MEMBERS' NEWS

JULY 2016





Chair's welcome

I am writing this piece having just returned from the Trust's AGM and Members' Gathering in Inverness, attended over the two days by around 150 people, from across the UK. We carry a full report on page 2.

Heartfelt thanks to four outgoing Trustees who stood aside at the AGM – Will Williams, Bill Wright, Gill Bond and Rob McMorran – and a warm welcome to our new board members Peter Foulkes, Hugh Salvesen, Douglas Wynn and David Broom (and to returning trustee, Jo Moulin). I look forward to working with you all over the coming years. At the other end of the spectrum, I was delighted to make a special presentation to Keith and Jane Anderson who are retiring after many years of service to the Trust and wish them all the best.

Following the Scottish elections in May, some important ministerial changes were announced. In a move which we warmly welcome, the former junior ministerial post of Environment Minister has now been upgraded to a full cabinet position, and we look forward to working with the new Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, Roseanna Cunningham. Because energy projects have had such an impact on wild land over the past few years, we were also interested to note the appointment of Paul Wheelhouse MSP to the post of Energy Minister. As Environment Minister in 2014, he supported the Wild Land Areas map, and addressed our 2014 AGM and Members Gathering in Dunbar.

Along with Stuart Brooks, I recently travelled to meet our partners and close neighbours, the Knoydart Foundation community land trust. We had wide-ranging and positive discussions, including around our deer management policies, which are supported by the



Foundation. Working with such partners is a vital part or our work.

On the peninsula, we met a group of our volunteers repairing footpaths in freezing weather on the Foundation's land. We don't take our work parties for granted. Our volunteers are tremendous ambassadors for the Trust, and show that conservation can make a difference not just to nature, but to the people who live in and around our wild places.

The Stronelairg Judicial Review was heard from the 4-6 May by three judges at the Inner House of the Court of Session in Edinburgh, but the decision won't be announced until July at the earliest. Unfortunately, we recently lost a Protective Expenses Order to limit our legal costs, so we ask our members to continue their financial support for this vital campaign.

Much of our work relies on the generosity of our members. Unfortunately, there is no significant government funding for the repair and maintenance of footpaths. That means we need at least £60,000 a year to maintain 120km of trails through remote, untamed places. So we would ask you to keep on supporting our Wild Ways Path Appeal (see page 5).

Finally, we would like your feedback to help us work more effectively. With that in mind, we ask you to sign up to a new research panel and take part in email and/or telephone surveys once or twice a year about Trust-related issues.

Meanwhile, enjoy the long summer days!

Peter Pearson

Trust responds to UK vote to leave the EU

In June, the UK voted to leave the European Union. How the next couple of years will unfold is difficult to know, but what is clear is that the Trust will continue to be needed to help shape the future and to continue to speak up for wild places and the people who benefit from their conservation.

Wild land throughout the countries that make up the United Kingdom will require protection, and people will continue to visit, regardless of the borders we create or remove now and in the future. The Trust's role will be to remain influential across all political landscapes - and join with others with shared interests - to make sure that conservation and enjoyment of wild places continues to receive adequate resources underpinned by progressive policies and regulation.

There is no doubt there will be both challenges and opportunities ahead. The Trust's vision and mission are long-term and will guide the responses we make.



A Highland gathering

The John Muir Trust's 2016 Annual General Meeting and Members' Gathering brings music, celebration and debate to Inverness

Peter Pearson, Chairman of the John Muir Trust, welcomed members to the John Muir Trust's 33rd AGM and Members' Gathering in early June. He started by thanking Councillor Helen Carmichael, Provost of Inverness for hosting the Trust at a civic reception the previous evening where 100 guests had recognised and celebrated the Trust's work.

The Provost presented a number of John Muir Award Certificates to pupils of Dochgarroch Primary School to mark their bushcraft and conservation work on the banks of the Caledonian Canal, guided by one of our partner organisations, the Scottish Waterways Trust. The event included a lively traditional concert by the talented students of the National Centre of Excellence in Traditional Music based in Plockton.

