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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 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 simon@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk

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Message from the President

Spring is here. The daffodils and heathers are in bloom and my camellias at the front door are as lovely as ever.

It has been a long gale riven winter with flood damage and many trees leaning over and having to be cut down. I have been in touch with the Forestry Commission and they tell me they hope to see some very special trees planted in my field.

The National Park itself suffered similarly, and many old trees that have stood for hundreds of years have been devastated. James tells me that the Friends are hoping to replace some of these where some lovely views have been spoiled by the loss of trees. We can replace them in time, but the damage to views across Loch Lomond is another matter which concerns me deeply.

Sitting in my sun porch I have been remembering days long gone, back to 1978 when I wrote to the Glasgow Herald and had my letter printed suggesting a campaign against the Hydro Board's proposed pumped power station on Loch Lomond. As it gave my Auchendarroch address, contacts followed, one of the first being Tom Weir – the rest is history.

Just as we did then, we must now fight to save Loch Lomond and the Trossachs from the dreadful prospect of huge wind farms, with turbines standing 100 metres tall overlooking so much of our National park. The planned wind farm at Merkins Farm near Gartocharn will have ten turbines, each 110 metres from base to tip and the whole ghastly towering group will be clearly seen around the southern half of Loch Lomond and from anywhere on the water at the southern end of the Loch – what a dreadful prospect!

I urge you all to support the campaign that the Friends will be mounting to stop this and if your own friends are not members please encourage them to join us. The more members we have the louder our voice will be,

All the best, yours aye Hannah

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Message from the Chairman

Welcome to this Spring edition of the Friends Voice magazine in its new larger format that is designed to make the publication easier to read as we bring you more news and articles about different aspects of Scotland's first National Park which is about to mark the 10th anniversary of its formation after many years of vigorous campaigning by the Friends and others. We are proud to be the only truly independent conservation charity covering the National Park area and I hope you enjoy reading this new look issue and it spurs you into coming along to one of our expanded range of Friends events this summer.

It has been an eventful period for the Friends in recent months with the launch of our new DVD celebrating the spectacular scenery of the National Park and good progress with a range of other initiatives such as the Our park voluntary visitor donation scheme that has now completed its first full pilot year across the Park with the support of 80 local businesses. We were fortunate in securing sponsorship support for the DVD from David Mouldsdale of Optical Express and the National Park Authority pre-ordered bulk supplies. This means all the proceeds from any additional sales can be used to support our expanding range of work during what is a challenging financial climate for voluntary organisations such as the Friends. If you have not purchased copies of this 'must have' memento of the National Park then please do so using the enclosed order form.

We have also recently completed a review of the Friends future priorities to coincide with the publication of the latest 5 year Park

Plan by the National Park Authority. We submitted a comprehensive response to the draft Park Plan and while there was much to be commended, and we understand the need for an emphasis by the Park Authority on pressing visitor management issues, we were concerned about the lack of emphasis on celebrating the cultural heritage of the Park. This is an area that we believe should not be ignored as there is a rich tapestry of people and places throughout the Park with interesting stories that deserve to be told and showcased. Alongside our traditional conservation activities, we plan to take more action on this in partnership with others and as a first step we will shortly be launching our new website that will act as a gateway to the special heritage qualities of the National Park. We also plan to work more closely with the many active local heritage groups to ensure the sterling work they undertake is more to the fore and helping the four million visitors attracted to the Park each year have



Friends Chairman James Fraser and Dane Sherrard of Luss Parish are pictured receiving the prestigious award of 'Founding Member of the Green Pilgrimage Network' from Princess Michael of Kent and the Hon Mrs Sara Morrison, Vice-President of WWF International at the World Summit of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation in Assisi, Italy last November

easier access to heritage information. Research consistently shows that visitors are looking for authentic experiences and the area's people and heritage assets have an important role to play in the overall tourism effort.

I was fortunate to represent the Loch Lomond area and Scotland, along with Dane Sherrard of Luss Parish, at the Sacred Land Green Pilgrimage Places Conference in Italy. This event was organised by the Alliance of Religions and Conservation with support from the World Wildlife Fund and was concerned with furthering actions on environmental issues to combat climate change by working through the world's leading faiths. It is encouraging that the village of Luss has been selected as one of only 11 places in the world as an exemplar in taking forward the green pilgrimage agenda due to drive and commitment of Dane Sherrard and his local parishioners.

Ironically, the success of Luss in tackling green issues is happening at a time that the southern and eastern flanks of the National Park are under increasing pressure from giant wind turbine proposals that are threatening the scenic qualities of the area and hundreds of local people have been turning out at local public meetings to air their views. Fortunately, within the Park tougher wind farm policies were adopted by the National Park Authority in their first local plan that came into force last December. It is also encouraging to see the Park Authority's Director of Planning & Rural Development recently quoted in the national press placing more emphasis on small run of the river hydro schemes and stating "wind farms are very difficult to reconcile with protecting the scenic qualities of the park". The Friends have been actively promoting this policy line for several years along with the Scottish Campaign for National Parks and we are pleased the National Park Authority are now of the same view!

I look forward to seeing you and other members at our AGM which is being held on the evening of 15th May in the Winnock Hotel, Drymen courtesy of David Warnes, the owner who is a longstanding Friends Business Supporter. Hot topics at the meeting will be the Loch Lomond byelaws review consultation and the much needed plans to tighten up management arrangements on some of the islands; wind turbine developments and the Friends future priorities.

All the very best.

James Fraser

Chair - Friends of Loch Lomond
and The Trossachs.

Call for More Robust Backing of New Park Plan

James Fraser, Chairman of the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs has called on all public sector bodies, including various Government Departments, to 'step up to the plate' to back the delivery of the new five year National Park Plan.



In a recent wide ranging talk to the Lomond Probus Club in Drymen on the challenges facing the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs area and the work of the Friends conservation charity he said " The Plan sets out an ambitious agenda with specific actions under the themes of conservation, visitor experience and rural development but as in the past there is a real danger that some public bodies go through the motions by broadly supporting the Plan but not prioritising resources to help deliver the actions identified."

He added: " We must ensure this is not be allowed to happen again as the scale of the issues and challenges facing what is the most heavily visited countryside destination in Scotland are too important not to be tackled in a more robust and effective partnership basis.

There is also an important role that the voluntary sector can play too through bodies such as the Friends and active local community groups to ensure that the area does truly live up the expectations of visitors and locals as part of the worldwide family of National Parks."

He also called on the National Park Authority to strive at all times to act in the best interests of the area and not to pander to the Scottish Government's insatiable drive to litter the special scenic areas in and around the Park with large and visually intrusive wind turbine structures.

He said: "This is one of the major challenges facing the area with a number of contentious proposals in the pipeline which are dividing communities, and while we welcome a toughening of the policies on large scale wind farms in the new Park Local Plan, it is evident that the Park Authority is having its hands tied behind its back by the Scottish Government's directive that the Park must have pro windfarm policies relating to windfarms in and outside the Park".

Another major issue he highlighted was the need to invest in preventative measures. He contends this is required not only in improving the health and well being of people and life chances of children in nearby urban areas through making greater use of the Park as an outdoor recreational and environmental resource, but also in pursuing a 'back to basics' agenda in maintaining the fabric of the infrastructure that already exists in the area to a much higher standard. He cited examples such as the West Highland Way long distance footpath, quality toilet provision and litter management.

Wind Farm Controversy Gathers Momentum

In the last few editions of Voice we have carried articles about the growing threat of giant wind turbines on the scenic qualities of the National Park and here we provide updates on current developments and share some views from Friends members and others.

Wind Farm Proposals Update

Two controversial wind farm proposals are at an advanced stage of consideration on sites just outside the National Park and have been causing considerable interest locally with regular packed meetings in village halls and the current status of each proposal is as follows:

Merkins Farm to the south of Gartocharn- This proposal to develop a cluster of 10 wind turbines with a height of 120 metres to the tip of the rotor blades was submitted to West Dunbartonshire for planning permission at the end of January and is currently subject to an extensive consultation exercise. The Friends have formally objected to the planning application on the grounds that the visual impact of the large - scale turbines will be significant around the southern end of Loch Lomond that is of international significance due to its landscape quality, visitor appeal and iconic status.

Ard Ghaoth to the north east of Drymen - This revised proposal for a cluster of 10 turbines with a height of 115 metres and more than twice the height identified in the Council's Local Plan is still at scoping stage and no formal planning application has yet been submitted. The level of opposition to this scheme is very substantial with bumper turnouts at local consultation and special meetings in villages such as Gartmore, Balfron and Drymen. If and when an application is submitted the Friends will make strong representation against the development on visual impact grounds.

