

The Voice

The magazine of the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs



**ALSO INSIDE
THIS ISSUE:**

SOS Steamship Appeal, Visitor Management in Action, News Updates, Climate Change in Focus, Walk in the Park *and more*

CAWLEY

HOTELS & RESTAURANTS



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Duck Bay is one of Scotland's finest restaurants offering international cuisine in a breath-taking environment overlooking Loch Lomond and the majestic Ben Lomond. Open every day from 9am, Duck Bay is the perfect base for touring, outdoor activities, leisure pursuits or relaxing on the bonnie banks.



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Duck Bay Loch Lomond G83 8QZ Tel: 01389 751234

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30 Main Road, Langbank PA14 6XR Tel: 01475 541254

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Our family style grill menu is available from noon with last orders at 10pm. Our 7 Day Carvery serves a choice of succulent roasts with all the trimmings.

Largs Road, Lochwinnoch PA12 4JF Tel: 01505 843848

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Boardwalk at Falkirk is open daily from 9am serving freshly ground coffees & speciality teas, wines, champagnes, spirits, malt whiskies and fabulous cocktails. Breakfast is served from 9am until noon. Our extensive menu is available from noon onwards until last orders at 10pm. Our 7 Day Carvery offers a great selection of succulent roasts with all the trimmings.



Ideally situated for visiting The Falkirk Wheel and The Helix Kelpies, Bobby's is the perfect stop for a light lunch, afternoon tea or refreshment.

Our Bar Menu is available from noon. Afternoon Tea is served daily from noon until 5pm. Open every evening serving refreshing drinks, cocktails, wines, spirits, malts, prosecco and champagne.

Millennium Wheel Drive, Falkirk FK1 4AD Tel: 01324 272427

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Duck Bay Loch Lomond G83 8QZ Tel: 01389 751234

RIVER HOUSE

River House at Stirling is open every day from 9am serving freshly ground coffees, speciality teas, an entire range of wines, champagnes, spirits, malt whiskies and fabulous cocktails.

Breakfast is served from 9am until noon. From midday our extensive restaurant menu packed with classic and contemporary dishes is available until last orders at 10pm.



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.

Our Bar Menu is available from noon with Afternoon Tea served until 5pm. Open every evening serving refreshing drinks, cocktails, wines, spirits, malt whiskies and champagne.

The Castle Business Park, Stirling FK9 4TW Tel: 01786 465577

CAWLEY
HOTELS & RESTAURANTS

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Chairman's Introduction

WELCOME TO THIS WINTER EDITION OF VOICE, which is packed with news and features about different aspects of the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park. This edition includes updates on recent activities by the Friends and others working to make the Park a better place for people and nature.



It was encouraging the Park Authority received a significant uplift in funding from the Scottish Government this year which meant they were able to employ additional staff and to provide extra temporary toilets to help deal more effectively with some of the visitor pressures in the National Park. It was also helpful that a number of local charities and community groups, including the Friends, were successful in receiving funding for additional "early action" visitor management activities through NatureScot's Better Places Green Recovery grant scheme. Many organisations employed rangers and wardens at busy sites and, along with other practical initiatives, this led to real improvements on the ground.

The Friends stepped in at short notice to help out over the May to October period and, unusually, were responsible for coordinating the provision of temporary public toilets at Duck Bay and Arrochar, the employment of visitor services wardens, the rollout of a very effective pilot A82 lay-by litter bin scheme and the delivery of some information and signing improvements in the Trossachs as part of a Trossachs Trail refresh. While this was a big undertaking, for what is a relatively small charity, the measures taken helped make a real difference with very positive feedback from appreciative visitors and locals.

It was no surprise that the toilets provided at busy locations such as Duck Bay on Loch Lomondside and at the head of Loch Long

in Arrochar were so heavily used. It was also encouraging the pilot bin scheme resulted in 15 tonnes (4,000 bags) of litter being collected from the 20 large bins installed in lay-bys alongside the A82 between Arden and Tarbet. An impressive 97% of the waste collected was recycled and, importantly, the road verges and lay-bys were the cleanest they have been in many years.

While many welcomed the long spells of dry and sunny weather this summer, it did contribute to exceptional increases in visitor numbers leading to major problems particularly in Luss, Luss Bay and Balloch. Following desperate pleas for help from local communities Police Scotland and the National Park agreed to step up their presence to deal with anti-social behaviour and a special Action Plan has been developed for Luss to help improve future visitor management in the village and out in the bay following a series of meetings chaired by Jackie Baillie MSP.

Disappointingly, the good weather lulled people into a false sense of security with record numbers enjoying the lochs and many being oblivious to the dangers which lurked below the surface. This tragically led to four people drowning at Loch Lomond on one weekend, and two others losing their lives at Loch Lubnaig and Loch Katrine. On average more than 50 people drown in Scotland every year with people simply not realising how sharply water depths can plummet near to shorelines and how cold the water can be. Alarming, 40% of the population can't swim and, while there is no evidence this was a factor in any of the tragedies, there must be more that can be

done to raise awareness of the dangers of the lochs and to encourage more people to learn to swim.

Climate change and the urgent need for action to reduce carbon emissions was very much in the news last month with the COP26 Climate Change Conference being held in Glasgow. Much was said about the need to strengthen commitments in the short and medium term to try and limit global warming and plenty evidence of the consequences of not acting now was presented at the conference and in special news features and documentaries. In this edition our Vice-Chair John Urquhart reflects on some of what was said at the COP26 Conference and in a special feature the Park Authority sets out some of the steps being taken locally to contribute to Scotland's ambitious net zero target. However, it is clear much more needs to be done to protect this special place for the benefit of people and nature and to contribute to climate change targets.

Please enjoy reading this edition of Voice and hopefully the contents will inspire you to get out and about in the National Park over the winter months. 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 and stay safe.

JAMES FRASER

Chair - Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs



Articles published in The Voice do not necessarily represent the views of The Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs. Charity No. SC015389

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Cover photo – Cyclists enjoying the autumnal colours at Loch Katrine with the Steamship Sir Water Scott in the background

Cover image by Paul Saunders www.paulsaunders.co.uk



BONNIE BANKS LAY-BY LITTER BIN SCHEME A RUNAWAY SUCCESS

In a move to tackle Loch Lomond’s chronic litter problems, following the easing of COVID 19 travel restrictions, the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs introduced a pilot litter bin scheme in lay-bys beside the busy 13 mile stretch of the A82 on Loch Lomondside between Arden and Tarbet over the summer months

This has proved to be a great success with 15 tonnes of litter collected and an impressive 97% of this waste being recycled instead of strewn along road verges and in lay-bys on the lochside as it would have been in previous years. This equates to a staggering 4,000 bags of litter collected overall (120,000 litres) with 3,880 bags of litter being recycled (116,400 litres).

This litter initiative was part of a larger £90,000 Two Lochs Visitor Management Project, led by the Friends with considerable volunteer input, that also included providing temporary toilets at the busy Duck Bay and Arrochar visitor hotspots as well as introducing seasonal village visitor wardens. Funding for the litter pilot scheme was provided by NatureScot from their Green Recovery Fund and the Hannah Stirling Loch Lomond Trust with some additional sponsorship from waste recycling company ENVA.

The installation of 20 bins in laybys and twice weekly litter collections over the busy summer months has been truly transformative and additional litter and flytipping clearing work by volunteers, the local Community Service team, Argyll & Bute Council and the Park Authority have also helped improve the litter situation along what continues to be one of the busiest tourist routes in Scotland with over six million vehicle movements annually.

ADOPT A BIN SCHEME PLANS

Following the success of the pilot scheme, the Friends have allocated funds from their reserves to extend the litter bin initiative over the winter months while longer term plans are developed for an innovative year round ‘Adopt a Bonnie Banks Bin’ scheme with support from potential private and public sector partners.

John Urquhart, Vice Chair of the Friends, said: “There is a substantial body of evidence from our regular monitoring activity that, despite the considerable volumes of traffic and pressure on the A82 along West Loch Lomondside, not only were the laybys mostly clear of litter, but so also were the road verges between the laybys. This is also reflected in the very positive feedback we have received from appreciative local residents, businesses and visitors.

“The pilot project has proved that if you provide bins and keep a place litter free, most people will treat the area with more respect and will respond to this and with a substantial drop in incidents of thoughtless littering.”

A comprehensive evaluation report has been prepared for the pilot layby litter bin scheme and has been widely circulated. This report also aims to build on the success of the pilot scheme and outlines proposals for a blended funding solution to continue with the existing scheme and to possibly expand it further.

A series of other practical recommendations are made in the report including the urgent need to prepare and adopt a coordinated A82 litter action plan involving various agencies and other stakeholders such as the Friends and local communities so that further progress can be made in tackling litter problems along the busy A82 Loch Lomondside corridor in future years.



STRONG SUPPORTER

Jackie Baillie MSP, a strong supporter of the pilot scheme, has welcomed the publication of the report. She said: “The Friends have delivered a very practical litter initiative which has made a real difference. The findings of the report, the positive feedback received locally and the evidence on the ground has clearly demonstrated that the provision of litter bins in lochside laybys, that are regularly emptied, are a very effective way of helping to manage and control litter in areas where there are high levels of visitor pressure.”

She added: “It is encouraging some local businesses are willing to step in and help fund the roll out of an A82 Adopt a Bonnie Banks Bin scheme next year. However, it is important that public agencies also contribute funds to ensure a truly sustainable scheme is in place. I will be asking them to help as it is essential further steps are taken to continue improving litter situation along the A82 on Loch Lomondside and it should not be left to a local charity to step in to do this on an ongoing basis.”



Along the stretch of the A82 in West Dunbartonshire, the Council funds the provision of litter bins in laybys and regular collections and this has been successful over many years while Argyll & Bute Council has not provided bins in lay-bys along their section of the A82 on the lochside. This led to serious litter problems before the Friends stepped in with a demonstrator project to show what a difference providing bins and regular collection services can make.



