

The Voice

The magazine of the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs

***Scotland's
most popular
countryside
destination***



**ALSO INSIDE
THIS ISSUE:**

Visitor Management Matters; News Updates, Nature of the Park, Scotland's Oldest Man, Walk in the Park *and more*

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Relax over a light bite, afternoon tea or aperitif in Bobby's at River House. Soak in the stunning views of Stirling's historic castle and countryside.

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Chairman's Introduction

WELCOME TO THIS SUMMER EDITION OF VOICE, which is available in both print and online formats to maximise the opportunities to read about different aspects of the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park. This edition includes news on recent activities by the Friends and others working to make the Park a better place for people and nature, during a particularly difficult time due to the ongoing impact of the COVID 19 pandemic.



For much of the first part of the year, our efforts continued to be focussed on supporting local communities and tourism businesses that remained closed and struggling to survive a six-month lockdown coming hard on the heels of a four-month lockdown last spring. This included lobbying activities and meetings with Fergus Ewing MSP, Cabinet Minister for Tourism and Rural Affairs, which were chaired by Jackie Baillie MSP and led to some welcome changes in support measures for the beleaguered tourist industry.

Increasingly, our focus as we eased out of lockdown moved towards lobbying on pressing visitor management issues and taking direct action where necessary ourselves. Our efforts have primarily been aimed at addressing gaps in provision and complementing the work of the National Park Authority, other agencies and some landowners and managers to ensure the area is better prepared to welcome visitors back safely and deal more effectively with visitor pressures. Important projects for the Friends included the new 'fast track' Two Lochs Visitor Management Project covering West Loch Lomond and the head of Loch Long, tackling serious outdoor toileting and littering issues with the provision of temporary toilets, litter bins in laybys and map panels, supported by the recruitment of three Visitor Services Wardens. Another is the Trossachs Visitor Management Project that includes a successful first phase refresh of the neglected

40-mile signposted Trossachs Trail, which the Friends have led on in the absence of any public sector initiative. The investment in major visitor infrastructure improvements in the village of Luss by Luss Estates, in readiness for the influx of visitors this year, has been impressive, with a new 250 space car park, toilets and a village green with safe path links. Equally impressive is some of the work of the Callander Landscape Partnership and the Callander Youth Project Trust (CYP) which has culminated in improvements to a network of paths and trails in and around this popular tourist town as well as the creation of a catering training kitchen and new tourist accommodation for disabled visitors and families with stunning views at the CYP Trust Bridgend site. With funding support from NatureScot, we supported Port of Menteith Community Council to undertake a review of visitor management issues and potential solutions around the popular Lake of Menteith. Encouragingly, almost half of the households in the area responded along with all the main landowners which meant that a robust action plan with wide community support was produced and adopted. This was a great example of a 'bottom-up' visitor management approach with strong community ownership. A worrying trend in the past year has been the move to more enforcement with around 5,000 fines issued for 'irresponsible' parking and a plethora of yellow no parking and no litter signs, traffic cones and traffic management electronic signs popping up in the busier parts of the National Park and this is largely due to the absence of adequate visitor infrastructure to

cope with visitor pressures. We are pushing for a more balanced approach, including pop-up temporary seasonal car parks in fields and more temporary toilets to help deal with problems in more positive ways, with many people simply wanting to park safely close to lochs and mountains for walks and well-being purposes with access to clean and well maintained toilets. This would help greatly while medium-term infrastructure projects are developed and implemented. There needs to be a real injection of pace to make things happen more quickly and to take advantage of various funding schemes. Some major positives to come out of the prolonged lockdowns are the greater recognition of the health and wellbeing values of the great outdoors and National Parks, the importance of providing more youth outdoor recreation opportunities and the need to invest more in countryside visitor infrastructure, which has been woefully underfunded for the past 20 years. Please enjoy reading this edition of Voice and hopefully the contents will inspire you to get out and about in the National Park and enjoy your newfound freedoms now that travel restrictions have eased. If you are not already a member of the Friends, please consider joining and supporting our efforts to help protect, provide for and promote Scotland's first National Park.

All the very best.

JAMES FRASER

Chair - Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs



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Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs; Carrochan; Carrochan Road; Balloch G83 8EG
Telephone: **01389 727761** Email: info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk
www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk

Cover photo – Bench with a view, Inchcailloch, Loch Lomond
Cover image by Paul Saunders www.paulsaunders.co.uk



Sir Malcolm Colquhoun is custodian of much of West Loch Lomondside through his ownership of Luss Estates and he is also Honorary President of the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs. Here he shares his views on the perennial problems of litter and what should be done to improve the situation on the lochside.



THE BONNIE BANKS of Loch Lomond: can there be any more evocative placename in the English language? One of the most famous and beautiful places on earth, renowned the world over, it is a magnet for tourists and a showcase for all the best that Scotland has to offer.

Or it should be. The reality is sadly all too different. Over the years, we have allowed ourselves to become the dirty man, not just of Europe, but of the world. Wherever you look – on the roadsides, in the laybys, on the loch shore and in the bushes – you are confronted by a sea of discarded human detritus that spans the spectrum from the merely unsightly to the utterly disgusting. Whatever must the visitors, on whom Scotland is so reliant for so much of its livelihood, think of us?



Left: Volunteer Rob Goodall is pictured clearing the Craigton Cottage lay-by just south of Luss

Litter is a matter that affects us all. On one level it is a cultural issue, one that hardly reflects well on us as a people and as a nation. How, you might ask, have we created a society that so casually permits its surroundings to be fouled in this way, in an age in which environmental concerns dominate the political agenda? I don't pretend to know the answer.

GREAT BEAUTY SPOT

Yes, those who drop the trash in the first place are primarily to blame, but unfortunately sanctions for littering have become pretty well non-existent – someone who casually dumps a pizza box, or a beer can, or a dirty nappy on the roadside runs almost no risk of any kind of comeback. Of course, it's not just here on the Bonnie Banks that there's a problem; but that this should be allowed to happen here, in a National Park, in one of the world's great beauty spots, is surely a national scandal and a cause for national shame.

We have to deal with this. On the one hand, we want to welcome tourists and visitors to our wonderful country,

not least for the employment and economic opportunities they bring. On the other, we too often fail at the most basic level to provide the public services that we are all entitled to expect. It's hard to think of anything more basic than

keeping our surroundings clean and tidy.

The National Park Authority was set up to preserve and enhance the area for which it is responsible. And yet, when earlier in the year the Friends of Loch Lomond raised the litter issue with the Park, its response was to say that "litter is a complex issue". It isn't!

It is extremely simple: it should not be allowed to happen in the first place, and when it does it should be picked up straight away. And so when, for example, the National Park recently put out a press release congratulating itself on collecting 1,000 bags of litter in a month the question we should be asking ourselves is: how was it allowed to get like that in the first place?

And it isn't just about litter. It is for example unbelievable that, in the 21st century, in a supposedly modern industrialised country, people have no alternative to defecating (or, to use the hideous neologism, "toileting") at the side of the road through the lack of provision of proper facilities. You might expect to see such a thing in parts of the Third World. You should not see it in the UK.

It does not, and should not, have to be like this. Let's get something done about it. Let's confront the culture that encourages and tolerates litter, and let's hold the public agencies whose job it is to look after our environment to their responsibilities.

Ye'll tak the High Road and I'll tak the Low Road . . . whichever road you take, let's rid ourselves of this scourge once and for all.

For far too long Loch Lomond's laybys have, literally, become a dumping ground for lazy motorists and flytippers



LOCHSIDE LAYBY LITTER BIN PILOT SCHEME APPROVED

ACTION PLAN

After months of intensive lobbying and behind the scenes work the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs have been able to secure consent to roll out a pilot litter bin scheme in laybys on West Loch Lomondside between Arden and Tarbet where the littering and outdoor toileting has become worse in recent years. This is part of a larger £90,000 package of 'fast track' works being delivered by the Friends this year with funding support from the NatureScot Better Places Green Recovery Fund and the Hannah Stirling Loch Lomond Trust as well as practical 'hands on' help from volunteer Trustees. James Fraser, Chair of the Friends, outlines the plans for this important pilot scheme below.

For many years now we have regularly unsuccessfully asked public agencies for litter bins to be installed alongside the busy Loch Lomond stretch of the A82 as part of a wider litter action plan but this has fallen on deaf ears. This has been despite bins being provided by West Dunbartonshire Council in laybys further south beside the A82 and the two local authorities covering the A9 passing through the Cairngorms National Park providing bins in every layby as part of the battle to improve the litter situation there. They seemed to have worked well in other areas for many years and we see no reason why this should not be part of



the solution on Loch Lomondside provided they are emptied frequently, which is what we plan to do, linked to litter monitoring between now and the end of October.

We were told litter is a complex issue and bins don't work whenever we raised the issue of tackling the scourge of littering on the banks of Loch Lomond so we decided to do something about it and plan to take direct action as periodic litter picks on their own aren't the solution either. We are delighted to now have the support of Argyll & Bute Council, BEAR Scotland and Transport Scotland to install 20 large litter bins in laybys alongside the north and southbound lanes of the A82 for a pilot period and we see this as a forerunner to delivering a long term sustainable 'adopt a bin on the bonnie banks' scheme with the support of local businesses, landowners and sponsors who are showing strong interest in being involved.

We have purchased 20 Glasdon 240 litre bins with poster frames to use for appropriate bin it or take your litter home messaging and for a numbering scheme as part of regular litter monitoring for the duration of the pilot. Our approved contractor has installed the concrete bin bases, fixings and bins and we have entered an agreement with ENVA, a leading recycling company who will empty the bins and recycle the waste gathered twice weekly at their recycling plant at Linwood. They have also very generously sponsored the wheelie bins that sit inside the smart new bin housings.

We aren't naive enough to think the bins on their own will solve the litter problem which is more deep rooted, as highlighted in Sir Malcolm's article, but we believe they can make a difference and time will tell if they do. We will closely monitor their effectiveness over the coming months.

Left: New Loch Lomond litter bins being unloaded

In parallel with this, we have called for a five-point action plan to be taken forward to address the serious littering and outdoor toileting problems along the A82 corridor on Loch Lomondside and further north in the Strathfillan area of the National Park. This came sharply into focus during a site visit I undertook in April to mark out locations for litter bins with our Vice Chair, John Urquhart. We were both shocked with what we saw and smelt beside the laybys with lots of evidence of toileting on a mass scale and extensive quantities of litter scattered around, along with lots of flytipping debris. Many of the verges beside laybys were also deeply rutted and in some cases this was not helped by lumps of discarded tar from recent roadworks.

This is a very poor advert for what we collectively aspire to be a 'world class destination.' There clearly needs to be concerted action to address this with an inter-agency action plan which should include:

- support for the continuation of an expanded version of the current pilot litter bin scheme;
- erecting appropriate fencing close to northbound laybys to reduce the incidence of flytipping and outdoor toileting;
- removal of scrub vegetation in vicinity of southbound laybys and viewpoints to make it easier for litter picking and to reduce outdoor toileting;
- reviewing signing along the A82 and introducing advance services signing to highlight where toilets are, along with an indication if they are open 24 hours; and
- improving the overall quality of laybys with better levels of verge maintenance and design improvements where necessary.