Liquid Assets are the Answer

According to an interview Gordon Watson, the National Park Authority's planning chief gave to the Scotsman newspaper earlier this year, the waterways in the National Park have the potential to create the power to ward off wind farms and this view has been warmly endorsed by the Friends who have been actively campaigning for several years to ensure the National Park and neighbouring areas remain as wind turbine free zones.

There is great interest in harnessing the energy generated by the numerous rivers and burns throughout the park and private landowners and community groups are actively pursuing a number of schemes which Gordon Watson believes could make a major contribution to helping the National Park's input to achieving the national renewables targets. He said: " We have sought to explore how best to contribute to renewables targets without detracting from highly valued landscapes and undoubtedly wind farms are very difficult to reconcile with protecting the scenic qualities of the park."

He added: " if you are sitting in a boat on Loch Lomond with wind turbines on the horizon in every direction then what impact will this have on people's wish to come?"

Stop Loch Lomond Wind Turbines

The Friends Chairman, James Fraser stepped in at short notice in early January to chair a public meeting in Gartocharn on the topic of the role of wind energy in meeting the Scottish Government's renewable targets. There were more than 150 people in attendance with interest in the meeting being generated by the Stop Loch Lomond Wind Turbines Group who are campaigning against the Merkins Farm and Ard Ghaoth wind turbine developments. Keynote speakers at the meeting included Helen McDade from the John Muir Trust, Professor Iain MacLeod who is Vice-President of the institute of Engineers and Shipbuilders in Scotland and MEP Struan Stevenson and they systematically demolished the case for littering Scotland with wind farm developments. At the meeting Rhona Weir, wife of the late Tom Weir and Friends stalwart, gave a passionate introductory speech on the need to protect the beauty of Loch Lomond from wind farm developments and she urged those present to follow in the footsteps of Tom and campaign against the desecration of Scotland's natural wonder.

Your views...

Dear Friends,

We hope your membership will share our concern about the planning application for Merkins Wind Farm. Situated in the Kilpatrick Hills and almost right on the boundary of the LL&TNP this development the visual impact of the 10 wind turbines (or to expand on that, 10 towers and 30 blades) will be immense. This planning application is contrary to West Dunbartonshire Council Local Plan 2010 and to LL&TNP Adopted Local Plan 2010 - 2015 Policy RENE Renewable Energy Development Adjacent to the National Park Boundary.

Renewable energy via hydro would seem to be far more in keeping in this area and it would be awful to see the park "ringed" by these gigantic structures. The ten Merkins wind turbines will be a mixture of 110 metre and 120 metre high to blade tip. There appears to be growing concern about the proliferation of wind farms which are destroying one of Scotland's best known attributes - the amazing views and wildness.

Another application for a site just outside Drymen, again just outwith the park is in the pipeline. Please write to the appropriate planning departments and lobby your MP, SMP and local councillors so they realise their constituents feelings.

Yours sincerely

Chris and Elaine Ellen
Gartocharn

Dear Editor,

I do not think the widespread objections to the Ard Ghaath wind farm is a NIMBY issue. I believe it is an issue which touches a much wider constituency than local residents.

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs rightly became our first National Park. Through its attraction to tourists from all over the world, this makes a massive contribution to the economy of Stirling and thus to the country.

Those who attended the recent consultation meeting were interested to see how the development would impact on their communities. The proposed wind farm will be visible from Drymen, Croftamie, Killearn, Balfron, Port of Menteith, Buchlyvie and further out towards Stirling; from Gartocharn, Balloch and Luss; and from Queen's View and the king's Mile.

We are privileged to live in an area of outstanding natural beauty. Let's not forget the instruction to those who go into the countryside; leave nothing but footprints, take nothing but memories. We have an obligation to hand this land on to the following generations intact.

John Cross
Drymen

Dear Editor,

Wind farms have been shown time and again to be a huge waste of money, dangerous to our environment and a scar on our beautiful landscape.

I have been at numerous meetings on the subject of wind farms and there is no doubt the majority of people do not want these monstrosities, not only in their local area but anywhere else in Scotland. I attended a meeting in Gartocharn where presentations were given by three experts and it was made clear on a technical level why wind farms don't work; the devastating impact of wind farms on Scotland's wildlife; and the utter folly of the cost of the things.

There is never a "rent a mob" at any of the meetings. There are concerned citizenry who have come to the logical conclusion that they are a huge waste of money and they do not work effectively.

Paul Henk
Chairman
Balfron Community Council

Dear Editor,

Here in Scotland tourism is crucial to the economy and generally the income earned from it throughout rural communities. Our landscape is precious, the jewel in our crown.

Not only is wind power vastly more expensive than other form of generation but it is also highly inefficient, capable of producing no more than 21 per cent of its alleged capacity overall.

Do we really want to be in a position that when the wind doesn't blow or when it blows too strongly the lights go out?

The politicians seem intent upon throwing vast sums of money at this white elephant whilst suddenly reducing the income derived from solar installations. This is quick fix politics at its worst. The current proposal to site a wind farm on the very edge of the National Park between Gartmore and Drymen is, in a word absurd.

Incidentally, science tells us that building wind farms on peatland (as this one would be) actually releases more carbon into the atmosphere than it would ever save. What absolute nonsense!

Keith Graham
Port of Menteith

A golden yellow Spring

Keith Graham writes of Spring and the long planned procreation of golden eagles!

As days lengthen, expectations begin to rise. If March can be a fickle month, it also provides our first real glimpses of the season of re-birth. The delightfully delicate yet deceptively hardy snowdrops, emerging in February and sometimes even as early as January, perhaps provide a prelude, their promises at last fulfilled by the crowds of golden daffodils that carpeted March's verges, parks and gardens. Welcoming yellow too are the shyer, ground-hogging primroses, opening their pale faces to the sun, a certain sign of a rising tide of new life. And now in April there is also gold upon them thar hills as gorse flowers on the hillsides.

On the eastern shore of Loch Lomond and in the environs of the nearby Trossachs hills, new life has already arrived in the form of kids born to the wandering bands of shaggy feral goats. From the very start of their young lives, they already demonstrate a remarkable degree of agility and sure footedness among the rocks and boulders. If not officially regarded as truly wild residents of these hillsides, they are nevertheless

pretty wild by nature. The inexorable advance of spring is however charted as much by our ears as by our eyes. Slowly, even before winter has begun its inevitable retreat, the avian choir is roused. Among the first voices to be heard are those of the great tits, their urgent and increasingly strident 'tea-cher, tea-cher' calls echoing through the woods. More noted songsters, the merle, the mavis and the laverock (the blackbird, the thrush and the lark) add real musical class to the rising volume of song that welcomes that hint of warmth as imperceptibly the sun climbs that wee bit higher in the sky each day. The chattering voices of chaffinches, herald the arrival of whistling, bubbling curlew and neurotically piping oyster-catchers, many of which now move from the marine environment, to exploit especially, the succulent invertebrate life that lies beneath the inland fields of the lower lying parts of the park. Many of them will eventually resort to lochsides, where along the pebbly strands they may nest. Tightly bunched flocks of lapwing join this short migration, their seemingly black and white

plumage flashing in the spring time sun.

Soon these flocks will begin to disperse, many of them establishing

territories on the bleaker moors where their wailing voices once disturbed the Covenanter's Conventicles in days long gone.

By now we are searching our skies eagerly for the true, longer distance migrants. Often it is the

monotonous voice of the chiff chaff that announces the first arrivals from the Dark Continent, again, more often than not heard rather than seen. If the English poets' harbinger of spring has traditionally been the cuckoo, here it is usually May before the comic notes of the gowk are heard. Perhaps our more glamorous harbinger in the park these days therefore, is the osprey. This bird more than any other perhaps, is at the heart of the tale of modern conservation most tellingly. Nineteenth century accounts tell of the presence here in the Loch Lomond and Trossachs area, of ospreys, a presence that was sadly truncated by over-zealous persecution until by 1916 there were no breeding ospreys remaining in Scotland or indeed Britain. But in the nineteen fifties ospreys began to return to Speyside and with much dedicated support on the part of many volunteers, have since gradually re-established themselves, now right across Scotland and even into England and Wales. Now, in many locations throughout the park, ospreys return in increasing numbers in March and April to repair eyries perhaps damaged by winter storms, indulge in their courtship rituals and then breed before eventually heading back towards Africa in late August and early September. Throughout spring and summer they provide breathtaking viewing for those lucky enough to spot them coursing over the park's many lochs and stooping spectacularly to catch their scaly prey. They are however, just a part of the fantastic story that is springtime migration when millions of birds surge northwards right across the globe. Tiny warblers weighing in at just a few grams, somehow summon up enough energy to follow their instincts and head inexorably north, flying thousands of miles and crossing deserts, mountain ranges and seas in the process. The more glamorous swallows and martins too make that astonishing journey, lighting up our skies with their grace and energy.



