

The
friends
OF LOCH LOMOND & THE TROSSACHS

Voice

Spring-Summer 2014 | No. 13

The magazine of the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs



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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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Cover photo Enjoying the explosion of bluebells on Inchcailloch Nature Trail, Loch Lomond. Some beautiful photographs of the National Park are available to purchase as framed or canvas wrap pictures from our online shop at www.lochlomond-trossachs.org.uk



Articles published in The Voice do not necessarily represent the views of The Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs.

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Message from the President

Dear Friends,



With a relatively mild, but blustery and wet, winter now behind us I am fortunate to be enjoying a riot of spring colours in my garden here at Auchendarroch on the bonnie banks of Loch Lomond. However, it was very sad to see so many magnificent mature trees in different parts of the National Park again falling victim to the high winds last December and I am pleased the Friends have a number of volunteer tree planting days planned to try and compensate in a small way for some of these losses.

I sincerely hope the weather is kind to us over the coming months as we welcome many thousands of overseas and UK visitors here as part of the special Homecoming celebrations and as Scotland plays host to major events such as the Commonwealth Games and the Ryder Cup. I am sure many of these visitors will also want to enjoy the scenic and cultural riches our National Park has to offer in abundance. I am confident our growing band of business supporters and others, who rely on the local hospitality industry for their livelihood, will look after them well and ensure they leave with fond memories of this special place.

This is a special year in other ways too as a number of significant 100th anniversaries are marked and commemorated in different ways. I was born a month after the Great War broke out in August, 1914 which lasted five long years with many brave individuals paying the ultimate sacrifice, including many from the Loch Lomond and Trossachs area and nearby population centres. 1914 was also the year that John Muir from Dunbar, the father of the National Park movement in North America and such an inspiration for many others campaigning for the protection for special landscapes, passed away on Christmas Eve.

It is very fitting that John Muir's contribution to the worldwide National Park movement is being marked in April with the opening of the John Muir Way, a coast to coast long distance footpath and cycle route that links Dunbar with Helensburgh, and weaves its way through the southern flanks of Scotland's first National Park via Balloch.

Interestingly, our very own conservation champion and campaigner for Loch Lomond becoming a National Park, the late Tom Weir, was born the week following the death of John Muir and to mark the contribution of both these great men I am delighted the Friends are organising two events during the John Muir Festival with any funds raised going to the Tom Weir Statue Campaign, which has already raised an impressive £30,000 in a relatively short period (see page 5 for further details). I understand the campaign organisers plan to unveil Tom's statue somewhere appropriate on the bonnie banks around the time of the 100th anniversary later this year and I wish them well in raising the outstanding funds required.

It is important we mark these anniversaries and the contribution of these remarkable people who have helped create a platform for us to enjoy the splendours of Scotland's first National Park. I would urge the current custodians of the National Park to uphold their values as they go about their daily business protecting and promoting the special qualities of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs.

Make sure you take the opportunity to enjoy the rich natural and cultural heritage of the National Park in this special year.

All the best,
yours aye Hannah

Dr Hannah Stirling MBE

Contents

4	Message from the Chairman	14	Nature in the Park - Spring
5	Tom's Statue Campaign Gathers Momentum	16	Friends of OUR Park
6	Friends Update	21	A Walk on the Ways
8	News in Brief	22	Events
10	Views of the Park	24	Business Supporters
13	RSPB Loch Lomond	27	Support the Friends Work

Chairman's Introduction

WELCOME TO OUR SPRING EDITION and a range of what I hope you will find are interesting articles on various aspects of the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park and the activities of the Friends and others working to make the Park a better place for people and nature.

As the only independent conservation and heritage charity covering the National Park, we continue to be active on a number of fronts as we strive to make a difference through our campaigning, fundraising and volunteering efforts.

2013 was a busy year for us with record levels of fundraising and 550 volunteers taking part in a range of conservation, access and heritage related tasks at 19 different locations throughout the Park. We also had bumper turnouts at the Kiltwalk, charity golf and pilot 'Celebrating Park People and Stories' events. The funds raised from these activities and the 100 businesses now participating in the Friends of OUR Park voluntary visitor giving scheme enabled us to provide financial support for a number of mainly community led projects, including sponsoring disadvantaged children on adventure breaks in the Park to provide life changing experiences. We plan to build on this further with funds raised by our enthusiastic band of volunteers who are again taking part in the Glasgow to Loch Lomond kiltwalk in late April and businesses who support our work in various ways.

We are making great progress with the roll out of the Park-wide life-saving public access defibrillator scheme (PADS) with the Trossachs Search and Rescue Team and other community groups. As a result of sponsorship from local tourism businesses and a recent generous anonymous donation from a longstanding member of the Friends, it has been possible to support the purchase of a further four PADS for siting at the busy visitor locations of Balmaha, Stronachlachar, Trossachs Pier and Balquhiddier Glen.

This follows on from the installation of units last year at Inversnaid and Loch Achray and the purchase of a mobile unit for Lomond Mountain Rescue Team with funds raised through the Friends of OUR Park voluntary visitor giving scheme, Lochs and Glens Holidays sponsorship and a donation from our President, Dr Hannah Stirling MBE. Remarkably, these units help increase survival rates for out of hospital cardiac arrests where CPR is performed from less than 5% to more than 50% which is quite telling given how remote many of the popular areas are in the National Park.

We continue to work hard to protect the National Park from the impact of large and visually intrusive wind turbines and I represented the Friends and the Scottish Campaign for National Parks at a planning hearing convened by West Dunbartonshire Council last Autumn to consider the ten 120 metre high turbines planned at Merkins Farm, near the southern end of Loch Lomond. Fortunately, following strong objections from the Friends and others, Councillors narrowly turned down the application recognising the detrimental visual impact on Loch Lomond was too high a price to pay, despite the developers offering

financially lucrative incentives to community groups if consent was granted.

We need to remain vigilant as large-scale wind farm proposals are at various stages of being worked up on the western flanks of the National Park. Meanwhile, a number of small-scale 'run of the river' hydro schemes have recently been approved bringing the overall total to 30, which means the National Park area will make a significant contribution to the national energy renewables targets without having the adverse visual impact of large-scale wind turbines.

It is encouraging that in the past 18 months the Scottish Government has allocated substantial funds for a number of National Park 'shovel ready' projects such as upgrading the West Highland Way, an overhaul of

the David Marshall Visitor Centre above Aberfoyle and new visitor facilities on Loch Lubnaigside. The benefits of these projects will be enjoyed by visitors and locals this year and for many years to come. A further raft of grant awards announced earlier this year for a new cycleway between Strathyre and Kingshouse, the innovative community led 'Ring of Breadalbane' public transport service and the Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre climate change project in Lochgoilhead, are also very welcome.

Have an enjoyable time exploring 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, which is very much appreciated.

All the very best.

James Fraser
Chair - Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs

Left: Public access defibrillator staff training at a popular lochside hotel

Above: Pictured at the official opening of the new Loch Lubnaig visitor facilities are (l to r) Gordon Watson and Linda McKay from the Park Authority and Bruce Crawford MSP.





Tom's Statue Campaign Gathers Momentum



Susan Taylor, the enthusiastic Group Administrator of the Tom Weir Statue Campaign provides an upbeat progress report on the plans to mark Tom's enormous contribution to popularising the Scottish countryside and conserving its special qualities.

This typical image of Tom relaxing against a drystone dyke is the preferred pose to be used for his statue



Since the **Tom Weir Statue Campaign** was created on Facebook in February 2012, it has gathered momentum with over 3,600 online supporters who all share the same vision to have a statue of Tom commissioned and erected at Loch Lomond in December 2014 to coincide with Tom's centenary celebration. So far the amount raised is a fantastic £30,000 and over the next 9 months the campaign will be out fundraising in force to raise the rest of the £55,000 total enabling the campaign to pay a fitting tribute of Tom with a superb bronze life-size statue sculpted by the talented Sean Hedges Quinn. In Autumn 2013 the group met along with Rhona Weir, Tom's widow, to decide on the final design and we're delighted with the choice of Tom relaxing against a dry stone dyke.

Throughout last year the campaign attended many local events spreading the word and raising the much needed funds. Public response has helped the campaign gain momentum and many tales and recollections of Tom and his work were shared in abundance. Many pictures have been posted on the Facebook group and page from campaign supporters of the famous red woolly bunnets worldwide too.

On the 29th of December, which would have been Tom's 99th birthday, the group honoured him at the top of The Dumpling, one of his favourite spots on Loch Lomondside. They raised their glasses with a "Dram for Tam" ending the first year of campaigning and also marking the countdown to December 2014, the group's ultimate goal of erecting the statue on the bonnie banks of Loch Lomond. It was a great finish to the year of campaigning for the group with a great turnout. There was also another "Bunnnet Tree" spotted too.



The next big decision for the group will be the perfect site for the statue. There have been many suggestions put forward but the group is unanimous that it should be accessible to all and their hope is, for generations to come, Tom will still be reaching out to people young and old, educating them on the splendour and value of Scotland's countryside, rich with a history to be proud of and scenery that should be preserved and enjoyed by all.

This year the group will be working very hard to achieve their goal of raising £55,000 and will be out in force shaking their collection buckets, selling their famous bunnets and official CDs.

New volunteers and fundraisers are always welcomed to help with various aspects of fundraising and events. If you are interested then please join us on Facebook or email tomweir@lochlomondtrossachs.org for more information.

You can make an online donation to the campaign at www.lochlomond-trossachs.org or by post to The Tom Weir Memorial Fund, c/o National Park Offices, Carrochan Road, Balloch G83 8EG.



For details of two fundraising events being organised as part of the John Muir Festival in April by the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs see pages 22 & 23.

Giant Turbines Rejected

A major threat to spoiling the special scenic qualities of Loch Lomond was removed at an important planning hearing held by West Dunbartonshire Council last Autumn when plans for ten giant wind turbines at Merkins Farm just outside the southern boundaries of the National Park near Gartocharn and Balloch were rejected by a narrow 3-2 vote by members of the Planning Committee.

The Friends were represented at the hearing by our Chairman, James Fraser, who also represented the Scottish Campaign for National Parks, and he strongly argued that given the close proximity of this visually prominent proposed cluster of ten 120 metre high wind turbines to Loch Lomond, they would have major adverse visual impacts on the National Park and the Kilpatrick Hills as well as on the quality of the recreational amenity and the local economy, which is heavily reliant on tourism. The turbines would have been highly visible from the southern end of Loch Lomond and many other popular viewpoints and tourist routes around the loch as far north as Tarbet.

