

The  friends
OF LOCH LOMOND & THE TROSSACHS

Voice

Spring • Summer 2013 | No. 11

The magazine of the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs



**INSIDE
THIS ISSUE:**

Nature Watch, Tom Weir, Celebrating Park People & Events, Planning Matters *and more*



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The Voice

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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Message from the President

Dear Friends,

After another long winter I am pleased that spring has arrived with daffodils, heathers and camellias in bloom in the garden again. Hopefully we will have a more pleasant spring and summer after what was one of the wettest summers on record last year.

Despite the years taking their toll on my health, I continue to take a keen interest in the Friends activities and I am delighted after years of lobbying we are at long last making progress with improvements to the Stonymollan Roundabout and opening up some of the views of Loch Lomond along the A82 north and south of Inverbeg that have been lost for years due to the uncontrolled growth of trees and shrubs creating a tunnel effect.

I am grateful to the Park Authority for their support in tackling these issues and I sincerely hope the introduction of plants at the Stonymollan Roundabout will soften the visual impact of the large and obtrusive timber structure that is meant to mark the entrance to the Park. I was happy to make a financial contribution to this work via the Friends with most of the funding coming from the Park Authority and Transport Scotland.

A 90th birthday party was recently organised for our Honorary Vice-President, Professor Gavin Arneil, which was a splendid occasion. Gavin of course was one of the original founding members of the Friends and has served us well in various roles, including Chairman, over many years. Some rowan trees are being planted this spring at Cashel Forest to mark Gavin's contribution to the Friends.

We were reminiscing about other founder members, including the great broadcaster and writer, Tom Weir, who was one of the first people to come and see me following my letter in May 1978 to the Herald that led to the formation of the Friends. Tom attended the inaugural meeting of the Friends later in the year in the Balloch Hotel and became one of the founding Council members. He was very passionate about Loch Lomond and played an important role in promoting the protection of its special qualities. It is therefore fitting that efforts are being made to raise funds to erect a statue on the bonnie banks in his memory. This is covered more fully in this edition of Voice.

It is remarkably the 60th birthday of another special lady this spring- the Maid of the Loch paddle steamer. Sadly she still remains tied up at Balloch Pier but some valiant efforts are being made to bring her back into steam with the recent launch of a big fundraising appeal. I wish those involved with this every success.

*All the best
yours aye Hannah*

Dr Hannah Stirling MBE

Contents

4	Message from the Chairman	20	Campaign for a Tom Weir Statue
5	Our New Website	22	Maid of Loch
6	News In Brief	24	Friends Events Programme
8	Nature In The Park	26	Friends Business Supporters
11	Heritage Stalwarts Recognised	29	Christmas at Ross Priory
12	Slate in the National Park	31	Support the Friends Work
18	Planning Matters		



Chairman's Introduction

WELCOME TO THIS SPRING EDITION and a range of interesting articles that aim to capture the special qualities of the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park and also provide useful updates on topical issues, including some of the activities of the Friends and others to make the Park a better place.

As the only conservation and heritage charity covering the National Park area we are active on a number of fronts but there is a limit to what our small band of Trustees and volunteers can do so we do need you to get involved in supporting some of the Friends events and activities that are helping ensure the Park remains a special place for people and nature.

We have a bumper programme of events in the months ahead as part of our 'Celebrating Park People & Stories' initiative and our fundraising efforts are also being stepped up. In addition to our popular golf charity event, organised by Optical Express, we are partnering the organisers of the Hampden to Loch Lomond Kiltwalk and, mainly through the sterling work of our Support Officer, Sandra Dyson, we have recruited over 150 volunteers to take part in the walk on 21st April to raise funds for national children's charities and a range of Young Friends projects in the National Park.

This latest fundraising effort is a sizeable, but very rewarding, undertaking for the Friends as it should enable us to involve a wider range of people in our work as well as releasing substantial funds for a number of projects including nature adventure play areas, days out in the National Park for hundreds of disadvantaged children and a wheelie boat for disabled children to enjoy fishing on lochs in the Park.

In recent months we consulted extensively on outline proposals for an improved and safe 'away from highway' access route between Balloch and Gartocharn as part of the planned John

Muir coast to coast route. This proved to be a useful exercise in sounding out attitudes amongst local residents and others and coincided with the tail end of the National Park's consultation on the five-year draft Outdoor Recreation Plan.

It is evident there are pockets of strong opposition in Gartocharn and Boturich to opening and linking up additional safe 'away from highway' pedestrian access routes at the south end of Loch Lomond. Consequently, the only major scheme that may progress in the next five years involves extending the pavement beside the heavily trafficked and dangerous A811 between Gartocharn and Balloch. This falls well short of what we should be aspiring to for one of Scotland's iconic places.

Work on our new website was completed earlier this year and we now have a high quality site rich in content which rivals the best available amongst the worldwide family of National Park Friends charity organisations. We are grateful to Optical Express, the Hannah Stirling Loch Lomond Trust, the National Park Authority and the Heritage Lottery Fund for sponsoring this new website. There are interesting sections on topics such as discovering history, exploring

nature, enjoying the Park, our work and how to help us make a difference as well as a useful online shop. I would encourage you to visit the new website and browse through the content as it may surprise you what gems we have managed to unearth about different aspects of the National Park.

We continue to work hard to protect and promote the special qualities of the National Park and recently objected to a planning application for a cluster of 93 metre high wind turbine structures on the Rosneath Peninsula as they will have an adverse visual impact on the scenic landscapes of the western flanks of the National Park in Cowal. We also supported the imaginative plans for transforming the derelict torpedo factory site beside Loch Long into a £70 million holiday resort but objected to the plans for seven very large and obtrusive 'tower block' second homes on the shoreline as they will visually detract from the iconic views of the sweep from Loch Long to the high peaks of the Arrochar Alps. The scheme has now been approved in full and will be developed and managed by the world's largest holiday accommodation operator, Wyndham Vacations.

Have an enjoyable spring and summer in the National Park and I look forward to seeing you at our some of our planned events over the coming months. Thank you for continuing to support the work of the Friends.

All the very best.

James Fraser

Chair - Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs

Left: A group of Friends Business Supporters are pictured with the Friends Chairman and staff, James Fraser, Sandra Dyson and Alice Blazy-Winning, at the Kiltwalk Awards Dinner in January'



New Friends Website Showcases the Park

While the Friends had a presence on the worldwide web for a number of years it was considered we hadn't kept up with the times and as a consequence the level of traffic to the site was low. It was recognised we needed a more dynamic site with much richer content to raise awareness of our work, to generate much needed income and, importantly, to showcase the special qualities of the National Park more effectively. We now have such a site that can be accessed by keying in www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk on your computer, tablet or mobile phone.

To differentiate the new website from others we have included in depth sections on discovering history and exploring nature. There are also informative sections on enjoying the Park, our work and priorities, how to support us and get involved, an online shop, webcam links, video and photo galleries and a what's on diary.

The 'Discover History' section includes insights to the various Park clans, a range of Park people and their stories, the Park's

literary heritage and the development of tourism with some unusual images and links to some of the more popular versions of the world famous Loch Lomond song. This section also includes digital and downloadable versions of the entire John Groome Diary Collection that charts daily life in a remoter part of Loch Lomond between 1965 and 1981.

The 'Explore Nature' section draws heavily on the Friends Wild Lomond website developed a few years ago with A to Zs of flora and fauna, but an added feature is a weekly nature watch update provided by well known local naturalist Keith Graham who is a regular columnist for Voice magazine and the Stirling Observer.

In the 'Enjoy the Park' section of the website includes fact files, a shortlist of Park wonders, overviews of different parts of the Park and things to see and do. There are also weblinks with the more local destination organisations and tourism groups so that users can access more detailed information on where to stay.

Stunning Imagery

Throughout the website stunning imagery is used to showcase the Park and we are grateful to local photographers such as Paul Saunders, John Urquhart and Philip Norris for generous free access to their collections. We were also able to use some of the many images taken by one of our previous Directors, Martin Varley. A selection of Paul Saunders' images are available for sale as framed images or canvas wraps from the online shop with 30% of proceeds being retained to support the Friends conservation and heritage work.

Delivery of such a high quality website, which we now believe rivals the best available amongst the worldwide family of National Parks Friends charity organisations, would not have been possible without the financial support and goodwill of a number of sponsors and individuals.

We are particularly grateful to David Mouldsdale and his Optical Express team (our main sponsor), the Hannah Stirling Loch Lomond Trust, the National Park Authority and the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding support; Mucky Puddle, our web designers who stuck with us as the site grew and grew; Gilbert Summers who wrote some of the main sections, identified key words to maximise site traffic and took on board constructive criticisms and suggestions with good humour; and finally, our Chairman, James Fraser who spent many hours selecting photos, editing content and sourcing funds to deliver this project at no direct cost to the Friends.

Encouragingly, the volume of traffic to the new website since it went live at the beginning of February has taken off with high levels of usage recorded so far from many parts of the UK and overseas. American visitors are using the site heavily to source information on clan heritage and other aspects of the history of the area.



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Park Gateway Improvements

The Friends have joined forces with the Park Authority and Transport Scotland to carry out a number of improvements to the southern gateway to the National Park at the Stonymollen Roundabout on the A82 near Balloch.

The large timber crown feature has been the subject of much criticism over the years and our President, Dr Hannah Stirling MBE has been relentless in her campaign to secure some improvements at this key site. With the support of Park Authority Chief Executive, Fiona Logan, a funding package involving contributions from Hannah, the Park Authority and Transport Scotland has been assembled to deliver a series of improvements.

As part of the scheme designed to soften the visual impact of the timber crown, the outline geese shapes on the structure are being filled in and lit and a mixture of shrub and tree planting is planned. A safe island feature is also being constructed to ensure it will be easier to undertake maintenance work in the future.

A82 Improvements Get Underway

Two major bottlenecks on the busy A82 tourist route at Pulpit Rock and Crianlarich are being tackled this year as part of a £16 million package of improvements being funded by the Scottish Government. A £10 million improvement scheme at Pulpit Rock is now underway and will result in traffic signals being removed after 30 years as well as road widening with the construction of a new viaduct running parallel over a short stretch of Loch Lomond. This work will also involve periods of closure of the A82 north of Tarbet in the Autumn and Winter with traffic diverted via the A83 where a back up emergency road has been upgraded for use in the event of more landslips occurring.

Work is due to commence this summer on the £5.5 million Crianlarich bypass. The bypass will be a new 1.3km single two-lane road to the west of the village, enabling the A82 to avoid the low bridges in the village. Villagers are currently progressing a number of initiatives to improve the appeal of Crianlarich and to ensure facilities are well signposted on the by-pass.

