

The Voice

The magazine of the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs

Backing for Balloch Tourist Resort Development



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Chairman's Introduction

WELCOME TO THIS AUTUMN EDITION OF VOICE, which features interesting articles about different aspects of the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park and news on recent activities of the Friends and others working to make the Park a better place for people and nature.

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

What a glorious summer, the likes of which has not been seen since 1976 according to keen weather watchers and historians. The balmy sunny days of May, June and July combined with a rich array of community and international events, such as Callander Summerfest, Balloch Festival, various Highland Games and the flagship European Open Water Swimming Championships at Loch Lomond, all contributed to showing off the natural and cultural assets of National Park at their best.

The great spell of summer weather has not been without other benefits and challenges with record numbers of visitors boosting the trading performance of many tourism-related businesses including cruise and campsite operators who experienced a large uplift in visitor numbers. However, there were additional visitor pressures in popular towns and villages and at many lochside locations resulting in large accumulations of litter, toileting and indiscriminate parking which at times the various authorities struggled to cope with. There was also a countrywide 'invasion'

of campervans with the area lacking in proper infrastructure provision to cater for them. Sadly, there were reports of irresponsible effluent disposal in National Park rivers and lochs. Urgent action is required to increase the number of effluent campervan disposal points as part of the Your Park initiative, which the National Park Authority has been investing heavily in over the past couple of years. The Friends recently celebrated its 40th anniversary with the planting of trees on Loch Lomondside. It doesn't seem that long ago that Dr Hannah Stirling MBE and other founding members gathered an impressive 200,000 signatures, in pre-internet days, to prevent a major hydro scheme destroying the shoulder of Ben Lomond, which was saved for the nation and transferred to the National Trust for Scotland to care for.

Some 30 years ago, the Friends won another famous battle at a public inquiry to protect the land around Drumkinnon Bay at Balloch from being covered in housing and to secure its future for people to enjoy for tourism and recreation purposes following restoration of the derelict former industrial sites and the development of tourist facilities, such as those now available at Loch Lomond Shores. On pages 4 and 5 we set out the reasons why we have taken the decision to provide qualified support for a major tourist and recreation development on the

remainder of this site and West Riverside which has been the subject of massive, and often ill-informed, press and social media coverage over the past year.

It is to the credit of the late Dr Hannah Stirling MBE, the late Professor Gavin Arneil and other founding members that the Friends is still a vibrant organisation, as relevant today as it was back in 1978, upholding the original vision of trying to make a difference and working for the benefit of people and nature.

A great number of individuals over the years have freely contributed time, effort and money to further the aims of the Friends and many members and businesses have continued to support Friends activities. A big thank you to everyone and here's to the next 40 years helping to care for what is a very special place enjoyed by millions of people from home and overseas.

Please enjoy reading this edition of Voice and enjoy what experts predict is going to be a very colourful Autumn due to the sustained heat over the summer producing perfect conditions for a riot of reds and oranges to rival anything we have seen before.

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
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Cover: Women's Timber Corps memorial at The Lodge Forest Visitor Centre, Aberfoyle.

Image by Paul Saunders www.paulsaunders.co.uk

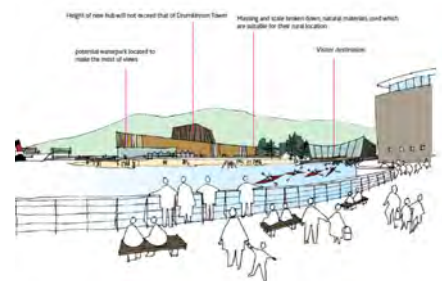
Backing for Balloch Tourist Resort Development

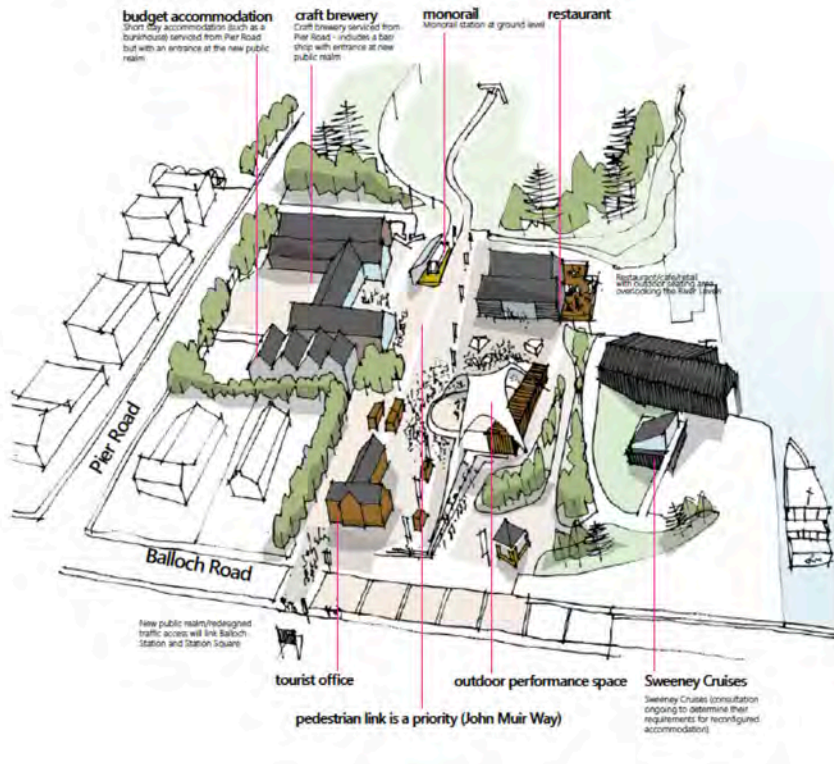
Plans help deliver vision for Loch Lomond set out by planners almost 70 years ago. The Friends recently confirmed their qualified support for the proposed £30 million tourist and leisure development in Balloch at the southern end of Loch Lomond.

In a detailed eleven page submission to the National Park Authority the Friends set out clearly the main reasons for their support and contend the plans will help deliver the vision first set out by Sir Patrick Abercrombie in the Clyde Valley Regional Plan as far back as 1949 and in subsequent local development and subject plans for Loch Lomond. A full copy of the submission is available on the Friend's website at www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk. The Friends took a proactive role to influencing these plans which are broadly a hybrid version of a slightly larger Forest Holidays and smaller

Center Parcs type of development but have wrongly been portrayed as a major theme park by the media and many of the objectors, simply because of the Flamingoland company name and their role as the scheme promoters. Commenting on their submission James Fraser, Chairman of the Friends, said: "Our decision to support the current development proposals was taken after very careful consideration of the plans, a site visit and a number of pre-application meetings with the developers. This led to some elements of the original scheme being modified to include the

retention of the public beach near the Maid of the Loch slipway and scrapping the proposed large viewing tower and also removing the proposed floating holiday boats planned for mooring along the River Leven where moorings are currently occupied by local cruising clubs." He added: "The outline proposals, with some modifications to accommodate a bolder transport solution to move people around Balloch more easily, linked to better traffic management arrangements and car parking improvements, will have far reaching economic, social and conservation benefits for Loch Lomond, Balloch and the





Vale of Leven and they will help to realise the undoubted tourist and recreational potential of Balloch as the gateway to Loch Lomond.”

Around 30 years ago the Friends, local councillors and the Area Tourist Board successfully fought a local public inquiry, which prevented the land at Drumkninnon Bay being covered by luxury Cala housing, so that its future could be secured for the public to enjoy for tourism and leisure purposes following comprehensive redevelopment of what then was a large tract of unsightly former industrial land with a mix of disused gravel workings, a derelict silk dye works, extensive disused railway sidings and a former large shorefront static holiday caravan park.

The Friends main reasons for supporting the proposals are:

1. The proposals are comprehensive, appropriate in scale and nature and are in largely accordance with the zoning in current and previous local development Plans;
2. The proposed development will help strengthen Balloch’s appeal as a tourist destination and resort with a range of family orientated accommodation, activities and wet weather facilities which should encourage longer staying visitors with consequent economic spin off benefits for the wider community and existing businesses;
3. The extensive site will remain available for the public to enjoy for recreation and tourism purposes with well-lit and safe paths and trails and access to a new indoor water park;
4. The development proposals include plans to engage visitors in conservation educational activities and appreciating the special natural and cultural heritage qualities of Loch Lomond; and
5. There is an opportunity as part of the development to improve transport connections between different parts of the village as well as parking and traffic management arrangements for the benefit of local residents and visitors.