In James's plea to Councillors to reject the application he made reference to the following 'fountains of life' quote from John Muir, the father of the National Park movement. Over a hundred years ago he said:

"Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilised people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity; and that mountain parks are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life."

He contended Loch Lomond and the wider Park area are important 'fountains of life' for the 4 million people who come to the National Park each year to enjoy and appreciate its special scenic qualities and it was important these qualities were protected by rejecting this proposed highly visually intrusive wind turbine development.

New Battle of Glen Fruin

Proposals for a controversial wind turbine scheme on the edge of the National Park have been in the headlines recently with strongly opposing views locally. The scheme involves the construction of five 85 metre high wind turbines in Glen Fruin. Since the turbines and blades will be clearly visible in some of the southern and most popular parts of the National Park, the Friends are likely to submit an objection with Argyll & Bute Council, when a planning application is lodged, on grounds of adverse visual impacts on the scenic qualities of the National Park. This is consistent with the policy stance of the Friends on other wind turbine schemes on the fringes of the National Park and a preference for low visual impact 'run of the river' micro hydro schemes, which are being successfully developed in a number of locations throughout the Park.

Call for Scenic Route Action Plans

Building on some of the great scenic viewpoint and car park improvement initiatives being led by the National Park with Scottish Government funding support, the Friends have called for more comprehensive scenic route action plans to be prepared to capitalise more on the views from busier tourist routes throughout the National Park.

Friends Chairman, James Fraser, said: "The Park Authority has enjoyed great success in recent years in securing 'shovel ready' and other project funding from the Scottish Government to upgrade specific car parks on Loch Lubnaiside and to create pilot scenic features at several existing viewpoints beside the A82 and A85. Also jointly, for a fairly modest investment, we have been able to make a real difference by removing stretches of trees and shrubs alongside the A82 which has opened up magnificent views of Loch Lomond.

"However, the quality of the visitor experience for travellers using some of the busiest tourist routes in the National Park falls well short of what we should be aspiring to. Many fine views are still hidden from view by overgrown trees and shrubs, crumbling stone dykes and boundary fences in a state of disrepair, proliferation of unauthorised and poor quality signs, inadequate and poorly maintained laybys and under-investment at some popular sites such as Duck Bay picnic area and the Rest



and Be Thankful viewpoint, which should be exemplars in terms of high quality visitor infrastructure provision."

The Friends believe it would be useful if the expertise of some of National Park's staff could be deployed to take a holistic approach to reviewing key routes in consultation with other bodies such as Transport Scotland, local authorities and local amenity and trade bodies. The Balloch to Tarbet stretch of the A82 could be a useful pilot with priorities clearly identified in a practical scenic route action plan. This could then be rolled out on a phased basis on other routes in future years and help ensure the National Park is showcased more effectively to millions of travellers who might be encouraged to linger longer in the area as opposed to rushing through to other destinations.

Background pic: Crumbling stone dykes alongside the busy A82 and the national cycleway'

Above: One of three new viewpoint structures planned for the scenic pulls-ins. This is the winning design for a new viewpoint structure at Inveruglas

Park Maritime Gateway Under Threat Again

Despite two Public Inquiries, just five years ago, into plans for two wind farms that would have major visual impacts on the approaches to the National Park's maritime gateway around Dunoon and the south west corner of the Park, a much larger scheme on the south Cowal hills is now planned by PNE wind, working with Forestry Commission Scotland. The scheme is of such a large scale that it is likely to bypass Argyll & Bute Council, and the local democratic process, and go straight to Scottish Ministers for determination.

Despite the rejection of the earlier plans by Scottish Government Reporters at the two public local inquiries, which the Friends and local tourism and community groups made strong representations at, this new 'scoping' proposal is for a scheme potentially comprising 20 giant 110-metre high turbines on the prominent hilltops immediately south-west of Dunoon directly above the Bishop's Glen beauty spot.

Philip Norris, Friends' Trustee for Cowal, said: "This scheme is, in landscape terms, drastic - a nightmare. The effect of such a development on the views south and south west from the National Park from the Strone/Kilmun area would be transformational, and the turbines would also be visible to millions of travellers using the Upper Clyde ferries and the many thousands of people walking in the Glen Fruin hills, and on the West Highland Way at Conic Hill above Balmaha."

The application is expected to go live in the Autumn, and is likely to attract many strong objections.



Bonnie Banks on View to Millions

The joint efforts of the Friends and the National Park has led to some of the finest views of the bonnie banks of Loch Lomond and Ben Lomond being opened up again for the millions of visitors using the A82 tourist route each year to enjoy. Several miles of views between the A82 and the lochside have been revealed following extensive tree and shrub removal over the winter months. Views from a beauty spot at Inverbeg have also been recently opened up as part of this joint project and we are lobbying for much needed works to be undertaken at the popular Duck Bay picnic area, where visitors travelling from the south get their first glimpse of Loch Lomond. With around 400,000 visitors a year this is one of the busiest picnic sites in Scotland but it is in a very poor condition with derelict toilets, rotting picnic benches, broken down fences, overgrown vegetation and poorly maintained footpaths, viewpoints and parking.

Commenting on the initiative, James Fraser, Chairman of the Friends, said: "The 22-mile stretch of the A82 between Balloch and Tarbet used to have spectacular views of Loch Lomond but overgrown vegetation has created a 'tree tunnel' and blocked these views for many years. We are delighted that the National Park agreed to work with us and help fund extensive tree and shrub removal along several lengthy stretches of the lochside. The results of recent works, as part of a three year programme, have been quite remarkable and has drawn many favourable comments."

Gordon Watson, Director of Operations for the National Park, added: "This is a great initiative that supports ongoing work in the National Park to improve visitor viewpoints. By working with the Friends and opening up views, not only does it enhance the journey through the National Park, it will encourage visitors to stop and spend more time in the local area."

The latest phase of works was completed in early March and in good time for what is hoped will be a busy year with millions of visitors enjoying Scotland's most popular countryside destination.



Derelict toilets and a picnic table that have seen better days at the southern end of the popular Duck Bay picnic area



After thirteen years of being based in our own offices in West Princes Street, Helensburgh we have moved to the upper floor of the Old Station in the centre of Balloch courtesy of very generous terms from VisitScotland. The building is also home to the trade led Love Loch Lomond Destination Organisation, who the Friends work closely with, and the ground floor houses a very busy visitor information centre run by VisitScotland. For some time we have been looking to relocate in the National Park and in premises that are more 'fit for purpose'. The offices on the vacant upper floor of the Old Station in the centre of Balloch and opposite the railway station are ideal for meeting our needs and include access to shared meeting facilities. The Friends Support Officer, Sandra Dyson, will be based here while our part-time Friends of

We have moved...

OUR Park Development Manager, Alice Blazy-Winning, will continue to be based nearby at the National Park headquarters as she works closely with a number of National Park staff on this joint initiative.

Our former offices in Helensburgh, which were purchased and donated by the Friends President Dr. Hannah Stirling MBE, have now been sold to a local businessman and the proceeds are being held in reserves to support future activities and appropriate projects. Thanks to Friends Trustee, John Urquhart, for his DIY work getting the offices into shape for sale.

The new address for the Friends is The Old Station, Balloch, Alexandria G83 8SS. Tel 01389 298008. The office is open 10am-4pm-Monday, Wednesday and Thursday.

New Trustee

We're delighted to welcome a new trustee to the board. Callander-based Sheila Winstone, former Communication Manager with the National Park Authority, brings a passion for the Park and a wealth of experience in PR and communication in a career that also included posts at the Scottish Environmental Education Council and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and an earlier career in publishing.

Since leaving the National Park in 2012, Sheila has become a freelance marketing and publishing consultant and is currently contracted to Callander Community Development Trust as Callander Town Co-ordinator. Through this post she has also become a Director of the Loch Lomond & Trossachs Community Partnership.

She said, "I've lived and worked in the National Park area for more than 35 years and love being able to keep on learning about its natural and historic treasures. I'm also constantly amazed at the resourcefulness of the Park's communities and the fantastic things that determined individuals and group can achieve.

"I'm really looking forward to working with fellow trustees and our talented staff to help deliver projects that make a real difference to the National Park and its communities and communicate what makes this such a special place for visitors and residents."



Breadalbane Bus Explorer

The innovative Ring of Breadalbane Explorer seasonal bus service that links Killin, Lochearnhead, Comrie, Crieff and Aberfeldy has been awarded £135,000 from Transport Scotland's Bus Investment Fund to expand the service over the next 3 years. Launched in June, 2012, the Ring of Breadalbane Explorer provides visitors and locals access to scenic tours and visitor attractions in and around the north west corner of the National Park, Loch Tay and Strathearn. The service was inspired by the success of Ireland's 'Ring of Kerry' tourist trail. The service was the idea of the Breadalbane Tourism Co-operative and one of the prime movers was Ken Chew who said: "This cash boost is wonderful news for visitors wishing to explore Breadalbane at their leisure and for locals needing public transport that can be hailed to stop anywhere along the route.

"The availability of three year funding should enable us to promote and establish the service more effectively and we are grateful to the Scottish Government and other public sector funders for supporting the £270,000 project."



New Cycle Path Link Planned

As part of an initiative to create more safe 'off-highway' cycling opportunities in the National Park, the Scottish Government is providing a £750,000 grant contribution towards the creation of a new 3.5km cycle path between Strathyre and Kinghouse at the entrance to Balquhidder Glen.

The new path is also receiving funding support from the National Park and is being developed by green transport charity Sustrans who have been responsible for the creation of a number of national cycle routes, including Route 7 that winds its way through the Park. This follows on from the successful installation last Autumn of the Tarken Bridge on the new St Fillan's to Lochearnhead cycle route led by local community groups working in partnership with the National Park and LEADER Perth & Kinross.

Meanwhile, the Park Authority is undertaking a review of cycling opportunities throughout the Park and has recently completed an extensive consultation exercise with local businesses and others, including the Friends, to identify for priorities for action. Both the Friends and the Love Loch Lomond Destination Organisation have highlighted the need for more family friendly 'away from highway' cycling routes in the Loch Lomond area and better signposting and maintenance of existing routes and trails throughout the Park.