Mausoleum Restoration Underway

A £1 million funding package has enabled restoration work on the historic Argyll Mausoleum in Kilmun to get underway. The Mausoleum dates back to 1790, and along with the neighbouring church, is the burial place of many of the Earls and Dukes of Argyll. The charitable company Argyll Mausoleum Ltd are coordinating the project with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and a number of public bodies.



Some of the trees and shrubs removed to open up views of Ben Lomond and the loch from the A82

A82 Tree Tunnel Action

For many years the Friends have lobbied for action to tackle stretches of the A82 'tree tunnel' that blocks out some of the best views of Ben Lomond and the loch between Tarbet and Luss. This has been the subject of numerous letters of complaint and it is clear that a proper tree and shrub management plan is required for what is one of the busiest scenic tourist routes in Scotland as opposed to infrequent 'one off' interventions.

We were therefore delighted when the National Park Authority responded positively to our pleas for help earlier this year with the allocation of £10,000 to tackle the removal of trees and shrubs on three stretches of the lochside north and south of Inverbeg. This initial work, which is part a three year project, has opened up over 1,000metres of views. Importantly, it also included treating the stumps of predominantly self-seeded birch, alder and willow trees and other fast growing shrubs in an effort to minimise future maintenance work and has led to stretches of the West Loch Lomond Cycleway, which were heavily overgrown, now being much more user friendly.

The Friends worked closely with the Park Authority's Tree Adviser, Iona Hyde who managed this scheme on our behalf and we were grateful to Luss Estates and Transport Scotland for allowing this scheme to proceed. Efforts are continuing to build on this initial success and some work will now be undertaken on annual basis to open up more views and stay on top of this issue.

Gordon Watson, Director of Planning and Rural Development for the National Park said:

"We know that the unique scenery and landscapes are the main reason for tourists coming to this part of the world so it's important that we maximise opportunities for visitors to enjoy the views. Loch Lomond is an iconic destination and the A82 is internationally recognised as an outstanding scenic route. We are delighted to work the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs to improve the experience for all visitors to this world-renowned part of the world."

Ring of Breadalbane Success

The pilot Ring of Breadalbane Explorer pilot bus service that linked Killin and Lochearnhead with Aberfeldy and Crieff last summer proved to be a success. Plans are being progressed by the Breadalbane Tourism Cooperative Group to run an extended service from the end of May to end of September this year if sufficient funding can be secured from various bodies. The Group is also progressing imaginative plans to strengthen the promotion of walks and cycling trails as part of the popular Ring of Breadalbane branding and to position the northern part of the National Park as a high quality and easily accessible outdoor activities destination.



New Friends Honorary President

We are delighted to announce Sir Malcolm Colquhoun (left) of Luss Estates has recently agreed to take up the post of Friends Honorary President following a restructuring aimed at strengthening the influence of the Society as we step up a gear to take forward a busy agenda designed to make a difference in the area covered by the National Park. As the only independent voice for conservation and heritage issues across the Park, steps have also been taken to secure the support of Lord John McFall of Alcluith and former Provost of Argyll, Billy Petrie in their new roles as Honorary Vice-Presidents. They join Professor Gavin Arneil and Sir Malcolm as figureheads of the Friends along with President Dr Hannah Stirling MBE and Vice-President George Boyd.

Bridge Over Troubled Waters

For many decades the various Loch Lomond user groups have come together under the banner of the Loch Lomond Association and worked constructively with the National Park Authority and its predecessor bodies to ensure the waters of Loch Lomond are well managed and any conflicts between users are amicably resolved in a mature and sensible manner.

Some pioneering work in introducing craft registration, buoys and byelaws restricting water craft speed close to the shoreline and the busy Luss Narrows, under the stewardship of the visionary Jack Bisset, have proved to be a great success in improving water safety for all. The recent review of the byelaws has resulted in only very minor changes being recommended which is testament to the original groundwork undertaken by Jack and others. Meanwhile, the Park Authority has gone back to the drawing board to review their more controversial management plans for the Loch Lomond islands.

It is therefore with some regret that we have witnessed a complete breakdown in the working relationships between the Loch Lomond Association and the senior management of the National Park Authority in recent years. It is for others to judge why this has come about but there is no doubt that this is not in the best interests of Loch Lomond and the many thousands of local residents and visitors who cherish and enjoy the loch's special qualities each year.

We would make a plea to the Park Convener, Linda MacKay, to intervene and knock some heads together to try and resolve what is a very unsatisfactory situation. The future management of Scotland's most popular loch is too important a subject for personality clashes and policy differences to get in the way.



'A tranquil Loch Lomond scene



Ian Cleaver is pictured receiving the prestigious Silver Thistle Award from VisitScotland Chairman, Mike Cantlay

Coach Tour Pioneers Awarded

Two of Scotland's most successful coaching holiday tourism operators and the largest and most long established independent coaching hotel owners in the National Park were recognised for their outstanding contributions recently. Ian Cleaver of Highland Heritage was the winner of the national Silver Thistle Award 2012 while Mike Wells of Lochs and Glens Holidays received an OBE in the New Year Honours List.

IAN CLEAVER (pictured above) of Highland Heritage owns a successful coach tour operator business with hotels in Tyndrum, Dalmally and Oban and was awarded the prestigious Silver Thistle Award by Mike Cantlay, Chairman of VisitScotland at the Scottish Tourism industry's flagship Thistle Awards ceremony in Glasgow. This is only awarded to those who make an outstanding contribution to the country's tourism industry and in his remarks at the awards ceremony Mike Cantlay described Ian as "a legendary ambassador for Scottish tourism who makes all his guests feel special."

Ian, 73 and still working, started with a guesthouse in Oban after leaving the merchant navy and has now built the company to be one of the most well-known tour operators in Scotland. He now owns four hotels and a fleet of coaches and offers visitors good value touring and entertainment package holidays, collecting passengers from across the country.

MIKE WELLS (right) founded Lochs and Glens Holidays in 1981, with his wife, Anne, when they bought the run down Loch Long Hotel in Arrochar. They subsequently went on to develop a very successful group of hotels in the Park and in locations such as Loch Awe outside the Park. The company is now run very successfully by their son, Neil, who recently oversaw the development of their new 128 bedroom hotel at Ardgartan. Prior to setting up his own company, Mike was Managing Director of North British Hotels and in this role he was heavily involved in disbursing a large percentage of the company's trading profits to charitable projects. With his own company, Lochs and Glens, he also contributed to many local charitable projects and this is a tradition being continued by his son Neil who is a sponsor of the Friends.



Mike and Anne have now retired to the New Forest but in his role as Chairman of Lochs and Glens he retains a keen interest in the business. Mike's lifelong contribution to tourism and charity work was deservedly recognised with an OBE in the Queen's New Year Honours List.

SPRING

Nature of the Park

Keith Graham writes about the challenges that face Park wildlife this spring following one of the wettest years on record.



Spring breathes new life into a landscape which, over the past year, has been deluged by near record rainfall. It has been a difficult year for the farming community and also for the wildlife with which we share this truly remarkable landscape. But now as a new season of re-birth arrives, we hope for better things, for a rather more normal pattern of weather and for a more productive year for both farmers and indeed for our fellow creatures.

Movement is what is catching the eye and indeed the ear, as slowly, winter gives way to spring. New sights and sounds, the arrival of migrant birds; these are the hallmarks of spring. We yearn for that first sighting of a swallow, the 'bluebird' that somehow epitomises the advancing season, lazy summer days and the sense of anticipation that is I'm sure, shared by human kind and wildlife alike. In fact it is more likely the house martin that we might spot before the swallow, a slightly earlier traveller and even more likely, the sand martin, often an even prompter adventurer arriving here from Africa.

Yet there are others even quicker off the mark. The white flashing rumps of wheatears, also newly arrived from Africa, usually brighten up early April days. Once upon a time, these attractive little birds, familiar to those who eagerly follow the network of footpaths that criss-cross the Park, especially those that traverse upland areas, were called 'white arses' – surely a more apt name. But our rather prudish Victorian ancestors thought such a name to be too rude and so changed it to 'wheatear', despite the fact that this wee bird is not associated with wheat or indeed with ears! It just sounded similar!

Harbinger of Spring

Poets down the ages have of course, waxed lyrical about the cuckoo. This traditional 'harbinger of spring' is indeed quite a late traveller. Those familiar yet comic notes – two, 'cuck-oo', from the male and three, 'cuck-cuck-oo' from the female, are seldom heard ringing out across the Park until May and even then their numbers have been in decline over recent years not just here but right across Britain. This is a bird that unusually seems not to even care about the future of its own progeny, famously leaving the task of rearing its off-spring to others. If its strange vocalisation is unique it could hardly be described as sweet. For sweet song, the host of warblers that arrive here in their thousands surely compensate.

The willow warbler is for me at least, the bird that somehow confirms the true arrival of spring with its sweet melodic cadance of notes tumbling down the scale, a song often delivered from atop a brilliant, golden glowing gorse bush in mid-April. Its fellow warblers, the blackcap and garden warbler are also purveyors of extremely melodious music, their songs usually delivered, more covertly from deep in woodland cover. Usually, the earliest of these warblers to set foot here are the rather less musical chiff-chaffs.

Yet whilst waves of birds are arriving here, others have departed. The geese that have provided wild winter sound for us, are well on their way for much more northern climes somewhere in the Arctic region. Greenland white fronts from Loch Lomond and pink-footed geese from elsewhere in the park are amongst the throngs of wintering birds heading back to their breeding grounds in the northern tundra.

Migrant Birds

Perhaps the most strident of the immigrant birds are not long-distance migrants at all but come into the Park from nearby coasts and estuaries. Oyster-catchers, which first began to trek inland annually, during spring-times around a hundred years ago, are perhaps more naturally associated with the marine environment. Yet during the early days of spring many of them decamp to loch shores, moorland and farmland far inland, adding their curiously neurotic piping to the sounds of the Park in spring and early summer. Those parts of the Park that are washed by the sea know well these striking black and white birds, adorned with bright orange beaks and pink legs and feet. They remain here as sea-shore birds throughout the year, their excited piping an ever present supplement to the sound of waves on sand or pebble.

Lapwing, known by so many pseudonyms such as peewit, peasie, tewit, chewit and many more, perhaps start this migration from coast to moor and heath, sea-pies following noisily and others such as redshank joining this growing chorus. The spectacular courtship displays of lapwings brings great flying displays and evocative sound yet the lyrical whistling of the curlew, another of these short range migrants, is surely one of the more romantic sounds of advancing spring.

One of the most spectacular of the Park's immigrant birds, is surely the osprey. Forced into extinction as a Scottish breeding bird in the early part of the twentieth century, the osprey first re-colonised its old stamping ground in Speyside some fifty years or so ago before literally spreading its wings to colonise many other parts of Scotland. Now there is such an increasingly healthy population of these fantastic fish hunters that nowadays if you're lucky you may spot one prospecting above any one of the many lochs within the Park.