STAFF REPORTS

Chief Executive Stuart Brooks began the staff reports by illustrating the relevance of the Trust's work. He stated the Trust exists for the public benefit. To be relevant, we need to work with both people and politicians, recognising the growing importance of health, well-being and education on the political agenda.

Mike Daniels, Head of Land Management, gave an overview of the Trust's work across its properties. He thanked members for their generosity in responding to appeals for Knoydart, Glenlude and various pathwork projects.

Rob Bushby, John Muir Award Manager, presented two maps side by side highlighting the wild land areas in the UK and the location of John Muir Award Providers - showing the national reach the Trust has.

Helen McDade, Head of Policy, spoke of the Trust's work to meet with MSPs and MPs across the UK. She also mentioned the Stronelairg case and warned: "It seems likely that even if we do win this appeal, SSE and the Scottish Government will take this case to the Supreme Court."

Kate Barclay, Head of Fundraising, spoke of the financial

pressure resulting from increased competition for private and public funds. She confirmed that the Trust doesn't outsource any of its fundraising. Kate finished by thanking members for donating to appeals and enabling projects to happen.

AGM

Chairman Peter Pearson started the formal AGM saying that the Trust's win in the first round of the Stronelairg court case shows we were justified in taking the action. He mentioned that the Trust has won TGO's 'Campaigner of the Year' award two years running and paid credit to the Trust's staff for their hard work during a year that also contained plenty of uncertainty.



Picture perfect: Jane and Keith Anderson were honoured at the AGM, marking their retirement after 25 years





Jim Gibson, Trustee and Convenor of the Trust's finance committee, reported on the Trust's finances. He also urged people to raise money for the Trust and/or sign up new members, saying: "we're in this for the long-term, what we do now will affect our grandchildren's grandchildren."

EXCURSIONS

In the afternoon, Trust members enjoyed discussions on policy work and excursions including visits to the Fyrish Monument at

> Alness, the Abriachan communityowned forest near Loch Ness, Culbin Sands on Findhorn Bay, and Aigas Field Centre near Beauly. Peter Cairns, the acclaimed wildlife photographer brought the event to a spectacular conclusion with Scotland: The Big Picture - an inspirational call for mass ecological restoration of the Scottish Highlands, illustrated with breathtaking pictures and film clips.

NEXT STOP: FORT WILLIAM...

The Trust's 2017 AGM and Members' Gathering will be held in Fort William. Further details will be available soon. Meanwhile, for the latest on all our events, sign up for our eNewsletter at johnmuirtrust.org/newsletter

Teenage explorer meets 'John Muir' on John Muir Way

Sixteen-year-old Zeki Basan – noted for his excellent Yosemite film 'In the Spirit of Muir' – recently met up with John Muir impersonator and actor Lee Stetson on the route of the John Muir Way

Thanks to financial support from the Trust through the Bill Wallace Grant, Zeki Basan started work on his new adventure film about the John Muir Way – a long distance trail across Central Scotland – in early May.

Muir impersonator Lee Stetson was in Scotland to mark John Muir's influence on the creation of the US National Park system, which is celebrating its 100th birthday this year.

He said: "I'm a fan of Zeki, I think his film In the Spirit of John Muir is wonderful. And I'm pleased that his next film will be here in Scotland on the John Muir Way.

"It's an opportunity for a young person to bring Muir's message close to hundreds of thousands of people from across the Central Belt and beyond."





Wales reaches 50k Award milestone

A Cardiff University student has become the 50,000th recipient of a John Muir Award in Wales.

Isabel Negri was presented with her certificate at a special celebration hosted by the University's Wildlife and Conservation Society. Along with other members of the Society, she took part in a diverse range of activities including surveying bats, identifying plants, clearing pathways to create wildlife corridors, building hedges to improve nesting habitats, sampling invertebrates, studying soil composition and planting trees.

Isabel said: "It's encouraged me to become more aware of my surroundings and spend time out in the open, observing and better connecting with wildlife and nature. Engaging in practical conservation taught me how very little effort really can make a difference to wild places."