Pictured at the launch of the layby pilot bin project are (left to right) John Urquhart, Vice Chair, Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs and Project Champion; Jackie Baillie MSP; and Sir Malcolm Colquhoun, Chair of the Luss Estates Company and Honorary President of the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs

As part of the £90,000 Two Lochs Visitor Management Project, led by the Friends with the support of Arrochar & Tarbet Community Development Trust and a small working group of local businesses, an impressive package of 'quick win' visitor management actions was delivered in these two lochside communities this summer. Friend's Trustee Duncan MacLachlan provides an overview of the action programme below.



VISITOR WELCOME INITIATIVE MAKES A REAL DIFFERENCE

Following a call for help to reverse the decline of the Arrochar and Tarbet area over several years and the growing adverse impacts of A83 regular road closures and Covid 19, leading to the villages not being able to cope with visitor pressures, I was delighted when a local Working Group involving local businesses, the local Development Trust, which I am Chair of, the National Park and the Friends was set up late last year. This brought a real focus to some of the challenges facing the villages and helped shape some priorities to realise the tourism potential of the area in a way that would help to strengthen the communities in sustainable and environmentally friendly ways. Early actions were identified to improve the situation on the ground and the Friends stepped in and secured substantial funding for a range of practical measures including the provision of temporary toilets at the main Arrochar car park and also at the start of the busy Cobble mountain path, the employment of 3 seasonal visitor wardens, the production of more than 30 information map panels for display locally and new information signage at several locations.

AMBITIOUS PROGRAMME

What was impressive was how quickly it was possible to roll out this ambitious programme in full within a few weeks following confirmation of substantial grant aid secured by the Friends in early May from NatureScot's Better Places Green Recovery grant scheme and supplemented by a generous grant from the Hannah Stirling Loch Lomond Trust. By the middle of May three wardens were recruited locally and the first batch of toilets were in place and operational at Arrochar car park which coincided with the transfer of responsibility for the car park from Argyll & Bute Council to the owners, Luss Estates Company. By the end of May Bank Holiday weekend all the waterproof information and orientation maps were in place on bus shelters and at other key locations throughout the area and new information directional signs were installed at the Railway Station and the head of Loch Long. Toilets were installed at the entrance to the Cobble mountain path by then too.

The provision of toilets, backed up by friendly and knowledgeable visitor wardens, made a huge difference locally and as soon as the toilets were opened in mid-May a queue formed and it was interesting to see climbers and walkers regularly sprinting from the Cobble car park to use them before toilets were installed there. The 7 temporary toilets provided across the two sites were heavily used throughout the 22 week period they were in place by an estimated 30,000 visitors and their availability and overall cleanliness levels were regularly complimented on by appreciative visitors and locals. The wardens, with the support of the Luss Estates Company, helped manage the busy Arrochar car park and regularly cleaned the toilets here and at the foot of the Cobble path. They also kept on top of litter problems and spent time providing advice and guidance to thousands of visitors to both car parks at the head of Loch Long. During the quieter spells in the Autumn the wardens carried out other tasks around the village including clearing overgrown paths and public spaces.

The early action programme has been a great success and is reflected in the high level of positive feedback received on the ground and via social media channels. Here is just a small sample of what some people have said.

Local Argyll & Bute Cllr Shonny Paterson: *"I congratulate you and the team in what you have achieved, you have showed what can be done when the will is there. The toilets and level of maintenance of the car park, paths and amenity areas in my community of Arrochar & Tarbet that were provided by the Friends have been a unmitigated success. I also have to mention the wardens should all get a ten out of ten for their work and dedication going above and beyond what was asked of them."*

Above: The temporary toilets at the entrance to the Cobble mountain path

Right: Martin, one of the three seasonal visitor wardens, in action at the Arrochar car park

A campervan visitor: *"We didn't expect too much but this was a gem and the friendly warden kept the car park and portaloos very tidy and clean. This is a great example of how the camping and local community can work in unison."*

A visitor from Islay: *"I'd just like to say how much tidier and cleaner the Arrochar car parks have been this summer and the toilets are a boon for travellers on a long journey."*

A local resident: *"I would like to thank the wardens for the litter picking they have done. The whole area looks so much cleaner and more welcoming."*

This programme of works has provided some welcome relief for villagers and has been a great morale booster as well as serving the basic needs of visitors. I hope we are able to build on this success in future years with the provision of permanent toilets and the retention of 'boots on the ground' via the excellent visitor warden scheme which has made a real difference locally.





DUCK BAY LOOS - 'A GAME CHANGER'

In the last edition of Voice it was reported after a 25 year absence of functioning public toilets at the busy Duck Bay Picnic Area beside Loch Lomond, the Friends had been successful in securing a funding package to deliver temporary toilets for the April-October period this year. They have been described as 'a game changer' by Alan Cawley of the Cawley Group who own and operate the neighbouring Duck Bay Hotel.

Alan Cawley said "I think to say the temporary toilets have been a great success is the understatement of the year. They have been an absolute game changer for the public and we have had fantastic feedback from visitors not to mention that complaints compared to previous years have been practically non-existent. On a busy day we used to receive hundreds of complaints and the public, understandably, could never believe there were no toilets at such a busy picnic area and scenic pull in.

"During busy holiday periods, based on observation and the volume of toilet rolls used, I estimate the temporary toilets would have been used by a minimum of 3,000 people per week. Over the 22 week period the toilets were available they were used by an estimated 45,000 to 50,000 people and as I mentioned earlier they were an absolute game changer!

"My family and my staff have a much easier summer because of the toilet provision and importantly, many thousands of visitors to the popular picnic site at Duck Bay no longer faced the indignity and discomfort of toileting behind bushes or jumping in their car to travel miles in distress to find a toilet.

"We are indebted to the Friends and Jackie Baillie MSP for leading the efforts to tackle this long outstanding problem and securing funding from partners. We would still be willing to invest heavily in providing extra free car parking beside the existing car park and Duck Bay Knoll, building new state of the art public toilets, adding signage and quality picnic facilities we could all be proud of. We see this as a means of giving something back while enhancing the area that means everything to us."

Funding for providing temporary toilets was secured from the NatureScot Green Recovery Fund, the Park Authority, Argyll & Bute Council and the Hannah Stirling Loch Lomond Trust. The Cawley Group kindly agreed to sponsor regular daily cleaning and the supply of toiletries and hygiene materials for the heavily used toilets.



VOLUNTEERS

MAKE A DIFFERENCE ON LOCHSIDE

The sun shone on the 40 volunteers who turned out and took part in the Make a Difference Day on West Loch Lomondside on Wednesday 10th November. Their work opening up views and clearing litter on the lochside between Inverbeg and Luss has further strengthened the huge improvements achieved this summer by the Friends' litter bin pilot project along the A82 corridor. This event was organised jointly by the Friends with the support of the National Park Authority and was the first event of this nature the Friends have coordinated since the easing of COVID 19 lockdown restrictions. Volunteers from a wide variety of backgrounds joined forces with volunteers from Cruise Loch Lomond, Luss Estates, Terrenus Land and Water, Scottish Water and the National Park.



OUR PARK GRANT AWARDS

A number of small grant awards from the Friends of OUR Park visitor giving scheme, involving tourism businesses throughout the National Park and managed by the Friends, were made this year to support the opening of the new Callander Visitor Information Centre; the community fundraising appeal to convert the former Trossachs School in Brig o' Turk into a community heritage and information centre with public toilets; the purchase of specially branded waste warrior bags for an initiative led by Destination Arrochar Alps; the purchase of squirrel feeders for siting on East Loch Lomondside and in the

heart of the Trossachs as part of a project to save the red squirrel and the refresh of the 40 mile Trossachs Trail with signing improvements and new information and orientation panels. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic the level of funds raised by tourism business understandably stalled over the past two years but an encouraging number of business have recently re-committed to raise funds for the OUR Park visitor giving scheme. Funds raised are used to support a wide range of practical conservation, access and heritage projects throughout the National Park including many being taken forward by local community and other groups



Ben A'an car park extension excavations



JENNIFER PLUNKETT
NEW FRIENDS
PROJECT SUPPORT OFFICER

With the Friends growing range of activities it was recognised that there was a limit to how much volunteer Trustees could do without adequate back up support so when Carol Lloyd, the excellent previous part-time Support Officer left to take up a post at senior level in the NHS Track & Trace Service it was decided to recruit a new Project Support Officer with an increased hours contract. This has been possible due to the Friends success in securing an Adapt and Thrive grant to strengthen the resilience of the organisation and re-build programmes that were badly affected by Covid 19 and the shutdown of local business supporters.

Jennifer Plunkett joined the Friends in August and has a background in finance, membership and customer services. She is already making a difference helping Friends Trustees deliver an ambitious programme of activities including visitor management programmes and volunteering events as well as supporting grant funding bids for conservation, litter management and warden schemes. Priorities over the coming months are to support membership services and the strengthening of the OUR Park visitor giving scheme with local businesses

Jennifer said: *"I am excited to be working with the Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs charity as their new Project Support Officer. I absolutely love Scotland's wonderful heritage and scenery and enjoy getting out and about and exploring the National Park - there is so much to see and do all year round. I am also lucky enough to live in Kilcreggan on the Rosneath Peninsula which is located just outside the National Park and is also a beautiful and peaceful part of Scotland. I feel privileged to work in a role which supports the charity's key aims, namely to protect and nurture the National Park's unique qualities, promote its natural and cultural heritage and to provide support for projects to enhance the park for people and nature.*

"I am really looking forward to working with our members, local businesses and volunteers to continue the amazing work the charity has undertaken for more than 40 years and I feel privileged to be in a position where I can help to make a difference and contribute towards future projects and initiatives."

TROSSACHS TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRESS

Work on the £650,000 Trossachs Trail Visitor Management Project is now underway following the recent final approval of a £375,000 Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund grant from VisitScotland. This involves various packages of works including a further phase of upgrades to information and orientation points along the 40 mile Trail and car park and other visitor facility improvements at the base of the popular Ben A'an path and at both Trossachs and Stronachlachar Piers.

The 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, Scotland Loves Local, Stirling Council and Scottish Water.

The Friends completed phase 1 of the Trossachs Trail refresh in May with new signage and the creation of a new website and information panels which are now on display in various locations around the route. Funding support for this initial phase of works was provided by the Love Local scheme, the Strathard and Callander Community Hydro Funds and the Friends.

