

FOR MEMBERS OF THE JOHN MUIR TRUST

MEMBERS' NEWS

JANUARY 2013



Chairman's welcome

On behalf of the Trustees,
I wish you a good New Year!

We have become accustomed to years being associated with events, for example *Bliadhna na Caoraich*, the Year of the Sheep, 1792 – when the Highland culture started to be eroded by the coming of the Cheviot. For around half of our membership, this will be the Year of Natural Scotland – the latest in VisitScotland's years of focus ahead of Homecoming in 2014.

In an effort to highlight Scotland's natural assets and celebrate its reputation as a land of outstanding beauty, the Year of Natural Scotland will see a host of events around the country. The Trust will be very much involved.

Together with others, the Trust has a great deal to defend as we work to protect and retain wild land and places that are under considerable pressure, not just in Scotland but throughout the UK. October saw us highlight this mission at a Westminster reception, hosted by Chris Smith, Lord Smith of Finsbury, a Trustee from 1991-98. We are extremely grateful for his support.

The past year has seen the Trust remain extremely active across its three pillars of advocacy, land management and the John Muir Award. We will continue to press forward with each in 2013. The Award will become stronger in England and Wales, while our policy work and land management (especially when it comes to deer) will likely take us into contentious areas. But that is why we exist – not to be awkward, but to stand up for what we believe. That is what you expect of us and why you support us; when we raise our heads above the parapet, we hope that others will follow.

In May, we will again have vacancies for Trustees. Five must stand down and while some may seek re-election I do hope that others will consider offering themselves to help develop the strategy of the Trust. There is a process for putting yourself forward which can be found at www.jmt.org

I'm delighted to announce that Allison Chin, president of the Sierra Club, will be visiting us and delivering a keynote speech at our Members' Gathering in May. We look forward to welcoming her and hearing about conservation activities in America.

Elsewhere in these pages, you will find a report on work we commissioned from YouGov exploring public support for the protection of wild land. The work yielded sound information, providing much for us to build on. In recent months, we have also seen VisitScotland express concern over the impact of wind turbines on landscape close to tourist areas; it is something that I felt to be an encouraging development.

Quite recently, I realised that the Gaelic poet Sorley Maclean and John Muir had something in common: they both used to walk on their own. Perhaps that gives us all a strong pointer on how to reconnect with our landscapes as we step into 2013?

John Hutchison
Chairman



CALL FOR TRUSTEES

Make a difference to the Trust and become a trustee

The Trust is inviting nominations for new candidates to our Board of Trustees. If you'd like to share your love of wild places and help shape the future of the Trust then getting involved at board level is a great opportunity.

There will be five places to fill. One of the current trustees, Walter Semple, will be standing down having served two terms. Bill Wright, Will Williams, and Mike Brown come to the end of their first term and may stand for re-election. John Hutchison will be up for re-election solely for his remaining length of time as chairman (two years).

Trustees are expected to attend four trustee meetings per year as well as the Trust's AGM and Members' Gathering. They are elected by members of the Trust and run it on their behalf – setting policies and making strategic decisions. Members elect up to five trustees each year using the Single Transferable Vote system, as specified in the Trust's constitution.

New trustees will serve on the board for three years from May 2013. Candidates must be members of the Trust over 18 years old, and have their nominations supported by five other members. Nominations must include a personal statement of 300 words.

Find out more and download a nomination form at www.jmt.org/trustee-noms.asp or call Linda Coupar on 01796 470080. Nominations must be received by Monday, 4 March.

AGM & MEMBERS' GATHERING 2013

This year's Member's Gathering will take place at Pitlochry Festival Theatre from Friday, 3 May to Sunday, 5 May. Come and get involved. There's more info on our website and in the enclosed booking form.

02 Trust policy on the ground

It has been a particularly busy – and effective – year of policy work for the Trust

We'd like to say a huge thank you to Trust members who participated in the Public Perception Survey of Wildness in Scotland in February, conducted jointly by Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority, Cairngorms National Park Authority and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). Trust members comprised 65% of the 'organisation' sample – more than double that of the next organisation represented.

The results of this survey reveal widespread public support for action to protect wild land in Scotland. We think the results should leave politicians from all political parties in no doubt that they have a mandate to take immediate action and put protection measures in place. The full press release and a link to the survey can be found in the October section of the news pages on our website.