John Muir Conserver Award recipient shortlisted for Environment Award

In April, 13-year-old Callum Ullman-Smith, from Kyle of Lochalsh in Wester Ross, trod the Edinburgh International Conference Centre red carpet as a Young Scot Awards finalist. He had been nominated by the John Muir Trust in the environmental category for his ground-breaking research of newt populations.

Although he did not win, the packed conference centre heard him described as "Scotland's Young David Attenborough."

Callum achieved his John Muir Conserver Award in 2015 and has since become an expert of newt populations unusually found in brackish and salty water. He spends much of his spare time helping conserve the coastal environment near his home, working with the Highland Seashore Surveyors Group, and the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust.

Following the ceremony in Edinburgh he said: "I've had an interest in wild places and wildlife all my life, but especially newts. Perhaps it's because I associate them with dragons that I imagined as a boy.

"Tonight's been amazing and thanks to the John Muir Trust for the nomination. I'm going to continue my research so who knows, I could be nominated again in the future."





In brief

Planning

During the passage of the Housing Bill through the UK Parliament, the Lords added an amendment supporting a community right of appeal, although this was subsequently reversed in the Commons. In a further encouraging move, campaigning by Planning Democracy led to the first live broadcast of a Public Local Inquiry in Scotland in early May, about the redevelopment of Glasgow Queen Street Station.

Political engagements

Now the shape of the new Scottish Parliament is clear, the Trust's Policy team is busy making connections with MSPs. new and old, to share our concerns and suggested solutions regarding the threats to wild land. In April we submitted evidence as part of a UK Parliament Scottish Affairs Committee inquiry into the renewable energy sector in Scotland.



Casework summary

Campaigns Co-ordinator **Mel Nicoll** reports on what our Policy team has been working on around the country

PERTHSHIRE

- Perth & Kinross Council has joined Angus Council in objecting to the 14-turbine Saddle Hill wind farm, which spans the two local authority areas. The councils recommended refusal of the development - which would be sited around six miles north of Blairgowrie - on the grounds that it would have unacceptable landscape and visual impacts. The developer may now appeal to the Scottish Government.
- A Public Local Inquiry (PLI) will be held on 14 November into the proposed 25-turbine Crossburns wind farm, near Aberfeldy, after Perth & Kinross Council raised an objection to the application.

The Trust objected to the proposal when it was first brought forward in 2014 because of its cumulative and landscape impact and its potential impact on employment and the local tourist economy. The wider area relies heavily on tourism and the Trust's own research has shown that a proliferation of turbines may make people less likely to visit the area.

We are concerned about the cumulative impact on the area which already has 91 installed turbines many of which will be visible from Schiehallion on a clear day. The Crossburns site also partially covers land where a previous application for a wind farm was refused by Scottish Ministers following a PLI in 2006.

• A PLI also starts soon into the 17-turbine Dulater wind farm near Dunkeld, again following a formal objection by Perth & Kinross Council. The scheme would involve the erection of 17 turbines on a site just over a mile from the Tay National Scenic Area boundary, and close to the Loch of the Lowes Nature Reserve, where ospreys breed.

HIGHLANDS

- We have submitted additional comment to the Scottish Government on the proposed Gordonbush Extension wind farm, following Highland Council's decision not to object. We referred the Government's Energy Consents Unit to RSPB research on the 80 per cent decline in numbers of golden plover at the existing Gordonbush wind farm.
- We have responded to a draft consultation launched by the Cairngorms National Park Authority about the future direction for Cairngorm and Glenmore. The Park Authority has analysed responses and convened a follow up meeting which addressed most of our concerns. The finalised consultation document will be issued this autumn. We will respond in detail at that time.
- · We are contributing to the ongoing consultation regarding the dualling of the A9 and how it can be designed to support users such as walkers and cyclists.

DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY

The Dumgal Against Pylons campaign to encourage public engagement in electricity grid planning has involved politicians of all parties. The campaign welcomed the decision by SP Energy Networks to put its plans for a power line upgrade from South Ayrshire to Cumbria - most of it in Dumfries and Galloway - on hold.