Work on two of the larger infrastructure projects are underway at Ben A'an car park and and at Stronachlachar Pier. Work should start shortly at Trossachs Pier car park.

Forestry & Land Scotland is leading on the project to double the size of the Ben A'an car park and despite a prolonged period of wet weather good progress is being made. Preliminary ground survey work has recently been completed at Trossachs Pier which should enable a start to be made to the main public toilets extension incorporating a mobility hub where mobile electric scooters and wheelchairs will be stored and available to assist visitors with mobility issues.

Further phases of improvement works are scheduled to take place in the less busy shoulder months of 2022 to minimise disruption at the operation of the busy Trossachs Pier and Stronachlachar Pier sites.

James Fraser, CEO of the Steamship Trust and Chair of the Friends, said "I am delighted it has been possible to make a start at long last to these upgrading and expansion schemes at busy sites in the heart of the Trossachs. When the original Trail was developed in the 1990s there was a sizeable investment in visitor infrastructure in Callander and Aberfoyle as well as a number at a number of countryside sites but in the intervening period investment has been limited at some of the busier sites and they are badly in need of improvements to better serve the needs of current and future visitors as well as helping to address some pressing visitor management issues."



Ben A'an car park extension takes shape

DRYMEN SQUARE FACELIFT

The first phase of Drymen Community Development Trust's plan to revitalise the community owned Drymen Square is complete, thanks to funding from several organisations, including NatureScot and Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs. Badly damaged car parking bays have been repaved, together with connecting pathways, the first stage of a wider plan to replace all the existing pathways and roads around the Village Square.

Drymen Community Development Trust have also recently won a Green Funding Award from the National Park to add a bike repair station and charging points for electric bikes at the bus stop on the square, which will be powered by solar panels. Recently the Trust has launched a village website (www.drymen.org) with a new heritage trail being launched before the end of the year.



KILLIN & ARDEONAIG COMMUNITY PLACE PLAN

The community of Killin and Ardeonaig have just published a Local Place Plan, which lists priority actions for the next decade. Preparation of the plan involved comprehensive consultation across the community, with good engagement from residents of all ages and local businesses. Andy Aitken, Chair of Killin Community Council, said: "We are delighted that our Local Place Plan is now published. There was a significant delay given the various lockdowns and Covid restrictions, which was disruptive, but allowed for some additional consultation. Thanks to all those that contributed to the production. It is now for the community to come together to work on its delivery."

Paul Godzik, Chair of Killin & Ardeonaig Community Development Trust added: "The new Plan sets out a clear direction in terms of community development. There are projects such as rejuvenating our sports and visitor facilities, where partnership working will be critical. It also suggests a number of small community-focused projects, like providing allotments and food growing space locally, while also highlighting perennial issues such as the lack of public transport options or access to training and employment opportunities, which have been ignored for far too long."

COMMUNITY RANGER SCHEME SUCCESS



Gavin Macnab and Clare West: Strathfillan Rangers 2021

Strathfillan Community Development Trust were one of a number of local groups in the National Park lucky enough to secure funding from NatureScot's Better Places Green Recovery Fund in May this year to employ two Seasonal Rangers; helping to keep Strathfillan cleaner and tidier over the tourist season, as well as providing information and advice to visitors.

The Trust employed two local people, Gavin Macnab from Tyndrum and Clare West from Crianlarich, who have done sterling work over the past five months. They have enjoyed the role, even its challenges, and developed good relationships with the National Park Rangers and Stirling Council workers. They had to deal with a variety of issues, from littering, irresponsible fires and camping, and illegal parking.

Visitors and locals have noticed their positive impact, with many mentioning to the rangers how much tidier and cleaner the area has looked over the high season. The Trust's Facebook poll shows a clear majority of local residents felt the community benefited from the pilot.

Although their roles finish at the end of October, the Trust are hoping that with the success of the pilot they can secure funding for next year to employ rangers from April to October, keeping the community cleaner and safer for longer.

A big thankyou to Clare and Gavin and the dozens of rangers and wardens active throughout the National Park this year as part of a major effort to cope more effectively with the large influx of visitors as Covid 19 lockdown restrictions eased.

They made a real difference on the ground.



WATER SAFETY TRAINING



National Park Rangers recently teamed up with RNLI for vital water safety training for the public. The sessions saw Rangers and other partner staff take part in 'train the trainer' sessions on the use of waterside public rescue equipment such as throwlines. This will then allow the Rangers to deliver this training to visitors, residents and businesses in the National Park, ensuring more people have these vital skills.

The training is part of an ongoing programme of partnership work on water safety including communications, signage and public rescue equipment.

Leigh Hamilton, Ranger Service Manager at Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park, said: "We want to encourage people to come out and have adventures in the countryside but we want them to do it safely and be responsible."

"This exercise is going to help us deliver essential public rescue equipment training to not only the public but stakeholders, businesses and other members of staff."

Find out more on enjoying the water safely at www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/watersafety

CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED TO FAST TRACK A83 PERMANENT SOLUTION

In October campaigners launched a parliamentary petition which has been backed by the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs and thousands of Argyll businesses and local residents, to deliver a more permanent solution more quickly for the landslip-prone A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful following another spate of road closures in recent months due to heavy rainfall.

Ministers have previously stated that any permanent solution for the road, which is used by 1.3 million vehicles annually, could take up to 10 years to deliver while petitioners are pushing for a scheme to be delivered within 3 years with less time wasted on lengthy consultation now that a preferred route through Glen Croe has been identified.

Rest and Be Thankful Campaign Chairman, John Gurr, said: "The crisis over this major artery should be treated as an emergency due to the economic and environmental impacts and the high risk of 100,000 tonnes of debris ready to fall on the road."

Campaigners have criticised the money 'wasted' on over £8.5 million of failed temporary fixes over the last five years and involving catch pits designed to capture debris from landslips and preventing it reaching the road. They are concerned a further £3.5 million is going to be spent on more catchpits as part of the latest phase of landslip mitigation measures.

They strongly argue delay in delivering a permanent solution for the Rest continues the real threat to the future of businesses and lives while making Argyll a more isolated community, not a connected one.

Transport Minister Graeme Dey MSP has previously stated that improving the resilience of the A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful is one of the Government's top priorities and they are continuing to work on their favoured permanent long-term solution, which could take 7-10 years to complete after being approved at a cost of up to £900 million.

There are five options for the new Glen Croe route, some of which include tunnels up to 1.8 miles long.



WARM WELCOME IN CALLANDER

Between June and October, over 8,000 visitors dropped in to Callander's community-led Visitor Information Centre's new premises in the former Royal Bank of Scotland. A part-time manager and 23 enthusiastic volunteers gave them a warm welcome and unrivalled local knowledge of Callander and the surrounding areas. Most-asked questions included where to walk, cycle or camp, places to eat, what to do on a rainy day, bus times and, top of the list, public toilets. A selection of maps and books provided more details on activities, walking and cycling routes.

For many, Callander is the first stopping place in Scotland, looking for details of destinations further west and north – Oban, the Western Isles, Inverness, the NC500. We were their first welcome! The information centre is a Callander Community Development Trust project, supported in 2021 by expertise and funding from Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, Callander Community Hydro Fund, the Steamship Sir Walter Scott Trust, Stirling Council Discretionary Fund, Campbells Shortbread, and private donations.

In October, the Development Trust was awarded £124,843 from the UK Government's Community Ownership Fund, to take ownership and refurbish 55 Main Street as a sustainable community asset. This is a significant investment in Callander's town centre as well as tourism and regeneration in the wider area.

If you are interested in joining the team in 2022, we will hold an open day in March and would love to see you then, or contact callandervic@gmail.com at any time.

Many of the most commonly asked questions are answered on the VIC website at www.visitcallander.uk.



The aftermath of one of the major landslips



This £1m barrier did not stop further disruption on the lower diversion route

MAID OF THE LOCH UPDATE

In the summer the **Maid of the Loch** was successfully pulled out of the water, for only the second time in over 40-years. As well as carrying out extensive checks and restoration works the charity were able to offer guided hard hat tours to the public, these were very successful with more planned for 2022. Meanwhile repair work on the hull of the ship and the paddles is underway.





SCENIC TOWER AND PATH PLANS APPROVED

The Steamship Sir Walter Scott Trust received the green light to reinstate the historic Roderick Dhu Path and construct a stunning lookout tower and platforms above Trossachs Pier at Loch Katrine after a marathon meeting and site visit by members of the Park Authority's Planning Committee at the end of August. Members overturned the Planning Officer's recommendation to refuse planning consent by 5 votes to 3.

This is the spot where Sir Walter Scott was inspired to write his epic poem *The Lady of the Lake*, published in 1810. Scott was born 250 years ago and it was his poem that is credited with triggering the birth of Scottish tourism. The site was visited earlier by other literary giants such as poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge and writer Dorothy Wordsworth who stayed in wicker huts at this jutting headland which were built for 'the accommodation of strangers to admire and sketch this wild and picturesque landscape' and were made accessible in the late 1770s by a new road blasted out of the rock.

James Fraser CEO of the Steamship Trust said: "Securing approval for this landmark cultural heritage project to celebrate the contribution of literary giants such as Sir Walter Scott to Scottish tourism is a major step forward in our efforts to improve visitor facilities and connect people with Scotland's rich natural and cultural heritage in easily accessible, safe and responsible ways that are compatible with the aims of the National Park.

"We are hugely indebted to the large number of local residents, visitors, businesses and community and conservation groups for their unprecedented level of support for this project which has really captured the imagination and we look forward to delivering a high-quality project which does justice to the magnificent setting which Scott vividly described as the scenery of a fairy dream."

Roderick Dhu path and viewing tower is named after a clan chief whose clansmen regularly were based at this site in the 1700s to guard the Trossachs Pass below and provide early alerts to Rob Roy MacGregor and his clans people of any advancing redcoats. Rob Roy lived for many years at Glen Gyle on the shores of Loch Katrine.



COWAL CAMPERVAN SITE APPROVED

The development of much needed campervan facilities at Rushfield near the South Cowal entrance to the National Park have been approved by Park planners and welcomed by the Friends, as the popularity of campervan and motorhome holidays has led to growing problems due to the lack of facilities for overnight stays and effluent disposal throughout the National Park and other parts of Scotland. This proposed development at Rushfield, north of Dunoon is adjacent to the Lamont Lodges, and includes the provision of 18 bays for campervans and touring caravans and an area for camping with an amenities and reception building.

