

# MEMBERS' NEWS

JANUARY 2022

JOHN  
MUIR  
TRUST



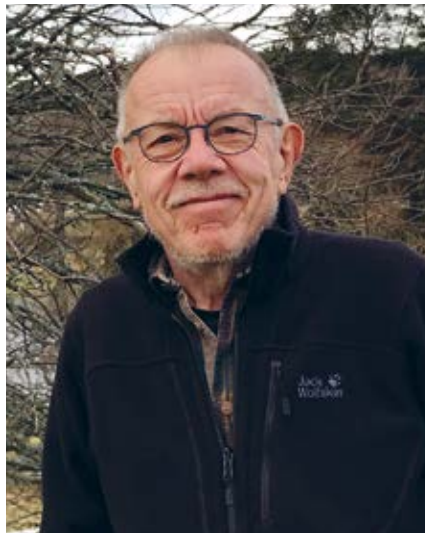
## Chair's welcome

It would be fantastic if we could put Covid-19 firmly behind us, but there is no doubt that we shall have to live with it. It seems our world has changed so much in the space of just a few years, but I hope that, like me, you find personal solace in wild places and from the enthusiasm for its protection and enjoyment shared by so many people, especially the young.

2022 will be a year of significant change and transition for the Trust. The new strategic plan seeks to position us as the leading voice for wild places: a voice which will use our experience of land stewardship and advocacy to inspire people of all ages and from diverse backgrounds and communities to better understand and value wild places, and to advocate for measures to ensure their protection.

I thank those of you who responded to our consultation about the plan and submitted comments. The overwhelming majority of the responses received were very supportive and the team has taken many suggestions into account.

Your Trustees were fully involved throughout the development of the plan, which we recognise is ambitious. We were unanimous in our view that the Trust must grow in order to exert positive influence effectively. In approving the plan,



Trustees recognised there will be a significant investment in new staff roles as we increase the capacity of the Trust in what is widely recognised as a tight jobs market.

The John Muir Trust is in a good position to tackle the many challenges and opportunities ahead with confidence and enthusiasm. We shall discuss the strategic plan and future aspirations at this year's online Annual General Meeting on Saturday 11 June and I look forward to seeing you there.

Thank you so much for your continuing support and involvement, and I wish you a happy New Year.

**Dave Gibson**

## Trustee call

Five Trustee places become vacant on our Board in 2022. We're looking for new Trustees who share our values and will bring fresh ideas to keep us relevant and influential as we work towards our new strategic plan which will take us through to 2026. We'd like Members to nominate and vote for candidates from diverse backgrounds. Specifically, we'd welcome those with experience in:

- community engagement
- land management
- fundraising
- public policy development.

Any Member is welcome to stand. The nomination process will close at noon on Tuesday 1 March 2022.

Find out more at [johnmuirtrust.org/trustee-call](https://johnmuirtrust.org/trustee-call)

**org/trustee-call**

## 2022 AGM

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the Board of Trustees has agreed that our 39th Annual General Meeting will be held online on Saturday 11 June 2022, with the Members' Gathering postponed until later in the year. To sign up for the online event, visit [johnmuirtrust.org/agm2022](https://johnmuirtrust.org/agm2022)

# Protecting wild Scotland

## The Trust responds to draft NPF4 consultation on the long-term approach to planning and development

Public consultation of Scotland's draft Fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4) runs until 31 March 2022. The Trust is aware of the pressure piling up on the Scottish Government from the onshore renewable companies to remove any reference to wild land and the Wild Land Areas and we welcome the inclusion of wild land and specific reference to NatureScot's Wild Land Areas map in the draft Policies 19 and 32.

The wording overall is less robust in this draft, and the special category (level 2 protection) which had included Wild Land Areas and other sensitive sites in Scottish Planning Policy 2 has been removed. However, the wording of the policies is sufficiently clear to ensure that developers, planning officials, councils, and the Scottish Government will have to continue to take account of wild land when applications come forward.

Part 2 of the document features proposed national developments. Number 12 in the list is 'Strategic Renewable Electricity Generation and Transmission Infrastructure'. This type of development includes Section 36 onshore wind applications and applies Scotland-wide.

A development with national development status is assumed as being needed and therefore the question of



PHOTOGRAPH: JAIN BROWN LIE ROY

need is no longer a consideration for planning.