Loch Lomond Pleasure Parks – Clyde Planners’ Scheme

The value of the Loch Lomond area a recreational resort for the citizens of Clydeside is stressed in the Clyde Valley Regional Plan, published to-day. Nowhere in Great Britain is there so near to great mass of population such a magnificent area of diverse beauty, states the Planning Committee’s report. In addition to the national park proposal, the committee suggest a national recreation centre should be set up at Balloch. Broadly speaking, it is envisaged that in

the strip of shore extending from Auchendennan House southwards to Balloch Pier, there should be afforded a complete range of tourist accommodation from camping facilities, through youth and family hostels, to first-class hotel accommodation, each divided from the other by generous park reservations. The scheme would include all facilities and attractions, such as rest parks, open-air restaurants, boating centre, games area, and shops necessary to make this

tourist centre with a universal appeal. The Loch Lomond National Park and the Balloch National Recreation Centre at the entrance to that park should be the first crystallisation in practical form of tourist facilities which could expand from this beginning to link up those many areas in Scotland capable of being made more attractive to the tourist, both native and foreign.

Extract from newspaper coverage of the Clyde Valley Regional Plan, 20th August 1949



CALL FOR BOLDER ACTION ON LITTER

The Friends has called for bolder action to tackle the blight of litter alongside the busy A82 tourist route on Loch Lomondside and at other visitor hotspots throughout the National Park. This follows on from discussions at the Friends AGM in May when litter was a hot topic following 2017 being one of the worst years on record for accumulations of litter at beauty spots in the National Park. There has been growing concern that the current arrangements for litter collection are poorly co-ordinated between the various agencies and fall well short of what is required in Scotland's most popular countryside destination. Pleas were made for the various bodies with responsibility for litter management in the National Park to step up their efforts to combat this growing problem. The Friends subsequently welcomed the recent confirmation by the Park Authority that they have now made litter their number one priority in their corporate plan and look forward to seeing what this will mean in terms of improvements on the ground which are badly needed. Local authorities of course have an important role to play but the Friends are looking for strong leadership from the Park Authority with their important coordinating role to help ensure the situation is markedly improved.

The Friends have suggested as part of a more proactive approach to dealing with the litter problem a five-point action plan should be adopted by local Councils and bodies such as the National Park Authority and Forestry Commission Scotland.

1. A more joined up approach should be taken to tackling litter issues including more frequent litter clearance at busy weekends and during holiday periods;
2. More and larger bins should be provided at busy locations throughout the National Park as exhortations to take litter home in isolation of other measures simply doesn't work;
3. Implementation of the same policy for the A82 on Loch Lomondside as exists along the A9 in the Cairngorms National Park where litter bins are provided in every layby and emptied regularly;
4. More rigorous enforcement of litter fines as part of a wider effort to change people's bad habits and attitudes in relation to discarding litter in the countryside and alongside road verges; and
5. More hard-hitting litter education campaigns on topics such as single use plastic, recycling and the impacts of irresponsible litter disposal in the National Park.



James Fraser, Chairman of the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs said: "Recent research by Keep Scotland Beautiful has confirmed Scotland is one of the dirtiest countries in Western Europe despite being voted as the most beautiful country in the world by Rough Guide readers. "This contradiction is sadly well illustrated throughout the National Park where accumulations of litter reached an all-time high in the past year at popular beauty spots and in lay-bys along the A82. "Working with others we have increased the number of volunteer cleans ups and the National Park Authority has improved litter clearance efforts at a number of lochside beauty spots but this has been insufficient to stem the tide. "The time has come for much bolder action to be taken and to stop passing the buck between various agencies if we are serious about making a real difference. We all have a responsibility to ensure the National Park is a cleaner and safer place for people to enjoy and for wildlife to thrive."

Friends 40th Anniversary Milestone

The Friends recently marked the 40th anniversary of their inaugural meeting on 28th September 1978, which was held at the Balloch Hotel, with the planting of 40 trees at Balloch Castle Country Park and a further 40 trees at the RSPB Loch Lomond National Nature Reserve as part of their ongoing conservation efforts.



It is a fine testament to the late Dr Hannah Stirling MBE, the late Professor Gavin Arneil and other founding members that the Friends is still a vibrant organisation, as relevant today as it was back in 1978, upholding the original vision of trying to make a difference and working for the benefit of people and nature in the Loch Lomond and the wider National Park area. A great number of individuals over the years have freely contributed time and effort to further the aims of the Friends and many individual members and businesses have continued to support Friends activities through the membership and Friends of OUR park visitor giving schemes, attending events or undertaking volunteer tasks. A big thankyou to everyone and here's to the next 40 years helping to care for what is a very special place enjoyed by millions of people from home and overseas.

Pic: Hannah Stirling and other founding members at the Friends' first Executive Council meeting in 1978

Funding Boost for Lauder Monument Project

The Friends have secured a £10,000 funding package from the Scottish Landfill Communities Fund to support improvements at the Lauder Memorial at Invernoaden in Cowal. The monument and viewpoint were created by the legendary Scottish musical artist Sir Harry Lauder in memory of his son John Lauder, who was killed in World War I.



Improvements planned include creating a small car park and path linking up to the site as well as restoring the railings around the monument and installing interpretation and better advance signage. Friends Ecotourism Manager Jared Bowers, who is overseeing the project, said: "We are delighted to receive this funding and consider this is an important cultural heritage project that will introduce more visitors the story of Harry and John Lauder and their strong family connections with Cowal." Tom Wallace, Activity Programme Manager for Mountains and the People Initiative, added: "Our trainees and volunteers have previously undertaken some work on the path to the monument with funding support from the Friends and we are looking forward to helping with this latest phase of works."

TOP NATIONAL PARK AWARDS FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Left to right. Joyce Deans, John Beveridge, Murdoch Cameron, Sir Malcolm Colquhoun, Jim Biddulph, Victoria Carrol and Duncan MacLachlan

THE FRIENDS have recognised the outstanding voluntary contributions made by three long-serving community champions and the owners of a long-established self-catering holiday business for their work making the National Park a better place for the benefit of people and nature.

At the annual general meeting in May, awards were given to Murdoch Cameron MBE and Jim Biddulph, who are Chairman and Secretary respectively of Balloch and Haldane Community Council, Duncan MacLachlan, Director of Arrochar and Tarbet Community Development Trust, who has recently overseen the successful opening of the Arrochar Community Hydro Scheme and Victoria Carroll of Lochend Chalets, Port of Menteith.

HANNAH STIRLING AWARD

Murdoch and Jim were jointly given the fourth Hannah Stirling National Park Award in recognition of their hard work, commitment and outstanding service over 20 years each to the well-being of Balloch and Haldane. The two have worked tirelessly to ensure the loudest possible voice for their community, giving them the chance to contribute to many important discussions, including some involving Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority.

The Hannah Stirling National Park Award was established by the Friends in 2015 in honour of its late former President.

At the award ceremony Murdoch said: *"We are delighted to receive this award, but our work for Balloch and Haldane Community Council is second nature to us. All we are looking for is for our residents to be allowed to have the best possible say in issues affecting them locally. To be recognised in this way is something we are very grateful for, and the people of Balloch and Haldane can be sure we don't intend going anywhere yet."*

Jim added: *"It is very rewarding to serve the people of your community in this way, and the fact that we have done it for so long shows how enjoyable it is as well. We have followed in some very illustrious footsteps by winning this award and it is an honour to receive it."*

GAVIN ARNEIL AWARD

The Friends recognised the efforts of Arrochar man Duncan MacLachlan, which made it a busy week for him with the launch of the Community Hydro Scheme taking place days later. A stalwart of Arrochar and Tarbet Community Development Trust for many years, his efforts were recognised with the Gavin Arneil Award as Volunteer of the Year. Although the award has been presented for several years, this was the first year it was named after Gavin, who was one of the founding members of the Friends in 1978. He passed away in January 2018.

Duncan said: *"The launch of the Community Hydro Scheme is a real asset to Arrochar and Tarbet, but just a small part of the work that needs to be done to ensure this community is kept vibrant and scenic and a good spot for tourists to visit. I am only too glad to offer my time and expertise towards achieving these goals. I am delighted that I have been recognised in this way by the Friends, and I am looking forward to continuing our successful relationship."*

BUSINESS SUPPORTER OF THE YEAR

The National Park Business Supporter of the Year award was given to long established business, Lochend Chalets of Port of Menteith, whose director Victoria Carroll was on hand to be presented with the prize.

Lochend Chalets has been on board as a Friends of OUR park visitor giving scheme member for many years, raising thousands of pounds for conservation, access and heritage projects in the National Park. In the past year a substantial sum was collected from visitors from the sale

of duck feed to visitors. There is also an opt-in visitor donation mechanism when guests stay in one of their 18 self-catering lodges which is well subscribed to by guests.

