

Friends of OUR park

Making a Difference

Visitor Giving and Volunteering Scheme



Working for people and nature in Scotland's first National Park

Making a Difference in Scotland's First National Park

The Friends of OUR park Visitor Giving and Volunteering Scheme is a compelling movement that brings together individuals and businesses who enjoy and value the magnificent natural and cultural heritage of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park, with organisations and local groups carrying out valuable work to make the Park and its communities a better place for people and nature.

From a small pilot project in 2010 the Friends of OUR park Scheme has grown steadily under the umbrella of the Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs, the only independent conservation and heritage charity covering the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park. To enable the successful development of the scheme a dedicated Project Manager, Alice Blazy-Winning, was employed with funding support from the National Park Authority, Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Friends. In the pilot phase funding support was also provided by the two European LEADER programmes covering the National Park and West Dunbartonshire Council. More recently, the Voluntary Action Fund also provided assistance with developing the volunteering element of the scheme.

At the heart of the scheme's success is the commitment of business owners and individuals to become involved in a variety of ways, including through voluntary visitor donations such as £1 on bookings for overnight stays, meals or loch cruises; hosting donation canisters; sponsoring specific projects or taking part in voluntary activities such as our popular Make a Difference Conservation in Action Days or sponsored walks. The activities all contribute to supporting a wide range of projects for the benefit of people and nature in and around the National Park.

The scheme has expanded in recent years and now involves 100 businesses and tens of thousands of individuals making personal contributions to help look after and improve the area every year. Encouragingly, over £200,000 has now been raised with 60 projects with a total value of more than £1.4 million being supported. Grant support through the scheme has ranged from £150 to £6,000 and has often been the catalyst to secure other funding to enable projects to happen on the ground.

Thousands of volunteer hours have also been generously given by individuals and businesses to help with conservation and environmental improvement tasks in the National Park. Other fundraising efforts through events such as the annual Glasgow to Balloch KiltWalk and the Caledonian Challenge on the West Highland Way have also been well supported.

A big thank you to all our businesses and individual fundraisers and volunteers, as well as the agency funders who have helped to support and foster the Friends of OUR park Visitor Giving and Volunteering Scheme. The scheme has clearly demonstrated how supportive people are when given the opportunity to care for a special area they love and cherish, as well as showing that, collectively, we can make a real difference in helping to deliver a more sustainable future for Scotland's first National Park.



James Fraser
Chairman

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Fraser".

Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs
November, 2015



Niall Colquhoun of Lodge on Loch Lomond
with John Urquhart of the Three Lochs Way



Alice Blazy-Winning, Friends of OUR park Project Manager with Julie Carmichael of Deli Ecosse



Children raising funds on the Wee KiltWalk



Receiving £1,000 donation from Gordon Allan & David Wyles of SS Sir Walter Scott

Achievements

- 100 tourism businesses involved
- £200,000 raised through visitor giving and sponsorship
- 60 projects supported
- 46 volunteer tasks organised involving 594 volunteers
- 6,533 volunteer hours contributed
- 110,000 individual cash donations made

“Given that our hotels are in such unique locations, engulfed by such natural beauty and panoramic views of Scotland’s most breathtaking loch, it makes complete sense for our many thousands of guests each year to be given the opportunity to help conserve this special place and contribute positively to improving outdoor access.”

Niall Colquhoun,
Lodge on Loch Lomond & Inn on Loch Lomond

“We have no doubt the Friends of OUR park scheme is a win-win for everyone. Visitors get a chance to contribute to the conservation of the place they have come to enjoy and businesses get a chance to protect and improve the product on which they rely.”

John Urquhart,
Balmillig B&B, Helensburgh

“We have been overwhelmed by how supportive all our customers have been – not one has asked for the £1 donation to be removed from their bill, and many give substantially more.”

Tom Lewis,
Monachyle Mhor, Balquhidder Glen

“People overwhelmingly want to contribute towards the scheme and love asking what the money is going towards – it is a great topic of conversation between staff and our customers!”

Sandy Fraser,
The Oak Tree Inn, Balmaha

“For us, Friends of OUR park is a useful vehicle for showing we care about what happens to the area, and it’s about taking practical steps to keeping the area in great condition. It is about community spirit and working together.”