The Trust has been reviewing the draft and will submit a response before the deadline. We encourage Members with an interest to respond as individuals to the draft.

## Challenging inappropriate developments on wild land

In August 2021, the Trust submitted a response to the Achany extension, objecting to this wind farm due to its scale and siting on peatlands within the Reay-Cassley Wild Land Area. NatureScot also responded, objecting to the proposal for being sited in a Wild Land Area and its foreseen peatland impacts unless certain conditions, set out in their response, could be met.

In October 2021, Scotland's Environmental Protection Agency

withdrew its earlier objection following changes to the locations of two turbines that would have been sited on deep peat. As we went to print, we were waiting for a determination from Scottish Ministers on this application and also the Sallachy wind farm application, which would be sited nearby in the same Wild Land Area.

The Trust also objects to the Yell wind farm because it would cause ecological harm.



## Latest consultation responses

In 2021, we formally responded to 10 consultations. These included: the UK government's consultation on Local Nature Recovery Strategies; the Scottish Government's consultation on agricultural transitions; written evidence in the form of our Carbon Emissions Land Tax proposal as part of a response to the Scottish Government's consultation on a First Tax Framework for Scotland; the Lake District's National Park Partnership Plan; Scotland's Third Land Use Strategy; DEFRA's consultation on environmental principles; and DEFRA's consultation on access and inclusivity.

With Scottish Environment LINK, we also contributed to the Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan draft and welcome it as a bold and ambitious plan for nature's recovery in the Cairngorms National Park.



PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID BALHARRY

Pete and Isaac on a site visit to Thirlmere, (pictured below) where we will help plant trees

# Tree planting partnership

In autumn of 2020, the Trust began a new relationship with its Helvellyn neighbours at nearby Thirlmere in the Lake District.

Our plan is to work with United Utilities, who manage the land around Thirlmere reservoir, and Cumbria Wildlife Trust who will undertake survey work, with a view to regenerating peatland and woodland and restoring natural processes. By working together, we have an opportunity to create a healthier landscape mosaic over a wide area, with the collective effort initially concentrated on a core area of about 15 square km.

Wythburn Beck weaves its way through the valley for approximately 4km before entering Thirlmere reservoir. The lower section has been identified as a perfect area for planting several hundred

native broadleaf trees. These trees will provide an important habitat and increase biodiversity, flood mitigation, carbon sequestration and reduce sediment flow into the reservoir.

After some detailed mapping and several site visits, we

plan to deliver this ambitious planting scheme over several days in the spring of 2022.

As well as planting the trees, we are keen to engage a wide range of audiences with this work.

Everyone from local volunteers, Members, schools and youth groups will have an opportunity to learn about the exciting new project and get involved in some hands-on conservation. If you are interested in getting involved, please email [Isaac.johnston@johnmuirtrust.org](mailto:Isaac.johnston@johnmuirtrust.org) to be added to an email list with further updates.



## New nature champ for upland birch

Following the May 2021 elections and a newly formed Scottish Parliament, we have been proactively engaging with MSPs from all political parties and are delighted to report that we have recruited another Nature Champion.

Joining Maree Todd MSP for Caithness, Sutherland and Ross (champion for the lesser butterfly orchid) and Lorna Slater MSP for Lothian region and Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity (champion for the golden eagle) is Anas Sarwar MSP for the Glasgow region and Leader of the Scottish Labour Party, who has agreed to champion upland birchwood habitats. We are still looking for MSPs to champion Atlantic salmon and sea trout.

Anas further demonstrated his commitment to the importance of wild places when he met with our team, Venture Scotland, and John Muir Award participants in Glasgow's Pollok Country Park at the end of October. He said: "We know about the links between wild places and wellbeing. Schemes such as the John Muir Award encourage people from all backgrounds to connect with nature in ways that are relevant to them."

Additional MSP engagement activity has included meeting Paul McLennan MSP at Schiehallion, an online call with Patrick Harvie, Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights. In 2021, we also engaged with two Parliamentary Cross-Party Working Groups – one on the uplands and the other on outdoor education.