Victoria said: *"It is a pleasure to assist the Friends in their funding of so many conservation and access projects, many of which are local to us, and to be recognised in this way is very humbling. Like the Friends, we at Lochend are passionate about the National Park and want to do all we can to help it flourish for everybody. The Friends do a power of work to help deliver a range of practical projects of benefit to people and nature and we are proud to be a part of that."*

Friends Chairman James Fraser said: *"All of these award winners are fully worthy of their recognition and we are grateful for the respective ways in which they help around the park, whether it is campaigning or fundraising for specific projects and initiatives or giving up their time to keep Scotland's first National Park beautiful. They have all helped make a real difference on the ground and have contributed to making the National Park a better place for people and nature. We congratulate all of our award winners this year and hope they continue to make contributions to enriching the villages and countryside within the National Park along with many hundreds of other volunteers and businesses who are active with the Friends and other bodies locally."*



ARROCHAR COMMUNITY HYDRO SCHEME OPENS

Earlier this summer the Arrochar Community Hydro scheme was officially opened by Sir Malcolm Colquhoun of Luss Estates (above) who own the land where the new hydro scheme is located. Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy and a large turnout of local residents, including schoolchildren, were also present to celebrate the opening of the scheme.

At the official opening Sir Malcolm Colquhoun commented: "Back in October 2013 we proposed the idea of a community hydro to the Arrochar & Tarbet and Luss & Arden Development Trusts. I am delighted that this initiative has come to fruition and wish the venture well. It offers a unique ability to the Development Trusts to raise funding to invest in the local community. I congratulate all those involved in delivering this project."

Duncan MacLachlan, Chairman of Arrochar Community Hydro Society, has been instrumental since the project's inception said: "With great help and support from everyone throughout, from the land owner, Luss Estates, to the National Park planning team, Scottish Government through Local Energy Scotland and CARES development officers, consultants, contractors and with a fully supportive community behind us, we have managed to complete our project."

"We look forward to the rain levels that attracted the first large post war hydro electric scheme to this area, bringing the present and future community further benefits for many years to come."

The Friends were one of a number community and ethical investors who purchased shares in the community share offer to raise funds to enable the project to proceed.



BALMAHA PONTOON BOOSTS LOCH LOMOND CONNECTIONS

A new £100,000 pontoon at Balmaha Pier installed by the Fraser family who own and run the nearby Oak Tree Inn has proved to be a great success, with thousands of visitors using the ferry services linking Luss and Balmaha as well as new island boat tour programmes.

The new pontoon was officially opened by the Duke of Montrose at a well-attended official opening ceremony in glorious sunshine earlier this summer.

Invited guests enjoyed one of one of Cruise Loch Lomond's new island cruises, with the additional highlight of a passing rowing boat, complete with oarsmen in Highland Dress to commemorate the repeal of the Act of Proscription in 1782, which had banned the wearing of Highland Dress. The rowing boat crossing the Highland Boundary Fault Line, located close to the pontoon and marking the start of the Scottish Highlands. Over the last two decades, owners of The Oak Tree Inn, Sandy Fraser and his family, have improved facilities for the growing number of visitors to Balmaha.

Sandy said: "The pontoon is already delivering incredible improvements to the east side of Loch Lomond."

"More people can arrive by boat, helping to take the pressure off of roads and car parks. New short cruises around the islands are proving to be very popular and we are seeing an extended season, which helps the local economy."



The Duke of Montrose (left), who opened the pontoon, said: "We welcome this significant improvement to connectivity on Loch Lomond and personally I was delighted to officially open the pontoon."

"It was wonderful to see the rowing boat and oarsmen, marking what is a significant moment of Scottish history."

NEW ECO LODGES ECHO THE HISTORY OF LOCH KATRINE

Right: Lady Drummond of Perth is pictured outside a replica of a 230-year-old 'rudimentary huts' alongside the new eco lodge with Bruce Crawford MSP and Dr Michael Cantlay, Chair of Scottish Natural Heritage.

A new eco camp has opened on the shores of Loch Katrine, where some of the first early travellers to Scotland stayed in wicker and bracken huts more than 200 years ago.

At the turn of the 19th century, when literary giants such as Sir Walter Scott, the Wordsworths and Coleridge ventured on some of their epic journeys to discover 'the raw beauty of Scotland's scenery' they sheltered in what were described as 'rudimentary huts with bracken roofs at the eastern end of Loch Katrine' and their writings subsequently led to Scotland's first tourism boom.

A couple of huts were provided by Lady Drummond of Perth, the local landowner, who was concerned to ensure there were shelters for these early travellers. Next to the spot where these huts stood, in the shadow of Ben Venue, the trust charged with sustaining the 119 year-old steamship Sir Walter Scott has developed a cluster of more luxurious timber eco lodges and a small campground. Billy Petrie, chair of the Steamship Sir Walter Scott Trust said: "I am confident the £300,000 eco camp development will be popular with city dwellers and



others as they seek to re-connect with nature in such a stunning setting and, importantly, the income generated from their stays will help to keep the steamship running for many years to come."

Dr Michael Cantlay, chair of Scottish Natural Heritage, and Bruce Crawford, MSP for Stirling, have both been strong supporters of the Steamship Sir Walter Scott Trust over the years and they officially opened the new eco camp on 18th June.

Dr Cantlay said: "This is a really bold investment by the trust and one which I wholeheartedly endorse as it has led to the creation of much-needed high quality glamping facilities in a stunning environmental setting where Scottish tourism began a couple of centuries ago."

"This development demonstrates that contemporary tourist facilities can be developed on an environmentally sensitive site in a sympathetic way while providing great opportunities for people to enjoy Scotland's outdoors and rich natural heritage." The project was funded by the trust and a grant from Forth Valley & Lomond LEADER programme.



800% HIKE IN PARKING CHARGE

LOCHSIDE PARKING CHARGES CONTROVERSY

As part of a budget balancing exercise Argyll & Bute Council is controversially phasing in sweeping new car parking charges at popular lochside car parks at Arrochar and Duck Bay without investing a single penny more in site infrastructure improvements such as much needed public toilets.

New charges were due to come into effect at the popular climbers car park for the Cobbler on the edge of Arrochar at the end of August with charges rising from £1 to £9 for full day parking. It is anticipated this will generate an extra £80,000 a year for the Council.

This proposal met with strong opposition from outdoor groups, the local community and the Friends who are not averse to modest increases in return for some investment in car park improvements and facilities to prevent extensive toileting in the bushes near the start of the popular footpath to the Cobbler. There is also concern that the 800% jump in car parking charges will simply lead to more informal parking on the verges near the car park and along what is a busy stretch of road.



Meanwhile, the Council has announced its intention to introduce parking charges for the first time at the Duck Bay car park beside the popular Loch Lomondside picnic area where public toilets have lain derelict for 20 years (pic left). Surprisingly, the Council seemed oblivious to the

fact the car park here was entirely funded by the Cawley family who own the adjacent Duck Bay Marina Hotel & Restaurant and an agreement was entered into with the former Dumbarton District Council that allows their guests and visitors to the popular National Park gateway picnic area having free use of the car parking spaces. The Council anticipates these charges could generate up to £90,000 a year.

The Friends have strongly objected to these proposals on the grounds that they appear to be in breach of existing agreements and have been drawn up without any consideration of the traffic management implications, with the inevitable displacement of more cars to the loop road here likely, and pressing public toilet investment needs at what is the busiest picnic area on Loch Lomondside.

Local MSP Jackie Baillie is pursuing this with the Council on behalf of the Friends and other local interests.

TOP RATING FOR FAMILY CRUISE COMPANY

Sweeney's Cruises, who have operated on Loch Lomond from their base in Balloch since the 1880s, has received a top five-star grading from VisitScotland.

John Sweeney, the fifth generation of his family to run the company said: "We've been offering boat tours on Loch Lomond for well over a century and in the last five years we've put a lot of time and effort into getting ourselves a five-star grading."

The company have also recently received the green light from National Park planners for a £500,000 investment in new shore-based facilities that include extended riverside berthage, new offices, public toilets and a large boat maintenance shed.



John Sweeney receives the grading award from David Adams McGilp of Visit Scotland

TYNDRUM COMMUNITY HUB AND INFO CENTRE PLANS SETBACK

Ambitious plans by villagers in Tyndrum to use the former tourist information centre as a replacement village hall incorporating community space and gold mine interpretation centre and information displays and services has been rejected by VisitScotland. They cite complications with the title deeds and legal burdens restricting use of the building which was constructed by the former Area Tourist Board on land gifted by a local businessman.

Meanwhile, the Callander tourist information centre is due to close shortly which means there will only be three information centres left in the entire National Park at Balloch, Aberfoyle and Balmaha. Callander groups are currently exploring options to retain an information centre in the town but progress has been slow to date.

COMMUNITY WOODLANDS-CALLANDER

A Community Woodland for Callander?

About five years ago, folk started talking about having a mountain bike trail through Coihallan Woods. Owners, the Forestry Commission, couldn't agree but suggested the community could buy the 80 hectares on the southern edge of Callander. A purchase just for a cycle trail seemed unwise so a study was done, with funding from the Scottish Land Fund, to see if a community woodland would be viable. Based partly on other community wood acquisitions, it concluded that Coihallan could be developed for community use.