Andy MacLeod,
Gardeners Cottages, Arden



“I am pleased we were able to work jointly with the Friends. The Friends demonstrated the ability to leverage additional funds with the monies raised to deliver a wide range of worthwhile projects throughout the National Park.”

David Mouldsdale,
Optical Express & Mouldsdale Foundation

NATURE CONSERVATION AND VOLUNTEERING

A number of the early nature conservation projects supported by the Friends of OUR park scheme were to assist with the protection of, and education about, some of the iconic wildlife we have here in the National Park. They continue to be important project themes for the scheme to support throughout the National Park and neighbouring communities.

PROJECT EXAMPLES:

Powan in the Classroom – A programme developed by the Loch Lomond Fisheries Trust to enable school pupils from in and around the National Park to learn about the powan, an endangered species of fish native only to Loch Lomond and Loch Eck (both in the National Park). The children learn about the life cycle of the fish and the threats they face, as well as gain an understanding of the wider ecology of the loch.

Red Squirrels – Supporting the Cowal Red Squirrel Group's work to protect the red squirrel population in the National Park. Over the years the scheme has supported the group in numerous ways, including paying for interpretation boards, a red squirrel first aid course, a camera, squirrel feeders and feed to assist with monitoring possible grey squirrel invasion.

“The grant money we receive through Friends of OUR park is vitally important, helping us continue our work in Cowal to monitor and protect the native red squirrel population, as well as help with our work to educate and inspire people to do their bit to help the reds.”

Jan Ferguson,
Cowal Red Squirrel Group

“Red squirrels are an important feature around Arrochar and the larger Cowal area. A red squirrel sighting can be a highlight of our visitors' stay with us! We are delighted to support this project through Friends of OUR park which is helping to protect this iconic species.”

Anne Bax,
Fascadail House, Arrochar



Powan in the Classroom





Many opportunities have also been provided for individuals to volunteer for practical environmental improvement tasks, as well as the annual multi-task Make a Difference Conservation in Action Days which bring together organisations delivering vital conservation work with individuals and businesses passionate about protecting and enhancing the area.

Participants in Make a Difference Days are a wonderful mix of individuals – local residents, business owners and their staff, as well as individuals who live outside the area who enjoy working in the great outdoors. Over the years we have worked closely with community and conservation organisations to deliver over 45 environmental improvement tasks, such as improving habitats for native wildlife, removing litter from scenic lochshore locations and carrying out path improvements to enhance access to the beautiful National Park landscapes.

Some Volunteers Statistics

- 500 native trees planted
- 2025 metres of path cleared/improved
- 583 bags of litter removed from lochshores
- 124 volunteers trained in environmental survey skills

“The whole team felt a real sense of achievement with the work completed as part of the day, and we are now planning on adopting an area of beach in the village which we will continue to survey and remove litter from on a regular basis.”

Gary Watson,
General Manager, Claymore Hotel, Arrochar

“In addition to improving and looking after the area, volunteering is also a great opportunity to meet new people as well as explore new parts of the Park. What I particularly enjoy about the Friends’ Make a Difference Days is the fact there is more interaction with the local community. You meet people living and working in that particular area, and it’s great to find out about how they find living there.”

Stuart Crawford, Volunteer, Balloch

Projects supported:

- Powan in the Classroom
- Protecting Red Squirrels, Cowal
- Biodiversity in Drymen
- Windows on the Park
- Rhododendron Clearance
- Tree Planting, Balloch Castle Country Park
- Litter Removal & Monitoring
- Path Verge & Habitat Improvement
- Tree Planting, Arden, Balloch & Balmaha



IMPROVING ACCESS

The Friends of OUR park scheme has supported 14 access improvement projects throughout the National Park. They range from improving the physical condition of paths with resurfacing, drainage or widening to assisting with waymarking, signage and producing information leaflets and maps to strengthen the promotion of paths to visitors and local residents.

PROJECT EXAMPLES:

Three Lochs Way Great Trail – Funding helped to improve signage and install information panels at key locations along the 34 mile route which links Loch Lomond, Loch Goil and Loch Long, as well as replacing a key bridge in Glen Culannach.

Bracklinn Bridge Path Loop, Callander – Funding support assisted with upgrading the path linking Bracklinn Bridge and Scout Pool, and for an interpretation panel at the main car park leading to the popular Bracklinn Falls.

