



Spring · Summer 2011 | No. 7

# The *Voice*

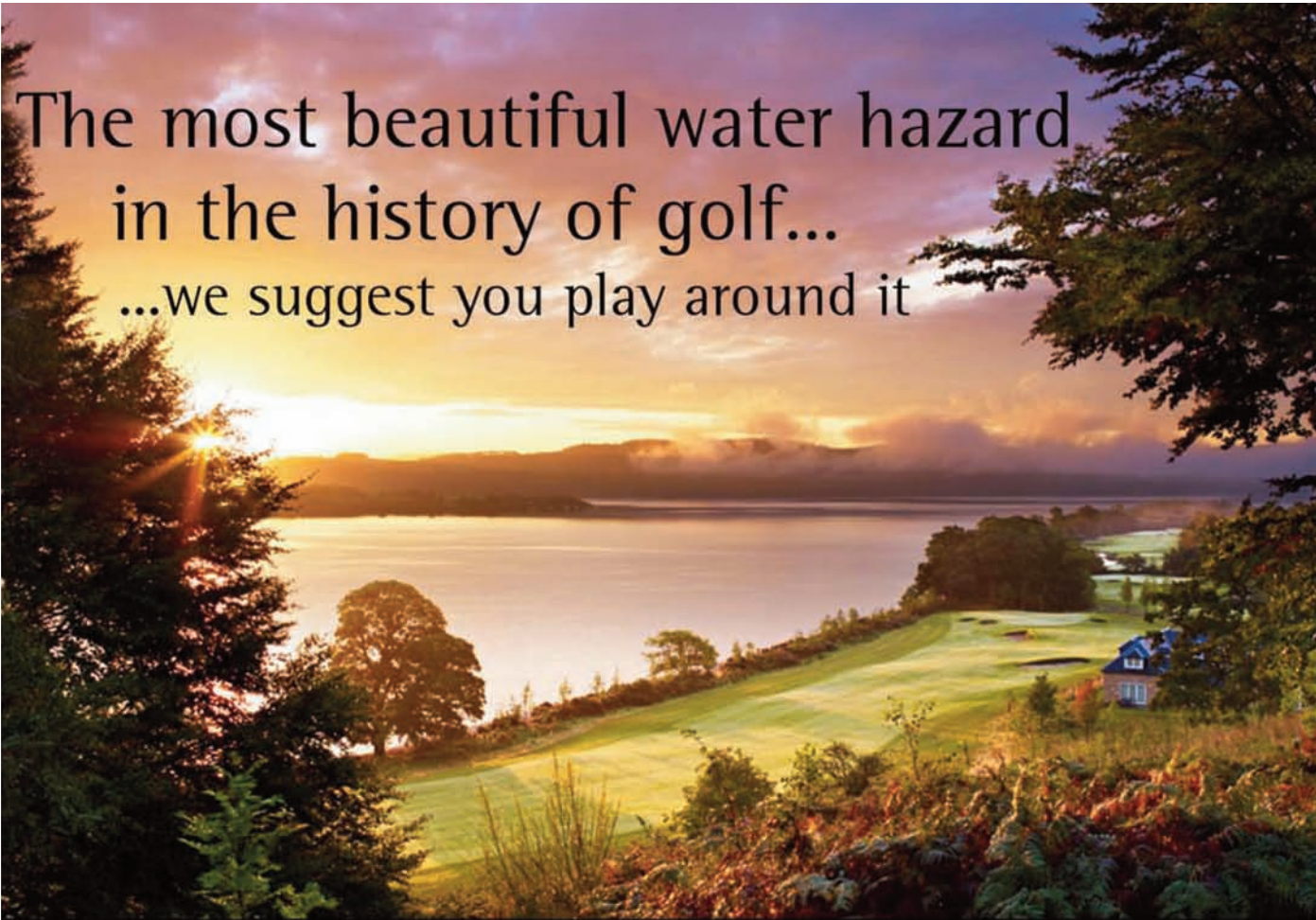
*The magazine of the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs*



**INSIDE THIS ISSUE: Islands of Shame, A Very Special Golf Day, Benmore Botanic Gardens,  
Spring Has Sprung, Fairy Kidnap of Minister, Maid for the Loch, and more...**



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# The Voice

**The Voice** is the magazine of the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, the independent conservation charity working solely to protect, promote and provide projects and services for this most precious part of Scotland – The Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park. To join us or to find out more about our work please visit [www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk](http://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 [simon@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk](mailto:simon@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk)

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

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## A letter from the President

It has been a long hard winter, with snow beginning in November and with icy roads and frozen pipes to contend with, not forgetting New Year's day when Scottish Water cut off my water completely – without any warning. All in all the past months have been difficult.

Old age has taken its toll and aches and pains keep me very much confined to my sun porch – but I still maintain a watching brief for Loch Lomond and keep in touch with The Park. I am deeply concerned with the closure of the two information centres at Luss and the Gateway at Lomond Shores. I was present at their opening as visitor centres. Sadly the pressure on the Park finances is such that Luss is to be a soap shop and the Gateway an ice cream parlour. Surely not part of the vision for Scotland's first National Park?

I have survived another winter and spring is on the way. The snowdrops and the white heather are out – first harbingers of the sap rising once more – my favourite time of year. So, though I cannot wander round the garden I can at least look at it through the window, and as always it is a great joy.

*All the best, yours aye Hannah*

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**ARROCHAR BEACH CLEAN, SUNDAY 10 APRIL**

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Refreshments and cakes provided!

**LOCH LUBNAIG/LOCH EARN SPRING CLEAN, MAY - TBC**

**CALEDONIAN CHALLENGE, SAT 11 & SUN 12 JUNE**

An opportunity once again to be part of this fun event whilst raising valuable funds for our conservation work by marshalling in the wild northern part of the National Park, ensuring this challenging walking event runs smoothly.

**For more information on the above events, or to register to take part please contact Jennie on 01389 727 709 or email [jennie.wills@lochlomond-trossachs.org](mailto:jennie.wills@lochlomond-trossachs.org).**



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## Chairman's letter



### Dear Members

WELCOME to this Spring issue of the Voice which contains an interesting range of features on different aspects of the National Park and some of our latest activities. This is an exciting and challenging time for the Friends as we strive to protect and promote the special qualities of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs area for the enjoyment of visitors and local residents in partnership with the National Park Authority and others, including our growing band of business supporters and volunteers.

We have made a number of important breakthroughs recently on the funding front to sustain and expand our activities. We were delighted to secure funding from the Forth Valley and Lomond, and the Argyll and the Islands European LEADER Programmes to support the expansion of the OUR park initiative across the whole of the National Park area. This scheme is also being financially supported by Scottish Enterprise, the National Park Authority and Scottish Natural Heritage and the number of businesses starting to actively fundraise from visitors continues to grow with monies re-invested in wildlife conservation and access projects.

OUR park is complemented by our new Business Supporters Scheme, and we are pleased to welcome Tigh Mor Trossachs Holiday Property Bond, Vision Express, Ross Priory (University of Strathclyde), Macdonald Forest Hills Hotel & Resort and Loch Katrine Visitor Complex as the latest Business Supporters. We are grateful to David Mouldsdale of Vision Express and Stephen Carter of Cameron House Hotel for joining forces with us to sponsor a major fundraising event

planned for June at the Carrick Golf Course (see page 6). Advertising and sponsorship has also enabled us to boost the print run of Voice to 5,000 copies, spreading the word about our activities and discussing some of the major issues in the Park with an increasingly wide audience.

It is a time of change at the National Park Authority as Mike Cantley steps down as Convener to concentrate on his new role as Chair of VisitScotland and as a number of others settle into their new roles as Board Members. We owe Mike our sincere thanks for his contribution to the National Park.

We look forward to seeing you and other members at our AGM which is being held on the PS Maid of the Loch – on the evening of 9th May 2011. This will be an enjoyable and informative event which is being attended by Linda McKay – Mike's successor as Convenor of the Park Authority. She is currently the Principal of Forth Valley College and is no stranger to the Park through her former role as Chair of Scottish Enterprise Forth Valley. We wish her well in her new role and look forward to building on the excellent relationship we had with her predecessor, and continue to have with Park Authority staff.

We were recently saddened to see the termination of the 15 year association between the Loch Lomond Golf Club and the Scottish Open with the event moving to Castle Stuart, near Inverness this year. Television coverage of the Scottish Open has brought the scenic splendours of Loch Lomond into tens of millions of households around the world over the years and has been a great boost to tourism locally. The Friends also enjoyed a good working relationship with the management team and organisers of the event and regularly had a presence in the tented

village to promote our work. On a more positive note we are pleased the future of the Golf Club has been secured with members paying £25 million to purchase this world-class facility from the banks. We wish them well in managing what is a very special part of Loch Lomondside.

We continue to lobby on a number of important matters and thanked Roseanna Cunningham, Minister for the Environment on her recent visit for the initial £300,000 plus contribution to the National Park Authority for much needed Loch Lomond pier upgrades that will safeguard the future of the growing range of cruising opportunities on the loch. We were also pleased she undertook to take up our plea for action with the Transport Minister to remove stretches of the Loch Lomond 'tree tunnel' to allow travellers to see the scenic beauty of the loch again. We are also awaiting the outcome of the Government Reporters deliberations on the first finalised Local Plan for the National Park and are hoping they will agree with the representations we have made to protect the Park from large wind turbine structures and to uphold the local residency housing occupancy conditions which have served the southern Loch Lomondside villages well for so many years.

Thank you for your continuing support, which we very much appreciate! We would be very grateful if you could pass on the enclosed membership form to a friend or relation and do your bit by persuading them to join the Friends and strengthen our membership base. I hope you enjoy reading this edition of the Voice.