PHOTOGRAPH: TOBY CLARK

Anas Sarwar MSP, our Nature Champion for upland birchwood

# Carbon Emissions Land Tax proposal

The Trust highlights our novel solution to the climate and biodiversity crises during COP26 in Glasgow

## Family friendly at Dynamic Earth

We kicked off various COP26 events and online sessions with a stall hosted at Dynamic Earth's Climate Science Showcase. This was an opportunity for us to promote our new short animation which helps to explain the issues and the concept of the tax proposal in a fun and engaging way. We also made a Gaelic language version of the film to widen access to this resource for the younger generation.

Our family friendly stall included mystery boxes containing different types of carbon storing habitats for kids (and adults) to try to guess. It was very positive to see people were engaged and supportive of our proposal.

## Music and poetry at SEDA

Our next COP26 fringe event was an online panel discussion about the tax, jointly hosted by the Trust and the Scottish Ecological Design Association (SEDA Land). The discussion point of the event was 'does Scotland need a Carbon Emissions Land Tax if it is to reach its target of net zero by 2045?'. Our aim was to canvas a range of opinions and critical analysis on our proposed tax.

We had a broad line-up of expert panellists - from forestry consultants to community health specialists - all sharing their unique perspective on how the tax would impact their areas.

It was gratifying when it became clear that the panellists and audience agreed that they were broadly supportive of the tax and a lively discussion ensued between panellists and the audience via the

Q&A. The event was punctuated by some inspiring words and music on the theme.

Mark Gallie of Loud Poets read his beautiful poem (reproduced on the right hand side of the page) and musicians Hamish Napier and Su-a Lee played an uplifting track from Hamish's album *The Woods* and created a video of the performance just for us.

## Crisis talks at REVIVE

Our final climate-related event was at the REVIVE Coalition's national conference held in mid November in Perth. Around 450 people from across Scotland came to hear host Chris Packham and an array of speakers (including our Carbon Officer Nikki Gordon) and experts discuss the link between the climate and biodiversity crises; as well as the circle of destruction that surrounds grouse shooting.

Nikki introduced our Carbon Emissions Land Tax proposal as an incentive mechanism for landowners to transform our moors and described the prospective benefits for people, communities, wildlife and the environment. The proposal was well received and Chris Packham did an excellent job of working the crowd.

Beyond COP26, we will continue to spread the word about the Carbon Emissions Land Tax as an incentive for the change needed to halt the climate and nature crises.

For more about the Carbon Emissions Land Tax and to check out our new animation in English and Gaelic, plus links to our specially created poem and music session, visit [johnmuirtrust.org/celt](http://johnmuirtrust.org/celt)



PHOTOGRAPHS: JOHN MUIR TRUST



People of all ages were invited to hear about our proposal for a Carbon Emissions Land Tax in various fun and engaging ways at COP26 fringe events



## Poem for wild places: Words from the weary



Mark Gallie

Once I could hold you in one hand  
It's strange to think of you like  
that now  
Bouncing baby beings bounding out  
of cold ocean to boldly go forth and  
prosper  
Each foot pressed into sand toes  
pointing forward  
gripping each grain as if even one pace  
backwards was admitting failure

Those were some shaky first steps  
though  
and I have seen more than my share  
of bambis on ice  
you were so small, so fragile  
still with each slipped sole  
you stamped heavier tread  
and found steady ground on my shores

I remember welcoming you into  
my embrace  
keeping you safe in the shelter of  
my branches  
rustling my leaves hoping you could  
finally dream  
of something other than surviving  
offered feast in the fruits of my fields  
and the beasts of my being

Gathering came easy  
hunting took longer  
but it was clear  
which one you enjoyed more  
The food chain rattles and sings  
when you add a new link

I should have been more concerned  
with your first word  
it sounded different then  
"More"  
But I was so overwhelmed  
so thrilled to hear you speak  
so happy to see you healthy  
I forgot to teach you "please"  
and "enough"

I wish you could remember me  
back then  
when kingdoms of creatures  
claimed home to my crags

The vast expanse of my  
foliage covering  
from sunrise to sunset

Season to season I would  
paint the plentiful hills pastel hues  
dance to the touring birdsong  
and hum to the tune of harmony  
the true beauty of balance

I can't dance any more  
too small, too fragile  
my lands dry and cracked  
habitats snapped from existence  
My poor swollen peat ache  
under the weight of your innovation

Once I could hold you in one hand  
Now you're too big to carry

You've grown so much  
Haven't lost that sense of adventure  
you've shaped cities from the soil,  
bloomed communities by  
the riverbanks  
you gave magic a new name in science  
tamed the sun, wind and waves.  
Paving way and making space  
carving your place in history

Just like when we first met  
Trying to build something better  
grow a world for those to come  
You didn't know what that meant then  
You do now  
a course correction still sails straight

You have been facing forward for  
so long  
you have forgotten how to be still  
and listen  
So hear me here

Once I could hold you in one hand  
Now I need one from you.