Yet as well as these arrivals, all of them eagerly anticipated, there are also departures. The great gaggles of grey geese, pinkfeet and Greenland white fronts together with the black and white barnacles, bid us farewell as they chart courses for their Arctic homelands. The true wild swans – whoopers – take their leave of us too, their destination Iceland. Indeed a surprisingly wide variety of birds, such as woodcock, short-eared owls and even tiny goldcrests, now return north and east for their breeding seasons. Many of these apparent winter migrants are of course more sedentary and spend their entire lives here.

April showers greet many of the incoming migrants but so too are things beginning to stir in our woodlands. As April gives way to May, the 'gentle' roe deer bring forth their 'Bambi-like' kids, usually twins and generally secreted in some woodland dell where the new leaves of spring form dappling patterns in the sunlight – perfect obfuscation for the spotted kids. Meanwhile we may hear the gruff barking of roebuck, for as a new generation is arriving, already plans are being made for yet another as the bucks seek to establish woodland territories prior to their courtship which occurs in August.

May is also the month when young badgers first emerge from their underground setts and begin to investigate the world outside. Fox cubs, predictably precocious, have already begun to explore well beyond the environs of the dens from which weeks before they too emerged. And high up in the mountainous glens of the more northerly parts of the park, golden eagles are already feeding their eaglets high upon their rocky eyries. For eagles, the whole process of procreation must seem endless for they may well have chosen their eyrie site as early as at the turn of the year and carried whatever running repairs were necessary.

By the end of March or early April, the eggs are laid and the long period of incubation (around forty days) begins. Hatching usually in May, the youngsters will remain on the eyrie for a further twelve weeks or so before at last taking to the wing. Even then they will still rely on their parents for food for some considerable time. Procreation is thus for eagles very much a pre-occupation!

It is also high up in the glens that our largest mammals give birth. Red deer hinds and stags live quite separately in single sex herds for most of the year. In June the hinds drop their calves amid the heathers and brackens. Like roe deer kids, they are heavily spotted at birth, betraying their true woodland origins.

The commonest of the park's raptors is the buzzard, a substantial hawk, quite often to be seen perched atop roadside trees or telegraph poles, and as such sometimes mistaken for their loftier and considerably larger cousins the eagles. The eagle's six or even seven foot wingspan however, puts the mere four foot span of the buzzard somewhat in the shade.

Buzzards usually nest in woodland and their characteristic, high-pitched mewing is a familiar sound in both Highland and Lowland landscapes throughout the park. In recent years there have been successful re-introductions of red kites and they too may be seen, often prescribing wide circular sweeps of the landscape in their search for food. Similar in size to the buzzard, the kite is more slender and easily identified by its long, forked tail

Hovering kestrels, dashing sparrowhawks, cruising hen

harriers and darting merlin are all also present in the park and occasionally, glimpses of the massive, re-introduced sea eagle perhaps prospecting for territory, may also be enjoyed. Rivers, burns and loch-sides, are regularly patrolled by herons as they seek to plunder the piscatorial riches of the waters be they fresh or indeed, salty, whilst native red squirrels are abundant in the more northerly reaches of the park. The arrival in recent years of pine marten, seems in some parts of the park, to have thankfully diminished numbers of the alien grey squirrels. However the greys remain dominant in the lower lying areas. Throughout the spring and summer, the park reflects a real sense of urgency as animals and birds alike concentrate their lives upon the process of producing the next generations of their kind. But as summer at last wanes and August by and large signals the completion of that vital period, the freshness begins to give way to stronger colours and increasingly a pall of silence falls as the birds go through the process of plumage renewal. In July the bell heather begins to flower and by August the hillsides glow purple as the ling follows suit. There is even then one more dramatic act to come. As many of the migrant birds, together with the new generations they have spawned, begin to prepare themselves for their mammoth journeys south, the sap is just beginning to rise in the hills and glens. The Monarchs of the Glen now reach the climax of their year and begin to tread the lists. Autumn signals perhaps the beginning of the end of the year but for the red deer, a new beginning altogether! And just as we listened earnestly to those songs of spring back in March and April, so now do we approach another winter with the deep-throated 'songs' of stags echoing in our ears.



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Loch Lomond Byelaws Public Consultation

26 March - 18 June 2012



The National Park Authority has just launched a public consultation on a review of the current Loch Lomond byelaws.

In general, the Park Authority considers the existing byelaws to be working well to maintain safety on the loch for all its users and protect the natural environment for generations to come. However, there are a number of minor amendments to the byelaws including a proposal to extend the 11kmph speed limit zone to cover an off shore area around Inverbeg. This is in response to safety concerns raised by visitors relating to powered boat activity near the shore.

The main area where the Park Authority is proposing potential changes is around the management of visitors to the four Loch Lomond (Special Protection Areas) islands. These islands are Inchmoan, Inchconnachan, Inchtavannach and Inchcruin which contain precious habitats and species, such as capercaillie, osprey and otters.

The consultation includes three options for consideration about how best to tackle the issues of wildlife disturbance, litter, vandalism, irresponsible camping and fire lighting.

The 12-week consultation aims to encourage respondents to consider the future of the islands and how best to safeguard them as important areas for conservation and wildlife as well as recreational areas that provide a high quality visitor experience.

The Park Authority consulted informally with a large range of organisations in 2011 in the development of the consultation proposals.

A Loch Lomond Stakeholder group was established comprising representatives from a variety of interests including commercial boat operators, recreational interest, users groups, environmental organisations and governing bodies. The group was established to help review the byelaws and discuss potential changes.

Your feedback is important to us. The Review of Loch Lomond Byelaws documents, including response forms, can be viewed on the National Park website www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/lochlomondbyelaws Consultation packs are also available from National Park offices in Callander and Balloch. The consultation will run for three months from 26 March until 18 June.

For further information email: lochlomondbyelaws@lochlomond-trossachs.org or phone 01389 722600.

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Loch Lomond Islands - bye laws consultation

As many of our members and supporters will know, the Loch Lomond Byelaws were introduced in 1996 by the Loch Lomond Regional Park Authority – and they have been managed Since 2002 by The Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority which is now consulting on changes to manage camping and protect wildlife and the wild places that are the islands in the Southern part of Loch Lomond. They've

supplied an article on the byelaws (opposite) which sets out a number of proposals for the future management of the islands.

From the visits we make and the quantity and horrid nature of waste we have collected on these islands, we feel that option three of those set out below may be necessary – but what do you think?

We are urging all our members and supporters to take part in the review of

the bye-laws and in particular to respond to the suggestions made about future management of access on the islands in Loch Lomond. Please respond to the National Park Authority's consultation here www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/lochlomondbyelaws and copy your response, or your brief views (whether or not you respond to the actual consultation) to us via info@lochlomondtrossachs.co.uk.

What are the options?

Option 1

Continue patrolling and educational campaign, continue with the current approach of island patrols by National Park rangers, police support, statutory signage and monitor visitor trends and behaviours over the next three years. Continue the publicity and education campaigns with users of the loch and islands

Editor's suggestion: Our concern with this option is that it is repeating the limited measures tried already and despite which the islands are in a pretty dreadful state.

So - please respond! The consultation document and response forms are on www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/lochlomondbyelaws or you can contact the NPA staff dealing with this at National Park Headquarters, Carrochan 01389 722600. The consultation period is for 12 weeks from 26 March to 18 June 2012.

Option 2

Infrastructure, patrolling and educational campaign. Provide infrastructure on specific SPA islands. Provide camping facilities (toilets, fire pits) on certain islands to encourage people to camp close to the new facilities. Island rangers, police patrols and statutory signage will still be needed as would the attendant publicity and education campaigns for users of the loch and islands.

Editor's suggestion: Our view is that we would be very supportive of this approach – and that if there are some facilities created they may start to improve things, but, the experience on the East shore of the Loch is that it was only when legally enforceable measures were in place that things started to improve.

Option 3

Infrastructure, byelaws, patrolling and educational campaign. Provide infrastructure on specific SPA islands and supplement with seasonal byelaws. Provide camping facilities, (toilets, fire pits) on certain islands and seasonally restrict camping out with the designated campsites. It would also include a seasonal byelaw to keep dogs on leads when on the four SPA islands. National Park ranger patrols, police support and statutory signage will still be needed as would publicity and education campaigns for users of the loch and islands.

Editor's suggestion: We feel that this is the option that must be put in place taking account of the dreadful current situation, the hard brutal evidence on the ground of these islands of how the soft information/education approach has failed, and the sad fact of the behaviour of the minority wrecking these beautiful places.