LUSS WATERSPORTS EXPANSION REJECTED

Following objections by Luss & Arden Community Council, local residents and the Friends plans to build a new jetty for watersports activity south of Luss Pier have been rejected by Park planners. This has traditionally been a quieter area of the village waterfront enjoyed by families for sunbathing and swimming. The planners agreed with objectors that intensification of use by motorised craft and high speed rib passenger boats at an upgraded jetty here would destroy the character of this part of the historic conservation village. The refusal decision coincided with a surge of visitors and major visitor management problems this summer in Luss Bay and around the main pierhead.

DRYMEN HOUSING CONTROVERSY

Plans for 12 houses adjacent to Drymen Parish Church on the western approach to the village are proving controversial with the local Community Council, the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs and many local residents lodging objections.

A previous housing scheme on this open greenfield site was rejected several years ago. This latest housing proposal would introduce 5 new access points onto the main busy road at the entrance to the village adding to traffic problems as well as constituting over development in a relatively compact site detracting from the overall character of the attractive village setting.



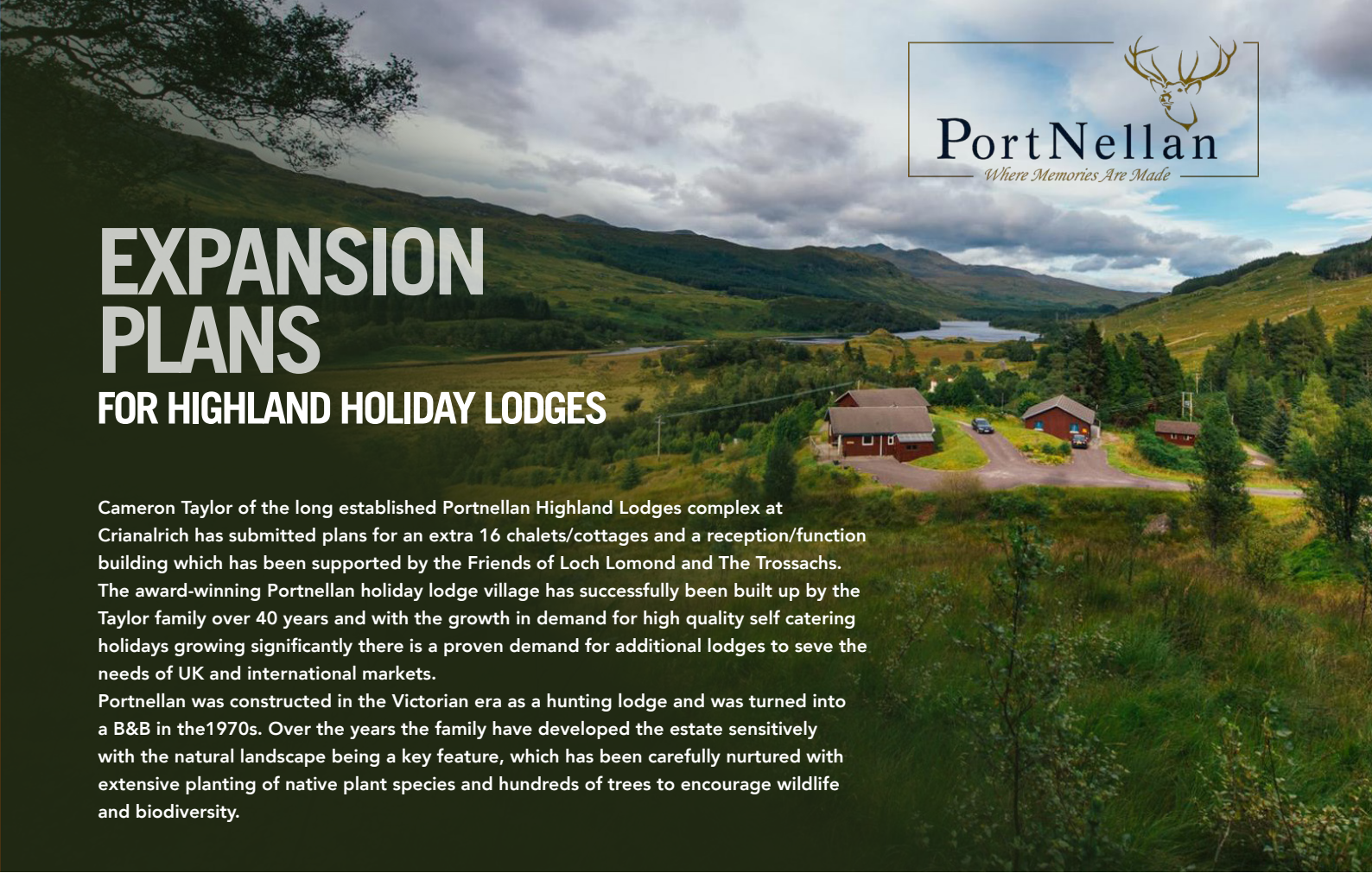
REVISED PLANS FOR LOMOND BANKS IN BALLOCH

Earlier this summer the developers behind the £40 million Lomond Banks tourist development for West Riverside and Woodbank House announced they would be submitting revised proposals to the National Park Authority after an extensive consultation exercise had been completed. They were keen to take on more of the feedback on the original plans they withdrew in 2019 and the updated plans are likely to be submitted for outline planning in the first quarter of 2022.

While revised plans have still to be finalised the developers have confirmed that they have dropped proposals for development in Drumkinnon Woods and the size of the leisure and hotel building at the pierhead will be greatly reduced.

The original plans for Station Square next to the existing tourist information centre are likely to remain broadly the same with a cluster of character buildings including a brewery visitor centre and an events arena. Transport links between the square and the pierhead are likely to be incorporated with a low level monorail the current preferred option but further work on transport and traffic management is underway before proposals are finalised.

Further details on the emerging plans can be viewed on www.lomondbanks.com and there is an opportunity to sign up for future updates on the website.



EXPANSION PLANS FOR HIGHLAND HOLIDAY LODGES

Cameron Taylor of the long established Portnellan Highland Lodges complex at Crianlrich has submitted plans for an extra 16 chalets/cottages and a reception/function building which has been supported by the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs. The award-winning Portnellan holiday lodge village has successfully been built up by the Taylor family over 40 years and with the growth in demand for high quality self catering holidays growing significantly there is a proven demand for additional lodges to serve the needs of UK and international markets.

Portnellan was constructed in the Victorian era as a hunting lodge and was turned into a B&B in the 1970s. Over the years the family have developed the estate sensitively with the natural landscape being a key feature, which has been carefully nurtured with extensive planting of native plant species and hundreds of trees to encourage wildlife and biodiversity.



THE OAK TREE INN BALMAHA LOCH LOMOND

Muddy Boots Welcome



The Oak Tree Inn is an award winning pub and restaurant, on the West Highland Way in the beautiful loch side village of Balmaha. Great Scottish food and drink, plus accommodation. Village Shop, St Mocha Coffee Shop & Ice Cream Parlour and loch cruises.

Tel: 01360 870357 | Email: info@theoaktreeinn.co.uk | www.theoaktreeinn.co.uk



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St Mocha

COFFEE SHOP & ICE CREAM PARLOUR

LOCH LOMOND
ICE CREAM



Loch Lomond roasted coffee • Teas • Gluten Free & Vegan Cakes & Traybake
Lunch menu • Homemade Loch Lomond Ice Cream

Open daily in Balmaha + The Station - Just opened in Aberfoyle



www.theoaktreeinn.co.uk - Next to the Oak Tree Inn & Village Shop, Balmaha



@LochLomondCoffee @stmochacoffee @thestationaberfoyle



LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD FOR SANDY FRASER

Sandy Fraser, The Oak Tree Inn founder, was recently presented with a well deserved Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2021 Scottish Bar & Pub Awards.

The following day, we spoke to Sandy, who told us that he was shocked and surprised to receive an award and had no idea he was in line to receive it. He paid tribute to his family, to who he attributes the success too. "My wife Lucy and all of our children have played a vital role in developing, each adding their unique contribution to the success of The Oak Tree Inn."

Lucy and some of his children Stuart, David, Emma, Nina and Ben were there to join him on stage at the glitzy event at The Hilton Hotel in Glasgow. The Fraser Family had been invited to the awards in recognition of their outstanding sustainability initiatives. Sandy and Lucy had a clear vision for The Oak Tree when they launched it

in 1997. A warm and welcoming pub and restaurant for locals, walkers and visitors that wasn't another pub with a TV showing football. From little acorns, the inn quickly became one of the most popular destinations on Loch Lomondside and a highlight of the West Highland Way.

The family's hard work and reinvestment have introduced new facilities, including a village shop, coffee shops, B&B accommodation, etc. However, the driving force of recent years is new eco-friendly ways to run their operation sustainably.

The Oak Tree Inn is responsible for the transformation of Balmaha, helping create the picturesque lochside village that we know and love today. Sandy plays an active role and can often be found planting and watering flowers or picking up litter.

Sandy and his family have always been enthusiastic and passionate supporters of Friends of Loch Lomond & the Trossachs. The Oak Tree Inn was one

of the first National Park businesses to sign up to the Friends Business Supporters and 'OUR Park Visitor Giving' schemes and have raised considerable sums over many years. Sandy also played an important role in helping to deliver the Tom Weir Statue in partnership with the Friends and the Tom Weir Campaign Group in 2014; now he and his team do an excellent job looking after the popular Tom Weir's Rest site by the bay. Sandy worked long and hard to create a new pontoon, providing improved water access to East Loch Lomond. The pontoon supports easier access for those in wheelchairs and with less mobility. He has also introduced an overflow car park to help ease visitor management pressures in the village.

Congratulations to Sandy, Lucy and all the Fraser clan!





