



## Chair's welcome

After acting as interim Chair for six months, I am delighted to have been voted to the position of Chair by fellow Trustees. In the eight years I've been involved with the Trust, I've seen it change from a small, Scottish-focused charity into a UK-wide organisation with bold ambitions.

I think you will agree that our new strategy comes at a time when awareness of the climate and biodiversity crises – and the need to take urgent action to halt them – has never been greater.

Despite the urgency, we are still facing many threats to our wild land. For example, the nuanced changes to the fourth Scottish National Planning Framework (NPF4) are leaving planning policy dangerously exposed to manipulation.

We welcome two new Trustees who have been co-opted onto the Board for their specific expert input: Hermione Lamond is a community representative from the Isle of Skye, to help us with our planned developments at Strathaird. Chris Loynes returns to the Board with outdoor learning expertise to help us increase engagement in the wild places we manage. My thanks to all



who applied for the positions, and I hope they consider standing for election this year.

One project, critical to the delivery of the Trust's corporate strategy, is the development of a wild places register

to help us better understand where the UK's wild places are. Please take part and share your favourite wild places at [johnmuirtrust.org/wild-places-survey](https://johnmuirtrust.org/wild-places-survey).

We were sad to have to cancel October's Members' Gathering in the Peak District. Because of the low numbers, we felt we couldn't justify the carbon and staff-time cost to proceed. We were sorry to have disappointed those of you who had booked. The Trustees will be exploring ideas for a gathering next year and would welcome any suggestions you may have – especially as it will be our 40th anniversary year, and worthy of celebrating together.

I would like to wish you a very happy new year and thank you for supporting the John Muir Trust and our commitment to conserve, protect and restore wild places for the benefit of all.

Jane Smallman

## Help celebrate our 40th anniversary

This year we mark 40 years of protecting and enhancing wild places for nature, people and communities and we have some exciting things lined up to celebrate our journey so far and our plans for the future.

Thanks to the generous support of our Members, we have cared for almost 24,500 hectares (60,500 acres) of wild land in the UK, ranging from Ben Nevis to Helvellyn in the Lake District.

Now we need your help to celebrate our latest milestone. Please share your early recollections of the Trust – including any memorable visits you made to the sites in our care – so we can share them as Wild Moments on our website. We are also planning to commemorate our anniversary with a souvenir Members' publication and Wild Space exhibition in Pitlochry.

To find out how to contribute your Wild Moments and for more updates, visit [johnmuirtrust.org/celebrate40](https://johnmuirtrust.org/celebrate40).

## 2023 AGM

Our 40th Annual General Meeting will be held online on Saturday 4 November 2023, with the Members' Gathering held separately. Further details of these and our 2023 call for Trustees are coming soon.

# Wild Scotland and NPF4

## Revised government approach to planning and development wording leaves Scotland's Wild Land Areas vulnerable

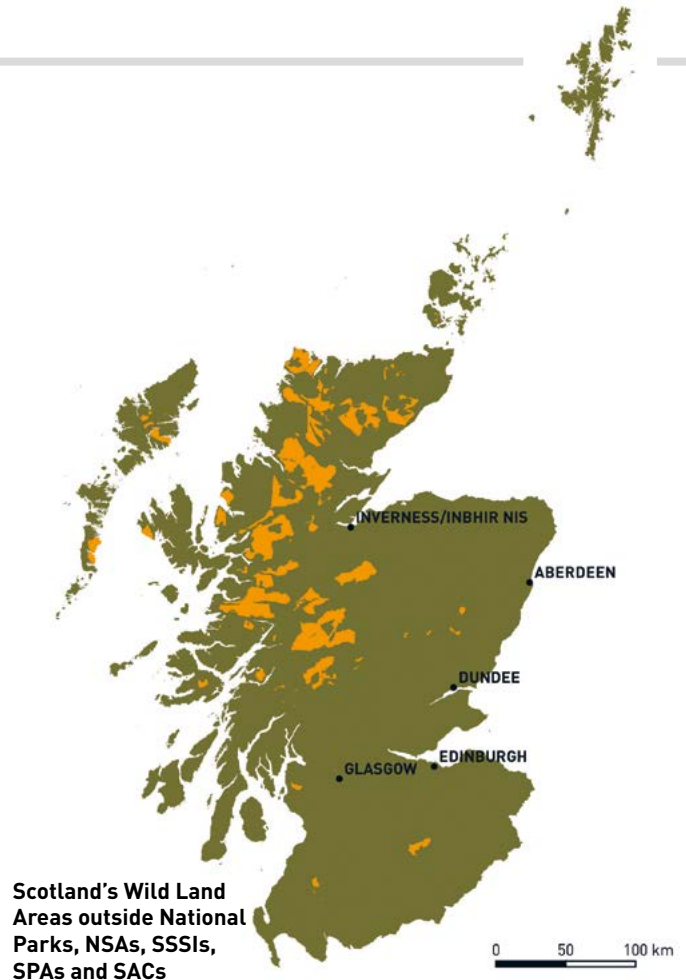
The revised Draft National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) was published by the Scottish Government in November 2022. It sets out a long-term development and infrastructure plan for Scotland and may have implications for wild places.