Our efforts continue apace to build support for better protection for wild land in both the Scottish Parliament and at Westminster where, thanks to the presence of Sheila Wren, our advocacy officer, we've been able to significantly increase our level of political lobbying. Following the Trust's exhibition stands at the autumn political conferences, we have continued to seek meetings with target representatives. Our reception at Westminster at the end of October (see below) and week-long exhibition at the House of Commons in early November have provided a solid platform on which to increase our impact.

In Scotland, we are pushing to ensure that the Scottish Parliament's Public Petitions Committee looks again at our petition calling for a new designation for our best wild land. The process had stalled pending the release of the final phase of SNH's wild land mapping. We are arguing that time is of the essence if we are not to lose more of our wild land in the interim – a point supported by SNH in its own initial response to our petition in early 2011.

Meanwhile, the Trust's representation at the Allt Duine Wind Farm public inquiry in late October provided a further opportunity to expose the pressures that wild land in Scotland face from the rapid roll-out of industrial-scale wind farm developments.

In addition, the results of the YouGov poll commissioned by the Trust (see page three) revealed widespread support across Britain for prioritising the protection of scenic wild land over large-scale wind farms.

Similarly, we continue to be involved on a daily basis with specific planning cases that impact on wild land. The level of representations we receive from concerned members of the Trust – and the wider public – continues to rise, with wind energy developments featuring heavily.

For information on how to support our Wild Land Campaign, see the Campaign pages at www.jmt.org

WESTMINSTER RECEPTION A SUCCESS

Sir Chris Bonington helped bring the Trust's role to life at our Parliamentary Reception in late October.

Our host, Lord Smith of Finsbury, introduced the Trust as one of the most important environmental organisations in the UK today. Then guests, including Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Owen Paterson, heard the famous mountaineer talk about the importance of wild places to people's lives.

Sir Chris recalled the excitement he felt when he first approached Rannoch Moor; his many adventures in the Cairngorms; his first ascent of Suilven in Assynt; and the annual camping adventures spent with his wife and children in the wilds of Sutherland.

The Trust's chief executive Stuart Brooks felt that the event had been a huge success. "It was a good day for the Trust, highlighting our UK ambitions and raising awareness of our work with influential people," he commented.

The reception was followed by a week-long exhibition showcasing our work in the Palace of Westminster. "Overall, around 130 people visited the stand, including lords, MPs, members of the public attending select committees and a group of young people from KinderCare who had recently completed the John Muir Award," explained Trust advocacy officer, Sheila Wren. "We are very grateful to Sir Tony Cunningham, MP for Workington, who kindly sponsored the event."



Sir Chris Bonington addresses the reception audience

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO HILL TRACKS CONSULTATION

Following consultation earlier this year, the Scottish Government has announced that permitted development rights for agricultural and forestry private tracks will not be amended at this time, but will be 'kept under review'.

The consultation centred around whether to introduce planning controls for the formation of new access tracks for agriculture or forestry, or for their maintenance and repair.

The consultation responses revealed strong views on either side. Most of those against planning control, however, focused on forestry work, rather than on upland hill tracks on wild land.

Many local authorities, National Park authorities and national environmental organisations expressed strong support for better regulation and the Trust had reiterated its long-held view that there was a pressing need for greater control in view of the detrimental impacts of inappropriately sited tracks.

Please write to the Minister to let him know that his decision is extremely disappointing as he has missed an opportunity to address an important factor contributing to the continuing loss of Scotland's wild land, especially if you can illustrate this with specific examples. Write to: Derek Mackay MSP, Minister for Local Government and Planning, Scottish Government, St. Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG

Wild Space taking shape

Excitement builds as work continues on our new Wild Space in Pitlochry

Thanks to generous support from The Reece Foundation, The Gannochy Trust, Craignish Trust and players of the People's Postcode Lottery, our plans to transform the Trust's premises at Tower House in Pitlochry are proceeding apace.

The aim is to create the John Muir Trust Wild Space – an exhibition, shop and gallery to help increase public awareness of wild places and the work of the Trust. We are also taking the opportunity to upgrade our offices to create a more efficient and productive working environment and allow for expansion.

Susan Manson, project manager for Wild Space, said the refurbishment is going well: "As with all projects involving old buildings, we have hit a few glitches, but are on target to complete the work on time. The main challenge has been to fit a new staircase between the first, ground and basement floors.