The next steps are to complete a valuation and apply for Scottish Land Fund funding to purchase the land and provide a professional forest manager for the first two years, to include the possible harvest of its remaining standing timber. Are you interested in helping the project? We need people with knowledge and ideas and, better still, also willing to do some of the work to get the project going.

Contact Callander Community Woodland c/o mark@markgriffithsmanagement.co.uk or find out more at www.incallander.co.uk/ccdt_coihallanwoods



See Loch Lomond is a new website created by Friends Business Supporter and Drymen based photographer and marketing consultant Paul Saunders. The website is a guide to all of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs, using Paul's photography, video and articles.

As Paul explains the idea started small and then grew and grew

'The idea originally was to share on-line my photographs of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs, but then that became a series of guides and articles. It soon became clear that there were some gaps to fill and thanks to the mostly good weather of the summer I visited lots of interesting places so that I could not only take photographs but write about what I discovered. It's been a lot of hard work but incredibly enjoyable, particularly visiting different parts of Loch Lomond'.

The website also features a number of videos and a comprehensive guide to 101 things to see and do in Loch Lomond & The Trossachs. An accommodation directory is also planned.

www.seelochlomond.co.uk



Callander's



What is 'Callander's Landscape'?

Callander's Landscape is an exciting project that focuses on the dramatic landscapes that surround Callander, improving natural and cultural heritage and ensuring that more people can access this awe-inspiring place.

Thanks to National Lottery players, £1.43million funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund the project has received a significant boost to help transform the town over the next three years. Partners, volunteers and other grant funders are all contributing to this landscape-scale project's overall value of around £2.2 million.

Chair of Callander Landscape Partnership Paul Prescott said:

"Callander's location right on the Highland Boundary Fault where Scotland's highlands and lowlands meet makes the area's landscape unique and it's this distinctive character that this Landscape Partnership will restore, enhance and celebrate."

"We want to engage more people in the landscape and the cultural heritage of the area through an array of exciting opportunities, and encourage greater sustainable exploration of this special place."

The project's vision is to:

Better connect Callander, its people and its visitors, unlocking the secrets of this awe-inspiring landscape's rivers, woodlands, mountains, heritage and history for all to enjoy.

Over the next three years the project will deliver 19 projects in and around Callander covering the four themes of 'restore, explore, research and engage'.

Specific plans include:

- access improvements and the restoration of the Victorian Walkway at the Falls of Leny
- improvements to and conservation of the area's natural heritage
- creating a cycling and walking network
- enhancing visitor interpretation to encourage people to make the most of getting active in the outdoors and explore the past through cultural heritage and archaeology

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

"Through partnership working 'Callander's Landscape' will help deliver key outcomes set out in our recently launched National Park Partnership Plan."

"This ambitious project will help transform the town of Callander into the 'Outdoor Capital of the National Park', with a more accessible and conserved landscape ready for visitors and locals to enjoy and explore."

restore, explore, research, engage

Landscape



Where are we now?

Although 'Callander's Landscape' is in its early stages, there is a lot happening over the autumn and winter.

- Led by Callander Youth Project Trust, two Modern Apprentices have embarked on a unique training experience that combines adventure tourism and hospitality. They will be joined by four more next year. These apprenticeships offer young people paid employment combined with training plus the benefit of working with national agencies, local businesses and the community.
- Volunteers will be re-establishing the woods at Callander Crag as a great place for both people and wildlife. Installation of habitat boxes and rhododendron clearance will be some of their first tasks and over the next few months, a number of path improvements will also get underway.
- In November a Dark Skies project will kick off with an evening of astronomy giving local families and visitors to Callander the opportunity to star gaze with local experts on a guided walk (weather permitting) into Callander Meadows. The Dark Skies project connects Callander's Neolithic heritage and conservation of the night sky and provides people with a fun and informal opportunity to better understand the area's landscape.



Keep in touch

Over the next few months a project website and social media accounts will be developed, where you'll be able to get all the latest news and updates about the project:

- 📍 CallandersLandscape.org
- 📘 facebook.com/CallandersLandscape
- 🐦 twitter.com/CallandersLandscape

A real partnership

Callander's Landscape will see 15 partners from across the community, public bodies, voluntary sector organisations, local businesses and landowners all working together to develop the vision and road map for delivering this ambitious set of projects. These are:

[Callander's Countryside](#)

[Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority](#)

[Callander Community Council](#)

[Callander Community Development Trust](#)

[McLaren Leisure Centre](#)

[Callander Heritage Society](#)

[Callander Ramblers](#)

[Scottish Natural Heritage](#)

[Scottish Wildlife Trust \(Callander\)](#)

[Forestry Commission Scotland](#)

[Stirling Council](#)

[Drumardoch Estate](#)

[FABB \(Facilitating Access Breaking Barriers\)](#)

[Callander Youth Project](#)

[River Forth Fisheries Trust](#)

"Thanks to funding from the National Lottery, Callander's Landscape will bring real cohesion to the natural and built heritage of the area with a diverse range of fascinating projects and activities."

Lucy Casot, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund in Scotland

A partnership project funded by:



LOTTERY FUNDED

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*.

Local historian and literary expert Louis Stott takes us on the last in his series of tours of waterfalls in the National Park.

The Falls *of* the Trossachs



THERE ARE SEVERAL significant waterfalls in proximity to Loch Ard. The striking Waterfall of the Little Fawn is above Aberfoyle, close to the spectacularly sited David Marshall Lodge on the Duke's Pass. The Allt a'Mhangan, the burn from which the fall gets its name, forms several attractive cascades including an upper fall of about ten metres after which it enters a wood of blackthorn, hazel, birch and willow before falling in an abrupt gorge, long known to botanists for its rich flora. The burn turns a corner, Camadh Laidir, before tumbling over a highly attractive broken 17-metre fall, reached by a much frequented forest trail from the information centre.

The Black Linn of Blairvaich on the Duchary, is probably best approached from a bridge above the fall, shown on maps, where an awkward footpath leads to its head. The Black Linn is set in a natural birch wood, behind is Ben Lomond, seen to great effect. Action scenes were shot here during the making of the 1953 film, *Rob Roy*, the *Highland Rogue*.

Above Loch Ard, on the way to Ben Venue by the charming mountain path from the farm of Ledard, the visitor encounters the Falls of Ledard, which so charmed Walter Scott that he used the site in both *Waverley* and *Rob Roy*, 'a spot the recollection of which yet strikes me with admiration'. Beyond the farmhouse the path climbs up beside the burn until you reach the beautiful rock pool described by Scott. The visitor who has read Scott may be surprised at the small scale of the falls and be tempted to doubt his arithmetic, but no one will doubt his skill in describing the scene.

Eas Mor on Ben Dubh, the dark mountain wall above Loch Chon in the Trossachs, is a curiosity. It is well described in Campbell Nairne's informative book about the Trossachs when he refers to the vanishing waterfall of Loch Chon:

In his description of Loch Chon, Graham (1806) mentions a spectacular cascade

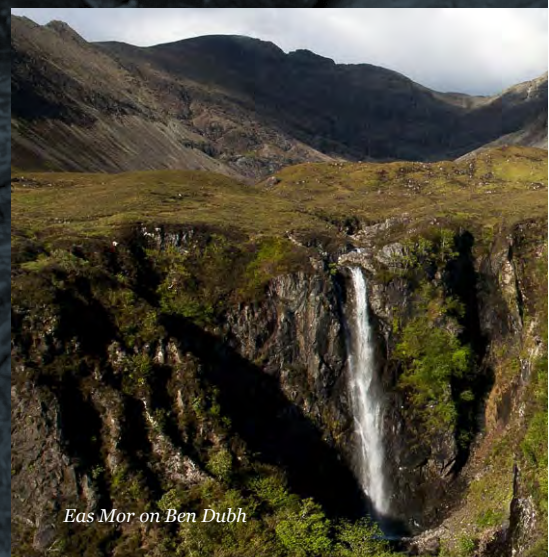


Filming *Rob Roy* in 1953 at the Black Linn of Blairvaich

which could be looked for near the upper end of the lake. The existence of this cascade has been known locally for hundreds of years yet it is rarely seen. The reason is that it appears only after a period of heavy rain. A mossy hollow on top of the mountain wall overflows and the water shoots down into the loch, a thousand feet below. Most of the fall is spray, but seen from a distance it is like a continuous white rope. After half an hour or so the cataract vanishes.

The Avon Dhu Falls are situated in the Pass of Aberfoyle at the foot of Loch Ard. They are hidden in the woods below the stepping-stones where the Avon Dhu, the infant Forth some say, creeps out of Little Loch Ard before rushing over two falls among rocks. Above the falls, on the way in to the forest, is the site of the millpond that fed the Corn Mill.