Sir Walter Scott Steamship RESTORATION APPEAL

Loch Katrine's much-loved historic Sir Walter Scott Steamship has an urgent SOS appeal underway to 'Save Our Steamship'. The 121-year-old steamer requires new boilers and other restoration work, having not sailed on Loch Katrine since it was condemned in January 2020 – after an annual inspection found hairline cracks in the boilers. The appeal aims to raise the necessary funds required to enable her to sail again from Summer 2022.

A charitable trust looks after the steamship, protecting the natural treasure for future generations to enjoy. The success of the appeal is vital for ensuring a positive future for the iconic steamship, the last surviving screw steamer in service in Scotland.

Sir Walter Scott Steamship was built in 1899 at Denny's Yard in Dumbarton on the River Clyde at the cost of £4,269. Having completed trials on the Clyde, she was broken up for transportation to Loch Katrine.

Nearly half of the steamship's purchase price was for delivery, unsurprising considering she was transported by barge up the River Leven and Loch Lomond to Inversnaid. From there, teams of horses lugged the sections up the steep hills to Stronachlachar on Loch Katrine. Finally, in 1900 she was reassembled and launched for the first time onto Loch Katrine. For over 120 years, she has carried millions of passengers on the beautiful loch, part of The Great Trossachs Forest. Loch Katrine is home to golden eagles, ospreys, red squirrel, otter and red deer.

The loch is also the water supply for much of Scotland's Central Belt, a fact which Tennent's Lager proudly promotes. Queen Victoria visited Loch Katrine to open its aqueduct in 1859.

It was Sir Walter Scott, born 250 years ago, who put Loch Katrine on the map. His poem 'The Lady of the Lake', published in 1810, was the day's blockbuster. At this time, composers, writers, and artists were drawn to the Trossachs and its outstanding beauty, as were the admirers of their work, who visited to see for themselves the vivid landscapes described and painted.

“We have to act now to make sure that future generations will be able to enjoy cruises on this national maritime heritage treasure”





Gordon Allan,
Managing Director
of Sir Walter Scott
Steamship Ltd.

Loch Katrine is credited with being the the birthplace of Scottish tourism, and many local communities benefit from tourism in the Trossachs. Undoubtedly the steamer is a big draw, helping boost the local economy for over 120 years.

The Steamship Trust's SOS campaign needs to raise the £500,000 required to get her sailing again. Almost half the funds are already in place through a combination of successful fundraising over the summer and reserves built up by the Steamship Trust. The balance of the funds require to be raised over the coming months to enable the steamship to be fully restored and come back into operation on the loch by July 2022.

As Gordon Allan, Managing Director of Sir Walter Scott Steamship Ltd, explains, this is a critical time for the steamship and it is important to get her back into operation as soon as possible before she deteriorates further.

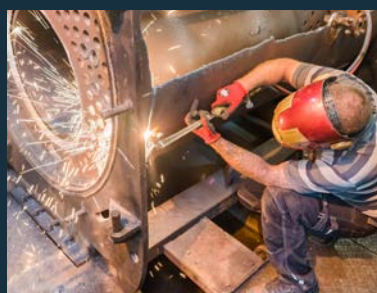
He said: "We have sadly seen so many occasions where a historic vessel has had to pause sailing, only for that to become a permanent situation. So many people have had enormous pleasure sailing on Sir Water Scott Steamship. We have to act now to make sure that future generations will be able to enjoy cruises on this national maritime heritage treasure which has been synonymous with the growth and development of tourism in the heart of the National Park since the late 1800s."

Donations have poured in via the appeal website and from visitors to Loch Katrine since its launch in the summer. The messages that have come with many of the donations demonstrate the huge affection for the historic steamer and whilst they are extremely welcome, the Trust will need to also achieve significant grant awards to be able to restore the ship and get her back sailing again.

In the meantime, work has commenced to prepare the engine room for new boilers, with the faulty boilers cut up and removed in preparation for the installation of replacement boilers.



Work Begins



Boiler Removal

6 COMPELLING REASONS TO SUPPORT OUR APPEAL

BETTER ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL

The Steamship can carry 220 passengers, accessible for all levels of mobility and sensory needs. A leading example of a water transport visitor experience in Scotland with wheelchair access.



STRENGTHENING THE RURAL ECONOMY

The Steamship provides significant direct and indirect employment, protecting jobs and supporting the fragile economy in nearby rural communities such as Callander and Aberfoyle.

PRESERVING A NATIONAL HERITAGE TREASURE

The Steamship is an important National Heritage asset, the last serving screw steamship in Scotland.



IMPROVING CONNECTIVITY

The Steamship connects Trossachs Pier with Stronachlachar, a vital transport connection to access cycling and walking routes, including a connection between Loch Katrine and Loch Lomond.

ENRICHING EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

The steamer plays a vital role in education, with a variety of themed activities and experiences that provide greater access and understanding of Scotland's history, wildlife, and nature.



PROVIDING SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

The Steamship has kept up with the times, adapting over the years to use more environmentally friendly fuels. Green hydrogen and vegetable oil fuel will be used when the Steamship is back sailing, which will reduce carbon emissions by 90% and making a major contribution to National Park carbon zero targets.

Support the appeal,
visit the appeal
website [www.
saveoursteamship.com](http://www.saveoursteamship.com)
or by post writing to
SOS Appeal, Trossachs
Pier, Loch Katrine,
Callander, FK17 8HZ





UN CLIMATE
CHANGE
CONFERENCE
UK 2021

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ITALY

CLIMATE CHANGE CHALLENGES IN FOCUS AT COP26

In previous editions of Voice we asked Friends Vice Chair, John Urquhart, a retired geography teacher, for some personal thoughts on the climate change crisis and his consistent message was that we must act now. This was reinforced again and again by various speakers at the recent COP26 conference and here John sets out some of his reflections on the event.

"Concrete and deliverable proposals needed"

"Earth is speaking – there is no more time"

These were the straws blowing in the autumn drizzle as, in the biggest ever "Conference of the Parties", 120 world leaders assembled in a wet and windy Glasgow on Monday 1st November to grapple with the global climate crisis.

But by the time you read this, the media circus will have moved on and "COP 26" will be long gone. But the climate crisis won't. So was it all just more "blah, blah" as Greta forecast, or did the politicians heed David Attenborough's advice to, "act now" before it is "too late"? He couldn't have been clearer, "Powerful nations have a moral duty to act because we caused it. We have a moral responsibility to do something, even if it wasn't us who caused it."

Other leaders weren't mincing their words either. Although he quickly withdrew his statement, The Archbishop of Canterbury compared our politicians today with those who appeased Nazi Germany in the 1930s and said they would be "cursed" if they failed to act.

And Antonio Guterres Sec. Gen. of the UN was just as sombre with his warning that those who continue to mine and drill and chop and burn were "digging their own graves". And, by implication, everyone else's!

"To reach the 1.5°C 2030 target, CO₂ has to fall by 16%. On current performance it will rise by 45%." With this dire UN warning, the pre COP runes did not look at all good. And if you had been looking to the weather as an omen, the flooding in the Borders in the immediate run up to the event certainly gave no cause for optimism. It was an echo of Germany's Ahrweiler flood earlier in the year which killed 180



and ruined the lives of thousands as 130,000 tonnes of belongings were trashed in a few hours of biblical mayhem. Thankfully the Teviot and the Nith stayed more or less within their banks and no lives were lost, but for a while it was touch and go.

The scene was set by Her Majesty the Queen, when she was ("accidentally") overheard expressing her exasperation at politicians who, "Talk, but don't do". In her recorded welcome she said much the same thing, only in more diplomatic language. And what of the ordinary people? Thousands walked in the pouring rain through the streets of Glasgow and the placard which summed it up for me was, "No time for COP out".



Leaders from all over the globe came to Glasgow for COP26



Sir David Attenborough, reminded us that "...together, we can save the planet" and he is right; so we can, if we act decisively - NOW! He is of course talking about life as we know it on the planet, not the planet itself, which will doubtless survive perfectly well on its own. Its natural feedback mechanisms have been working for billions of years maintaining the climatic stability necessary for life to thrive. Our burning of fossil fuels is upsetting that stability, but the natural planetary balancing mechanisms work on time scales of thousands and indeed millions of years - way beyond what we need NOW to re-set the atmospheric thermostat to a level which we and other species will be able tolerate.

As Francesca Osowska, Chief Executive of Scotland's natural environment watch dog, NatureScot, put it, "If we continue as we are, humanity is imperilled".

It is all down to those politicians, "who talk and don't do". One of them put it succinctly, "We know what we have to do, but we don't know how to get re-elected after we do it".

They are caught between fear of the immediate negative political consequences of doing the unthinkable and unpopular things that need to



be done and the longer term fear of the catastrophic consequences of not doing enough, soon enough. Like two lines on a graph, the fears see saw with each new devastating fire, storm or flood, but what will it take to make them intersect?

As the conference drew to a close on Saturday 13th November there were a few new straws in the damp wind blowing up the Clyde. China and the US issued a joint statement promising co-operation, there were promises on methane and deforestation, but over the substantive issue of phasing out fossil fuels, agreement there was none.

Greta Thunberg, who saw COP as a "Celebration of business as usual", ruefully dismissed the closing agreement saying they had even managed to water down the blah, blah, blah. She knows, and anyone who is even half aware of the facts knows, "What is needed are immediate drastic cuts, unlike anything the world has ever seen". But how to do it?

Brian Taylor, in a Glasgow Herald piece trying to discern where the necessary political power might come from concluded, "Leaders will find the issue moving beyond their control.. scientific imperative and youthful pressure will accelerate and enforce action".

Let's hope he is right and let's hope it happens before it is too late.



Climate Emergency takes centre stage

We've recently had the eyes of the world on Scotland discussing the Global Climate Emergency at COP26 just up the road in Glasgow.

The National Park plays a crucial role in Scotland's drive to become a Net Zero Nation and can do even more over the coming years. This is because the impacts of climate are being seen and felt here and now and also because the National Park is ideally positioned to trial innovative and collaborative initiatives on topics like sustainable travel and nature-based solutions, at a regional scale.

COP26 was a great opportunity to shine a light on some of the fantastic work already underway here in Scotland's first National Park. Even more importantly it was a chance to bring together a huge range of stakeholders and partners to discuss how we can all play our part.



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

Nature-based solutions

The National Park is more than just a beautiful place. It contains vital natural tools we can use to tackle the global climate emergency.