What do you think?...

The NPA has ruled out restricting access in general to the four SPA islands as this could be considered disproportionate, difficult to enforce and could be counter-productive. To stimulate your response here's what we said recently in response to an enquiry from The Herald newspaper: Would you back the idea of restricting camping on the Luss islands outwith designated campsites to help protect the area and its wildlife Or should the issue be approached another way? Clearly a sensitive issue given generations of individuals and groups have been able to enjoy informal camping on the islands. We will be taking soundings from our large membership on our

formal response to the options for managing the islands more effectively. However what is clear is that something needs to happen as the 'frontier islands' on Loch Lomond are coming under increasing visitor pressures and some of the behaviour by stag party groups and others is unacceptable as they are spoiling the enjoyment of these special places for others, as well as disturbing wildlife, and the very threatened Capercaillie population whose protection is a legal requirement. With the help of volunteers we have organised litter picks on the islands but we are fighting a losing battle with the scale of littering, toileting and despoliation of what

should be jewels in the crown of the National Park. A combination of measures including stepped up patrols by the Park Authority and the police, designated camping areas, the provision of dry toilets will all help but at the end of the day we need people to take more responsibility for their own actions and not to be irresponsible in their use and abuse of special places which are there to be enjoyed and treasured by everyone. We plan to continue to develop our education initiatives which are designed to encourage a sense of value of and care for these special places in younger generations living in the urban areas around the National Park.



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Tourists in the Trossachs, and elsewhere...

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs have always borne the brunt of tourism in Scotland. Tourism probably began some time after the Jacobite Risings. When Boswell and Johnson set out on their epic tour of 1773, Tobias Smollett, born in the Vale of Leven, observed that Scotland was less well known than Japan. There were visitors before them, but they were travellers rather than tourists. Two of them, Thomas Pennant and William Gilpin, were very influential and wrote books which became 'Bibles' for new visitors, and the first guide book was published long before Scott brought hordes of what might definitely be described as tourists to Scotland. Scott's influence was described by Alexander Smith in *Summer in Skye* (1865):

"Scott's novels were to Edinburgh what the tobacco trade was to Glasgow. Although several labourers were before him in the field of Border Ballads, he made fashionable those wonderful stories . . . As soon as *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* appeared, everybody was raving about Melrose and moonlight. He wrote *The Lady of the Lake* and next year a thousand tourists descended on the Trossachs, watched the sun setting on Loch Katrine, and began to take lessons on the bagpipe. . . .

Where his muse was one year, a mail-coach and a hotel were the next." However, almost immediately, the downside of tourism appeared. In a letter addressed to Scott, John MacCulloch (1773-1835) complained of the effects of Scott's works which included, for example, an adaptation of Rob Roy for the London stage: The mystic portal has been thrown open and the mob has rushed in, dispersing all these fairy visions, and polluting everything with its unhallowed touch. Barouches and gigs, cocknies, and fishermen and poets, Glasgow weavers and travelling haberdashers now swarm in every resting place and meet us at every avenue. As Rob Roy now blusters at Covent Garden and the Lyceum, and Aberfoyle is gone to Wapping, so Wapping and the Strand must also come to Aberfoyle. The green-coated fairies have packed up their alls and quitted the premises, and the Uriskins only caper now in your verses.

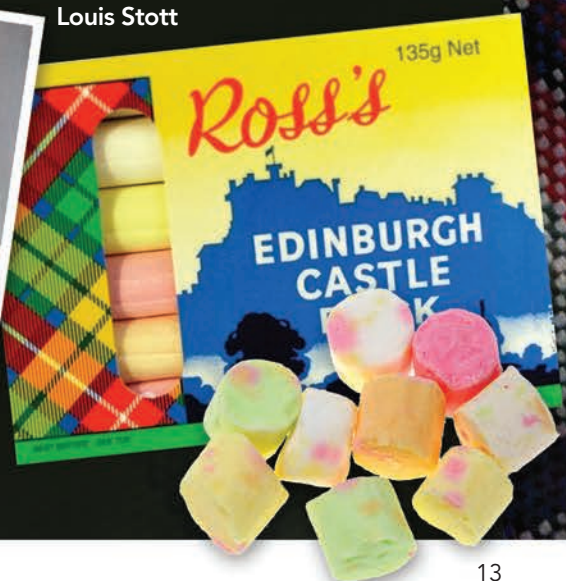
Not long afterwards the American poet Nathaniel P. Willis (1806-67) was bemoaning the 'cockneyfication' of Loch Lomondside, and Lord Cockburn and Carlyle were describing the excesses to which they were subjected in the Trossachs. It was not that the Scots weren't welcoming - they rapidly developed a reputation for unrivalled hospitality - nor was it that they

weren't proud of what the tourists came to see. They objected, as they still object, when they were overwhelmed, and the majority of Scots objected, as they still object, to the distorted image of Scotland and things Scottish which the visitors took away with them.

These images can be attributed, in part, to Scott, who saw to it that the Royal Visit of 1822 revived the Tartan and romanticised it; in part to a minor Scottish novelist, James Grant (1822-87), who was closely connected with the first stirrings of Nationalism in Scotland, and was the author of the first of the now ubiquitous clan and tartan guides to the country; and partly to Queen Victoria and her successors whose 'Balmoralification' of Scotland mortified many Scots. However, the height of tourist kitch may well have been reached at the Imperial International Exhibition in London in 1909, or in the 1954 MGM musical, *Brigadoon*. After the success of an Irish Village in an earlier Exhibition, Aberfoyle, or a crass imitation of it, was re-built at White City. Famously, Arthur Freed, the producer of the film, considered that there was nowhere in Scotland that looked quite like Scotland, and shot the film in a Hollywood studio. There is some evidence that Freed's village may have been based on Killin.

Yet as much good as bad can be said about tourism

Louis Stott



CIVILISATIONS

Their Rise to Brilliance & Subsequent Decline Due to Environmental Change.

One of our longest serving trustees and local organic farmer Jock Scott-Park (right) sets out a salutary message on the finite fertility of our land



Throughout history (with three exceptions) civilisations always have been founded on virgin soil where the fertility accumulated over many many millennia has been exploited in a relatively short time. They have all followed the same course to a brilliant climax and then declined into a very ordinary "maintenance" level; the more brilliant a civilisation, the shorter its lifespan⁽¹⁾. There have been between ten and thirty such civilisations (the exact number depending on who classifies them).

The virgin topsoil is immensely fertile and produces highly nutritious food which has a profound effect on the developed human forebrain. Weston Price, author of "Nutrition & Physical Degeneration", a book described by medical doctors as the most important medical book ever written, lists four stages in the development of the human forebrain and the behaviour emanating at each stage.

- **Stage 1:** forebrain undeveloped - basic instinct is for food & reproduction;
- **Stage 2:** forebrain developed to an ordinary degree - unselfishness, honesty, integrity apparent;
- **Stage 3:** well developed forebrain plus super nutrition resulting from food grown on virgin soil super-mentality, exalted personality, noble

music, arts, social reforms, altruism - all that is best in civilisation;

- **Stage 4:** developed forebrain but individual fed on nutritionally impoverished food (e.g. grown on impoverished soil or refined with vitamins or minerals removed or unbalanced, such as white bread, sugar, potato crisps) - loss of inhibitions, character

With three exceptions, every civilisation has followed the same road to ruin - increasing population, agriculture extended inland and upwards, overgrazing, and trees felled leaving the soil unprotected from rain. In each case catastrophic erosion of the topsoil occurred and the nutritional quality of their food plummeted with disastrous consequences for forebrains and the civilisations. Consider Greece at its peak - its plethora of brilliant mathematicians, architects, stonemasons, philosophers, sportsmen; and look at Greece now. Plato describes the change in the land of Attica between the time when the Greeks first settled it and his age around 400 BC: "what now remains of the once rich land is like the skeleton of a sick man; all the fat and soft earth having wasted away, only the bare framework is left. Formerly many of the present mountains were arable hills, the present marshes were plains full of rich soil;" The scale of the erosion

defies imagination! The town of Adria was once a flourishing sea port; now it is 15 miles inland, its streets 15 feet above those of the original Etruscan town.

From spades to computers our present civilised world consists largely of material articles and philosophies made possible only through the highly developed human forebrain. Importing bread wheat from the virgin soil of the Canadian prairies, rich in trace elements such as selenium, has helped mitigate to a small extent some of the ill effects of refining our foods, but there is now very little virgin soil left to exploit. An abundant supply of highly nutritious food is essential for the effective functioning of the human forebrain on which depends our very civilisation as well as our health and happiness; our ever increasing prison population is not composed of happy people.