Rob Roy Way - The scheme funded improved waymarking along this 79 mile walking route, which starts in Drymen and meanders north through the scenic Trossachs via Aberfoyle and Callander before heading into Highland Perthshire via Strathyre, Lochearnhead, Killin and Aberfeldy before ending at Pitlochry.



Inchcailloch Nature Trail



Three Lochs Way

“ I am particularly pleased the first wave of funding raised by our guests is being used to improve and promote the Three Lochs Way path network, as this will open up previously undiscovered parts of the area for the enjoyment of many future visitors as well as local residents in nearby towns and villages. **”**

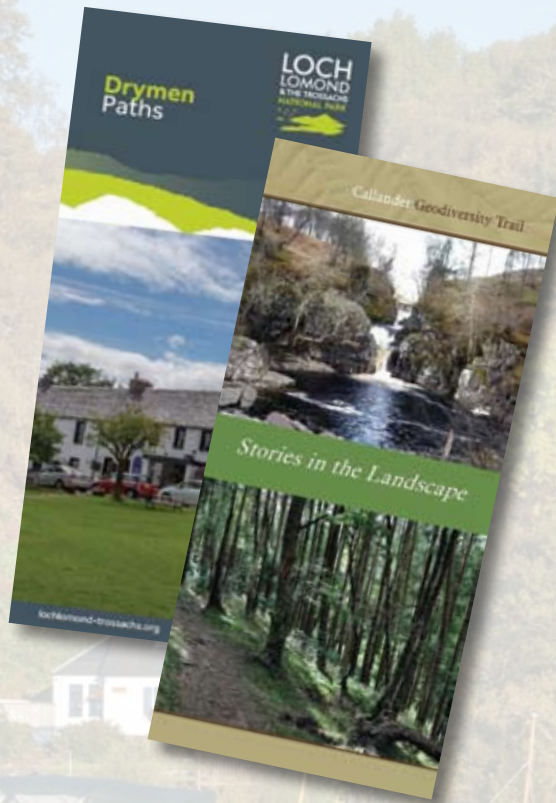
Niall Colquhoun,
Lodge on Loch Lomond, Luss and Inn on Loch Lomond, Inverbeg

“ We are grateful to the Friends for contributing to the latest package of works that has included installing information panels, signposts, self-closing gates and a footbridge as well as publishing the official Three Lochs Way guidebook. **”**

Anne Urquhart, Convener,
Helensburgh and District Access Trust



Bracklinn Bridge Path



Lake of Menteith Wheelyboat

PROJECT EXAMPLES:

Paths Leaflets – The production of a number of leaflets incorporating easy to read maps have been supported by the scheme and have often been linked with path improvement projects. These include the Rob Roy Way, Drymen Paths, Callander Geodiversity Trail, Helensburgh & Rosneath Paths and Arrochar & Tarbet Paths.

Lake of Menteith Wheelyboat - The scheme contributed towards an easy to use electric-start motor for a Wheelyboat that gives disabled people, and wheelchair users in particular, more independent access to the Lake. The Wheelyboat has proven to be very popular since its introduction, gaining quite a number of regular customers. On average it is used about three times a week over 30 weeks of the year.

“We are delighted to be members of the OUR park scheme. As an environmentally conscious business 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.”

Julie Carmichael,
Deli Ecosse, Callander

“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 help 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.”

Victoria Carroll,
Lochend Chalets, Port of Menteith

Projects supported:

- Drymen Paths Leaflet
- Loch Tarsan Disabled Access
- Arrochar & Tarbet Paths Leaflet
- Loch Tay Storyboard, Killin
- Helensburgh & Rosneath Paths Leaflet
- Ben Lomond Path Improvements
- Whinney Hill Path Improvements, Balloch
- Wheelyboat, Lake of Menteith
- Callander Geodiversity Leaflet
- Roy Roy Way Signage
- Bracklinn Falls Path & Storyboard, Callander
- Three Lochs Way Improvements



Rob Roy Way

YOUTH AND EDUCATION

In recent years we have increased our focus on providing opportunities for young people, particularly those experiencing disadvantage and living in urban areas, to experience, enjoy and learn about the special qualities of the National Park. We provide youth activity days and short breaks in the National Park as well as support projects which introduce young people to nature. Over 300 youths have enjoyed activity and environmental awareness outings in the National Park with funding support from the Friends of OUR park scheme.