Our initial response was to welcome the continued recognition of Wild Land Areas, and the high-level focus on reversing biodiversity loss and protecting and expanding woodland. However, the reference to the potential for development in Wild Land Areas where it 'will support meeting renewable energy targets' gave us cause for concern.

While we fully support the Scottish Government's bold and ambitious climate targets, and we recognise that Net Zero by 2045 will require expanding our renewables sector, we caution against sacrificing Scotland's remaining wild places for renewable energy development.

If protected and restored - our wild places offer a long-term way of dealing with the climate emergency by absorbing and storing greenhouse gases from the atmosphere in perpetuity. They also contain some of the highest carbon content soils which, if ripped up for industrial scale renewable energy developments, will release vast amounts of carbon into the atmosphere with unquantified, unknown costs to biodiversity.

Alternatives to onshore wind for delivering renewable energy at scale are advancing. Offshore wind capacity is developing rapidly, with 27GW in the planning 'pipeline' compared to current onshore wind installed capacity of 8.6GW. There is also opportunity for far more small-scale



community-owned renewable energy enterprises, that would circulate sustainable income and energy back into rural areas.

A developer-led process in a lax regulatory regime will mainly benefit the giant energy companies and private landowners who have a huge financial incentive to gain from high energy prices and public subsidies.

The Trust will be seeking to challenge the language in the policy and its implementation to make sure that wild places have a voice at the table and don't pay the ultimate sacrifice.

Please donate to our Protect Wild Places campaign fund so we can continue to protect wild places at [johnmuirtrust.org/campaignfund](https://johnmuirtrust.org/campaignfund)

## Climate action report

The Trust was delighted to hear that our proposal for a Carbon Emissions Land Tax was one of a series of recommendations featured in a new report prepared for Stop Climate Chaos Scotland.

*Financing Climate Justice: Fiscal measures for climate action in a time of crisis* was prepared by Dr Richard Dixon for a coalition of more than 60 civil society organisations in Scotland – from the Church of Scotland to the RSPB, and from the Edinburgh University Students Association to The Poverty Alliance – who are campaigning together on climate change. It examines how taxation can help to deliver Scotland's climate ambitions, as well as suggesting potential new measures to raise more finance and to enable the public and businesses to reduce emissions.

Our proposed Carbon Emissions Land Tax is designed to be enacted by local authorities. It would levy a banded tax on carbon emissions from landholdings more than 1,000 hectares and encourage effective land management to sequester – or 'capture' – carbon and enhance biodiversity.



Festival attendees share their favourite wild places

## Kendal pilots new survey

The John Muir Trust wants to see a world where we are enriched by the three freedoms for wild places: where nature can repair itself, people can enjoy the benefits, and communities can thrive. We need a better understanding of the wild places that are important to the people in the UK, and why they are valued.

Our wild places survey will help us compile a Wild Places Register of people's favourite wild places across the UK. The register will inform our work in protecting them and help create recognised standards that will enable land managers to manage them sensitively and sustainably.

The wild places survey was developed with help from visitors to our stall at the Kendal Mountain Festival in November.

Participants told us why wild places matter to them and what makes them so special. Their answers ranged from wild places we care for, such as Sandwood Bay and Knoydart to a park in Devon, showing just how diverse people's engagement with wild places is.

The survey was further shaped with help from people across the world who shared their perspectives on wild places at our online workshop. The workshop discussion influenced the proposed criteria for what makes a place wild.