All the very best **James Fraser**  
Chair-Friends of Loch Lomond  
and The Trossachs



## A very special Golf Day!

The details for our Charity Golf Day have been finalised and we are very pleased to report that David Mouldale and his company Optical Express have offered to run the day for us, following their own Golf Day for the Mouldale Foundation the day before. Facilities at the Carrick and the dinner are being very generously provided by Cameron House.

As a result of this generous support, we have a major fundraising opportunity for The Friends, which will generate very significant funding to enable projects to project, promote and provide for a very part of Scotland – Loch Lomond and The Trossachs. The Golf Day is the first event of its kind being hosted by The Friends and we are hoping it will become an annual occurrence.

The golf event is being targeted primarily at corporate clients, but is also available on a first come first served basis for our members and readers of VOICE – in teams of four only.

### FRIENDS OF LOCH LOMOND & THE TROSSACHS CHARITY GOLF DAY 2011

Carrick Golf Club, Loch Lomond  
Wednesday, 29th June 2011

The golf day will take place at the prestigious Carrick Golf Club, one of Scotland's finest new courses with its majestic setting on the shores of Loch Lomond.

The player's package for the day includes:

- Golfer's souvenir pack
- Light refreshments before play
- Access to the Practice Area with assistance from the resident Golf Pro
- 18 holes of golf, with refreshments at regular intervals
- Prize giving ceremony and auction
- Team photographs
- Drinks reception
- Dinner

Arrival time at the Carrick is 12 noon, with play commencing with a shotgun start at 2pm. Transport can be arranged to / from Glasgow Airport if required.

The entry fee will be £1,000 per team of four golfers. Sponsorship of individual holes, prizes and various aspects of the day are also available, for further information please contact [simon@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk](mailto:simon@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk) or phone 01436 677733.

To book a team of four places at the event please email Simon Lewis at the above address and send payment to Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, 63 West Princess St, Helensburgh, G84 8BN - by Friday 29th April. Team places are limited and an early return is recommended to avoid disappointment. Bookings will be confirmed once full payment has been received.



George is the 'Chief Engineer' at Cameron House – or this at least is his job title. He's in charge of everything to do with the physical fabric of the hotel and all its facilities including The Carrick'. And he's been here from the beginning, coming on board just as the building that is now this wonderful hotel was being stripped to a bare shell and rebuilt

George's father had escaped from Poland as the Nazis took control, and on arrival in this country had enlisted for 'The Polish Regiment', to be promptly sent back to fight in the country of his birth. At the end of the war, like so many of his countrymen he had become a miner – digging coal near Dollar in what is now Clackmannanshire. Here he was naturalised and the clerk taking his details misheard the surname Goertz, shortening it to Gerc – despite his protestations this was now the new family name!

George was born in Tillicoultry just before the family moved to Argyll where his father took a job with the Forestry Commission and they lived in Achnamara. After a couple of years his dad had the opportunity to take over a Forestry Commission croft and they moved to a small croft known as South Lecknabaan in the hills above Bellanoch on the road to Tayvallich. George was 12 years old when his father became estate manager for the then Cameron Estate, and the family moved to Loch Lomondside.

"What a place it was for a 12 year old" says George

There was a boy of his own age, David Smollett, in 'the big house' and adventures were had in what is now one of Scotland's finest hotels. They tried to fire the flintlock pistols using a quantity of match heads, George almost succeeded in climbing into a full size suit of armour and soon Mr Smollett, the estate's owner was talking to George's parents

"You must tell young George to stop encouraging young David...". He apparently needed no encouraging though.

Mrs Smollett is still living at Cameron Home Farm, above Cameron House Hotel.

George joined the Royal Navy in 1965 as a Junior Stoker and left after 25 years as a Charge Chief Artificer. He had been around the world many times and served on many vessels starting on an aircraft carrier and finally ending his naval career on nuclear submarines. On ships and subs he generally had to make any parts or repairs needed – he would have access to a lathe and other decent gear on board. As he says;

'To mend it you generally had to make it' There was no overnight delivery in the middle of the Atlantic or wherever they happened to be!

During his time at sea he felt he was hardly at home and missed his family. On one often-remembered occasion he was travelling by train to embark on a ship at Mallaig to start his sea training. There was no time to get home and he found his mother waiting on the platform at Dalreoch station with a basket full of his

# By George

## - a lifetime by Cameron House

**Simon Lewis talks to one of 'the characters' of the National Park, with a lifetime at Loch Lomondside.**

favourite gipsy creams - they were passed up through the window of the slow moving train and George was off again across the ocean.

During his navy days he had met and married Pamela who lived at the time in Fareham, and they have 3 children – 2 girls, a boy – and a 4 month old grandson, aptly named Cameron George.. His son George was the assistant manager at the Marina at Cameron House until taking on the role as dockmaster at Brixham Marina in Devon four years ago. His daughters are still in the local area. Patricia teaches art at Our Lady and St Patrick's secondary school in Dumbarton and Catherine runs the Business Banking section for HBoS in Alexandria.

George left the Navy and started to use the engineering expertise he had built up over 25 years to run a small steel fabrication business around the Loch Lomond area – and a major client was Cameron House Hotel which was being stripped back to bare stone and remade from the old leaking house it had been. The Bear Park venture which some will remember had come and gone in the early 1980s, timeshare lodges had been built around 1989 and then in 1990 George started as 'Chief Engineer' – a title well known in the Navy which he selected when asked what he should be called. He got the job on account of just 'dropping by' to ask if there might be any work on the steel going into the hotel – almost literally as he walked up the drive the man who was just to start as maintenance manager had been taken seriously ill – there was a brief conversation and he started on the spot!

For over 20 years – this is what George has been – chief engineer, head of maintenance – in charge of all of the fabric of Cameron House Hotel, The Leisure Club and spa, everything at The Carrick. His team is responsible for stone and mortar, light bulbs and shower fittings, cookers in the kitchen, wiring in the conference rooms. He has a number of key manufacturers and suppliers for the Hotel, and it's not quite his

navy days when at sea when:

'You had to 'make the part to fix the motor'. As George says, 'It's more about knowing who can do it for you, and do it properly'

At this 5 star establishment George starts his day at around 7:30am; he has to deal with some papers, he even has to do some email, but then its boiler suit on as fast as possible and down to some 'proper work'. He has the highest standards – there are no loose taps or squeaking door hinges on his watch at Cameron House!

On the infrequent occasions when he's not on duty, he's probably taking one of his precious motorbikes out for a spin – perhaps cruising back west to Lochgilphead. He has three bikes – two 'veterans' and a modern machine. He regularly marshals at the famous Isle of Man TT races and is part of local man Mark Buckley's OTSS racing team. There are no cars in the Gerc household, though he tells me he once had a 'Series A' Landover - he felt this was as comfortable as he was prepared to get in or on a vehicle!

I came to interview George for this article in VOICE, and like a budding 'cub' (!) reporter had all sorts of interesting questions lined up. He talked with such enthusiasm about his childhood and later life around and in Cameron House that no questions were needed to tease out the stories. But I did get to ask him two of my planned questions and discovered that; His favourite time of the year is Spring into early Summer, and the biggest challenge in his all encompassing role is keeping smiling and looking as if nothing is too difficult.

George sets a very high standard for his team at Cameron House and the Carrick, and he tells me he's often a little surprised and depressed by what he sees elsewhere (the contractors he brings in to his patch generally know better these days!). He can't help looking at the tiling in other hotels there you may find cracked grout, but never in a Cameron house bathroom. Sweeping the yard in one go, rather than

covering the ground with broom and brush two of three times, measuring twice, at least, and cutting once. One of his favourites is gutters in which the water is expected to run uphill, but it's a long time since anyone has tried this miracle of science at Cameron House.

George is 62, but looks and behaves as if he's in his 50s. He has an infectious enthusiasm for Loch Lomond and the Lochside on which he grew up. He is some 2 and ½ years from retirement, and if that ever happens, this five star establishment will lose one of it's greatest characters.

My two hours over coffee with George has gone in a flash - an infectious burst of stories, enthusiasm and devotion to a beautiful place and a famous establishment at the heart of the National Park on the bonny, bonny banks of Loch Lomond.

Here's to the Chief Engineer!








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# 2011

## BENMORE BOTANIC GARDEN

The spring 2011 season at Benmore is likely to start with an interesting array of flowering despite the harsh winter. Normally the deep red *Rhododendron barbatum* (right) would be in flower from 1st March. If it is slightly late, rarely more than seven days, it still has wonderful deep coloured stems of interest. In the area of the pond there is an interesting collection of acers and many colourful herbaceous species including primulas, ariseamas and meconopsis.

The first exhibition in the Courtyard Gallery is "James Duncan of Benmore, An enlightened Victorian". This exhibition from 6th March to 22nd May will showcase Duncan's life story, owner of Benmore in the 1870's, and 1880's, depicted with banners and artefacts, plus the story of Duncan's picture gallery at Benmore with reproduced canvasses from Duncan's great collection.

Of the over three hundred species of rhododendron growing at Benmore, flowering will continue from early spring to mid summer, with many other flowering trees and shrubs complimenting them. From early April, expect to see magnificent specimens of magnolia in flower. The "Chilean Firebush" *Embothrium coccineum* from May, with *Styrax japonica* flowering in early summer. One of the late summer flowering groups of plants of great stature and interest at Benmore are the eucryphas.

The restored Victorian Fernery, which opened to visitors in September 2009, has a fascinating collection of ferns comprising over seventy



species. For visitors not interested in ferns, many will be able to enjoy the magnificent restored structure which had been a ruin for over eighty years.