The charming Falls of Bruach Coaruinn are situated above the elaborate deserted settlement of Bruach Caoruinn where the path from Kinlochard to Rowardennan (and to Ben Lomond) leaves the Forest road. A visit to them can be combined with a visit to the settlement.



Eas Mor on Ben Dubh



Bracklinn Falls are a short walk from Callander. Once an information board drew attention the medicinal herbs, such as tormentil and woundwort, to be found beside the path. It was the alpine quality of an insubstantial wooden bridge above the roaring falls that caught the imagination of Sir Walter Scott who was said as a young man to have ridden his horse at a gallop across it. He frequently stayed at Cambusmore where he began to compose *The Lady of the Lake*. In the poem, his memorable epithet 'wild as Brackland's thundering wave' helped to popularise the falls.

The old bridge has long been supplanted and access has been improved. There is a way in from Bridge of Keltie on the A84 by Auchenlaich, where there is a significant chambered cairn, and, further up, a 'Pictish' fort. The Keltie Burn tumbles in a series of connected falls through rock gateways in near-vertical red sandstones and conglomerates. A consequence of the inclination of the rocks is that the falls have a foursquare appearance and there are precipitous cliffs above Brackland Glen, or as Scott puts it:

... *Bracklinn's chasm, so black and steep
Receives her roaring linn,*

In the Trossachs proper The Falls of Glenfinglas, still visible below the dam, were the scene of one of the most famous seductions of the nineteenth century. John Everett Millais determined to paint a waterfall as the background to a portrait of Ruskin, comparable with Turner's treatment of waterfalls in the Alps and elsewhere. At the beginning of their holiday Millais was an admirer of Effie, Ruskin's wife, and worshipped Ruskin; by the end of it he was complaining of Ruskin and was hopelessly in love with Effie. When Effie left Ruskin and married Millais the scandal which broke was the greatest since Byron's day.

John Everett Millais
"Ruskin, Turner and the pre-Raphaelites"
The portrait was abandoned in 1853 and finished in the studio in the following year. Ruskin considered it very fine, and it is one of Millais' most famous works. Another picture 'The Waterfall' which shows Effie sitting beside another spot on the Turk was completed during the holiday. The Ruskin Viewpoint is reached from the Car Park on the Brig o' Turk to Glenfinglas road. In the vicinity there are the fine Pass of Achray Falls where the path from Loch Achray to Ben Venue crosses the outlet from Loch Katrine. The narrow defile of the Pass of Leny is a busy place. The river gorge at the Falls of Leny is scarcely able to accommodate the river, let alone the old military road, the more modern main road and the former Callander and Oban railway line, which criss-crossed the rapids in such a dramatic fashion. The line of the old railway now provides a footpath and cycle trail west of the river, which is the best way to see the falls. There are car parks at Kilmahog and at the foot of Loch Lubnaig. The river falls in twin cataracts, five metres high, rushing over rough rocks and nearly always providing an abundance of white water.



From Stank farm a fine forest walk leads into the hills. There are various alternative routes (to be found on the internet). The roar of the fall in spate is obvious enough, but it is hidden in trees until the last minute. Stank Falls make three impressive leaps of about eight metres each before taking a sheer leap over a 25 metre fall. Lord Esher built a chapel at the foot of the glen where he intended to be buried. The chapel has two Stevenson epitaphs. It is still possible to appreciate what a superb site it was. He wrote to his son in 1902: 'Such a day. An absolutely cloudless day. Not a speck in the azure. Lubnaig was like Como. No movement of the deep blue water, except an occasional ripple, when the lightest of breezes touched the loch.'



Stank Falls



Celebrating our young people

The Year of Young People 2018 is a fantastic opportunity to support our young people to get out and experience the National Park and gain vital skills they can take with them into their everyday life and beyond.



Earlier this year we launched our new National Park Partnership Plan that sets out the overarching vision for widening the benefits of the Park over the next five years. One of the Plan's aims is to tackle issues that are key to young people by providing skills and training opportunities within the Park itself.

Throughout this year we are collaborating with young people in a variety of exciting projects and initiatives.



Junior Rangers

We are one of three pilot National Parks to benefit from a £5,000 contribution from Forest Holidays towards education work specifically for young people. Thanks to their support, this year pupils from the Vale of Leven Academy will be taking part in the National Park Junior Ranger programme for the first time.



The week long programme delivers a unique hands-on experience for young people and has been running successfully for four years with pupils from Balfron High School and McLaren High School taking part earlier this year.

Catriona Manders, a S2 pupil from McLaren High School, said: *"Junior Rangers was an amazing experience and I feel very fortunate to have taken part. The variety of activities mixed with a brilliant group made this week I will never forget."*

Youth Volunteers

We have recently launched a new Young Volunteer Programme for young people aged 16-25. The programme follows on a pilot held with 12 young people February who took part in practical conservation tasks and explored the history and heritage of the area.

National Park Youth Committee

The National Park Youth Committee is made up of 14 young people who live in or near to the National Park who are passionate about supporting the work we do. By joining the committee, young people have the opportunity to work with a variety of National Park staff and talk to us about issues that matter to them.

Our partnership with Forest Holidays means that in February 2019 we will be delivering the first ever Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park hosted residential programme for young people. This will bring together our Junior Rangers, Young Volunteers and Youth Committee members to share experiences and plan activity for the year ahead.



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A feature on two of the next generation of the Fraser Family, who as well as ensuring the high standards of the Oak Tree Inn in Balmaha are maintained are creating their own Loch Lomond products and brands



Growing Loch Lomond Businesses



Brothers Stuart and David Fraser grew up above the shop. Well for David it was a room above the bar, for Stuart a caravan across the road! During their teenage years they took a keen interest in the new family business. In 1997 parents Sandy and Lucy had taken the bold step to open the Oak Tree Inn, a bar and restaurant with B&B accommodation in Balmaha. They had a clear vision of what their business would look like and were determined to turn around the reputation of the loch side village, which had sadly suffered in the preceding years. Stuart and David eventually joined Sandy and Lucy as partners in the Oak Tree and have helped to make The Oak Tree successful. For Stuart it was a passion for food and drink, creating the popular Oak Tree menu, whilst for David it was the experience that he gained whilst working at the other family business Fraser Electrical. Their efforts didn't go unnoticed, with The Oak Tree twice winning the title of best pub in Scotland and being selected to feature in the #ScotSpirit worldwide campaign, as the perfect example of the warm and friendly welcome that visitors to Scotland receive. In 2014 the brothers formed their own business, Lomond Developments. They wanted to create and grow their own brands and products. First on the list was a coffee shop, which they built alongside The Oak Tree.

St Mocha Coffee Shop has been a huge success, largely because as Stuart explains they managed to get three key elements right. "First, we needed a building with character, contemporary but in keeping with the village. Second, we had to perfect the product, people coming from urban areas where there is a strong culture of artisan coffee shops expect nothing less than incredible coffee. Finally, we needed a strong brand, something that was both relevant and memorable. We achieved all three thanks to the very talented team that helped us to create St Mocha." The St Mocha name comes from the Bealach Mo-Cha, 'the pass of Saint Mo-Cha'. The pass of Balmaha, as it is now known runs between the nearby hills of the village. St Mocha is firmly established and is a strong addition to Balmaha. Last year they opened a St Mocha kiosk on Luss pier, with another outlet opening shortly in Aberfoyle. St Mocha is also the home of two Loch Lomond firsts, both of which have been introduced by the brothers. Loch Lomond Ice Cream and the Loch Lomond Coffee Co. These, as David explains, provide visitors with not only great taste, but an authentic part of the visitor experience. "We always wanted St Mocha to be not only a coffee shop, but an ice cream parlour. We make the ice cream onsite in Balmaha, using milk from a local dairy, whose cows graze on the banks of the loch. We have also invested in our own coffee roasting facility, established last year at St Mocha in Balmaha. The response to both has been incredible and have given us the confidence to expand these brands further within the Loch Lomond area". For the new Loch Lomond Coffee Co. branding and packaging Stuart and David were inspired by successful red squirrel conservation work in Balmaha. The proud emblem is a red squirrel and we are delighted

that they are generously donating 50p to the Friends for each bag of coffee sold in their shops. We, in turn, will ensure that this is used to support red squirrel conservation initiatives in the park. The Fraser family have been strong supporters of the Friends and were one of the first to adopt the 'Our Park' visitor giving scheme at The Oak Tree. Donations come in via a £1 visitor opt-in for overnight accommodation, as well as £1 from each 'Clansman' burger ordered in the restaurant. Over the years this has raised over £40,000 that has been used to support many conservation, educational, access and heritage projects throughout the park. As if they weren't busy enough Lomond Developments recently bought the Carbeth Inn near Blanefield, just off the John Muir Way. Having recently received planning consent Stuart and David are working on a number of new ideas for the site of the old coaching inn, including a St Mocha outlet that will open in 2019. This is an excellent example of a family business benefiting from the positive involvement of the next generation. We are delighted though that Stuart and David have the same strong values as their parents for conservation and a desire to support the overall quality of the Balmaha destination.