Nature-based solutions are at the core of our approach whether that's through peatland restoration to sink carbon, the protection and creation of woodlands or supporting riparian habitat restoration to improve resilience to flooding.

Around 30% of the National Park (52,300ha), roughly the size of 50,000 rugby pitches, is covered with trees. These trees hold approximately 2.5 million tonnes of carbon and through our Trees and Woodlands strategy we are expanding native woodlands.

Peatlands may not be beautiful to look at but in the National Park

they hold an estimated 20million tonnes of carbon. Repairing damaged peatlands helps fight both the causes and effects of climate change by both storing carbon and slowly releasing water helping to reduce flood risks.

Through our work with Peatland Action we're working with partners and land managers to restore damaged peatlands with the aim to restore 2000 ha by 2023. As well as being fantastic for storing carbon, healthy peatlands support rich biodiversity – they are an incredibly valuable ecosystem.

Not only does this approach strengthen the National Park's resilience to climate change, it also delivers tangible benefits for nature and helps to tackle the equally important nature crisis.



Peat bog restoration work in action

Our Mission Zero

As a National Park Authority, whose fundamental aim is to conserve and enhance the natural heritage of this special part of Scotland, we aim to be a leading organisation in reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. We've committed to becoming a net zero emitting organisation by 2030 or sooner. This is our Mission Zero.

Our Mission Zero Route Map outlines actions that we will prioritise and behaviours we will adopt to ensure this ambition is a success.

We will transform the land and buildings we manage by investing in green infrastructure such as air source heat pumps to heat our visitor centre and toilets, solar panels to power our headquarters and Duncan Mills Memorial Slipway and even more efficient LED lightbulbs and sensors across all our buildings.



We will continue our shift towards an electric fleet so we can travel round the National Park as sustainably as possible. We also now have a fully electric maintenance boat on Loch Lomond which is three times more efficient than a traditional petrol or diesel boat.

We will continue to support everyone at the National Park Authority to champion emissions reduction in their behaviour and the actions we all take.



US Secretary visit

US Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland visited Loch Lomond during COP26 and met with a local teenager to discuss the role for young people and National Parks in tackling the climate emergency.

She met with 16-year-old Aidan Cronin from the National Park's Youth Committee, alongside Michael Matheson, Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, and National Park representatives to see and hear first-hand how Scottish National Parks are tackling both.

Ms Haaland's visit coincided with the launch of a joint statement by National Parks and Protected Areas across the world on climate change and biodiversity highlighting their critical role at the vanguard of the fight against Climate Change and Biodiversity loss.

Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Convener James Stuart led the creation of the statement and the sign-up process.

To read more about the National Park Authority's work to tackle the climate emergency go to: www.lochlomondtrossachs.org



Sustainable Travel

With over 85% of visits to the National Park estimated to be by car, developing and promoting sustainable ways for people travel to, from and around the National Park is vital for tackling the climate emergency.

This will be a long term shift and needs collaboration from a range of organisations to be able to provide better transport options in rural areas as well as changing behaviour among those who live, work and visit the National Park.

We know that there are serious gaps in provision that need to be overcome if this is to change. We are developing a programme of measures to make it easier to travel to and within the National Park in a climate-friendly way but we cannot do it alone.

In September 2021 a new Journeyplanner app to make it easier research all travel options in one place and to check and compare the carbon impacts of different modes of travel. The pilot will also be used to gather valuable feedback and data on the demand for more transport services, to inform longer term planning with partners on sustainable travel.



Cormonachan Community Woodlands' Scottish Rainforest

Cormonachan Community Woodlands Trust has had a busy year with the conservation of their Ancient Semi Natural Woodlands between Lochgoilhead and Carrick Castle and building on their success over many years creating 2.5km of circular paths, car parking, a red squirrel hide and contemplation shelter. The charity received grants over two years from the National Park to clear all the *Rhododendron ponticum* from the 63.9 hectare woodlands and the target is to complete this by next year. It also has a felling licence from Scottish Forestry to continue clearing more non-native Sitka spruce from around oaks and to replant with native trees. This work is being done by ten volunteers from the Fife Conservation Group who have been doing this work for over 20 years.

Over the last eighteen months, 625 native trees have been planted by local volunteers. In November, fourteen Raleigh International volunteers, over six days have cleared bracken and scrub from around the recently planted trees, cleared away debris of branches and logs off the planned new 2 km path route. This new path will eventually connect the 2.5 km existing paths from the Contemplation Shelter to the Medieval Settlement and Cormonachan Falls at Upper Cormonachan with another car park,



Raleigh International volunteers by one of the sculptures in the woodlands

once funding is secured. Funding applications have been made to two funders to share the £250,000 construction costs with decisions due before the end of the year.

Throughout October, Cormonachan Woodlands has hosted 'The Woodlands Art Trail - 2021' organised

by Argyll Arts Collective where several local Argyll artists have displayed their thirty sculptures and art works around the paths. Almost 1,500 visitors attended this free event. In October. In November a memorable visit to the woodlands was made by the Association Jiboiana, the indigenous Amazonian delegation that attended COP26 climate conference in Glasgow and they blessed this Scottish Rainforest and planted an oak tree in commemoration of their visit. This was followed up by a Community Event in the Lochgoilhead village hall where 100 invited guests were able to meet them and there were speeches and musical performances by this Amazonian group.



Some of the colorful members of the Association Jiboiana from the Amazon entertain villagers after a visit to the Cormonachan rainforest

River Goil Improvements Progress

The River Goil habitat improvement project has been progressed as part of an ongoing partnership between Lochgoil Community Trust, Argyll Fisheries Trust, Forestry and Land Scotland and the National Park Authority since 2015. During the last 6 years volunteers have worked with partner organisations to plant over 1,000 native trees, install stock fencing and complete the first stretch of bank reprofiling and the installation of green revetment. Following on from the success of an earlier phase of works volunteers from Lochgoil were able to work with partners again to install a second stretch of green revetment during the summer of 2021.

WHY IS A HABITAT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT REQUIRED?

The River Goil flows into one of the main sea lochs in the Firth of Clyde, making it an important spawning ground for Atlantic salmon and sea trout. However, over time, the river has suffered badly from bank collapse and erosion. This erosion then leads to an increase in silt levels in the river ecosystem which can damage precious spawning sites. Tree cover has disappeared from large sections of the river banks, leaving them exposed to erosion and removing vital habitat diversity for the riparian ecosystem. As the impacts of climate change become more prevalent, trees and bushes alongside the river will be even more necessary to provide vital shade to the river environment.

WHAT IS A GREEN REVETMENT & HOW DOES IT HELP?



Before: River bank eroding ~1m per year

After: Protected by green revetment

A green revetment is a nature-based solution to protect a river bank and future-proof the river environment by forming a sloping structure on the bank and cultivating tree and shrub growth to protect the bank and help absorb the energy of incoming water.

The installation of the green revetment at the River Goil involved rebuilding and reprofiling sections of collapsed bank with a digger. Locally sourced willow was used in the revetment and is already naturally regenerating. The community plans to source trees to plant on the bank to provide further diversity and depth to the riparian woodland.

The green revetment should help to reduce erosion of the river bank, leading to rejuvenation of the river bed so that it creates ideal conditions for salmon spawning. It will also create a more diverse environment which benefits a wide range of other species.

WHO COMPLETED THIS PROJECT?

The project was delivered by volunteers from Lochgoil Community Trust working in partnership with Argyll Fisheries Trust. The volunteers donated another 275 hours of time taking the total donation of time for the River Goil Habitat Improvement Project in the last 2 years to over 675 hours and planning is already underway for a Phase 3 for 2022!

RSPB Reserve Transformation



RSPB Scotland Loch Lomond has been transforming areas of the reserve into a wetland wonderland. During late summer 2021 with help from funding through the LIFE 100% project and as part of the Froglife Go Forth for Wildlife project a new wetland was created which has already seen a number of species making the most of the new habitat. The old Schoolhouse field at RSPB Loch Lomond pre 2021 was a bit of a sorry sight. The field was wall to wall rush, and apart from the odd snipe, was largely devoid of wildlife. However, in late summer a digger, a tractor and two hardworking wardens set about turning around the fortunes of this field, by making it wetter. Now a series of four ponds with varying edges has been created and although the new wetland needs time to develop, birds such as greenshank, snipe, grey heron and kingfisher have already stopped by to check out what is on offer. The Life 100% project has also made buying a tractor fitted with Soucy tracks and cutting equipment possible. These tracks reduce the amount of pressure the tractor puts on the ground, which therefore allow it to work in the wettest and muddiest areas of the site without causing extensive damage to the soil. The cutting equipment has been used this autumn/winter around the site. These areas were cut before the mid/late October rainfall and are now already benefitting a range of bird species including wigeon, teal, mallard and Greenland white-fronted geese. With these areas of conservation work already benefitting wildlife it will be interesting to seeing what happens over the next season and beyond.

Pauline Lynch of Forest Holidays, which has sites at Strathyre and Ardgarten, provides an update on the campaign to save wildlife in the National Park.

“Drive slowly for the safety of our wildlife”



Christmas Tree Fundraiser to Save Red Squirrels

Christmas trees are not just for Christmas; it's an all-year labour of love at Duff Christmas Tree Farm, near Buchlyvie on the edge of the Trossachs. Much of the work is carried out by hand, with many years of expertise to ensure a healthy crop of Christmas trees that will last longer once cut to supply wholesale markets throughout the UK. Families enjoy their annual trip to the Duff family farm, where they can select and then cut their choice of Christmas tree in a safe environment. For many, it is a much-loved family tradition, symbolising the start of their Christmas festivities. Last year the Duff's generously donated to the Friends of OUR Park, supporting red squirrel conservation with a donation for each 'cut your own' tree sold. Support will continue this year, so look out once again for the farm's red squirrel mascot greeting visitors.