We are also adding a lift for disabled access. It is difficult to cram these modern requirements into a Victorian building.

"I'm looking forward to seeing the staircase going in – as well as the new windows fitted and the shop front painted. This will greatly enhance this part of Pitlochry's main street and create a building that Trust members can be proud of."

The Trust is working with interpretive designers Campbell & Co to create an inspiring exhibition that will take people on a journey of discovery through Trust properties and other wild places.

If everything continues to go to plan, we look forward to welcoming you to our Wild Space by Easter 2013.



An artist's impression of the Trust's new Wild Space exhibition area

POLL INDICATES SUPPORT FOR WILD LAND PROTECTION

Forty per cent of the UK public would like politicians to protect wild landscapes from commercial wind farms, while just 28 per cent want to allow commercial wind farms on wild land, according to a poll commissioned by the John Muir Trust.

The YouGov poll, based on a representative sample of 2,200 adults, is the first to focus on the location of wind farms on wild and scenic land. "The results show that, far from being isolated, the John Muir Trust and other bodies who oppose the industrialisation of our wild land are in tune with mainstream public opinion," said the Trust's chief executive, Stuart Brooks.

A breakdown of the poll reveals that support for prioritising wild land is strong across all socio-economic groups and across almost every part of the UK – including Scotland, where wind power has been hailed as a potential economic goldmine.

The poll also warned that the future of tourism in scenic areas such as the Scottish Highlands could be undermined if the drive to scatter turbines through wild and scenic landscapes continues unchecked. Asked whether they would be more or less likely to visit a scenic area with a high concentration of wind turbines, 43 per cent of those polled said they would be less likely and just 2 per cent more likely.

"Climate change demands bold thinking, serious changes in behaviour and radical technical solutions," added Stuart. "But covering wild land with wind turbines, access tracks and other infrastructure is not the way to go."

REVISITING SCOTLAND'S LANDSCAPE NEEDS

Fifty years on from Scotland's first National Landscape Policy Conference, the Trust recently part-sponsored a follow-up conference in Perth. Managing Change in Scotland's Landscapes took place on 27 and 28 November, enabling delegates to review progress, introduce new perspectives and debate how best to manage future change.

The Trust was one of several supporting partners for the event – a gathering that chief executive Stuart Brooks felt to be both timely and immensely valuable. "There is no doubt we are in a period of unprecedented change and the decisions we take today will leave a legacy for future generations," he commented.



Participants on a recent Wild Day in Knoydart

04 Read all about us!

The Trust has enjoyed excellent media coverage in recent months

An interview with our chief executive, Stuart Brooks, resulted in a positive piece about the Trust in Scotland's fortnightly political and current affairs magazine, *Holyrood*. Read what he had to say about wind turbines, deer management and much more at <http://bit.ly/U3PSjf>

Meanwhile, the Trust's head of land, Mike Daniels, was interviewed for a BBC Scotland *Landward* television programme, which featured the arguments for and against hill tracks. Mike and our property manager Fran Lockhart also appeared on BBC Radio Scotland's *Out of Doors* programme on 1 December, during which they discussed deer management on Quinag.

Our footpath officer Chris Goodman and conservation officer Don O'Driscoll have been similarly in demand and were also recently interviewed for the *Out of Doors* programme, with Chris accompanying Fran talking about the work on the Steall Gorge path, and Don discussing Quinag.

Chris was also interviewed about Steall Gorge for BBC TV's Reporting Scotland and Radio Scotland's morning and evening news reports. He also wrote a short piece for the *Lochaber News*. Don featured in print recently, too. He introduced readers of *Lonely Planet Traveller* magazine to the many delights of Sandwood Bay, judged the 'Best for Beach' in an article about the Scottish Highlands.

Martin McCrorie, our contractor who re-built the gully markers on the top of Ben Nevis, was interviewed on the summit for BBC Radio Scotland's *Out of Doors*, while Fran Lockhart and Trust chairman John Hutchison both contributed comment for an article in the summer issue of *Scotland Outdoors* exploring the conservation challenges surrounding the management of Ben Nevis. The autumn issue of *Scotland Outdoors* also carried comment from the Trust as part of a feature looking at the need to protect Scotland's wild places from the encroachment of industrial-scale wind farms.

