

Volunteers Help Restore Paths on Ben Lomond



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Great Trossachs Forest, Park News, Events *and more*



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Chairman's Introduction

WELCOME TO THIS SPRING EDITION OF VOICE, which goes from strength to strength. It has a focus on different aspects of the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park and news on recent activities by the Friends and others working to make the Park a better place for people and nature.

As the only independent conservation and heritage charity covering the National Park, we continue to try and make a difference through campaigning, fundraising and volunteering activities working closely with partners such as the Park Authority, local communities and tourism groups.

In this edition we include a special feature on The Great Trossachs Forest which has recently, deservedly, secured special status as Britain's largest National Nature Reserve following great progress with a range of initiatives that have included planting thousands of trees and the opening of The Great Trossachs Path linking Inversnaid on Loch Lomondside with the popular tourist town of Callander. This is one of several Heritage Lottery funded projects which is helping to conserve and promote the special qualities of the National Park. Others include the Mountains and the People project, which is now gathering momentum with the very competent Tom Wallace at the helm, and the Callander Landscape Partnership that plans to showcase the rich and diverse heritage qualities of the countryside around Callander and includes restoring path links with Leny Falls.

The Friends have also been successful in securing HLF funding at a more modest level to support the Tom Weir's Loch Lomond Wonderland initiative that complements the recently completed Tom and Rhona's

Mountain Garden at the popular Tom Weir's Rest site in Balmaha, which attracted an impressive 80,000 visitors in the first year since the unveiling of the Tom Weir statue. This latest project involves schoolchildren at the six primary schools around the loch contributing to a special booklet on the rich stories and wonders of Loch Lomond. It is refreshing to see how they have enthusiastically gone about this task and the results will be on display at the second Weirfest in Balmaha on Saturday 18th June when the booklet is due to be launched.

Doing more to introduce youngsters to the wonders of the National Park has become a higher priority for the Friends and this has been possible due to the funding from Argyll & Bute Council and funds raised through the Glasgow to Loch Lomond Kiltwalk and the growing success of the Friends of OUR park visitor giving scheme that now enjoys the support of 100 businesses throughout the National Park. We have now raised over £200,000 and supported diverse 60 projects.

In the past year youths from the Vale of Leven, Helensburgh and Dunoon school catchment areas have enjoyed activity breaks and days out in the National Park with support from the Friends and many have been successful in gaining John Muir Awards. The Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre, that we helped a voluntary group rescue from closure in 2011 and have



recently supported again with funding for additional classroom space, also hosted a record 2,600 youngsters on activity and environmental breaks in 2015.

We are now working jointly with the Park Authority on a number of youth educational initiatives and through our visitor giving scheme and Kiltwalk activities we are co-sponsoring a Junior Ranger project and educational resource materials on topics such as saving the red squirrel and Balloch Castle Country Park.

Please enjoy reading this latest edition of Voice and hopefully some of the features will encourage you to get out and about to make the most of Scotland's first National Park during a more pleasant period weather wise after what has been a particularly wet winter that has caused extensive damage to popular beauty spots and path networks. Thank you for continuing to support the work of the Friends and if you are not already a member please do consider joining as the more members we have the more we are able to do to protect and promote this special part of Scotland.

All the very best.

JAMES FRASER
Chair - Friends of Loch Lomond
and The Trossachs



Articles published in The Voice do not necessarily represent the views of The Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs. Charity No. SC015389

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

The Voice is published biannually in spring and autumn. Submissions on topics relating to Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park are welcome. Please send submissions to the editor at the address below or email info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs The Old Station, Balloch Alexandria G83 8SS Telephone: **01389 298008** Email: info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk

Cover photo – Volunteers take a rest from restoring the footpath at Ptarmigan Ridge on Ben Lomond. The Friends are supporting this work through the OUR park visitor giving grants scheme. *Photo courtesy of National Trust for Scotland.* Some beautiful photographs of the National Park are available to purchase as framed or canvas wrap pictures from our online shop at www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk



Hannah's Legacy

Candy Jackin, Joyce Deans, Hugh Stirling, James Fraser and George Boyd at the Tom Weir site

Last Autumn the Friends hosted a pleasant visit to Tom Weir's Rest at Balmaha by Hugh Stirling, one of two nephews of the late Dr. Hannah Stirling MBE who was the founder, President and champion of the Friends for 36 years between 1978 and 2014. Hugh was able to see how some of the legacy funding left by Hannah in her will was being spent to restore a pleasant picnic area and to create an impressive viewpoint overlooking Balmaha Bay beside the Tom Weir statue. Tom was a founder member of the Friends and a great personal friend of Hannah's. A special memorial bench with a plaque commemorating Hannah's great contribution to protecting and promoting Loch Lomond was installed at the site. This complements the MV Lomond Hannah which Cruise Loch Lomond operates on the loch and worked with the Friends to name after Hannah to mark her 100th birthday in 2014.



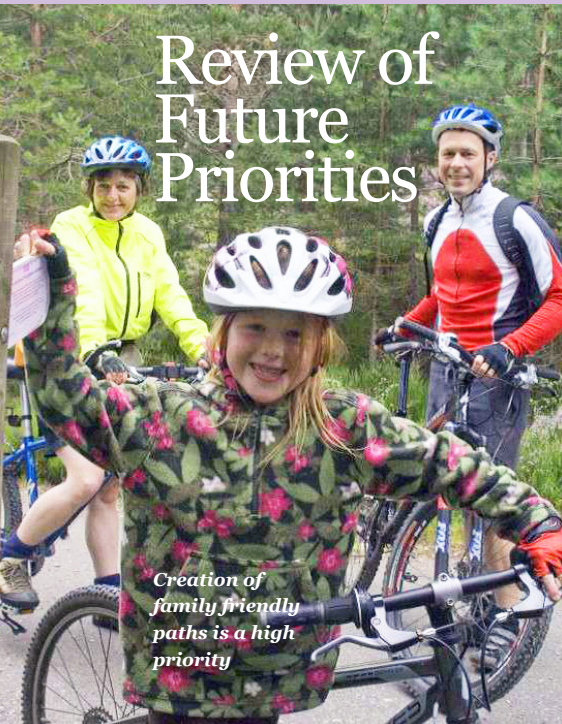
Milestone for Safer Park

The official launch of the new defibrillator at Gartmore

The safety of the four million annual visitors to the National Park and the 16,000 residents who live in the Park recently reached an important milestone with the installation of the fiftieth public access defibrillator (PAD) by the Trossachs Search and Rescue Team who have been working jointly with the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs and local communities and businesses on this Park-wide scheme for the past five years. The latest installations took place at Gartmore and Aberfoyle following fundraising by the local Friends of Aberfoyle Surgery Group with top-up funding of £1,000 coming from the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs OUR park visitor giving scheme. The Gartmore defibrillator is located in a refurbished public phone box in the Main Street while the Aberfoyle one is located in a prominent position on the outside wall of the Forth Inn. Funding has also recently been provided by the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs to the rescue Team to develop a mobile phone app so people will be able to quickly find the location of the nearest defibrillator.



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Review of Future Priorities

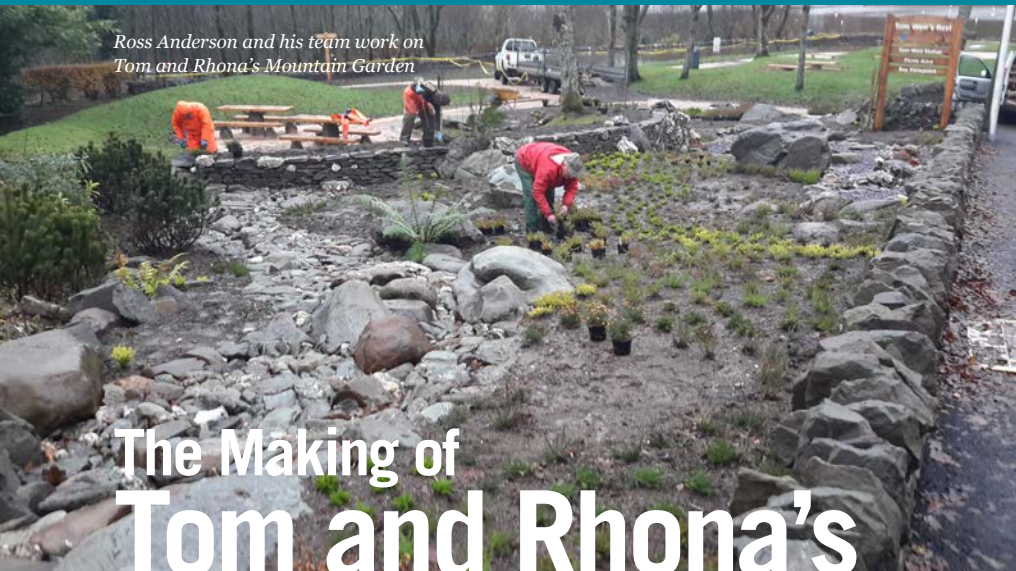
Creation of family friendly paths is a high priority

The Trustees of the Friends recently completed a review of activities undertaken over the past four years and have set out an ambitious agenda for the years ahead with a major focus on campaigning and fundraising to support a range of activities that are complementary to the work of the National Park Authority. Chairman of the Friends, James Fraser said: "Clearly with limited financial and staff resources we need to be very selective about the areas of activity we get involved in and the focus is on making a real difference. "However, over the past four years we can point to a number of successes, including the growth and development of the Friends of OUR park voluntary visitor giving and volunteering scheme, opening up views of Loch Lomond along the A82, safeguarding the National Park from visually intrusive wind farm developments, the production of high

quality DVDs showcasing the special scenic and cultural heritage qualities of the National Park, creating Tom Weir's Rest and Mountain Garden at Balmaha and delivering a growing number of youth initiatives." He added: "Looking to the future with our dedicated band of volunteers, Trustees and two staff we want build on this success and we have identified a number of practical actions under the five themes of Windows on the Park; Celebrating Cultural Heritage; Nature Conservation; Protecting the Park's Special Qualities and Young Friends. In many cases this involves collaboration with others but in other instances we will lead campaigning efforts where we consider this is necessary as the only truly independent conservation and heritage charity covering Scotland's first National Park."