One of the new feeders at the Eco Camp, by Trossachs Pier at Loch Katrine

The farm is close to the Highland Boundary Line, a crucial area for red squirrel conservation, and the battle to keep grey squirrels from advancing further north. Funds raised last year have been used to purchase feeders installed on East Loch

Lomondside and in the heart of the Trossachs at Loch Katrine. The support for red squirrel conservation is one of many initiatives by Duff Christmas Tree Farm to help carbon reduction, with the priority pledge of planting two trees for each one felled. On the farm, which enjoys great views towards Ben Lomond they have created new woodlands with oak, birch, rowan and hazel, whilst 50-acres semi-ancient woodlands ensure native species have been preserved.

Visit Duff Christmas Tree Farm close to Buchlyvie and Aberfoyle to enjoy the fun experience of cutting the family Christmas Tree. See www.dufftrees.co.uk for more details.



Saving Our Wildlife Campaign

Thank you to the many businesses and organisations who have joined the campaign to reduce the number of native wild animals being killed on roads within our National Park. The Park is home to a rich and diverse network of species. Autumn sees a high number of young red squirrels dead on roads and as winter approaches, the nights get longer and the weather colder and wetter, the danger of wildlife being killed on a road is even greater, particularly animals who are active at night and have to travel farther to find food such as foxes, deer, badgers and pine martens. Owls are also at greater risk of vehicle collision during the winter. Some tourism providers and organisations within the National Park are encouraging the

use of public transport links, this along with the prospective Park's sustainable transport initiative will hopefully reduce the number of visitor cars on our roads but we will always have too many vehicles and too many animals killed. By reducing our speed and asking others to do the same we can alleviate that pressure. If you have already joined in the campaign to save our wildlife, thank you. **If you would like more information about the campaign or to access posters or car window stickers please telephone: 07858 633 750 or email Pauline.Lynch@forestholidays.co.uk If you see a dead animal on the road please report it at projectsplatter.co.uk-roadkill**



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With the easing of COVID 19 lockdown restrictions it was encouraging to see the gradual return of some old favourites as well as a sprinkling of new outdoor events in the National Park in recent months. Events make a major contribution to the rich tapestry of cultural life and outdoor experiences in the National Park and it is hoped 2022 will see the return of many more, including much missed Highland Games, festivals and village galas.



Celebrating the 100th Boots & Beards walk at the Tom Weir's Rest site in Balmaha

Boots & Beards 100th Walk Celebration

Beards and Boots Hiking Club, which was set up to inspire people from the Scottish Asian community to enjoy the great outdoors, marked their 100th event at the Tom Weir's Rest site in Balmaha in August and participants featured in a special BBC documentary broadcast recently charting the interesting journey of the group over the last 5 years.

When Nav Bakhsh stumbled upon a new found hobby of hiking Scotland's hills, little did he know that it would lead to a growing and pioneering community project that would inspire the Scottish Asian community to embrace the outdoors.

The first to admit that he is not sure where the idea sprung from but they soon found themselves hiking up Conic Hill near Balmaha and things grew from there. It was therefore fitting to have a special day of celebrations to mark their 100th walk at Balmaha with a big turnout of people who participated in a range of family fun outdoor activities.

In the TV documentary Nav said: "In a way I feel we are leaving a legacy behind. Five years ago, the Asian community in Scotland wasn't really doing any hill walking and now that has all changed, people are now getting outdoors and I feel we've had a fair bit to play in that."

Boots & Beards deservedly won the Community Champions Award 2021 at a special awards ceremony organised by the Sunday Mail and Daily Record.



Piping on the Square

The very popular weekly Piping on the Square in Drymen made a welcome return this summer. Pipe bands from Helensburgh and Doune shared the Thursday night slots on the green at the Village Square in East Loch Lomond, with both bands welcoming the opportunity to be able to play in public for the first time in nearly two years. 'Staycation' visitors from across the UK enjoyed watching the event and were generous with donations. Some of the money raised goes to the pipe bands to purchase uniforms and instruments, whilst the rest is used to maintain the village square environment. Drymen Community Development Trust who organised the regular event were overwhelmed by the tremendous support from visitors. One family from Southern England who attended told them they'd had such an enjoyable visit that they were going back home to put their house on the market and move to the area!

Callander Festival Delivers

This year's 15th Callander Jazz & Blues Festival in October proved to be the most challenging yet, but also turned out to be one of the best.

The quality of the bands attending this year was very high, with many travelling from all across the UK, including London, to play at the festival, the majority for the first time.

The festival offered up a true musical smorgasbord of some of the best talent around in the present UK Jazz and Blues scene. All in all, 140 musicians from 39 acts played 56 gigs across 14 venues over the festival weekend. The feedback from them all was so positive about the festival itself but also about playing in such a beautiful setting with a fun and friendly atmosphere.

A great community effort by the 28 volunteers, 14 venues and staff, 4 sound techs and 4 film crew who all helped put on one of the best, and probably most needed, festivals with such a positive spirit in very challenging circumstances. The organising committee would like to thank sponsors and the local community bodies who help towards the funding of the festival, with a special mention this year for the added financial assistance of Event Scotland.

Until Sep 30th-Oct 2nd next year!

BEN LOMOND EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE



On Sunday 26 September, a successful experimental theatre production, *Úrlar*, presenting a 'kaleidoscopic vision of place' was held along the Ardess Hidden History Trail at Ben Lomond. National Trust for Scotland commissioned the outdoor theatre production to help visitors to be inspired by one of Scotland's most iconic landscapes. It combined music, dance and spoken word in a new theatrical production that drew on the history of this special place. In the Great Highland Bagpipe tradition of pibroch (a classical form of bagpipe music), the úrlar is the 'main theme' upon which the tune builds layers of variation.

Developed by Glasgow-based artist and producer Guy Veale, *Úrlar* took small groups guided by professional storytellers on a 90 minute journey along the Ardess Hidden History Trail. Key stations along the route were brought to life, in harmony with the natural environment and some subtle additions to nature's own amazing soundscape – a recurring 'sonic beacon' joined by multiple instruments and voices, and carried on the wind to activate the entire site.

Some of the voices used in the recordings were of local people and included several Board members of the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs who volunteered to take part in this unusual event.



Urlar storytellers at Ben Lomond





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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, takes a winter walk in the Luss Hills to enjoy the views from Beinn Thursuinn.



Last winter we had week after week of cold settled weather and a round of the Glen Fruin tops just had to be done. The Luss Hills are in my backyard yet I seldom walk there, which is a mistake.

We parked in the generous lay-by off the Haul Road just above Ballevoulin Farm in Glen Fruin. A rough track ramps up off the road and soon we were crunching up over old frost hardened snow.

One of the good things about the Luss Hills is the fairly easy going, down to good natural drainage and short grass cover, a product of a geology dominated by relatively soft schists and slates.

In common with the rest of the Highlands, the Luss Hills have been fashioned from an ancient erosion surface raised up into a plateau and gently tilted towards the southeast. Rivers did the initial work cutting the valleys, but beginning around two million years ago, overriding ice

sheets have ground the relatively soft rocks into a landscape of rounded summits and smooth sided glacial glens. That makes for easy walking, but undramatic scenery. The drama comes from the position on the edge of Highlands which gives expansive views over the Clyde estuary and away towards the distant peaks of Arran.

Our targets were Beinn Chaorach (Sheep Mountain) and Beinn Thursuinn, a mountain whose Gaelic name conveys the meaning of a barrier or something 'lying across'. The barrier is the continuous ridge of high ground which stretches east from Beinn Chaorach and separates Glen Fruin from Glen Luss to the north.

Once up on the plateau our walking poles really came into their own, helping to drive us on through the deepening snow. This was the 29th of December and daylight was a real issue as we had started late.

However, I was keen to see the old

sheilings which are such a feature of Auchengaich Glen on our route back to Glen Fruin. As it was, the light was failing as we trudged wearily south and we could hardly see the low outlines of the little shelters which were used in the summer months when the cattle were taken to these high pastures, well away from the crops growing lower down in Glen Fruin. The introduction of sheep and then fencing meant the shelters were probably last used in the 18th century. The map shows 26 of them, a testament to the size of the agricultural population in those days. Incidentally Glen Fruin's name is connected with the sheilings – Fraon, pronounced fruinn, means mountain shelter.

The whole route makes for a fairly demanding 5-hour round of 13 km with a total ascent of 620 metres, but you could easily shorten it.

*Main pic: Walking poles useful in the deepening snow
Above LtoR: Beinn Chaorach from Beinn Thursuinn;
Icicles on approach to Beinn Thursuinn;
Unbroken views over the Firth of Clyde*



WOODLAND TRUST SCOTLAND CELEBRATING 25 YEARS AT GLEN FINGLAS ESTATE

Glen Finglas lies at the heart of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park and is part of the Great Trossachs Forest National Nature Reserve – a 200-year-long landscape-scale woodland restoration project involving the RSPB and Forestry & Land Scotland.

The estate was a hill farm that had been heavily grazed by sheep for generations when Woodland Trust acquired it in 1996 with help from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Covering more than 4800ha of mountain and moorland it is the largest of Woodland Trust's 1000-plus sites across the UK.

Over a million native trees have been planted and some 1800ha of new native woodland created. Over 100ha of peatland has been restored. The estate now welcomes more people and is home to more wildlife. Car parks, waymarked trails and a Visitor Gateway building have all improved opportunities for the public to access and enjoy the site,

The landscape is now diverse and thriving. As the nation gets the woodland creation bug, Glen Finglas offers a glimpse of what the future may hold for land whose revival journey is only just getting

underway. Ideas such as rewilding and reforestation have a high profile today. People increasingly see the urgency to create more woodland to counter the climate and biodiversity crises. Glen Finglas has had a 25-year head start. What you see here now is what much of the country might look like in future, as more and more land is revived.

This metamorphosis required careful management of the vast and varied landscape. A range of habitats had to be nurtured and protected, from open and ancient oak woodland through to montane scrub, grassland, marshland and moorland. Rare upland wood pasture - one of the best examples in Scotland – is given its own special management with help from the hardy herd of grazing Luine cattle.

There's always more to do, but from the lochside to the 879m summit of Ben Ledi, efforts are undoubtedly paying off.

Wildlife is flourishing. Over the years we've seen an increase in all kinds of species, from woodland mammals and birds of prey to fascinating flora and fungi. Golden eagle, pine marten, otter and red squirrel are regularly spotted. Clean air allows lichens to thrive, and trout spawning in the burns is evidence of clean water too.