CONTROVERSIAL CAR PARKING CHARGING PLANS



The Cawley Group and the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs have joined forces to fight the plans by Argyll & Bute Council to introduce parking charges at the Duck Bay car park which was built and paid for by the late Bobby Cawley, the father of current Duck Bay hotel owners Alan Cawley and his sister Margo. The plans also include introducing charges along the entire length of the Duck Bay loop road beside the large picnic area which is popular with locals and visitors and performs an important role as a pull in and rest area for travellers using the neighbouring busy A82 trunk road. Commenting on the plans, Alan Cawley said: "I am strongly opposed to the Council's ill-conceived plans which go against the philosophy of what was agreed between my late father and the former Dumbarton District Council, which led to him fully funding a large car park for members of the public visiting the picnic area and viewpoint and our hotel guests to use free of charge. This arrangement has worked well since the 1980s and what is planned is simply a money making exercise by the Council with no guarantee that the funds raised will be used to re-invest in the nearby picnic area which is very run down. The plans to introduce charges along the waterfront are flawed too with the open views of the loch and Ben Lomond now going to be spoilt with the introduction of parking metres and signage alongside the recently painted double yellow lines which has led to chaos in the area with the police having to be regularly called out to deal with road blockages."



Pictured celebrating the opening of the temporary new toilets are left to right Sam Newell of Honeywagon, the toilet suppliers, James Fraser of the Friends and Stuart King of the Cawley Group



After years of unsuccessful campaigning, the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs decided to step in and provide temporary toilets beside the popular Duck Bay beauty spot at the southern gateway to Loch Lomond for the period May to October this year.

The initiative is being funded by a number of partners including the Friends, the Hannah Stirling Loch Lomond Trust, the Park Authority and Argyll & Bute Council. Sponsorship is also being provided by the Cawley Group who own and operate the adjacent Duck Bay Hotel. Alan Cawley kindly agreed to allocate staff to regularly clean the toilets and provide toiletries and cleaning materials. The provision of toilets after a 25-year absence of functioning public toilets at this busy site, which is used by over 300,000 visitors a year, has been widely welcomed and follows on from a site walkabout last August led by Jackie Baillie MSP involving senior representatives from various bodies and the Cawley family. This reinforced the urgent need to address the chronic outdoor toileting problem with thousands of visitors in desperation having to resort to toileting behind bushes and walls due to the absence of public toilets at what is the busiest picnic area in the National Park. Welcoming the breakthrough in toilet provision Jackie Baillie MSP said: "The Friends are to be congratulated for taking the initiative to provide much needed temporary toilets at this popular Loch Lomondside picnic area and this means that thousands of site users will no longer have to face the indignity of having to toilet outdoors and can now visit the site in the safe knowledge they will have access to toilets which are well maintained and hygienic."

James Fraser, Chair of the Friends, said: "It has been a long hard struggle to get to this point but we are delighted that our determination to make something happen at this site has finally paid off and we are grateful to all the partners for contributing to the funding package to enable long overdue and desperately needed toilets to be provided here. I am also grateful to Alan Cawley who has willingly stepped in to support the initiative with practical day-to-day assistance as well as investing heavily in the neighbouring knoll and viewpoint which once again can now be enjoyed by thousands of visitors." He added: "We will continue to keep the pressure on public agencies to come forward with further plans to invest in this tired looking site which has the potential to be a jewel in the crown of Loch Lomond that we can all be proud of." Gordon Watson, Chief Executive of the National Park Authority, said: "Duck Bay is an extremely popular site within the National Park, used by visitors for a range of activities both on the land and the water. Providing temporary toilets here is essential to supporting people to have a more enjoyable and responsible visit. With the National Park Authority not owning any land in this area we are delighted to support and help fund a partnership approach to deliver these crucial facilities. This reflects work going on across the National Park to provide for current visitor needs and we look forward to working with the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs and a range of public body partners on longer term plans for investment in visitor facilities."



ARROCHAR & TARBET VISITOR WELCOME INITIATIVE

In the last edition of Voice a two-page feature highlighted the plight of the ‘ghost villages’ of Arrochar and Tarbet that were suffering from the double blow of extensive closures of the A83 due to landslides at the Rest and Be Thankful and the impact of COVID 19 lockdowns. To try and turn the fortunes of the villages around a working group of tourism businesses, Luss Estates, the Friends and National Park representatives came together earlier in the year to develop a vision for the villages and identify some short-term and longer-term priority actions.

A smaller sub-group of local business owners and volunteer Friends Trustees has taken forward an impressive early action programme. Extensive support was provided by the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs who secured funds from the NatureScot Better Places Green Recovery grants scheme, the Hannah Stirling Loch Lomond Trust and the Friends of OUR park visitor giving scheme as part of a larger Two Lochs Visitor Management Project.

EARLY ACTIONS

An ambitious target was set to progress a number of early action improvements for the May holiday weekend and the group worked swiftly with the help of Kenwil Signs to deliver the following within three weeks of securing the funding:

- **providing temporary toilets at two busy locations- Arrochar Car Park courtesy of owners Luss Estates and the start of the Cobbler mountain path with permission from Forest & Land Scotland;**
- **employing three seasonal Visitor Services Wardens to work out of Arrochar and at the head of Loch Long providing services to help visitors and improve the appearance of the village; and**
- **designing and installing information and orientation map panels at key locations, such as bus stops, the railway station and other busy tourist outlets in the area.**

A Waste Warriors branded litter bag scheme led by Destination Arrochar Alps has also been launched, funded by the Friends of OUR park visitor giving scheme, in which Cruise Loch Lomond are active participants. Branded recyclable bags are handed out to walkers and wild campers to use and return to local businesses. The local working group is also progressing an update of the very popular local walks map with funds raised from the sale of the first edition.

At a recent launch event local MSP Jackie Baillie said: “I am really impressed with what has been achieved by a small band of local volunteers working in close partnership with the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs in such a short time. It is refreshing to see what can be achieved by adopting a determined and positive attitude in times of adversity. “The provision of much need toilets and information map panels backed up by three locally recruited Visitor Services Wardens should ensure the area caters more effectively for the needs of visitors as we ease out of lockdown restrictions and with a rapid increase in the number of people who simply want to enjoy the great outdoors in the Arrochar & Tarbet area.” Friends Trustee and Chair of the local Development Trust Duncan Macglachlan said: “ It has been a busy period preparing for the launch of this visitor welcome initiative but it marks the start of what will hopefully be a productive period of regeneration in both villages as we begin the long journey on the road to recovery after some unprecedented events outwith our control. I am grateful to local businesses and colleagues at the conservation charity, Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, and Luss Estates who have really stepped up to the plate in our time of need.”



Photos above: 1 Signage
2 Waste Warriors recyclable litter bag launch event with pupils from Sunnyside Primary
3 Visitor Services Wardens being briefed by Duncan Macglachlan and John Urquhart
4 Jackie Baillie MSP with the team at the launch of the info map boards



Jackie Baillie MSP is pictured third from left with the newly appointed Visitor Wardens and local representatives at the official opening of the Arrochar toilets



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AMBITIOUS PLANS RELIEVE VISITOR PRESSURE IN LUSS

The popular village of Luss has struggled to cope with the annual influx of 750,000 visitors and villagers have campaigned tirelessly to secure improvements in car parking infrastructure and for a traffic free area in the heart of the village. Their efforts are now being rewarded with Argyll & Bute Council adopting the Community Council's traffic management plans following an investment of £750,000 by the Luss Estates Company in a major new car park and other facilities at the southern end of the village.

A new car park with 250 spaces was opened in early May to the immediate south of Loch Lomond Arms Hotel by the Luss Estates Company along with a new village green and play park with a path that links visitors directly to the heart of the village in a safe way. This adds to the 250 spaces already available in the Council-owned car and coach park at the north end of the village. Villagers have been complaining for years about parked cars choking up the narrow streets as crowds of visitors flock to the pretty lochside community. They strongly resisted ill thought out traffic management plans by Argyll & Bute Council for more than five years and came up with their own community traffic management initiative. In the absence of any constructive engagement or help from Argyll & Bute Council, Luss Estates stepped in to fund traffic consultants, road safety experts and lawyers to design, draw up and sense test the alternative proposal. The scheme now being adopted has been due to the combined efforts of the Estate and community. It is now in the final throes of being adopted and implemented by the local authority linked to permanent traffic regulation orders. This will result in no parking in some streets and a car free Pier Road which will create a more pleasant environment in the heart of the historic village.

This would not be possible without the bold investment by the Luss Estates Company in the new car park and related facilities at a time when many of the Estate's tourism enterprises have been closed for long periods due to the COVID 19 pandemic. There are high quality temporary toilets on the site too with permanent toilets to follow in the future.

Patrick Colquhoun, Assistant Chief Executive at Luss Estates, said: "We are delighted to be opening Luss South Car Park, as well as a beautiful new village green and a safe and enjoyable play park in the village.

"Our £750,000 investment will instantly and dramatically improve the quality of life for the village residents and visitors."

Dave Prestwell of Luss and Arden Community Council added: "Our community faces huge challenges from the increasing number of visitors coming to Luss and unless visitor cars are excluded from the residential heart of the village, with its narrow streets and Victorian infrastructure, then both the quality of life for residents and the 'visitor experience' can only deteriorate further."

James Fraser, Chair of the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, also welcomed the investment and said: "Luss Estates are to be commended for taking radical steps at this time to invest so heavily in improving the village visitor infrastructure which will help transform what up until now has been a very congested village, overrun by cars disrupting villagers' quality of life and leading to a poor quality experience for visitors.

"We strongly supported this much needed visitor management initiative and are also pleased Argyll & Bute Council has agreed to adopt the community's well thought through traffic management plans, which should have a transformative effect on the overall quality of the village as a place to stay and visit."

Both the Luss Car Park and the new £60,000 playground are already proving very popular



LUSS WARDEN CLEANS UP

Luss resident, John Taylor, has been making a huge difference in the village in recent months since he was appointed as new Community Warden, as a result of an innovative sponsorship arrangement with the Luss Estates Company. He is working four days a week tackling litter and maintaining public areas. He is also managing to find time to be a village ambassador, talking to visitors and sharing his wealth of local knowledge to ensure they get the most out of their stay. His duties as church beadle keep him occupied the other day.

Simon Miller, Chief Executive of Luss Estates, said: "We are delighted to be a part of this initiative, which we believe will improve the environment and the visitor experience in Luss out of all proportion to the relatively tiny cost involved. John is doing the 101 little things that are making a really big difference."