Big Plans for Maid of The Loch

Plans for a new all-year-round visitor facility on Balloch Pier have recently been revealed by the Loch Lomond Steamship Company, owners of the Maid of the Loch Paddle Steamer.

The concept is to provide an integrated Experience Loch Lomond attraction which will support the operation of the Maid of the Loch and linked to the historic Balloch Steam Slipway. The charity is planning to create a visitor destination where people can sail on an historic paddle steamer, and spend time enjoying learning about the area's history and culture in a modern museum with interpretive and interactive displays.

The structure is based on the site of the old Balloch Pier station, and contains a ticket office, retail sales area, museum, cafe, toilets, and a sheltered area for intending passengers to wait. The design was conceived by Glasgow-based architects, studioKAP. The public appeal now stands at an impressive £125,000, and is still open. An application has been submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund, the outcome of which will be known shortly.

A 50 minute DVD entitled "Voyage of the Maid" has been produced by Paul Saunders Media of Drymen, and tells the story of the Maid's sixty year history using archive cine footage and location shoots. Half of all profits go to the appeal. The DVD is priced £15 including p&p.

Comments about the plans, or donations, should be sent to LLSC c/o PO Box 9401, Gourrock PA19 1NB. Orders for the DVD to 7 Gartness Court, Drymen G63 0AX. Please make all cheques to The Loch Lomond Steamship Company.

Balloch Tourism Boost

Balloch's role as an important tourist centre received a welcome boost recently with a raft of announcements on progress with new tourist facilities such as tourist accommodation, catering outlets and several visitor attractions.

Following the relocation of the Birds of Prey Centre to the woodlands next to Loch Lomond Shores last Autumn, another new attraction will be opening there shortly with the introduction of a series of adventure rope trails. West Dunbartonshire Council has also committed £300,000 for much needed restoration works at Balloch Castle as part of a drive to strengthen the tourist appeal of the Country Park.

After many years of lobbying, boat trips on Loch Lomond will be available shortly from a new jetty and walkway at Loch Lomond Shores. The Park Authority and Scottish Enterprise are currently investing £350,000 dredging part of the former sand and gravel works at Drumkinnon Bay and installing a jetty, walkway and ticket office next to

the Gateway Centre.

Local cruise boat operator and Friends Business Supporter, Sweeney's Cruises, who

also have plans for ambitious upgraded facilities below Balloch Bridge, won the competitive tender to operate boat trips from the new Loch Lomond Shores jetty. In addition to offering a regular schedule of cruise options on a daily year round basis, they will provide a welcome waterbus link between the centre of Balloch and Loch Lomond Shores.

Plans for a new £5 million country inn at the entrance roundabout to Loch Lomond Shores were recently approved by the National Park and this new development should be completed in the next year. The country inn is being developed by Marston's and includes 27 letting bedrooms and a 180 cover restaurant with bar.



Paths in Focus

Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust, an offshoot of Cairngorms National Park, has joined forces with Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park to submit a substantial bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a mountain paths project aimed at tackling path erosion on some of the more popular mountains in both National Parks. Priority mountain paths for action locally include Ben A'an, Ben Lomond, Ben Ledi and the Cobbler.

Other lower level paths receiving attention in advance of the main summer season include the West Highland Way, where with Scottish Government funding, Forestry Commission Scotland are currently investing £750,000 on improvements to some of the stretches of the route in poorest condition north of Rowardennan. This follows on from a significant investment by the National Park upgrading the popular Conic Hill stretch of the route near Balmaha last year.

The Helensburgh & District Access Trust, with funding support from Scottish Natural Heritage and the National Park, has recently created improved path links between the Three Lochs Way and Arrochar and a stretch of the Way near Balloch at the Gowk Hill viewpoint, which forms part of the new John Muir Way being launched in late April to commemorate the hundred anniversary of this great conservationist and founding father of the worldwide National Park movement.

Friends Project Officer, Alice Blazy-Winning and Trustee John Urquhart on the Three Lochs Way



Luss Has a Bright Future

The most popular village in the National Park is facing a bright future after Luss Estates Company launched ambitious regeneration and enhancement plans at a public open day last Autumn. The plans for the village are part of a wider review of the 45,000 acres in the ownership of the Colquhoun family on West Loch Lomondside.

According to a report prepared by Page Park Architects and Roger Tym Associates, improvements to infrastructure, a drive to create greater economic opportunity and a wider provision of housing is required if one of Scotland's most visited villages is to avoid becoming little more than a retirement community.

The report tackles Luss's ability to meet the needs of its residents, balanced with those of the estimated 750,000 tourists who visit the village every year. Numerous suggestions are made, from providing an enhanced retail offering to pedestrianising the historic core of the village, creation of a village green, extended car parking, and improved road access and signposting.

Luss is one of Scotland's most visited villages, with a combination of its spectacular scenery, pretty streets and loch access all ensuring its popularity with both overseas tourists and day trippers. An early Christian settlement, Luss dates back more than 1,000 years, with much of its historic core laid out in the early nineteenth century to accommodate quarry workers and their families. More recently, the village achieved fame as the setting of the 1980s television programme Take the High Road. In the surrounding area, the principal landowner is Luss Estates which has remained in the continuous ownership of the Colquhoun of Luss family for eight centuries.

At the launch of the plans Sir Malcolm Colquhoun, Chair of Luss Estates and Honorary President of the Friends, said: "I am very proud to be launching this Strategic Development Framework for Luss in what, I hope, will be a pivotal moment in the history of this beautiful village. Having read its findings, it seems clear to me that the key to the future of communities such as Luss lies in the development of economic opportunities, allied to the provision of family housing, which will in turn lead to the provision of secure, well-paid jobs, especially for the young. From the aging demographic to traffic problems, roads that are in an awful state and generally poor retail offering, the picture presented by Luss today is, in many ways a sorry one. If the threatened closure of the school is carried out, Luss is in danger of becoming little more than a sunset community – something that few would wish to see happen. Change is urgently required, and I hope this document stimulates both debate and action."

A copy of a summary of plans is available at

www.lussestates.co.uk

Future of Ardroy Secured

The success of Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre in Lochgoilhead, which was closed by Fife Council in 2011, is going from strength to strength with the local charitable trust that rescued the Centre and reopened it later the same year, recently completing the buy-out with the help of a £300,000 Scottish Government grant and loan. This also enabled a £70,000 facelift of the main Victorian building to be completed in time for the Centre to host over 2,000 young children and teenagers on residential adventure and environmental education breaks this year. The Centre is enjoying high usage levels and now employs 20 staff. The trust was also recently successful in securing an £80,000 climate change grant award to support their recycling and environmental education programmes.

Gold Rush Scaled Down

The plans for the Cononish Mine near Tyndum are being scaled down due to a 25% drop in the traded price for gold and the difficulty in raising sufficient funds to realise the full potential of the mine, which mining company Scotgold Resources previously estimated could produce gold and silver with a value of £17 million per year over a seven-year lifespan.

The controversial mine received planning permission a couple of years ago at the second attempt after much improved proposals for managing the visual impact of the mine waste and a long term management plan for the glen were drawn up. It is understood consultants are now looking at fresh proposals for smaller scale workings and processing facilities and this may be subject to a revised planning application.

£18 Million Road Upgrades on Target

The two major A82 improvements schemes at Pulpit Rock and the Crianlarich bypass are both due to be completed later this year despite some setbacks due to adverse weather and well publicised landslips, rock falls and tree wind blow damage at the challenging Pulpit Rock site in particular.

The Crianlarich bypass, which sweeps around the western edge of the village and takes out an awkward railway bridge bottleneck, is due for completion in September while the new short stretch of cantilevered road at Pulpit Rock is scheduled for completion in the Autumn.



Points of View

around the National Park

Local historian and literary expert Louis Stott writes about the favourite views of some famous writers from the past and his own shortlist of special views around the Park



“I rather think this particular stretch of Loch Lomond, in front of Inversnaid, is the most beautiful lake and mountain view I have ever seen.”

Nathaniel Hawthorne English Notebooks

Few would dispute that the view of the Arrochar Alps across Loch Lomond at Inversnaid is very fine. There are several variations of it: that from Rob Roy’s Viewpoint is quite good, and James Hogg, recovering from the after-effects of a bottle of whisky, was intoxicated by another version of the view, probably from above The Garrison:

“It was scarcely possible to place me in another situation in Scotland where I could have had such a view of so many striking and sublime objects.”

However, the best variant is probably The Queen’s View, at the head of Loch Arklet where the lesser loch constitutes the foreground, rather than Loch Lomond. Coming from Aberfoyle it is a breathtaking coup d’oeil. The prospect is one of four views in the district called the Queen’s View. Those nearby are The Queen’s View, Loch Ard, and The Queen’s View, Loch

Achray, both connected with Victoria’s visit to Inverrossachs in 1869. Indeed in More Leaves Victoria is quite fulsome about the panorama at the foot of Loch Ard, likening it to Switzerland. At Loch Achray she implies that it was where Scott was inspired to write:

*“Each purpled peak,
each flinty spire,
Was bathed in floods of
living fire.”*

The Queens View at Auchineden, probably named after Edward VII’s Queen, is just outside the National Park. From the South, it is a spectacular first view of the Highlands.

Scott stayed at Ross Priory, which has a magnificent view of Ben Lomond across the loch. Craigie Fort, Balmaha provides another fine ‘foot of the loch’ view. However, most people would agree that Duncryne, the Witches’ Hill, above Gartocharn, is pre-eminent. Tom Weir held that

*“Duncryne is to my mind
the finest viewpoint
of any small hill in
Scotland.”*

It is perhaps worth noting at this point the significance of some elevation in providing aesthetically satisfying views. The view from Duncryne is superior to that from Ross Priory, just as, the view from Inchtavannach or Stronbrae is superior to that from Ross Dhu. On the other hand

too great an elevation means that the prospect may be too diffused. It is for this reason that most hill summits have been excluded; in any case, Ben Lomond and other hills form essential features of the best views. Intimate views, such as that of Inchtavannach from Camstradden, or of, say, the Falls of Dochart are also excluded from this survey.