And finally, Susan Wright, the Trust's head of communications, was recently interviewed about the 'Public Perception Survey of Wildness in Scotland' for Radio Scotland. Read the report at <http://bit.ly/UIG8vn>



HELICOPTER LIFT AIDS STEALL GORGE FOOTPATH REPAIR

Our contractor Arran Footpaths Repair began work on the Steall Gorge footpath in early November. The team spent the first week preparing for the airlift of materials to the site – bagging up 120 tonnes of stone and surfacing material and felling trees to create landing areas for the stone to be brought in near the path.

The helicopter lift was delayed for a couple of days due to heavy rain and poor visibility, but went ahead on 14 and 15 November. Chris Goodman, the Trust's footpath officer, had anticipated that it would be a tricky task: "It proved to be a very technical and challenging lift with the pilot having to land the one-tonne bags of stone on steep ground among trees," he said.

"All went well though and, with all the materials on site, work can now begin in earnest to shore up the existing path and maintain it in a good condition for the tens of thousands of walkers heading up to Steall Meadows and beyond."



PHOTOGRAPHY: CHRIS GOODMAN



The helicopter had to negotiate some extremely tricky terrain (top); working amidst dramatic scenery (below)

CHANGES TO GIFT AID

Thanks to donations and support from members, the John Muir Trust benefits from around £90,000 a year by claiming Gift Aid from HMRC. For every pound you give to the Trust, whether through donations or by paying your membership subscription, we can claim an additional 25p.

You may have noticed on our forms, and on those of other charities, that the wording for Gift Aid declarations recently changed very slightly. It now reads:

[] I wish the John Muir Trust to treat all donations and subscriptions I have made in the last 4 years and those I make in future as Gift Aid donations until further notice. I confirm that I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify.

If you've already signed a Gift Aid declaration with us, you don't need to re-do it. Your existing one is valid and allows us to continue claiming. However, if you haven't signed up to Gift Aid, but you are eligible (according to the guidance opposite), please let us know so we can help make your support to the Trust go even further.

The easiest way to do this is online at <http://bit.ly/XuxJCm>, or by contacting Jane on jane.anderson@jmt.org, tel 0300 321 4964.

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EDINBURGH MEMBERS' GROUP DISCUSSES LAND REFORM

With land reform back on the national agenda in Scotland, and the establishment of the Scottish Government-backed Land Reform Review Group, over 100 people recently attended a meeting on the subject called by the Trust's Edinburgh and Scottish Borders Members' Groups.

Among the audience for Land Reform: Where Next? was Dr Alison Elliot, chair of the Land Reform Review Group. Alison's remit is to broaden participation in the ownership, governance, management and use of rural and urban land; assist with the acquisition and management of land (and land assets) by communities; and deliver new relationships between land, people, economy and environment in Scotland.

Andy Wightman – author of *Who Owns Scotland* and *The Poor Had No Lawyers* – set the debate in an historical context, arguing passionately for democratisation of land ownership and for local people to regain control over their communities. (His review *Land Reform The Way Ahead*, March 2011, is available at www.andywightman.com/?page_id=1027)

Another attendee, John Hutchison – Chair of Eigg Community Heritage Trust, the John Muir Trust and the Nevis Partnership – drew from his experience of working in diverse organisations. He suggested that some of the strongest achievements of these bodies were based on bringing together geographical communities (i.e. people who live in a distinct area) with communities of interest (i.e. people who may live outside the area but have shared values and aims that are relevant to the community).

Pip Tabor, Director of the Southern Upland Partnership, praised the Trust's activity at Glenlude in the Borders, which has provided a wild land management model that can be adapted and followed elsewhere. He pointed out that children today have little experience of land use and applauded the success of the Queensberry Initiative (<http://bit.ly/VAXHCJ>).

Following the question and answer session, attendees were reminded that the call for evidence for the Land Reform Review Group closes in mid-January, with the report submitted in May 2013.

MEMBERSHIP RESEARCH SURVEY 2013

We last researched your views in 2008 and now want to hear your thoughts concerning our work and priorities to help the Trust's decision-making as we form our strategy for the next five years. We will be in touch again in the coming months to let you know how to contribute online, or by post.

For regular updates about events near you, local members' group meetings and news from our policy and land teams, visit our website and subscribe to our monthly e-newsletter.