Garden guiding takes place at 2pm on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays throughout the season. Guided tours are informal with no prior booking being required and are tailored to the interests of whoever turns up. Tours last approximately one to one and a half hours. The Benmore Explorer takes tours for the less able on specific dates.

For visitors who would prefer an independent tour, audio guides are available.

For the 2011 season there is a new 38 page guide book, which contains much information about the history, purpose, map, plantings and management of the garden.

There are to be illustrated talks on "Plant collecting in North America", "RBGE's work in China" and "James Duncan of Benmore". Exhibitions in association with local artists, crafts people and Cowal Open Studios will take place. Our members AGM is at 2pm on 31st March. Anyone interesting in finding out more about Benmore is welcome to attend.

**For detailed information of events and topical information about what is happening at Benmore, please access information from [www.rbge.org.uk/benmore](http://www.rbge.org.uk/benmore) twitter, facebook or contact the Curator on 01369 706261.**



# *The* REMARKABLE *REVEREND* ROBERT KIRK

*by Louis Stott*

It is not often that fairies kidnap a minister, or that thereafter he has been said to be in perpetual charge of his parish since he may return from fairyland at any moment, but this fate has befallen Robert Kirk (1644–1692). He was the seventh son of James Kirk, minister of Aberfoyle. In November 1664 he became the minister of Balquhider, and in June 1685 he was appointed to his father's old charge. In both parishes he studied his parishioners' beliefs, particularly about second sight, supposedly possessed by seventh sons, and about fairies.

Kirk's parishes were entirely Gaelic speaking, and the minister was the scholarly author of the first complete metrical psalter in Gaelic in 1684. But Kirk was not 'a one-trick pony'; thereafter he became involved in two projects financed by the scientist Robert Boyle. The first was a Bible in Irish type, but the Irish characters were unfamiliar, and Kirk proposed that it should be transliterated into roman characters and carried out the task himself. This was during the time of considerable uncertainty in the Scottish church, which succeeded the political events of 1688. Kirk, who was something of a 'Vicar of Bray', had been permitted to continue in the ministry despite his unrepentant episcopalianism. The intrepid minister then went to London for eight months to supervise the printing of what came to be known as Kirk's Bible, of 1690. In addition to the Bible, a vocabulary of 464 difficult words foreshadowed future Gaelic dictionaries.



*Left: A copy of Kirk Coat of Arms and Robert Kirk's final resting place*



While in London, Kirk, who still had a keen interest in fairy superstitions, met Bishop Edward Stillingfleet and his wife, Elizabeth. The bishop was a seventh son, and the couple, who were to have seven sons, asked what this might imply. In response Kirk wrote, *The Curious Secret Commonwealth*, addressed to Elizabeth Stillingfleet. Should you wish to be appraised of seventeenth century brawls in Killin, or second sight for widows, and much else, the *Secret Commonwealth* is for you.

Kirk married twice. His second wife was pregnant with their second child, Marjorie, when Kirk died, at Aberfoyle, on 14 May 1692. Interest in Kirk has persisted, partly because a successor at Aberfoyle, Patrick Graham (1750–1835), drew him to the attention of Sir Walter Scott who mentioned him in *Rob Roy* (1818). In his *Sketches of Perthshire* (1812), Graham related that Kirk did not die, but was ‘taken’ by the fairies whose secrets he had betrayed. According to Graham, Kirk reappeared at the baptism of his posthumous child. Manifesting himself to a ‘mutual relation’, the minister had asked that his brother-in-law, Thomas Graham of Duchray, cast a dagger above his head, to release him from fairyland, but, at the baptism, ‘in his astonishment’, Duchray failed to throw the weapon, leaving Kirk captive in fairyland. Since then many distinguished folklorists have investigated the Fairy Minister, but this has meant that the importance of Kirk's work, as the scholar who was among the first to record highland folk-beliefs and to make the Bible accessible to highlanders, has sometimes been underestimated.

**Louis Stott wrote the entry in the *New Oxford Dictionary of Biography* about Robert Kirk.**

## Planning News

The gold mine controversy rolls on with a planning appeal to be held this summer and meanwhile outside the Park ScotGold announce major finds. Clearly this charity will not object to mining outside the National Park, but we will make representations at the appeal for Cononish, within the Park near Tyndrum. We hear that the applicant may have been able to significantly reduce the size of the ‘tailings’ in a new scheme – the great mound of spoil that was a strong part of the focus of our and others’ objections. As Simon Lewis says: ‘I clearly remember ScotGold's comment at the planning meeting last summer when they stated that the mound could just not be any smaller – it had to be built this way and to this size, or the whole project was un-viable, and they'd withdraw all their investment from the area. Oh well... If the mine does get through on appeal it may at least have a smaller visual impact and that might be an improvement?’

As we go to press, local plan hearings are imminent and the Friends are being lobbied to oppose a wind farm development that will be visible to the South of Loch Lomond from the surface of the Loch itself. Some holiday developments at Drymen are also seeking planning permission, and we are looking at these plans carefully. As a membership charity, we are always interested to hear our members’ individual views – please let us have them! our position is to always.

On wind energy, our position is that wind turbines near or over 50 metres (or 164 feet) high, which are possible in the current local plan draft, must not be allowed. This scale of wind turbine is in our view a commercial development which may very well be welcomed elsewhere in Scotland – but surely could ruin the scenery of this valuable national park with its famous and beautiful landscape.

There are a range of opinions and viewpoints and as ever the editor of VOICE would welcome yours on this and other issues. After publication of the Autumn 2010 edition of VOICE we did receive one objection to the position we stated on wind turbines from Ian Watson of Blanefield – and we quote the interesting comments he makes below: *“I was disappointed that the Friends closed the door on wind turbines which are by far the best renewable source of energy to replace fossil fuels which threaten the health of humans and their children and destroy the environment. In formed people tell us that cheap oil will end soon. The consequences could be a disaster for the undeveloped countries who were not responsible for man made global warming. Because Scotland has the highest average wind speed in Europe, wind turbines could save us from economic disaster. Surely, it would be possible to find one or two areas where wind farms of 1MW machines could be sited without spoiling the views from then loch and roads. Near loch Sloy might be a suitable place. The future is so bleak that we should do all we can to prepare for the end of cheap oil.”*

We believe the National Park is capable of making its ‘best’ contribution to the Scottish Government's renewable targets through the less intrusive and more efficient ‘run of the river’ hydro schemes’. Please do let us have your views too!



# Spring has sprung...

*Well-known local naturalist Keith Graham, who lives at Port of Mentieth, writes of Spring Growth and Summer coming*

**It has been a long time coming but as I write (in mid-February), there are encouraging signs that spring is at last springing. It has been a long, drawn out winter with keen frosts and plenty of snow, a winter which it may be assumed, has tested all forms of wildlife to the limit. With many of the small mammals seeking solace underneath the snow, it has undoubtedly been a hard winter for raptors such as kestrels, buzzards and kites. Hard too for wildfowl and herons in particular, frozen out – excluded - from their normal haunts.**

The advance of spring – and there could of course, be many setbacks yet to come – can be likened to an advancing tide. Its progress can at first be sluggish but slowly the impetus gathers and the season of re-birth cannot be denied. The first hint of a changing mood from the rigours of pure survival to something a little more animated, came on a cold and frosty morning, with snow still lying. The herald was a great tit, piping his little 'tea-cher, tea-cher, tea-cher' challenge with typical vigour.

Lengthening days have a profound influence on birds in particular and on this sharp but sunny morning, this bonnie

little fellow was eager to get his message over. "I am ready, willing and able; I'm a handsome, available male ladies and eager to oblige!" There was too, immediate, vocal response from rival cock great tits. Amongst our most intelligent birds, cock great tits, identified through the broad black band all the way down their chests, are always quick to state their case at the very first hint of forthcoming spring.

This attractive little bird is familiar indeed in many gardens, is well distributed throughout the park but by nature is really a woodland dweller. It is surprisingly versatile as a vocalist. I recall once playing a recording of something like forty different bird songs to an audience and asking them to identify the vocalists. Much to the audience's surprise, all forty were recordings of great tits and it may well be that as you saunter through the woods you may hear little snatches of song you are unable to identify. The chances are that most of them will emanate from great tits!

If these are among the earliest vocalists, eagerly announcing the approach of spring, others have already caught the mood. There has for instance, been much 'kronking', especially in the higher reaches of the park, as the ravens – which incidentally pair for life - have been setting about renewing their vows.

Whilst mostly confined to the Highland parts of the park, there are nevertheless, ravens well to the south of the great fault line that so clearly separates the Lowland areas of the park from its towering Highlands. In those high places too, golden eagles, also constant, by the second half of February, will have determined which of the eyries in their territory they will use this year. They may have a choice of two or three and the decision as to which one they will use is inevitably made by the hen bird. Avian society, in that respect is

distinctly matriarchal!

These are just some of the tell tale signs that we look for as that feeling of great expectations grabs us. Nature sets down these markers each and every year, albeit that sometimes the timing may differ.

The first snowdrops, trembling in a rather chill blast mark the prelude, with pussy willow emerging also, to fulfil promises that spring will come... sooner or later. Then there follow primroses, opening their yellow faces to the sun, and inevitably, the golden daffodils, hosts of them. And there is gold on them thar hills too as gorse, whin or furze, set the hillsides ablaze with their glowing, golden blooms.

As summer creeps forward, bluebells fill the woodlands and indeed areas where once woodland stood, with their heady scent. Blue carpets clothe the woodland floor whilst hedgerows are pure white, first with hawthorn (May blossom) and then with sloe blossom as memories of a landscape plastered with a different kind of white, fast fade.