LAKE DISTRICT

Pressure has mounted on National Grid in connection with the plans for a new transmission line that will cut through the Lake District National Park. Friends of the Lake District are working with National Grid to try and mitigate the plan. The group organised a walk on St George's Day to highlight the potential impacts.

Helping to transform wild landscapes

Wild Ways path fund: Paths on our properties are almost entirely dependent on private donations. Thank you for the fantastic support, now involving over 10 per cent of our members, and also the support from the Brown Forbes Memorial Fund, Scottish Mountaineering Trust, the Kestrelman Trust, the Hugh Fraser Foundation and the Jeremy Willson Charitable Trust.

If you would like to continue to help the paths in our care, please donate to our Wild Ways Path Appeal. We are currently seeking funding for the second phase of the Skye path project at Glen Sligachan.



Knoydart: Thanks to your generous support, and a huge effort from volunteers working in all weathers, the latest phase of native woodland planting on Knoydart is off to a great start. Approximately 6,500 birch and alder have been planted so far, and more seedlings are germinating in our newly-built nurseries, for planting out over the next couple of years. You've so far donated over £64,000. Thanks go also to the Patsy Wood Charitable Trust and the Dunard Fund.

Glenlude: With your donations, and thanks to players of People's Postcode Lottery, we have reached our target for the new community firewood project,

including the purchase of a new firewood processor and on-site storage. We'll keep you updated with the progress, and hope some of you may be able to volunteer as part of the project.

Suilven: The work on the Suilven path on Assynt Foundation owned land is due to start in the autumn, with support from Heritage Lottery Fund (as part of the Coigach and Assynt Living Landscapes project). We are grateful to all who gave so generously to help the Trust work with the Assynt Foundation to repair the path.

If you'd like more information or to get involved in assisting any of these projects, please contact kate.barclay@johnmuirtrust.org / 01796 484 963



Students make it four-in-a row at Sandwood Bay

For the fourth year, a group of Fife-based countryside management students from the Scottish Rural College's (SRUC) Elmwood Campus travelled to Sandwood for a week of pathwork experience while completing a John Muir Award.

This year the group built five cross drains and six steps, dug around 60m of ditch and surfaced 50m of the path as well as landscaping the path edges and all the excavated soil.

As always, the group gained more than pathwork experience. They also enjoyed discovering the people and landscape of the far North West Highlands.

Victoria Pendry, lecturer at Elmwood Campus, said: "Despite it being physically hard work, the students enjoyed themselves and learnt a lot this week."

Chris Goodman, footpath officer for the John Muir Trust, said: "The finished work is a huge improvement on the wet, boggy section of path that was there before and the students should be very proud of their work.

"This combined effort of the Elmwood students over four years and our own volunteer work parties has helped keep the path in tip-top condition, so another huge thank you to everyone who has helped with this work, either by coming out and getting muddy or by donating to our Wild Ways Path Appeal."



Happy trails: Before and after pictures show our sympathetic repairs to the Sandwood path



work party update

To date this year, we have carried out 208 days of work on the nine work parties held on seven properties. Our volunteer coordinator **Sandy Maxwell** reports

GLENLUDE

Thanks to two full work parties at Glenlude and several ad hoc days. we have planted many hundreds of native tress and carried out maintenance on trees planted in previous years. The polytunnel and nursery is continuing to expand with new benches and seed trays being built, and large numbers of crab apple, oak and other seedlings now potted out.

KNOYDART

We have held two work parties at Li & Coire Dhorrcail with hundreds of alder and birch planted above the bay at Poll a' Mhuineil. A tree nursery has been established at Inbhir Dhorrcail with volunteers erecting the fencing and spending days digging out bracken roots. The existing tree nursery further up the Coire has also been weeded.

We've also made two trips to Inverie village on the other side of the peninsula to carry out work on behalf of the longest standing of our partners, the Knoydart Foundation. Working with the Knoydart Forest Trust, we removed rhododendrons. We also worked on over 600m of paths up at Follach - redigging ditches, clearing culverts and rebuilding a section which was in danger of falling into the river.

We carried out maintenance work on the Bla Bheinn footpath, and

made extensive renovations to the car park.