There are few finer sights than that of an osprey fishing. It may be spotted cruising quite high above the water before pausing and the stooping to conquer in a steep, accelerating dive. As it nears the water it lowers those

massive talons and then with a mighty splash it is in the water grappling with its fishy prey, it seems for minutes on end. (it is only seconds in reality). Then those mighty wings lift it clear, a fish gripped by those steely talons. It shakes free surplus water, secures its grip and flies off to a favourite feeding perch or indeed to its eyrie.

Birdsong Crescendos

Throughout April and May the volume of birdsong rises until it reaches a crescendo in June and then, quite suddenly, that sound fades. By the beginning of July, most birds have completed their breeding plans for the year and so start their annual moult. Now, rather than wishing to advertise their presence, many of them become more covert in habit, concealing themselves, their flight often hampered by the initial loss of feathers. Indeed, in July and August a curious silence falls upon the landscape. Often the bright yellow headed yellowhammer, is the lone voice piercing this silence with his 'little bit of bread and no cheeeese' ditty.

Much new life will have come into the world during those months of May and June, albeit that the Park's healthy population of foxes and badgers have already given birth as early as March. Indeed, by May fox cubs may have become a familiar sight in some areas whereas badger cubs, a little less precocious, generally enjoy their first outings above ground early in the merry month. This too is when most of the roe deer kids are born, usually twins and occasionally triplets.

These are the epitome of Walt Disney's 'Bambi', yet these delightful little creatures are dreadfully vulnerable during the first two or three weeks of their lives, when they are hidden carefully by the doe in woodland for their own security. Should you accidentally stumble across one such kid, please do not touch it. Tempting though it may be to stroke such an animal, that is the worst thing you could do for by leaving your scent upon it you are likely to cause its mother to abandon it. The result is that the wee creature will starve to death.

So don't touch!

Red deer calves follow into the world during June, mostly born out on the open hill although increasingly they are to be found in woodland too which is of course the original habitat for animals now more closely associated with the wild highland glens and moors. During the spring and summer red deer live entirely in single sex herds, the hinds generally on lower ground, the stags, which of course, during these crucial months are growing new sets of antlers, the old ones having been cast in March, often occupying the higher ground.

New sights and sounds... these are the hallmarks of spring!

The early summer is a time of hectic activity. Wherever you look, there are birds dashing hither and thither with beaks full of food, their main task to feed the next generations of their kind. Only as July dawns, is this hectic lifestyle calmed and throughout, this heightened sense of activity is set against an ever-changing kaleidoscopic background of colour. From the golden gorse of April, the smiling yellow faces of primroses, the sweet scented carpets of bluebells through to the first heathers blooming in July, the serried roadside ranks of foxgloves and the hills purpling as the ling bursts into bloom brings the uplands to a magnificent finale.

But if you can, for a moment pause from drinking in the magnificent scenery, the mountains, the lochs, the rivers, woodlands, moors and fields. Instead take some time to look down at the small flowers that pepper this landscape. Yellow tormentil, wood sorrel, the common daisies, buttercups and dandelions, meadowsweet, violets, red campion, stitchwort, honeysuckle, in late summer the delicate harebells (the Scottish bluebells) and countless others. Finally as summer begins to fade, autumn with its gradually strengthening colours, changes the face of the landscape yet again. The variety is simply never ending. This is a vibrant, living landscape of intrinsic beauty and each summer, of new life.



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Contribution of Heritage Stalwarts Recognised

At a recent event in Ross Priory the contributions of two National Park residents, Keith Graham and Louis Stott, who between them have clocked up 77 years writing and sharing their knowledge about the natural and cultural heritage riches of the Park, were recognised with Honorary Life Memberships of the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs.

LOUIS STOTT moved to the area in 1974 to head up a Government Quality of Life Initiative in Dunbartonshire and has lived at Aberfoyle since 1984. He also ran the popular Browsers Bookshop in Dunblane between 1993 and 2002. Over almost four decades Louis has written on most aspects of the heritage of the National Park area and his most popular books include his Literary Guides to Loch Lomond and The Trossachs; The Enchantment of the Trossachs; The History of Aberfoyle Quarry; and Waterfalls of Scotland. In addition to contributing regularly to the Friends Voice magazine Louis contributes to the Forth Naturalist and Historian and has given numerous talks and lectures on local history. He also has an excellent website with in depth details of literary connections with places throughout the Park.

KEITH GRAHAM pioneered the first Council Countryside Ranger Service in the eastern half of the Park when he moved to the Trossachs in 1975. He began writing the "Country View" weekly nature column with the Stirling Observer later the same year and he amazingly hasn't missed a week in 37 years! Keith also spent 30 years giving regular evening talks in packed venues about the magical qualities of the Trossachs with the help of a sound and light show and live narration. He has written several books, including some in the Colin Baxter Wildlife series and has also published a collection of his own work three years ago. For many years he also filled a weekly wildlife slot on BBC Scotland's "McGregor's Gathering" and has been 'the voice of Scottish cricket' on BBC Radio Scotland. Keith continues to be a regular contributor to the Friends Voice magazine and is providing weekly nature watch articles for the Friends new website.

Commenting on the award of Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs Honorary Life Memberships, Friends Chairman James Fraser said: "Louis and Keith are two truly remarkable people who have made an enormous contribution to enriching the lives of many thousands of local residents and visitors to the National Park and surrounding area with their talks, lectures and writings over almost four decades.

In this, the Year of Natural Scotland, and, more locally, our Year of Celebrating Park People, it is entirely fitting that the first two individuals we are recognising are Louis and Keith as over many years they have shared their wealth of knowledge of the natural and cultural heritage of the National Park area in lively and entertaining ways which, in turn, has inspired many thousands of people to explore and enjoy the special qualities of the National Park."

From the left- Friends Honorary Vice-President Billy Petrie; Keith Graham; Friends Chairman James Fraser; Louis Stott and Friends Vice President George Boyd.



“Louis and Keith are two truly remarkable people... enriching the lives of many thousands of local residents and visitors...”

The Story of SLATE

Below: Quarrymen at Aberfoyle



THE PREVAILING roofing material in Scotland, from prehistoric times until the late 19th century, was thatch. Slate was used for bigger, more significant, buildings and quarries such as Aberfoyle were opened as and when necessary. We know that William Miller, a slater in Linlithgow, who worked on the palaces both there and in Stirling got his skailyie (slate) from Alexander Graham of Duchray. In 1625 John Graham made a bargain to supply ten thousand skailyie to Stirling castle. He seems to have obtained this from Glassert, Loch Ard. Of slate quarries in Scotland the best known is probably Ballachulish, and, after that, those of the Slate Islands of Lorn. However, Aberfoyle rapidly became, by the end of the nineteenth century, the third most prolific source of slate in Scotland and remained significant until the industry in Scotland was virtually closed down in the 1950s. However, the slate quarries on Loch Lomond were at one time more important than those at

Local historian Louis Stott writes about the contribution of slate quarries at Aberfoyle, Camstradden and Luss to some of Scotland's built heritage.

Aberfoyle. *The Old Statistical Account* described them:

There are two slate quarries, one upon the estate of Camstradden and the other upon the estate of Luss. From the former, for five years past, 250,000 to 360,000 slates, and from the latter quarry from 100,000 to 170,000 slates have been annually exported. Some of them were sent to Greenock, Glasgow, and Paisley, but the greater part to the banks of the Leven, and across Loch Lomond to Stirlingshire. The slates are of an excellent quality.

At the same time Patrick Graham of Aberfoyle stated that 'Slate of good quality is wrought whenever there is a demand for it', suggesting that production there was intermittent. The reason for the difference was the closeness of the Loch to the quarries at Camstradden and Luss. It was not until the advent of the railway that Aberfoyle really took off. Shortage of work at Ballachulish and in the Slate Islands also contributed. Families from Appin and Lorn moved to Aberfoyle and lived at first in the quarry village called the Cottaries. This was a lively and interesting place with a school and many community activities. There were 29 houses in all. Unsurprisingly, there were a number of single men, some boarders and some staying in a bothy. Many of them spoke both Gaelic and English and their

ties with either Ballachulish or the Slate Islands were strong. However there were some local brides by 1891 and women played an important part in the life of the quarry village. A number of families had strong connections with the Episcopal Church and were particularly associated with the erection and establishment of the Episcopal church in Aberfoyle. There was a small church at the quarry, based on a mission from Callander, but it was decided in 1892 to build a proper church in Aberfoyle. This is perhaps an indication that the incomers now really regarded the village as their home. The church, situated on a knoll at the entrance to the village, is very handsome in a Highland sort of way. The slate quarrymen worked together in crews of four to six men, often family units. The quarryman or faceman, was usually the leader. He was assisted by a labourer and was responsible for blasting slabs of rock from the quarry face. When a slab had been removed the quarryman cut it



in the National Park

SELECT LIST OF DATES PERTAINING TO THE ABERFOYLE QUARRIES

At Camstradden excellent roofing slate was exported from a wharf on Loch Lomond.



up into manageable blocks, and a waggoner took them to the dressing place where it would be shaped into roofing slates by a splitter, a semi-skilled man, and the slate-maker or dresser. The cutting of slate is called 'knapping'. It is carried out with two tools: a knife or chisel and a break. The labourer, probably the waggoner as well, was also responsible for the disposal of waste. For every ton of slate there was seven tons of rubbish at Aberfoyle. A good crew might produce 1500 richly coloured Aberfoyle slates in a day. At first the distribution of slates beyond immediate locality, was restricted, but Aberfoyle slates appear to have often been taken some distance. Pack ponies, sledges and carts were used to transport them, a process which was considerably improved by the construction the road south to Ballat in about 1810 and of the Duke's Pass in 1820. The railway came in 1882 and shortly afterwards a tramway (a mineral railway of 2'4.5" gauge), was built to connect the quarry to

the station. A horse drew six waggons (a rake) full of slates from the quarry to a point above the school, whence a double track ran down a steep incline (said to be the steepest railway in Scotland). Laden trucks were attached to an endless wire, and the weight of the descending trucks drew up the empty ones. Just behind the present school, another horse waited to draw the full trucks along another tramway, which, after crossing the road near the old Police Station ran along the south side of the present road. It then crossed the lawn at the Bailie Nicol.

The first house at the quarries at Aberfoyle, Hill Cottage, is still standing, but the rest have gone. The Forestry Commission regularly arrange visits to the quarry on open days and there are traces of the tramway to be found in the locality. In the old kirkyard there are several graves of quarrymen, marked by slate gravestones. At Luss a charming walk though the quarry is waymarked.