There is a fine retrospective view of the head of Loch Lomond from Cnap Mor, another a coup d’oeil. At Inveruglas the northern aspect of Ben Lomond is seen in close to. Cruach Tarbert affords a view down Loch Long, but this little mountain also commands an unrivalled spectacle of the upper reach of Loch Lomond with Island I Vow, of Loch Sloy cradled between Ben Vorlich and Ben Vane, of the steep summit cone of Ben Lomond and of the Cobbler and its sister alps. Thus Cruach Tarbert is often regarded as one of the finest mountain viewpoints in Scotland. Since it is surrounded by much higher peaks the view from it is not diffused.

Christopher North drew attention to Firkin Point:

*“From this eminence the
whole surface of the
lake, diversified with
its numerous islands is
displayed to the eye.”*

The prospect towards the islands is less good than from Stronbrae, but this is more than compensated for by the view of the upper part of the loch. Ben Lomond is dramatically foreshortened and is seen from water’s edge to summit immediately across

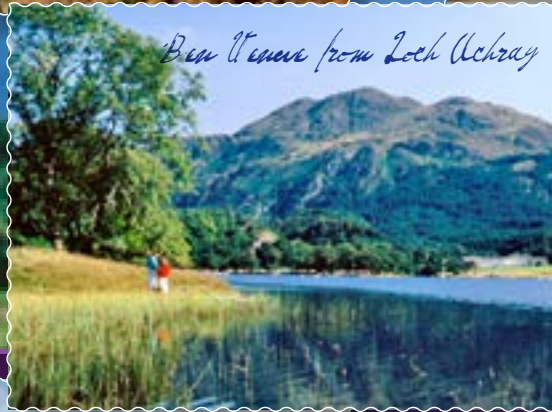
Loch Achray



Loch Urquhart



Ben Venue from Loch Achray



Lochpichhead



The Cobbler



the Stonymollan Road and Ben Bowie are all good.

It is unsurprising that Loch Lomond is associated with many notable prospects, but there are, of course, many others elsewhere in the National Park. There is an exquisite surprise view of

Hare Townsend climbed the Duke's Pass between Aberfoyle and the Trossachs to Tom an-t Seillich, watch hill, one the best viewpoints in the Trossachs, and wrote:

“Half the horizon was filled with mountains, tossed and tumbled about like an ocean arrested in its wildest rage. . . .

“Oh, ‘twas an unimaginable sight!”

In Glenfinglas there is a good viewpoint overlooking Loch Finglas. At Balquhider visitors ought to climb Creag an Tuirc which provides a grandstand view of the village. Finally, from Glenoglehead there is a fine prospect of Ben Lawers and the Tarmachans beyond Loch Tay

However, compiling such lists is an everlasting and a subjective business. No doubt a much-loved prospect has been omitted; but it depends on your point of view.

the loch. The prominent waterfall above Ptarmigan Lodge is Eas Sneggan.

In the opinion of Baddeley, the authoritative writer of guidebooks, there is little to choose between Stronbrae, above Luss, and Tom nan Crag, the highest point on Inchtavannach. The view of what Coleridge called ‘delicious islands’ from either of these two places is superb. Dorothy Wordsworth considered the prospect ‘like a flash of images from another world.’ Many early literary visitors were much impressed, quoting Wordsworth:

*“All the fairy crowds
Of islands which
together lie As quietly
as spots of sky Among
the evening clouds.”*

There are similar views from Inchcailloch and Inchmurrin. At the foot of Loch Lomond, between the loch and the sea, are a number of good viewpoints which command both loch and firth. Carman Muir,

the Lake of Menteith and Inchmahome at Malling on the A81. At Whistlefield one side of the hill provides a fine view of the Gareloch, in spite of the Clyde Submarine Base, but the other side provides a finer panorama, that of Loch Long at its junction with Loch Goil. The sombre character of Loch Long overshadowed by the steep hills of Ardgoil is offset by the generally better-lit lesser loch; it is a classic highland view.

In Cowal the Wright Smith viewpoint in the Benmore Botanic Garden gives particularly good views of the gardens and the Clyde. Near Ardentinny Samuel Rodgers went to Shepherd's Point from which there is a stunning view up Loch Long, “sublime, mountain behind mountain receding one behind another, on each side of the lake, till the vista terminates. . . Indeed, I think in its way it surpasses everything of the kind we ever saw.” At the head of Glencroe Wordsworth climbed to the Rest and Be Thankful half a century after the soldiers who built the road. There he wrote a sonnet. From ‘the Rest’ there is a fine view of the old road.

In the mid nineteenth century Chauncy

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RSPB Loch Lomond is one of the best places for wildlife in Scotland. Located on the south east shores of Loch Lomond, the site has a remarkable mix of habitats: not just woodland and grassland, but rich floodplains, and swampy mires and fens, all of which provide food and shelter for a massive range of creatures.

The Greenland white-fronted geese that come here in the winter make up an internationally important population. Each year some 200 of these migrants join 2400 pink-footed and 200 greylag geese, spending the winter on the bonnie shores of Loch Lomond. The river lampreys that skulk amidst the mud at the bottom of the River Endrick display a unique behaviour, migrating to the freshwaters of the loch, rather than to the sea like other lampreys. There are rare insects here too, like the ox-bow diving beetle, and even a plant that is only found here in the whole of the UK, the Scottish dock.

The site forms part of the Loch Lomond National Nature Reserve (NNR) and was acquired by the RSPB in April 2012, with financial support from Scottish Natural

Heritage (SNH), Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park (LLTNP) and the National Heritage Memorial Fund, for a total cost of £1.1 million. This 563-acre site, previously part of the Wards estate, is now managed by the RSPB, SNH and the LLTNP in a unique tri-party agreement.

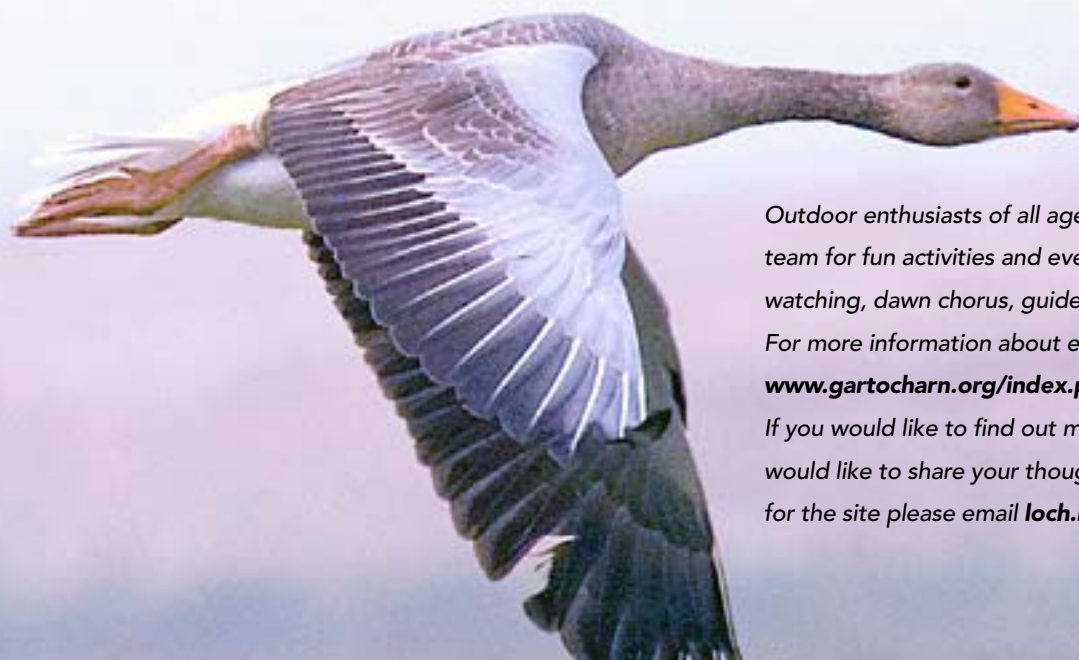
The RSPB has an ambitious vision for the site and aims to make it a flagship site for nature conservation and wildlife tourism. The team has been working hard to achieve this, with the help of volunteers, partners and colleagues. There is a long history of land management here, much of which helped to form the unique habitats found today. Over time, the RSPB wants to recreate some of those conditions and use historical practices to make this place the best it can be for wildlife and people. Over the course of 2013, the grasslands were cut and then grazed, to improve their condition for wildlife. The results are already visible, with gaggles of geese returning to the High Wards fields after 11 years. The management plan for April 2014 to March 2019, has now been finalised and a public version is available on request.

Hard work and expert knowledge helped monitor important wildlife and even uncovered new species for the site. Highlights included 5,000 common/heath spotted orchids, the horsetail sloth weevil *above* (it was the second Scottish record



of this beetle in 100 years) and the dung cannon fungi, also known as the fastest organism in the world.

Over time, the RSPB plans to improve access and facilities for visitors. However, it is already possible to enjoy the amazing sights RSPB Loch Lomond has to offer. Visitors can walk down to the Shore Wood via the Aber Path, which begins at the Kilmarnock Millennium Hall in Gartocharn. This walk is most enjoyable in spring, when the woodland is full of bluebells, and in the summer when migrant birds start to return, filling the air with song. The path leads to the Net Bay viewpoint where you can see ospreys in summer and flocks of geese in the winter. The breathtaking view over the loch, islands and hills is of course a year-round spectacle.



Outdoor enthusiasts of all ages can also join the RSPB team for fun activities and events including goose-watching, dawn chorus, guided walks and more.

For more information about events, go to www.gartocharn.org/index.php/rspb-lochlomond.

If you would like to find out more about the site, or if you would like to share your thoughts about the RSPB's plans for the site please email loch.lomond@rspb.org.uk

Nature of the Park



Keith Graham writes about the season of re-birth and the impact on the rich wildlife and landscapes of the National Park.

IN SOME PARTS OF BRITAIN, spring will be greeted with some scepticism with vast unnatural inland lakes likely to remain in situ for weeks to come. Here however, the season of re-birth has progressed steadily without the extreme weather that has so crippled places to the south. The diverse character of the National Park, means that advancing spring spreads across its acres slowly, like the laying of a comforting blanket.

The Park of course, encompasses marine environments, low moorlands, lowland farmland and woodland, wide, far reaching moors, deep cut glens, coniferous forest and of course the Highland mountains, many of them capped white with snow well into the spring and sometimes into the summer. New life therefore comes without indecent haste, arriving earlier in the softer lowland areas and inevitably later on the high ground.