And of course, we look also for movement as the urge to migrate stirs many different kinds of birds to prepare themselves for travel. The first signs of movement are not necessarily of long distance travellers but of those birds that spend most of their winter in the marine environment. The shrill piping of oyster-catchers as much as any other sound, bears witness to the arrival inland of these first springtime adventurers. They probe the earth with their long, bright, orange beaks as they explore the subterranean world for unseen invertebrate food. They are quite unmistakable with their striking black and white plumage and are of course, always nervously vocal.

Tightly packed, highly disciplined flocks of lapwing also head inland in the early spring, before dispersing to seek suitable breeding places, often on bleak





moorland but also in Lowland fields. Soon they are flinging themselves gloriously about the sky as courtship brings the very best out of these wonderful avian athletes, which perhaps are known by more sobriquets than any other; 'teuchit', 'chewit', 'peesweep' and 'thieves nacket' to name but a few. There is a romance about the voices of lapwings just as there is an air of mystery about the warbling voices of curlew, another of the short-haul immigrants. In memory, no hill walk I ever undertook seemed to be without its whistling whaups! Perhaps they serenade the newly arriving lambs?

Meanwhile, there are departures too as the geese that have languished here during the winter months, look north and in their orderly skeins, take leave of us to head for their Arctic breeding grounds. Departing too are the whooper swans, their graceful presence soon to be a memory as the lochs are left to be the sole swan lakes of our gliding and sedentary mute swans.

In April the real travellers begin to arrive, many of them minuscule yet brave and full of stamina. Chiff-chaffs, plain little birds, often the first of these epic voyagers to put in an appearance, betray their presence through their metronomic chanting high in the woodland canopies. These are birds that weigh in at mere ounces but which have incredibly, crossed deserts, seas and mountain ranges to get here. Wheatears, once called 'white arses', flash their white rumps provocatively as they arrive on upland sheep walks.

But these are merely the vanguard for literally millions of others. Sand martins, soon followed by house martins and eventually by swallows, swoop low over the lochs to snatch insect life as they renew their energy banks after long and perilous journeys of thousands of miles.

Already, by late March or early April, ospreys have been seen quartering the lochs, eyes down in search of the silver darlings that are their bread and butter. They are among the early travellers and soon they can be seen snatching fallen branches from the ground with which to re-furbish their eyries. No bird has surely captured the hearts of the public so dramatically during the past fifty years or so. Like phoenixes they have risen from complete extinction here in the early twentieth century to a thrilling presence in many parts of the park. And all this hurley burley, this swarming immigration, sets a new tone. The real marker of advancing spring is as much to be heard as seen as the volume and variety of birdsong increases by the day. Song is of the essence of avian courtship but happily it gives us so much pleasure too. By lonely or busy lochsides, in woodlands, ancient or modern, on wild heaths, out on the moors and even amongst the jagged high mountains a vast array of music greets our ears.

In the forests and woodlands by May something else stirs as roe deer give birth to their Bambi-like kids, usually twins which the doe carefully nurtures in separate parts of the woods for security until at last they are strong enough to run with her.

The last of the migrants arrive in May as swifts hurtle in from Africa to scream their messages of summer among the chimney tops. The cuckoo too arrives quite late and indeed, lingers here perhaps for a mere three months or so. This bird that shuns true parenthood, is content to make its way back to warmer climes once its dastardly deeds are done. It leaves, safe in the knowledge that the next generation of gowks is receiving lots of tender loving care from a whole host of willing foster parents, most often within the park perhaps, passing parental duties to dutiful little meadow pipits.

Still the music pours forth as new generations begin to emerge. High on the hillsides, red deer calves are dropped, most of them born in June. And still the clamour continues as the boundless energy of countless birds and animals devoted to the primary task of renewing future generations overrides all other considerations.

Only as July approaches is there any break in this frantic action. Now, for most the job is done. Throughout July and August, there is suddenly a hush as the clamour now is muted and birds prepare for their annual moult in more silent mode. Debilitated by this gradual change of plumage and thus more vulnerable to predators, most cease their singing. It as if the birds have suddenly disappeared but it is not so. Hence August in particular can seem soporific, as lochs seem more reflective and sometimes eerily silent. Woodlands too fall quiet and mountain sides are hushed.

As the chatter of the woodlands recedes, from the moors, the lapwings, sea-pies and whaups take flight with their new generations, returning to the marine or estuarine environments. A new mood pervades and all must now turn to face the future. For the year's progeny, the tests ahead are of survival and as the colours change from verdant green to gold and red and on the rolling hills purple, that is the challenge they must face.

Yet nature is not entirely done for in the glens can now be heard the guttural roars of the Monarchs of the Glens. The year's most important work is still to be done as red deer stags at last reach the climax of their year. The first frosts and sometimes the first snows on the peaks seem to kindle in the hearts of these mighty beasts, new ambition as the rut pits mighty stag against mighty stag. Battle is joined... and how! If this epic annual peak of frantic action marks an end it also marks a new beginning as another new generation is about to be sired. Ahead lies winter and already, as September unfolds, south-bound traffic is growing as new generations join old in a mass exodus for warmer climes.

And yet, as October's reddening, purpled landscape provides a final dramatic fling, the arrivals lounge is already busy as geese and swans begin to arrive from the far north with their new generations in tow. These ever changing patterns enrich the park. And if variety is the spice of life then there are riches indeed to be discovered. High up in the mountains that dominate the northern reaches, by lochs, burns and rivers, on the sweeping moorlands or in the softer, field patterned and wooded lowlands, there is in the remarkable variety of wildlife, always something waiting to be discovered. Go find it!

*“And there is gold on them thar hills too as gorse, whin or furze, set the hillsides ablaze with their glowing, golden blooms.”*





# Our future just got brighter!

**New members!** A group of Trossachs businesses supporters gathered on a morning of snowflakes at Loch Katrine in February – thank you to our founder members (shown below).

This edition of VOICE sees our new Business Supporters Scheme going from strength to strength. We're delighted that the leading businesses in the Trossachs have joined as members of the scheme, alongside the many hundreds of 'public' members of the Friends. Just like our public members, our business supporters are passionate about protecting this wonderful part of Scotland. And through the scheme they

are now actively supporting our work to protect the area's environmental quality heritage and culture, promote it as a most special part of Scotland, and provide for its future through a range of projects for people and for wildlife. Together we believe that a beautiful growing, and thriving National Park is vital for visitors, customers and everyone who lives here! James Fraser – the chairman of The Friends said: "As the new 'season' starts we are delighted to welcome new Business Supporters

in the Trossachs - I am very grateful to all our Business Supporters, and everyone advertising in this edition of VOICE, for their wonderful support. We will use it to keep this place special and enjoyed by all".

*Below our new supporters (left to right): Stuart Ross - Harbour Café; Mark Shimidzu - Wheels; Simon Lewis - Friends; David Wyles - Loch Katrine; Nikki Cirillo - Tigh Mor Trossachs; John Martin - Poppies Hotel; Danny McKirgan - Myrtle Inn; James Fraser - Friends*



## "The Capital of the National Park" Joins Forces with the Friends

Businesses in and around Callander-the largest settlement in the National Park which can justly claim to be the Park's Capital- have come together under the umbrella of Callander Enterprise to join the Friends Business Supporters Scheme. Callander Enterprise is a dynamic business group with 200 members and has ambitious objectives to position the town in such a way as to maximise the benefits of National Park status for the entire business community in the area. Callander Enterprise recently took over the 'incallander' website(www.incallander.co.uk) which attracts more traffic than the official national Park website. The Group is also active on twitter www.twitter.com/incallander. George Johnson, Chair of Callander Enterprise said, ' I am keen to ensure we develop a good working relationship with the Friends as I am a firm believer that we can achieve so much more for the town by working together on a range of projects that will make a real difference to the quality of the visitor experience in this special corner of Scotland's first National Park'.

The Friends Chairman, James Fraser added, 'I am delighted to welcome Callander Enterprise as a Business Supporter of the Friends - I and my staff along with our local based trustee Carron Tobin are looking forward to developing a productive relationship with George and his enthusiastic team - the town and surrounding area has enormous potential as a must visit, stay and explore destination in the National Park'. In the short term there are plans to step up 'Our Park' activities with local businesses in and around the town with any funds raised from visitors through this voluntary donation scheme being ploughed back into local environmental projects which reinforce the special qualities of the area. Any businesses wishing to participate in the Our Park scheme should contact Alice at [alice@lochlomond-trossachs.org](mailto:alice@lochlomond-trossachs.org) 001389 727761