THE OAK TREE INN BALMAHA LOCH LOMOND

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The spectacular scenic lookout planned as part of the reinstatement of the historic Roderick Dhu path project above Trossachs Pier



TROSSACHS TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS UNDERWAY

Following a massive influx of visitors to the Trossachs last year and an anticipated repeat this year due to Covid 19 and overseas travel restrictions, a new £600,000 initiative is underway to improve visitor management in the Trossachs, with a refresh of the 40 mile Trossachs Trail signage and car park expansion at visitor honeypots in the heart the area. The ambitious project is being led by the Steamship Sir Walter Scott Trust, in partnership with the Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs and Forestry & Land Scotland, supported by local community groups, VisitScotland, the National Park, Love Local, Stirling Council and Scottish Water. The Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs have recently completed phase 1 of the Trossachs Trail refresh with funding support from the Love Local scheme and the Strathard and Callander Community Hydro Funds and more substantial improvements are planned later in the year. A new website for the Trossachs Trail was launched in April, providing a comprehensive planning guide for visiting the Trossachs with links to local websites. The award-winning Trail was first developed almost thirty years ago and was the first official geographic tourist trail in Scotland. It was based on the famous Trossachs Tour popularised by Sir Walter Scott and other writers in the 1800s which led to the growth of popular destinations such as Callander and Aberfoyle and the development of other small villages with hostelries along the way.

ROAD SIGNS

This circular scenic route connects Blair Drummond, Doune, Callander, Kilmahog, Brig O' Turk, Aberfoyle, Port of Menteith and Thornhill and includes a wide range of things to see and do in an area extending west to Inversnaid and north to Strathyre and Balquhider. The existing brown Trossachs Trail road signs were recently upgraded, and new information panels, featuring a map with things to do, car parks, toilets and advice on how to enjoy the Trossachs responsibly have been installed at strategic points around the trail and provided to some tourism businesses in the area to display in their foyers and reception areas. The Trossachs Trail website and map guide encourage visitors to explore the wonderful countryside by foot, bike and boat, as well as supporting local businesses and communities. If you're a local business or accommodation provider in the Trossachs, become a supporter of the Trossachs Trail. Visit the website www.trossachstrail.co.uk for more information. The partners are also working on major infrastructure projects, backed by a conditional grant of £375,000 from

VisitScotland to improve the destination for both residents and visitors. This includes expanded car parks at Ben A'an, Trossachs Pier and Stronachlachar Pier, the latter two also developing visitor hubs, with upgraded toilets, litter recycling areas and bike charging points. These developments were granted planning consent by the Park Authority at the end of March but are on hold until the outcome of a fourth application is known, for the reinstatement of the historic Roderick Dhu Watchtower path and scenic lookout, which is adjacent to Trossachs Pier Car Park and has stunning views of Loch Katrine, Ben A'an and Ben Venue. This signature element of the project has captured the imagination of the public and enjoys the support of a large number of local community and conservation groups as well as many visitors and locals who have lodged supporting notes with the Park Authority which is due to determine the application shortly. The viewpoint was opened up in the late 1790s with a rock-blasted road and two wicker huts on the knoll overlooking Loch Katrine that were visited by many famous poets and painters who helped the area become famous as the birthplace of Scottish tourism.



Left: Sheila Winstone, local Friends Trustee, Frank Park, Chair of Callander Hydro and James Fraser, Chair of Friends.





Welcoming you back



As we move into summer and with lockdown restrictions easing it's great to be able to welcome people back to enjoy all that the National Park has to offer.

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

It has been a tough time for everyone, from local businesses hit hard by the pandemic, to people unable to get all the physical and mental benefits of being out in nature and the outdoors.

Of course summer is always a busier time and with restrictions still in place on overseas travel we are already seeing more people enjoying day trips and staycations closer to home.

The National Park is perfect for this but it can be a double-edged sword as an increase in visitors brings with it challenges, for example congestion and parking issues as well as litter.

That National Park Authority work closely with our partner public bodies to prepare for this season and to manage these issues throughout the summer months so that we can both support visitors to enjoy the area responsibly and support those who live and work in the area.



How we're managing visitor pressures

In preparation for the visitor season, all partners have increased their staffing on the ground so there are more rangers, parking officers, police and wardens across the area. This includes a new team of National Park Environment Officers to help tackle litter and flytipping.

Joint patrols are being carried out by our Ranger Service with both Police Scotland and Fire and Rescue Scotland. Local authority parking enforcement continues at key visitor hotspots such as Luss, Arrochar, Ben A'an and East Loch Lomond.

With the increased number of seasonal rangers recruited this year we have also been able to add targeted patrols to cover key hotspot areas such as the Trossachs, Cowal, East and West Loch Lomond.

We've brought in additional temporary toilet facilities at some of the most popular visitor destinations and have 24hr toilet provision at many key sites. It's also great to see extra national funding support local initiatives bringing in additional toilet facilities at Arrochar and Duck Bay

With volume of traffic a persistent issue it's also great to see extra parking facilities being brought in at Rowardennan, Trossachs Pier, Luss and later this year at Ben A'an. Looking ahead we are also hoping to develop sustainable transport options for visitors.





**RESPECT
PROTECT**
Enjoy

Litter and waste

Sadly whenever visitor numbers increase we tend to also see a rise in the amount of litter around the National Park. This is something we're working hard with our partners to address and we know many local businesses and communities are also doing their bit to tackle this.

A coordinated push on litter during April saw staff from the National Park Authority, local authorities and communities get a head start on the issue ahead of the busiest visitor months. This resulted in more than 1200 bags of litter being collected over the course of the month.

To encourage responsible toileting in the outdoors, we have introduced trowel loan boxes and poo bins in a number of camping areas, and promoting advice on 'what to do when you need to poo' to all visitors.

What you can do to help

We all have a part to play in Scotland's recovery from the pandemic and keeping the National Park as special as it is. If you're planning a visit, or maybe already here, there are a few things you can do to help:



Plan ahead Car parks in popular places fill up early especially at weekends. Before heading out check the most up to date information on how car parks and have a plan B if your first choice is going to be busy. We provide regular updates on the status of car parks around the National Park at weekends between 8am-4pm.



'Go' before you go Toilet facilities may be operating at reduced hours/capacity or if you're going somewhere remote there might not be any facilities. You can use the National Park website to check where you're nearest 'last chance loo stop' will be and advice on how to do the toilet responsibly in the outdoors.



Take home whatever you bring This one is easy! Bin your litter or take it home. Don't leave your waste behind, including next to bins if they are already full. Pack two extra bags so you can take your litter away safely and leave some space in your car or bag to carry it home.



Support local businesses Many businesses in the National Park have been closed for a large portion of the year. You can help small and local businesses get back on their feet by visiting local cafés, restaurants and shops. Remember you may need to book ahead and should always follow FACTS guidance.

And most importantly....



Be kind and show respect for others We all enjoy getting out into nature and everyone wants to enjoy their visit. It's also important to be considerate of the many people living and working in the National Park.

You can find out more on how to enjoy the National Park responsibly on our website www.lochlomond-trossachs.org

£250,000 Green Recovery Fund launched

The National Park Authority has launched a £250,000 Green Recovery Fund to help local communities, land managers, businesses and other partners to recover from the pandemic in a sustainable way.

The Fund is open to a range of projects, including those that help address the global climate emergency and nature crisis or tackle pressures from high volumes of visitors such as traffic and littering.

Stuart Mearns, Director of Place at Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority said: "Recovering from the pandemic and delivering on our ambitious climate change and nature targets are priorities for the National Park Authority but we cannot do that alone.

"Applications that help address the global climate emergency and the nature crisis are particularly welcome and we want to empower community organisations to deliver positive outcomes for people and place.

"We are investing now, laying the groundwork and building capacity for the future."

Green Recovery Fund



The Green Recovery Fund is now open for applications. To find out more, including details of project criteria and who is eligible to apply visit: www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/GreenRecoveryFund



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.

• THE SHORE LOCH LOMOND

Ben Lomond Way, Balloch – 01389 488883
theshorelochlomond.com

The former Gateway Centre at Loch Lomond Shores has been transformed and is now home to an elegant and stylish events venue situated by the water's edge at Loch Lomond Shores. This is a beautiful location for weddings and celebrations. The Shore also offers an Elemis Spa. The Shore Loch Lomond is proud to be a Business Supporter of Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs.

• ARDOCH

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

Ardoch is an exceptional venue for business seminars and family reunions. There are 18 bedrooms and numerous meeting rooms in a mix of traditional and contemporary

spaces most of which overlook Loch Lomond. Hire Ardoch on an exclusive basis and be assured of total privacy.

• 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 year round subject to weather and demand.

• LUSS ESTATES

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

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

• ARGYLL HOLIDAYS

Lochgoilhead PA24 8AD 08454596412
www.argyllholidays.com

The Campbell family have developed quality holiday parks and hotels in seven stunning scenic locations in Argyll with a number in, or close to, the National Park. They are all easily accessible and just within an hour from Glasgow. As part of their growing emphasis on green and active holidays, Argyll Holidays are delighted to be supporting the work of the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs.



Business Plus Supporters £250 MINIMUM

• THE OAK TREE INN BALMAHA

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

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

• THE WINNOCK HOTEL

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

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

• SWEENEY'S CRUISES

Balloch, Loch Lomond, G83 8SS
Tel: 01389 752 376
email: info@sweeneyscruises.com
www.sweeneyscruises.com

Scottish Tourist Board 4-star tours on Loch Lomond. All cruises have live commentary, bar and toilet facilities. Open 7 days a week all year round.

• CRUISE LOCH LOMOND

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

Experience the serenity of the bonnie banks throughout winter and summer on award winning cruises - Rambler, Explorer, Rob Roy Discovery and Ben Lomond Hike. From Tarbet, Luss, Inversnaid, Balmaha, Rowardennan.

• BALMILLIG B & B

64B Colquhoun St, Helensburgh, G84 9JP
Tel: 01436 674 922
email: anne@balmillig.co.uk
www.balmillig.co.uk

Superb 4 star accommodation minutes from the National Park's southern edge. An environmentally committed business also offering bespoke guided tours - day walking and mountain guiding.

• LOMOND LUXURY LODGES

Croftamie, By Glasgow G63 0EX
Tel: 01360 660054
email: info@lochlomond-holidays.co.uk
www.lochlomond-holidays.co.uk

5 Star luxury lodges located within the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park making this family-run business an ideal base for touring this truly exceptional area.

• CALLANDER ENTERPRISE

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

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

• LOCH LOMOND SEAPLANES

PO Box 26613, Helensburgh G84 9YG
Tel 01436675030
info@lochlomodseaplanes.com

Fly in a luxury seaplane back to the halcyon days of travel with a first class seat over the most magnificent landscape in the world. Take off from the romantic shores of Loch Lomond. Discovery tours from £129 to £169. Flight vouchers make the perfect gift.