Weston Price studied on a world-wide scale in the early 1930s the diets of people with perfect health and perfect physique whom he found living in isolated communities on their primitive diets. Although there was huge variance in their composition, analysis showed they all contained four times the recommended daily intake of minerals and ten times the recommended daily intake of vitamins.

⁽¹⁾ Topsoil & Civilisation by Carter & Dale

Jock Scott-Park

Folklore Centre Closure Blow for Killin



The villagers of Killin have been reeling from closure of the Breadalbane Folklore Centre that has showcased the area's rich heritage in imaginative ways to more than 1.2 million visitors since it first opened in 1994. The centre, which originally cost £550,000 to develop in a historic converted mill beside the scenic Falls of Dochart, housed a visitor information centre on the ground floor and two floors of interesting exhibitions on local clans, historic sites and the story of St Fillans and regularly attracted between 60,000 and 85,000 visitors a year.

Situated in the north east corner of the National Park the Centre has played an important gateway role showcasing the Breadalbane area and interestingly, this closure happened just before the recent announcement by Cabinet Secretary, John Swinney of £500,000 funding for a new Cairngorms National Park Gateway Centre at Blair Atholl which is just 44 miles away from Killin. He was extolling the virtues of partnership working and the importance providing gateway information services to the National Park.

As there is no prospect of the Centre reopening in the short term all the valuable historic artefacts have been removed for safe keeping and discussions are ongoing with the local Development Trust on options for using the now vacated building. The Park Authority is helping to fund an options review and conservation plan for the building. It was unfortunate the Council and Stirling District Tourism Ltd, the Council's charitable trust, broke the funding link between the National Wallace Monument, the Rob Roy Centre and the Folklore Centre as some of the large surpluses generated by the Monument were used to cross subsidise the more fragile rural centres in Callander and Killin. The recent closure is also more evidence of a clear lack of a joined up approach to the delivery of visitor information services throughout the National Park by a number of public sector agencies and an integrated and forward thinking strategy is urgently required to deliver information services in a variety of ways to the 4 million visitors to the Park annually. Interestingly, a recent

The Breadalbane Folklore Centre was a popular attraction in the attractive Highland village of Killin since it opened in 1994.

survey undertaken by the Park Authority reinforced the importance of tourist information with almost two thirds of all visitors seeking information while they are in the area. Sadly, the Folklore Centre is another victim of Council budget and efficiency savings and is symptomatic of what has been happening to visitor information and heritage centres throughout the National Park in recent years. When the National Park came into being some 10 years ago its opening was marked with the launch of the new £2.8 million National Park Gateway Centre at Balloch- two years ago the Centre was leased out as a coffee shop, an ice cream parlour and childrens play area with the exhibition on the park stripped out. In Luss the Visitor Centre has been controversially turned into a restaurant and further north, the Ardgartan Information Centre was closed last year. To the east of Loch Lomond the seasonal information centre at Drymen and the Rob Roy Exhibition in Callander were closed several years ago.

What is the future for the remaining information centres in and around the Park? Who knows, but thankfully VisitScotland is investing in refurbishing the popular Trossachs Discovery Centre in Aberfoyle while the Park Authority has recently upgraded the Park Centre in Balmaha and the Forestry Commission is investing heavily in the David Marshall Lodge Visitor Centre above Aberfoyle. There is also a prospect of some investment taking place in the re-installation of information and interpretation zones in the Gateway Centre at Balloch and the former Luss Visitor Centre so perhaps the tide is turning and there is growing recognition of the value of ensuring our visitors have access to quality information services to get the best out of their visit to the Park!

Congratulations too to the new Love Loch Lomond Destination Organisation who have taken a bold initiative recently with the installation of a number of interactive information units (I-signs) at key locations around the loch. Hopefully this will be a successful pilot that can be rolled out elsewhere in the Park to partially compensate for the loss of manned Information Centres. And how about the public agencies helping some local shops in the smaller villages, which are run by knowledgeable local characters, become branded Park visitor information partners? With a little imagination and a limited amount of financial pump priming the spread of information points throughout the park could be so much better

You are invited to join us on Wednesday, 27th June at the Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Golf Day.

Last year's event raised almost £15,000 for conservation and access projects in the National Park - a great day, achieving great things for this special part of Scotland. The money raised supported a range of projects including Red Squirrel protection in Cowal, The 3 Lochs Way - a major path project from Gareloch, to Loch Long and Loch Lomond, Bracklinn Falls - footpaths and interpretation beyond the famous falls in Callander, way markers and information for walkers on the Rob Roy Way running from near Drymen and The Ardroy Outdoor Centre - securing the future of the outdoor education centre for 3000 young children to enjoy outdoor experiences in the National Park. The funds raised have in turn levered at least £150,000 of extra funding.

Can you bring a team to enjoy a day of lunch, golf and dinner with a very splendid raffle - and help us do more for this most precious part of Scotland?

This is the second Golf Day hosted by The Friends with the generous support of Optical Express. The day will take place at the prestigious Carrick Golf Club, one of Scotland's finest new courses with its majestic setting on the shores of Loch Lomond. The player's package for the day includes:

- **Golfer's souvenir pack**
- **Light refreshments before play**
- **Access to the Practice Area with assistance from the resident Golf Pro**
- **18 holes of golf, with refreshments at regular intervals**
- **Prize giving ceremony & auction (top notch prizes and very good odds of winning one!)**
- **Team photographs**
- **Drinks reception and Dinner**

The entry fee is £1,000 per team of 4 golfers. Sponsorship of individual holes, prizes and various aspects of the day are also available, for further information please contact Simon@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk or phone 01436 677733. Please contact Simon to book your place at the event by Friday 8th June. Team places are limited and early contact is recommended to avoid disappointment. We do hope that you can join in raising as much money as possible for a great cause, and if you are cannot manage a full team of four do still let us know - we may be able to include you in a team we put together.

The 2012 Friends' Golf day promises to be a great and enjoyable occasion, and it will achieve great things for a place we all love and want to keep safe for all our futures.

Generously sponsored by



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Events Calendar 2012

After a successful season of events in 2011, for this year we have an expanded programme and hope that as many members and friends as possible will join in one or more activity. The full events calendar is set out below and as you'll see the activities range from events to entertain, inform and inspire for which we ask a modest fee per person, and volunteer events where we ask you to help us look after this wonderful place as well as helping us spread the word about the Friends and raise some vital funds for our work. Please read on and sign up for any of these by contacting the office...

• 15 MAY AGM

The annual members event with buffet meal and guest speaker - to examine the reports and accounts from last year (our financial year runs to the calendar year), meet, chat and discuss the key issues for the future for the charity. Non-members most welcome, but we'll ask for the modest £15 membership fee on the night. To be held at the Winnock Hotel on the evening of Tuesday 15th May with a buffet meal at 6.00pm followed by the AGM at 7.30pm

• 26 MAY The Drymen Show

The first of our 'show events' which we started last year, appearing at a number of Highland Games and other occasions with our new gazebo, to meet as many locals and visitors as possible, find out how much they care for Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, and tell them a little about our work Across the National Park. These shows are fun to do - you get to see some of the show, and the more volunteers we have the more show our volunteers get to see with plenty of breaks. Or just visit us here and have a crack at the free prize raffle...

• 16-17 JUNE Caledonian Challenge Volunteer Event

Every year the Friends raise some thousands of pounds from this event - with a fee paid for every volunteer we produce to help marshal on this Scottish Communities Foundation event. Great camaraderie and a touch of volunteering in one of the most spectacular settings in the world - sign up now!

• 11 JUNE Bearsden and Milngavie Games

The second 'show', and the first of our highland games. We are keen to recruit more members from Glasgow - can you help us inspire in Milngavie and Bearsden? Special prize raffle for everyone who comes to see us here!

• 20 JUNE Guided walk - Inchcailloch

The first of our new guided walks with expert John Urquhart (who is also a trustee of the Friends) - The creation of a conservation gem - a story of geology, geomorphology, natural history and 2,000 years of human activity.

Timetable - 10am-1pm from Balmaha with lunch at the Oak Tree Inn. £15 including lunch and the ferry ticket.

Please book by 11th June - places limited

• 7 JULY Luss Highland Games

A lovely event at which to help us represent the charity - call the office and book your volunteer spot - or just come and see us in our tent on the day and have a crack at our special prize raffle.

• 28/29 JULY Callander World Highland Games

Just like Luss, but bigger and right on the edge of the Trossachs

• 22 SEPTEMBER Morelaggan trip

The second of our John Urquhart guided walks - A recently excavated clearance fermtoun on the shores of Loch Long. Transport provided by Alex Pringle's 4Bs bus. Historical Interpretation by local historian.