A summary copy of the future priorities chart can be viewed on www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk

Ross Anderson and his team work on Tom and Rhona's Mountain Garden



The Making of Tom and Rhona's Mountain Garden

Following on from the success of the makeover of the picnic area at Balmaha Bay and the installation of much needed flood prevention measures (stone boundary walls and drainage), led by the Friends in partnership with the Tom Weir Memorial Group, work has recently been completed on the impressive £17,500 Tom and Rhona's Mountain Garden which will be formally opened on Saturday 30th April at 2.00pm.

The garden features a range of typical mountain plants as well as a selection of stones and rocks collected near the Highland Boundary Fault which runs through Loch Lomond in close proximity to Balmaha. Feature stones and rocks include white quartz from Ben Lomond and slate slabs from Aberfoyle with engravings of quotes from Tom Weir's articles in the SCOTS magazine 50 years ago on what was special to him about Loch Lomond.

The slabs have been engraved by apprentice stone masons courtesy of Historic Environment Scotland and Forth Valley College in Stirling. A storyboard funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund provides interesting information on the different types of plants and stones and was researched and written by Friends Trustee John Urquhart.



Stuart Fraser, Friends Trustee
Bill Dalrymple and Sandy Fraser at the Mountain Garden

The garden design was prepared by Ross Anderson at no cost to the Friends. Ross is a retired landscape architect who is a member of the Friends and current Chairman of the Scottish Campaign for National Parks. He oversaw the garden works which were undertaken by Sandy Fraser of Alexander Fraser and Sons of Balmaha and his highly skilled outdoor team who also delivered the wider programme of works at Tom Weir's Rest during the past 15 months.

Meanwhile, a series of other storyboards featuring the story of Tom Weir and the natural and cultural heritage of Balmaha Bay have been installed elsewhere on the site. These panels were also written and researched by John Urquhart with design and installation costs being covered by the Friends and grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the National Park Authority.

The public appeal for Tom Weir's Rest site improvements and ongoing maintenance remains open and donations can be sent to the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, Carrochan, Balloch G83 8EG or online at www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/visiting/tom-weir-statue-campaign/menu-id-957.html.

Trossachs Trail Revived

The Friends have stepped in to provide some funding support for the promotion and freshening up of the well signposted Trossachs Trail that introduces visitors to Scotland's oldest established tourist area which embraces the heart of the Trossachs and the nearby towns and villages of Callander, Brig o Turk, Aberfoyle, Thornhill and Doune.

Following a series of workshops with local businesses coordinated by Destination Stirling and talks from Dr. Mike Cantlay, the Chairman of VisitScotland, who lives locally, and Friends Chairman, James Fraser, a working group involving local businesses, the Park Authority, VisitScotland and Stirling Council has been set up to look at ways of capitalising on the major investment that took place in the Trossachs Trail over a decade ago.



We Have Moved

To ensure the staff employed to deliver the important £6 million Mountains and the People project over the next 5 years can be housed in the National Park we have vacated the accommodation we occupied on the upper floor of the Old Station building in the centre of Balloch and have moved our Support Officer, Andrew Galloway to the National Park offices at Carrochan in Balloch. The new address is Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, Carrochan, Carrochan Road, Balloch G83 8EG. Andrew can be contacted by telephone on 01389727761 or by email: info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk Tuesday-Friday between 9.30am and 4pm.

For a number of years now the Park Authority has provided 'in kind' office support services for the Friends of OUR park project and they have agreed to continue this arrangement for the next 5 years. Alice Blazy-Winning, our Project Manager, is currently on maternity leave and we are pleased to report she recently gave birth to a healthy boy called Henry.



Park Wildlife TV Series Success



A series of hour long documentaries following the fortunes of a range of wildlife species throughout the four seasons of the year in the National Park has generated record viewing figures for Channel 5 and greatly raised awareness of the rich wildlife that exists in the Park.

The series featured some spectacular footage of the deer rut in Glen Ample, ospreys diving for food on Trossachs lochs, red kites fighting for survival on the eastern edge of the Park, red squirrels foraging for food and whales and dolphins exploring Loch Long and much more. The rich and varied footage secured was made possible by the local knowledge of Park rangers who worked closely with the film production crew. The series was a timely reminder of the varied wildlife that exists in the National Park and their struggle for survival in what are becoming increasingly unpredictable weather conditions with the differences between seasons becoming blurred.



New Face at the Community Partnership

In October last year, the Community Partnership welcomed its newest staff member Anne Sobey.

Joining the team as Development Manager, Anne had been previously living and working in the Western Isles where she had been working as Third Sector Co-ordinator providing direct support to charities, community groups, social enterprises, development trusts and voluntary organisations across the Isle of Lewis.

Originally born in Haldane, Anne has a strong passion for working with communities, a very personable nature and a breadth of experience and knowledge which will ensure the Community Partnership continues to bring together communities from across Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park to share information and enrich the lives of local residents through a range of practical initiatives.

Callander's Heritage Lottery Fund Award



Paul Prescott, Chairman of the Callander Landscape Partnership project board describes the group's plans following its successful HLF bid.

Leny Pass and Loch Lubnaig

It's surprising how few people realise that in 85 AD the boundary of the Roman empire was right on Callander's doorstep. Almost everyone has heard of Hadrian's Wall and the Antonine Wall, but how many know about the earlier line of forts which ran from Loch Lomond to Montrose? One of these "glen blocker" forts sat at Bochastle, guarding the route through the Pass of Leny into the highlands.

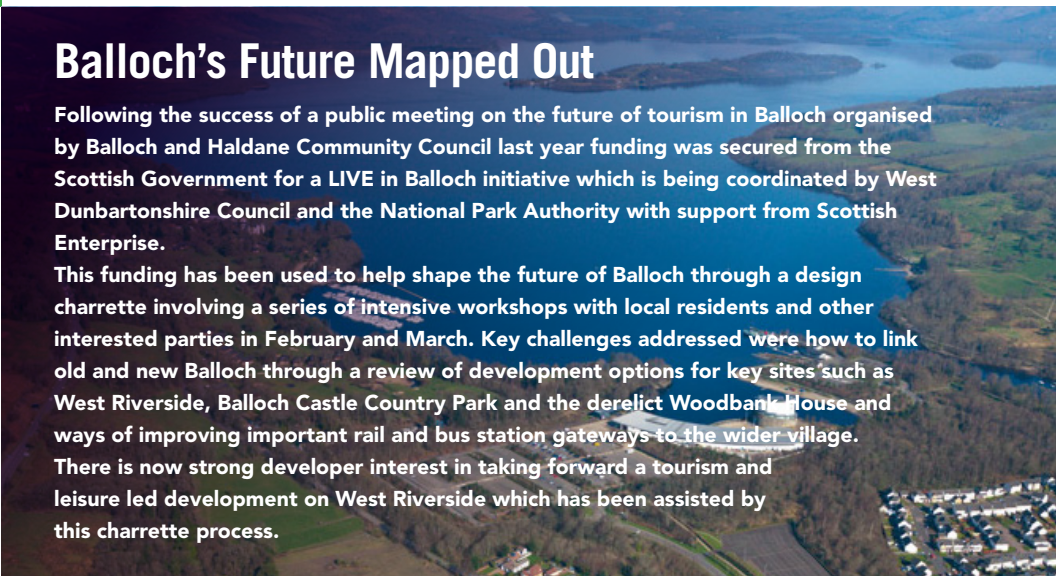
Or how about the 330m long chambered cairn at Auchenlaich near Keltie Bridge? This is the longest prehistoric burial mound in Britain, but is hardly known even to locals. Yet it is older than Stonehenge or the Pyramids.

Heritage like this led the national park to suggest submitting a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund's landscape partnership programme. Community groups, landowners and public bodies were called together, and a "partnership board" was formed. It seemed to us all that a bid had the potential to contribute to the vision in the recent charette that Callander should become the outdoor capital of the national park. So we went at it with a will and submitted an application in May 2015. At the end of October we heard that we'd been awarded £1.55m.

Our bid set out plans to improve the access to and awareness of the features of our landscape,

both natural and man made. The centrepiece is a new bridge over the river at the Falls of Leny, linking the cycleway to a reopened Victorian walkway and leading to the car park at Leny woods. There, a restored and expanded network of footpaths will give access to this splendid area and its many archaeological sites. We plan many other improvements at Little Leny meadows, at Kilmahog and on the crags, and the restoration of old dry stane dykes alongside the A84, to mention just a selection. More widely we plan signage, mapping and interpretation to let locals and visitors alike access the many landscape features. Central to this is an "Ecomuseum", a concept which leaves the museum exhibits in place in the environment but provides online information and a mobile phone app to guide visitors. We also want to tap into the collective folk memory. A research project will interview Callander's older residents and also try to record all the many old photographs that seem to hang on the walls of every pub and café. The next stages are to appoint a project manager, work up our ideas into detailed plans, submit these to the lottery folk, and then if all is well start building. It will all take a few years, but the potential for transformation is enormous!

Balloch's Future Mapped Out



Following the success of a public meeting on the future of tourism in Balloch organised by Balloch and Haldane Community Council last year funding was secured from the Scottish Government for a LIVE in Balloch initiative which is being coordinated by West Dunbartonshire Council and the National Park Authority with support from Scottish Enterprise.