If you would like to become a Friends supporter, please contact us today... FRIENDS OF LOCH LOMOND AND THE TROSSACHS, Carrochan, Carrochan Road, Balloch G83 8EG Telephone: 01389 727761 Email: info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk



Business Supporters £100 MINIMUM

• POPPIES HOTEL & RESTAURANT

Leny Road, Callander FK17 8AL
Tel: 01877 330 329
www.poppieshotel.com

• VENACHAR LOCHSIDE

Loch Venachar, Callander FK17 8HP
Tel: 01877 330 011
www.venachar-lochside.co.uk

• WHEELS CYCLING CENTRE - BIKES / HIRE

Invertrossachs Rd, Callander, FK17 8HW
Tel: 01877 331 100
www.scottish-cycling.com

• MAID OF THE LOCH

The Pier, Pier Road, Balloch G83 8QX
Tel: 01389 711865 www.maidoftheloch.com

• FOREST HOLIDAYS

Argyll Forest and Strathyre Tel 08451308223
www.forestholidays.co.uk

• WWW.HOLIDAYCOTTAGES.CO.UK

Tel: 01237 426287
www.holidaycottages.co.uk/scotland

• APPLEJACKS

2 Ancaster Square, Callander FK17 8ED.
Tel: 01877 330370

• PAUL SAUNDERS PHOTOGRAPHY

7 Gartness Court Drymen, Glasgow G63 0AX
Tel: 01360 661029
www.paulsaundersphotography.com

• FORTH INN

Main Street, Aberfoyle.
Tel: 01877 382372 www.forthinn.com

• DELI ECOSSE

Ancaster Square, Callander FK17 8ED.
Tel: 01877 331220 www.deliecosse.co.uk

• COTTAGES AND CASTLES

Tel: 01738 503601 holidaycottages.co.uk

Annual General Meetings Combo

Due to the prolonged periods of lockdown due to the COVID19, combined 2020 and 2021 AGMs were held online in April to ensure we complied with OSCR regulations and guidelines. The online meeting enabled some members to participate who do not normally attend our AGMs at Ross Priory. Following a review of the past two years and current priorities with the aid of visuals by Friends Chair, James Fraser, there was some lively discussion around visitor management issues and the welcome additional funding for the Park Authority which has received a record sum this year. Accounts and annual reports for both financial years were circulated and approved. Copies are available for viewing at www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk.

At the AGM, Elizabeth Bain, a former stalwart of the Community Partnership agreed to join the Board of Trustees. Prior to this she had kindly agreed to carry out an independent audit of two sets of the Friends accounts for submission to OSCR. Elizabeth is also an active Community Councillor in Lochgoilhead and a Trustee at Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre.



Loch Lomond Native Tree Planting

The Friends received many requests to purchase native tree planting gifts during lockdown and one of the more unusual and generous donations was from Janet More and family in memory of her parents Richard Dykes More & Aileen Irene May More.

Janet explains the choice of donation for tree planting on Loch Lomondside in their memory. "My father was Scottish (born in Ayrshire) so a honeymoon in Scotland was significant for my parents. Their honeymoon was in August 1952 and after their wedding in Exeter they travelled to Loch Lomond, staying in Aldochlay with a local family.

My parents also called the family home in Devon, Aldochlay, where they lived during their married lives. They planted trees in their garden for significant events such as the birth of a child. My mother planted a rowan tree at this house for my dad when he passed away.

My parents both gardened and enjoyed nature and we're sure would have appreciated the thought of trees being planted in their memory in the place that they spent their honeymoon"

Our thanks go to Janet and her family, for a very generous donation and discussions are under way regarding the restocking of oak and associated species in appropriate areas around Loch Lomond.

WELCOME ABOARD

We are pleased to welcome the following new members who have joined recently:

J SMITH - Individual
S CROCKER - Individual
A HARDMAN - Individual
J GREG - Individual
A MOODIE - Family

JOIN US NOW

By becoming a member for as little as £20, you can have the satisfaction that you are helping our efforts to conserve and enhance the National Park for the benefit of people and nature. You will also enjoy a range of discounts at a range of hospitality businesses and visitor attractions throughout the National Park.

If you are interested in becoming a member please contact Carol Lloyd on 01389 727761, by email info@lochlomondtrossachs.org, uk or join via our website www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk.

Friends Online Shop Success



During lockdown an increasing number of purchase were made through the Friends online shop at www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk/the-friends-shop, a useful source for unusual gifts, such as books, guides, DVDs or Friends branded clothing. Gifts that fund some of the practical conservation work we do to help keep the National Park a special place for years to come, including sponsoring a red squirrel feeding station or native tree planting, are very popular. We have teamed up with several local charities and businesses to increase awareness of, and to raise funding for, tree planting and red squirrel conservation activities.



Join us NOW

Help us make a difference



Protecting and nurturing the special qualities of the National Park.

Promoting and celebrating the natural and cultural heritage of the National Park.



Providing support for projects to make the National Park a better place for people and nature.

Working for people and nature in Scotland's first National Park
 Scottish Charities Registered SC015389

Find out more at: www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk





LAKE OF MENTEITH VISITOR MANAGEMENT PLAN APPROVED



A community-led working group supported by the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs and NatureScot undertook a community survey earlier this year to identify visitor management issues and to come forward with a series of short and medium term actions to improve the situation on the lakeside. The survey response was very high with almost half the households and most landowners responding with some very helpful suggestions that were incorporated in the final action plan. Key actions identified included the need

to improve parking and litter management near the lakeside and to provide toilets to cater for the growing number of visitors coming to the area. Conflicts between the use of the lake by anglers and non motorised watersports enthusiasts was also mentioned by a significant number of local residents, as was the growth in wild camping near the edge of the lake. The Community Council has reactivated a projects working group to try and progress some of the actions and to take advantage of current funding opportunities.



NEW LIFE FOR TROSSACHS SCHOOL

Probably all our readers know Brig o' Turk set at the mouth of Glen Finglas, nestled between Loch Venacher and Loch Achray in the heart of the Trossachs, famous for its traditional tearoom, recently refurbished by its new owners. With visitor development work by the Woodland Trust on the Glen Finglas Estate, the village has welcomed a steady increase in the number of visitors in recent years.

Exciting developments driven by the Trossachs Community Trust are also underway. In the past two years, the Trust have managed to bring in high-speed internet access for the community, which was a real game changer when Covid-19 and lock down struck.

So what of their latest project?

It's fair to say that when the Trossachs Primary School was mothballed in 2017 prior to its closure it led to a degree of disquiet and anger in the community. However, after a lot of negotiations with many parties, in March this year the Trust acquired the village

school building and has set about turning it into a community-led visitor centre. As with all the other activities of the Trust, this will operate on a not-for-profit basis with any surplus generated being ploughed back into other community projects.

'The Old Trossachs School' will feature a heritage display celebrating the diverse history of the village. It has seen hardy cattle drovers, rebels, folk heroes and Jacobites, as well as ground-breaking artists and innovative engineers, and the visitor centre will celebrate this diverse heritage. The school was a central part of the lives of villagers from its opening in 1875, and the stories and memories of pupils, teachers and parents within the school building will also feature.

With an ever-increasing number of visitors to the Trossachs, the facility will also have a small café to provide refreshments, complementing the other outlets in the area, and a shop to sell locally produced arts, crafts and food. It will also substantially increase the toilet facilities for visitors to



the village. This will create sustainable employment within the local community, as well as acting as a space where locals and visitors can meet. The project also ensures that this listed building will be looked after and can be of use to the community in perpetuity.

The Trossachs is renowned for the beauty of its landscape and the Trust is committed to safeguarding this natural heritage so they are installing environmentally sustainable biomass and solar energy systems and considering an electric car charging point. The Trust is asking anyone who has visited the Trossachs, or plans to in the future, to make a donation to help them raise the funds to complete the school's restoration and repurposing. If you would like to help, you can learn more about the project and donate at <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/the-old-trossachs-school>.

You can follow the redevelopment of The Old Trossachs School by liking their Facebook page or dipping into the website at Trossachs.org.uk

NATURESCOT BETTER PLACES FUNDING BOOST FOR LOCAL GROUPS

Bridget Jones, NatureScot's Green Recovery Fund Manager, said: "We are really pleased to be able to offer funding to help support visitor management activity in the National Park. Working with communities and local organisations helps to ensure one of Scotland's most spectacular and accessible places for experiencing nature and the outdoors is well looked after and enjoyed."

James Fraser, Chair of the Friends, added: "This is a welcome new funding scheme, which has enabled local groups to respond very quickly and come forward with practical schemes to address problems in visitor hotspots not currently being tackled by public agencies but which are seen as high priorities locally. I hope the scheme will be continued in future years as it empowers local groups to tackle visitor management issues, often in more cost effective and quicker ways than public bodies can manage."



Drymen Square

Local conservation and community groups in the National Park have secured funding support worth almost £200,000 for visitor management management activities in busy visitor locations during the 2021 summer season from the recently introduced NatureScot Better Places Green Recovery Fund. This follows on from awards to three groups in an earlier round for visitor management reviews and action plans. Schemes supported in the latest round include the employment of seasonal rangers and visitor services wardens by Strathfillan Development Trust, RSPB Loch Lomond and Cashel Forest Trust and the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs. The Friends and RSPB also secured funding for temporary toilets at busy Loch Lomond and Loch Long sites while Drymen Community Development Trust were awarded funds to carry out car park surface repairs and for the design and installation of interpretation boards to help manage visitor pressures in Drymen and East Loch Lomondside. The largest award winner was the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs who secured £68,000 for their ambitious Two Lochs Visitor Management Project which includes a pilot litter bin initiative on West Loch Lomond, provision of temporary toilets at Duck Bay and Arrochar and the employment of three seasonal Visitor Services Wardens in the busy Arrochar area.

SAVING OUR WILDLIFE CAMPAIGN

Pauline Lynch of Forest Holidays, which has sites at Strathyre and Ardgarten, outlines details of the new campaign to save wildlife in the National Park.



The Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park is home to a rich and diverse network of species. Red deer, badger, pine marten, red squirrel, black grouse, otter, brown hare, fox, beaver and hedgehog, to name but a few who thrive in the network of habitats provided by our varied and beautiful landscape. Sadly, evidence shows much of our wildlife is being killed on roads leading to, and within, the National Park. Most drivers see wildlife dead at the roadside every day and only a very small percentage of these incidents are reported which means the statistics we see are greatly under represented. In addition to those of us who live and work here, over 4 million visitors are expected to visit the area this year, further increasing the volume of vehicles on the roads. We are all proud that people want to come and enjoy what our National Park has to offer but I am sure most people agree it should not be to the detriment of our wildlife.

Forest Holidays began the 'Save Our Wildlife' campaign (SOW) in 2019, raising awareness with guests and suppliers asking them to 'Drive Slowly for Wildlife'. This involves posters, car window stickers, website messaging and social media. We also contact companies whose vehicles have been seen to be driven responsibly to thank them. But - we are only two locations within the 720 square miles of the National Park, we can't do this alone. We are asking local businesses and communities to help save our wildlife by joining our campaign to raise awareness of the problem. If we all come together we can protect biodiversity, reduce CO₂ emissions, reduce road traffic accidents and show visitors, customers and future generations that we care. To support the campaign and for additional information on wildlife casualty statistics, please contact Pauline.Lynch@forestholidays.co.uk.





CAMERON HOUSE GEARS UP TO RE-OPEN



Cameron House Hotel, the luxury five-star resort located on the banks of Loch Lomond, is well underway with a recruitment drive ahead of its re-opening on 1 August 2021.