PROJECT EXAMPLES:

Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre, Lochgoilhead – In 2011 funding from the scheme helped secure the future of this important outdoor learning resource in Argyll Forest which provides residential activity and environmental education breaks for over 2,000 young people each year. In 2013 Friends of OUR park made a further contribution to help the centre build a new classroom extension to increase the capacity to help young people gain valuable lifelong learning skills.

John Muir Awards – A priority for the Friends of OUR park scheme is to engage young people in activities structured towards attaining John Muir Awards. These awards provide young people with a nationally recognised environmental accreditation, which acknowledges their achievement and enhances their wellbeing. Over the past two years the scheme has helped over 150 young people to achieve John Muir Awards.

Green Routes Project, Gartmore – In partnership with three local businesses, the scheme helped fund replacement tools and equipment, as well as provide a secure storage shed for this project which works with around 35 young people with learning difficulties aged between 18 and 25. The youngsters, who live in and around the National Park, are encouraged to learn horticulture skills and obtain horticultural accreditation awards as a stepping stone to work placements.

“Keeping Ardroy going is a real team effort and I am extremely grateful to the Friends who have had a role in helping me ensure the Centre has remained open to inspire thousands of youngsters who thoroughly enjoy their time here making new discoveries in the great outdoors.”

George Bruce, Chief Executive,
Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre, Lochgoilhead

“Thanks to the support from the Friends of OUR park scheme, 140 young people had the opportunity to take part in a variety of fun and exciting outdoor activities in the National Park.”

Helen Goode,
Tullochan Trust, West Dunbartonshire

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.”

“I learned about birds and how to identify them and their homes.”

“Water skiing was amazing and it was so cool getting to do this on the loch.”



Ardroy classroom extension



Moss o' Balloch Play Area



Aberfoyle Bike Park



Green Routes

PROJECT EXAMPLES:

Moss o' Balloch Nature Play Area, Balloch - A contribution from the scheme was made towards the construction of a new themed nature play area at Moss o' Balloch, providing younger people with the opportunity to play on naturally constructed play features in the great outdoors. Support was also provided for a play area in Luss.

Aberfoyle Bike Park - The scheme supported the promotion and maintenance of the recently opened 700m bike trail on the edge of the village. The Bike Park incorporates technical features to assist with developing off-road cycling skills, particularly for young people, before they graduate to the longer trails in the surrounding hills.

“We highly value the role of the Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs as one the guardians of the National Park, and are delighted to support this scheme which is raising money for local priority projects.”

Simon Miller, Chief Executive,
Luss Estates

“This support will give our students additional learning opportunities which will place them in a stronger position to gain employment, which is great!”

Gillian Forster,
Green Routes, Gartmore

“We jumped at the opportunity to contribute towards the wonderful scenery and recreational product of the area through the Friends of OUR park scheme.”

Carolyn Barrowcliffe,
Venachar Lochside, Callander



John Muir Awards



Projects supported:

- Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre, Lochgoilhead
- Maid of the Loch Education Pack, Balloch
- Moss o' Balloch Play Area
- Luss Play Area
- Loch Lomond Shores Outdoor Classroom, Balloch
- Green Routes Equipment, Gartmore
- Tulloch Trust Activity Days & Breaks
- Brucehill & Vale of Leven Youth Groups Activity Days & Breaks
- West Dunbartonshire Youth John Muir Awards
- Dunoon & Helensburgh Youth John Muir Awards
- Aberfoyle Bike Park

A SAFER NATIONAL PARK

The safety of the 4 million annual visitors to Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park and the 16,000 residents who live in the Park is at the heart of a joint project involving the Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs and the Trossachs Search & Rescue Team who are working closely with local communities and businesses to roll out a Park-wide Public Access Defibrillator (PAD) Scheme.

An impressive 50 PADs have been purchased and installed at key locations in and around the National Park linked to local community fundraising efforts and funding from the Friends of OUR park scheme. Support from the scheme has been provided for PADs at some of the more popular tourist hotspots and the remoter more sparsely populated communities where speedy access to emergency services is limited due to the distances involved.

Funding has recently been provided to develop a mobile phone app so people will be able to quickly find the location of the nearest defibrillator. A lightweight defibrillator for use by the Loch Lomond Mountain Rescue Team was also funded by the Friends of OUR park scheme.