Please help us compile our Wild Places Register by taking part in our survey online at [johnmuirtrust.org/wild-places-survey](https://johnmuirtrust.org/wild-places-survey)

Email any questions to [research@johnmuirtrust.org](mailto:research@johnmuirtrust.org)



Survey responses will help compile Wild Places Register

## Consultation responses

### Future of National Parks

The current programme for the Scottish Government contains a commitment to establish at least one new National Park in Scotland by spring 2026. The process for deciding where that new park will be is now underway. In summer the Trust responded to an initial government crowd sourcing of ideas about National Parks. A consultation on the 'Future of National Parks' led by NatureScot followed during the autumn. In our response, the Trust emphasised that the primary goal of new and existing National Parks should be to lead nature recovery, and act as exemplary models of progressive land management for the whole of Scotland.

### Land Reform Bill

The Scottish Government has published proposals for a new Land Reform Bill, which is due to be introduced before the end of 2023. In our response to the consultation, the Trust welcomed the proposed aims of the Bill. We supported the proposed legal duties that 'large-scale' landowners comply with the Land Rights and Responsibilities principles, and complete land management plans. The definition of 'large scale' landowner has yet to be determined but landholdings within the definition would be expected, under the proposed legislation, to be required to manage land in ways that align more closely with what is deemed to be in the public interest.

### Biodiversity strategy

The Scottish Government's draft Biodiversity Strategy intends to halt biodiversity loss by 2030 and reverse it by 2045. It will provide a basis on which to develop statutory nature restoration targets, expected to be introduced in the forthcoming Natural Environment Bill. In our response to the consultation, we echoed and supported the points made in a separate collective response from Scottish Environment LINK members. The final version was due to be published at the end of 2022.

### Bunloinn wind farm

Our objection to the Bunloinn wind farm and battery storage proposal noted our concern about the loss of wild qualities of the nearby Wild Land Areas (Central Highlands and Kinlochhourn – Knoydart – Morar) which the proposed development would stand between. We also supported NatureScot's submission that the position between these Wild Land Areas would result in a loss of visual connectivity between them. We are also concerned about the pattern in the spread of wind energy westwards, towards and potentially into, the top 10 per cent of Scotland's wildest places.

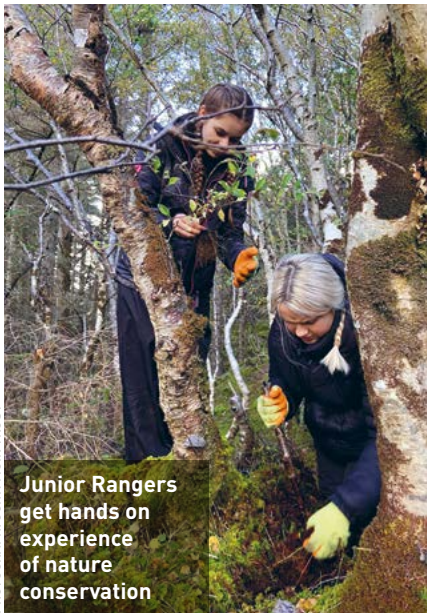
## Introducing our new Junior Rangers

Twelve pupils from Ullapool High School and 12 from Lochaber High School have become the latest John Muir Trust Junior Rangers for 2022/23.

This John Muir Trust-led programme hopes to inspire, challenge and build confidence by offering a combination of practical experiences and training including: learning about nature conservation; advocacy; working with others; and leading towards a John Muir Explorer Award, a Scottish Countryside Ranger Association (SCRA) Junior Ranger Award, a first aid certificate, and navigation and bushcraft skills.

Nevis Conservation Officer Nathan Berrie, said: "As a former pupil of Lochaber High, I am extremely proud to be part of the programme and looking forward to getting to know the new Junior Rangers and learning from them."

Romany Garnett, Land Development Manager at Quinag and Sandwood, added: "We hope the Junior Rangers will learn how their actions can make a real difference to the local environment and are inspired to become advocates for protecting wild places in the future."



Junior Rangers get hands on experience of nature conservation

PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN MUIR TRUST

Volunteers help re-wet degraded peatland in Glen Nevis by adding blockers



PHOTOGRAPH: ZEEHON EINHARDT

# Restoring peatland at Glen Nevis

**Thanks to the generous response to our Nevis 21 Appeal and ongoing Peatland Appeal, we have started restoring peatland in Glen Nevis**

In late October 2022, we worked with a fantastic team of volunteers to 're-wet' an area of degraded bog in Glen Nevis – enabling it to capture and store carbon from the atmosphere once again. The project was only made possible with the generous support of our supporters.

The John Muir Trust partnered with ACT Heritage and a team of volunteers to carry out vital restoration work on a degraded peatland site east of Steall Falls.

To help the habitat retain water, a series of wooden and stone dams were installed in strategic locations to help slow the flow of water out of the bog. Logs made of coconut husks (known as 'coire logs') were also used to create a series of blockers to back up the water flow.