**CALLANDER ENTERPRISE**  
Taking Callander Businesses Forward



## Foundation Supporters **£500 minimum**

- CAMERON HOUSE** Loch Lomond, Dunbartonshire, G83 8QZ  
Telephone: 01389 755 565 Fax: 01389 713 281  
[www.cameronhouse.co.uk](http://www.cameronhouse.co.uk)  
A magnificent baronial mansion surrounded by 100 acres of woodland, Cameron House on Loch Lomond, blends traditional Scottish influences with sumptuous contemporary décor to offer guests a memorable stay in the finest surroundings. This is your lochside Baronial mansion and much more with our Carrick resort our 18-hole championship golf course and luxury spa. Once tried, never forgotten.
- LODGE ON LOCH LOMOND HOTEL**  
Luss, Argyll, G83 8PA Tel: 01436 860 201  
Fax: 01436 860 203 email: res@loch-lomond.co.uk  
[www.loch-lomond.co.uk](http://www.loch-lomond.co.uk)  
The 4-star Lodge on Loch Lomond Hotel has a unique lochside setting. It offers stylish accommodation, some with en-suite saunas and private balconies, Colquhoun's, a 2 AA rosette restaurant with panoramic views of the Loch and mountains and leisure facilities with swimming pool.
- LOCHS & GLENS HOLIDAYS**  
School Road, Gartocharn, Dunbartonshire G83 8RW  
Tel: 01389 713 713 email: enquiries@lochsandglens.com  
[www.lochsandglens.com](http://www.lochsandglens.com)  
Lochs & Glens Holidays are proud to support the Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs
- TIGH MOR TROSSACHS**  
Telephone: 0800 2300391 [www.hpb-trossachs.co.uk](http://www.hpb-trossachs.co.uk)  
Tigh Mor Trossachs is the Scottish flagship of the Holiday Property Bond ([www.hpb.co.uk](http://www.hpb.co.uk)). It was formerly the Trossachs Hotel which by 1990 had fallen into a state of disrepair. Tigh Mor was completely renovated in 1992 and now has 76 properties, an indoor swimming pool and extensive leisure facilities.
- OPTICAL EXPRESS & MOULSDALE FOUNDATION**  
Telephone: 0800 023 20 20 email: enquiries@opticalexpress.com  
[www.opticalexpress.com](http://www.opticalexpress.com)  
The Mousdale Foundation & Optical Express are proud to support the Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs. For over 30 years, the friends have been working to protect the area's environmental heritage, promote it as a most special part of Scotland, and provide for its future through a range of projects for people and for wildlife. As the only independent conservation charity working across the whole of this precious part of Scotland, The Mousdale Foundation & Optical Express is pleased to be associated with such a worthwhile cause.
- LOCH KATRINE**  
Trossachs Pier, Loch Katrine, By Callander, Stirling FK17 8HZ  
Information and Reservations - (01877) 332000  
[www.lochkatrine.com](http://www.lochkatrine.com)  
Loch Katrine - a special experience for everyone to enjoy. Cruising Loch Katrine in the heart of The Trossachs is a special experience - on the classic steamship 'Sir Walter Scott', or on 'Lady of the Lake'. Visitor amenities include lochside walks, shopping, cycle hire and Katrine Café. Cruises depart daily (April until October), with the first sailing at 10:30am.

## Business Plus Supporters **£250 minimum**

- THE OAK TREE INN** Balmaha, Glasgow, G63 0JQ  
Tel: 01360 870 357 email: info@oak-tree-inn.co.uk  
[www.oak-tree-inn.co.uk](http://www.oak-tree-inn.co.uk)  
Family run inn on east side of Loch Lomond adjacent to WHW, serving good food all day with bunk, standard and deluxe accommodation available
- THE WINNOCK HOTEL**  
The Square, Drymen, Loch Lomond, G63 0BL  
Tel: 01360 660 245 email: info@winnockhotel.com  
[www.winnockhotel.com](http://www.winnockhotel.com)  
The Winnock Hotel in Drymen is the perfect choice for everything from a delicious bar meal through to a fun-filled party-night, ceilidh or special event.
- BEST WESTERN BUCHANAN ARMS HOTEL AND SPA**  
23 Main Street, Drymen, Glasgow G63 0BQ  
Tel: 01360 660 588 email: info@buchananarms.co.uk  
[www.buchananarms.co.uk](http://www.buchananarms.co.uk)  
One of the finest and most popular small hotels in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, with a character and charm which sits peacefully and calmly with the qualities of its surroundings.
- CRUISE LOCH LOMOND**  
The Boatyard, Tarbet, Loch Lomond, G83 7DG  
Tel: 01301 702 356 email: enquiries@cruiselochlomond.co.uk  
[www.cruiselochlomond.co.uk](http://www.cruiselochlomond.co.uk)  
Experience the serenity of the bonnie banks through the winter on award winning cruises - Rambler; Explorer; Rob Roy Discovery, Ben Lomond Hike. From Tarbet, Luss, Inversnaid, Balmaha, Rowardennan.
- SWEENEY'S CRUISES**  
Balloch, Dunbartonshire, Loch Lomond, G83 8SS  
Tel: 01389 752 376 email: info@sweeneyscruises.com  
[www.sweeneyscruises.com](http://www.sweeneyscruises.com)  
Scottish Tourist Board 4-star tours on Loch Lomond. All cruises have live commentary, bar and toilet facilities. Open 7 days a week all year round.
- COACH HOUSE COFFEE SHOP**  
Luss, Loch Lomond, Argyll, G83 8NN  
Tel: 01436 860 341 email: info@lochlomondtrading.com  
[www.lochlomondtrading.com](http://www.lochlomondtrading.com)
- BALMILLIG B & B**  
64B Colquhoun St, Helensburgh, G84 9JP [www.balmillig.co.uk](http://www.balmillig.co.uk)  
Tel: 01436 674 922 email: anne@balmillig.co.uk  
Superb 4 star accommodation minutes from the National Park's southern edge. An environmentally committed business also offering bespoke guided tours - day walking and mountain guiding.
- LOCHSIDE PHOTOGRAPHY**  
2 Hamilton Street, Dumbarton, G82 2AD  
Tel: 01389 733 888 Mobile: 07836 261956  
email: h.hall@lochsidephotography.co.uk  
[www.lochsidephotography.co.uk](http://www.lochsidephotography.co.uk)  
Wedding photography for all budgets, high quality press, corporate, and landscape photography founded on many years experience in tourism and the Loch-Lomond area.
- CALLANDER ENTERPRISE** [www.callanderenterprise.com](http://www.callanderenterprise.com)  
[www.twitter.com/incallander](http://www.twitter.com/incallander) email: cal-ent@incallander.co.uk  
Callander Enterprise is dynamic business group with ambitious objectives to benefit the entire business community in the area. The 200+ members cover the largest settlement within the National Park
- THE MYRTLE INN HOLIDAY COTTAGE**  
Tel: 01877 330 919 . .mobile 07703838800  
[myrtleinn@btconnect.com](http://myrtleinn@btconnect.com)  
New on the self-catering list - cottage sleeps up to five, only a few minutes from all the shops with a handy Spar even closer and a brand new coffee shop opening in May!
- ROSS PRIORY**  
Gartocharn G83 8NL 0141 548 3565  
Ross Priory, on the banks of Loch Lomond, the Staff Educational and Recreational Centre of the University of Strathclyde, is proud to support the Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs.

## Business Supporters **£100 minimum**

- POPPIES HOTEL & RESTAURANT**  
Lenny Road, Callander FK17 8AL Tel: 01877 330 329  
[www.poppieshotel.com](http://www.poppieshotel.com)
- THE HARBOUR CAFÉ**  
Loch Venachar, Callander FK17 8HP Tel: 01877 330 011  
[www.venachar-lochside.co.uk](http://www.venachar-lochside.co.uk)
- WHEELS CYCLING CENTRE - BIKES / HIRE**  
Invertrossachs Road, Callander, FK17 8HW Tel: 01877 331 100  
[www.scottish-cycling.com](http://www.scottish-cycling.com)



# Where there's a will...

*Simon Lewis writes about the significant 'gearing up' of the charity's work and how leaving a legacy to the Friends can continue this work forever...*

All our readers will have noticed from this and last year's editions of VOICE that this charity is increasingly busy working to protect, promote and provide support for this most special part of Scotland's natural and cultural heritage. From fighting to ensure a goldmine does not blight the magnificent landscape around Tyndrum or that huge wind turbines do not march across the Park, to investing in all kinds of conservation under the OUR park scheme, and encouraging local young people to value rather than despoil our loch sides through our new Young Friends project – we are working hard and making long term plans for the future of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs.

A moment watching the sun set across Loch Lomond, drinking in the growing green of the Trossachs in Spring, or the bright Autumn gold of the Argyll Forest in the Autumn,

seeing the salmon leap the Falls of Leny in a brown spate, snow on the peak of Ben Lui ...these are memories made forever. By leaving a small legacy to The Friends in your will - these memories and many more like them can be the real experience of this wonderful place for generations far into the future.

As Simon says: "Of course what everyone wants to do is to provide properly for their family and loved ones after their death, but a lot of people don't realise that they can make all the arrangements for those close to them and leave a modest 'residual legacy' to a charity like The Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs. With this in place, after identified amounts are left to loved ones, the residue or remainder of the estate comes to help this independent charity protect the National Park for the futures of everyone.

I am happy to talk informally to any of our members, or indeed anyone who cares for this wonderful place in the strictest confidence about how to leave a gift to Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, and indeed to Loch Lomond or the Trossachs in particular. I can visit you at your home at a time to suit you, or we can meet in our office in Helensburgh. A gift of any size will make a difference for the future of these places and all the treasures within them, and the choice really does not have to be between family and charity. Both can be remembered forever.

And as announced in the budget in March – if you give 10% of your estate to a charity like the Friends, the government will in turn reduce your inheritance tax burden by 10% also!" Your solicitor will be able to advise on all matters to do with inheritance, and the specifics of this new scheme.

***Simon Lewis, Our Director, can be contacted at the office,  
by email to [simon@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk](mailto:simon@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk), or on mobile 07799 262 742***





## Cruising Opportunities on Loch Lomond on the increase

The range of boat trips and cruising opportunities for visitors to hop from one destination to another around Loch Lomond has been greatly increased this year due to the collaborative efforts of existing commercial boat trip operators, the National Park Authority and Scottish Enterprise and the allocation of £300,000 by the Scottish Government for urgent repairs to a number of piers. The Friends, boat operators and the new Love Loch Lomond Destination Organisation supported the Park Authority's successful bid for much needed pier repair funding and on a recent visit to the lochside the Friends Chairman, James Fraser thanked the Minister for the Environment, Roseanna Cunningham for releasing the funds for this important initiative at a time when there is considerable pressure on the public purse and he also congratulated the Park Authority staff for presenting such a robust case to the Minister. Existing passenger boat trip operators have not been slow to respond to this initiative and have come together to form a new Association to work more closely with each other and the National Park/Scottish Enterprise to strengthen the range of boat trip opportunities and

improve the overall marketing of what is on offer, including a number of re-instated routes linking villages around the loch in a more integrated way than has happened since the disappearance of the Countess Fiona in 1989.