Timetable - 9am from Drymen square, 9.30am from Carrochan building, Balloch and also collecting from Helensburgh Pier Car Park at 10.00am. Walking 2km to Morelaggan from Glen Douglas - finishing with lunch at Coach House Coffee Shop and return to collection points £15 including lunch and the bus. Some rough ground and steep hills on this walk - please bring suitable gear and a moderate level of fitness!

Please book by 13th September - places limited

• 2 DECEMBER Annual Christmas Reception

Advance warning - a date for your diary - again at the lovely Ross Priory. TBC.

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For over 30 years, the friends have been working to protect the area's environmental heritage, promote it as a most special part of Scotland, and provide for its future through a range of projects for people and for wildlife. As the only independent conservation charity working across the whole of this precious part of Scotland, The Mousdale Foundation & Optical Express is pleased to be associated with such a worthwhile cause.

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www.loch-lomond.co.uk
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 email: info@lovelochlomond.com
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Would you like to become a Friends supporter?

Please contact us today...

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Telephone: 01436 677733

Email:

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New Film Celebrates Loch Lomond and The Trossachs

Showcasing some of the most spectacular scenery Scotland has to offer, a new digitised DVD starring Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park is now available from the Friends. Funded by contributions from the National Park and sponsor Optical Express, the DVD captures the evocative moods and spirit of the area accompanied by original music composed by Phil Cunningham.

James Fraser, Chair of the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs said: "We are delighted with quality of the film which really does do justice to the special qualities of Scotland's first National Park, in this, the tenth anniversary since its formation. We are grateful to both the National Park Authority and Optical Express for their support which has enabled us to produce large quantities of the film to promote the area as well as raising much needed funds from sales for important conservation work in the Park".

Speaking about the film, Fiona Logan CEO of the National Park said: "We know that Loch Lomond and The Trossachs has some of the most spectacular scenery in the world and I would recommend you take a look at the new film to get a bird's eye view of the whole park. From Loch Lomond in the south, Cowal in the west, over to the Trossachs and across to Breadalbane, the aerial footage is breathtaking and

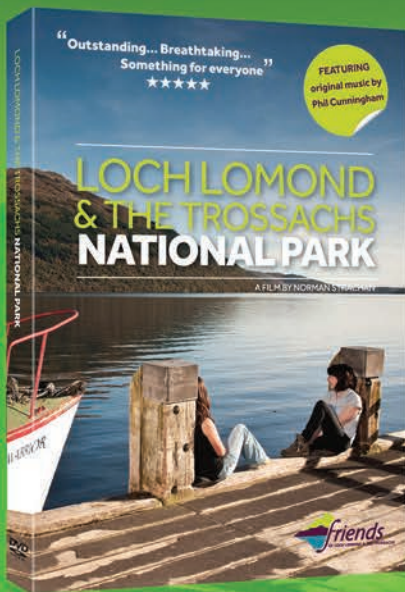
gives you a real sense of the diverse landscape we are lucky to have in this National Park. If you think you know the National Park, I would encourage you to look again at the many hidden and magic gems and be inspired to explore everything Loch Lomond and The Trossachs has to offer from scenery to wildlife, lochs and mountains to the rich culture of the area."

David Mouldsdale, CEO of Optical Express said "This film captures the magical qualities of what is one of the most beautiful places in the world and we are proud to support the Friends with this and other projects as part of their Windows on the Park initiative. Like many others, I have happy memories of days spent in the area and it's important that we all play our part supporting the valuable conservation work of the Friends for the benefit of current and future generations".

All proceeds of the DVD will go towards a number of conservation projects including native tree planting, restoring footpaths, education activities and red squirrel protection.

The DVD is available to buy for £11.99 from the Friends main office 63 West Princess Street, Helensburgh (Tel 01436677733) www.lochlomond-trossachs.org and from other outlets in and around the Park.

Buy your Friends merchandise today...



Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park DVD

Normal price £11.99

SPECIAL MEMBERS PRICE £8.99 + £2 p&p

We also have a range of Friends branded clothing including Cosy Fleece, Polo shirts and caps in a range of colours'

Please call the office on 01436 677733 or visit the website for more details. Your order will normally be sent out within three days.

www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk



Luss and the World Green Pilgrimage Network

by James Fraser, Chairman of the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs



The procession at the sacred land celebration in Assisi.

When I received a late night phone call last Autumn from Provost Billy Petrie of Argyll & Bute Council little did I know this would lead to me representing Loch Lomond and Scotland, with the Rev Dane Sherrard of Luss Parish and a couple of other Ministers from the Church of Scotland, at a world conference of the leading religious faiths in Assisi, Italy in November to discuss ways of taking practical environmental actions to protect the planet. Through the tireless efforts of Dane and his parishioners on green initiatives, Luss was also being recognised as one of only eleven founding members of the World's Green Pilgrimage Network at this prestigious event. The Sacred Land Green Pilgrimage Places Conference was organised by the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC), an organisation formed in 1995 to further conservation action through faiths. In 2009 nine of the world's religions launched long-term commitments to environmental action in what the United Nations described "as potentially the world's largest civil society movement on climate change". This gave birth to the idea of linking faiths through a network of green pilgrimage places and pathways around the world sharing experiences and ideas. The aim is to help faiths green their holy places according to their own theology and understanding, which, in turn, could have a dramatic impact on protecting the planet. The event took place over four days with representatives from 15 faith traditions from around the world with secular and environmental organisations and involved a spectacular opening procession -with banners, flags, drummers and torch bearers- through the streets of historic Assisi which, appropriately, is the birthplace of St Francis who is the Catholic Patron Saint of ecology, known for his love of birds, animals and nature. This was followed by a colourful celebration bringing together music, dance, ritual and teaching from many religions and cultures, illustrating their common mission

to care for the natural world with examples of projects worldwide and a banquet in the sensitively restored 13th century Palazzo Monte Frumentario. At the banquet we heard a passionate speech from HRH Princess Michael of Kent on the theme of how faiths could work to protect nature as part of the fastest growing conservation movement in the world.

As part of a series of conference working sessions there were a number of interesting talks and workshops that had a focus on practical actions on environmental issues being taken by different faiths at heavily visited pilgrimage sites throughout the world. Diverse examples included protection of sacred forests in Jinja Honcho, Japan; reducing waste and encouraging recycling in Hifa, Israel; provision of fresh, clean water for millions of pilgrims to the Golden Temple in Amritsar, India and planting thousands of trees around sacred sites of Etchmiadzin in Armenia. The draft of a useful toolkit handbook on ways to complete and implement environmental audits and action plans for pilgrimage places was also reviewed and strengthened with input from delegates.



Rev Dane Sherrard of Luss Parish was able to convey the major contribution to environmental action being taken on Loch Lomondside with the help of a powerful film and a supporting publication which also featured ambitious plans for a network of pilgrim ways across Scotland in the shape of a saltire flag with Luss of course at the centre. The presentation was well received and demonstrated Luss was an exemplar in involving the community in taking forward a comprehensive green agenda and acting responsibly in welcoming 750,000 visitors a year to the village and western shores of Loch Lomondside. Fuller details of Luss's 'green revolution' will appear in the next edition of Voice.

At the conference the world's first global commitment to green pilgrimage was also launched with the establishment of the Green Pilgrimage Network. Around 150 million people a year become pilgrims,

whether for a few hours, days or even weeks, according to figures compiled by ARC. The Green Pilgrimage network brings together faiths, local governments and environmental groups to make their pilgrim places as environmentally sustainable as possible, according to their own theologies and understanding of the natural world. It was a great privilege in my role as the Chairman of the Friends to join Dane in receiving Luss's certificates of commendation as one of the first eleven founding members of the worldwide Green Pilgrimage Network from HRH Princess Michael of Kent at the conference in Assisi. The event was enjoyable and very informative and it has certainly raised my awareness of the scale and diversity of environmental actions either underway or planned by different faiths at a global level. It was also encouraging to see what is happening in Luss Parish, led enthusiastically by Dane and with the hard work of his parishioners, being recognised on the world's religious and conservation stage.

Who knows what the next late night phonecall from Provost Billy Petrie will involve but on this occasion I was happy to help him out! Incidentally, Billy steps down in May after a very long and distinguished career in local government and leading the local tourism effort and it is very fitting his sterling work over many years is being recognised by being made a Freeman of Argyll & Bute. We also plan to recognise his contribution to Loch Lomond and the wider Park area with honorary life membership of the Friends.



OUR park – successes from 2011!

2011 was a busy year for the Friends with the roll-out of the pilot of our innovative 'OUR park' scheme across the whole of the National Park. The scheme aims to enhance, conserve and increase the natural and recreational assets valued by visitors, local businesses and the community in and around Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park by engaging businesses in caring for the natural environment.