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Scotland's First Social Enterprise Town Accolade for

Callander

CALLANDER is the largest settlement in the National Park, a small tourist town on the edge of the Highlands, whose resilient community have for more than 20 years used social enterprise to tackle local issues. That effort was recognised in September when Callander became the first town in Scotland to be awarded Social Enterprise Place status by Social Enterprise UK. Cabinet Secretary for Communities Aileen Campbell at the launch in Callander Hostel and the celebrations were screened later on the BBC One Show.

This was one part of a two-day study tour based in Callander, with 50 international delegates from the Social Enterprise World Forum, based in its 10th year in Edinburgh. They visited some of the local groups and volunteers who have made a difference over the years by offering their time to deliver services often taken for granted in cities and larger towns.

Among these were McLaren Leisure, a community-run leisure complex which serves a wide rural catchment area and avoids the often prohibitively expensive trip to Stirling. Callander Youth Project Trust runs the 5-star Callander Hostel which has welcomed over 20,000 overnight guests and

trained more than 18 young people in hospitality since it opened in 2014. It also uses the hostel as a base for a range of other youth work activities. When a storm washed away the bridge at the popular Bracklinn Falls, Callander Community Development Trust set about raising the funds and setting up the partnership to replace it with what has become a unique go-to destination for visitors. Then, disturbed by rising numbers of empty shops, they brought together a group of artists and crafters in a cooperative that is now the independent company Creative in Callander, run by the artists as an outlet for their work, with each of them taking a turn to volunteer in the shop.

The Development Trust also owns a company that built a hydro scheme near Loch Lubnaig, which has been generating electricity to the national grid since 2014. It donates funds of up to £60,000 a year (although this will vary) to the Trust which allocates grants to projects and activities to benefit Callander. One of the recipients were Trossachs Mobility, a charity that gives wheelchair users access the natural landscape by offering the loan of all-terrain vehicles and guided treks. Other groups have responded to

other issues, including social mobility by establishing community cinema and social isolation by providing a community newspaper and befriending groups. Rural Stirling Housing Association offers affordable housing within the area and are planning a large development of new homes. The Clanranald Trust for Scotland ensure we retain our cultural heritage. They are building a replica Medieval fort at Duncarron and offer costumes, props and supporting cast for film and TV, including Outlander and The Outlaw King to provide their income. These are just a few of the 80 plus community groups in Callander and many others have responded to a social problem by using social enterprise to generate an income and surplus whilst evidencing impact. With all this social enterprise activity it was inevitable that Callander would be awarded the title of Scotland's first Social Enterprise Place and it's hoped that it will help to create new tourism markets as people are increasingly supportive of their money going to support social and environmental outcomes.



Social Enterprise UK



McLaren Leisure is run by members of the community



The 5 star Callander Hostel & Bridgend Cafe



Young people are trained in hospitality at Callander Hostel

Harvest for the nature

Keith Graham writes about the changing seasons and how the rich variety of wildlife in the National Park deals with the transition from autumn to winter.

IN RECENT TIMES, modern machinery and crop development have advanced the farmer's harvest by several weeks. This year's harvest has been unusually early because of the long, hot summer. However, yields are certainly down through a lack of rain. Traditionally, harvest time is celebrated at September's full harvest moon but in reality by then most of the harvest from our farms is already in.



However, nature's harvest time is a much more prolonged affair. That said, the good summer weather certainly advanced the production of autumn's fruits. One of Scotland's most colourful crops comes from our rowan trees, their red berries lighting up late summer, autumn and winter landscapes. There is a saying which predicts that we can expect a hard winter if there is a particularly good crop of rowans. My own view is that it is much more likely that a good crop of rowans, rather than forecasting a hard winter, is more a reflection of the summer's weather just past. Yet a good berry crop will be welcomed by several of our winter visitors. In particular, when winter does begin to bite we often find we have invasions of waxwings from Scandinavia. These 'irruptions' can occur anywhere in the Park but are often more obvious in towns and villages as opposed to the countryside. Waxwings are really exotic looking birds, which look as if they should come from some tropical country rather than from the 'frozen north'. Waxwings exhibit a surprising boldness when they descend upon us, often swarming through village and garden berry-bearing trees seemingly oblivious to the hordes of people who come out to see them. Once commonly known as Bohemian Chatterers, these are starling-sized birds, which show off an essentially pink body plumage on the breast and underparts. The back is a greyish chestnut colour, the head adorned with a prominent crest, whilst the wings, yellow, black and white also carry the red splashes of colour resembling blobs of sealing wax which give the birds their name. The tail is embellished with a bold yellow tip and the throat is black.

Viking Raiders

When they arrive in numbers, waxwings can strip a crop of berries in no time. However, there are other visitors from Scandinavia which generally make their presence felt in the Park in October - the Scandinavian thrushes, fieldfares and redwings. They too have a seemingly voracious appetite for rowan and indeed any other berries they can find. These mixed flocks are perhaps reminiscent of the Viking raiders of old, as they rampage noisily across our landscape. However, as thrushes they also hunt as enthusiastically over farmers' fields, searching for invertebrate life. Fieldfares resemble our mistle thrushes in size but are distinguished by their grey heads and rumps, whereas the smaller redwings are the same size as the familiar song thrushes. They have prominent red flashes under their wings. For reasons best known to birds in general, some rowan crops are devoured especially early; for instance, my berries had virtually disappeared before the end of August, yet some are left unmolested and may perhaps be regarded as food reserves saved for the harder, later days of winter. Curiously enough, the fruits of rowan and thus the seeds must pass through the acid gut of a bird in order to germinate. They are rich in vitamin C and some folk make them into a rather tart jelly. However, they are slightly poisonous if uncooked. Much the same can be said of the red fruits of the yew tree. The flesh of yew berries is edible but other parts are also poisonous however birds can eat the seeds without releasing the poisons. Perhaps surprisingly, two well known carnivores, foxes and pine marten - the latter now very well established in the Park - also take advantage of the fruits, notably of brambles, of our hedgerows. Famously, during the autumn months, squirrels collect masses of nuts and beech-mast and bury or hide them in tree bark for those winter days when food is short. Due to the increasing presence in the Park of pine marten, the alien grey squirrels appear to be on the retreat and happily the void is increasingly being filled by the much more attractive native red squirrels. And, one of the most colourful of our birds, the jay, is also hyperactive during the autumn collecting and burying acorns. Indeed, it is said that as a result of this activity, jays play a

ral world



very important role in oak-wood regeneration. Members of the crow clan of course, Jays, like the immigrant waxwings, are basically adorned in pink body plumage. They also boast head crests and are readily recognised by a prominent white flash above the tail, very evident as they fly away from us and they are prominent in woodlands throughout the Park.

Great Hoarders

Many animals also harvest nuts, seeds and beech-mast at this time of the year as food reserves for forthcoming winter. Wood or field mice are great hoarders and so too are voles, both of which are sought after prey for the Park's woodland owls, the most common of which is the tawny or brown owl. During the autumn, as the year's young owls are dispersing from parental territories, there is much vocalisation with the familiar 'too-whit-to-who' and the piercing 'kee-wick' to be heard as owl families maintain vocal contact with each other. You may also be lucky enough to spot the beautiful but quite rare barn owl. The long-eared owl is more elusive and inclined to remain deep in thick woodland, whilst short-eared owl numbers are bolstered in the autumn, by immigrants from across the North Sea.

Of course, some birds do not remain here to face the winter but instead fly to the warmth of Africa. However, there may still be a few house martins, with late broods of youngsters, remaining into October. Migration is far from being a one-way street, for many birds come here for the winter from northern and eastern Europe.

Fieldfares and redwings may be preceded by the first skeins of wintering geese. Greenland white-fronted geese come to the southern reaches of Loch Lomond whilst elsewhere, the vanguard of pink-footed geese usually arrive here in September with the bulk of them arriving in October. Their noisy, restless skeins are reminiscent of wilder northern realms. Later, usually in late October and early November, whooper swans also grace many of our lochs, having flown here from Iceland.

They are joined by many kinds of waterfowl, in particular the deep diving goldeneye, the drakes resplendent with their dark heads, prominent white cheek patches and of course, their golden eyes, the



females brown and less conspicuous. The drakes' bodies are dark on top but white below and at the waterline. They may be seen on several of our lochs throughout the winter before in late spring returning to their breeding grounds in northern Europe.

Sedentary populations of wildfowl such as teal, wigeon and tufted duck are also swollen in the winter months by immigrants from Iceland and northern and eastern Europe. There are now well-established populations of Canada geese, resident all the year round on various water bodies in the Park and of course mute swans are commonplace. With so many fish-filled lochs, rivers and burns, otters are widespread throughout the park

Autumn's Bounty

Hedgehogs and of course, bats avoid the ravages of winter by simply hibernating, thus sleeping through the winter, whilst badgers prepare themselves by storing autumn's bounty in the form of body fat. Badgers do not hibernate but may snooze through the worst days of winter tucked away in their underground setts.