Photo by Laurie Campbell



FINGLAS FACTS

Together with neighbouring land owned by RSPB, and Forest and Land Scotland, Glen Finglas Estate makes up The Great Trossachs Forest National Nature Reserve - which is as big as Glasgow.

Glen Finglas has nine waymarked paths totalling 59km and connects with The Great Trossachs Path between Inversnaid and Callander. Paths range from a family-friendly play trail to more challenging routes high up in the glen.

Many of Glen Finglas' ancient trees have 'flying' or 'cuckoo' rowans growing out of crevices: one tree growing on another.

If you visit between April and October, be sure to visit the Visitor Gateway centre in the Lendrick Hill car park. Open 7 days a week during these months, from 10am to 4pm, the Visitor Gateway is full of information about the estate, our conservation work and what to see and do during your visit.

Boosting tree cover along the riverbank has encouraged beavers – another sign of clear waters – to migrate into the estate.

The black grouse's courtship dance, known as lekking, is one of the greatest natural spectacles in Scotland. The males' flamboyant strutting, posturing and bubbling calls have been an increasingly rare sight in the UK in recent years. Vast population decline has left only 5,000 breeding pairs and marked the bird an endangered red list species. But their future is looking brighter at Glen Finglas, where the mosaic of habitats - and especially the woodland fringe - provide ideal conditions for the bird. A decade of monitoring has revealed a healthy and stable population of 15-22 males across three lek sites. Considering the volume of suitable habitat nearby and the birds' secretive nature, there are probably more.

Future plans are for more of the same: increased woodland cover, more peatland restoration, and extended path networks. Glen Finglas will continue to be a haven for people and wildlife as well as locking up carbon in its woods and peat bogs; to help in the fight against climate change."

Whether you're a walker, cyclist, photographer, wildlife watcher or history buff, Glen Finglas has something for everyone.



Golden eagle, pine marten, otter and red squirrel are amongst the regular visitors to the estate

Archaeology

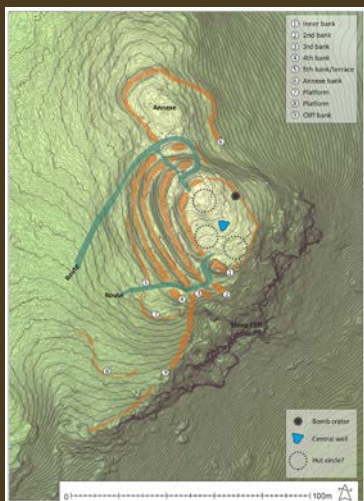
Excavations at Callander Hillforts

The popular imagination of Iron Age Scotland tends to focus on brochs, wheelhouses, roundhouses, crannogs, and – of course – hillforts. In 2021, the Callander's Landscape archaeology project, funded by Historic Environment Scotland and the National Lottery Heritage Fund, has focused on the latter of these, investigating two hillforts in the Callander area.

Residents of Callander will probably be familiar with the iconic Dunmore Hillfort. From its high vantage it looks out onto Loch Venachar and guards the Pass of Leny. Less well-known perhaps is Auchenlaich Hillfort, a larger site sitting high amid forestry at the top of Keltie Glen. Both hillforts are protected as Scheduled Monuments by Historic Environment Scotland, solidifying their importance on a national scale.

It has long been the aspiration of the Callander Heritage Society to find out more about the form, function, and dates of these sites. And so, over the course of two long weekends in June and September 2021, these hillforts were excavated for the first time by a team of volunteers, overseen by AOC Archaeology Group.

Beginning with Dunmore Hillfort, this site was first analysed by the project back in February 2019 when Forestry and Land Scotland generously provided funding for Skyscape Survey to conduct a drone-based photogrammetric survey of the hillfort. This gave us a huge head-start by defining the extent of the ramparts and – most crucially – identifying possible hut platforms in the interior.



Our attentions then moved to excavating this site. Historic Environment Scotland permitted us to hand-excavate three trenches inside the Scheduled area of the hillfort: one across the south-western ramparts and possible entrance, the second in the interior across a possible hut platform, and finally a third across the bank of the annexe to the north.

On the afternoon of the first day, the excavation team found an intact shale bangle in the interior trench, just 10cm under the surface. You could say the dig began with a bang(le)! It is not uncommon to find fragments of shale ornaments at these sites but recovering a bangle fully intact is much more unlikely. Even though shale ornaments can look very robust when they come out of the ground, they tend to laminate or crack if they dry out too quickly.



These objects have a wide date range, from the late Bronze Age, Iron Age, and into the early Medieval period. Inside the same trench in the interior of the hillfort, the team uncovered a hearth, recovering charcoal and burnt bone. This material should allow us to obtain radiocarbon dates and – together with the bangle – build up a rough timeline of activity relating to this hillfort.

Elsewhere, we are now confident that the current route up to the hillfort from the south-west is not the original, ancient entrance. When the team excavated this area, they found that the ramparts had collapsed or slumped, which, when covered in turf and bracken, provides a misleading impression of a path or entrance. We now think that the entrance



*Drone Survey of Dunmore
(Photo by Skyscape Survey_FLS)*

was more likely located at the northern edge of the site, near the annexe of the main hillfort. This might have made the walk up to the summit even more “in the shadow” of the ramparts.

Later in September 2021, we turned our attentions to Auchenlaich Hillfort. Similar to the methodology at Dunmore Hillfort, we were permitted by HES to hand-excavate two trenches inside the Scheduled area: one 6m x 2m trench across the north-western rampart (and possible entrance) and a square 4m x 4m trench in the interior.

The trench over the rampart and possible entrance yielded interesting results. The volunteers found that the sole rampart on this site is an earthwork, with no obvious stone elements. The lack of multiple phases of construction may suggest the occupation of this site was single-phase. A soil sample was recovered from this trench which will be sent to AOC's laboratory for further analysis. Soil samples can contain artefacts (pottery, lithics, etc) or ecofacts (cereal grains, charcoal, etc), which may help us to date the site.

In the other trench located inside the interior near its natural “centre” we hoped to find evidence of occupation but unfortunately luck was not on our side. The volunteers soon dug down to a natural layer, without finding any archaeological features. Therefore, with the evidence we currently possess, we think Auchenlaich was likely a minor hillfort in the local area.

Taking Dunmore and Auchenlaich Hillforts together, we are delighted by how much we have been able to uncover about these sites and we hope the return of radiocarbon dates will reveal even more. Huge thanks to the volunteers for all their efforts and to AOC for directing the work on-site. We would also like to thank the landowners at the two sites and our funders for all their support.

The sky at night



Here are our top tips if you want to give stargazing a go this winter:

Look to the sky this winter

Few things are as amazing or inspiring as gazing up at the night sky to see the distant stars, far-off planets, our neighbouring galaxy or, if you are really lucky, the aurora borealis (northern lights). As part of Callander's Landscape, the Dark Skies project is encouraging people to get outside at night and look up!

Typically the observing season runs from late October when the clocks go back, until late March when the clocks go forward. Stargazing at this time has three great advantages: early darkness, midge-free observing and also an increase in transparent skies.

Lots of great online resources will aid you on your stargazing journey. As a starting point you can read Callander's Landscape monthly blog, written by local amateur astronomer Vernon. You can find out what to look out for each month including what planets are visible, meteor showers and the key constellations in the sky. You can read them here: www.callanderslandscape.org/news/.

Callander's Landscape also hope to host some dark skies event later in the winter, so keep an eye out for more information in the new year. Happy stargazing!

- *Consider the moon. Moonlight washes out the light from most stars leaving only the brightest stars visible. The best times to stargaze are the days before, during and just after the new moon, when the sky is moon free.*
- *Check the weather forecast. You want a clear, crisp evening so if the forecast is showing cloudy skies or heavy rain then leave it for another night.*
- *Be prepared for the cold. This means wrapping up warm, taking a flask of hot drinks and something comfy to sit on like a camp chair or a blanket.*
- *See red. You will need a torch but red light is better for your night vision than a white light. If you don't have a red light torch then you can always adapt your torch using a coloured piece of cellophane or a red sweetie wrapper.*
- *The right kit. You really don't need any kit to enjoy the stars, just your eyes and a dark place away from bright lights. However you could use binoculars if you have them and print off a star chart to help you identify constellations.*
- *Be patient. Your eyes need to adjust to the dark. The longer you spend looking at the night sky, the more stars you will see as the chemical makeup in your eyes adjusts to the low light environment. Even quickly checking your phone is enough to undo the time spent adjusting your eyes so be sure to turn your phone off or turn the brightness right down.*
- *Connect with the Cosmos. Sit back, relax and enjoy the sky above.*



Photos by Stuart McIntyre



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email: enquiries@cruiselochlomond.co.uk
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email: anne@balmillig.co.uk
www.balmillig.co.uk

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• 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-£250

• POPPIES HOTEL & RESTAURANT

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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

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www.holidaycottages.co.uk/scotland

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

• COTTAGES AND CASTLES

Tel: 01738 503601 holidaycottages.co.uk

Christmas at Loch Katrine



Book now for child and adult tickets to lunch with Santa at Loch Katrine including a finger food buffet at the Steamship Café, a one-hour cruise and the kids get a wrapped up Christmas present.

- One-hour cruise around Loch Katrine onboard the Lady of the Lake. Snuggle up in the heated saloons and settle in with a drink and snack while listening to the tales and legends of the loch narrated by the knowledgeable crew
- Take in the stunning Trossachs landmarks such as Ben A'an, Ben Venue and Brenachoile
- Enjoy a finger buffet with Santa after the cruise! Tuck into mince pies, sausage rolls, sandwiches, chipolatas and more of delicious festive food!
- Take part in Christmas crafts in the café to make something fabulously festive to take home!



ADVANCE BOOKING REQUIRED

Ticket must be booked at least 48 hours prior to your selected date (we don't want you to miss out!)

WEEKEND DATES:

4th & 5th / 11th & 12th / 18th & 19th



Thank you to all who have supported our SOS, Save our Steamship Appeal. Help us raise £500,000 required to get Sir Walter Scott Steamship back sailing on Loch Katrine.

Please support the appeal at

www.saveoursteamship.com

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