Loch Lomond has a long tradition as Scotland's most popular loch for boat trips and cruises and many of the existing operators have been involved in this sector for generations with businesses being passed down from father to son. The MacFarlanes at Balmaha, who operate the famous mailboat around the islands of Loch Lomond, have offered boat trips for over 100 years while the Sweeney family have been boat hiring and offering trips on the loch from their base in Balloch for 130 years. 'Younger' operators include award winning Cruise Loch Lomond at Tarbet (33 years) and Thomson's at Luss (40 years). Ferries have a longer tradition on the loch with services available linking Rowardennan Hotel and Inverbeg Inn as early as 1697 and Inversnaid Hotel and Inveruglas since 1870. The Scott family on Inchmurrin Island have operated a ferry for the past 80 years allowing customers to come over from the west side of the loch to sample their renowned hospitality and

Ardlui Hotel has operated a ferry service between Ardlui and Ardleish for 52 years. New services this year include the extension of the season for Cruise Loch Lomond's popular Luss to Balmaha route which is operational daily from the beginning of April - see

[www.cruiselochlomond.co.uk](http://www.cruiselochlomond.co.uk) for their full range of themed cruises which are bookable online. Sweeney's Cruises are also introducing two additional routes this year with the re-instatement of Balloch to Luss and Balloch to Balmaha running April to September alongside their other popular cruises- see

[www.sweeneyscruises.com](http://www.sweeneyscruises.com) for fuller details. There is also a welcome return for the Rowardennan to Inverbeg ferry with a regular timetabled service.

For details of all services around the loch pick up a timetable at local information centres, hotels and other outlets and be sure to make the most of the range of boat trip opportunities available and enjoy Loch Lomond and the bonnie banks at their best. Cruises are also available on nearby Loch Katrine on the SS Sir Walter Scott and Lady of the Lake- see

[www.lochkatrine.com](http://www.lochkatrine.com)

## Rowardennan to Inverbeg Ferry Runs Again

The Rowardennan Hotel has evolved from an old Inn, dating from around 1696, and Rowardennan - Inverbeg has been an important east-west crossing on the Loch since time immemorial. Rowardennan was on an old droving route. Cattle were swum across the Loch from Inverbeg, led by specially trained cattle, which were kept at Inverbeg for that purpose. The passenger ferry which operates in the summer months from Rowardennan to Inverbeg makes a welcomed return. (Dogs and Bicycles welcome)

**Ferry Service - Daily: Mid-April to September.**

**Rowardennan to Inverbeg**

**10.00 am, 2.00 pm, & 5.30 pm.**

**Inverbeg to Rowardennan**

**10.30 am, 2.30 pm, & 6.00 pm all**

**Tel: 01360 870273**

**Email: [overnight@rowardennanhotel.co.uk](mailto:overnight@rowardennanhotel.co.uk)**





# Tourism Businesses Love Loch Lomond

The new industry led tourism group Love Loch Lomond was successfully launched recently at Cameron House Hotel with a bumper turnout of local tourism business representatives. The group joins a growing number of local trade groups in the National Park with a focus on improving the overall quality of the visitor experience and strengthening the promotion of the area.

At the launch event the new Chairman, Graeme Nesbitt who is General Manager of Cameron House Resort, gave a presentation on the early priorities of the group which includes promoting the Loch Lomond, Strathendrick and Clyde Sea Lochs area as quality year round destinations through a powerful new website and other innovative ways; enhancing the quality of the visitor experience through a range of practical initiatives; and lobbying a

range of bodies on issues that impact on the well-being of tourism locally.

The group is being supported by a range of partners including Scottish Enterprise, local authorities, the Park Authority and Visit Scotland. The Chairman of the Friends, James Fraser, who has a strong background in tourism, is also an Advisor to the Interim Board of Directors.

Other business groups active in the National Park include Cowal Marketing Group; Trossachs Business Association; Callander Enterprise and Loch Earn Tourism Initiative and they are all looking to capitalise on the tourism potential of the National Park in responsible ways to sustain and support their rural communities.

## SHOPPING

*with the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs*

**Our new branded outdoor wear range is launched – perfect for Spring and Summer time walks with an exclusive ‘Friends’ logo embroidered in full colour – for men and women. Available in black, green and navy and in a full range of sizes.**

To order just click on the ‘friends’ clothing button on the front page of our website [www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk](http://www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk) – if you don’t have access to a computer, just contact the office and we’ll do the rest.



Also our **Trossachs notelets** are available in packs of ten at just £5.00

As is our guide to the National Park **‘Discover Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park’** is an ideal companion on any expedition into any part of the Park and priced at £9.99 is exceptional value.

**‘The Islands of Loch Lomond’** is a fascinating study of the history of the islands with beautiful pictures - selling for £5 a copy with £1.50 P&P.

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**63 West Princes Street Helensburgh, Scotland G84 8BN**

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# Maid for the Loch

**MAID OF THE LOCH**, Loch Lomond's Paddle Steamer, could be about to make her long-awaited return to steam operation. Her owners, the Loch Lomond Steamship Company, a local charity, are currently planning her refit to carry up to 600 passengers.

The cost will be a daunting £3.3M, but since taking ownership in 1996, LLSC, its volunteers and supporters have raised and re-invested £1.6M in not just the Maid, but in rebuilding the Balloch Steam Slipway, the pier, and a car park. Volunteers have worked over 62,000 hours free of charge, and every compartment on the steamer has been stripped back to the bare metal, repainted, refitted, and refurbished. The Queens' Restaurant offers a panoramic view of the loch and is popular for weddings; the lower bar - at and below water level - is warm and snug; the Douglas Mickel Saloon with its tartan carpet is eye-catching; and her gleaming engines are open to public gaze and wonderment. Her hull is good; her engines will go on forever; structurally, little needs done.

In recent times famous names have lent their support. Donald Dewar, Secretary of State for Scotland, met with volunteers on the ship; HRH The Princess Royal opened the winchhouse; the then Minister of Culture, Mike Russell MSP, pledged his support when being shown over the Maid; and stars such as Timothy West, Prunella Scales, Jimmie Macgregor and Robbie Coltrane, have fallen in love with Loch Lomond's Maid and want to see her

sailing again. The "supporters club" now has well over 300 members, and growing.

So what can a new Maid of the Loch offer Loch Lomond? The Maid will be an icon for not just the loch, but for Scotland - and the UK. She can help provide an integrated water transport, working with and alongside the other boat operators. Tarbet could once again link up with Arrochar and trips on the Waverley (once its new pier is built); and Inversnaid would allow access to the Sir Walter Scott and Loch Katrine. Both the Waverley and Sir Walter are keen to see this happen again.

Maid of the Loch can give "added value" to visitors and help open up Loch Lomond to a new generation. She will be fully accessible for the less-abled, with an internal lift and ramps. What better way to see the whole loch, get the benefit of the open air, and relax to the rhythmic beat of paddles! New jobs would be created, the local economy would benefit, and more people would be drawn to the area. Working together, everyone wins.

It is an exciting time for everyone involved in the Maid. Despite the current economic climate, the opportunity is there to give Loch Lomond an iconic world class facility. LLSC Chairman, Philip Preston (and Managing Director of Caledonian MacBrayne) is pushing hard to make it happen. Do come aboard and see the progress that has been made, and admission is free. **Visitors are most welcome.**





# No more messing on islands of shame!



**Last Autumn members of Friends, Love Loch Lomond and Tulloch Trust volunteers needed strong stomachs when they combined forces to tackle the poo in the park problem**

**by John Urquhart, Friends member and Vice Chairman of the tourism destination organisation, Love Loch Lomond**

*(John and Anne Urquhart are active supporters of Friend's 'OUR park' tourism/conservation partnership scheme and last year their Helensburgh based Balmillig House B&B business contributed over £600 to the partnership. John also sits on the Park's Local Access Forum and is Chairman of the Argyll and Bute Local Access Forum)*

Last year on Saturday 25 September the sun shone for the 16 volunteers who took part in an island clean up operation dubbed "No Messing" by joint organisers, "Love Loch Lomond", Friends and The Tulloch Trust. The Luss Lifeboat provided transport and the National Park helped out with logistical support and did a great job shuttling the volunteers around the islands and removing the rubbish at the end of the day.

I had been aware for many years that there were problems on some of Loch Lomond's islands, but during a kayaking trip last August, it was the appalling state in which Anne and I found the west end of Inchmoan which precipitated our move to try to do something to alleviate matters.

From my earlier experience on Inchmoan and from a brief recce conducted the day before, I had a rough idea what to expect, but I was unprepared for the volume of rubbish which we found and particularly so by the abundance of toileting remains which were a disgusting feature of the undergrowth around every site. At the north end of Inchtavannach, this included, to my astonishment, a plastic bucket full of excrement! There was so much rubbish lying amongst the blaeberrries around this site that we had to leave most of it because we ran out of time, bags and room on our boat for any more.

As well as cleaning up, the idea had been to hand out a leaflet containing some simple advice about how to camp responsibly, so we spoke to quite a few folk who were out there camping, picnicking or lying at anchor enjoying the lovely weather. One boat owner said he no longer anchored in the narrows at the weekend because of the noise and rowdy behaviour and at another point I met up with well known Inchtavannach resident Roy Rogers who reported his first hand experiences of the situation, including the sad fact that due to the ongoing disturbance by people and dogs, the Capercaillie population of the islands is now no more.