That advance is perhaps most evidently seen in new growth on shrubs and trees and the appearance of furry looking catkins, clearly signalling an awakening from winter slumbers and a leap of faith into new life that characterises this special season. It has

been a good snowdrop year with these first delicate blooms shimmering on many roadside verges. Well before the departure of February the first yellow gorse flowers were also appearing among the thorns. Soon there will be a golden haze across many a hillside.

Spring of course, is a time of movement, when millions of birds translocate. At first these movements are mostly made over short distances, simply from coastal areas to inland locations. Among these early travellers are lapwing, curlew, oyster-catchers and redshank. But many a mile to the south, legions of birds are already preparing for epic journeys that will bring them home from Africa's Dark Continent, across thousands of miles of ocean, desert and mountain.

For this is indeed the land of re-birth to which millions of them will inevitably return to begin another cycle in their lives, the production of a new generation. This is indeed the season of re-generation.

Early Songsters

Although redbreast is the eternal songster, spouting forth his cheery phrases of sweet music all the year round, the avian sounds of the Park in winter tend to be dominated by the wild cackling of geese, the coarser cawing of rooks and the wild 'jacking' of jackdaws. But as spring awakens, now we begin to hear real music with blackbird and thrush – merle and mavis – among the earliest of choristers, whilst the urgent 'tea-cher, tea-cher, tea-cher' of the great tits resounds across the landscape. Few birds are quite so assertive in declaring the approach of spring.

However, the arrival inland of some of those short distance travellers such as the striking black and white oyster-catchers, suddenly brings a further sense of excitement, their shrill piping adding another, different dimension, and surely a sense of expectation that longer days do indeed stretch ahead of us. They will bring further musical accompaniment as whaups and peewits add their voices to the chorus. This however is

merely the overture. The real chorus gathers real momentum with the arrival of those first long distance migrants.

Among the first to be heard are the rather anonymous chiff chaffs, plain and nondescript little brown warblers with an equally plain and nondescript song, 'chiff-chaff, chiff-chaff'. The very similar looking willow

warbler provides a much sweeter song, it silvery, down the scale cadence, one of the true hallmarks of emerging spring, whilst the white flashing rumps of wheatears are to be seen on many of our hillsides. Soon an avian avalanche will be manifested as more and more travellers complete their journeys, with martins suddenly skimming across the surfaces of our many lochs and at last the first swallows twittering from the overhead lines. Ospreys too now patrol our many lochs searching the waters below for their scaly prey. Travel of course, is a recurring theme with some birds clocking up unimaginable mileages on an annual basis. The travel theme is not however, entirely the prerogative of birds for this year, in April, the Park will pay homage to that great Scottish born naturalist, John Muir when the new 'John Muir Way' between Helensburgh and Dunbar (his birthplace) is opened. Muir died a hundred years ago, having spent much of his life in America, where he was of course, the champion for National Parks.



Outdoors Man

Coincidentally, this year, a statue of our very own 'Outdoors Man', Tom Weir, will be unveiled on Loch Lomondside. Muir was perhaps one of the great pioneers of the natural environment, whilst in his own inimitable way, Weir brought the beauties of Scotland's landscape, the nursery of Muir's first encounters with nature, into the living rooms of so many with his unique "Weir's Way" programmes on television.

And, as our days lengthen, so fragments of new life begin to pervade the landscape to promise that eternal sense of more jam to come tomorrow. The snowdrops as said have been especially good this year. They are the first manifestation of those better days ahead. Then that yellow, golden haze comes to many hillsides as the gorse begins to bloom. Indeed yellow is a continuing theme as primroses too shyly emerge as a prelude to the hosts of nodding daffodils that welcome spring in their own very special way. And then at last the woods are carpeted in blue as our wild hyacinths, or bluebells bloom, their sweet scent spreading among trees now buzzing with life.

Soon May blossom cascades over the hedgerows and now the avian chorus is approaching its zenith. Life for so many of the birds is short and when opportunity arises it must be seized. The choice of nest site must be made, courtship rituals followed and food sources examined. In most cases, it is the hen birds that make the final choices. It is therefore up to courting males to make sure that not only are they in prime voice and condition to catch a female's eye, but that the territories they select provide good potential nesting sites and plenty of the right kind of food.

Already there are the year's first newcomers as fox and badger cubs come into the world, most of them born in March. Fox cubs being especially precocious, they are, in just a few short weeks, soon exploring their home ground. Badgers are a little more cautious, seldom emerging above ground until May, which is also the month in which most roe deer kids come into the world. Roe does are circumspect in concealing their young in separate locations. Twins are the norm and triplets quite common, each 'Bambi-like' fawn carefully concealed apart from each other in woodland dells, their spotted coats providing excellent camouflage in a woodland setting where the sun flickering through the canopy gives a dappling effect.

Return of the Pine Marten

In recent years a newcomer has made its impact on the park, a creature once so close to extinction that it clung on only in handfuls in the rugged north-west of Scotland. A more benign outlook towards pine marten has enabled them to gradually recover much of the ground they lost when they were so heavily persecuted, early in the last century.

Their spread into the Park is to be welcomed for these new generations of marten prey heavily on the alien grey squirrel, which first made its appearance here, by Loch Long, as long ago as 1896. Those first grey squirrels were introduced from Canada and in time ran riot to such an extent that they displaced many populations of our native red squirrels. Happily, the return of pine marten to both Highland and Lowland parts of the Park and their predation upon grey squirrels, has created a vacuum which is slowly being filled again by red squirrels. Grey squirrels, being almost twice the size of reds, are stronger competitors for food and carry a disease that is deadly to the reds. However, as they are not as agile as the smaller reds, they are much easier prey for the martens and of course, when caught they make a much better square meal!

The merry month of May is in every sense of the word busy as longer days provide more opportunity for birds to gather food. By the time June arrives on the calendar, and mid-summer is reached our nights are indeed short, days almost endless. This, together with the burgeoning insect life of our countryside, is why so many birds make this their summer destination.



Some, such as the bright yellow-headed yellowhammers, so common in our hedgerows, make those long days count, often rearing three broods of youngster in quick succession throughout the summer. Thus the reeling sound, 'a little bit of bread and no cheese', of the cock birds rings out even into August when most other birds pause to reflect and cease to sing whilst they moult; job done!

Meanwhile, up in the glens, a new generation of red deer calves also comes into the world, most of them arriving in June. The red deer calves are also born well spotted, an indication that they too by origin are really woodland dwellers. Indeed, many of our Monarchs of the Glens, revert to the woodland environment given the chance.

Throughout the spring and summer the stags first cast their antlers, most of them in March, and then begin to grow another set which by August are complete but covered in protective velvet which is rubbed off in September.

Having lived in separate, single sex herds during these months, the stags by late August are beginning to stir. In a few week's time, they know they will be confronting their annual challenges, as the rut, the climax of their year, approaches and tempers start to fray. For most of our creatures the hectic summer months are drawing to a close and now they face a change in lifestyle, for some a coming together in flocks, for others long migratory journeys, whilst for most, the watchword is 'survival'. But now, life is just beginning!





A VOLUNTEER'S PERSPECTIVE

We asked Mo MacPherson (above, left), a Friends team member in last year's Kiltwalk to give us her insight to taking part in this great fundraising event.

WHY THE KILTWALK?

Because of the men in kilts! No seriously, I discovered that through doing the Kiltwalk monies raised went to different Scottish children's charities and my daughter who is now 15 attended Yorkhill hospital for 11 years so I decided to do it as a way of saying thank you for treating her with her illness plus in the knowledge that half the money that I also raised went to local children's projects around the area where I stay at the southern end of Loch Lomond.

WHY THE FOLLATT (FRIENDS) TEAM

I decided to join the Friends team because West Dunbartonshire is a social inclusion area and local children's projects benefit from half the monies raised by the team which, in turn, helps children in this area benefit through exercise and getting out in to the fresh air. For example, part of the money raised from last year's Kiltwalk went towards the play area in the Moss O' Balloch and Park Rangers teaching children all about nature within Balloch Castle Country Park.

MOST PAINFUL/HARDEST MOMENT

The most painful moment was realising that I had a blister on each of my heels and the most hardest part was discovering that I still had another 4 miles when I thought I only had 2 miles to go before I reached Loch Lomond Shores. However, the event was still great fun with many worthwhile kids projects benefitting from my endeavours.

TRAINING TIPS

'Don't do too many miles at the one time if you've never been out walking before as you could strain yourself. Try and walk a few miles a couple of days a week building up to 26 miles and do not do anything the week before the Kiltwalk. Also wear a pair of comfortable training shoes or boots and a good pair of socks. Remember too there are opportunities to take part in shorter versions of the walk if you do not feel you are up to the full length walk.

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO IN LOCH LOMOND 2014 EVENT

I'm looking forward to hopefully making even more money for the Friends team than I did last year and of course the food and after party fun when I've finished the Kiltwalk.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO ANYONE THINKING ABOUT SIGNING UP FOR 2014?

Go for it!! It's worth every bit of pain and after the blisters disappear you'll have amazing memories of the day. It is also great for the waistline!

£1 Million Loch Lomond Kiltwalk Target

Building on the huge success of last year's Glasgow to Loch Lomond Kiltwalk which attracted 3,000 walkers and raised an amazing £700,000 for Scotland's children's charities, the Friends have again teamed up with the Kiltwalk organisers for the 2014 event on Sunday 27th April.

Last year 50% of the funds raised by the efforts of the Friends 150 strong band of volunteers who took part in the walk, helped with raffle ticket sales or marshalling the wee walk in Balloch Castle Country Park, supported a range of great projects in the National Park including the new nature play facilities at Moss o Balloch, a wheelie boat for disabled kids to enjoy fishing on Lake of Menteith, learning kits for schools and adventure and fun days out for disadvantaged and special needs kids. The balance of the funds raised contributed to the grants varying from £50,000 to £100,000 that went to national charities including Yorkhill Children's Foundation, Aberlour, CHAS, TACC and CLIC Sargent.

