Name

email

Address

..... Post Code

Contact tel. no.

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