Following the sensitive restoration of the historical 17th century Baronial mansion, which suffered extensive damage after a fire that resulted in the tragic death of two guests, Cameron House Hotel and Resort is gearing up to re-open with 140 bedrooms including 24 suites. The resort includes an award-winning spa with rooftop infinity pool, 18-hole championship golf course, a range of impressive restaurants and bars, elegant event and function spaces, a new state-of-the-art Leisure Club, 234-berth marina, and a choice of exhilarating and relaxing activities.

Over 300 new jobs have been created, spanning a range of departments including housekeeping, reception, food and beverage, sales and events, and kitchens and maintenance.

A major expansion of the hotel is also underway with additional bedrooms and a large function suite that won't open until later in the year. The total investment in restoring the original hotel and the major new additions is over £40 million.



HOLIDAY LODGES APPROVED



Forest Holidays

As part of an ongoing investment programme by Forest Holidays in the National Park, a further 12 high quality timber lodges have been given the green light by Park planners for the well established site at Strathyre. The lodges enjoy high year round occupancies and support a significant number of jobs on site with substantial economic benefits for nearby communities.

In Glen Dochart the owners of Luib Hotel are diversifying with the provision of four glamping lodges in the grounds which will greatly strengthen the viability of a fragile seasonal business.

Both these applications were supported by the Friends as they will strengthen existing businesses and meet a proven need for different forms of self-catering accommodation

LUSS WATERSPORTS EXPANSION CONCERNS

Luss & Arden Community Council, local residents and the Friends have all objected to plans to build a new jetty for watersports activity south of Luss Pier, which is currently a quiet area of the village waterfront enjoyed by families for sunbathing and swimming. The intensification of use by motorised craft and high speed rib passenger boats would destroy the character of this part of the historic conservation village. If consent is granted, the Friends have asked for strict planning conditions to be imposed, limiting the type of craft that can be used and the hours of operation.



Objectors believe the character of the southern beach and jetty would be destroyed with the introduction of a commercial watersports operation.

CAMPERVAN FACILITIES WELCOME

Two schemes to provide much needed campervan facilities have been welcomed by the Friends, as the growth in campervan and motorhome ownership continues to grow and the National Park's popularity grows.

In recent years the owners of Loch Goil Cruisers have invested heavily in improved shore facilities including a small popular café and associated changing facilities for watersports enthusiasts. Recently, planning permission was granted for a new car park with bays for campervans and motorhomes.

Imaginative plans for the use of a former breaker's yard near Gartocharn have also recently been approved and include the creation of a campsite and motorhome hire centre with a toilet block and associated landscaping.

A third scheme at Rushfield, north of Dunoon and adjacent to Lamont Lodges, is under consideration and is being supported by the Friends. This includes the provision of 18 bays for campervans and touring caravans and an area for camping with an amenities and reception building.



Tarbet Bay Motorhome Park or Car & Coach Park?

MAID STALWART STEPS DOWN

After almost 40 years trying to secure a long-term future for the famous Loch Lomond paddle steamer Maid of the Loch, John Beveridge has stepped down as both Chairman and a board member of the Loch Lomond Steamship Company.

John was instrumental in setting up the Steamship Company to save the Maid in 1995 and he remains the steamship's number one fan despite handing over the responsibility of owning, running and restoring the ship to others. Over many years John has put a huge amount of effort and time into securing the future of the Maid and helping to develop the ship as a popular attraction moored at Balloch Pier. He has led many of the fund-raising efforts and has been instrumental in transforming the historic ship.

John said: "The Maid has been a huge part of my life and I'm as full of enthusiasm for the ship as I've ever been, and I still believe in what she can do for the area, though it will take another major push to get her sailing again."

The charity's new acting chair, Iain Robertson, said: "John has made a tremendous contribution to throughout his years involved with the Maid and if it weren't for him and others who were founders of the charity, I think it is fair to say the Maid would have long ago been lost to the community and Scotland as a whole."



Loch Lomond Viewpoints Objections

The Friends lodged formal objections to plans to introduce large clusters of 3-5 metre insensitive and poorly sited signing for car park charging schemes at the popular scenic Tarbet and Inveruglas viewpoints. The Friends have argued introducing 13 tall signs and notices at each site interrupting stunning scenic views is excessive and have suggested lower and better positioned signing should be considered.

They also raised concerns about the plans to introduce charging for coaches at these busy sites as it sets a dangerous precedent in the National Park that could lead to the displacement of coaches to laybys and more coach traffic on narrow roads as they relocate or take alternative routes to specific destinations around the loch. One coaching holiday company owner has already advised this could lead to an additional 800 coach movements each year on the single track road winding through Strathard to the Inversnaid Hotel as opposed to simply transferring passengers by boat from Inveruglas to Inversnaid. Another has indicated they will simply pass along the lochside and not stop for cruises en route to other destinations.

The Friends have appealed to the National Park Authority to re-think their poorly thought through plans which seem contrary to their priorities to encourage sustainable transport, easing visitor management pressures and ameliorating the impact of climate change as they strive to support the Scottish Government's plan for a carbon neutral economy.

Meanwhile, there is growing concern locally that the existing car park at Tarbet has been largely taken over by motorhomes and campervans due to the proximity of the loch and the availability of a much needed effluent disposal point. A local working group has called on the Park Authority to come forward with an investment plan for the Tarbet site that involves greatly increasing the capacity of the car and coach park. The National Park has responded positively by including the site in a wider planned review of future visitor infrastructure investment requirements around Loch Lomond.

A83 GLEN CROE CORRIDOR PROPOSALS

The Otira Viaduct in Arthur's Pass, South Island, New Zealand, a site with some similarities to Glen Croe

The option of building a new replacement A83 road in the existing Glen Croe corridor in response to the recent Scottish Government consultation is gathering momentum and is strongly backed by the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs who favour a radical bridge and tunnel solution.

John Urquhart, Vice-Chair of the Friends, said: "We strongly support the selection of the Route Corridor 1 through Glen Croe as the preferred route corridor as this achieves the best of all outcomes."

John argues there are a number of reasons for adopting this particular option:

1. It reduces the length of tunnelling required, saving cost.
2. Well designed, the viaduct section would be a spectacular work of architecture and engineering, which would only add to the already iconic status of this famous gateway to Argyll.
3. Travellers will enjoy a thrilling visual experience as spectacular mountain views are dramatically revealed on exiting the tunnel.
4. Putting the road inside a tunnel will reduce traffic noise and free up space for a much needed improved car park and viewing area at the Rest and Be Thankful on what is a designated national scenic route.
5. The spoil from tunnelling could be used to partly infill and/or construct a causeway for the A83 across the head of Loch Long, thereby providing a neat solution to long standing and so far intractable multiple problems there relating to marine litter management, car parking, road safety and other traffic related issues in the village of Arrochar.

Glen Croe and the Rest and Be Thankful pass are outstanding scenic areas as well as being a vital transport corridor to mid-Argyll and Kintyre and it is important whatever mix of engineering solutions are chosen make the most of the setting and are designed to the highest standard. It is also important the tourism opportunities from the investment are maximised with an enhanced rest area/viewpoint and off highway safe cycleway path links perhaps using remnants of the redundant old roads.

In this respect, the abandoned section of the A83 carriageway between the Rest and the proposed tunnel exit above Glen Kinglass, as well as giving access to the B828 and the R&BT viewing area and car park, would allow for the creation of a stunningly scenic and essentially traffic free link by Loch Restil between the Glen Croe and Glen Kinglass sections of the Old Military Road, thus creating, for the first time, real potential to provide for continuous safe non-motorised journeys all the way from central Glasgow to the head of Loch.

LOCHGOILHEAD RIVER WALK PROJECT COMPLETED

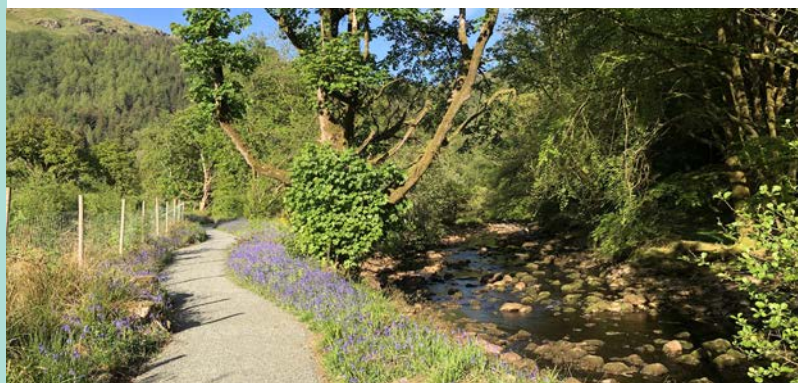
The River Walk in Lochgoilhead is a fine example of how community-led development can transform land use and open-up access to nature. In this beautiful village at the head of Loch Goil, the hills and mountains provide an epic backdrop to daily life. But not everyone is able to take advantage of the many local hill walks. Sometimes a pleasant stroll is all that's needed.

The River Walk provides a low-level, easy access path along the banks of the pretty River Goil. Starting in Lochgoilhead's friendly Community Park and Gardens, the first section was opened by Lochgoil Community Trust in November 2018. The path meanders through bluebells alongside the river, with picnic stops, places for a paddle and then onwards through a beech wood brimming with wildlife. Red squirrel sightings are pretty much guaranteed if you're quiet, and the nest boxes are becoming quite the des-res for bird life. Dippers, water voles, otters and kingfishers have all been spotted from the path.

In 2020, thanks to a grant from Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park and the generosity of our supporters and Forestry and Land Scotland, the construction of a second phase of the River Walk began. This 3km section runs alongside the river, following the route of a long-abandoned, ancient track from Lochgoilhead to the foot of Hell's Glen at the B839.

COVID-19 restrictions severely impacted the project but, recognising the importance of such paths for permitted daily exercise, Lochgoil Community Trust volunteers worked in household groups to get construction underway. The bulk of development then took place through the depths of Winter, ensuring that the path would be open to visitors as restrictions eased.

Continuing from the end of the current River Walk, this newly opened section begins with a forestry access road, before narrowing down to a pleasant footpath, passing through managed forestry and native Atlantic oak woodlands, finally opening to spectacular views across farmland and the River Goil glen. Benches provide places to take a well-earned break and take in the scenery. Informal nature trails extend through the woodlands, enabling more adventurous walkers to explore along the banks of the River Goil.



Friends National Park Heritage Experts Tributes

Friends Chair, James Fraser, pays tribute to Friends Honorary Members and local natural and cultural heritage experts Keith Graham and Louis Stott, who were prolific writers on different aspects of the National Park and were regular contributors to every edition of Voice over the past decade. They both sadly passed away peacefully over the winter months and due to COVID 19 restrictions we were unable to be present at their funerals.

Louis Stott (1934-2021)

Louis was born in Brighton, educated as a geographer at Oxford University and spent most of his professional life in education. He moved to Scotland in 1974 to work with the Council in Dumbarton and he eventually settled in Aberfoyle and ran a bookshop in Dunblane for many years.