This funding has been used to help shape the future of Balloch through a design charrette involving a series of intensive workshops with local residents and other interested parties in February and March. Key challenges addressed were how to link old and new Balloch through a review of development options for key sites such as West Riverside, Balloch Castle Country Park and the derelict Woodbank House and ways of improving important rail and bus station gateways to the wider village. There is now strong developer interest in taking forward a tourism and leisure led development on West Riverside which has been assisted by this charrette process.



Mission accomplished for Dunoon couple who saved Ardroy

George and Isla Bruce at Ardroy

Dunoon couple George and Isla Bruce, who came out of retirement in 2011 to lead the rescue of Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre in Lochgoilhead, have recently stepped down from their roles as Chief Executive (unpaid) and Administration Manager after five very successful years of hard work placing the Centre on a secure and sustainable long term footing. The Centre was closed in summer 2011 by Fife Council as part of a budget saving exercise but George and Isla stepped in with a team of supporters, including the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, to re-open the Centre later the same year. A social enterprise was set up to run and purchase the Centre from Fife Council and as a result of the efforts of George, Isla and their support team an annual operating loss of £290,000 was very quickly turned around to an

operating surplus with a turnover of £600,000 and an annual throughput of over 2,500 youngsters on outdoor educational and environmental courses. Over the past five years over £500,000 has been invested purchasing and improving the Centre and the most recent investment was in a new central heating system powered by biomass that will reduce annual heating bills by at least a third with the capital costs being recouped through contributions from the national feed in tariff. George and Isla are looking forward to not having to make the 60 mile daily round trip from Dunoon to oversee the running of the Centre and can take a great deal of pride and satisfaction from their successful mission to save Ardroy with many thousands of youngsters likely to benefit from their efforts for years to come.



LUSS A series of proposals by Luss Estates to enhance the popular village of Luss have been approved by the Park Authority. This follows hard on the heels of the opening of the Luss Smokehouse and includes plans to re-introduce a filling station beside the main village car park and the creation of a cluster of retail and craft workshops nearby.

GARTOCHARN A controversial planning application for a housing and cancer respite care centre on a field in front of the busy Gartocharn village hall has been refused by the Park Authority. The field was zoned in the local development plan as open space to protect the spectacular panoramic views overlooking Loch Lomond from the village hall. Amongst the many objectors to this development were the local Community Council, hundreds of villagers and the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs.

BALLOCH Despite strong opposition from the Balloch & Haldane Community Council, many local residents and the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, the Park Authority approved a controversial housing scheme on one of the last remaining potential sites for public parking east of the River Leven and next to the National Park headquarters. As a token concession 15 much needed public car parking spaces have been included in the approved scheme but this falls well short of the estimated 300 car parking space capacity of the site.

The local Community Council and the Friends put forward a strong case for the site to be retained for the provision of a large car park and open space to address the chronic shortage of parking spaces and to support the growth and development of tourism in the older part of the village. Sadly, their pleas failed to persuade Planning Committee members to reject the Planning Officer's recommendation to approve the housing scheme and the decision in favour of housing was, not surprisingly, met with disbelief by the 35 or so members of the public present at the meeting.



Park Stars

Young people from across the National Park were recognised for their creative work at the 'Park Stars' awards ceremony at Cameron House. The Community Partnership provided 20 pupils from Hermitage Academy in Helensburgh, Vale of Leven Academy, McLaren High in Callander and Balfour High with professional training in film-making as part of the Park Previews Project. The young people were trained by award-winning Scottish film company Urbancroft Films who supported them to shoot five inspiring films about what it is like to work for some industries who are flourishing in the National Park. Twelve local businesses offered advice and tours of their businesses, while local employers Monachyle Mhor Hotel, Carrick Golf Club, Loch Lomond Homes and Gardens Centre and Fraser C Robb provided work experience placements for eight of the youngsters.



Loch Lomond Boating Holidays

Award winning passenger cruise boat operator Cruise Loch Lomond has introduced a new cruising experience on Loch Lomond for 2016 with a luxury Linssen motor cruiser in partnership with Linssen Boating Holidays. The high quality Linssen Grand Sturdy 36.9 motor cruiser offers style and serenity with two en-suite cabins and a saloon finished in luxurious wooden panelling and leather upholstery. Based at Cameron House Marina the vessel will be available for 3, 4 or 7 day bare boat charter offering guests the opportunity to explore many of the island gems in the Loch Lomond crown; visit the riparian pubs and hotels to sample local ales and fayre; enjoy a round of golf on one of the world renowned courses; or get back to nature looking for wildlife and enjoying one of the many loch-side walks and cycles. The vessel can also be chartered for ½ or full day skippered charters to discover the Loch's less accessible tranquil locations. For further information: Tel: 013101702356.



Cars parked on pavement at Carrochan

THE ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION COMPANIES ARE

Seeing the bigge

Reducing the visual impact of pre-existing electricity transmission infrastructure in S



Power Distribution

VISTA Project Visual Impact of Scottish Transmission Assets

SHE Transmission's aim is to plan, develop, operate and maintain a safe and reliable electricity network in the north of Scotland. The towers, overhead lines, substations and other infrastructure that we own and maintain in the north of Scotland are at the heart of this network. A lot of our infrastructure runs through some of the country's most remote areas, including National Parks and National Scenic Areas.

www.spenergynetworks.co.uk/pages/view_project.asp



Electricity is an essential part of our everyday lives. We all expect to have access to its benefits at the flick of a switch and we take its presence in our homes and workplaces for granted. SP Energy Networks (SPEN) and Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission (SHE Transmission) are responsible for the safe and reliable maintenance of the electricity transmission and distribution networks in Scotland, and operate a number of overhead transmission lines through some of Scotland's most protected and highly valued landscapes, including Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park.

Working in collaboration across Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park, SPEN and SHE Transmission are currently progressing the Changing the VIEW (Visual Impact of Existing Wirescape) and VISTA (Visual Impact of Scottish Transmission Assets) initiatives to access a share of a £500 million fund, administered by energy regulator OFGEM. The fund is available to mitigate or positively enhance the visual impact of pre-existing transmission infrastructure located in the UK's nationally designated landscapes, including Scotland's National Parks and National Scenic Areas (NSAs). SPEN and SHE Transmission recognise the importance of engaging key stakeholders to ensure the best possible success of

the projects, and have established a Stakeholder Partnership Group to draw upon local expertise and knowledge of the National Park, as well as organisations with a national or regional interest in the protection, enhancement and use of Scotland's designated landscapes. The key objective of the projects is to identify the locations where pre-existing transmission infrastructure has the greatest level of impact on the National Park, and where there is greatest opportunity for successful mitigation. In 2015, SPEN and SHE Transmission commissioned LUC (Land Use Consultants) to undertake an assessment of landscape and visual impacts associated with the pre-existing transmission infrastructure located within Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park. Through this process, a number of transmission infrastructure assets with the greatest perceived visual impacts were identified. Informed by stakeholder participation, through a series of consultation workshops and meetings, LUC is now developing potential mitigation proposals to address the most important visual impacts identified, and will continue to work closely with stakeholders as the projects progress.

SPEN and SHE Transmission are committed to the delivery of mitigation proposals which can remove, reduce or



Changing the VIEW Project Visual Impact of Existing Wirescape

SP Energy Networks (SPEN) Visual Impact of Existing Wirescape (VIEW) Project represents an opportunity to contribute to the success of Scotland's National Parks and National Scenic Areas by accessing a share of a £500 million OFGEM fund, for the positive enhancement of existing transmission infrastructure in our most protected locations.

www.ssepd.co.uk/vistaconsultation/



www.landuse.co.uk

er picture

Scotland's most iconic and scenic landscapes'

re-focus existing visual impacts, and which can complement the diverse range of ongoing initiatives being delivered across Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park - while remaining technically feasible from an engineering and operations perspective. Visual mitigation proposals which deliver potential opportunities for additional environmental, recreational, educational or social enhancement for residents and visitors to the National Park will be encouraged, in order to maximise the benefits from the initiatives. Mitigation proposals could include the introduction of screen planting around substations, the re-routeing or undergrounding of overhead lines, establishment of native woodland planting along overhead line corridors, and additional landscape enhancements linked to visual impacts, such as alterations to recreational paths or green networks. The initiatives represent an exciting opportunity to contribute to the ongoing success of Scotland's most visited National Park, and over the coming months SPEN and SHE Transmission will be developing more detailed mitigation proposals in collaboration with stakeholders, in advance of a submission for funding to OFGEM later in 2016. If you would like to find out more please contact view@spenergynetworks.co.uk or vista@sse.com and keep a close eye on the project webpages for updates and opportunities to get involved at future consultation events as the proposals develop.



“Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park staff have welcomed the opportunity to engage fully with this project as it has developed. We've been able to discuss our current projects and visions for the Park within the context of these two ambitious and large scale projects where there is potential for real public benefit. It is exciting to think that we have a real chance of a share of the OFGEM money to address the impacts of some of the most visible pylons from key routes and honeypots within the parks special landscape.”

Sara Melville, Landscape Advisor
Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority

“These are great initiatives which provide an opportunity to reduce the visual impact of pylons in some of the more scenically sensitive and heavily visited areas in the National Park. They will also enable some important recreational routes to potentially be diverted and opened up and provide a lasting legacy.”