© Mark Gallie / Loud Poets  
Read more wild moments at  
[johnmuirtrust.org/wildmoments](http://johnmuirtrust.org/wildmoments) and  
find out how to submit your own wild  
moment.

Dave MacLeod's film shows him tackling Keystone in Glen Nevis and investigating mountain woodland

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVE CUTHBERTSON

# Keystone at Kendal

## Trust's mountain woodland project reaches a new audience via an exciting new film

We were excited to have an increased presence at this year's Kendal Mountain Festival. As well as our mountain woodland-themed stall in Basecamp, we sponsored a brand-new film and an inclusive event.

A Trust-commissioned film, *Keystone*, by renowned climber and filmmaker Dave MacLeod, premiered at this year's festival to an enthusiastic response.

Dave used his attempt to make the first free ascent of Keystone (grade E8), close to home in Glen Nevis, to explore why our uplands are so barren. His research highlighted historic and ongoing issues in upland land management in Scotland: a lack of mountain woodland and community control exacerbated by concentrated land ownership and overgrazing by deer.

At an audience Q&A after the premiere, Dave and the Trust's Mountain Woodlands Officer Izzy Filor were asked how the Trust can empower local communities and change our upland landscapes for the benefit of people and biodiversity, especially when the financial incentives to do so are limited.

We are happy that the film was well received and look forward to sharing it with more audiences at a variety of mountain and adventure film festivals in 2022.

Our commitment to ensuring that wild places are for all to enjoy and benefit from saw us sponsor Open Mountain – which helps amplify under-represented voices in the outdoors – for the third year running.

Open Mountain organisers, Kate Davies, and Polly Atkin, were deeply impressed with how people responded to this year's brief – 'unlocking landscapes: what it means to gain access to a landscape or to feel excluded'. They selected six writers from a range of diverse backgrounds – Becca Grady, Lynn Buckle, Erin Niimi Longhurst, Sarah Doyle, Paula Knight and Carinya Sharples – to share their beautiful and moving work with an appreciative online audience.

Our thanks to everyone who came over to our Basecamp stall to support our work in wild places. We raised £1,500 and are grateful to Mountain Equipment for supporting our presence there.

## John Muir Award aids pandemic recovery

Last year, Scotland's primary schools experienced a near 40 per cent increase in John Muir Award activity compared to the previous academic year. In 2020-21, pupils achieved 9,584 John Muir Awards, with 20 per cent by young people who are experiencing some form of social,

physical, or financial disadvantage.

While the pandemic shone a light on the deep social inequalities within our society, it also highlighted just how important connecting to wild places is for health and wellbeing.

Feedback tells us that the John Muir Award offers a rich curriculum

context for schools; it builds teacher confidence in taking learning outdoors and helps equip pupils with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed to address some of our global challenges, including climate change, nature loss and inequality.



PHOTOGRAPH: SARAH MCNEILL

Junior Rangers learn navigation skills in Glen Nevis

# Ambassadors for wild places

## Junior Rangers protect their local landscapes

Since August 2021, 20 local young people from Lochaber and Ullapool High Schools have been taking part in our first Junior Ranger programmes; providing young people living on, or near, John Muir Trust land with the opportunity to learn about their local area and develop practical and lifelong skills to increase their chances of taking on future roles in nature conservation.

Ullapool High School Head Teacher Robbie McFedries said: "This is a tremendously exciting programme which really opens young people's eyes to what is happening locally, nationally and globally and may plant seeds for active contribution in later life."

The year-long programme is based around the John Muir Award, and Scottish Countryside Ranger Association Junior Ranger Award. So far, the young people have:

- Contributed to our conservation work in a diverse range of habitats
- Learned about deer management
- Explored visitor management challenges and learned the Scottish Outdoor Access Code
- Developed their skills in navigation and teamwork and boosted their nature knowledge
- Been ambassadors for wild places by representing the Trust at community events.