Louis' work was always well researched, well presented and accessible. He is the author of a number of books on Scottish history and literature including *Scottish History in Verse*, a unique anthology of over 200 poems and songs marking the glories and tragedies of Scottish history.

Locally, he produced many books and articles on topics such as the Aberfoyle Slate Quarries, *The Enchantment of the Forest*, *Faeries of the Trossachs* and *Waterfalls of Scotland*. He regularly contributed interesting heritage articles to the *Friends Voice* magazine, full of rich nuggets of information from his meticulous research.

At a special award ceremony in Aberfoyle in 2017, Louis received an award from the British Association for Local History, one of the Association's six UK awards for Personal Achievement for Local Historians. Louis was the single Scottish recipient for 2017. Local historians who have made significant voluntary contributions to the subject in their own areas and more widely are publicly honoured by the BALH Awards for Personal Achievement.

Alan Simpson, Lord-Lieutenant for Stirling and Falkirk, presented the award and paid tribute to Louis Stott's longstanding voluntary effort. He stated: "Louis has made an extraordinary contribution to local history over very many years by carrying out rigorous research into different aspects of local history and publishing his findings in an interesting and accessible manner. In addition he has written books on Scottish history and literature and is always only too glad to pass on his knowledge through lectures, discussions, letters or his blog. For Louis to receive this award from the British Association of Local History is a well deserved recognition and endorsement of his dedication to local history in this area."

Louis upon receiving the award stated: "I want to start by thanking the British Association for Local History and those who nominated me. My longstanding interest in local history began in Watford when I set up *Exploring Hertfordshire*. Involvement in setting up courses in various parts of the UK has been important is establishing future historians and then a major move in Dumbarton on the Quality of Life Experiment.

Laterally this beautiful area has given me a rich vein of material to explore and describe. Receiving an award which does not bring any tasks or obligations is a relief since it will allow me to continue my efforts in local history."



Above: Louis pictured at a special awards ceremony in Aberfoyle in 2017 to recognise his contribution to local history, left to right: Alan Simpson Lord Lieutenant of Stirling, Louis Stott, James Kennedy from Strathard Heritage Group and James Fraser.

Keith Graham (1932-2020)

I first came across Keith in 1983 when he was one of a small band of pioneering Countryside Rangers in Scotland and his contribution was recognised when he was made an honorary Vice-President of the Scottish Countryside Ranger Service some years later. He was employed by



Stirling County Council and then Stirling District Council and his regular beat was the Trossachs, Breadalbane and East Loch Lomond well before the formation of the National Park in 2002. He used to tell me stories of irresponsible camping and littering on lochshores and very little has changed since though camping byelaws and greatly strengthened ranger services have helped to get on top of some of the issues in recent years following an explosion in outdoor recreation since these early days.

I recognised early on that Keith was a talented writer on all things to do with the countryside and I regularly commissioned him to write descriptive copy for tourist guides and calendars over a 20 year period while I was chief of the local Tourist Board. His descriptive copy on the landscapes and heritage sites of Central Scotland and Argyll have been read by many millions of UK and overseas visitors.

In his spare time Keith was a talented cricketer and played for many years with Stirling County Cricket Club. He was captain of the club in the 1980s and was subsequently, Captain of Comrie Cricket Club he was also BBC Radio Scotland's cricket commentator. He was a great narrator and photographer and could be found most Monday evenings in the Ancaster Arms Hotel enthralled a packed house of visitors with the natural wonders and stories of the Trossachs. This show ran for many years throughout the main tourist season until he started touring the UK with talented singer Mary Sandeman and violinist Bob Christie with their Celtic Tapestry Show which also played to full houses. Also, for several years he filled a weekly wildlife slot on BBC Scotland's "McGregor's Gathering." However, Keith is best known for his weekly Country View nature column in the *Stirling Observer* which ran for almost 50 years and gave readers wonderful insights to wildlife in the National Park throughout the seasons. He was a very gifted writer whose vivid descriptions of the behaviours of different creatures and varied landscapes through the changing seasons enthralled his many readers. He very kindly allowed us to post his weekly nature rambles to the Friends facebook page and this was picked up by many business in the National Park to share with their guests. He also wrote a regular double page spread on *Nature of the Park* for our *Voice* magazine which is all the poorer for his passing. He has written several wildlife books, including some in the Colin Baxter wildlife series, and published two collections of his own work.

In recognition of his outstanding contribution to the community (he was a CC member for over 20 years), he received a Civic Award from the Provost of Stirling in 2014

He is survived by his wife Valerie and four stepsons, the youngest of whom, Callum, followed in his footsteps to become a countryside ranger. They continue to live in Port of Menteith where Keith enjoyed many a dram of whisky with his wide network of friends in the Lake of Menteith Hotel discussing the affairs of the day which he reliably informed me was one of the important duties he performed as a local Community Councillor of many years dedicated service!



Both Louis and Keith will be sadly missed and they leave behind them a rich legacy of natural and cultural heritage articles and publications which will continue to be a source of inspiration to anyone interested in aspects of the National Park's diverse heritage. It has been a privilege to know them both.



The new glamping pods at Bridgend, Callander



Two important Iron Age hillforts close to Callander will be excavated later in 2021. Dr Ross Crawford of Callander's Landscape describes the sites and plans for the digs.

Drone Survey of Dunmore (Photo by Skyscape Survey_FLS)

Accessible Glamping in Callander

Callander has an exciting new self-catering option for visitors with some of the best views in the popular Trossachs town. Independent youth charity, Callander Youth Project Trust (CYP), has added four luxury glamping pods to its already successful hostel, a social enterprise that supports its core aims to provide local employability and training for young people in the local rural area.

The four self-contained pods boast unrivalled views across the River Teith to Ben Ledi and fit beautifully into the landscape. Manager of CYP, Patricia Kent, said: "The draw of the National Park is obviously a huge attraction for our guests, so it's ideal for us to be able to offer these views on their doorstep whilst still maintaining the easy access to all the amenities offered within Callander.

"Operating within the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park, the hospitality industry is a significant source of employment for the young people with whom we work. Our social enterprises allow us to offer supported job roles (Community Jobs Scotland) and to deliver Modern Apprenticeships in Hospitality, through both our holiday accommodation and our functions venue.

"Perhaps the most significant part of the development is our fourth pod. Designed to be fully-accessible, this eco-lodge comes complete with a hoist and Changing Places style bathroom, amongst various other features. A lack of accessible access to the accommodation within our main building has long been one of its limitations. Being able to offer ground floor accommodation through our pods – and in particular the additional features included in our fully-accessible pod – was a key driving force in the development of this project.

"We're excited that the pods will allow us to welcome a wider range of guests to Callander. We're also keen to share the learning experience behind our fully-accessible pod to any other local accommodation providers who might be looking to implement something similar in the future."

Information and bookings at www.cyp.org.uk.

Iron Age Hillforts in Callander

Dunmore Hillfort is one of the most well-known archaeological sites in the area and is often seen as the "jewel in the crown" of Iron Age Callander. It sits on the northern edge of Loch Venachar and offers fantastic panoramic views of the surrounding landscape. It is a naturally defensible location, with steep cliff sides on the southern side, which Iron Age peoples reinforced with three or four ramparts along the flatter western edge of the hilltop. A recent drone survey was undertaken as part of this project thanks to funding from Forestry and Land Scotland. This helped to define the shape and extent of the hillfort's ramparts, as well as identify the possible presence of round-house platforms on the summit.

Given its proximity to the Roman Camp at Bochastle, Dunmore's possible connections to the Roman invasion around 80 CE are tantalising. Did native Iron Age peoples witness the intimidating advance of Agricola's Roman legions marching up through the Pass of Leny? We hope to find dating evidence at Dunmore to find out if this is more than just an exciting theory.

Auchenlaich Hillfort is a lesser-known site, tucked away amidst conifer plantation in Keltie Glen. It is more difficult to pick out obvious archaeological features at Auchenlaich, with only a single enclosing rampart around the hilltop and an external ditch on the north-west and south-east sides, but that only lends to its intrigue. Compared to Dunmore which we presume was a high-status settlement with a probable defensive function, it is possible that Auchenlaich represents a different "type" of hillfort, possibly functioning as a proto-urban centre.

We believe there could have been intervisibility between Auchenlaich and Dunmore, but we do not know if they were active at the same time, or whether they were occupied centuries apart. But we hope to find out!

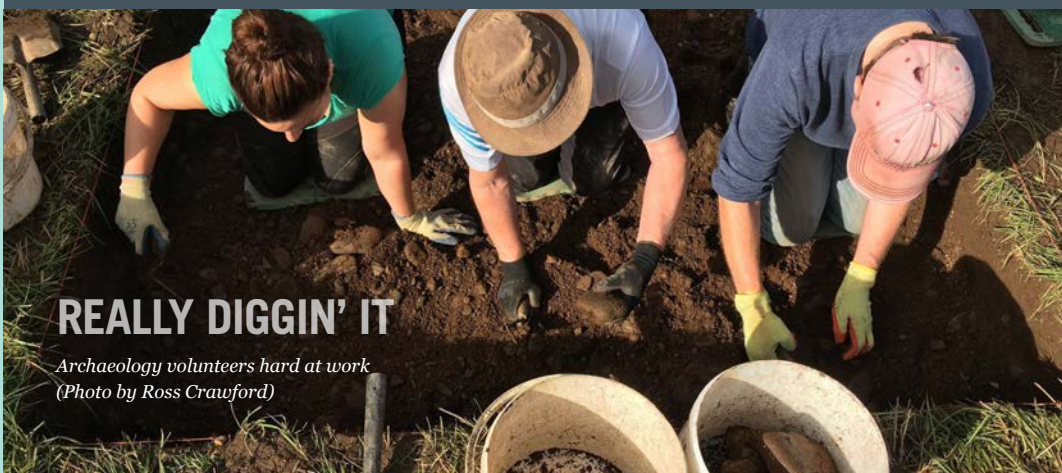
Both sites will be investigated through a series of small, hand-excavated trenches at key areas of the sites, such as ramparts, entrances, annexes, and interiors. Hopefully we will find dating evidence which will allow us to quickly build up a chronology of occupation and thereby expand our knowledge of Iron Age Callander. There are thought to be two other hillforts in the Torrie area of Callander which only serves to underline the richness of the archaeological record.

These two important sites at Dunmore and Auchenlaich have been researched and selected by the Callander Heritage Society, who will coordinate the excavations in partnership with the National Park Authority and AOC Archaeology. There will be a programme of events and engagement, including involvement from local schools and volunteers. We are aiming for the fieldwork to take place in June and September, if government restrictions allow.

We would like to thank Historic Environment Scotland, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Forestry and Land Scotland for funding this project, as well as the landowners - the Woodland Trust and Cambusmore Estate Trust - for all their support.

If you would like to keep updated on this project, please sign up to the Callander's Landscape mailing list by emailing clpadmin@lochlomond-trossachs.org

You can also follow the Callander Heritage Society on Facebook: www.facebook.com/callanderheritage



REALLY DIGGIN' IT

Archaeology volunteers hard at work (Photo by Ross Crawford)



Callander's Vibrant Gaelic Heritage

The Callander's Landscape Gaelic project recently produced two resources which celebrate the richness of Callander's Gaelic heritage.