The Kiltwalk organisers have set an ambitious target of raising £1 million for Scotland's children's charities from this year's walk and as an added incentive to participating teams, including the Friends, they have indicated 75% of the funds raised can be retained locally to support children's projects. The range of projects we hope to support this year with funds raised include improved children's play facilities in Balloch and Luss, kids education packs, safe child friendly trails and expansion of the number of adventure and fun days out in the National Park for disadvantaged and special needs kids from the Vale of Leven and further afield.

Our Support Officer, Sandra Dyson is currently recruiting volunteers to participate in the series of walks and also to help with selling raffle tickets or marshalling the wee walk in Balloch. If you would like to participate in any of the walks or help out in any other way with this fun day that raises lots of cash for many worthy children's project please get in touch with Sandra Dyson at info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk. or by phone at 01389298008.

Right: Ben Fraser from Balmaha is pictured receiving his Outstanding Physical Effort award at the special Kiltwalk gala evening earlier this year. Brave 14 year old Ben is battling leukemia but successfully completed the 28 mile walk last year leaving his mum Lucy, dad Sandy and brothers Stuart and David struggling to keep up with him

the KiltWalk
walking for Scotland's children
with SUNDAY POST



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Friends Chairman, James Fraser hands over a gift of a short break to Catherine & John Sweeney of Sweeney's Cruises who generously sponsored a 'kiltwalk thank you cruise' and buffet for the many volunteers who either took part in the Friends team or volunteered to help out at the successful fundraising event



AND HERE'S WHY WE ALL DO IT...



Blairmore Pier Refresh

One of the more picturesque National Park maritime gateways in Cowal has recently received a double boost. Following the removal of the threat of giant wind turbines opposite Blairmore on the Rosneath peninsula villagers have been celebrating receiving a cash windfall of over £80,000 from the Scottish Land Fund to purchase the village green opposite the pier and the Friends have provided a small grant to spruce up the Pier signing in time for the coming tourist season. Plans for enhancing the village green are under consideration by the Blairmore Village Trust following consultation with villagers.

Blairmore is an increasingly popular destination, with Friends Business Supporter, Lochs and Glens Holidays, taking thousands of visitors on cruises from Tighnabruach to Blairmore to enjoy the stunning views of the fjord-like seascapes and landscapes in the south west corner of the National Park.



Life Saving Boost

The plans to install public access defibrillators (PADS) in partnership with Trossachs Search and Rescue Team and local communities and businesses throughout the Park took a giant step forward in recent months. A very generous donation from a member of the Friends coupled with donations collected by local businesses participating in the Friends of OUR Park visitor giving scheme has enabled a further four units to be purchased for installation in some of the busier and remoter visitor hotspots such as Balquhidder Glen, Trossachs Pier, Stronachlachar and Balmaha. Stuart Ballatyne said: "I am delighted that as a result of the partnership with the Friends we have been able to accelerate the roll out of PADS at some key locations in the Park and this will greatly enhance the chances of saving lives as sudden cardiac arrests are still the UK's biggest killer. The out of hospital cardiac arrest survival rate where CPR is administered is less than 5% and with readily accessible defibrillation this can be raised to over 50%."

Above: Friends Trustee Sheila Winstone is pictured handing over a defibrillator to Stuart Ballatyne and Gordon Young of the Trossachs Search and Rescue Team at Trossachs Pier phone box which will be house the life-saving equipment



Above: The new children's nature play park at Moss o' Balloch supported with KiltWalk funds raised, and also children's adventure days out are being supported with KiltWalk funds

Project Grant Awards

Following a busy year of fundraising by businesses participating in the Friends of OUR Park visitor giving scheme, volunteers taking part in the Friends Kiltwalk team, our charity golf event with the Mouldsdale Foundation and the Optical Express team, and members' generous donations we are delighted that grant awards totalling over £26,000 have been made by the Friends to a range of projects. A further £17,000 went to national children's charities through our agreement with the Kiltwalk organisers to split funding between local and national children's projects.

Friends Trustee, George Boyd said: "The past year have been a busy period on the fundraising front and I would like to place on record the thanks of all our Trustees and our President Dr Hannah Stirling MBE to the many volunteers, businesses, visitors and Friends staff and members who have contributed in any way to our record fundraising efforts. It is pleasing to see so many worthwhile projects and initiatives throughout the Park benefitting from these efforts and we can all be proud that collectively we are making a valuable contribution to making a difference and enhancing people's enjoyment of this very special place."

Project grant awards:

- * **£5,000** Public access defibrillators, Balmaha, Balquhidder, Trossachs Pier and Stronachlachar
- * **£6,000** Moss o' Balloch Nature Play Park
- * **£5,000** Adventure days out and breaks for disadvantaged and special needs kids & classroom extension, Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre, Lochgoilhead
- * **£1,000** Wheelie boat outboard motor to improve access for disabled kids to enjoy free fishing on Lake of Menteith
- * **£1,300** Callander Friendship Garden
- * **£500** Callander Geodiversity Trail Booklet
- * **£1,500** Balmaha Village Green & Picnic Area Improvements
- * **£200** Cowal Red Squirrel Protection
- * **£400** Loch Lomond Powan Schools Project
- * **£400** Educational Resource Packs
- * **£1,500** Loch Lomond Walks Improvements
- * **£3,340** Loch Lomond Shores Outdoor Classroom & Viewpoint Interpretation

focus on local businesses

Avril & Andy MacLeod of The Gardeners Cottages at Arden talk about their involvement with the Friends of OUR park scheme and the wider Loch Lomond area.



Tell us a little about the history of The Gardeners Cottages?

We first moved to Loch Lomond 21 years ago, after falling in love with the walled garden surrounding the cottages. The place was run down, overgrown with enormous weeds in both the front and back gardens. Initially the idea to develop three of the cottages into a self-catering business was in part to sustain the property and keep it from being neglected.

Although we had some business knowledge we had a lot to learn about the tourism industry and the local area. Our local community of tourism businesses helped us to climb a steep learning path.

Why did you join the Friends of OUR park voluntary visitor giving scheme?

When we first moved to the area we immediately became members of Friends of Loch Lomond as we were passionate about the area, and joining the Friends of OUR park scheme for the self-catering cottages was a natural progression to this.

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

We try to make sure that most of our bookings come direct through our website, and at time of booking guests have the opportunity to make a donation towards the scheme, which is reinvested in local conservation, access and wildlife projects. We suggest £1 per person in the party, and about 50% of guests booking with us give the donation. We feel that having the donation as an 'opt-in' gives guests the added feel good factor of making the voluntary contribution, even though £1 is a minimal amount.

In addition to collecting donations from guests, we decided as a business to contribute £1 for every £1 our guests give. We also contribute all monies from the use of our laundry facilities to the scheme.

We joined the scheme in March 2013 and have contributed over £300 in our first year which is a good start. We would encourage other businesses to join the scheme and help make a difference in the National Park.

Why is Loch Lomond special to you?

When we were moving back up here, we remember as we drove up the A82 and arrived at Loch Lomond we were greeted with the sweeping views across the loch to the islands and with Ben Lomond beyond, and we said then we must not take this wonderful place for granted.

It is such a great place with so much to offer. It is very beautiful, an open space, tranquil, and somewhere you can really connect with nature. We would not want to be anywhere else!



Gordon Allan, Managing Director at The Steamship Sir Walter Scott Ltd at Loch Katrine talks about their involvement with the Friends of OUR park scheme as well as what is so special about The Trossachs.

Tell us about your involvement with the Friends

"We are delighted to be both Business Supporters of the Friends and to participate in fundraising activity for the Friends of OUR park scheme as we believe it is important to protect the special scenic qualities of the Trossachs and ensure our visitors have an opportunity to enjoy the area at its best. The Friends, as an independent conservation charity, are great partners for us and are making a valuable practical contribution to both protecting and enhancing the area for people and nature.

We decided to launch the "Trossachs Special" to help fundraise – a luxurious coffee with either brandy or rum for customers to enjoy on board while soaking up the incredible Loch Katrine scenery – 10p from the sale of every drink is donated towards the scheme. We have raised £500 since launching the Trossachs Special at the end of 2012. However, with the scheme supporting worthy local projects, such as two public access defibrillators at either end of Loch Katrine, as well

as wider conservation and access projects in the area, we have match funded the £500 raised so far, making our total donation £1,000."

What is for you is special about The Trossachs?

"I live in Callander and it has to be the drive every morning to where I work at Trossachs Pier on Loch Katrine – it is a Scotland in miniature on my doorstep – spectacular scenery with beautiful lochs against a backdrop of rugged mountains. There is such a diversity of amazing wildlife too – otters on the loch, golden eagles and ospreys soaring above – I am very lucky to have all this as

my daily shop window as I ply up and down Loch Katrine on the SS Sir Walter Scott sharing this special experience with thousands of visitors."

Above: Gordon Allan (left) and David Wyles of The Steamship Sir Walter Scott Ltd presenting their £1000 donation cheque to Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Trustee Sheila Winstone and Friends of OUR park Project Officer Alice Blazy-Winning

Below: The Steamship Sir Walter Scott at Trossachs Pier in Loch Katrine



A Helping Hand - Volunteers Making a Difference

Record numbers of volunteers from all walks of life are now participating in Friends of OUR Park 'make a difference days'. In 2013 an encouraging 550 volunteer days were donated by individuals and businesses.

We had a very productive autumn with over 110 volunteers involved in delivering a whole host of environmental improvements across Cowal, South Loch Lomond and The Trossachs. Collectively volunteers contributed well over 500 hours to delivering over 10 conservation project tasks improving the landscape for both people and wildlife.

Included in the programme of activity were two successful 'make a difference days' in Cowal and

The Trossachs involving over 40 volunteers - and 65 staff from Rabbits Trail Burners assisting with tasks around south Loch Lomond as part of their staff conference held in Balloch.

We also helped with efforts to improve and open up the heritage path at Leny Woods at Kilmahog with the Callander Countryside Group on 6 October and 15 November.

A big thank you to everyone who has been involved from those businesses supporting the event including teams from from Scottish Water, Claymore Hotel in Arrochar and Tarbet Bay Hotel and also Forest Holidays Argyll and Venachar Lochside Restaurant for helping to host the Make a Difference days by providing our volunteers

with bacon rolls and refreshments. Thanks too are due to the National Park Authority Ranger Team, Forestry Commission Scotland and the Great Trossachs Forest Team for leading on the conservation tasks.