Helping the team was 15-year-old Archie Ferguson, who took part in the John Muir Trust's Junior Rangers programme last year. "I came out today for the experience to learn about doing this type of work which I'd like to do," said Archie, "and I wanted to learn a bit about carbon and how to do the restoration. You cannae beat a bit of peat!"

Donald Mackenzie, ACT Conservation Works Supervisor, said: "This is the most remote site we have carried out peatland restoration work and it's been really interesting. It was great to see the dams starting to work with water filling up behind almost immediately as we built them and it would be nice to think migrating birds might use these pools in the future."





PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN MUIR TRUST

International visitors at Glenlude learn about Recovery through Nature

# Therapy by stealth

Delegates from the European Federation of Therapeutic Communities conference recently headed to our Scottish Borders site to visit the Phoenix Forest and see ‘therapy by stealth’ in action.

The Trust’s Glenlude Manager Karen Purvis and our partners Phoenix Futures hosted guests from Finland, Belgium, Poland and the US during a fun September day in the Scottish Borders. The visitors learned about

Phoenix Future’s Recovery through Nature (RtN) programme and met some of the people who have helped plant trees to celebrate achievements in the organisation, while adding to the Phoenix Forest that is on site.

Jon Hall, Environmental & Sustainability Manager at Phoenix Futures (a UK-wide charity that helps people overcome drug and alcohol problems) said its RtN programme – supported by our main engagement

initiative the John Muir Award – has had particularly strong results.

“Every year, RtN service users, staff and managers come from Glasgow, Fife and Derby to plant trees in the Phoenix Forest. As well as commemorating everybody who has completed the programme and gained a John Muir Award, people enjoy themselves while learning practical conservation skills and building their self-esteem.”

## Creative recycling on Skye

Work has begun on clearing old fish hatchery equipment on the site we are planning to develop at Strathaird on Skye – in collaboration with the local community. Loathed to automatically assign it all to landfill, our Skye Estate Worker John MacRae and Seasonal Ranger Ali Watt got in touch with an enterprising local couple.

Paul and Becky Smith – part of Skye Climate Action who also run their own self-catering accommodation business in Torrin – are behind ‘Waste Not Wednesday’ which enables the community to recycle unwanted items. The success of the project created a need for a storage shed. Enter the fibreglass water tower from the Trust’s newly acquired Kilmorie hatchery.

Splitting the tower in half, Paul and Becky fashioned two semi-circular storage sheds, to which they added recycled double doors and windows and insulated with material found on the beach.

One of the newly formed sheds is now a charity shop and the other is an electrical workshop, where Paul (who is a qualified PAT tester) fixes broken electrical items, or strips them for parts to be recycled elsewhere.

Paul managed to find a use for two old fish tanks from the Strathaird site too. He formed one tank into an out-of-hours drop off hut that sits by the entrance to their croft and is open 24/7. The other is now a shower unit that serves the self-catering ‘hobbit houses’ run by Paul and Becky.

## Right to nature

The Trust is backing a Wildlife & Countryside LINK coalition calling on the UK Government to make equal access to nature a core part of its levelling up plans to benefit wildlife and communities.

LINK is calling for a legal right to nature, ahead of a proposed amendment to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill by Caroline Lucas MP. If accepted, this amendment would enshrine a right to nature in law – helping secure the stronger requirements and funding needed to help local authorities safeguard wild places.

Please show support for these changes by signing a petition at [bit.ly/nature-everyone](https://bit.ly/nature-everyone)

# Edinburgh Members' gathering

## Members meet to discuss what the climate emergency means for wild places

Over 30 Members turned out on a crisp November day to meet in person – the first opportunity since 2019's Edinburgh Members' gathering – and listen to four speakers relate their work to the event's theme, 'wild places in a warmer world'.

The speaker panel comprised Gus Routledge, Director of Reforesting Scotland; Charlotte Maddix from Rewilding Britain; Hillary Sillitto, author of *Scotland 2070* and the Trust's Wild Places Protection Officer; Fiona Baillie.

Hillary spoke about how a commercially motivated drive to offset carbon in industry and company operations is resulting in swathes of fast-growing Sitka spruce plantation in Scotland's wild places. It would be much better to have longer-term approaches to Scotland's timber industry, storing carbon in native trees, harvesting this timber in a more sustainable way – rather than clear felling it all in one go.