Left: The Cottaries at Aberfoyle Quarry. Hill Cottage, the Manager's house is still standing.

Right: The Cottaries today. Hill Cottage is seen in the background. There are traces of the Cottaries in the foreground.



- 1574 Slates may have been supplied from Aberfoyle to Stirling Castle [source A.S.Macnair]
- 1581 Repairs to Doune Castle; for which slates from Aberfoyle probably used
- 1594 Rebuilding of Chapel Royal at Stirling; Aberfoyle slates possibly used
- 1625 Master of Works refers to Aberfoyle slate for Stirling Castle
- 1668 Tack for slate craig at "Glasart" [MM]
- 1672 Bond referring to the skallie craigs of Drumlane. [MM]
- 1677 Protest about contract for supply of "blew skailzie" by Earl of Monteith
- 1686 Document refers to scailyie quarries of Glashard [MM]
- 1693 Sale of "blew scalzie" by Earl of Monteith [CGP]
- 1702 Old Auchentroig built, roofed with Aberfoyle slates
- 1716 Repair of the slate roof of the Earl of Monteith's burial place, Inchmahome
- 1726-7 13,000 Monteith slates shipped to Eyemouth for Makerstoun House
- 1727 Discharge for "skallie" (slate) furnished by Alexander Grahame of Duchray
- 1752 Aberfoyle slate used to roof UF Kirk in Buchlyvie
- 1765. Proposals to take a tack of the skallie craig of Monteith. [MM]
- 1814 Tack for slate quarry in the muir of Craigmughty [MM]
- 1825 Duncan McFarlane was tenant [source: Peter Joynson Local Past]
- 1843 New Statistical Account refers to employment for about 20 men
- 1847 Peter McKeich was tenant [source: A.S.Macnair]
- 1851 Duncan McKeich recorded as a slate merchant employing 30 men [source: Census]
- 1858 [First] Slate Quarry Company formed [source: A.S.Macnair]
- 1875-78 Efforts to set up Aberfoyle Slate and Slab Company [Source Nat Archives]
- 1882 Strathendrick and Aberfoyle Railway opens; new Slate Quarries Company set up
- 1885 Inclined plane tramway opens;
- 1893 70 - 80 employees
- 1920-30 100 employees
- 1946 Quarry open 70 employees
- 1947 Tramway closed [source Railscot Website]; Scottish Slate Company formed
- 1951-58 Various dates at which quarry operations were said to have ceased



Alice is Back in the Saddle

Friends of OUR park Project Officer, Alice Blazy-Winning came back to work in January after a spell of maternity leave and she has picked up the reins again from Eileen Calveley who is now working as a full-time Research Fellow at Stirling University.

Alice is now working part-time and can be contacted on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays (tel 01389 727 761 or email alice@lochlomond-trossachs.org). She is being supported in her role by Sandra Dyson (tel 01436 677 733 or email info@lochlomondtrossachs.org).

Current priorities include ensuring more businesses go live with opt outs on bookings and organising a series of volunteer events.

Callander Projects Support

We are supporting two key project initiatives in Callander being taken forward by local voluntary groups under the umbrella of the Callander Community Development Trust. £2,000 has been allocated to assist with the Bracklinn Bridge loop path upgrading works and £1,000 has been contributed towards the creation of the Callander Friendship Garden. The Bracklinn Bridge path project will significantly improve the condition of the path loop along the river beyond the iconic Bracklinn Bridge as well as improve interpretation at the site. The Callander Friendship Garden will create an attractive green space on the site of the old public toilet block in the town centre which links Main Street with the footbridge over the river Teith.

Local business owner Julie Carmichael of Deli Ecosse, who has raised almost £1,500 over two years for the Friends of OUR park by donating 5p on the sale of every cup of coffee, said: "I am thrilled that the money we have raised is going towards these two priority local projects, which will improve access to the environment and improve the visual appeal of the area, which benefits both visitors and local residents alike."



James Fraser, Chair of Friends (second left) presents a cheque for £1,000 to Frank Park, Chair Community Development Trust (first left) and looking on are Hilary Gunkel (centre), Julie Carmichael from Deli Ecosse and Lucy Fraser-Gunn from Roslin Cottage, who both support the scheme. Also pictured are some of the other garden volunteers

Bracklinn Bridge Path Development – Grant Award of £2,000. James Fraser (Chair of Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, third right) presents the grant award cheque to Frank Park (Chair Community Development Trust, third left) and John Snodin (second right). Left to Right: Mike Hawkins, Mike Steward, Frank Park, James Fraser, John Snodin, Julie Carmichael of Deli Ecosse]



Environment and Access Projects Funded

We are delighted to announce eight funding awards for a range of projects, which has been made possible as a direct result of the fundraising efforts by businesses participating in the Friends of OUR park visitor giving scheme as well as our own fundraising efforts, including our joint annual charity Golf event with Optical Express at the Carrick.

Project grant awards:

- £2,000 **Bracklinn Bridge Path, Callander;**
- £2,000 **Cowal Way, Argyll Forest-**
- £1,400 **Mountain Rescue Light-weight Defibrillator, Loch Lomond;**
- £3,300 **Public Access Defibrillators, Inversnaid and Loch Achray;**
- £500 **Tree Planting, Balloch Country Park;**
- £200 **Cowal Red Squirrel Project**
- £1,000 **Callander Friendship Garden**
- £1,500 **Balmaha Village Improvements**



Life Saving Cash Boost for Park Visitors & Residents

The Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs have joined forces with local coaching hotel group, Lochs and Glens Holidays, to provide funding to purchase several Public Access Defibrillators for siting at busy tourist hotspots on Loch Lomondside and in the Trossachs as part of an ambitious National Park-wide health and safety initiative being led by the Trossachs Search and Rescue Team.

There are plans to site at least a dozen new public access defibrillators (PADs) in towns, villages and other key locations in and around the National Park to improve the life survival chances of Park visitors and local residents. This complements plans to help kit out some Mountain Rescue Teams in the area with lightweight mobile units.

This initial batch of units is being funded through the Friends of OUR Park visitor giving scheme with match funding from Lochs and Glens Holidays who are the largest provider of coaching holidays in the National Park.

George Boyd, Vice-President of the Friends said: "We are delighted to be supporting this life saving initiative which should help to make the National Park a safer place to visit and live in. We hope to be able to fund more defibrillators in the future with the help of visitors and businesses such as Lochs and Glens Holidays who have helped us to make such an impressive start with the roll out of units."

Neil Wells, Managing Director of Lochs and Glens Holidays said: "Our company hosts tens of thousands of visitors each year in some of the remoter parts of the National Park and it is important we do all we can to ensure their safety and well being"



Pictured handing over defibrillators to Stuart Ballantyne and Sion Barrington (centre) from the Trossachs Search and Rescue Team against the backdrop of Loch Lomond are Neil Wells, Managing Director of Lochs and Glens Holidays (left) and George Boyd, Vice-President of the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs (right)

"This is a great initiative which we are pleased to support as it will be of direct benefit to our guests as well as residents in some of the more sparsely populated communities in the Park where speedy access to emergency services is limited due to the distances involved."

Commenting on the funding boost Stuart Ballantyne of Trossachs Search and Rescue Team said: " We have been impressed with how quickly the Friends have responded to our approach for financial support for this new initiative and their partnership with Lochs and Glens Holidays has enabled us to accelerate the purchase of two public access defibrillators and one much needed training unit for use in some of the more remote and challenging parts of the Park. We are pleased they are also assisting the Lomond Mountain Rescue Team with the purchase of a lightweight mobile unit."

He added: "Sudden cardiac arrests are the UK's biggest killer, and with the move in recent years to centralise A&E Departments for the National Park villages to more distant locations in Larbert and Paisley, it is vital that life saving defibrillators are easily accessible in different parts of the Park. The current survival rate for out of hospital cardiac arrest where CPR is performed is less than 5% and with readily accessible defibrillation this can be raised to more than 50%."

Defibrillator for Lomond Mountain Rescue

As part of a drive to improve the life chances of National Park visitors and local residents we have awarded Lomond Mountain Rescue Team £1,400 to assist with the purchase of a light-weight defibrillator which will be much easier to transport over high and rough ground compared to the traditional heavy defibrillators. The funding contribution has been raised through the Friends of OUR Park visitor giving scheme by Balmillig B&B, Helensburgh and lochside businesses Lodge on Loch Lomond Hotel

and the Inverbeg Inn. A generous private contribution was also received from the Friends President, Dr Hannah Stirling MBE. The Lomond Rescue Team have been established since 1967 and cover just over 1,000 square miles, much of which comes within Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park including Ben Lomond and the Loch Lomond stretch of the West Highland Way, both of which are very popular with tens of thousands of walkers and climbers annually.



Pictured at the grant award presentation to Lomond Mountain Rescue Team are two OUR park fundraising businesses. Left to right: David Cramma, Lodge on Loch Lomond and Inverbeg Inn; Anne Urquhart Balmillig B&B; George Boyd, Vice President of the Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs; Martin McCallum, Deputy Team Leader, Lomond Mountain Rescue Team; and John Urquhart, Balmillig B&B.

Friends of OUR park

New Recruits

We are delighted to welcome a number of new members to the OUR park scheme:

The Gardeners Cottages

Owner Andy McLeod has agreed to add a donation of £1 per person booking any of his selection of 3 luxury self-catering cottages on the banks of Loch Lomond at Arden.

Paul Saunders Photography

an independent Photographer based in Drymen, is donating 30% of online sales of his Loch Lomond Prints and has linked up with the Friends new website to provide an online picture gallery. Paul said "Living and working in Loch Lomond, and like many other residents and businesses, I am passionate about conserving this beautiful part of Scotland. Contributing a percentage of sales from my prints of the area is a great way for me to do something to keep the area special."

Argyll Holidays

This is one of Scotland's largest holiday park operators based in Cowal with a cluster of parks and owners, the Campbell family, have recently agreed to pilot an opt out on bookings. Argyll Holidays has also signed up as a Friends Foundation Business Supporter (see page 27 for more details).

Buchanan Arms Hotel, Leisure Club & Spa

This 52 bedroom hotel in Drymen is adding an optional donation on bookings made for overnight accommodation.

Friends of OUR park

Fundraising Highlights

LODGE ON LOCH LOMOND HOTEL

& INVERBEG INN have jointly raised an impressive £4,500 for the Friends of OUR park since joining the scheme in May 2011. The hotel offers guests an opportunity to add a £1 donation when making an accommodation booking online.