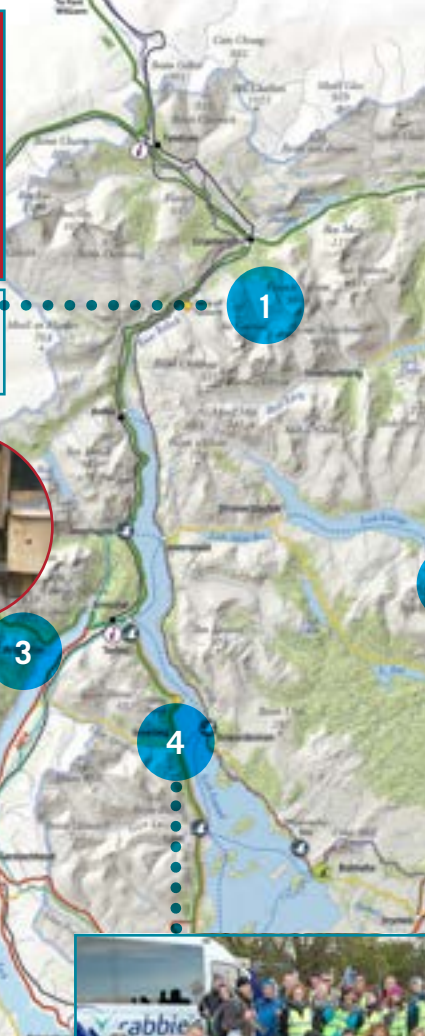
Our first spring 2014 'make a difference day' in March was also a great success with almost 30 volunteers helping with a range of tasks around Loch Lomond including tree planting at the Carrick, litter clearance, cycle path shrub clearance at Inverbeg and path improvements near the loch shore below Ben Lomond.

Highlighted below is some of the recent volunteer activity:

We gratefully acknowledge the support of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park, Scottish Enterprise and Scottish Natural Heritage in developing the Friends of OUR park scheme



Identifying and recording 40 ancient trees at Glen Gyle, one of the more remote areas of the National Park on 24 October



Clearing vegetation at a footpath at Arrochar on 22 October (left); and creating ditches to improve drainage as well as opening up 2 view points and clearing the path on the Leny Woods Heritage Path on 6 October and 15 November (right)



Building 15 bird boxes for a variety of garden species at Ardgartan. Some of the finished bird boxes.



Dismantling 35 fire pits and clearing 30 bags of litter from Loch Venachar on 24 October



The Team at the Cowal Make a Difference Day on 22 October



Team of 65 Rabbits Tours staff participating in a range of tasks around South Loch Lomond including planting 200 bulbs and removing well over 30 bags of litter and other items



Volunteers from Scottish Water who cleared spruce and created a wildlife hut with the cuttings near Aberfoyle, The Trossachs Make a Difference day on 24 October

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Living Investing Visiting Experiencing



Planning for your community

Our Local Development Plan, LIVE Park is focused on the development needed for Living in, Investing, Visiting and Experiencing our National Park.

Last year as part of our preparation for the Local Development Plan our National Park Planning team received a fantastic response from local communities who wanted to get involved in planning the future of their towns and villages.

Everyone who took part in the charettes and workshops held around the Park helped us to identify future priorities for new development - a big thanks to you for your support.

We've also been talking to landowners, developers and business owners, asking them to help us identify opportunities to boost rural economies and support local communities.

All these ideas have helped us prepare a consultation document, known as the Main Issues Report. This highlights potential development opportunities in your area and will include images of how your town or village could look in the future.

The report will be available from the end of April. We'd like to hear your views and get your feedback on whether we've got it right. You can get involved to make sure we get the right development in the right place and help communities around the Park thrive. Keep a look out in your local community for more information. If you would like to be reminded when the Main Issues Report is published please get in touch.



For more information about LIVE Park please contact the National Park Planning Team:
email: ldp@lochlomond-trossachs.org
tel: 01389 722108



lochlomond-trossachs.org

find us on facebook, follow us on twitter, watch us on youtube

Friends member, Alistair McIntyre, takes us on the first of a series of walks on the Three Lochs Way between Balloch at the south end of Loch Lomond and the historic planned town of Helensburgh. This 9-mile stretch of the Three Lochs Way also doubles up as the final leg of the newly created John Muir Way, linking Dunbar on the east coast with Helensburgh on the west coast, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the death of famous Scot John Muir, the great conservationist and father of the National Park movement in the USA, where there are now over 400 National Parks.



At The Cross Stone

A Walk on the Ways



As busy Balloch and the roar of traffic make way to the solitude of the ancient Stonymollan trackway, there is that delicious feeling of adventure before us, with the prospect of fresh air and outstanding vistas ours to enjoy. It's worth noting that most of the Three Lochs Way is set within what used to be known as the Isle West of Leven, a tract girded by mighty lochs and rivers on all sides, save for the narrow isthmus at Tarbet. Before the modern era of roads and bridges, various choices of route were available to those travelling through, but Balloch, which offered both ferry and fording-place, along with strategic location, would undoubtedly have formed a key point of passage. Stonymollan would once have been abuzz with all manner of traffic coming and going, including great herds of cattle and other animals in the heyday of the droving trade.

As we ascend steadily, it's well worth looking back from time to time to savour the ever-changing perspective offered by Loch Lomond and the surrounding hills, including the intriguingly named Mount Misery on the opposite side of the loch, which, despite the name, is reckoned to be one of the finest viewpoints at this southern end. We should certainly not be put off by the cynic claiming that the number of times we stop to admire the scenery is in direct proportion to our level of fitness!

Just before entering the conifer plantations, it's worth looking out for a boulder to the right which has a hollow, thought to possibly form the socket for a stone cross. This might have related to use of the Stonymollan as a coffin road, or perhaps to service as a pilgrimage route for those heading for Iona. Much further back in time, the Dark Age St. Modan probably came this way. Perhaps an affiliate of the St Columba School, place names hint at his evangelising progress through Benderloch, Cowal, Rosneath and as far east as Falkirk.

The coolness of the forest may provide an opportunity to reflect that this section of the Three Lochs Way forms the final part of the John Muir cross-country trail, with Helensburgh the western termination. Climbing up to the high point of the route, short detours beckon, such as the top of Ben Bouie - a great place for lunch. Look out for the crumbly volcanic rock, known with unwitting irony as "tuff". On the mid slopes of this hill, Tam Ward and Sandra Kelly have recently been uncovering abundant evidence of prehistoric activity, including structures such as burnt mounds and charcoal lenses, and artefacts of flint, chert, pitchstone and cannel coal. Dropping down towards Helensburgh through the former farmlands of Camis Eskan, now planted with trees, there is ample opportunity to enjoy views of this young, but already famous, town, and its truly stupendous setting by the Clyde.



Descending towards Helensburgh



Inchmurrin from the Three Lochs Way



Celebrating Park People & Stories

Following on from our successful Celebrating Park People & Stories pilot programme last year, we are organising another interesting programme of events this year with a mixture of walks, cruises and talks (see opposite). Particular highlights include two events as part of the John Muir Festival in April that are also doubling up as fundraisers for the campaign to erect a statue on the bonnie banks in Tom Weir's memory later this year.



On Thursday 24th April at 7.30pm, renowned folk singer, broadcaster and conservation champion, Jimmie MacGregor, will be at the

Victoria Halls in Helensburgh paying homage to the father of the global National Parks movement, John Muir. The illustrated talk is just one of a number of events which will be taking place in the area around this time celebrating the opening of the John Muir Way, a new coast to coast walking route linking Dunbar, Muir's birth place, with Helensburgh which looks across the Firth of Clyde to Greenock, where, as an 11 year old, Muir left Scotland for North America. This interesting and beautifully illustrated talk is not to be missed and members of the Tom Weir

Memorial Statue will be on hand to provide tea and home bakes as well as a range of other items from their well-stocked stall.

On the following Saturday 26th April, the Friends will also be organising a unique walking event along the newly improved route which links Helensburgh and Balloch. Setting out at 4.00pm from either Helensburgh or Balloch, walkers will converge on Gouk Hill, a stunning viewpoint overlooking Loch Lomond, where they will witness a meeting and conversation between 'John Muir' and 'Tom Weir'. Two actors will play the roles of John Muir and Tom Weir and have an interesting exchange on a range of conservation issues against the backdrop of Loch Lomond. Interestingly, John Muir died on Christmas Eve in 1914 and in the following week Tom Weir was born.

John Muir was a farmer, inventor, botanist, geologist, explorer mountaineer and writer but he is best known as a pioneer of nature conservation and the founder of the American National Parks. He was born in Dunbar

and as a child he developed a deep love of the natural world which grew into a lifelong journey, both physical and spiritual, of exploration, revelation, hardship and wonder. Tom Weir, who died in 2006, was a prolific writer and broadcaster on the great outdoors. He was also a great supporter of conservation and a campaigner for a National Park for Loch Lomond. Tom was one of the founder members of the Friends of Loch Lomond and served on the first Council. He supported the Friends' successful campaign to prevent a major pump storage hydro-electric scheme being developed on Loch Lomond's eastern shore which eventually led to Ben Lomond being protected for the nation with the transfer of the ownership to the National Trust for Scotland.

For more details of the inaugural John Muir Festival taking place between 17th and 26th April to mark the official opening of the 134 mile John Muir Way see www.johnmuirfestival.com.



Pictured with copies of the new Celebrating Park People DVD at Loch Lubnaig are from left to right, Tom Lewis, the Mhor Group; James Fraser, Friends Chairman; Craig Mitchell, Macdonald Resorts & Chairman of Destination National Park and Willie Nisbet, Park Authority Board member. Tom and Willie are two of the nine local characters featured on the DVD talking about their work in the Park and their favourite places. Copies of the DVD are on sale for £9 from the Friends - see inside back cover for more details.

Christmas at Ross Priory

In December 2013 there was a full house at the Friends informal pre-Christmas Celebration at Ross Priory with over 100 people enjoying traditional Christmas fayre and musical entertainment provided by Callander Chimes and the One Foot in the Stave Choir. The craft stalls and Celebrating Park People exhibition were also very popular. This popular event was organised by Friends Trustee, Dr Joyce Deans who has close links with Ross Priory.



Sue Cameron and Sandra Dyson take a break after welcoming 100 guests to Ross Priory.



Friends Chairman, James Fraser thanks everyone for making the event such a great success.