This spring will see the introduction of the much debated by-laws which it is hoped will resolve some of the problems along the east shore, but clearly there is an urgent need to control 'wild camping' and wild partying on the



*“Loch Lomond is our principal asset and as outdoor enthusiasts who have enjoyed the delights of the loch all of our lives, it is also very dear to us personally.”*



islands as well. And last summer (when the east shore by-laws were no more than a rumour) there was already evidence of displacement to other areas, with similar problems arising in Glen Fruin and around Lochs Achray, Venachar and Earn. Even Loch Awe and Glen Etive are now not immune from the attentions of the irresponsible 'wild' camper.

With issues like this the Police talk about the difficulty of obtaining 'traction'. The law gives people a right to camp responsibly, but it is hard enough for police or rangers to identify who is being irresponsible at a roadside camp; it is virtually impossible to do so on the islands of Loch Lomond. Hopefully the byelaws will supply the necessary 'traction' on the East shore, but who knows what goes on out on the islands and what do we do about the displacement issue... create still more local by-laws? As tourism business operators, Loch Lomond is our principal asset and as outdoor enthusiasts who have enjoyed the delights of the Loch all of our lives, it is also very dear to us personally. These are not new problems and when the National Park was set up we had hoped we were getting a mechanism which could address these issues. I don't doubt that the by-laws will provide some badly needed respite for the East shore, but there is every sign they will just push the problem somewhere else. And the by-laws will do nothing to alleviate the situation on the islands.

It may be that the time has come to rethink some aspects of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code legislation. Whether it is along Loch Lomond's eastern shore or out on the islands or at some new location in Glen Fruin, motorised transport is the common factor and it is this aspect which could give the legislators the traction that police and rangers need. Wild camping should be just that – wild. Those accessing land to camp wild should not be using motorized transport and it is time the law was changed to bring this about.

**Fiona Logan, Chief Executive of the National Park Authority, responds:**

*'The National Park are deeply concerned about the issues that affect the islands of Loch Lomond. I spent quite a bit of time myself last summer witnessing the devastation and disruption in this very special and beautiful part of the Park. I am taking these issues very seriously. Last summer we undertook a number of patrols on the islands (43 patrols in June, July and August) in addition to the many boat patrols that we undertake. We spoke to more than 630 campers and contacted a number of people with letters reinforcing the need to conserve and protect these magnificent islands and making clear the consequences if they continued to cause problems on the islands.*

*The Park Authority supported the clean up on the islands led by Friends, Love Loch Lomond and the Tulloch Trust and we provided transportation, litter pickers, bin bags and collected the rubbish at the end of the litter pick.*

*John is absolutely right that we cannot allow these islands to be degraded and we all must do more to protect them. Over the last two years and with an increased focus in the last six months we have engaged our leading partner in this area, Scottish Natural Heritage, with the support of the RSPB, to find a better solution to this enduring problem. We are now very close to announcing a suite of actions for the Islands this summer and I hope to be able to do so by the end of March in time for the coming season.*

*In addition, through Operation Ironworks (our joint working with the three Police Forces across the Park) we will continue to deal with these issues. We all want the islands to be places for people to enjoy, relax and recreate. This cannot be at the expense of the biodiversity and landscape; the very things that make them attractive in the first place*

***The National Park needs everyone's help in tackling this issue and, if you see incidents, please report them through the Crimestoppers phone number (0800 555111) or to the NP Police Officer (01389 722600).***



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## OUR park goes park-wide

We are delighted to have secured funding to enable us to develop the innovative OUR park scheme across the whole of the National Park in 2011!

The scheme works closely with businesses to support wildlife, conservation and access projects to the area, thereby enhancing the natural assets of the area for us all to enjoy.

**A HUGE THANK YOU** to all our pioneering businesses in Argyll/West Loch Lomond who participated in the initial trial and development of the scheme last year, making it a success.

Thanks to their early commitment and enthusiasm, we have been able to secure core funding from the Joint LEADER Local Action Group for Argyll & the Islands and Forth Valley whose contributions joins grants from Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park, Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Natural Heritage.

We now have over 30 businesses either actively fundraising with a further 30 committing to joining the scheme, with new businesses spread across the whole of the National Park. See below for details of some innovative ways businesses are fundraising for the scheme.



## New Business Members

We now have close to thirty businesses actively fundraising with a further thirty committed to joining the scheme, which is fantastic!

We have new members joining from all corners of the Park.

- Ardachearnbeg Cottages
- Balmillig B&B
- Balquhidder Braes Holiday Park
- Benmore Lodge
- Book Point
- Braemor B&B
- Buchanan Arms
- Cameron House
- C-N-Do Scotland
- Coach House Coffee Shop
- Cruise Loch Lomond
- Deli Ecosse
- Drimsynie Estate Costcutters shop
- Fasadail House
- Glendaruel Caravan Park
- Gateway Centre
- Hidden Glen Safaris
- Hunters Quay Holiday Village
- Inverbeg Inn
- Inversnaid Bunkhouse
- Lochend Chalets
- Lochgoilhead Hotel
- Lodge on Loch Lomond
- MacDonald's Forest Hills Hotel & Resort
- Oak Tree Inn
- Portnellan Chalets
- Ross Priory (University of Strathclyde)
- Rowardennan Hotel
- Tigh Mor Trossachs
- Wheels Cycling Centre
- Winnock Hotel



## Merci Deli Ecosse



**Deli Ecosse** is one of the first businesses to join the scheme from The Trossachs. This scrumptious deli/café which is situated next to the Rob Roy centre in Callander is donating 5p on drinks sales to the scheme.

The owner, Julie Carmichael said *"We are delighted to be members of the OUR park scheme. As an environmentally conscious businesses we are keen to make a positive contribution to the local area, and participating in the scheme is a great way for us to do this."*



## 12 New Arrivals at Rowardennan

*Ian Allison and Family bought the Rowardennan Hotel in February 2010 and by July of that year, they had twelve new arrivals - Ex-Battery Hens!*

*"Having always been a keen advocate of Free Range Eggs I thought that the Rowardennan provided the perfect opportunity to give some hens a chance of freedom " Having spent all their lives in a small cage, it took the hens several days before they would leave their new hen hut and venture out. The hen's were all duly named and it wasn't long before the hens became great favourites of both staff and visitors alike.*

*visitors are encouraged to feed the hens for a small donation and the proceeds are split between the OUR park scheme and the hen welfare trust.*





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**THE WELCOME ON  
 BOARD**



We have a new face join the OUR park team as we roll out the scheme across the National Park - JENNIE WILLIS who lives in Helensburgh will be providing admin support to the project. Jennie has a background in Scottish History and has worked in an administrative capacity for various organisations. With her partner, she owns a self-catering business in the Western Isles which has introduced an interest and knowledge in the tourism sector. She is also particularly interested in Scottish wildlife.

*Jennie says "Having grown up in Helensburgh I have always appreciated the beauty of Loch Lomond and its surroundings. Further travel around the world has confirmed that it is a special place that deserves conserving. I am delighted to be involved in such a worthwhile project and hope to make a valuable contribution to it."*

Jennie works on a Monday and Thursday from the National Park Office at Carrochan and can be contacted on 01389 727 709. On a Friday afternoon she plans to work from the office in Helensburgh and can be contacted there on 01436 677733 or by email on [jennie.wills@lochlomond-trossachs.org](mailto:jennie.wills@lochlomond-trossachs.org) at both places.



## A82 Pulpit Rock Improvement a Step Nearer

Work on the historic Pulpit Rock section of the A82 recently took a major step forward with the publication of draft road orders by Transport Scotland for an £11 million scheme which will result in a major bottleneck, that has frustrated motorists on this stretch of Loch Lomondside for over thirty years, being permanently removed.

The scheme involves major engineering works on what has been described as 'some of the most challenging and scenically sensitive terrain in the world' by Transport Minister, Stewart Stevenson and is part of a £32 million package of improvements planned or underway on the road. Other schemes include the Crianlarich bypass and resurfacing and introducing road safety improvements on the road between Tarbet and Crianlarich.

An extensive range of options, including tunnelling and constructing cantilevers, were fully explored by engineers before opting for the final preferred solution which involves the removal of traffic lights and the re-introduction of free flowing two way traffic on a realigned section of the road that will be carried on a low level viaduct running parallel to the loch for a short stretch before swinging back onto a realigned widened length of carriageway to the north of Pulpit Rock. The realigned road will open up some magnificent views of Loch Lomond while also protecting the Pulpit Rock scheduled ancient monument, which the Friends have previously been responsible for making more visible to the public with the removal of shrubs and trees.

The project will take a year to complete and the road will close for up to 14 weeks due to the engineering challenges involved.

Meanwhile, we have written to the Transport Minister seeking reassurances that the package of A82 improvements will not become a victim of the public expenditure cuts and seeking clarification on the timetable for the programme of much needed works. We have stressed the importance of taking a strategic design overview of the entire route improvements planned for Loch Lomondside due to the special nature of the scenic and landscape qualities.

We have also pressed the Minister for some urgent action on the need to transform the West Loch Lomondside visitor experience by opening up some of the stunning views of the loch which are currently blocked by lengthy tunnels of overgrown shrubs and trees. This issue is regularly raised with us by members as we are keen to see some positive action being taken soon by Transport Scotland. Our chairman James Fraser has also recently discussed this with environment minister Roseanna Cunningham.