→ www.jmt.org

Coast-to-coast trail launched

Exciting plans for a new Muir-inspired, cross-country walking route have been announced

Plans for a new cross-Scotland walking route to commemorate John Muir were officially unveiled at the Scottish Parliament in mid-September. The announcement reception was organised by Central Scotland Green Network, the body that will develop the 108-mile John Muir Coast-to-Coast Trail which will run from Dunbar, East Lothian to Helensburgh, Argyll and Bute.

Among the 150 politicians, conservationists and guests in attendance was broadcaster, Cameron McNeish. "Muir believed passionately in encouraging people to get out into the green places and I'm sure the new John Muir Coast-to-Coast Trail will do just that," he commented.

At the same event, Cameron presented Rhonda and Lauren Butler with their John Muir Family Explorer Award.

The new trail should be open by April 21, 2014 – the date of Muir's birthday and the centenary year of his death.

NORTHERN MEMBERS' GATHERING 2012

This year's Members' Gathering at the Macphail Centre in Ullapool featured the redoubtable Stephen Pyke as guest speaker. Stephen provided a memorable description of how he completed a round of the Munros – on foot, bike and kayak – in a new record time.

The Members' Forum, chaired by Denis Mollison, discussed the appropriate level of deer cull. Members felt that our good work in this area is in some instances undermined by inaccurate reports of the Trust's deer management (see item on page seven).

Members also discussed the proposed siting of hydro schemes in remote and inaccessible areas. Such projects can involve building many kilometres of road navigable by HGVs and it was felt that some research should be done into the viability and environmental impact of such schemes.

Meanwhile, a raffle raised £155 and served to highlight some local talent. Thanks to James Hawkins who donated a print, to Highland Stoneware for a lovely dish and to Iain Roy for a photographic panorama.



Stephen Pyke celebrates his achievement on the summit of Ben Hope

LIVE FLARE WASHED UP AT SANDWOOD

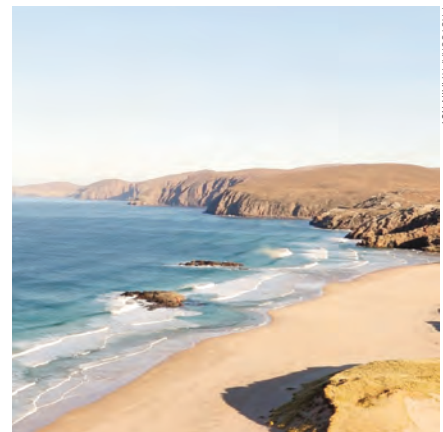
Bomb disposal experts were called to Sandwood to deal with a live distress flare found on Sheigra beach in early November. On this occasion, the flare was destroyed in a controlled explosion and no-one was hurt, but the problem is becoming more common.

Since April 2010, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) no longer accepts out-of-date flares at Coastguard stations. Recreational boat owners can now take them to 18 licensed MCA sites around the country, but some choose not to. Instead, irresponsible sailors have been dumping their damaged and time-expired flares at sea, adding to the hazardous waste that washes up on our beaches.

Sandwood conservation officer Don O'Driscoll said he occasionally finds ordnance in the area: "I found an unexploded marker shell near Droman after navy manoeuvres, earlier in the year."

However, as an ex-coastguard, he finds it frustrating that some boat owners are adding to the problem by not acting responsibly when disposing of out-of-date flares. "Distress flares can cause a nasty accident if mishandled. I would encourage everyone to report any suspicious objects they find on beaches and never touch or approach them."

For more on how to dispose of time-expired pyrotechnics safely, read the Royal Yachting Association guidance at <http://bit.ly/UJWi7U>



POTENTIAL NORTH WEST SCOTLAND MEMBERS' GROUP

If any Trust members in the Ullapool to Cape Wrath area are interested in setting up a North West Scotland Members' Group, please get in touch with Denis Mollison at denis.mollison@gmail.com

06 Do something for wildness

Work party volunteers made a huge contribution in 2012 – and there are many more opportunities to get involved in the year ahead

A huge thank you to everyone who gave their time and energy to our Conservation Work Parties in 2012. We couldn't do it without you. You can read all about their achievements and find out about what's planned for 2013 (including the all-new family oriented work party at Glenlude) at www.jmt.org/activities-conservation-work-parties.asp

For more information about work parties, contact our conservation activities co-ordinator Sandy Maxwell at workparties@jmt.org, or call 0141 576 6663, mobile 07766 380 663.