Speaking at a recent fundraising certificate handover ceremony Friends Chairman, James Fraser said:

"The efforts of owner Niall Colquhoun, his staff and guests in raising a record amount in less than two years have been tremendous and are a great example to others. The funds raised have helped to improve the Three Lochs Way trail as well as contributing to the local 'save the red squirrel project' and the purchase of a light-weight defibrillator for Lomond Mountain Rescue Team."



Niall Colquhoun (Left), Owner of Lodge of Loch Lomond & Inverbeg Inn, being presented with Friends of OUR park Fundraising Certificates by James Fraser (Right), Chair of Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs



THE OAK TREE INN, BALMAHA who joined the scheme in November 2011, have raised the most of any individual business in 2012 with a total of £2,200! Currently The Oak Tree Inn add a voluntary donation of £1 on accommodation bookings, however they plan to do even more to help the environment and improve the visual appeal of the area in the year ahead including adding 'OUR park' sponsored food items on their new menu. A large proportion of the funding raised has been awarded to the local Community Development Trust for village enhancements

Sandy Fraser (left) and Stuart Fraser (right), father and son business partners at The Oak Tree Inn, proudly display their 2012 fundraising certificate

BALMILLIG BED & BREAKFAST, HELENSBURGH is owned and run by Anne and John Urquhart who have been enthusiastic supporters of the visitor giving scheme since it was first piloted in 2009/10. They have raised an impressive £1,625 and this includes a mix of £1 donations on bookings which they have matched. Projects supported with the funding include the Three Lochs Way Trail that weaves its way from Balloch to Cardross and Helensburgh before it heads north to Arrochar and Tarbet on Loch Lomond via the Gareloch and Loch Long. They are both on the local access group and have been the main drivers behind the creation of this long distance route.

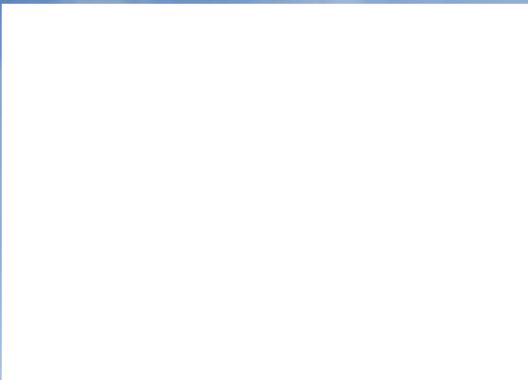
VOLUNTEERS

Making a Difference to OUR park!

Despite soggy and cold conditions, our hardy volunteers delivered two projects over the Winter months – clearing the West Loch Lomond Cycle Path and planting native trees at Balloch Country Park.



On 13 November, our volunteers cleared 200m of The West Loch Lomond Cycle Path south of the Inverbeg Holiday Park. Over time, vegetation had become overgrown and was encroaching on the path to such an extent the path was less than 1m wide in the area. The path width should be at least 1.5m to allow bicycles to pass each other comfortably in either direction. The West Loch Lomond Cycle Path forms part of the Sustrans National Route 40, which links Balloch and Tarbet by a 17 mile off-road cycle and walkway along the Loch.



Six of our volunteers gathered on 29 January to plant 250 Willow and 130 Elder at Balloch Country Park. The saplings were purchased with a £500 grant award through the Friends of OUR park scheme, and also included a number of 2 metre tall Scots Pine. The mixture of Willow will provide a sustainable stock for coppicing and weaving with community and educational groups and the sustainable stock of Elder will be used in the Forest Schools initiative. Both varieties also provide important habitats for wildlife.

In 2013 we will be doing even to more enhance the natural environment and maintain the area's outstanding natural beauty, with a full programme of volunteer events spanning across the 4 corners of the National Park. This will include a spring clean at the popular village of Balmaha.

To find out more about Friends of OUR park:
To be kept up to date on our volunteering opportunities, to find out more about the projects we support and how you can help, please contact Alice Blazy-Winning, Project Officer on 01389 727 761 or alice@lochlomond-trossachs.org.



COVE WIND TURBINES OBJECTION

The latest in a number of proposals for wind turbines just outside the boundaries of the National Park was lodged last December and involves the construction of five 92.5 metre high wind turbines on the prominent southern slopes of Rosneath Peninsula. This follows on from the controversial proposals above Balloch at Merkins Farm that still have to be determined by West Dunbartonshire Council.

The Friends have lodged a strong objection on the grounds that the Cove development, if approved, would have a major detrimental visual impact on the scenic landscapes of the western part of the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park and the maritime gateway to the Park.

The giant turbines would be highly visible over a wide area, in particular from the National Park's Cowal coast between Strone and Ardentiny, including Blairmore and Gairletter, and from the ferry access routes, known as the 'Marine Gateway to the National Park' to Hunter's Quay and Dunoon from Gourock. The views north from the ferries towards the National Park and the 'Arrochar Alps' would be seriously damaged by the appearance of five giant turbines located on south-facing hill slopes in the foreground, barely 3 miles from the ferry routes.

The turbines would also be visible from the Glen Fruin Hills Beinn Chaorach, Beinn Tharsuinn, and Balcnock, adversely changing the character of their south westerly views towards Cowal. These adjacent National Park areas are of very high landscape value, and highly sensitive. Cowal's coastal A 880 Ardentiny road is important for Park visitors, and the Glen Fruin hills have become increasingly popular with hill walkers in recent years. The proposed site is remarkably exposed, and thus highly visible, to the south and west.

£70m Tourism Resort for Old Torpedo Range

Work on the Ben Arthur Resort is underway and will see the former derelict torpedo range beside Loch Long near Arrochar being transformed into a £70m, five star holiday resort and luxury residential development creating over 300 jobs and injecting £9.8m annually into the local economy.



Speaking recently about development, Linda McKay, Convener of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority, said:

"Tourism is by far the biggest contributor to our rural economies in the National Park. It generates over £200m every year and accounts for a third of employment. By approving this development we can help attract vital local employment with the offer of 300 permanent jobs and 210 construction jobs.

The superb quality of the resort means that we can attract more international visitors to the area and open up further opportunities for the community and business growth transforming an abandoned derelict site into a premier visitor destination and a new marine gateway for the National Park. Approval has been granted for a 130 bedroom hotel, 36 fractional ownership

apartments and 16 luxury houses. An application to create a 250-berth marina on Loch Long will be submitted to Marine Scotland later this year.

The new Ben Arthur resort will be owned and operated by Wyndham Vacations, the world's largest provider of tourist accommodation. They operate a number of luxury resorts in and around some of the best known National Parks in America and also own a number of well known holiday companies such as Hoseasons and RCI.

The National Park Authority and Scottish Development International are to be congratulated on their success in securing this prestigious inward investment for a site that has been a derelict eyesore for so long. The holiday resort will be a huge economic boost for this economically fragile part of the National Park and should provide a platform

for other local businesses to benefit from the off site spend by the high spending visitors to the resort each year.

The Friends strongly supported the core tourism proposals on the grounds they would transform a former derelict site and make a positive contribution to the local economy. We did, however, object to the shoreline siting of seven large and obtrusive tower block houses as we believe they are inappropriate in such a sensitive and iconic scenic location. The houses are three storeys high and will detract from the special landscape qualities of the area. They will dominate the western and eastern flanks of the site that is characterised by open and dramatic sweeps from the shores of Loch Long to the high mountain tops of the Arrochar Alps.

Renewable Energy Guidance Re-think

Following strong representations by the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs and bodies such as the Scottish Campaign for National Parks and objections to the wind turbine policies in the draft Local Plan and the associated supplementary planning guidance note (SPG) issued several years ago, tighter policies were introduced in the final Local Plan restricting consent for turbines to less than 30metres in height as opposed to clusters 60 metres high. This was subsequently endorsed by Government Reporters and is now official policy in the adopted Local Plan that was approved in 2011.

The draft of long awaited revised supplementary planning guidance on renewable energy has now been published by the National Park Authority and is the subject of public consultation until the end of April. Encouragingly, the revised guidance on wind turbines is much tighter and clearer with useful illustrations. Thankfully, the previously contentious maps showing large swathes of the Park with potential for wind turbines has been removed and in reality, given the economics of wind turbines, there is now no likelihood of commercial windfarms being developed in the Park with only small scale domestic turbines in limited circumstances being a possibility.

This means we can now focus our energies on fighting large and visually intrusive windfarms in the buffer areas around the Park. We welcome the recent efforts by well know outdoor broadcaster, Cameron McNeish and others who are campaigning for large commercial wind turbine schemes to be banned in buffer zones around National Parks. There are currently several 'live' schemes which, if granted consent, would have an adverse visual impact on the special scenic qualities of the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park.



Five Lochs Plans Approved

Following the publication of the Five Lochs Management Plan last Autumn, plans to transform some of the most popular car parks and address long standing problems such as overnight camping, litter and anti-social behaviour alongside Loch Lubnaig, Loch Venachar, Loch Earn, Loch Achray and Loch Voil, have been approved by the Park Authority.

There are plans to spend £5.7 million upgrading car parks with the provision of improved parking areas, small-scale campsites, new toilets and catering kiosks, improved picnic areas and overnight motor home facilities. Work is underway on the first phase of improvements at Loch Lubnaig that should be complete by late spring.

The investment in the five lochs area is long overdue and has been widely welcomed by local residents and tourism businesses. The Visitor Management Plan tackles a range of issues arising from visitor pressure and should ensure the popular lochside sites meet more visitors expectations while being maintained to a much higher standard with franchised kiosks and the introduction of modest charges for reinvestment in site maintenance.

Work is underway on upgrading the Loch Lubnaig sites as result of the Park Authority's success in securing some of the 'shovel ready' project funding released by the Scottish Government.



The new toilet and kiosk building planned for Loch Lubnaig as part of a £700,000 upgrading scheme

The Forgotten Visitors

Surprisingly, as part of the Management Plan and related investment package the needs of coach visitors, who make up 25% of the total Park visitors each year with at least 1.5 million visits, were not initially considered. There was no provision for any coaches to pull in safely at any of the sites alongside the popular A84/A85 coaching route or along the Trossachs Trail. There is also no mention of the needs of the coach market in the Management Plan or, indeed, public transport links and the provision of safe drop off/pick up points for walkers and other site users who do not arrive by car or motor home.

The Friends considered this was a missed an opportunity and some provision should be made for the valuable year round coach market that is here to enjoy the scenic splendours of the National Park and contributes over £60 million a year to the Park's economy. It was very unfortunate that coach groups were 'the forgotten visitors'

quite simply because they have not been the source of any countryside visitor management problems or through a misconception that none of the sites had capacity to cater for coaches.

Thankfully, following some lobbying by the Friends on this issue, the Park Authority has responded positively and provision for coaches at one of the more scenic spots at the head of Glen Ogle is now under active consideration.