Charlotte talked about the value of our choices ahead. We have a choice to make space for nature, so nature can adapt in a warmer climate; for example, by restoring habitats and creating ecological corridors north to south that allow species to migrate and adapt. Both Charlotte and Hillary cited Carrifran Wildwood as a successful exemplar of expanding the space for nature and allowing it to recover.

Gus spoke about the importance of people living in, managing and cherishing Scotland's wild places. He mentioned Loch Arkaig, a community-owned woodland working with the Woodland Trust, but highlighted that this is surrounded by vast areas where people have little to no say in the land's management. He also took a moderate view on non-native species, such as Sitka spruce plantations, which he has seen can support native wildlife, mosses and capercaillie. He concluded by saying he would like to see these woodlands managed by people living locally, removing timber slowly, allowing nature to co-exist with peoples' needs.

Fiona used the Trust's three freedoms – the freedom for nature to repair itself, communities to thrive and people to



Members gather for climate-themed discussion



PHOTOGRAPHS: ROSS BRANNIGAN



benefit from wild places – to describe how wild places can provide us with benefits in a warmer world. To help illustrate these benefits, Fiona outlined the Trust's plans to develop a Wild Places Register which later led to conversations during the tea break with Members about their favourite wild places.

She also presented on the Trust's vision for a just transition – a prescient issue as we attempt to decarbonise our economy and support fragile rural communities.

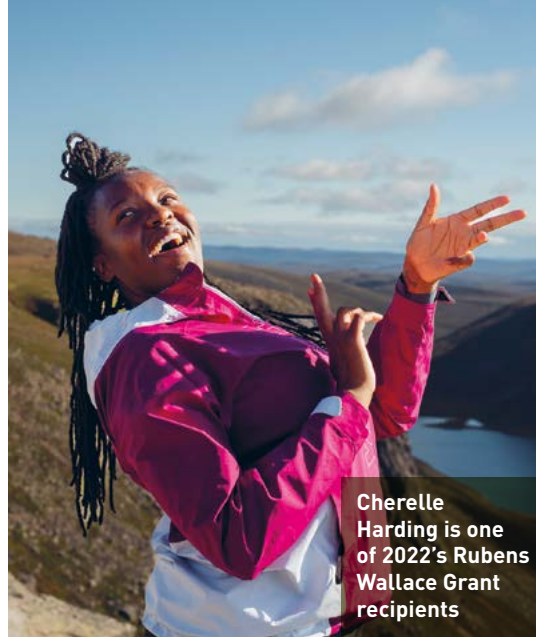
After a tea and coffee break, lively discussion followed, with a reminder from Denis Mollison, one of the founding Members of Trust, that one of the things the Trust has been able to do successfully is test different approaches to protecting wild places – e.g. through partnerships, ownership, land management planning – and that, in the context of the upcoming land reform bill, there is value in continuing to take diverse approaches to land management.

Special thanks to Hugh Salvesen and everyone who helped coordinate the event. Thanks, too, to Morag at St Augustine's United Church for the welcome hospitality and to all the Members and supporters who attended.

# Rubens Wallace Grant

The 2022 Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant is helping eight intrepid people to undertake educational or scientific adventures in wild places. The latest recipients of a grant are:

- Emma Steel, a marine conservationist from Orkney who surveyed whales, dolphins and porpoises in St Kilda.
- Linnea Livingstone, occupational therapy student from Glasgow Caledonian University who will travel to Norway to research disabled access to outdoor experiences.
- Cherelle Harding, a youth worker and founder of Steppers UK, who organises activities in the Peak District for ethnic minority communities.
- Rory Pyper – a young horticulturalist with an interest in pomology (growing fruit and nuts) will travel to Kazakhstan to research the unique ecosystem of the



Cherelle Harding is one of 2022's Rubens Wallace Grant recipients

traditional apple forests in the Tien Shien mountains.

- Alex Boyd – writer and photographer who will spend a month hiking Scotland's highest peaks.
- Jane Williamson, from Middlesex, has just completed a six-week solo journey by bike and foot to explore the wild places of Scotland.
- 11-year-old twin brothers from Edinburgh joined their classmates on a week-long adventure trip to Lagganlia Outdoor Centre in the Cairngorms National Park.

The John Muir Trust administers the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant to give people the opportunity to seek out life-changing experiences in wild

places across the world. The closing date for applications is 15 January each year. Find out more at [johnmuirtrust.org/rubenswallace](http://johnmuirtrust.org/rubenswallace)

PHOTOGRAPH: PHIL YOUNG

## MSP highlights Trust's work

MSP for Mid Scotland and Fife Mark Ruskell highlighted the John Muir Trust's work to restore native woodland in highland Perthshire in a recent Scottish Parliament debate about forestry's contribution to a net zero Scotland.