For the golden eagles of the Park, the autumn and early winter represents a rare opportunity to be free of breeding responsibilities. Their offspring will be dependent upon their parents from their emergence in March or April until late summer but once free of such responsibility eagles may be seen soaring in the Park's Highland areas in autumn and early winter. However, producing the next generation of eagles is a pre-occupation which may begin as early as December when pairs begin to decide which of usually three or four eyrie sites will be their choice for the forthcoming breeding season. If the eagles may not contemplate engaging in courtship until after the turn of the year, one animal for which the autumn represents a climax is the 'Monarch of the Glen'. Most of our red deer spend their summer high among the mountains and hills but as autumn days begin to shorten, they assemble on their old traditional rutting grounds. And while the stags

and hinds have lived in separate herds through the summer months, now they come together for the annual rut which begins yet another breeding cycle.

As the sap within

them begins to rise, the senior, master stags will challenge each other for the right to collect harems of hinds with which to mate as October melts into November. There is much posturing as stags challenge each other, sometimes marching side by side until suddenly they will turn to meet head-to-head, their antlers clashing sometimes very violently. And all the time, the glens will echo to their sonorous roaring, a sound which when heard perhaps as mists shroud the landscape can sometimes seem unearthly!

Fearsome Goshawks

There can be occasional sightings of the White-tailed or Sea Eagle in the Park, whilst glimpses of other raptors such as sparrowhawks and increasingly, the fearsome goshawks may be had in wooded areas. There can also be possible sightings of hen harriers on coastal or low-lying areas during the winter months while super-fast peregrine falcons inhabit the more mountainous parts of the Park throughout the year.

In a sense, the year ends just before Christmas at the winter solstice, yet the Yuletide season reminds us constantly of the remarkable variety of wildlife we boast throughout the Park. Cock robin is everyone's Christmas bird and he remains one of the most popular images decorating the cards that march across our mantle-pieces as we celebrate the festival. The robin is a cheery fellow who sings all winter long, his bell-like notes echoing from every corner of the Park while another songster shares the winter airwaves. Jenny Wren, his rapid delivery of notes astonishing as in 5.2 seconds he rattles out no fewer than 56 notes!

Now, as we enter the new calendar year, our days slowly begin to lengthen. This is an invitation for others to try out their voices. One of the earliest to break winter's vow of silence, is often the great tit, his assertive two note 'tea-cher, tea-cher' clearly heard against an otherwise muted landscape. Yet soon blackbirds lend their mellow voices to the growing chorus, and then the thrushes also rhythmically respond to the invitation to sing.

It is still winter, yet as days lengthen the early signs of spring begin to show themselves as early green shoots, snowdrops and catkins begin to appear. At last our magnificent landscape begins to stir and breathe again. Foxes and badgers are already preparing themselves for parenthood and the birds are already re-furbishing their nests. At last, spring is a coming!

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 briefly feature recent grant awards, activities of OUR Park participant businesses and profile one of the OUR Park businesses helping to make a real difference in the National Park.



Gordon Allan hands over a cheque to Jared Bowers watched by catering manager, Danny Mckingran.

Loch Katrine visitors support Trossachs mountain path repairs

The Friends recently accepted a cheque for £1,000 from Steamship Sir Walter Scott Company representatives as part of their involvement in the OUR Park visitor giving scheme.

The funds raised by the company from visitors have gone towards supporting mountain path repairs at nearby Ben Venue and Ben A'an which are some of the most popular paths in the Trossachs. The works on the paths has been undertaken by as part of the five-year Mountains and the People initiative which aims to restore a large number of mountain paths throughout the National Park.

Friends Eco Tourism Project Manager, Jared Bowers, said: "The Friends have a long-standing policy of working for the benefit of people and nature in Scotland's first National Park, and this would not be possible without the help of many businesses and visitors who participate in the Friends of OUR Park visitor giving scheme which is going from strength to strength.

"We express sincere thanks to staff and customers at the Steamship Company for their continued support, and we look forward to extending this mutually beneficial relationship for many years to come."

Gordon Allan, Managing Director of the Steamship Company, said: "We have worked closely with the Friends over the years and they have done a great job supporting many worthwhile projects through the Friends of OUR park visitor giving scheme which we have been pleased to support. It is great to see the latest tranche of funds raised by our visitors going to support repairs to popular Trossachs mountain paths."

Recent Grant Awards

An impressive amount continues to be raised annually by businesses participating in the OUR Park visitor giving scheme. So far in 2018 the Friends have supported 10 varied and worthwhile projects throughout the National Park. Some of the most recent grant awards have included: Callander Summerfest £400; Cowalfest £300; Loch Tarsan disabled access for fishing £800; International Children's Day Celebrations at Loch Katrine £100; Tom Weir's Rest path improvements, Balmaha £800; Lauder Monument restoration and access improvements survey, Inveroaden £1,000; Lochgoilhead Information Board £250; Mountains and the People path restoration and path builder trainee programme £2,500; and Luss Quarries path interpretation £500.

If you are aware of any projects which would benefit from support that are in line with the Friends aims to make the National Park and better place for people to enjoy and nature please email jared.bowers@lochlomond-trossachs.org



Volunteers clear scenic viewpoint along A82

Volunteers Make a Difference

The Friends recently held two of their Make a Difference volunteer events in the National Park. During the first event in April, approximately 15 volunteers got their hands dirty to collect more than 20 bags of rubbish from a beauty spot beside Loch Lubnaig, near Strathyre. The event, organised in association with Forest Holidays and Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority, had been due to take place in early March, but had to be cancelled due to 'The Beast from the East'. However, even the weather couldn't stop the volunteers from heading to the site in more spring-like conditions to lend their services for the day.

Friends Project Officer Jared Bowers, who was one of the volunteers who took part, said: "We are delighted with the success of our Make a Difference Day! Volunteers are a vital part of what our charity sets out to achieve in Scotland's first National Park and we very much appreciate their ongoing support, including that from the businesses whose employees joined us on the day."

The second Make A Difference event was held in June where a group of volunteers helped to open up views of Loch Lomond along a stretch of the A82 south of Inverbeg. Around 10 volunteers took part in rainy conditions to remove several hundred metres of overgrown trees and shrubs from the side of the road, giving motorists and walkers a clearer and more scenic view of Loch Lomond. The volunteer group also picked up and removed numerous bags of rubbish, which were collected on the day. The site was chosen as part of the Friends' 'Windows on the Loch' project, which aims to improve views of Loch Lomond from various sites including the A82.

Volunteers for both of the above events came from a variety of organisations including the Department for International Development, Scottish Water and Aberdeen Standard as well as motivated individuals who volunteer with the Friends and Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority. The nearby Inn on Loch Lomond Hotel also provided shelter and a complimentary lunch for the volunteers.

Friends Vice-Chairman John Urquhart, who was among the volunteers who took part on the day, said: "Anybody passing this area of Loch Lomond now has a much better view of its natural beauty, and it is all down to the efforts of the volunteers, who turned out in force to ensure that this event went smoothly."

A further volunteers' day working on opening up the views of Loch Lomond is planned for October 2018. For further details contact Jared Bowers - info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk.

Volunteers pick up litter along Loch Lubnaig





Major Drive to Promote Glamping in the National Park

GLAMPING



The prolonged spell of good summer weather has contributed to a bumper tourist season in the National Park but it has highlighted a shortage of certain types of accommodation, including glamping facilities, which enable visitors to get close to nature and enjoy the National Park at its best.

To address this the Friends have launched an exciting new initiative, as part of a wider ecotourism project, to encourage new or existing businesses to invest in glamping facilities. Glamping is rapidly growing in popularity with more and more visitors wanting to get back to nature and enjoy authentic experiences staying in unusual or unique, but comfortable, accommodation in a safe environment. The Friends, with support from Scottish Enterprise, hosted two well attended Glamping Business Workshops in early September in Balloch and Callander.

Led by renowned glamping expert Kate Morel, these workshops were aimed at any individual or business considering setting up a small to medium glamping business. She took participants through the A to Z of glamping with interesting case studies and this was augmented by local speakers Kate Sankey from Thornhill Yurts and Gordon Allan from Loch Katrine Eco Camp who gave insights to their successful glamping businesses. Jared Bowers, the Friends Ecotourism Manager and Matt Buckland from the National Park

Authority set the context and outlined the scale of the opportunity that exists to develop 'light touch' glamping facilities throughout the National Park. The seminars were also supported with back up workbooks specially prepared specially for the seminars by leading glamping advisers and they can be viewed online at www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk.