Also as part of a scenic routes campaign the Park Authority has been spearheading for several years, there are indications that the Scottish Government will release some funds for some pilot scenic pull ins alongside trunk routes and there is a strong likelihood the National Park will secure a share of this funding. The Park Authority has indicated the needs of coaching visitors will be taken account of in any scheme that proceeds.

This is good news as it is an essential element of the drive to create a truly sustainable destination.

WEIRS WAY

A STATUE FOR TOM IS A WORTHY MEMORIAL

This article was written by Cameron McNeish. An edited version is published here courtesy of *The Scots Magazine*.



THE WEE MAN was in his element. Clad in his characteristic tweeds and stockings, he was thinner than the last time I had seen him but his eyes still sparkled when he talked of the hills. And there were plenty of people there to share memories of mountain days.

This was Tommy Weir's night, and at 86 years of age, he was the recipient of the John Muir Trust's first ever Lifetime Achievement Award. I couldn't think of anyone who deserved it more. It was a happy party, a celebration of a life dedicated to conserving the wildlife and landscape of Scotland, a life that was compared to that of Scotland's greatest ever export, John Muir.

One of the speakers, Bob Aitken, while suggesting he didn't particularly believe in reincarnation, pointed out that there were only a matter of days between the death of John Muir and the birth of Tom Weir. Indeed, the two men lived for wild places and wildlife, both sang the praises of wild land in their prolific writings and both men influenced the conservation of such landscapes.

I suspect it had never entered Tom's head that he could be the reincarnation of anyone, never mind the great John Muir. Tom Weir was undoubtedly a one-off, and as he was inspired by the writings of the highland naturalist Seton Gordon and the mountaineer Frank Smythe, so Tom inspired a new generation of

outdoor writers. At the reception, I shared a table with fellow *Scots Magazine* columnist Jim Crumley and we shared notes on how Tom has influenced both of us as outdoors commentators and writers. We agreed that Tom had set standards that few of us could ever hope to reach.

But it's not just fellow writers Tom inspired. Through his books, television programmes, radio shows and in particular his 46-year-long monthly column in *The Scots Magazine*, he shared his experience and passion for Scotland with countless others. In the sixties, I thought I might be the only teenager in Scotland to subscribe to *The Scots Magazine* – I bought it purely for the delight of following Tom Weir's 'My Month' column.

Tom passed away in 2006, 'with a smile on his face,' his wife Rhona later told me, and now a group of fans have come together to make sure he is remembered in perpetuity. They hope to raise enough money to build a statue of Tom and place it somewhere on the banks of his beloved Loch Lomond. It's hoped the statue will be erected in time for the centenary of Tom's birth in 2014.

The founder of that group, Graham Hendry, is a Ballater-based hillwalker and health care assistant who was hugely inspired by Tom's television programmes.

'I'm from Springburn originally, just like Tom,' Graham told me.

I asked him what he thought the appeal of Tom was. 'Tom Weir was a humble man,' he said. 'He was never showy or showing off on the television. He was easy to watch, easy to listen to. He was in many ways similar to David Attenborough – you're aware you're listening to someone with a real, genuine passion, someone with a deep-rooted knowledge and understanding of their subject. Tom also made you aware that you could experience the great outdoors in places like the Campsies, close to Glasgow, without having to go up north to the Cairngorms or Skye.'

'Watching Tom Weir on television was like going for a walk with your granddad,

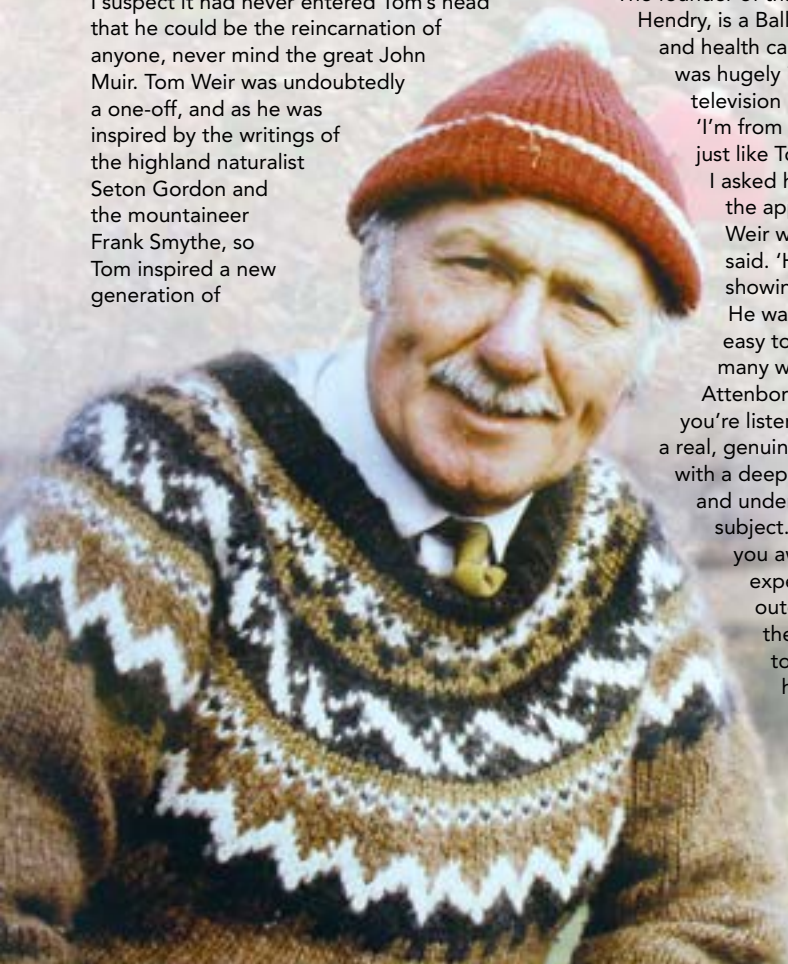
or your favourite uncle. He had a warmth about him and he gently encouraged you to go to these places he was talking about. I believe a statue of Tom would become a focal point to remember him. To remind us that he touched the lives of a lot of people. 'I'd love to see a statue of Tom looking out over the waters of Loch Lomond. It could be somewhere where youngsters could learn something of the great outdoors, or it could become a meeting place for outdoor folk. He was the epitome of a working-class generation who got on their bikes and left the city to explore the wider areas of Scotland.'

Tom certainly got on his bike, both literally and metaphorically. He left school at an early age and worked as an apprentice grocer in Cowlares Co-operative Society. At this time he was a member of the Springburn Amateur Boxing and Wrestling Club, learned to play the drums and later formed a band, but it was his sister Molly who found celebrity status with *Life* with the Lyons as the canny Scots lass of the Ben and Bebe show. Meanwhile, Tom took an evening course in writing at Glasgow University and joined the Glasgow YMCA Camera Club where he made full use of the darkroom to learn how to develop film and enlarge the negatives.

But it was probably a notice in a local newspaper that had the biggest impact in Tom's career. 'Do you have an aim in life?' it asked. 'If so, what are you doing to achieve it? The Pelman system of mind and memory training could help you.' In Tom's own words he 'paid for a course that did me far more good than I ever expected.'

Tom completed his course and harboured ambitions as a freelance journalist, or more pointedly he 'wanted to be a naturalist and writer on Scotland like Seton Gordon.' Molly taught him shorthand and how to type – according to Tom's wife Rhona, charging him two and six per lesson!

After World War Two service in the Royal Artillery, Tom worked as a surveyor for the Ordnance Survey before commencing a full-time career as a climber, writer and photographer. He led the kind of life most folk could only dream of, but that's not to say it was easy. Tom once told me he always found it difficult to make ends meet until television came along. It gave Tom his biggest audience and allowed him to promote his beloved Scotland in a way he would never have thought possible. That television career began with a series of five-minute slots about the Scottish countryside but his producer, Russell





Galbraith, soon realised he had discovered a gem of a broadcaster. The short slots became 30-minute programmes and Weir's Way was born.

He was a natural broadcaster. I always reckoned Tommy's greatest skill was storytelling. He could captivate an audience and loved to tell his tales.

Tom Weir's successes were impressive – the OBE, membership of the Alpine Club and Presidency of the Scottish Mountaineering Club, followed by the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award from the John Muir Trust.

But Tom wasn't always the avuncular, genial character he projected on television. He had strong opinions and was a prodigious campaigner for Scotland's wild places.

Along with his great friend, W H Murray, they fought a scheme to dam upper Glen Nevis for hydro-electric purposes and Tom later fought a similar proposed development for the wonderful corrie above Craig Royston on Loch Lomondside. Few mountaineers or naturalists will ever exhibit as great a passion for the wild places of Scotland as Tom Weir did, and his television programmes are fondly remembered for his enthusiasm and his ability to communicate his love of the bens and glens.

Even today, six years after his death, Tom is warmly and fondly remembered by many people while the DVDs of his television programmes sell well. I wonder what he would have thought of the idea of a statue erected in his memory. I asked his wife, Rhona.



**THE OFFICIAL
TOM WEIR
STATUE
CAMPAIGN**

'I think he would have been delighted,' she bubbled enthusiastically into the phone. 'He would have been thrilled that people had remembered him because he loved people and I think his legacy was this – he was good at inspiring people. He had a great rapport with people. And I think he left behind something rather special. He always believed that anyone, from any background, could achieve anything if they had a vision.' Graham Hendry certainly has that vision, and insists the statue is not only about Tom Weir. 'It's about Loch Lomond, it's about Scotland, and people are embracing the idea of something that

we feel is very worthwhile,' he told me. 'We're surrounded with negativity at the moment so it's great to focus on a man who gave a lot and influenced so many people in such a positive way.' Officials from Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park have promised their support. Chief Executive Fiona Logan said, 'Tom Weir is held in great affection for being a true champion of Loch Lomond and the surrounding area. It is only fitting that his incredible passion is celebrated. We're working with his family and friends to find a suitable site for a commission that celebrates the life of this great adventurer.'

TOM AND THE FRIENDS

Tom Weir was one of the founder members of the Friends of Loch Lomond, elected to the first Council at a packed meeting in Balloch in 1978. He supported the Friends' first campaign to prevent a pump storage hydro-electric scheme being developed on Loch Lomond's eastern shore and gave many lectures and talks to help raise funds. His celebrity helped to raise the awareness of the campaign, but he was never strident. His gentler approach and undoubted passion for conservation won over opinion.

Following the success of this initial campaign, Tom was very clear that the Friends should not just be about campaigning but should be a positive force for conservation, which has continued to this day. The Friends made Tom Weir Honorary Vice President in recognition of his outstanding work promoting conservation and access in the area.