James Fraser, Chairman
Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs

“Changing the VIEW will allow SP Energy Networks to engage with stakeholders and members of the public to discuss the issues and impacts that can occur with overhead transmission lines. This represents a great opportunity to work together to provide innovative solutions in areas where these transmission lines impact upon the valued qualities of the national park”

Grant Douglas, Project Manager
SP Energy Networks

“The VISTA initiative aims to help reduce the visual impact of SHE Transmissions infrastructure on one of Scotland key designated landscapes – The Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. We aim to ensure that applications to the fund are generated through collaborative working with those who have interests in the National Park, helping to develop projects which deliver best value for both local and national stakeholders”

Euan Smith, Project Manager
Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission



Two parallel 132kV transmission lines near Killin



132kV transmission line, Glen Falloch

The Falls *of* Breadalbane



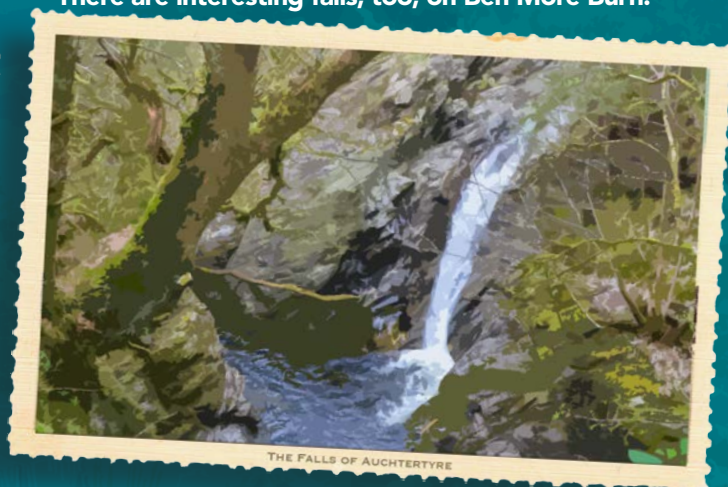
SOME MIGHT QUARREL with the inclusion of a series of rapids like the Falls of Dochart in a list of waterfalls. However, the Falls of Dochart constitute such a temptation that, if they can stop, few passers-by will miss the opportunity of doing so. David Niven is briefly seen driving past the Falls of Dochart in the spoof Bond movie, *Casino Royale*. The crowds looking at the falls when the salmon are running are usually very numerous. However, there is one place at Killin which is always quiet, the ancestral burial ground of the MacNabs. Seton Gordon (1948) describes it: Through the heart of Killin the Dochart thunders, and in heavy water its spray bathes the MacNabs' ancestral burial ground of Inchbuie. Inch Buie, the Yellow Island, which may have been an ancient stronghold, is densely shaded by veteran beeches and pines and golden moss covers the ground.

The MacNabs emigrated to Canada in the early nineteenth century, and they have a curious connection with the Falls of Niagara. It is said that when the United States invaded Canada it was a MacNab who was responsible for sending a blazing American gunboat over the falls.

William Gilpin, the eighteenth century apostle of the picturesque, described Glen Dochart, between Killin and Crianlarich in his *Tour of Scotland*:

From the pleasing environs of Killin we launched out into a wild country which nature had barely produced; but had done little to adorn. In general we had few forms of picturesque beauty, at least in the larger part.

In the smaller we often found them in the winding of rivulets, in their rocky beds and in their bustling cascades of which we had great variety. Of these tributary burns Allt Essan, leading from Loch Essan (the loch of the waterfalls) perched on a shelf above Loch Lubhair and commanding splendid views, stumbles into the Dochart in a series of pretty falls. There are interesting falls, too, on Ben More Burn.



Further on are the Falls of Auchtertyre between Crianlarich and Tyndrum. In the splendid Tyndrum Community Woodland are the charming if modest White Bridge Falls situated on the Fillan. They are reached by a short walk from the car park at Dalrigh, the scene of the Battle of Dalrigh, to Drochaid Ban, a handsome structure, in all probability built by Thomas Telford, but substantially widened. The falls are upstream of the bridge. The trunk stream of the Tay later becomes the Cononish on which there is a delightful six metre fall at the foot of Ben Lui. At the head of a shallow gorge the river leaps into a very beautiful plunge pool forming an intricate cascade. Eas Anie is a fine hanging waterfall on Ben Chuirn on the infant Tay. It can be seen from the A82 at Dalrigh. The district is the site of one of the most celebrated lead deposits of the Central Highlands. The Earl of Breadalbane developed the mines there which led to the growth of the village of Tyndrum and which established him as one of the richest landowners in Britain.



THE FALLS OF EDINAMPLE

South of Killin is Glen Ogle. After rain there are a number of highly visible waterfalls, but at other times there may be little to see. Beyond Lochearnhead are the Falls of Edinample, where the Burn of Ample falls steeply to the level of Loch Earn. There are three cascades which, although they are close to the road, cannot be seen from it. A rather awkward little path leads down the east side of the burn into a tree-filled den. The upper fall of about six metres is obscured by a corner. The two lower falls are very picturesque. They are situated in the grounds of the charming Edinample Castle, a whitewashed seventeenth-century tower house, associated with the MacGregors. The house itself is not open to the public, but it is seen to great advantage. In all the falls are 20 metres in height. The attractive Falls of Kirkton Glen are situated a short distance from the kirk of Balquhidder at the foot of Kirkton Glen. The fall is divided by a rocky islet, and tumbles perhaps ten metres in all.

The place is full of associations. Rob Roy must have known it; and Robert Kirk, the minister who translated the psalms into Gaelic, must have delighted in its spiritual calm. Opposite the Calair Burn, sometimes called the Blackwater, drains Glen Buckie, haunt at one time of Trossachs ironmasters. Baddeley recommends a detour to the Eilean Dubh Falls: "After heavy rain



KIRKTON GLEN

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

the stream forms an impetuous torrent, and at all times the scene is picturesque." The falls, a series of cascades 20m high, with a fine five metre apron fall as a centrepiece, are, indeed, highly picturesque. They can be reached from the woods higher up the burn. Along the Braes of Balquhidder is Rob Roy's Cave Waterfall above Tulloch. A mountain burn falls over the entrance to a shallow cave. It is possible to enter the cave and look outwards through the curtain of water to Loch Voil. The cave is not obvious from below, but this spot is well worth seeking out on a sunny day.



FALLS OF LENY

The Pass of Leny is a significant gateway to the Highlands, and the narrow defile is a busy place, but there is a car park beside the A84 and an old walk leading to the Falls of Leny. The river gorge is scarcely able to accommodate the river, let alone the old military road, the more modern road and the former Callander and Oban railway line, which criss-crossed the rapids in a dramatic fashion. The line of the old railway now provides a footpath and cycle trail west of the river, which is by far the best way to see the falls. There are car parks at Kilmahog and at the foot of Ben Ledi. The river falls in twin cataracts, five metres high, rushing over rough rocks and nearly always providing an abundance of white water. The catchment consists mainly of open heather moorland underlain by metamorphic rocks with igneous intrusions. There is nearly always a considerable discharge because the falls lie immediately below Loch Lubnaig.



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A look ahead to 2016

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

After a busy winter we are looking forward to a wide range of exciting events, projects and new initiatives in the National Park, both for this coming summer and beyond. As we approach the 2016 season there's lots to do and I'm looking forward to working with our staff, partners, communities, businesses and volunteers.

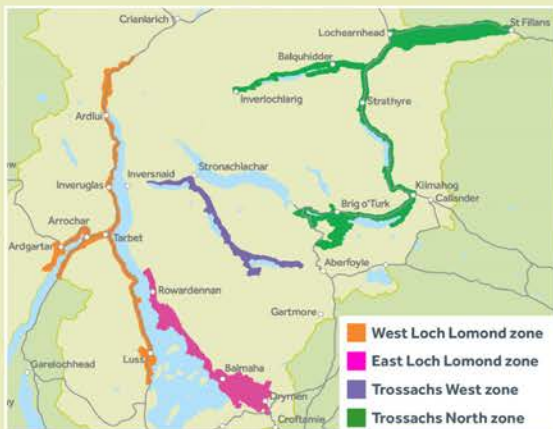


At the end of January The Minister for the Environment Climate Change & Land Reform, Dr Aileen McLeod, approved our camping management proposals to protect the Park by addressing damage caused by overuse and antisocial behaviour around the Park's busiest lochshores.

Local communities, landowners and environmental organisations including the Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs also welcomed the announcement.

The new byelaws will cover 3.7% of the National Park from 1st March until 30th September each year, and will come into effect from the 1st March 2017. They will regulate camping, tackle antisocial behaviour and make it an offence to cause damage to the Park's natural environment. They will also prevent inappropriate use of public laybys as encampments by caravans and campervans.

We know from our experience on East Loch Lomond that camping byelaws, as part of a package of measures - including continued education, joined up work and patrolling with Police Scotland and investment in camping provision - have a transformative effect on the area. So as we prepare for implementation in March 2017, we look forward to seeing this same improvement in the three new 'camping management zones' at West Loch Lomond, Trossachs (West) and Trossachs (North).



CALLANDER LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP

The Callander Landscape Partnership had a huge boost in October when it was awarded an earmarked grant of £1.5m from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the 'Callander's Pass - Mind The Gap' project.

The community-led project will use Callander's unique position on the Highland Boundary Fault to establish the Stirlingshire town as the 'Outdoor Capital of the National Park' including the creation of visitor interpretation, a cycling and walking network, and training opportunities in the magnificent surrounding countryside.

The £1.5m funding will see local community aspirations, that were originally envisioned at the 2011 Callander planning 'charrette,' come to fruition in more than 30 individual projects.

The project is a collaboration between local community organisations, Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority, Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland and Stirling Council.



The Mountains and The People project is up and running and already making a big impact, with path improvements underway on Ben A'an and the Cobbler and starting this spring on Ben Lomond.

The Mountains & The People is a five-year project that will inspire people to protect and maintain iconic Scottish peaks

whilst creating training & employment opportunities for 48 people. As I write the recruitment of our first round of trainees is taking place, with more than 100 fantastic candidates. The project, led by the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT), represents the coming together of Scotland's two National Parks - Cairngorms

Building on the award-winning success of our LIVE Park campaign, LIVE in Balloch is a new initiative to help shape the future of Balloch.