OUR EVENTS DIARY OUR EVENTS DIARY OUR EVENTS

THURSDAY 24th APRIL
FROM DUNBAR TO YOSEMITE
 WITH JIMMIE MACGREGOR

Well-known entertainer, broadcaster and conservationist Jimmie MacGregor pays homage to John Muir, wilderness guardian and father of the global National Parks movement. Refreshments and special merchandise also available with proceeds going to the Tom Weir Memorial Statue Campaign. Victoria Halls, Sinclair Street, Helensburgh at 7.30pm. Tickets £10 in advance or £12 purchased at the door. Tickets available direct from the Halls-phone 01436 673275. Small fee for credit card sales.

SATURDAY 26th APRIL –
JOHN MUIR MEETS TOM WEIR

A unique and fun event that involves walking part of the new John Muir Way from either Helensburgh or Balloch with walkers converging at Gouk Hill, where they will witness a dramatic meeting and conversation between John Muir and Tom Weir against the stunning backdrop of Loch Lomond. Register 3.30pm with walk commencing at 4pm, Saturday 26th April 2014. Walkers start from Hermitage Park, Sinclair Street, Helensburgh OR the Kiltwalk Marquee, Moss o Balloch. Involves a long (7km up and 7km down) easy gradient walk up a hill (height gain 300 metres). Participants are invited to wear John Muir cowboy hats and big beards or Tom Weir toorie bunnets. To book your Tom Weir bunnet or John Muir beard and hat you must register interest in advance with john@balmillig.co.uk Tel 07738701948. Event is free, although £5 suggested donation by all walkers to support the Tom Weir Statue fundraising effort.

SUNDAY 27th APRIL
GLASGOW TO LOCH LOMOND
 KILTWALK

A series of fun charity walks of varying lengths to raise funds to support Scotland's children and local projects aimed at helping more children to enjoy the National Park. For details on how to take part in the Friends team contact Sandra Dyson at info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk or on 01389 29008.

WEDNESDAY 21st MAY
FRIENDS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
& NATIONAL PARK MATTERS TALK

The annual members meeting with a buffet meal and guest speaker. An opportunity to network informally with other Friends members and to catch up with the activities of the Friends and hear about current National Park issues. Our guest speaker is Gordon Watson, Director of Operations at the National Park Authority and he will provide an overview of scenic routes initiatives and plans for further improvements in the Park. To be held at the Lodge on Loch Lomond Hotel, Luss with great views over the loch. Buffet meal at 6pm followed by a short AGM and guest speaker Gordon Watson at 7.30pm. Please book buffet meal in advance.

SATURDAY & SUNDAY 14th - 15th JUNE
CALEDONIAN CHALLENGE
VOLUNTEER EVENT

An opportunity to help as a marshal at this Scottish Communities Foundation charity 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 one of the staging points on the West Highland Way. Sign up now!

SATURDAY 5th JULY
LUSS HIGHLAND GAMES & FRIENDS
WELCOME TENT

In this special Year of Homecoming come along and enjoy one of Scotland's oldest Highland Games and visit our welcome tent to toast the continuing success of the Friends and meet some of our Trustees. 11am-5pm-see www.lushighlandgames.co.uk for more details.

WEDNESDAY 20th AUGUST
A CELEBRATION OF LOCH LOMOND
CRUISE

Returning by popular demand this joint event with the Lennox Literary Society provides an opportunity to enjoy a sunset cruise and Loch Lomond songs and ballads by local band, Hell for Leather. Leaves from Sweeney's Boatyard, Balloch at 7pm and return 9pm. Tickets £11 and booking in advance essential.

SUNDAY 30th NOVEMBER
CHRISTMAS AT ROSS PRIORY

An informal reception with musical entertainment, craft stalls and light Christmas fayre. More details to follow in Autumn edition of Voice but worth marking in your diary now. For further details of any of the above events please contact Sandra Dyson at info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk. or telephone 01389 298008 on Mondays, Wednesdays or Thursdays or the specific contacts mentioned.

EVERYONE WELCOME



National Parks and Protected Areas for the 21st Century is the theme of a special conference taking place at Perth Concert Hall on Monday 12 and Tuesday 13 May 2014 in honour of John Muir, who was a truly influential Scots born figure at the heart of the early conservation and the National Parks movement.

2014 marks the centenary of John Muir's death and Scotland's two National Parks and conservation bodies have come together to organise an interesting programme with inspirational speakers who will share innovative approaches to managing our protected areas and examine the viability of John Muir's principles in the 21st Century. For further information please visit www.johnmuir100.com





Enjoying Loch Lomond at its Best in Two Character Hotels

Father and son partnership Alan and Niall Colquhoun, who own and operate two character hotels on the bonnie banks of Loch Lomond at Luss and Inverbeg, are enthusiastic Friends Business Supporters and raise substantial funds for the Friends of OUR park visitor giving scheme which supports a range of conservation and access projects around the loch. They have played host to two American presidents and many other famous people at their high quality and contrasting hotels - the purpose built Lodge on Loch Lomond at Luss and the 200 year old Inn on Loch Lomond at Inverbeg which have benefitted from a £10 million plus investment programme. Here we chart the story of their involvement in developing popular destination hotels and conference facilities on the lochside.

Seventy-two year old Alan Colquhoun has a long association with the hospitality industry in Luss. As a youngster he helped his parents run the former Colquhoun Arms Hotel and after the death of his father and a short spell at Agricultural College he became more heavily involved in running what was a very busy hotel. The hotel was leased by the family from Luss Estates between 1930 and 1970. Alan and his mother then spent a spell managing the Inverkip Hotel before they moved to Crieff and developed a very successful holiday chalet business. However, he always dreamt of coming back to Luss and developing his own hotel and in 1988 he purchased run down farm buildings just north of the village with spectacular views across the loch. Alan successfully secured planning permission and opened for business in time for the main 1992 tourist season with nine letting bedrooms and a restaurant/bar and he continued to expand the business with the help of his son Niall who followed in his father's footsteps by working in the family business from

a young age. A series of expansions followed with an additional 20 bedrooms in 1997 and the impressive Munro Lodge following in 2004 which has a further 20 bedrooms, swimming pool and state of the art conference rooms. The Lodge on Loch Lomond Hotel is a very popular venue for short breaks and informal dining. It is also no accident it is the busiest venue for weddings on Loch Lomond as it is a short stone's throw from Luss Parish Church which, until the recent retirement of Rev Dane Sherrard, held the record of hosting the most weddings of any church in Scotland in a year. In 2007 they expanded again with the purchase of the 200 year old Inverbeg Inn and the nearby Beach House and set about transforming them with a multi-million pound makeover in two phases which included adding a further twenty rooms and 8 suites in the Beach House, which is in an idyllic spot on the shores of Loch Lomond. The Inn has now been re-branded as 'The Inn on Loch Lomond' and is now famous for its regular music evenings and informal and fun dining

experiences.

Commenting on the success of the business Niall said: "I admired my dad's drive and determination in having the foresight and ability to deliver high quality tourist developments on the lochside and it has been something of a whirlwind experience as we joined forces to expand the business even further over the last 22 years of my involvement. We have a good understanding of what our visitors want and with the help of our dedicated team of 100 staff in the low season rising to 150 staff in the high season we continually strive to deliver quality service in a competitive market which matches the stunning locations our hotels enjoy on the bonnie banks of Loch Lomond. "Current plans include installing a jetty at Lodge on Loch Lomond Hotel so that visiting boats can call in and enjoy meals in our lochside restaurant. This will also be a great asset for wedding groups and will further diversify the appeal of the hotel."

For further details of the hotels visit www.loch-lomond.co.uk

★ Staff Pen Profiles ... ★ Staff Pen Profiles... ★ Staff Pen Profiles...

Nigel Bird

Nigel joined the company in June 2013 and is responsible for all operations at The Lodge & The Inn on Loch Lomond Hotels. An entrepreneurial spirit, he has been managing hotels since 1985 which has involved looking after properties in London, New Zealand, the South of France and a considerable number of years in Kenya. Latterly he has been back in Scotland with General Manager positions at The Crianlarich and Glencoe Hotels and the exclusive 5 star resort Ackergill Tower.

Calum Hall

Just recently started as Executive Head Chef, Calum will be implementing a range of new ideas and menus demonstrating his love of local Scottish produce and overseeing both The Lodge & Inn on Loch Lomond kitchen brigades to ensure that quality and consistency are key. His career to date has involved time at the Buchanan Arms, the MacDonald Hotel portfolio, Kilconquhar Castle Estate and overseas in Spain which then led him to the 2 rosette contemporary restaurant with rooms The Loch Ness Inn. He is now back home where he grew up in Dumbarton



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.
- 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 Mouldsdale Foundation & Optical Express are proud to support the Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs. For 35 years, the friends have been working to protect the area's environmental heritage, promote it as a most special part of Scotland, and provide for its future through a range of projects for people and for wildlife.
- ROSS PRIORY**
 Gartocharn G83 8NL 0141 548 3565
Ross Priory, on the banks of Loch Lomond, the Staff Educational and Recreational Centre of the University of Strathclyde, is proud to support the Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs.
- LOCHS & GLENS HOLIDAYS**
 School Road, Gartocharn, G83 8RW
 Tel: 01389 713 713
 email: enquiries@lochsandglens.com
www.lochsandglens.com
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
- ARDOCH**
 Gartocharn G83 8ND 01389 710401
 email: robert@ardoch-scotland.com
www.ardoch-scotland.com
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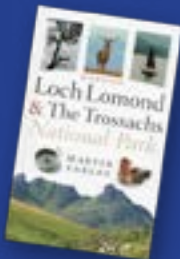
Make a donation many of our members do this each time they renew, adding £10 or so to their cheque and this gives us the funds to fight the dreadful proposals for wind farms with 100 metre high turbines all around the Southern edge of Loch Lomond, or you can just make a one off donation at any time.



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!

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Just donations can help us to...

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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 **01389 298008** 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 contact me
- I am interested in volunteering opportunities
- I would like to make a donation of £

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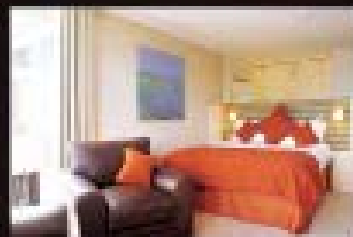


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