Conservation work parties 2013

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 15–18 February | Glenlude |
| 24 March | East Schiehallion |
| 29 March–1 April | Glenlude |
| 22–26 April | Corrour |
| 26–29 April | Li & Coire Dhorraic |
| 5 May | East Schiehallion |
| 6–11 May | Inverie |
| 16–18 May | Sandwood |
| 20–24 May | Western Isles |
| 26 May | Ben Nevis |
| 31 May–3 June | Skye |
| 7–9 June | East Schiehallion |
| 10–15 June | Quinag/Assynt |
| 29 June | Ben Nevis |
| 19–21 July | Glen Nevis |
| 9–12 August | Quinag/Assynt |
| 18 August | East Schiehallion |
| 22–24 August | Sandwood |
| 25 August | Ben Nevis |
| 26 August–1 September | Glenlude |
| 9–14 September | Western Isles |
| 20–23 September | Skye |
| 28 September | Ben Nevis |
| 29 September | East Schiehallion |
| 7–11 October | Tanera Mor |
| 8–11 November | Glenlude |



Volunteer Jackie Thompson hard at work at Glenlude

WILD DAYS 2013

Wild days are an opportunity for members and supporters to learn about how the Trust seeks to restore ecological balance on each of our properties. Each day is led by a Trust conservation officer, allowing plenty of time for discussion on the process of caring for the flora and fauna in the area. The days are also a great way of meeting other like-minded people.

There is a minimum recommended donation of £20 per person (£10 unwaged) in order to cover costs of staff and equipment. Group sizes are kept fairly small, so early registration is recommended. To find out more and book your place, please contact David Lintern on 0131 554 0114, or david.lintern@jmt.org

27 May Glen Nevis

Enjoy the spring flora and fauna on a walk through Steall Gorge – plus see the finished path repairs, achieved through donations to the 2012 Steall Gorge appeal.

5 June Knoydart

A trip across Loch Hourn onboard the *Silver Fox* to visit our oldest native woodland regeneration project in the full flush of summer. Places limited to four.

6 June Knoydart

A second chance to visit this special property. Both days are led by Lester Standen, who has a lifetime of knowledge and experience on the Trust's oldest estate. Places limited to four.

7 June Skye

A guided walk with Trust ranger Ally Macaskill around the rugged coastline of Elgol and Camasunary.

1 August Quinag

Don O'Driscoll walks us through the very small to the very tall, exploring the wonderful ecology of this dramatic area.

2 August Sandwood

A day exploring the coastal wildlife, pools and shoreline of the magical far northwest.

30 September Schiehallion

A fascinating tour of this historic upland site, combining archaeology, geology and ecology.

15 October Glenlude

Visit this accessible Borders estate at this most colourful time of year to discover more about the Phoenix Forest and our other conservation projects.

SOMETHING TO LOOK OUT FOR

As part of the John Muir Day celebrations on 21 April 2013, Scottish Natural Heritage and Visit Scotland have invited the Trust to run some open days. Called the Big Weekend Out, we hope to showcase our work and spread the word about wild places. Look out for further information via e-bulletin and on our website nearer the time.

FANTASTIC FUNDRAISING

The Trust's ongoing work to protect and enhance wild places has benefitted from an extra injection of cash thanks to the fundraising efforts of our members and supporters.

The first donation of £3,000 came from the Rotary Club of Buckie's annual Six Harbour Walk (as highlighted in the Summer 12 issue of *Members' News*). A huge thank you to the 500 walkers and cyclists who took part, raising £25,000 for good causes – which, thanks to a nomination from our member Charles McKay, included the John Muir Trust.

We are also hugely grateful to Radical Travel Group – a silver corporate member of the Trust. Thanks to the generosity of its Highland Explorer Tour customers, the company raised £1,000 towards our work. The bulk of the fundraising was achieved during the festive period, when customers are given the opportunity to buy souvenir T-shirts. Fifty per cent of all the proceeds are donated to the John Muir Trust.



Spotlight on our deer management at Quinag

Clarification on the Trust's deer management policy at a key site

In October and November, the Trust responded to rumours circulating in Assynt and a story in the local press about proposed deer culls.