The first of these is a comic, entitled Calasraid: Àite nan Sgeulachdan / Callander: Place of the Stories, which retells four stories from Callander's Gaelic tradition. These include a depiction of a terrifying incident involving the each-uisge (water horse) lurking in Loch Venachar, and a bloody clan battle between the Buchanans and the MacLarens.

Local school pupils in Callander and Stirling were involved in the whole process, from choosing the stories, designing characters, and writing dialogue. Along the way, the pupils also learned some Gaelic words, phrases, and sound-effects!

Since all the stories originate from Callander's Gaelic tradition, the dialogue is presented first in Gaelic, with simultaneous translation in English to support language acquisition.

You can pick up a free copy from Karnak Comics on Callander Main Street or read it for free online here: www.callanderslandscape.org/projects/gaelic-comic/

More recently, Callander's Landscape launched an online Gaelic Points of Interest storymap, which allows you to explore a selection of Gaelic place-names around Callander: <https://interestingwalks.com/gaelicplaces>

Most of Callander's famous landmarks, from Ben Ledi to Bracklinn Falls, originate from Gaelic names, but their meanings in English are not always understood. Did you know, for example, that Gaels refer to Callander as Calasraid (cah-lus-suhratch), which means "harbour street"?

This new resource directs you to 12 points around Callander which have interesting place-names nearby, and to aid your pronunciation, we have included a sound-file for each place-name. You can explore these when you're out and about in Callander, or from the comfort of your own home!



Cycling Friendly Trossachs

Callander Meander Group, on behalf of Callander Development Community Development Trust, recently gained the Silver Cycle Friendly Community Award from Cycling Scotland in recognition of their efforts to support and encourage cycling in Callander. The nationally recognised award celebrates community groups who are taking a leading role in ensuring that anyone, anywhere can enjoy the benefits of cycling and aims to promote cycling as a pleasant, healthy and economical travel choice.

The Meander Group and Development Trust demonstrated their commitment to cycling by working closely with Loch Lomond and Trossachs Countryside Trust Active Travel Officer, Jim Riach, to increase awareness of active travel and develop an Active Travel Action Plan for Callander. Meander Group coordinator Colin Welsh, said, "We recognise the environmental, social and health benefits of cycling and encourage everyone to make more short journeys in the National Park by bike. Cycling has given many of us more freedom and has provided an opportunity for independent travel with minimal impact on our environment.

"Working with the Countryside Trust has assisted and encouraged more people to cycle and join our cycling group and we are grateful to them for their support in our journey to become a Cycle Friendly Community."

Jim Riach, the Trust's Active Travel Officer, said, "I was very impressed by the innovation of the group setting up a messenger group during lockdown to share individual rides and experiences and to continue to support each other and stay in touch socially when group rides were not permitted. The group has gone from strength to strength and their work in lobbying for further improvements for cycling in the community benefits everyone.

"It's great to see a real 'Cycle Friendly Corridor' developing making this area a fantastic place to live and work for cyclists and somewhere where cyclists are welcome. The Cycle Friendly Communities, Gravelfoyle way-marked trails at Aberfoyle and the Trossachs Trail are all starting to gel to make this a great place to ride your bike."



The Callander Meander Group meets in Ancaster Square on Tuesday mornings at 10am, for a gentle ride of up to about 10 miles, depending on the participants' abilities on the day, followed by refreshments. Everyone is welcome (with their bike), both residents and visitors, and there is no need to book.



New Home for Visitor Information Centre

Callander's community-led visitor information centre is now re-opened and ready to offer a warm welcome after missing last season due to the pandemic. It has a new location in the former Royal Bank of Scotland building at 55 Main Street, close to Ancaster Square in the town centre.

An expert team of local volunteers are on hand to share their love of Callander and the Trossachs and advise visitors on the best that the area has to offer. Drop in for information or to find a souvenir of your visit.

The centre was set up in 2019 by a partnership between the Steamship Sir Walter Scott and Callander's Community Development Trust and Community Council.

Open from 11 June on Fridays to Sundays, hopefully building up to 7 days a week, depending on demand. Visitor information is also available online at www.visitcallander.uk.



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A WALK IN THE PARK

In the latest in a series of articles covering some of the best short walks in and around the National Park, Friends Vice Chair, John Urquhart, visits the western end of The Great Trossachs Path where it winds its way from Inversnaid on Loch Lomondside to Stronachlachar at Loch Katrine.



Clearly we weren't the only ones using newly restored freedoms to venture further afield, for when we arrived at 10.30, Inversnaid's car park was already half full. We had left bikes at the head of Loch Arklet, the plan being to re-visit the western end of the The Great Trossachs Path, which we had last visited shortly after its construction 10 years ago. Then it was all very raw with a still unconsolidated surface making the walking less than ideal.

You begin with a delightful kilometre winding up through the oak woods which clothe the steep slopes south of the waterfalls. Inversnaid ('Needle mouth') may get its name from the way the lower fall divides on either side of a central rock outcrop giving the appearance of the eye of a needle when viewed from the opposite side of the loch.

Rhododendrons are a serious problem in the area so we were pleased to see a notice that NatureScot plan an eradication programme. Above the upper fall some careless visitors had completely burnt through the bench there with one of those throw away BBQ trays which should be banned. A still smoking camp fire and a large collection of fuel wood attested to the recent presence of the culprits, possibly the two lads we had seen earlier loading their car at the foot of the steps leading up to the bridge over the falls.

The presence of the falls indicates that Glen

Arklet is a 'hanging valley', its floor being around 100 metres above Loch Lomond, which occupies the much deeper trough cut by the more powerful Loch Lomond glacier flowing south from Scotland's central ice cap during peak discharge episodes or glacial 'maxima'. The loch is at its deepest (150m+) just south of Inversnaid.

On the easier gradients above the 100 metre contour we soon arrived at Rob Roy's View. A couple of motor homes were parked up, jumping the government's gun on overnight stays. A short path leads up to the viewpoint where the interpretation provided by Stirling Council still survives, its 1966 installation catching my eye as that was the year I left school!

Re-crossing Arklet Water, a right turn took us along the public road to the Bothy Bistro where the owner was busy sprucing up the lovely old church building ready for re-opening. 500m further on the path leaves the public road and heads up by Inversnaid Garrison which dates back to the time of the Jacobite rebellions and is now operated as The Garrison B&B. Just behind the Garrison the RSPB has a visitor centre which serves their neighbouring Inversnaid Reserve; drifting across the moor, right on cue, came the unmistakeable two notes of a cuckoo claiming its 2021 territory. Now we were on the new Great Trossachs

Path, which we are delighted to report has now bedded in well. The path is however becoming overgrown in places with goat willow in particular colonising the surface and margins. As the area is now within The Great Trossachs Forest, there has been considerable planting of native broad leaves like rowan and birch. The trees are still small, but the plaintive notes of willow warbler, abundant owl pellets, a shrew, green hairstreak, meadow brown and orange-tip butterflies were all indications of the improving biodiversity.

As we approached the end of our walk, it was clear the trail had been extensively repaired following the extreme rainfall event a couple of years ago, which necessitated closure of the road around Loch Katrine for over a year (it was only re-opened earlier this year). Five minutes on the bikes took us down there, where sadly, Stronachlachar's excellent Pier Tearoom and its scones had yet to emerge from lockdown.

With the east wind behind us, 30 minutes was enough to cover the 8km return ride back to Inversnaid, where, with boots off and coffee flask to hand, we sat down by the bonnie banks to watch the antics of the speed boats and jet bikes and ponder how the National Park would cope with the coming post lockdown summer.



For more information about The Great Trossachs Path visit thegreattrossachsforest.co.uk

Nature of the Park



Here with the help of Emma Martinella, Community Engagement Officer from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) we explore the important conservation work and efforts being made by the charity to connect people with nature in two very special parts of Loch Lomond.

RSPB SCOTLAND LOCH LOMOND

Summer at RSPB Scotland Loch Lomond is a wonderful time of year. Staff and volunteers are getting back to what they are passionate about, wildlife, conservation and inspiring visitors. Flowers seem to be even more abundant and bird song even clearer and more beautiful than previous years. Maybe that's because many of us were unable to visit during our favourite seasons last year.

Luckily for us, some of our volunteer work force has been able to continue during lockdown. They've been carrying out vital work across the site including litter picking, surveys, scrub removal, path maintenance and fence repairs and checks. It's now getting into invasive non-native species removal season and for the next couple of months teams will be out checking for and removing plants such as Himalayan balsam, few-flowered leek and skunk cabbage. RSPB Loch Lomond has a wonderful diversity of plant life so keeping on top of these species allows the native plants to flourish.

We are now planning events and activities for the summer and have some exciting plans. One of the projects we have been working on is with artist-researcher Hannah Imlach, whose PhD project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, is based within the reserve. Hannah is researching the sensory world of moths and creating a moth encounter artwork to be temporarily installed on-site. The artwork, titled Moth Kota, takes its inspiration from moth traps and traditional pyramidal shelters such as the Finnish Kota or Gohti (Northern Sámi). In July we will be hosting a series of guided events, inviting people to experience the Moth Kota. Look out for

project and ticket information on our website and on social media.

WILDLIFE SIGHTINGS

Our visitor experience volunteers are delighted to be returning to share news, wildlife sightings and information with visitors. As with many places around Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park, we are gearing up for a busier season than usual and have introduced a new volunteering role to manage this. Roving visitor experience volunteers will be working between RSPB Loch Lomond and RSPB Inversnaid, inspiring people about wildlife, recording sightings, managing and reporting irresponsible behaviour and promoting a litter free environment. We have already had many of our current volunteers sign up for this role, but we are looking for new ones too. If this or any other volunteering opportunities sound of interest to you, then please get in touch.

As well as events and new volunteering opportunities, RSPB Loch Lomond has some exciting plans for 2021. We are creating a new area of wetland onsite with funding from National Lottery Heritage Fund as part of Froglife's Come Forth for Wildlife project. The work is taking place in one of the notoriously wet and rush dominated fields. It will provide a much more varied habitat and will benefit a range of species including lapwings, snipe, geese, frogs, toads and newts. The plan is to create four pools connected by ditches with an inbuilt ability to control the water level. This means that in the summer we can keep the levels low for waders feeding on the banks, and in winter we would keep it higher for ducks, geese and swans. We hope that by creating this habitat, we will encourage a range of species to an area previously low in biodiversity. We have also been working on a new



*Osprey with a fish at Gartocharn
Photograph by David McCulloch*

path linking our visitor facilities to the Loch Lomond shore. Planning permission has been granted and if our funding applications are successful, we hope to start the work this year. This new path will weave its way through the site allowing visitors to experience some of the more unusual habitats and wildlife found here. Encouraging different groups into the outdoors, inspiring visitors with iconic Scottish wildlife and opening up access to a wider part of the reserve is vital to our mission to protect nature. People should have the opportunity to experience these special areas for themselves and this proposed route will allow them the chance to do this. The route of the path has been planned following a thorough process and the proposed route has been chosen to have the least possible impact on wildlife and habitats. This combined with our fantastic team of staff and volunteers will hopefully add to more and more people understanding, appreciating and taking action for nature.