James Fraser, Chairman of the Friends said: "These seminars provided very practical insights to the glamping industry and, given the level of interest in them, I am confident we will see the development of more glamping facilities in the National Park over the next few years. "This is one of the most exciting and fastest growing sectors of the tourist industry at the present time as visitors seek out more unique and rustic holiday experiences and, given the special scenic and natural heritage qualities of the National Park, there is great potential for new start-up businesses or existing businesses to capitalise on this growth by developing much sought after glamping facilities."



Focus on Business

Fiona Campbell, talks about the business and her involvement with the Friends of OUR park visitor giving scheme.

What attracted you to do business at Mansefield House?

Mansefield House offered the flexibility of operating a four star self-catering holiday home sleeping up to 12 people, a contemporary craft gallery championing independent Scottish designers and makers, The Larder showcasing the best of Scottish food and drink, a bike maintenance workshop and bike lifestyle boutique and being the base for a bike hire operation, whilst we live on site. Mansefield has developed into a destination for families to gravitate towards, with great coffee, ice cream and a climbing wall for kids to play on, while the big kids can shop in peace! The fabulous surroundings, overlooking Loch Long and the Arrochar Alps are a joy to wake up to. With mountain biking, canoeing and trails to run all on the doorstep, it is the perfect place to live and work within the National Park.

Tell us about your inspiration and plans for Mansefield House?

We continue to diversify at Mansefield and we plan to offer canoe hire on Loch Long and Loch Lomond from 2019. We have recently opened a second holiday cottage in Arrochar in a charming stone steading dating back to 1760. We look forward to continuing to welcome visitors from all over the world, whether they are staying with us, or popping in to the Studios to browse the best of what Scotland can offer.

Why do you support the Friends of OUR Park visitor giving scheme?

The Friends of OUR Park project offers the opportunity for visitors to the National Park to contribute to the conservation and heritage in the Park, via local businesses. It is an easy and effective way of fundraising. It also helps us to enhance our 'green' credentials and help to keep the National Park as beautiful a place as it can be..

What is particularly special about the Loch Long / Arrochar area for you?

Nestled in the shadow of the Cobbler, beneath the Arrochar Alps, at the head of Loch Long, at the gateway to the Argyll Forest Park, the area is rich with spectacular views and scenery. For people who love the outdoors, it is second to none. And when you need some culture and a Thai meal? Glasgow is just down the road!.





International Children's Day Celebrations at Loch Katrine

In early June a dozen talented young musicians from McLaren High School in Callander entertained over 350 visitors on cruises on The Steamship Sir Walter Scott at Loch Katrine, sponsored by the Friends and the Sir Walter Scott Steamship Company, as part of special celebrations to mark International Children's Day in the National Park.

International Children's Day was established in 1954 by the United Nations General Assembly, to create 'a day of worldwide fraternity and understanding between children.' Each country chooses their own date for Children's Day to allow children the chance to go outside during summer close to the day they are celebrated.

James Fraser, Chairman of the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, said: "We were delighted to have received the support of the Music Department of McLaren High School and the Steamship Sir Walter Scott Trust to organise what turned out to be a very special event with young musicians from the school catchment area in the National Park entertaining hundreds of visitors in the magical setting of Loch Katrine in perfect weather conditions." In recognition of the young musicians' efforts to contribute to the International Children's Day celebrations in the National Park both the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs and the Steamship Sir Walter Scott Trust made donations to the school's music instrument fund.



Loch Lomond hosts the European Championships Open Water Swimming competition

Loch Lomond played host to the inaugural European Championships Open Water Swimming competition in August and attracted large crowds who saw some of the best aquatics stars on the continent competing for medals. BBC broadcast live coverage of the sporting action to an estimated TV audience of up to 1 billion and inspiring people to visit the area, further boosting the local economy.



To celebrate the sporting event coming to the area, on Saturday 11th August a special Balloch Festival was organised with sponsorship from the Park Authority. The event was part of Festival 2018, the cultural programme for the Glasgow 2018 European Championships and created a carnival atmosphere with bumper crowds.

Loch Lomond Sunset Cruise

The annual mid-August sunset cruise organised jointly by the Lennox Literary Society and the Friends proved as popular as ever with 90 passengers on board. The event provided an opportunity for members and friends from both organisations to enjoy an atmospheric scenic trip on Loch Lomond with local folk group Hell for Leather providing the entertainment-



Callander Summerfest

A huge thank you to Friends of OUR Park for funding and to everyone who put their time and talent into making Callander Summerfest 2018 such a success. More than 40 community groups, 15 businesses and around 50 individual volunteers organised events and exhibitions, performed, ran workshops, led walks or cycle rides, sold tickets, greeted visitors, made art installations and put up gazebos. It's truly a community-led celebration that brought more than 6,000 visitors to 70+ events and activities in the last two weeks of July.



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A WALK IN THE PARK

WHINNEY HILL

In this the second of a series of articles covering some of the best short walks in the National Park, Friends Vice Chair, John Urquhart, revisits Whinney Hill which is known as Mount Misery.

I first discovered this walk a few years ago when the Friends became involved in trying to help Scottish Natural Heritage scope out a route for the John Muir Way, a new coast to coast long distance walking route they had been tasked to deliver to celebrate Muir's legacy as the father of the global national parks movement. The route is now in place and is proving popular, especially with walkers from America, where it seems every second high school is named after the far seeing Scot. It links Dunbar, which was Muir's birth place, with the Firth of Clyde, which Muir last saw, when, as an 11 year old boy, he sailed from Greenock in 1849, bound for new adventures across the Atlantic. With its stunning views, the walk from Balloch Castle over the Whinney Hill would certainly have made a great contribution to the John Muir Way experience, however following some local objections it means that at Balloch Castle the John Muir Way turns its back on Loch Lomond and heads east on a trajectory which is not nearly as scenic as it might have been.

Mount Misery

To make sure I've got the up to date story I like to revisit a walk before writing about it and so with an end of August print deadline at my heels I headed for the free car park at Balloch Castle to begin my re-aquaintance with the hill of the whins and "Mount Misery." Dating from the early years of the 19th century, the castle has been more or less abandoned so I was pleased to note that some conservation work had recently been done on the walls and roof so that the building is now more or less weathertight. It is still owned by Glasgow District Council, but neither they nor the lessees, West Dumbarton Council, seem able to come up with a plan for its long term survival. As I looked at the rotting window sashes, I wondered how long it would be before



those flimsy defences are breached and the grand old building goes up in smoke? A few metres downhill from the car park you turn right onto the broad tarmac path which heads north towards 'Horsehouse Wood'. It was a bright late August day and soon my sombre thoughts about the castle were being blown away by the breeze as the familiar views over the loch took my attention. About 500 metres north of the castle a broad path strikes off to the right and skirting around the edge of 'Horsehouse Wood' the path narrows to an earth trod as it swings east to enter the delightful woodland lining the sides of the "Fairy Glen". 400 metres further on you encounter a Woodland Trust sign welcoming you to "Whinny Hill Wood". A few metres beyond the welcome sign the path crosses the public road just outside the Boturich estate gates.

Woodland Trust improvements

A few years ago The Friends provided "seed corn" finance enabling the Woodland Trust to improve the Whinney Hill path so I was keen to see how our investment was standing up. I needn't have worried - as I headed up through the mature mixed woodland it was clear the contractor had done a good job - apart from some minor erosion on a steep section, the path was in excellent condition. The views from Whinney Hill itself are limited by its dense woodland cover as well as the higher ground of Knockour

Hill which blocks off any views of the loch to the north. Like so many Scottish place names, Knockour Hill has a compound name containing an original gaelic name as well as its partial English translation. "Cnoc" means "hill" while the "our" ending is most likely derived from the Gaelic "odhar" meaning "dappled" - so nothing to do with knocking anything our or over! Interestingly, Knockour is also known as "Mount Misery", named it is said from the time Buchanan women gathered there to watch for signs of their menfolk returning from the Battle of Glen Fruin in 1603. Unfortunately for the Buchanans, a MacGregor force routed the Colquhouns and their allies and very few Buchanan men returned across Loch Lomond that night.

Instead of climbing Knockour, my intention was to make a circuit by continuing north for a further kilometre to the Lorn access road near Scottish Water's Blairlinnans works where Loch Lomond water is treated before being distributed throughout the Central Belt.

Turning left at Blairlinnans you are rewarded after a further kilometre with one of the finest views of Loch Lomond that I know and, with the water sparkling and the rowan berries glowing in the afternoon sunshine, it certainly didn't disappoint. Also admiring the view we came on two young Czech lads, Vojtech and Jindrich, who explained they were on holiday celebrating the completion of their secondary education and had followed the google map on their phones to find a good view of the loch - the wonders of IT!

Following the estate road for 3km round past Lorn and Boturich you arrive back where you started by the Boturich estate gate. Retracing the route by the Fairy Glen, Balloch Castle is reached 1km further on making for a round trip of eight delightful kilometres.

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