The National Park Authority has been working with West Dunbartonshire Council and Scottish Enterprise to run a series of 'charrette' events through February and March to involve local people in the design of their community.

The 'charrette' aims to involve people who live, work, visit and invest in the area in planning what future development in Balloch might look like, through workshop-style events. We are delighted with the enthusiasm and ideas we are already seeing on how to improve Balloch and benefit from its status as a visitor attraction.

You can get involved at www.facebook.com/ourlivepark

National Park and Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park - to work on a scale never previously attempted and in conjunction with Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

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Nature of the Park



CONFUSION REIGNS!
With daffodils blooming, in some parts of the country before Christmas and collared doves nesting in municipal Christmas trees before twelfth night, thus preventing them from being taken down, have we had a winter at all or did spring begin exceptionally early? A succession of storms racing in from the Atlantic have made this winter a soggy one ... and a warm one to boot, Record rainfalls and indeed record high temperatures have been the order of the day and so we should not perhaps be overly surprised that some elements of nature have accordingly, been somewhat bemused by such un-winter-like conditions.

Keith Graham writes about how the rich variety of wildlife in the National Park and how different species are looking forward to the months ahead after an exceptionally wet and windy winter.

And yet in reality it is the slowly increasing length of daylight hours rather than temperatures that alerts most wildlife to the genuine approach to spring. Thus the urgent sawing of great tits didn't begin to echo across the park until early February. The rhythmic chanting of blue-tits quickly followed prompting a reflection on my part that those record rain and temperature levels seem to have had nothing but beneficial effects upon the titmice, for their numbers throughout this winter seem to have been exceptionally high. However, it remains to be seen if the moths, the caterpillars of which become so important as food for young tits before they

fledge, might well have been encouraged to enter their breeding seasons early. Timing for both great tits and blue-tits is of the essence. Therefore the male birds of both species will be keeping a very close eye on what is happening in moth communities and adjusting their own approach to courtship accordingly. The success of the titmice breeding season depends upon their careful observation of the breeding activity of the moths.

It may be presumed that last year they got their timing absolutely right, hence the prolific numbers of titmice currently a feature of many gardens. As that crucial time approaches, both these birds will be girding up their loins for the massive task ahead of them. As an illustration, one simple statistic will serve to demonstrate the energy a pair of great tits will need in order to complete the task of rearing a family during the months to come. During one intensive period following the hatch of their youngsters, one such pair will need to find in the region of nine or ten thousand caterpillars over a three week period in order to rear successfully their broods of chicks. Not surprisingly, for most of the titmice, one clutch per breeding season is enough!

Otter Cubs

Floods have been universal during that succession of storms and one wildlife sanctuary near the Park has had to deal with a record number of otter cubs which have been separated from their parents by the fury of those floodwaters. The problem for the dedicated people who run those sanctuaries is that otter cubs are dependent upon their mothers for at least a year which means that that is the length of time those cubs will have to be cared for.

Otters are well distributed throughout the National Park, being present on most of our rivers and of course in the many lochs too. They are not as easy to watch here as they are on the remote west coast of Scotland, where they are much less nocturnal than they are in these rather more populace places and where they seem therefore to be more comfortable in the company of people. However, should you be lucky enough to find yourself watching these remarkable animals, you are sure to be utterly enthralled by them, charmed by their sheer athleticism and by that ever present sense of fun.

Otters are dedicated to play. Even pensionable otters will happily enter into the spirit of things and indulge in bouts of play. They are of course, never far from water and indeed spend most of their lives in the rivers, lochs or on the seashore, although they are also known to make surprisingly lengthy sorties across dry land as they make their way from one river system to another, especially when young males are seeking to establish territories for themselves. Apart from the aforementioned flood waters, there is of course, plenty of water within the boundaries of the Park. River systems, lochs, fed both by the sea and fresh water and of course in the south western corner of the park, the sea itself, provide many rich marine environments which attract a wide variety of wildlife. Recent floods have resulted in the surprising discovery of young trout and salmon swimming about in farmer' fields, Herons, always with an eye open for such opportunities, have thus been seen fishing in those fields! However, these large and familiar birds are no strangers to such fieldwork, for they are to be seen patrolling such places in spring and autumn as they search for migrating frogs and toads.

Heronries

The usual place to see them however is either stalking through the shallows or standing like statues sometimes well into the water waiting to pounce on any unwary fish that might pass unknowingly close by. Then you may see the heron at its lethal best ... slowly 'cocking' its long neck before striking with the speed of a snake to snaffle a scaly victim in that dagger-like beak. Herons are unusually early in beginning the rituals of their breeding season, re-furbishing their high rise nests – they usually lived in communities, known as heronries - constructed in the topmost branches of trees - and often lay their first eggs as early as February.

Another commonplace waterside bird very familiar in the Park is the energetic little dipper which might be described as an oversized wren, dark brown in colour with a prominent white bib. They may be seen 'bowing and scraping' – dipping – on what seem to be very well sprung legs. Dippers live off insects and their larvae which they secure by literally walking on the bed of the burn against the flow of water before buoyantly bobbing back to the surface. They may also be seen dipping into our lochs. Slowly but surely, as the days at last lengthen, the mantle of spring settles on this beautiful corner of Scotland. Snowdrops are soon followed by golden hosts of daffodils and then those delicate primroses; the landscape greens and the inevitable call to prepare for the production of new generations is clearly amplified by



the gradual swelling of birdsong. Nothing greets spring as vocally as the increasingly enthusiastic avian choir.

Resident birds are the first to offer their resonant voices in celebration – blackbirds and thrushes among them but soon other voices are to be heard as peewits, oyster-catchers and curlews join the chorus. Theirs is the first inward migration, albeit that it is not necessarily from foreign shores. Indeed many of them will have travelled just a short distance from relatively nearby shores and estuaries where they spend their winters.

Choral Stakes

But as spring really begins to impact, the first migrant birds enter the choral stakes. Some, such as the little chiff-chaffs, plain and anonymous little brown birds, are not great songsters yet their monotone voices tell us of the continuing progress of the season. Among the first proper migrants to return to the Park, are the spectacular ospreys, now increasingly familiar summer residents of the Park and surely among the most spectacular. The sight of an osprey hunting is one of the most exciting wildlife experiences.

The trickle of migrating birds soon becomes a torrent. New voices are to be heard almost on a daily basis and the whole Park seems to be waking, throbbing with vibrant life. Surprisingly, ravens are, like herons, early starters in courtship, laying eggs as early as February, despite their occupation of the more mountainous parts of the Park. To some folk, ravens may cut sinister figures. They are black and down the years their reputation seems to have gone before them! But ravens are constant. They pair for life and furthermore are among the most acrobatic flyers. It often strikes me that there is within each raven, a distinct sense of humour for they frequently loop the loop and at times may be seen flying upside down!

Bluebells soon carpet many a wood with their delicate blue and touch another sense through their delicious scent. And, all the

time more in-coming birds make their marks. At last the cuckoo's voice is heard, not perhaps a welcome sound to those birds which will find themselves not rearing their own progeny but instead a fast growing cuckoo chick which soon dwarfs them. The adult cuckoos meanwhile having completed their dastardly missions, are heading south again, to Africa by early July.

New life emerges. Unseen and before spring has properly arrived, fox and badger cubs have come into the world in their underground earths and setts. Whilst the fox cubs are precocious enough to be out and about in April, it will be May before badger cubs venture into the world outside. But new avian life ensures that those migrant birds that fly sometimes thousands of miles to come here to raise the next generation have completed their vital tasks. Their stay here is dominated by that single generational factor. Summer is therefore the time of mass production and a time when our skies are gloriously animated by the supreme flight of swallows and martins and by the energetic aerial mastery of swifts.

And then, as August approaches, a new mood silences the landscape.

Job done, those summer visitors must now prepare for departure. But first, a new suit of clothes – new feathers – must be grown before mammoth journeys can be contemplated. Suddenly silence reigns; a season's work is nearly done and autumn's bounty is awaited.

And whilst migratory birds and their new families must prepare themselves for those fearsome and in some cases, amazingly lengthy flights, others must begin to amass stores of food for next winter. Our increasingly numerous red squirrels will soon be turning their minds to collecting and stashing stocks of nuts and beech mast for shorter days to come, whilst the similarly increasing population of pine marten will be watching such endeavours with menacing interest! But at least, the martens are making encouraging inroads into the accordingly falling numbers of alien grey squirrels. Yet, these are indeed the months of creation.





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Friends member Alistair McIntyre takes us on his fifth and final outing following the Three Lochs Way. Here he walks the 6 miles (9.5 kilometres) from Arrochar to Inveruglas. The Three Lochs Way was created by Helensburgh and District Access Trust with funding from a range of sources including The Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs. It is one of Scotland's nationally approved "Great Trails".

A Walk on the Three Lochs Way



THE LAST STAGE OF OUR WALK begins at Arrochar and Tarbet, with several options beckoning us on to the route through Glen Loin. Native woodland forms an attractive green portal as we proceed, leaving images of loch and village swiftly behind. Extensive stands of oak and especially ash, have led to the designation of the hillside on our right as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. We have the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs to thank for the fine path that threads its way onwards, with glimpses and then more open views of the rugged hills rising steeply from the bed of the glen. There are caves up there, both to left and right, tricky to find nowadays, but immortalised through the classic book "Always a Little Further" by Alastair Borthwick, who graphically portrays their use as shelters for the impecunious or independent-minded during the Hungry Thirties. We may also catch sight of the buildings of Stronafyne Farm. With the growth of forestry hereabouts, stock-rearing has declined in

relative importance, but this was once a very large sheep-farm, almost 7,000 acres in extent. In earlier times, cattle drovers often came through the glen- there was an overnight stance. Incredibly, there exists an account of a drove here as late as 1914, surely one of the very last in the whole country.