If you would like to hear more about volunteering opportunities or any other information, please visit the website www.rspb.org.uk/lochlomond or email loch.lomond@rspb.org.uk

RSPB SCOTLAND INVERRNAID

For those of you who are not familiar with RSPB Scotland Inversnaid, we own and manage just over 800 hectares of ground directly north from Inversnaid village. Around three miles of the West Highland Way pass through the reserve, and it stretches all the way from the lochside up to the summit of Beinn a' Choin (770m). The reserve is a mixture of woodland and upland habitat and is home to black grouse and a diverse suite of woodland species.

Inversnaid reserve has been going through quite a transformation in the past ten years. Over 100ha has been planted with native woodland, with areas of natural regeneration eventually expected to make up roughly the same area again. This woodland will link up with other existing and establishing woodlands, to create continuous wooded areas across The Great Trossachs Forest; an area of some 16,000 hectares of partnership between RSPB, Forestry and Land Scotland, and the Woodland Trust.

Black grouse, a major focus of our work, have been responding well to the changes in habitat. They prefer a mosaic of grazed land, scrub and regenerating woodland. Numbers have been increasing as the new woodland begins to establish and a reduction in grazing has allowed for more scrub cover, with at least five males displaying on the reserve this year.

Temperate Rainforest

The condition of Pollochro Woods remains a major concern and a focus for our work at Inversnaid. Pollochro Woods is shared between RSPB Inversnaid and Glen Falloch Estate to our north and is internationally important due to its designation as Atlantic Oak Woodland. Commonly referred to as temperate rainforest, this habitat is typified by mild temperatures year-round and heavy rainfall, resulting in a plethora of lichens and mosses. We are also blessed with a healthy woodland bird population, including pied flycatcher, wood warbler, redstart and tree pipit.

At present, a lack of regeneration means that the woodland and its associated species are on borrowed time. As mature trees die off there are no young trees to take their place which, in turn, allows bracken to colonise areas, further hindering regeneration. If left unchecked, these areas of bracken will grow and grow until the woodland completely disappears. Not only do you lose the canopy cover above ground when the trees go, but the roots form a vast nutrient transport system below ground which plays an important part in providing a nutrient rich ground flora.

Through monitoring and partnership work, we have identified that the herbivore browsing pressure through the woodland is many times that which would allow successful regeneration. As well as red deer, Inversnaid and its surrounding area are home to large feral goat population.

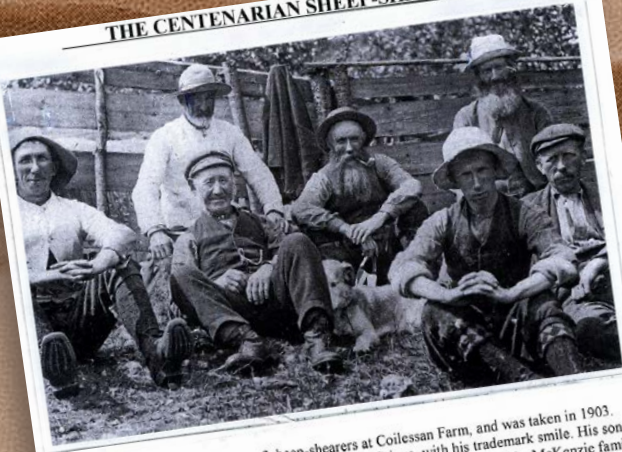
At present, we are working with neighbouring properties and partnership organisations in the National Park to help lower these pressures. If we can reduce herbivore numbers enough, it has been shown that there is still a good seed source in the area that will allow the woodland to regenerate and recover. Getting the woodland back into a more natural balance is now at an urgency, and there is a real risk of losing it all together if further action is not taken.

Let's give
nature
a home
rspb.org.uk

We are now planning events and activities for the summer and have some exciting plans.



THE CENTENARIAN SHEEP-SHEARER



This photograph depicts a group of sheep-shearers at Coileissan Farm, and was taken in 1903. Centre stage with watch-chain is centenarian James Grieve, with his trademark smile. His son William is the man at the back, on the right hand side. Several members of the McKenzie family, who had the tenancy of Coileissan Farm are also shown. They include the man on the left of James, and his brother on the extreme right. There is surely a family resemblance with the young man nearest the camera: perhaps he is a younger brother.

Coileissan Farm covered a very large area, extending to Mark and beyond, so on an occasion like this, with only manual hand shears in use, it would have been a case of all hands to the pumps to get through the work. Although no sheep are to be seen, it was the Blackface breed that held sway here, and on most surrounding farms. The fleeces were packed into huge hessian bags, and at the appropriate time were taken to the water's edge, where a flotilla of small boats were loaded with an impossibly high pile, before being rowed out to a paddle steamer on its regular passenger run. At such a time, loading would have to have been carried out quickly, in order not to delay the timetable of the steamer. In fact, other photographs exist, showing this very process taking place, possibly taken the day after this picture.

It can thus be seen that the men shown here would have needed not only strength, skill and stamina, but also nerves of steel when taking the heavily laden boats out to meet the steamer - the very qualities required of MBA volunteers at work-parties!

To-day, with manpower on hill farms minimal, much of the sheep-shearing work is contracted out. Sadly, the bottom has dropped out of the market for hill sheep wool, and sheep-shearing, which must be done by law, is generally uneconomic.

Local historian Alistair McIntyre investigates the mystery surrounding the story of Scotland's oldest man who lived on the shores of Loch Long.

On the trail of SCOTLAND

People have long been drawn to the exceptional, a trait exemplified a century ago by the steady flow of visitors that beat a path to Portincapple to take the short crossing of Loch Long to the home of James Grieve, Scotland's 'Oldest Man' whose life has been immortalised through the many postcards produced as a result of his fame.

But what is the story behind the picture? As we shall discover, James was not quite the person he appeared to be.

In 1903, James had joined the household of his son, William, at Mark, a little cottage standing on a headland by the shores of Loch Long, diagonally across from Portincapple. William himself had moved there with his own family the year before, and was employed as a shepherd with Coileissan Farm. Sitting at the foot of the rugged stretch of hill country known as "Argyll's Bowling Green", the setting of Mark could hardly have been more spectacular.

OLDEST CITIZEN

Another important circumstance, that goes some way to explain the publicity that came to surround James, was the gifting in 1906 of the Bowling Green, to the City of Glasgow, by its then owner, A. Cameron Corbett (later Lord Rowallan). In consequence, Mark and its surrounds came under Glasgow Corporation's Parks Department from that time onwards. It even led to the proud boast that James was Glasgow's oldest citizen.

On 29 November 1910, Mr Grieve's obituary was published by the Glasgow Herald under the heading, "Death of Oldest Scot".

"James Grieve, aged 110 years, died at Corantee, Loch Eck, on the Benmore Estate. Born at Glengarry, Inverness-shire...he was 15 years of age when Waterloo was fought, and well remembers the rejoicings when the great victory was announced.... He is to be buried at Kilmun Cemetery tomorrow."

Quite different in tone is the recollection of a visit earlier in the 20th century, quoted in that delightful book, Tea at Miss Cranston's.

"We used to take a wee boat across Loch Long and beach it on the shore near a cottage where an old man lived. He would've been maybe 98 years old the first time we were there, then up to a 101 in the next three. It was quite the thing for holiday-makers to go and just look at this old chap, sitting outside the cottage and selling postcards of himself as souvenirs.

"'How are you the day?', you used to ask. 'Och I'm fine....fine', says he. Same thing every time. He just made a living out of being a hundred."

D'S OLDEST MAN

OPEN AND SHUT CASE

But how well does the story match what is recorded in the official records? A good starting point is the death certificate which gives the date of death as 26 November, 1910 and states that his father was Walter Grieve, shepherd, while his mother's name is given as Catherine. He was the widower of Annie McCallum. The informant was William, the son of James. Crucially, the age of the deceased is given as 110 years. It would thus seem to be an open and shut case.

Extraordinary claims require cast-iron evidence and some slight doubt might creep in based on the evidence of a photograph of sheep-shearing at Coilessan Farm, taken in 1903. Among the hardy-looking bunch of sheep-shearers is none other than James. Also present is his son William. Could a man of 103 really contribute to such heavy work?

No evidence could be found of the birth of a James Grieve between 1797 and 1820, but a search under the less common surname of GREIVE did yield a result. The birth of a James Greive was recorded, with Walter Greive, shepherd at Glenquaich, as father, in the parish of Glenelg, Inverness-shire. However, the date of birth was not around 1800, but was given as 1 November, 1814. The same parish records were also found to contain

the birth of a son, William, to a Walter Grieve, shepherd at Glenquaich, on 11 November 1810. It looks very much as if Walter Grieve and Walter Greive were one and the same person.

The William Grieve who witnessed the death certificate of 1910 was unable to supply a signature, only his mark. The implication is that he was illiterate. It seems reasonable to suppose that his parents might well have been likewise, and perhaps his grandfather too. All these people were born in an era well before compulsory education, and although there would have been parish schools, anyone living in an out-of-the-way place could easily have missed out.

KEY TO THE MYSTERY

But what of the Glasgow Herald story about celebrating victory at Waterloo? At first glance, that might seem to threaten the integrity of this whole account. But could it in fact hold the key to the mystery of Grieve's erroneous age?

With a birth date of 1814, it is easy to imagine James Grieve being exposed to tales about the Waterloo celebrations as he grew up. As an adult, these might well have been added to his own repertoire of stories, and as he aged, it's not too difficult to imagine the perception

coming about that he had actually been a participant. It may even be that over time, he himself began to imagine that this was so. That in turn might help explain a report that he was born on 1 January 1800, which does seem a trifle suspicious.

Of course, we shall never know the truth for sure. But that might not really be a bad thing; surely the best stories always have an element of mystery about them! And as for James, retaining the ability to help at sheep-shearing when in his late eighties, must be something worth celebrating.

As a footnote, it might be observed that even if James had reached 110 years of age, he would still have been a relative youngster compared with certain others. At the top end of the island of Jura, there is a headstone which reads:

*Mary MacCrain died 1856, aged 128
Descendant of Gillour MacCrain
Who kept 180 Christmases in his own house
And who died in the reign of Charles I*

Beat that!

James Grieve, Scotland's 'Oldest Man' whose life has been immortalised through the many postcards produced as a result of his fame



View from a bench

Friends Trustee Paul Saunders is out and about regularly in the National Park taking pictures for his popular See Loch Lomond website which is an on-line guide to things to see and do in the National Park. Visit www.seelochlomond.co.uk.

Here Paul shares some pictures from one of his more unusual articles on benches with a view throughout the National Park.



Balloch Castle Country Park



Inveruglas



Loch Venachar



On Aber Shore, Gartocharn



A bench view looking towards Incheailloch Island

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