“We are delighted and fortunate to have had such great support from the Friends in securing funding for numerous defibrillators in the National Park which is the busiest outdoor countryside destination in Scotland.”

Stuart Ballantyne,
Trossachs Search & Rescue

“Our company hosts tens of thousands of visitors each year in some of the remoter parts of the National Park and it is important we do all we can to ensure their safety and wellbeing. This is a great initiative which we are pleased to support as it will be of direct benefit to our guests as well as residents in some of the more sparsely populated communities in the park.”

Neil Wells, Managing Director
Lochs & Glens Holidays



Gartmore Village



The Oak Tree, Balmaha



Neil Wells of Lochs & Glens Holidays
with Trossachs Search & Rescue Team



Trossachs Pier



Balquhiddar

SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

The Friends of OUR park scheme has helped support a number of community projects celebrating and promoting local cultural heritage as well as projects that have enhanced 'the sense of place' through environmental improvements.



Mhor Festival, Balquhiddar Glen



Callander Summerfest



Celebrating Callander Friendship Garden opening



Tom Weir's Rest

PROJECT EXAMPLES:

Tom Weir's Rest, Balmaha - The Friends, in partnership with the Tom Weir Memorial Group, took the lead in developing this countryside heritage site at Balmaha Bay with funding from a variety of sources including a public appeal and the Friends of OUR park scheme. The project involved installing a life-size bronze statue of Scotland's most-loved mountain man, as well as creating a Bay viewpoint and improving a 'tired' picnic area with new paths, picnic tables, seats, interpretation and a mountain garden.

Heritage Projects - Funding was provided to the Arrochar, Tarbet & Ardlui Heritage Group for help with exhibition display panels. Funding was also given to Callander Community Development Trust to support a Railway Heritage Weekend and the creation of the town's Friendship Garden, featuring stepping stones from some of the town's many groups and clubs, on the site of former public toilets, while in Cowal assistance was given for signing the historic Ardentinny Walled Garden.

Festival Programmes - The scheme has supported a number of community cultural events such as Callander's very successful Summerfest programmes which included free exhibitions with a focus on wildlife, a variety of workshops, music and films. Other events supported have included Mhor Festival at Balquhiddar and Weirfest at Balmaha which both celebrated and featured the very best of local nature's larder, musical talent and craft.

“We are grateful to the general public and funding partners, including Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs, without whose help it would not have been possible to deliver the statue and associated works in memory of Tom in time for his centenary anniversary.”

Susan Taylor, Administrator,
Tom Weir Memorial Group

“I am thrilled that the money we have raised from customers is going towards the Friendship Garden as this will improve the visual appeal of the town for the benefit of both visitors and residents alike.”

Julie Carmichael,
Deli Ecosse, Callander

Projects supported:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| • Mhor Festival, Balquhiddar Glen | • Balmaha Village Green Enhancement |
| • Tom Weir's Rest, Balmaha | • Callander Friendship Garden |
| • Callander Summerfest | • Arrochar, Tarbet & Ardlui Heritage Group Exhibition |
| • Callander Railway Festival | • Ardentinny Walled Garden Signage |
| • Queen's Oak Tree, Luss | • Cowalfest |
| • Weirfest, Balmaha | |

JOIN US AND HELP TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

“ I never take for granted that I get to live and work in Loch Lomond. As a photographer the scenery is incredibly inspiring, the least I could do in return is to support the Friends of OUR park scheme. I've seen first hand the work that they do and the difference that it makes.**”**

Paul Saunders,
Photographer, Drymen

“ 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. We have been overwhelmed by how supportive and positive all our customers have been.**”**

Tom Lewis,
Monachyle Mhor, Balquhidder

“ I care passionately about the National Park, with its stunning landscape qualities which I believe fully deserve careful protection and the Friends of OUR park scheme is a great way of enabling visitors to contribute to this.**”**

Philip Norris,
Lyll Cliff Self-Catering, Dunoon

“ We are very conscious about putting something back in to Balmaha and the surrounding Loch Lomond area. I firmly believe that as a business, if you are not part of your community, contributing to worthwhile causes, you are only doing half your job.**”**

Sandy Fraser,
The Oak Tree Inn, Balmaha



If you are passionate about protecting and improving the special qualities of the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park please join us and help keep it beautiful, accessible and unspoilt. With your help we can support more projects for the benefit of people and nature in and around the National Park.

For further details on how to become involved contact:

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