Never wide at any point, Glen Loin undergoes a sudden change of character as we move deeper among the hills. A sharp incline on the part of the path coincides with a dramatic narrowing of the glen, almost as if unseen but gigantic stagehands have replaced the backdrop by sleight of hand. It is in a place like this that imagination can easily take over, and ambush by hidden warriors presents itself as a real possibility. Such a feeling may well be heightened by the sight of a massive boulder perched on top of smaller stones- could this have been the work of some unsung Fingal or Ossian?

Whatever the case, our romantic side is perhaps brought back to the present by the sight ahead, not of a clansman or giant, but an electricity pylon astride a huge rock, seemingly challenging our way. This is a good place to draw breath, have a cuppa, and savour the surroundings.

The steep climb behind us, the landscape alters yet again, as we wend our way through conifer plantations and new hills soar into view. In large measure, it is these constantly changing vistas that give the Three Lochs Way its unique

character, and render it a never-ending source of delight.

We rapidly drop down to the Inveruglas burn and Coiregrogain, a former shepherd's cottage. Once over the bridge and onto the tarmac road, there is a decision to be made: do we go left, and up to Loch Sloy dam, or turn right and head downhill to Inveruglas and the end of our walk? You will already have caught a glimpse of the dam, well-framed on either side by the equally rugged Ben Vorlich and Ben Vane, and the uphill walk is justly very popular and well worth the effort.



Whether or not you do make the detour, you will savour the views of Loch Lomond and its hilly retinue as you drop down to Inveruglas, with huge water pipes leading water from the dam into Sloy Power Station. The present writer was fortunate enough to be present at the opening by Her Majesty the Queen in 1950. His prevailing memory is of crowds, rain, mud and waiting - but something not to be missed at any cost!



Walkers on the Three Lochs Way



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



The Great Trossachs Forest National Nature Reserve is the UK's newest and largest. Home to iconic wildlife, it also offers a range of opportunities for enjoying the great outdoors, as Project Manager Sue Morris explains.

THE GREAT TROSSACHS FOREST

Photos courtesy of Forestry Commission, Scottish Viewpoint, Niall Benvie, Shirley Leek and Louise Greenhorn



The Great Trossachs Forest National Nature Reserve is a huge conservation project in the heart of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park. Covering a vast area of 16,500 hectares, it accounts for nearly one-tenth of the National Park area, and is the largest reserve in the UK.

Although this National Nature Reserve was only designated last year, RSPB, Woodland Trust and Forestry Commission Scotland have actually been working together since 2009 to create and restore a mosaic of native woodlands and open hill habitats, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. It's a project that also involves sharing the human history of the area, as well as creating great opportunities for visitors, including cyclists and walkers. Crucially, the reserve is within an hour's drive for 80% of Scotland's population.

A legacy for nature

Ambition lies at the very heart of the new reserve's ethos. The Great Trossachs Forest plan is a 200-year commitment. During this time, the main aim of our work will be to celebrate and promote the incredible beauty of the area and to restore, protect and enhance our native habitats. This extensive time frame and geographic scale will allow species both the time and the space to react and adapt to the changes that are likely as a result of climate change. The work that has been started will continue for centuries and should ensure that future generations will be able to enjoy the area. It also gives the partners the opportunity to monitor changes and react accordingly. This is a crucial point as The Great Trossachs Forest was born out of the Scottish Forest Alliance. As part of this alliance a monitoring programme was established that is recording the amount of above – and below – ground carbon being stored by our restoration work and also how this ecosystem is functioning. This measuring work will continue over the 200-year lifetime of the project.



A vast mosaic of habitats

The Great Trossachs Forest covers an array of important habitats, which include ancient woodland, western Atlantic oak woodland (often described as Scotland's rainforest) and upland wood pasture.

A total of 1.5 million native trees have been planted over the past six years and are connecting these varied surroundings whilst forming a diverse woodland corridor straddling the project area. This woodland corridor will ultimately be a beautiful mixture of native species, age structure and tree density with an uneven forest edge. The area is home to iconic species such as golden eagles, ospreys, red squirrels and pine martens and, by investing time and resources in the new National Nature Reserve, The Great Trossachs Forest will remain a significant home and sanctuary for wildlife. This is neatly demonstrated by the black grouse, numbers of which, after a hard-earned period of increase, have remained stable in recent years, thus bucking a national decline.

It isn't only mammals and birds that will benefit from the new reserve. Rare butterflies and moths, including the pearl-bordered fritillary and the narrow-bordered bee hawk-moth, have recently been discovered, providing a good indication that their habitats are recovering from a previously

Something for everyone



Walkers enjoying the Great Trossachs Forest

overgrazed state. These are woodland edge and glade species that need only light grazing and an abundance of nectar-rich wildflowers – especially bugle for the former, and devil's bit scabious for the latter – to thrive. The Great Trossachs Forest will offer something special for those inspired by the arts. The area is steeped in cultural history and our art and literature trail celebrates a number of important figures who have been influenced by the area. Amongst those featured are painters including John Ruskin and The Glasgow Boys, who drew inspiration from the superb scenery, and Sir Walter Scott, whose writings brought the legend of Rob Roy and the Lady of the Lake to life.

Boots, bikes and boats

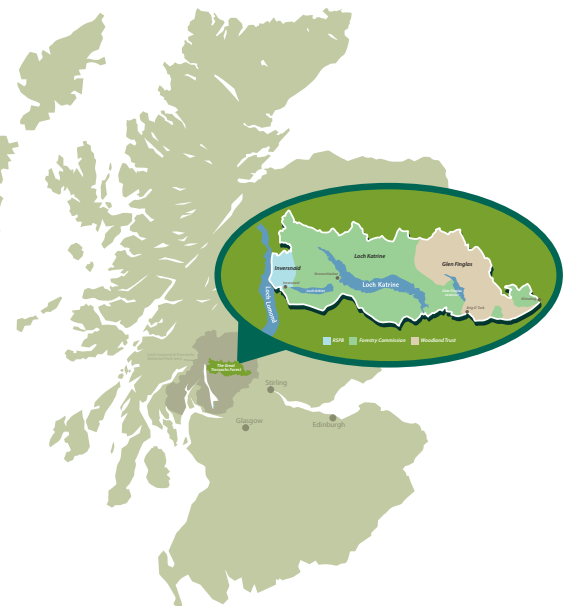
Modern-day visitors can enjoy a network of paths offering fantastic views. These range from a twenty-minute walk to a two-day trek along The Great Trossachs Path, one of Scotland's Great Trails. The Great Trossachs Path along with some of our loop walks also offer some fantastic cycling opportunities. Another great way to enjoy the spectacular scenery of the area is by boat, and there are a number of cruising options, most notably the steamship Sir Walter Scott, that plies Loch Katrine.

Thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund we have created new facilities to help visitors explore. Our two new visitor gateways provide information on the work of the partners and highlight what there is to do in the area. These facilities – the RSPB Gateway is in the Garrison car park at Inversnaid and the Woodland Trust Gateway is in the Lendrick Hill car park just outside Brig o' Turk – are a great starting point for your adventure in The Great Trossachs Forest.

Volunteers welcome

Finally, if you are interested in getting involved we are always looking for volunteers. As well as regular conservation volunteering, such as helping with surveys and species monitoring, we have a number of roles, including being a volunteer speaker and helping to greet visitors to our gateways. So there is a 'new kid on the block' in the suite of Scotland's National Nature Reserves. The Great Trossachs Forest may be the latest but chances are it will quickly prove to be one of the most popular.

To find out more about Scotland's largest National Nature Reserve visit www.thegreattrossachsforest.co.uk



Time to kilt!



Join us for the 2016 Kiltwalk

After a year of change, the Kiltwalk is coming back to Loch Lomond this springtime – and once again the Friends want you to join our team. Sunday 24th April is the date for the latest staging of the Kiltwalk, which will see hundreds of participants hiking the 26 miles from Hampden Park in Glasgow to Moss o' Balloch Park on the bonnie banks or taking part in the 'Wee Walk' at Balloch Castle Country Park. And as part of a complete revamp of the charity trek, every single penny raised by walkers in the Friends team will go towards helping children get the most out of the National Park. Last year the Friends were represented on the main walk by local residents from Renton and Alexandria, along with a team from the Tarbet Bay Hotel. We were also delighted to have twenty young people undertaking the six-mile 'Wee Walk' as part of their work towards a John Muir Award. The Kiltwalk was relaunched last year and is now under the watch of millionaire Scottish philanthropist Sir Tom Hunter who has also pledged that "every single penny, every single pound" raised will benefit young people throughout Scotland. If you would like to help us raise funds for children's causes, as either a walker or volunteer, please contact Andrew Galloway at info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk or on 01389 727761.



Friends of OUR Park is a very successful voluntary visitor giving and volunteering initiative led by the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs with support from 100 local businesses, Scottish Enterprise and the National Park Authority. Here we feature different aspects of OUR Park which is going from strength to strength and making a real difference in the National Park.

Ben Lomond Paths Repair Support

A generous grant of £1,000 will help the National Trust for Scotland repair paths on one of Scotland's most popular 'munro' mountains – Ben Lomond - this year.



The Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs gave the cash towards the conservation charity's £15,000 annual bill to maintain paths on the mountain which welcomes around 30,000 visitors every year. The Friends grant came from their innovative Friends of OUR park visitor giving scheme which involves hundreds of visitors donating funds via local businesses such as Cruise Loch Lomond, the Lodge on Loch Lomond Hotel and the Oak Tree Inn at Balmaha for re-investment in a range of projects for the benefit of people and nature. The donation will specifically be used for the repair work on the Ptarmigan ridge, a high altitude and difficult section of path to look after. Ben Lomond Property Manager Alasdair Eckersall said: "We are so grateful for this generous contribution to our vital conservation work. By keeping our footpaths in good order, we can help ensure that the impact of 30,000 pairs of boots every year is kept to a minimum. "Looking after Scotland's countryside and mountains is an expensive business and as a charity, we need help to make this happen." Last October, 100 tonnes of stone was airlifted onto Ben Lomond to enable the Upland Path Team to carry

out repairs throughout 2016. James Fraser, Chairman of the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs: "We are delighted to be able to support the National Trust for Scotland's important work maintaining the popular Ben Lomond footpath as a result of the joint efforts of local tourism businesses and visitors generously donating funds through our visitor giving scheme." The National Trust for Scotland cares for more than 400 miles of paths across Scotland. The charity's Upland Path Team ensures that these landscapes are protected. Their workplace extends across the 46 munros in the Trust's care, as well as outstanding wildlife reserves and island havens. It costs the conservation charity £37 to repair one metre of footpath and a donation of £3 per month to its Footpath Fund will help repair one metre of path over a year - www.footpathfund.org.uk.



Friends Chairman James Fraser (right) and Trustee Bill Dalrymple (left) present Alasdair Eckersall of the National Trust for Scotland with the grant

Deli Ecosse

We are a small family run delicatessen and café. We've been trading since 2007, serving home cooked food, including full breakfast, tasty soups and made to order sandwiches and Panini.

All baking is homemade including scones, carrot cake and thick caramel slice.

Deli and grocery products are mainly sourced from Scottish producers and suppliers, along with a selection of ingredients from around the world.

Deli Ecosse
10 Ancaster Square
Callander
FK17 8ED

01877331220
deli.ecosse@yahoo.co.uk



Opening Hours

Easter – End of Sept
8am til 5pm
Seven days

October – Easter
8.30am til 5pm
Thursday to Tuesday
Closed Wednesday

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Rhodie Invasion Tackled



The removal of rhododendron proved to be a rewarding experience for dozens of volunteers who took part in the Friends' Make a Difference Day last autumn. A team of 38 willing volunteers tackled the invasion of rhodies on West Loch Lomond next to the imposing gates beside Loch Lomond Golf Club. Many of the volunteers came from well-known national companies including Scottish Water and Direct Line Insurance. The group also included other volunteers who were working with the Friends for the first time.

Volunteers who took part in the rhododendron removal Make a Difference Day

focus on Deli Ecosse, Callander

Julie Carmichael, proprietor of the popular Deli Ecosse in Ancaster Square, Callander talks about her business and involvement with the Friends of OUR park scheme.



Julie Carmichael pictured right with Friends Project Officer Alice Blazy-Winning

Making a Difference Success

Towards the end of 2015, the Friends of OUR park project celebrated five years of helping deserving projects to flourish.

More than £200,000 has now been raised by the initiative since it was launched in 2010, with over 60 worthy projects supported financially throughout the National Park. One hundred tourism businesses have pledged their support in a variety of ways, including donation canisters and opt-in giving schemes in place at hotels, catering outlets and visitor attractions. The scheme has also seen nearly 50 volunteer tasks organised, involving a total of almost 600 volunteers contributing over 6,500 hours of their time and effort.

Hotelier Niall Colquhoun of Lodge of Loch Lomond and Inn on Loch Lomond and one of the scheme's strongest supporters, said: "Given 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."



Make a Difference Success - Some business supporters of the Friends of OUR park project at the launch of the 'Making a Difference' booklet at the National Park Tourism Conference

Balmaha entrepreneur Sandy Fraser, whose Oak Tree Inn premises is one of the scheme's largest fundraisers, said: "People overwhelmingly want to contribute towards the scheme and love asking what the money is going towards. We are very conscious about putting something back in to Balmaha and the surrounding Loch Lomond area. I believe that as a business, if you are not part of the community, contributing to worthwhile causes, you are doing only half your job."

Friends Chairman James Fraser described the Friends of OUR park scheme as "a

compelling movement that brings together individuals and businesses who enjoy and value the magnificent natural and cultural heritage of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park."

He added: "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."

Another raft of projects have also recently benefited from the Friends of OUR park project, including the production of path leaflets for Arrochar and Tarbet; Drymen and Balmaha; and Helensburgh and the Rosneath Peninsula, red squirrel conservation work in Cowal, footpath signing in Killin and a package of youth and educational resource initiatives that are being taken forward jointly with the Park Authority.

What attracted you to do business in Callander?

Having worked for over 15 years in the catering industry, I decided it was now or never to start my own business. And having worked mainly in tourist areas in various parts of the UK, I realised this was the sector of catering I really enjoyed. I was looking for an area with several different customer bases. Callander fitted this requirement with locals, day trippers and many regular travellers on the A84. When I visited Deli Ecosse for the first time, I realised there was loads on potential, to increase the café element of the business while still maintaining the deli. Other towns and villages I'd looked at had already had an increase in cafés and restaurants, while Callander still had potential to expand the market share of Deli Ecosse.

Tell us about your inspiration and plans for Deli Ecosse.

Having built up fantastic regular trade in Callander and the National Park, we took on another retail unit on the Main Street, Brambles. Our aim there is to provide a range of Scottish preserves, chutneys, confectionary and other Scottish produce, along with a small selection of gift items. We are now looking at expanding our horizons, with a new e-commerce website in the pipeline. Many of our visitors, from further afield, have commented on the difficulty of obtaining many Scottish products and feels this is a market we could expand into.

Why do you support Friends of OUR Park?

Friends of OUR Park gives us and visitors a chance to support local projects that mean something to the Callander area. These include the Bracklinn Falls path and the Community Friendship Garden in Callander and they enhance the area for both locals and visitors. Being completely hands on at the deli, I feel this is one way we can help contribute to the hard work done by volunteers by collecting funds to support these projects. Although I don't get out very often to enjoy the wonderful countryside around Callander, I enjoy hearing customers' tales of exploring the paths, hills, woods and waterways, knowing that some are maintained by the Friends, National Park staff, landowners and farmers.



Midsummer Weirfest

Scotland's most-loved mountain man, Tom Weir, is to be honoured on the banks of Loch Lomond again with the second staging of the Weirfest and Scotland's Red Toorie Hat Festival, which this year will take place on a new midsummer date of Saturday, June 18. The family fun day featuring music, competitions, cooking and outdoor craft demonstrations, proved a great hit with thousands of visitors to the site of his iconic statue at scenic Balmaha Bay when it first took place in 2015, and it is hoped that the new date, closer to the school summer holidays and at a warmer time of the year, will be a further boost. Plans are currently being drawn up for the programme of entertainment on the day and a final schedule, featuring some of Scotland's leading performers in music and cookery, will be unveiled closer to the day of the festival.

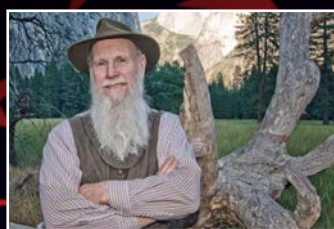
Popular Scottish minstrel Alistair MacDonald and well known Balmaha local musician Dave Acari have already agreed to perform. There will also be a series of cooking demonstrations featuring some of Tom's favourite foods. A variety of craft and food stalls will also be available to the public on the day, while admission and car parking will be free of charge and donations can be made on the day to boost the Tom Weir fundraising campaign to maintain and improve the site. Susan Taylor, administrator of the Tom Weir Memorial Group, said: "Last year's Weirfest was a huge success, surpassing everybody's expectations for an event being held for the first time. This year we hope we can build on that and make Scotland's Red Toorie Hat Festival even more of a key event in celebrating the life and work of Scotland's most loved mountain man.

"We hope that once again there will be a good turnout of people wearing Tom's signature red toorie hats, which have become an integral part of visits to the statue. These will be on sale as we bid to add to the colour and ambience of the day, and we very much hope that a date closer to midsummer will mean a nice, warm day for visitors to Loch Lomond to come out and enjoy themselves."

Work is ongoing at the Tom Weir site to maintain it as an idyllic beauty spot. The public appeal remains open and donations can be sent to the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, The Old Station, Balloch Road, Balloch G83 8SS or online at www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/visiting/tom-weir-statue-campaign/menu-id-957.html



US National Parks Service Centennial Celebrations



The Friends are taking part in the US National Parks Service centennial celebrations by hosting a visit from US National Parks ambassador, Lee Stetson (above), who will be bringing 'the spirit of John Muir' back home to his birthplace in Dunbar as he portrays the great man walking the new Scottish long distance route which bears his name. Lee, a Hollywood actor perhaps better known to us for his part in the TV series 'Hawaii Five-0', is one of a number of 'Centennial Ambassadors' who will be helping to spread the conservation and National Parks messages worldwide during 2016.