Interestingly, the issue of developing a string of lookout points along some of Scotland's most popular tourist routes and in the National Parks was the subject of a lengthy feature in the Scotsman recently and the Editor, Bill Jamieson, suggested this simple measure could help to transform tourism in rural Scotland. We entirely agree and have suggested to the Minister that he could make a good start by tackling the removal of trees and shrubs on stretches of the A82 between Luss and Tarbet and also resurrecting the A84/85 improvement scheme winding its way up Glen Ogle (the Kyber Pass) between Lochearnhead and Lix Toll which incorporates some lookout points and rest areas with spectacular views.



## Preparing for the season ahead

As we bid goodbye to the cold winter months, National Park Rangers are preparing for a busy season ahead. Here, Steven Kenney, Senior Ranger based in the North West Loch Lomond area, and Jenny Rogers, the water-based Ranger Team Leader for Loch Lomond, tell us about their jobs.



### How are you preparing for the season ahead?



During the winter, Rangers join winter working groups, which look at many aspects of our role, examine the data collated in the previous season and plan activities and initiatives for the coming season. I've been involved in two, the biodiversity group and the visitor management group.

The biodiversity group has been examining and reporting on species and habitat data from 2010 and setting out our objectives, methodology, recommendations and targets for our 2011 programme of surveys. These surveys add to the knowledge of the health of species in the park and include bird, mammal, insect, amphibian and habitat surveys.

The visitor management group has been reviewing and planning our patrol routes for the coming season. We will also be taking the Respect message into major outdoor retailing outlets such as Go Outdoors. The hope is that through engagement with a ranger in the store and including Respect literature in outdoor products we can convey relevant messages to the public before they visit the countryside.



Being a ranger is not just about getting out and about in the fresh air. A lot of behind the scenes administration needs to be done; procurement of essential equipment, maintenance of our craft, servicing of hazard buoys, recruitment of seasonal staff all need to be done before the season starts. The season comes around in a flash and I try to be as organised as possible so that we can hit the ground running, to use an old cliché, so when the visitors arrive we are ready. I also find lots of tea helps!

### What is a typical day during the season?



(Steven laughs!) There is no such thing as a typical day. It just takes one phone call or an email and your day can be up in the air. For example, just last week I thought my morning was going to be spent at a full staff meeting at headquarters when the phone rang. It was a member of the public who had found a very large owl being mobbed by crows by the River Leven. When I arrived the owl was calm and had been wrapped up in a fleece. By the size of the talons protruding from the fleece this was no tawny owl. It turned out to be a great grey, normally found in Northern Europe and Russia and about the size of an eagle owl. It had escaped from the Loch Lomond Bird of Prey Centre during a stormy night a week before. Delighted owner and hungry owl were reunited later that day.



Weekdays are generally spent in the office on day-to-day running of the team, arranging staff and resources, sorting out problems and organising volunteers, but at the weekend I try to get out and about on the loch, one of the many perks of my job! We aim to get two patrol boats out at the weekend, carrying out water patrol, islands patrol or undertaking survey work. We also get called to incidents from missing children and dogs that have swum after swans to medical emergencies or breakdowns. So there really is no typical day. It is very reactive which is fortunately just how I like it!

### What big projects are you working on?



We're making plans to plant broadleaf native woodland in memory of Angus Lennox the first National Park volunteer. Gus helped us over many years gather acorns to be planted in our nursery and it is these oak trees that will be planted in the wood.

In Alexandria we are working with children from Vale of Leven Academy to develop, from scratch, their outdoor classroom/garden. Projects with national park volunteers this year will include planting fruit trees, building a dry stone wall, cultivating the raised beds that we build from recycled materials and installing a sculpture made from slate and fused glass that will be donated by a local artist and former pupil.



This is the first year we will be charging for using our facilities at Duncan Mills Memorial Slipway and Milarochy Bay, and with that comes a whole heap of administration. Thankfully I have an excellent administrator who is keeping on top of that colossal task. I have all the training for both permanent and seasonal staff so that the start of the season runs smoothly on the ground. We also have our campaign for the capercaillie on Loch Lomond's islands. Last year we upped the number of island patrols to try and engage with visitors about how their behaviour might be affecting the capercaillie and their numbers. We will be continuing with these efforts this year alongside Central Scotland and Strathclyde Police.

This is also the first year we will benefit from 25 new volunteer rangers. They are primarily going to be dedicated to visitor management and to help out our full time rangers. It is hoped they will be an additional resource and help us achieve even more this year. I'm really looking forward to being involved, I'm certain it will be a very worthwhile project.

### What are the biggest challenges of your job?



Keeping all the plates spinning! Our role is so diverse that it can be a real challenge to keep everything in the air. But, in saying that, having come from a project management background I find it a fun part of the job.



It really is trying to manage all the visitor pressures on the loch. There are so many user groups all looking for a different experience and, although the loch is a big place, most users seem to congregate in the same areas. Parts of the loch have been designated for quieter recreation and some have speed restrictions, but there are areas where it has been derestricted to allow for waterskiing off the shore or speeding close to the shore. It's just a case of educating and appealing to visitors to use the loch sensibly and mindfully of other loch users.

### What are the highlights of your job?



There are many! In the summer it's meeting and greeting the public and ensuring that their visit is made as enjoyable and informative as it can be. I also enjoy the education aspect of the role where we provide opportunities for all ages to experience the park and learn from what it has to offer. I feel that we live in such a man-made world these days that people are losing touch with the natural environment. Taking the time to slow down and engage with the natural world is good for the soul. Oh and I forgot to say, it's the best job in the world!



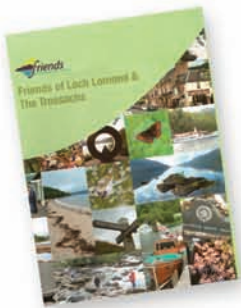
I have a fantastic job, in a stunning part of the world but the highlight of my job, other than being out in breathtaking surroundings is meeting people. Whether it's visitors, other staff, contractors, police, firemen, local businesses, tour operators or locals, I love meeting people. Everyone has their own story, personality and history to bring to the table. Even those who are the exact opposite of me I find fascinating and intriguing to work with and alongside.



Find us on facebook, follow us on twitter

[www.lochlomond-trossachs.org](http://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org)





## Why not join The Friends Today?

The **Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs** is the only independent conservation charity working across the whole of this precious part of Scotland - The Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park.

For over 30 years, we have been working to protect the area's environmental heritage, promote it as a most special part of Scotland, and provide for its future through a range of projects for people and for wildlife. As a small charity, we plough almost every part of every penny into the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park and its future.

Please complete the form overleaf, cut it out and return to us enclosing your cheque amount payable to Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs or FoLL&T, or set up a direct debit instruction using the Direct Debit mandate.

We would like to thank you very much in advance for your support and for championing the cause of this natural heart of Scotland. Do you have a friend, relation or neighbour who might be interested in joining us too? We can let you have a special member information pack to pass on to them – contact the office and we will send this out to you – or direct to them if you/they prefer.

The more support 'The Friends' receive, the more we can spend on vital protection, promotion and provision focussed on Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, and the more we can get done by the power of more people behind us – this collective 'voice' of hundreds and hundreds of Friends from this area and from all over the world, individuals, companies and organisations - is the most effective way of caring for this special part of Scotland.

*Keeping Scotland's first national park a special place*



# Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Membership Application



Complete this form then cut it out and return it (with any remittance) in DL envelope to Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs Helensburgh Office

## New member name (enter both names for joint members)

Title	First name	Last name	DOB (optional)
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

## Address

Post Code

Telephone Home  Mobile

If you are over 16 and would like to receive email updates about our conservation and campaigning work please enter your email here

## Type of Membership (Please tick)

Individual £15  Family £20  Associate (clubs, societies etc) £25  Life £200

We have a special separate business membership scheme – please ask us for details

## Payment Method (Please tick)

Cheque  Direct Debit

Please make payable to 'Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs'

If you can, please also consider making a small additional donation (Please circle/fill in amount)

£5  £10  £20  £.....

Please enclose your cheque for the above amount payable to The Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs or FoLL&T, or set up a direct debit instruction using the form below:

## INSTRUCTIONS TO BANK/BUILDING SOCIETY

To The Manager  Bank / Building Society   
Address

Post Code

Branch Sort Code  Account No.

Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

**Instruction to bank or building society.** Please pay Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs Direct Debits from the account detailed on this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee (copy on request).

Signature(s) of Account Holder(s)

Date

Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debits instructions for some types of account.



## GIFT AID

If you are a taxpayer please complete this form which allows us to reclaim the tax you have paid, increasing the value of your support by 28% at no extra cost to you.

I would like **Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs** to treat all donations and subscriptions from the date of this declaration as Gift

I pay an amount of income or capital gains tax at least equal to that reclaimed by **Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs**.

Full Name and Address and Signature

Registered Charity Number: SC 1100759





# Notice of AGM

Our AGM will be held this year on the Steamship Maid of the Loch, Balloch on Monday 9 May 2011. Guided tours of the vessel will be offered from 6.30pm with the formal meeting starting at 7.30pm prompt.

There will be a buffet supper provided by the Coach House Coffee Shop served from 6pm – the cost including a glass of wine or a soft drink will be £9.50. And there will be a raffle with a range of delightful prizes.

The event is open to members, and we will be very happy to take subscriptions from new or renewing members on the day

### Publication dates for the next issue:

**the (Autumn) edition of VOICE will be published early September 2011.**

**We would welcome your contributions**

**- for these to be considered please contact the editor by 20th July 2011.**

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the following for the OUR park Scheme.

We particularly acknowledge the support of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park

Authority for the new young people's project - Wild.Lomond - Wild.Trossachs:

and the generous support of the companies in our Business Supporters' scheme.

And a most special thank you to our members - who are the basis of this charity and our work.



**Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs, 63 West Princes Street, Helensburgh Scotland G84 8BN**

Telephone: 01436 677733 Email: [info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk](mailto:info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk)





# Loch Katrine

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