A fantastic 80 businesses have participated in the scheme during the 2011 pilot, getting involved by either fundraising for conservation projects, volunteering staff on practical conservation activities, or providing in-kind support such as fundraising raffle prizes and venue and catering for volunteer events.

This participation has resulted in £12,000 in cash donations and a further £7,000 of in-kind contributions which has enabled the delivery of a fantastic 14 conservation and environmental improvements projects to take place across the National Park (six as a result of grants from cash raised and eight as a result of volunteer events).



Make a Difference to Loch Lomond Day

We undertook a number of volunteer conservation events as part of the scheme in 2011, with our flagship volunteer event 'Make a Difference to Loch Lomond Day' taking place on 26 October in which 42 volunteers participated. The day was organised in partnership with Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority and Love Loch Lomond.

A huge amount was achieved by our enthusiastic and hard-working volunteers, including:

Loch Lomond Islands – cleared 25 bags of litter and five bags of recycling (pictured above)

Loch Lomond Cycle Path – cleared 200m of path including widening the path from 1m to 3m (top right)

Endrick Mouth – improved biodiversity and cleared heavy floating vegetation from (bottom right)



PROJECTS SUPPORTED WITH GRANTS

We are delighted that in the majority of instances our grant monies are being used to leverage additional funds to enable even greater environmental improvements to take place. Two of our funded projects were featured in the last edition of VOICE – improving and promoting the Three Lochs Way long distance route and assisting with the re-opening of the Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre at Lochgoilhead – please see opposite for updates on progress for our other funded projects:

OUR top fundraisers

Over 50 businesses from across the National Park and contributed cash donations in 2011, with OUR top fundraisers as follows:

1. **Lodge on Loch Lomond** at Luss – who have raised a fantastic £1500 through the generous contributions of their guests.
2. **Balmillig B&B** in Helensburgh – who have raised an extremely impressive £1000, who continue to generously match-fund their customers donations, showing that small business can make a big contribution!
3. **Deli Ecosse** in Callander – who raised £720, by donating 5p on the sale of hot drinks – that's over 14,000 individual donations!



Red Squirrels

Cowal Red Squirrel Group have now purchased the remote sensor camera to help with their monitoring of grey and red squirrel populations to be located in the Arrochar area (pictured left)



Maid of the Loch

Work is progressing to get ready for school visits to the ship to enable children to learn more about this historic paddle steamer and the social history of the era.

Rob Roy Way

Following a comprehensive survey of the route, the new waymarker discs have been designed and ordered along with additional waymarker posts and a variety of new waymarking signage including street signage through communities along the route to be installed along the route by April 2012 ready for the new season (pictured left)

Bracklinn Bridge paths

A full survey is now complete which will incorporate improved interpretation, paths upgrading and signage around the Bracklinn Bridge, with work will commence later on in the year.

A HUGE thank you to all our businesses, volunteers and conservation partners who have made the scheme such a success!

LIST OF BUSINESSES INVOLVED IN 2011

- Ardachearnbeg
- Ardroy Outdoor Centre
- Arrochar Hotel
- Ballyhennan Old Toll House
- Balmillig B&B
- Balquhidder Braes
- Ben Bhuela B&B
- Benmore Lodge
- Book Point
- Braemore B&B
- Buchanan Arms Hotel
- Callander Ladies Circle
- Capital FM
- Carl Zeiss AG
- CnDo
- Coach House Coffee Shop
- Coach House Hotel Killin
- Craggs Hotel
- Creagan House
- Crown Hotel
- Cruise Loch Lomond
- De Vere Cameron House
- Deli Ecosse
- DM Design
- Dreadnought Hotel
- Eye Supply Ltd
- Fascaidail House
- Four Bs bus
- Gardeners Cottages
- Gateway Centre
- Glendaruel Caravan Park
- Golf Event Raffle
- Go Ape
- Hidden Glen Safaris
- I Love Scotland
- Inverbeg Inn
- Inversnaid Bunkhouse
- Invertay House
- Inveruglas Cafe
- Loch Lomond Sea Planes
- Lochend Chalets
- Lodge on the Loch
- Luss Estates
- Marchon UK
- McDonald Forest Hills
- McDonalds Restaurant
- Media Vision
- Mish Mash
- Monachyle Mhor
- Monkey Agency
- Mouldsdale Foundation
- Oak Tree Inn
- O E Westfield Ltd
- Old Bank Café
- Optical Express
- Poppies Hotel
- Portnellan Chalets
- Riverside Inn
- Roman Camp
- Roslin Cottage
- Ross Priory
- Rowardennan Hotel
- Royal Bank of Scotland
- Rural Dimensions
- Saufflon Pharmaceuticals
- Scissor Sister
- Scottish Water
- Sealife Centre
- Shandonbank Cottage
- Strathfillan Wigwams
- Strone House
- Tarbet Hotel
- Thistle House
- Tigh Mor Trossachs
- Trossachs Outdoors
- Trossachs Tryst Hostel
- The Untouchables Ltd
- Wheels Cycle Centre
- Wild By Nature
- Winnock Hotel

With thanks also to our funding partners in 2011



ARDROY OUTDOOR CENTRE RESCUE SUCCESS



The efforts to save the Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre in Lochgoilhead reported on in the last edition of Voice has paid dividends. The band of volunteers, led by 71 year old George Bruce, who saved the Centre from permanent closure were handed the keys by Fife Council last November and they have worked hard to attract back groups of youngsters from Fife schools and further afield. Most of the previous staff who were made redundant last summer by the Council have now been re-employed and the Centre is well on

target to survive in its first full year of operation under the management of the new trust without the benefit of Council's previous annual subsidy of £290,000. Over £200,000 of new business has already been won by the Trust in a remarkably short period and the Centre is bursting at the seams with a gaggle of excited youngsters enjoying their first outdoor environmental and education experience in Scotland's first National Park.



Historic Hotel Restoration

The historic Colquhoun Arms Hotel in Luss is set to re-open this summer after a £2.7 million investment that aims to recreate the atmosphere of an authentic 19th century coaching inn with a modern twist in terms of the quality of facilities and the hospitality provided. The project is the brainchild of the Friends Honorary President, and local clan chief and landowner, Sir Malcolm Colquhoun of Luss Estates. He sees it as "a vital component of the regeneration of the prettiest village in Scotland". The hotel has been completely refurbished to create 14 en suite bedrooms, a traditional style bar and restaurant plus a weddings and events suite.

LOO RELIEF

The Park Authority is currently investing over £100,000 in much needed new toilets in Luss which is the most popular lochside village with over 600,000 visitors a year. This comes at a time that Stirling Council is closing a number of public toilets in the eastern half of the Park as a budget saving exercise. Fortunately they have entered a series of agreements with local hotels and other businesses to introduce a 'comfort partnership scheme' whereby for small annual contributions to cleaning and toiletries the public are encouraged to use the toilets in these premises. It remains to be seen if the scheme will work in some of the honeypot locations. It is disappointing the Council is only willing to contribute to comfort partnership schemes where they are closing public toilets as opposed to extending the scheme to areas such as Balquhidder Glen where visitors can be caught short and where businesses such as Monachyle Mhor have expressed interest in participating. Interestingly, this is happening at a time that a new Park Authority visitor survey has highlighted the provision and availability of toilets as the number one concern amongst visitors interviewed.





Argyll Forest Coaching Hotel Takes Shape

A new £10million coaching hotel is nearing completion on the site of a former derelict youth hostel and caravan park in a stunning site on the shores of Loch Long in Argyll Forest Park. The 128 bedroom Ardgartan Hotel is the latest in a series of investments by locally based company Lochs & Glens Coaching Holidays who have successfully run inclusive scenic coaching touring holidays in and around the National Park for over 30 years. This latest development is being overseen by company Chairman, Neil Wells a founding Business Supporter of the Friends and Neil tells us that on completion of the hotel this summer he and his staff will annually be welcoming over 95,000 guests per year in their group of six hotels to enjoy the scenic splendours of the National Park and surrounding area. During the final push to complete the new hotel a staggering 12 miles of wallpaper is being hung and 6,000 square metres of carpet is being laid.