These days Lee practically is John Muir, his memorable portrayals of the great man having been a highlight for hundreds of thousands of visitors to Yosemite National Park since 1983. Lee will start his walk at Helensburgh which looks across the Firth of Clyde to Greenock where an 11 year old John Muir set out in 1849 with his parents for a new life in America. The table below gives the full list of events being organised by the Friends. For more information about Lee's other events, check out <http://discoverjohnmuir.com/muir-events/> Hopefully we'll see you at one or other of the public events listed below. It's your chance too to have a chat with the spirit of John Muir. What will he say? Spooky, or what! **The US National Parks Service is responsible for over 409 parks in America's National Park system and a record 305 million people visited National Parks in 2015.**

DATE	EVENT	SPONSOR
Wed 27th	09.00 - 10.00am Address to pupils at Hermitage Academy. (Private event)	Argyll and Bute Council
	10.30am Media photo-call at Helensburgh Pier before walking JM trail to Balloch accompanied by local walking enthusiasts. Arrive Balloch around 15.30 (Public event)	Friends Balmillig B&B
	3.30pm Reception at National Park HQ in Balloch. Presentation of John Muir Awards. (Public event)	Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park
Friday 29th	7.00pm John Muir Wildlife and Ecology Film Festival opening event at The Tower, Helensburgh. Presentation of John Muir Awards. More information at filmfreeway.com/festival/JohnMuirWildLifeFilmFestival	Argyll and Bute Council. Balmillig B&B
Saturday 30th	10.30 - 11.30am Helensburgh Hanami celebrations incorporating planting of Sequoias from Yosemite National Park in Hermitage Park, Helensburgh. (Public event)	Friends of Hermitage Park & Helensburgh Tree Conservation Trust
	2.00pm 'John Muir meets Tom and Rhona Weir' - afternoon outdoor event at the Tom Weir Statue in Balmaha where Lee will formally declare the opening of the "Tom and Rhona's Mountain Garden" (Public event with donations welcome)	Friends Oak Tree Inn, Balmaha

SUNDAY 24th APRIL

HAMPDEN TO LOCH LOMOND KILTWALK

A unique Scottish charity event where every penny raised by walkers and fundraisers goes towards supporting children throughout Scotland. Revamped for 2016, the 26-mile walk will finish in Moss o' Balloch Park.

WEDNESDAY 27th to SATURDAY 30th APRIL

SERIES OF JOHN MUIR TALKS

With 3 days of events, the Friends will be helping to bring 'the spirit of John Muir' back home to Scotland this Spring. To mark its centenary, the US National Parks Service has appointed actor Lee Stetson as a 'Centennial Ambassador' to portray the great man as he walks the new Scottish long distance route which bears John Muir's name. Since 1983 thousands of visitors to Yosemite National Park have seen Lee's famous portrayals of Muir. See detailed programme on page 23.

WEDNESDAY 18th MAY

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This annual member's event with a buffet meal and guest speakers on interesting topics such as the new Mountains and People project. To be held at Ross Priory, Gartocharn with stunning views up Loch Lomond. An optional buffet meal between 6.00pm and 7.30pm followed by the AGM and guest speakers with a 9pm finish. Please book the buffet meal in advance (£10).

SATURDAY 11th and SUNDAY 12th JUNE

CALEDONIAN CHALLENGE VOLUNTEER EVENT

This Scottish Communities Foundation event offers an opportunity for volunteers to help marshal and raise funds for the Friends at the same time. By helping out you will be supporting walkers as they take on a huge 54-mile, 24-hour walk along the West Highland Way.

SATURDAY 18th JUNE

WEIRFEST

The second staging of Scotland's Red Toorie Hat Festival, which was a roaring success when it was held for the first time last year. Taking place at the iconic Tom Weir Statue site, Weirfest will once again feature a mix of musical talent, crafts and food. This year's festival will run from 11am to 4pm and entry is free with donations welcome.

SATURDAY 2nd JULY

LUSS HIGHLAND GAMES & FRIENDS WELCOME TENT

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

CALLANDER SUMMERFEST

If you're in Callander between July 16th and 31st you're sure to find something interesting or entertaining to do. Callander & Trossachs Summerfest will have a full programme of exhibitions, music, poetry, film, art workshops, art installations and sporting activities, including the Trossachs Summer Festival and ceilidh at McLaren Community Leisure Centre. This community-led festival is organised by Callander Community Development Trust, Creative in Callander and McLaren Community Leisure Centre. Find all the details at www.callandercdt.org.uk or Callander Summerfest on Facebook.

WEDNESDAY 17th AUGUST

A LOCH LOMOND SUNSET CRUISE

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

SUNDAY 4th DECEMBER

CHRISTMAS AT ROSS PRIORY

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

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



Festive Celebrations

Friends members and guests enjoyed an entertaining start to their festive celebrations at our annual 'Christmas at Ross Priory' in the run up to Christmas last year. The Loch Lomond Ukulele Orchestra (above) followed on from their highly successful appearance at last year's Weirfest by entertaining guests at the reception held at the scenic venue overlooking Loch Lomond in Gartocharn.

A selection of craft stalls also ensured that visitors had the opportunity to purchase that 'different' gift, while mince pies and mulled wine supplied by Ross Priory added to the occasion.



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For details of membership please
call 01389 298008 or
visit www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk

Ardoch's Success Brings Benefits to Young People



Ardoch is a conference and function venue with a difference with stunning 360° views of Loch Lomond and the Campsies in a carefully converted and extended cluster of farm buildings. Since being opened by Princess Anne in 2010 it has become a popular venue for meetings, conferences and weddings, as well as being a source of invaluable funding for good causes primarily supporting young people. Run by a small team of directors and staff, it has ambitions to build on this success.

ARDOCH lies at the end of a single track road on the edge of the village of Gartocharn at the southern end of Loch Lomond and is a great success story and is now under the management team of Luke, Brianne and Peter Cockill. While it is run on commercial lines all profits are re-invested in improvements to the facilities and through its own Foundation a range of charities are supported, primarily with a focus on developing leadership skills amongst young people.

While Ardoch has gone from strength to strength since being officially opened by Princess Anne, the team are keen to keep things progressing forward as they try to widen the appeal of the venue and tap into new markets to support their tremendous charity work.

Luke said: "We are delighted we have been able to help a number of children's charities and other causes, and it's nice to feel you are giving something back. "The venue's opening ceremony was organised by Columba 1400, a company based in Skye who work with young people. They were a big help in getting Princess Anne to Ardoch and it was a great occasion.



Luke, Brianne and Peter Cockill, the directors of Ardoch

"Over the last five years we have raised £180,000 which has helped us give grants to kids' charities. Obviously we want to keep that going."

"We are still looking to grow as a corporate business and are looking to open the venue up for more weddings. Our goal is to secure around ten weddings a year and we are also looking at doing more private dinners and parties, whether it's groups of 20 friends or a small party attending a meeting.

"The view of Loch Lomond is a huge selling point. You always talk about unique selling points which a business can offer, and this is ours.

"But how do you get that across? One of the biggest challenges is to get people up here to view the premises, and once they do they fall in love with the area.

"It's important to know who you are dealing with, and with us being a small team, it's something we do well."

Ardoch's opening was the end of a four-year process where the land was acquired, refurbished and extended. When Luke returned to the UK in 2013, having previously worked at Deer Valley Resort in Park City, Utah, he took over the running of the venue from his parents, Robert and Penny.

He added: "I grew up in North Yorkshire but my wife Brianne and I had been working in America.

"For us, to move to a new and beautiful area was exciting but to take a business which still had to become profitable and put our own stamp on it was an opportunity we couldn't pass up.

"In the States we were working in the hospitality industry and knew with our backgrounds that we could bring a lot of value to Ardoch. It's very much a different way of life but one that we love."



Whether his workforce consists of nine or nearly 500, Luke Cockill is happy to muck in. There may be a small number of people on the staff at Ardoch, but everybody puts in a power of effort to ensure a successful business.

Luke said: "We have three directors and three front of house staff. One of them helps as kitchen porter while one helps prepare breakfasts and lunches and the other prepares dinner. We also have three housekeeping staff, who help keep the facility in the good condition it needs to be. I came from working with a team of close to 500 people, so coming down to nine there was quite a different mentality. But it's nice to spend time with your staff as we want to bring them in knowing what is going on.

"Everybody who works here is here for one simple reason – we are all trying to give something back. It's something you want to get out of bed and feel good about."



ARDOCH

To find out more about visit
www.ardoch-scotland.com

Foundation Supporters £500 MINIMUM

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• OPTICAL EXPRESS & MOULSDALE FOUNDATION

Telephone: 0800 023 20 20
email: enquiries@opticalexpress.com
www.opticalexpress.com

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

• ROSS PRIORY

Gartocharn G83 8NL 0141 548 3565
Ross Priory, on the banks of Loch Lomond, the Staff Educational and Recreational Centre of the University of Strathclyde, is proud to support the Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs.

• LOCHS & GLENS HOLIDAYS

School Road, Gartocharn, G83 8RW
Tel: 01389 713 713
email: enquiries@lochsandglens.com

www.lochsandglens.com
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• LODGE ON LOCH LOMOND HOTEL

Luss, Argyll, G83 8PA
Tel: 01436 860 201 Fax: 01436 860 203
email: res@loch-lomond.co.uk
www.loch-lomond.co.uk

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

• LOCH KATRINE

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Stirling FK17 8HZ
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www.lochkatrine.com

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

• LOVE LOCH LOMOND

email: info@lovelochlomond.com
www.lovelochlomond.com
Love Loch Lomond is a recently formed industry led Destination

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

• ARDOCH

Gartocharn G83 8ND 01389 710401
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Ardoch is an exceptional venue for business seminars and family reunions. There are 18 bedrooms and numerous meeting rooms in a mix of traditional and contemporary spaces most of which overlook Loch Lomond. Hire Ardoch on an exclusive basis and be assured of total privacy. Phone Luke for details.

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Luss Estates Company, Arnburn Arden
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Business Plus Supporters £250 MINIMUM

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email: info@sweeneyscruises.com
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• CALLANDER ENTERPRISE

email: cal-ent@incallander.co.uk
www.twitter.com/incallander
www.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

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Tel: 07795 156681 pyko@me.com

Coming from an experienced blue-chip background. Deepstream offer a full range of graphic design services. Friends supporters receive a 15% discount on first project.

• LOCH LOMOND SEAPLANES

PO Box 26613, Helensburgh G84 9YG
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