CAMPAIGN EVENTS



Memorial Campaign

The Tom Weir Statue Campaign is holding a series of entertaining fund-raising events to raise the £50,000 needed to have the statue commissioned and erected by December 2014. They are also asking for knitters to knit red bobble bunnets for them to sell at these events. You can use your own pattern, so long as it's red with a cream bobble! Hand in your finished hats to National Park HQ in Balloch.

Tom Weir Gala Day

Saturday 13th April at Kilmarnock Millennium Hall, Gartocharn. Free entry. Guests include Cameron McNeish, Rhona Weir and Sean Hedges Quinn, the campaign's chosen sculptor, who will display his sculpture proposal. The Mighty Sparrahawk will perform their campaign song, "Tom Weir" which will be on sale with all proceeds going directly to the campaign. Also on display will be an original drawing of Tom by Dave Miles and limited prints will be available to order on the day.



5k Tom Weir Run in the Park

Saturday 4th May 9.30am at Balloch Castle Country Park. Bring your red woolly bunnets for a fun run (or walk) round the park. Don't worry if you haven't got a hat as the Bunnet Stall will be there selling campaign merchandise. More information at <http://runpark.leaguerepublic.com/index.html>.

For news of the campaign or to offer support email tomweirmemorial@yahoo.co.uk or find them on Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/tomweirmemorial.

You can make an online donation to the campaign at www.lochlomond-trossachs.org. Look for the red and black button on the home page.



FULL STEAM AHEAD

Maid of The Loch Public Appeal Launched



Maid of the Loch, Loch Lomond's Paddle Steamer, celebrates her Diamond Jubilee this year. Launched on 5th March 1953 and with her maiden voyage on 25th May that year, she has reached her 60th birthday.

To mark the occasion, the charity that owns her, the Loch Lomond Steamship Company, launched a public appeal for funds to return her to steam operation on the loch, sixty years to the day of her own launch into the world famous loch. On Tuesday 5th March, on board the Maid, Phil Preston, Chairman of LLSC, announced to invited guests and the media, the appeal to raise £4.9M.

"What more fitting way to commemorate her 60th birthday than by starting our appeal to return her to an operational steamship?" said Phil. "Our project is to get the Maid sailing again, build a visitor centre to provide an all year round facility, and get improvements to the loch piers". He added, "We want the Maid to be an iconic ship and our visitor facility to be the outstanding attraction the area deserves".



Maid of the Loch is the last in a long line of paddle steamers that first began with the little Marion in 1818, 195 years ago. Continuing the tradition of loch cruising, connecting all the lochside communities and providing visitors to Loch Lomond with an "added value" experience is what this ambitious project is all about. Equally important is the creation of up to 30 new jobs, training opportunities for young people, and the inward investment that all this will bring.

The main item of expenditure is a new boiler for the Maid, but the project aims to re-create the style of building that used to sit at Balloch Pier station, and provide a covered walkway from it to the pier. The visitor facility would provide information about the Maid, previous loch steamers, and of the flora, fauna, and geology of the loch.

Phil said, "It's now full steam ahead for what will be a major investment for Balloch and lochside communities. We've also been exploring the opportunities to link up with Sir Walter Scott on Loch Katrine and the Waverley at a future pier at Arrochar. Please help us create a world class attraction for visitors. The bonnie banks from Maid of the Loch – an unbeatable experience!

Please contribute what you can!
www.maidoftheloch.com

The aim is to return the Maid to steam operation in 2014. So far over £1.6M has been raised and invested in the Maid and infrastructure since 1996, and over 62,000 hours of our volunteers time committed to her restoration. The Charity needs £3.3M to get her sailing again. Visit www.maidoftheloch.com to make your donation or to see how you can be become involved to help restore this icon to it's rightful home.

Your Community Your Say

People living and working in Aberfoyle, Arrochar & Tarbet, Drymen & Balmaha, and Tyndrum have been debating the real issues and ideas affecting their community by taking part in a new pilot scheme.

The "Your Community, Your Say" scheme was launched in February and community workshops, known as Charrettes, took place throughout March. The scheme brought members of the community, landowners and agencies together with design consultants to talk about future plans for their village, development aspirations and the benefits that new development, including tourism, could bring to rural communities. Ideas and issues put forward at the workshop were brought to life with the help of designers, through drawings and illustrations, giving communities an idea of what improvements can be made and what they might look like.

Building on community action planning work already, or simultaneously, being carried out by communities, a master plan has been created for each community. This information will be used to help prepare the next National Park Local Development Plan by informing the content of a Park wide tourism strategy and guiding development and investment in specific areas of the Park.

Derek Mackay, Minister for Local Government and Planning, (pictured here with Linda McKay, National Park Convener) who launched the events in February, showed his support.

"These charrettes present a tremendously exciting opportunity for everyone who cares about Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park to join in creating a vision for the future of the Park. By funding these charrettes, the Scottish Government wants to give a chance to everyone in areas to work together to talk about their priorities and the challenges facing the National Park and how they can be addressed, and engage in the development of Local Development Plans."

The workshops were designed to encourage more people from different sectors of the community, including children and young people, to participate in planning and influence the shape of their community for future generations. They form part of an early consultation programme of work being undertaken by the National



Park Authority and will ensure that communities' views and aspirations are clear from the outset of this process.

The Charrettes are funded by the Scottish Government Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative: Charrette Mainstreaming Programme and the National Park Authority.

Further information can be found on the National Park website
www.lochlomond-trossachs.org

Find us on facebook, follow us on twitter



COME AND JOIN

LOCH LOMOND KILTWALK GETS OFF TO A FLIER

The Friends have joined forces with the organisers of the Hampden to Loch Lomond Kiltwalk that is due to take place on Sunday 21st April to try and help raise £500,000 for Scotland's children, including a range of projects to enable children enjoy the National Park.

The level of local participation has rocketed as a result of the Friends partnership with the organisers and amazingly over 150 local residents and staff and owners of local businesses around Loch Lomond have signed up to take part in the fun event. Friends Support Officer Sandra Dyson, a participant in last year's event, has actively recruited dozens of locals, from Balloch, Haldane and the Vale of Leven to take part in the 26 mile walk, the half walk or the wee walk around Balloch Country Park and many of the Friends Business Supporters are either entering teams or sponsoring auction and raffle prizes for the event.

Half of the funds raised by the Friends team will be used to support projects that help children to enjoy the National Park and priority projects include new play areas at Moss o Balloch, Gartmore and Luss; adventure and fun days out for disadvantaged children and children with special needs; Park learning kits for schools; safe park trails for children and a wheelie boat for disabled children to enjoy fishing on the Park lochs. The remaining 50% of funds raised will be shared with some of Scotland's other best-loved children's charities including Yorkhill Children's Foundation, Aberlour, CHAS and CLIC Sargent

Commenting on the new partnership Friends' Chairman, James Fraser, said: "The level of interest in the Kiltwalk fundraising event locally has taken us by surprise and it is encouraging to see so many people from such a wide variety of backgrounds getting involved and supporting our efforts to raise funds for kids projects locally and nationally. The Kiltwalk is also proving to be a great way of connecting residents in the Vale of Leven in a more meaningful way with the National Park which is on their doorstep." Carey McEvoy, Chief Executive of the Kiltwalk, said: "I have been impressed with the way the Friends have embraced the Hampden to Loch Lomond Kiltwalk and they have brought real enthusiasm, commitment and fresh ideas to the table. It is great that as a result of hard work of Sandra Dyson and others so many local residents and businesses are participating in the event and I was delighted that we were able to recognise Sandra's efforts with the Unsung Hero award at our annual awards ceremony in January."

Right: Friends Support Officer Sandra Dyson and daughter Holly are pictured in Balloch on a trial walk for the big event



If you are interested in helping out as a volunteer marshall or raffle ticket seller at the event on Sunday 21st April please contact Sandra on 01436677733 or at info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk Alternatively, come along and enjoy the atmosphere as hundreds of walkers and supporters gather at the end of the walk in the afternoon at Loch Lomond Shores.

If you would like to help our efforts by donating funds simply log on to www.justgiving.com/Sandra-Dyson1 where there is an opportunity to support the Friends Kiltwalk team. Or bid for one of the fantastic prizes in the online auction which is running in the three weeks up to the event at www.thekiltwalk.co.uk

The KiltWalk
walking for Scotland's children
with SUNDAY POST

Hampden Park to Loch Lomond KiltWalk
Sunday 21st April 2013

DOOR TEAM(S)!

JOIN US

AT OUR GOLF DAY

The Friends & Mousdale Foundation Golf Day

Tuesday 25th June

Enter a team to enjoy a great day out with lunch, a round of golf and dinner and help us make a difference in this special part of Scotland.

This is the Friends third golf charity event generously supported and organised by David Mousdale and his Optical Express team. Funds raised from the event are invested in a number of practical conservation, access and heritage projects to enhance the National Park.

For further details of entry fees and event arrangements please contact Sandra Dyson - tel 01436 677 733 or at info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk



Donnie MacLeod (captain) and last year's winning team DM Design receiving the trophy from June Mousdale, Communications Manager at Optical Express along with Friends Vice-President, George Boyd and Chairman, James Fraser.

CELEBRATING PARK PEOPLE AND STORIES

With support from the Heritage Lottery Fund the Friends are stepping up efforts to showcase the rich and varied stories of people past and present associated with the National Park area. As part of a year long programme of activity a series of interesting storytelling visits, concerts and events are planned. See below for further details. Book early as numbers are limited for some events.

Tickets available by contacting Sandra Dyson at the Friends. Tel 01436 677 733 or email info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk



FRIENDS EVENTS CALENDAR...(ALL WELCOME)

SUNDAY 21st APRIL – HAMPDEN TO LOCH LOMOND KILTWALK

A charity event to raise funds to support Scotland's children and local projects aimed at helping more children to enjoy the National Park. See article opposite for more details.

SUNDAY 28th APRIL - A CELEBRATION OF CONTEMPORARY SCOTS MUSIC AND SONG

The first in a series of Celebrating Park People & Stories events, with local singer and songwriter Ken Campbell and Linsey Aitken on cello and vocals. Spend a pleasant afternoon in the stunning surroundings of Ardoch at Gartocharn overlooking Loch Lomond. From 2.30pm-5.00pm. Ticket price £10 - includes cream tea.

21st MAY - AGM AND TALK ON THE LITERARY GIANTS OF THE NATIONAL PARK

The annual members event with a buffet meal and guest speaker. To be held at the recently refurbished Loch Lomond Arms Hotel, Luss with a buffet meal at 6.00pm followed by a short AGM at 7.30pm and guest speaker Professor Tom Furniss from Strathclyde University on the literary giants who contributed to the popularisation of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs area. Please book buffet meal in advance (£10).