They have also had the opportunity to work with neighbouring organisations and specialists including the Aberdeen Science Centre, Nevis Landscape Partnership, West Sutherland Fisheries Trust, West Edge, Leckmelm Wood and The Woodland Trust.

We are excited to continue working with these enthusiastic young conservationists for the rest of their academic year. Thank you to our funders ALA Green for making these experiences possible. Thanks also to Gift Your Gear and Coigach Assynt Living Landscape Partnership for their kind donations of outdoor clothing and equipment.

## Establishing Skye's newest woodland

This winter has seen significant progress with our long-term forest plan for an area of around 300 hectares of the Strathaird peninsula on Skye.

Our goal is to re-establish natural ecosystems by transforming the various blocks of conifer plantation back to native woodland or peatland through a variety of techniques. The recent work to plant 40,000 native broadleaf trees in an area known as Keppoch, was funded by a mixture of private donations – including through our Wild Woods Appeal and the Scottish Forestry's Woodland Grant Scheme.

Keppoch was planted with conifers in the 1960s and – due to lack of management and the precarious nature of the mature trees – it was decided that this particular block would be clear-felled and restocked with native broadleaves.

The felling and extraction of the timber took place in 2017/18 and, after erecting a deer fence and preparing the ground, we finally started planting in September 2021. Trees for Life were chosen as contractors to undertake the work, supplying and planting the local mixture of native trees.

The footprint of the woodland was restructured to make the most of the ground conditions and to protect and enhance the archaeology of the area which includes a substantial village cleared in the late 1800s.

We have also hosted several groups of volunteers over the last year who have been helping us to clear invasive species from our re-establishing woodlands. Volunteers also helped remove regenerating Sitka spruce from our recently restored peatland site below Blà Bheinn.

This work is ongoing, and we rely on volunteers to help us to manage invasive species in our woodlands. If you would like to contribute then please do get in touch.



Around 40,000 native broadleaf trees are planted near Blà Bheinn

PHOTOGRAPH: CATHRYN BAILLIE



PHOTOGRAPH: SARAH MCNEILL

Funds raised for the Wild Action Fund will support our Award and engagement work such as the Junior Ranger programme pictured here in Glen Nevis

## Wild Action for wild places

We'd like to thank everyone who donated to our new Wild Action Fund. At time of writing you had given almost £33,000 to help create opportunities for more people to protect and conserve our natural environment.

"We know that when people have meaningful experiences in wild places, whether that's a mountain peak or a local park, they are more likely to want to care for them," said Phil Stubbington, John Muir Award England & Wales Manager. "Encouraging these experiences and removing barriers for people to participate is vital if we are to extend the reach and impact of our conservation work."

All donations to the Wild Action Fund will support our Award and engagement work, including our volunteering and Junior Ranger programmes.

Find out more at [johnmuirtrust.org/wildaction](http://johnmuirtrust.org/wildaction)

## Volunteer work parties in 2022

### North West England

Twice-monthly dates with the Restoring Hardknott Forest group and a new tree planting opportunity at Wythburn, Thirlmere.

### North East Scotland

Join one of the regular monthly work parties at Glen Tanar.

### Perthshire

Book for our first Seed to Tree planting day in late February.

### Scottish Borders

Regular volunteer Thursdays resume in late February.

For up to date details of these work parties and other events visit our events web page at [johnmuirtrust.org/whats-new/events](http://johnmuirtrust.org/whats-new/events)

## Wild Writer talks

This winter you are invited to hear three Vertebrate Publishing authors talk about their passion for wild places. Snow patch expert Iain Cameron will talk on 26 January, award-winning writer Alex Roddie on 9 February, and plant scientist and wild swimmer Susanne Masters on 23 February.

Find out more and book a place at [johnmuirtrust.org/whats-new/events](http://johnmuirtrust.org/whats-new/events)

- Members of the Trust can book a free place with the promo code 'JTMEMBER'

## Get in touch

What have Trust Members and local groups been up to? Tell us your news and stories.

Email [ross.brannigan@johnmuirtrust.org](mailto:ross.brannigan@johnmuirtrust.org)

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COVER BANNER IMAGE: QUINAG IN THE SNOW BY CHRIS PUDEPHATT

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