SCHIEHALLION

Wet weather failed to deter our volunteers from building a new bridge to help reduce incursions of sheep from neighbouring estates which are interfering with the natural regeneration of woodland. A second work party in May maintained the whole of the built path and surveyed sections of the path which will need to be rebuilt during our next work party in July.

WESTERN ISLES

The first of the conservation work parties of the year in the Western Isles coincided with a May heatwave. Under blue skies, a large group worked with two of our partner organisations, the North Harris and the West Harris Trust.

The work on North Harris included maintenance on the Huisinis-Cravadale, Leosaid and Laxdale Lochs paths; beach cleaning; pirri-pirri removal, the installation of a solar panel and the switch-on of the electric deer fence in Glen Trollamaraig.

In West Harris we spent two days rebuilding around 18 metres of drystone dyking at Borve.

Find out more about our conservation volunteer work parties at johnmuirtrust.org/support-us/ volunteer/conservationvolunteering

Varying the restriction on the Steall path fund

Thanks to your generous support for our Steall Gorge Footpath Appeal in 2012, the work was successfully completed - leaving the Trust with a balance of £32,000 remaining in the restricted fund. Those funds would be useful in our ongoing Wild Ways path fund to help repair and maintain the most damaged paths that the Trust looks after (including the Steall Gorge path if needed).

We are now going to request that OSCR, the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, allows us to vary the restrictions on the Steall path fund since the original purpose has been fulfilled. Before we make that application, we are informing members and supporters of our intentions.

If you donated to the Steall appeal and have any questions on this plan to use the £32,000 for the Trust's pathwork, please contact Kate Barclay on 01796 470080 or email us at finance@johnmuirtrust.org



Mick Ward's triple challenge

Three cheers for Mick Ward! Not content with running a mere 26.2 miles as one of our eight London Marathon runners, he decided to create a 'triple challenge' to fundraise for the Trust - also walking the 134 mile length of the John Muir Way and climbing

The 55-year-old successfully completed his gruelling challenge in early June, scaling Nevis on a glorious summer day. By collecting sponsorship money and selling his photographs and other items on ebay, Mick raised an impressive £1,400 for the Trust.

"Wild places are beautiful, exhilarating, inspiring and essential", Mick says. "The John Muir Trust is ideal for me as I spend a lot of my free time walking the wild spaces of Scotland. I can give something back to the country and particularly places like Ben Nevis and Skye that I visit regularly".

You can still support Mick's efforts at justgiving.com/fundraising/Michael-Ward55



London Marathon 2016 fundraising heroes

Congratulations to the eight John Muir Trust supporters who ran the 2016 London Marathon on Sunday 24 April, raising almost £10,000 for our work: Georgina Hobson, who ran through the pain of a fractured shoulder; Mick Ward, running the marathon as part of a 'triple challenge'; Adam Osman and Jenny Frings, who both broke the four-hour barrier; father and son Patrick and Duncan Gray – Patrick running a remarkable tenth London Marathon for the Trust; and mother and son Elizabeth and Gary Marshall.

Gary, who has been delivering the John Muir Award as a teacher for several years, said: "Both my mum and I had the best day running the London Marathon. The whole experience was amazing.

"Running through a major city like London was incredible, but it also hit home just how important protecting and managing our wild landscapes actually is".

Thanks to all our runners – and if you're interested in running next year's London Marathon for the Trust, or you have any other fundraising plans, please contact Adam Pinder on **01796 484 965** or email him at **adam.pinder@johnmuirtrust.org.**

Wild moment: Bryan Johnston

A Trust member shares a poem written as a teen, some 50 years ago!

Away from crowds on moorlands free the wind is strong and carries far our childlike laughter.

And this is where I dream I am when winter crowds in all around to make us shiver.

Just two short weeks in one long year is all I need to carry me through tiresome winter.

And yet I could not live for long away from crowds (on moorlands free) for they're a part of me.

Find out how to share your own stories and poems about wild places at johnmuirtrust.org/wild-moments

'Fairy Hill' charity event

For the second year, families, patients and staff from the Schiehallion unit of Royal Hospital for Children in Glasgow came to hold a day of celebration and fundraising at the mountain of the same name.