NEW FRIENDS WEBSITE

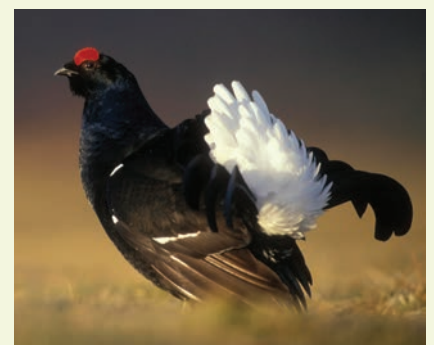
As part of a new initiative to celebrate the cultural and natural heritage qualities of the National Park the Friends are developing a new website which will have a number of new features on the people and places in the Park. The site will also have a discovery section, podcasts and video clips showcasing the special qualities of the park. There will also be new sections aimed at engaging potential visitors and locals in the work of the Friends and supporting our role as the only truly independent conservation charity covering the park area. Our president Dr Hannah Stirling MBE is generously financially supporting the initiative and there will be a special section on the clans of the area to reach out to North Americans who in the early days of the Friends were successfully targeted by Hannah during her travels. The site is also being financially supported by the Park Authority and David Mouldsdale of Optical Express, who has consistently supported Friends projects in recent years. The new site should go live in May.

NEW TOURISM USE FOR BUCHANAN ESTATE QUARRY

The Fraser family from Balmaha, who have successfully built up tourism businesses on the east side of Loch Lomond over three generations, have secured approval for an imaginative holiday cottage development that will transform the disused Buchanan Estate quarry. Following their success with the Oak Tree Inn in Balmaha, which has been built entirely in slate from the Aberfoyle quarry, they intend to use stones from the Buchanan Estate quarry to restore the derelict smithy building on site and create 13 character holiday cottages. Local path networks will be improved too and environmentally sustainable practices will be to the fore in this development that is geared to attracting visitors interested in the special qualities of the National Park.

BLACK GROUSE FUNDING BOOST

Black grouse in the 8,000 hectare area covered by six farms and estates between Callander and Lochearnhead are set to benefit from a £720,000 funding package secured from the Scotland Rural Development Fund by the Park Authority. The funding will target conservation measures over five years to help stabilise and increase the number of black grouse which have declined from 50 lekking males in 1999 to 15 in 2010. Some of the measures planned include grazing management, bracken spraying, scrub thinning, heather burning, tree planting and fence marking.



Gold Mine

Finally Gets Green Light

The long awaited, much discussed, argued over, fought against Gold Mine at Cononish Glen by Tyndrum has finally got the go ahead after an agreement on the 60 planning conditions was resolved with the National Park Authority. In a small way, and working with others, the Friends have helped secure a much improved 'version' of the development from that originally proposed in 2010 when Scotgold stated that the mine could only be operated with a spoil heap and associated visual impacts more than twice the scale of those now agreed. They also originally had a weaker package of financial planning gains for the community than has been negotiated now. It is interesting that all the politicians who sat in on the first application determination bar one (Cllr Colin O'Brien) and local MSPs were content to accept the original sub standard proposals and associated funding package. It is to the great credit of the Park Authority planners and other members of the National Park Authority that they rejected the application and held out for major environmental improvements and better financial safeguards in the revised application despite the outcry of disbelief at the time by MSPs and locals.

A £2 million funding package is now in place with Scotgold resources Ltd to allow the 10 year development to proceed and this includes financial bonds of £1.3 million to restore the site and the implementation of a Cononish Glen management plan. The financial agreement also includes a commitment from the developer to contribute £325K towards other conservation and visitor projects in the National Park over the period of the mine. A further pledge to donate £150K to Strathfillan Community Development Trust (SCDT) has been made by the developer and they have also agreed to donate a sum of £200K to SCDT as a contribution towards the development of a mining exhibition and interpretative facility.

While we still have reservations about the scale and nature of mining operations planned in such a sensitive scenic area we are pleased that the environmental impacts of this scheme have been significantly reduced...but we will be keeping an eye on this! We also hope the approved scheme delivers all the economic benefits locally that John Riley of Strathfillan Community Development Trust and other locals think it will and there is a long term positive legacy for what is an economically fragile part of the Park. If we have one criticism this is the weighting in the conservation and visitor projects element financial package to the wider Park area as opposed to ensuring the bulk of this is spent locally in Strathfillan and on worthwhile projects such as the Killin/Crianlarich/Tyndrum Cycleway.

Friends Christmas

On Sunday 4th December 2011 Friends Trustee Dr Joyce Deans hosted an informal Christmas reception at the historic Ross Priory.

The assembled guests enjoyed traditional Christmas Fayre and were entertained by the Lomond School Traditional Music Group.

A splendid time was had by all.



Sue Ashby, Joyce Deans, and James Ashby



Karen Tobin, Susan Cameron, Anne Urquhart and Gill Robertson



Iain Stuart, Fiona Stuart, James Fraser and Gavin Arneil

Christmas Reception at Ross Priory

Lomond
School
Traditional
Music Group



Willie Nisbet, Elizabeth Boyd,
George Boyd, Rhona Weir



Kenneth Crawford, Jean
Crawford, Allan Crawford
and Pat Crawford



Myrtle & Jock Scott-Park
with Bill Dalrymple



Jean Kelso, Betty Johnston
and Fiona Maxwell



Kathleen Siddle,
Anne McKechnie,
Archie McKechnie
and Ralph Ward

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Publication dates for the next issue:
the (Autumn) edition of VOICE will be published late September 2012.
We would welcome your contributions
- for these to be considered please contact the editor by 5th August 2012

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

We particularly acknowledge the support of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority
 for the new young people's project - Wild.Lomond - Wild.Trossachs:
 and the generous support of the companies in our Business Supporters' scheme.
 And a most special thank you to our members - who are the basis of this charity and our work.



Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs, 63 West Princes Street, Helensburgh Scotland G84 8BN
 Telephone: 01436 677733 Email: info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk


Membership prices held – buy our new DVD, our guide to the National Park, a polo shirt with the Friends’ logo – join as a member or donate now and help us fight the wind turbine plans massing around Loch Lomond!

With your support we are making a difference in Scotland’s first National Park

For over 30 years we have been working to protect, promote and provide for this special part of Scotland that extends to 720 square miles and embraces precious mountains, lochs and landscapes made famous by writers and artists over many hundreds of years. The area is enjoyed by large numbers of visitors and locals each year and to ensure everyone can continue to enjoy and celebrate the special landscapes of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs we need your support.

There a number of ways you can support our conservation efforts:

Becoming a member for a modest £15 – use the form below and not only help fund our work but add the huge value of your name behind all we are striving to do for Loch Lomond and The Trossachs



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



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

Purchase Friends Merchandise
Buy a copy of our new DVD (info below/on page 18) or one of our informative publications as a gift for a friend or a relative.



Just donations can help us to...

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



To help make a difference please tick the relevant boxes below and complete your details. If you prefer you can send us an email us at info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk or phone us on **01436 677733** with the details of your order and we will get back to you within a couple of days. Further details of membership rates and benefits can be seen on www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk

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

I would like to order:

- The Loch Lomond & the Trossachs DVD**
Special discounted price of £8.99 plus £2.00 P&P
- Discover Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Guide**
£9.99 plus £1.50 P&P
- The Islands of Loch Lomond Historical Guide**
£5.00 plus £1.50 P&P

PAYMENT DETAILS

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

email info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk

NB: Direct debits – with sincere apologies to all our members, we are currently unable to offer this facility. Our Bank, RBS, having said this was possible, have now changed their mind – evidently we are too small a charity!

YOUR DETAILS

Name

email

Address

..... Post Code

Contact tel. no.

Please return completed form with any cheque/remittance to:
Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs, 63 West Princes St, Helensburgh G84 8BN
If you require a receipt please enclose a SAE



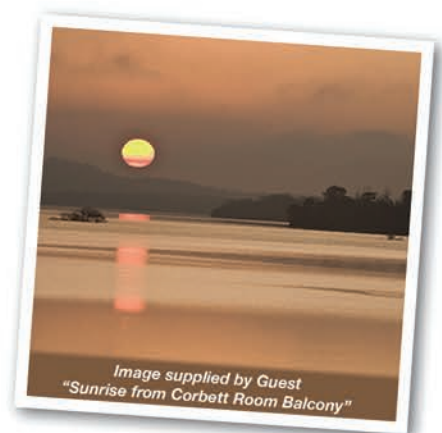
CELEBRATE 20 YEARS OF LODGE ON LOCH LOMOND HOTEL



Join us during our celebration period and enjoy a 20% discount

2012 will mark the 20th anniversary of Lodge on Loch Lomond Hotel, when Mr Colquhoun Senior fell in love with a stunning sandy cove at Loch Lomond, its panoramic views and decided to open a charming nine bedroom hotel. This little jewel in the Loch Lomond crown has grown to be a 4-star, award-winning, 49 bedroom hotel

attracting leisure guests from across the globe, including two former US presidents, is one of Scotland's most romantic venues and a favourite business getaway with the corporate world. Yet it retains the warmth, service and friendly ambience of a family-run hotel, where guests return time and time again.



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