Heavy browsing by deer is preventing regeneration in the Ardvar Woodlands, a Special Site of Scientific Interest and Special Area of Conservation that sits on Quinag, and the neighbouring Ardvar and Assynt Crofters Trust estates. Without positive action, these trees – and the ancient woodland they form – will eventually die.

The Trust is in a statutory agreement (called a Section 7) with Ardvar, the Forestry Commission and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) to manage the deer to improve the condition of the woodland. The agreement had stalled and, at a recent meeting, SNH information indicated there were 296 stags on Quinag and Ardvar and that the stag population needed to be reduced to around 150 to achieve a 'minimum sporting population', let alone to protect the Ardvar Woodlands.

SNH had initially proposed a 45-stag cull and asked for views. In response, the Trust had suggested a targeted cull focusing on the woodlands with an upper limit of 100 stags to be culled across both Quinag and Ardvar. Neighbouring sporting estates feared this would impact on their sporting objectives and suggested the Trust should fence the woodland instead and not cull as many stags.

The Trust's deer and fencing policies have always been clear (www.jmt.org/policy-deer-management.asp). We would prefer to achieve regeneration without fencing where possible on biodiversity and landscape grounds. We also believe that deer should have access to the woodland for food and shelter rather than fencing them out. For context, without natural predators and due to too-low culls in the past, deer numbers have trebled on Ardvar over the last 30 years.



PHOTOGRAPH: DON O'BRIEN/SCOTT

Deer management is not a choice between culling and fencing. If deer are fenced out then a compensatory cull should be undertaken, otherwise those deer that depended on the wood for shelter and forage will starve or die of exposure or increase impacts elsewhere. After the lifetime of the fence (c. 20 years), if the deer population is not reduced the deer simply move back in and regeneration is halted once again. Fencing merely treats the symptoms and not the cause of the problem.

The Trust is committed to working with SNH to protect this important site. At the time of going to press, the Trust is awaiting a decision from SNH on the next steps to be taken.

CELEBRATIONS AS GLENLUDE WELCOMES PHOENIX FOREST SCOTLAND

An exciting partnership was celebrated at Glenludde in mid-November when more than 40 people from Phoenix Futures, the John Muir Trust and other partner organisations planted the first trees of what will become the Scottish Phoenix Forest.

Phoenix Futures works with people across the UK to help them conquer drug and alcohol addiction, partly through their pioneering programme, Recovery Through Nature. For the past seven years, Phoenix Futures Scotland has delivered the John Muir Award as part of Recovery Through Nature in wild places across Glasgow and Lanarkshire. The Award gives service users additional motivation, a goal to work towards and recognition of their achievements. The partnership between the two organisations has developed this year as service users have volunteered at Glenludde.

The day marked the launch of Phoenix Forest Scotland at Glenludde – a forest to commemorate the recovery of Phoenix service users – and celebration of 500 John Muir Awards being achieved through Phoenix Futures in Scotland. The first tree of the forest was planted by Lesley from the north of Glasgow, who was a hairdresser before she joined the programme a year-and-a-half ago.

Lesley has just completed the Conserver John Muir Award – the highest level – and is about to begin a two-year apprenticeship with Forestry Commission Scotland. She believes that throwing herself into conservation work has turned her life around: "I've learned lots of new skills and I'm more confident and happier all round than ever before," she commented.



PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID LINTERN

Lesley plants the first tree of the new Phoenix Forest

JOHN MUIR AWARD RECEIVES £10,000

The Scottish Government has given the John Muir Award a grant of £10,000 as part of Talking Science – an engagement programme that aims to help 2,500 people from hard-to-reach groups get involved in environmental and citizen science. John Muir Award activity in Scotland ranges across 16 council areas, from inner cities to remote parts of the Highlands. The money will enable us to continue to work with hard-to-reach groups in Scotland's wild places.



PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN MUIR AWARD

The recent grant will help the Award extend its environmental science outreach work

08 Local Members' Group events 2013

Glasgow and West Scotland

Talk: Lewis Pate, Scottish Wildlife Trust, on red squirrels and Toby Clark, John Muir Award Scotland manager, on the Award
When: Monday, 4 March, 7.00pm for 7.30pm start
Where: Partick Burgh Hall, 9 Burgh Hall Street, Glasgow

Talk: Bob Sharpe on mountain rescue in Scotland
When: Thursday, 18 April, 7.00pm for 7.30pm start
Where: Partick Burgh Hall, 9 Burgh Hall Street, Glasgow.
 The talk will be followed by a short AGM.