The 100 people who made the 170-mile round trip were rewarded with bright and mostly wind-free weather, with snow patches on either side of the mountain ridge glistening in the sunlight.

Eleven-year-old Emily Erskine, who had been a patient in the Schiehallion unit five years ago, travelled down from Stornoway to raise some money and recognise the help she's received with her ongoing recovery.

With the support of Trish, Richard and Bill from the Highland Perthshire Community Land Trust – whose property Dun Coillich neighbours the Trust's Schiehallion property – Emily and her family planted several trees as a way of marking her journey to date.

During the day, a group set off for the summit supported by qualified mountain leaders stationed at different points on the hill. At basecamp, a storyteller enthralled listeners with folklore and fairy tales, while others took part in craft sessions or roasted marshmallows on a fire. Groups also followed a numbered nature trail, through along a stream, through woodland and out to the base of the mighty mountain itself.

Volunteers, partners and organisations from across the local community came together with the John Muir Trust to make the event happen including the Highland Perthshire Communities Land Trust, Harviestoun Brewery, and the Breadalbane Wildlife Watchers.





NE Scotland Local Group update

With the summer days lengthening the John Muir Trust North East Group (Scotland) has been particularly active.

The monthly Conservation Work Parties with the rangers of Glen Tanar Charitable Trust (usually held on the third Saturday of the month) have attracted an increasing number of volunteers. The extra hands have been most welcome in assisting with the mammoth task of removing domestic detritus left on the river banks after the exceptional winter floods. Footpaths and fences also required repairing before attention could be turned to planting tree saplings that had overwintered in the nursery.

The group's customary open spring talk was to be given by John Muir Trust Trustee, Chris Townsend, but Chris had an accident on the way to the venue, ending up in A & E. The Trust's Kevin Lelland, and local Trustee Steve Green stepped into the void keeping the audience well informed about some of the Trust's activities and entertained with exhilarating personal slides of Steve's recent ski mountaineering trip along the Haute Route from Chamonix to Zermatt.

Back outdoors some volunteers worked on a two-day work party at Mar Lodge. Dry weather, with only a few midges, enabled the complete removal of a redundant electric fence and clearance of overgrowth on a track needing access by heavy machinery for more flood damage repair work.

Local volunteers have also travelled further afield to the main John Muir Trust Conservation Work Parties, very recently at Sandwood Bay. Exceptionally dry ground conditions and two days of unbroken sunshine were perfect for footpath resurfacing and beach-cleaning work.

MEMBERS' GROUPS FORTHCOMING EVENTS

26 November - Edinburgh Members' Gathering with Andy Wightman, MSP, at the Augustine United Church in Edinburgh. Contact edinburgh@johnmuirtrust.org

North East Scotland

13-14 September - Assist with conservation tasks on the Mar Lodge Estate. Contact jamesbrownhill@sky.com 14 August and 29 October - Assist with conservation tasks on Balmoral Estate. Contact jamesbrownhill@sky.com

22-23 October - North West Members' Gathering in Ambleside. Contact D.V.Spracklen@leeds.ac.uk 12 November - Southern Members' Gathering in Bristol. Contact southernmembersgroup@johnmuirtrust.org

1 October – Wales Members' Gathering at Plas y Brenin Mountain Centre, Capel Curig. Contact Peter Foulkes at peter.foulkes249@btinternet.com

For more info visit: johnmuirtrust.org/latest/events



Spirit of John Muir in 2016

Following the success of Chris Packham's inaugural speech in London last year, adventurer and author Alastair Humphreys will be the keynote speaker in the Trust's Spirit of John Muir event series this year at the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh on the evening of Tuesday 8 November. Alastair said "I'm excited to be able share my own adventures in honour of inspirational wilderness visionary John Muir." For further information about this event visit johnmuirtrust.org/spiritofjohnmuir

Tell us your news!

What have Trust members and local groups been up to? Tell Email emma.cessford@ johnmuirtrust.org

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COVER BANNER IMAGE: MOUNTAIN HARE IN MID SUMMER BY FERGU GILL/2020VISION

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