Mark Ruskell – who visited Schiehallion earlier in the year to officially open the easy access Foss Loop path there – described our work with our fellow Heart of Scotland Forest partners as: "...a balanced approach to tree planting that takes careful consideration of our precious soil carbon and delivers a diverse mix of woodland cover, with a focus on native species."

In the debate, he went on to say there is a need to proactively tackle threats from overgrazing, muirburn, invasive species and plant diseases, which could undermine the role of woodlands in meeting net zero.



Mark Ruskell at Schiehallion

PHOTOGRAPH: MARION MCKINNON



John Muir Award participants explore the Welsh countryside

PHOTOGRAPH: PHILIP HAT CHER-MOORE

## John Muir Award under review

As the Trust celebrates its 40th anniversary next year we are excited to review and refresh the John Muir Award to continue to build on its success over the last 25 years and prepare it for a bright future. The review will ensure the Award aligns with our strategy and our charitable purpose, to ensure it is fit for purpose. We are also looking at the best way to deliver the Award to ensure it has the most impact in protecting and promoting our precious wild places.

# Members improve NE Scotland's wild places

Post-pandemic, the average turnout for the North East Scotland Local Members' conservation days increased by over 20 per cent in 2022, with a 12-month total of over 1,300 hours committed to improving the wild places in Royal Deeside.

The monthly conservation days at **Glen Tanar** are approaching their 13th year. The past winter storms caused enough damage to keep the volunteers busy, making the network of footpaths safe for everyone to use. The group continues to monitor 25 riparian, three-metre-square tree enclosures far up the Waters of Tanar, beyond the existing treeline. Some of these were established nearly 30 years ago and they are regularly maintained and topped up, when necessary, with new saplings.

Work with the **Balmoral Rangers** was exceptionally popular with volunteers, resulting in five conservation days. Under the umbrella of the Cairngorm National

Park Capercaillie Project they improved habitat by ditch blocking (rewetting) and creating dead-wood by ringbarking non-native spruce trees. Redundant fences were removed, and a storm damaged deer fence reinstated. They also constructed stone waterbars and cross drains on a section of footpath.

At the National Trust for Scotland's Mar Lodge events, tree planting was the priority. In early spring at an altitude of around 450 metres, the group planted over 1,000 birch. Later they added more

than 500 mixed native species near the Lodge itself, which also required fence construction work.

A spring gathering was held via Zoom, with a presentation by Elspeth Berry about her solo run of the Kungsleden (the Kings Road in Sweden).

By autumn, the North East Group was able to gather in person to see Scotland: The Big Picture (STBP) film *Riverwoods* – followed by a lively Q&A session with the film's Producer and Executive Director of STBP, Peter Cairns.



The volunteers join the Balmoral Rangers to fix a fence

PHOTOGRAPH: JAMES BROWNHILL

## Members' groups forthcoming events

### North Harris

Help create a network of woodland habitat with the North Harris Trust on one of the regular Friday workparties.

### North West England

Take part in a twice-monthly workparty organised by the Restoring Hardknott Forest group in Cumbria.

### North East Scotland

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

### Scottish Borders

Regular volunteer Thursdays resume in late February.

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

## 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)

The John Muir Trust Members' News is printed on 100% recycled offset, which is an FSC-certified recycled grade paper, containing 100% post consumer waste and manufactured at a mill accredited with ISO14001 environmental management standard. The pulp used in this product is bleached using an Elemental Chlorine Free process. We use a Scottish printer with excellent environmental credentials.

Managing editor: Nicky McClure

Editor: Julie Gough  
[julie.gough@johnmuirtrust.org](mailto:julie.gough@johnmuirtrust.org)

Design: Neil Braidwood,  
Connect Communications

Print: Thomson Colour

© John Muir Trust 2023

COVER BANNER IMAGE: GLAMAIG ON THE ISLE OF SKYE BY CHRIS RUTTER

## Update your preferences

- Sign up to our e-newsletter at [johnmuirtrust.org/newsletter](http://johnmuirtrust.org/newsletter)
- Opt to receive your mailings online – or update your contact details – by emailing us at [membership@johnmuirtrust.org](mailto:membership@johnmuirtrust.org)
- Follow us via Facebook and Twitter @JohnMuirTrust #JohnMuirAward