Conservation work party: Isle of Gigha

When: 17–19 May

The Glasgow group plans to visit Gigha to help the islanders with conservation work. If anyone is interested in joining us, please contact heatherwillimott@valleyfield.fsbusiness.co.uk

North East of Scotland

Conservation work party: Glen Tanar

When: Usually the third Saturday of the month.

What: Work varies from footpath maintenance, fence repair, tree maintenance and coppicing, tree planting, wildlife and habitat improvement.

Contact: James Brownhill, james@brownhill.us

Scottish Borders

Talk: Calum MacDonald, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency

When: Tuesday, 5 February, 7.30pm

Where: Selkirk Rugby Club, Ettrickhaugh Road, Selkirk

Talk: Helen McDade, head of policy, John Muir Trust

When: Wednesday, 20 March, 7.30pm

Where: Old Gala House, Scott Crescent, Galashiels, tel 01896 752611

Helen will be talking about the Trust's policy on energy, renewables and onshore wind.

For further information about Scottish Borders events above, please email John Thomas, j.p.r.t@btinternet.com

Yorkshire

Conservation weekend

When: 23–24 February

Where: The Yorkshire Dales National Park. Tools and expertise provided. Accommodation may be available.

Contact: John Page, john.page31@btinternet.com, tel 01904 425175

Other local group contacts

Edinburgh – Richard Ellis, rellis.consultancy@virgin.net

Glasgow and West – Moya Taylor, moyamtaylor@aol.com

North East Scotland – Rohan Beyts, r.beyts@btinternet.com

Mid and South Wales – Geoffrey Vaughan-Williams, gdvaughan.will@virgin.net, tel 01558 822960

South West England – John Finney, john.finney@ucl.ac.uk or Elizabeth Radford, elizabeth_radford@yahoo.com

▣ A WILD TRIBUTE TO PATRICK AGNEW



We were delighted to receive a generous donation last year from Ann Agnew. Her son Thomas first got in touch in January with the gift made in memory of Ann's husband Patrick (both pictured above), who was a keen supporter of the Trust.

The family lived in the Borders and Patrick's passion for inventing led him to teach mechanical engineering at Glasgow University. Ann also worked in education and the couple came together through their strong interest in the environmental and peace movements – indeed Patrick was a founding member of the Scottish Green Party.

Thomas remembers many family walks on the Scottish moors, hills and lochs where the idea of the wild was both beautiful and threatening: "The midges and their place in the wild verged on the spiritual!"

The family interest in education and the environment continues today. Patrick's daughter Hazel is a keen outdoors enthusiast and photographer and Thomas, a molecular biologist whose main interest is in "the very small", works at Edinburgh University.

Thomas now has a young family of his own who love visiting the bogs on Skye. He was interested to hear of the Trust's use of camera traps and plans for acoustic bat monitoring in Glen Nevis – a demonstration of the science of ecology with an educational application.

The Trust is always grateful to receive gifts in memory of loved ones. We would like to thank the Agnew family for this wonderful tribute to Patrick, who dearly loved Scotland's wild places.

▣ PARAMO PRIZE WINNER ANNOUNCED

Thank you to everyone who signed up for our e-newsletter at recent events. Over 600 people entered their details into our prize draw to win a Paramo Alta II jacket – an effective waterproof with ventilation in the arms that's ideal for hill walkers looking for comfort without having to take layers on or off.

Our heartfelt thanks to the team at Paramo for their generosity and congratulations to our winner, Roisin Watson from London. Your prize will be with you shortly!

▣ TELL US YOUR NEWS

What have Trust members been up to? We'd love to find out. Share your news and stories with us and we'll publish a selection in the next *Members' News*. We'd particularly like to hear from any group members and their projects. Let us know on 01796 470080 or email promotions@jmt.org
 Thank you.

▣ KEEP IN TOUCH

- Sign up to our monthly e-message, email – membership@jmt.org
- Keep up-to-date on events and local activities online – www.jmt.org/events.asp
- Join our discussion groups on Facebook/receive updates on Twitter – access via www.jmt.org
- You can also receive your Journal & Members' News electronically – email membership@jmt.org

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The Mamores viewed from the lower slopes of Aonach Beag, Nevis Range
 Photograph: Keith Brame

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