SATURDAY 8th JUNE – CELEBRATING PARK PEOPLE & STORIES CONFERENCE

A joint conference with the National Park Community Partnership with a packed day of inspiring talks and practical workshops at the village hall in Gartocharn for those interested in any aspect of storytelling.

For programme details see www.lochlomond.org.uk

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY 15-16th JUNE - CALEDONIAN CHALLENGE VOLUNTEER EVENT

An opportunity to help as a marshall at this Scottish Communities Foundation event with a fee paid to the Friends for every volunteer we muster. A good fun way to help boost the Friends funds with plenty fresh air at either Glencoe or Inverarnan. Sign up now!

26th JUNE - A CELEBRATION OF THE LOCH KATRINE STORY

Spend a pleasant evening at Loch Katrine with a local storyteller giving unusual insights to the stories associated with Loch Katrine and the building of the Victorian engineering wonders that secured fresh water supplies for Glasgow. Price £11

TUESDAY 25th JUNE - GOLF CHARITY EVENT

Our third golf charity organised for us by Optical Express with the Mousdale Foundation. Lunch, golf, dinner and great raffle prizes. Open to teams of four. See opposite for booking details.

WEDNESDAY 21st AUGUST – A CELEBRATION OF LOCH LOMOND ISLANDS CRUISE

A joint event with Lennox Literary Society with a cruise around Loch Lomond's islands with music featuring Loch Lomond songs and ballads by local band, Hell for Leather, and some new island poetry by Ann MacKinnon. Leave from Sweeney's Boatyard, Balloch at 7pm and return 9pm. Tickets £11 and advance booking essential.

WEDNESDAY 11th SEPTEMBER - A CELEBRATION OF THE WEST HIGHLAND RAILWAY STORY

Join us on a railway journey with a difference on the spectacular West Highland Railway as it winds its way through the National Park from Helensburgh to Tyndrum and Loch Awe. Hear about some of the stories associated with this historic and scenic railway and enjoy lunch and spectacular views. Leaving Helensburgh Upper Station at 9.52am and returning at 15.03pm. Tickets £25 inclusive (train/meal) and £10 for Argyll & Bute residents who purchase heavily discounted rail tickets direct. Booking in advance essential.

FRIDAY 25th OCTOBER – A GRAND CONCERT TO CELEBRATE PARK PEOPLE & STORIES, LOCH LOMOND SHORES

A grand finale to our special season of celebrating Park People and Stories with a range of talented musicians, singers and poets drawn from in and around the National Park coordinated by Linsey Aitken and Ken Campbell. Proceeds from the charity evening will be shared between the Young Friends project fund and Robin House Children's Hospice, Balloch. 7.30 - 10.00pm with a half hour interval for cheese and wine on the promontory deck of Drumkinnon Tower. Tickets £12. (provisional)

Argyll Holidays Success Story

Some members of the Argyll Holidays management team and Directors are pictured with their Best in Britain Award (lodges and parks) for Lochgoilhead Lodges at the Hosesons Conference and Customer Service Awards in November. Argyll Holidays were also recognised as best Relax and Explore Park in Scotland.



Cowal based Argyll Holidays, who are the area's largest private sector employer with 240 staff, have become the latest company to sign up as a Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs Foundation Business Supporter. The family owned business has grown from small beginnings 45 years ago into one of Scotland's largest leisure companies with seven award winning holiday parks in and around the western part of the National Park.

It all started with Douglas & Jean Campbell in their farmhouse deciding to diversify into tourism with six caravans which were let out on a piece of ground at Lochgoilhead. From these beginnings in 1968, the caravan park grew into the Drimsynie Estate Holiday Village.

Their three sons Keith, Allan & Roy, all joined the business on leaving school and helped develop the seven holiday parks which make up Argyll Holidays. Each of their wives, Irene, Susan & Liz work behind the scenes and their grandson, Andrew has joined the team.

Despite early diversification, farming still plays an important role amongst the family and they have enjoyed great success breeding pedigree sheep. Argyll Holidays Head Office is situated on the family farm at Lochgoilhead, where it all began.

The Campbell's all feel very passionate about the business and its future potential. In recent years they have won a string of prestigious awards for the quality of their holiday parks and some of their innovations. Their latest award, received in February, was the best SME 300 Newcomer which marks their success as one of Scotland's best performing small to medium size business with a turnover between £8 million to £20 million.

Keith Campbell said: "As we grow our business it is important we play our part in helping to protect the special qualities of the National Park which are enjoyed and appreciated by our many thousands of guests each year. We are therefore delighted to support the valuable work of the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs and we look forward a long and productive relationship taking forward some practical projects together to enhance the quality of the visitor experience in Scotland's first National Park." Commenting on their most recent award for achievement, he added: "I believe this reflects Argyll Holidays our vital role in the Scottish economy and tourism, our resilience in a challenging market place and our overall commitment and continual investment into our holiday parks and staff."

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Stunning holiday homes to buy or rent

£100 off Lodge Short Breaks

Book now on: 0845 459 9772 or visit www.argyllholidays.com



Foundation Supporters £500 MINIMUM

• CAMERON HOUSE

Loch Lomond, Dunbartonshire, G83 8QZ
Tel: 01389 755 565 Fax: 01389 713 281
www.cameronhouse.co.uk

A magnificent baronial mansion surrounded by 100 acres of woodland, Cameron House on Loch Lomond, blends traditional Scottish influences with sumptuous contemporary décor to offer guests a memorable stay in the finest surroundings. This is your lochside Baronial mansion and much more with our Carrick resort our 18-hole championship golf course and luxury spa. Once tried, never forgotten.

• TIGH MOR TROSSACHS

Telephone: 0800 2300391
www.hpb-trossachs.co.uk

Tigh Mor Trossachs is the Scottish flagship of the Holiday Property Bond (www.hpb.co.uk). It was formerly the Trossachs Hotel which by 1990 had fallen into a state of disrepair. Tigh Mor was completely renovated in 1992 and now has 76 properties, an indoor swimming pool and extensive leisure facilities.

• OPTICAL EXPRESS & MOULSDALE FOUNDATION

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

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

• ROSS PRIORY

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

• LOCHS & GLENS HOLIDAYS

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

Lochs & Glens Holidays are proud to support the Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs

• LODGE ON LOCH LOMOND HOTEL

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

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

• LOCH KATRINE

Trossachs Pier, Loch Katrine, By Callander,
Stirling FK17 8HZ
Information and Reservations - (01877) 332000
www.lochkatrine.com

Loch Katrine - a special experience for everyone to enjoy. Cruising Loch Katrine in the heart of The Trossachs is a special experience - on the classic steamship 'Sir Walter Scott', or on 'Lady of the Lake'. Visitor amenities include lochside walks, shopping, cycle hire and

Katrine Café. Cruises depart daily (April until October), with the first sailing at 10:30am.

• LOVE LOCH LOMOND

email: info@lovelochlomond.com
www.lovelochlomond.com

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

• ARDOCH

Gartocharn G83 8ND 01389 710401
email: robert@ardoch-scotland.com
www.ardoch-scotland.com

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

• LUSS ESTATES

Luss Estates Company, Arnburn Arden
Argyll, G83 8RH
email: estateoffice@lussestates.co.uk
www.lussestates.co.uk

One of Scotland's greatest Estates, spanning 40,000+ acres and eight centuries of continuous ownership by the family of Colquhoun of Luss. Today we combine farming, forestry, tourism, property and power generation - protecting, preserving and developing the estate to enrich and ensure the future of the land, resources, villages, communities and people which are at our heart.

Business Plus Supporters £250 MINIMUM

• THE OAK TREE INN BALMAHA

Glasgow, G63 0JQ Tel: 01360 870 357
email: info@oak-tree-inn.co.uk
www.oak-tree-inn.co.uk

Family run inn on east side of Loch Lomond adjacent to WHW, serving good food all day with bunk, standard and deluxe accommodation available

• THE WINNOCK HOTEL

The Square, Drymen, Loch Lomond, G63 0BL
Tel: 01360 660 245
email: info@winnockhotel.com
www.winnockhotel.com

The Winnock Hotel in Drymen is the perfect choice for everything from a delicious bar meal through to a fun-filled party-night, ceilidh or special event.

• BEST WESTERN BUCHANAN ARMS HOTEL AND SPA

23 Main Street, Drymen, Glasgow G63 0BQ
Tel: 01360 660 588
email: info@buchananarms.co.uk
www.buchananarms.co.uk

One of the finest and most popular small hotels in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, with a character and charm which sits peacefully and calmly with the qualities of its surroundings.

• CRUISE LOCH LOMOND

The Boatyard, Tarbet. Loch Lomond, G83 7DG
Tel: 01301 702 356
email: enquiries@cruiselochlomond.co.uk
www.cruiselochlomond.co.uk

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www.lochsidephotography.co.uk

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• CALLANDER ENTERPRISE

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

Callander Enterprise is dynamic business group with ambitious objectives to benefit the entire business community in the area. The 200+ members cover the largest settlement within the National Park

• THE MYRTLE INN HOLIDAY COTTAGE

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myrtleinn@btconnect.com

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Please contact us today...

Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs

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Telephone: 01436 677733

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

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• THE KILTED SKIRLIE

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Christmas at Ross Priory



In December 2012 the Friends hosted an informal Christmas Celebration at Ross Priory with a bumper turnout of almost 100 people. Guests enjoyed traditional Christmas fayre and were entertained by the 'B' Flats from Gartocharn. The cluster of local craft stalls also proved to be very popular as was the exhibition of the National Park photo competition winning entries.



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photography

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the Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs.

The next edition of VOICE will be published
in early October 2013.

**We would welcome your contributions
- for these to be considered please contact
the editor by 15th August 2013.**

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the
following funders for the 'OUR park' scheme:

Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park Authority,
Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Natural Heritage.

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David Mouldsdale of Optical Express
and Dr. Hannah Stirling MBE for the Friends new website:

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.

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Telephone: 01436 677733

Email: info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk

SUPPORT THE FRIENDS WORK AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Help us by becoming a member of the Friends or donating today. Buy our new DVD film exploring the scenic wonders of the National Park or one of our informative guides to get the best out of your time in the Park. Support our efforts in the knowledge every penny is reinvested in protecting the special qualities of Scotland's first National Park.

A Track Record of Achievement over 34 Years

For over 34 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 are a number of practical ways you can support our efforts and make a difference:

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



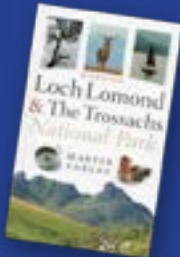
Make a donation many of our members do this each time they renew, adding £10 or so to their cheque and this gives us the funds to fight the dreadful proposals for wind farms with 100 metre high turbines all around the Southern edge of Loch Lomond, or you can just make a one off donation at any time.



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 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**
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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 £

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