

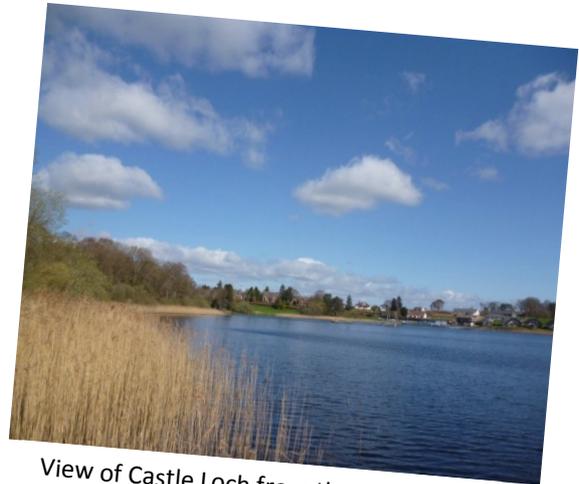


Castle Loch Lochmaben Community Trust Winter/Spring Newsletter 2015

Dumfries & Galloway Life People of the Year 'Community Project' WINNER 2014
SC044045

As we say goodbye to an exciting 2014 and a big hello to 2015, may I wish you a very happy year ahead - and a big thank you for all your support.

We have just had the first anniversary of the community ownership of Castle Loch, and what a busy and fruitful first year it has been. We have created a new footpath and bridge, enabling people to walk all the way around the loch, set up well attended twice monthly volunteer work parties, grown a Scottish wildflower garden with the help of the 1st Lochmaben Girl Guides, built bird boxes for a variety of species, and made a Kindergarten Forest School, which will be well used by the children at Jaybees Nursery.



View of Castle Loch from the west path

To top the year off we received a wonderful accolade, 'Community Project 2014' from Dumfries & Galloway Life 'People of the Year' awards. This was presented at an awards ceremony at Easterbrook Hall in Dumfries.

Darren Flint *Project Officer*



Certificate and award from DG Life

Diary dates:

24 March: AGM Church Hall, Lochmaben

11 April: The official opening ceremony of the new Castle Loch walk.

August (TBA): A day of history, art and music around the loch.

Keeping in Touch:

Website: www.castleloch.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/castlelochlochmaben

Twitter: @castle_loch

Email: darrenflint@castleloch.org.uk

Address: Lochfield Cottage, Priestdykes, Lochmaben, DG11 1LP

The noticeboard in the car park near the bowls club is regularly updated and the Castle loch leaflets are available from leaflet dispensers on site, library, Post Office, and downloadable from the website.

A place for people to enjoy wildlife.

From the regular and more common species through to seasonal visitors and scarcities, Castle Loch is a joy throughout the year for those wishing to experience the outdoors. Castle Loch is particularly noted for its winter migrations of pink footed and greylag geese, and a site for large numbers of over-wintering goosander.



Marsh Marigold

Be sure, however, not to overlook the more everyday sights - the beautiful yellow iris and marsh marigolds fringe the loch in summer, mosses and lichen cry out for closer inspection, and the orange tip butterfly in a woodland clearing provides a much needed dash of early spring colour.

Castle Loch has many legal and environmental designations. It is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Protected Area (SPA) which ensure that the site is legally protected for its birdlife. It is also a Ramsar Site which is a special designation for important wetland sites.

Some 2014 wildlife highlights...

The return of the osprey during May and June, fishing at the loch, was enjoyed by many (although not the gulls!). The willow tits remain as elusive as ever, but this national scarcity does have a good population at Castle Loch. If you would like to see them they are regular visitors to the Lochfield Cottage feeders.

Mute swans are a year-round feature, with a display of about a hundred individuals, many of them juvenile, all busy feeding, and males flexing their wings ('busking'). Amongst them there were also a few whooper swans, which came in during December.



Goosanders on Castle Loch.

Photograph by courtesy of Tony Lyman

Otters are regularly seen around the reed beds during the day - and keep a look out for their pungent fishy 'spraints' (droppings) deposited on the boardwalk.

CLLCT is now part of the Annandale Red Squirrel Group, whose aim is to monitor red squirrel populations and the spread of greys and the associated parapox virus. You can report any sightings at www.scottishsquirrels.org.uk, please do also let us know if you see any.



The destroyed bird hide

A few challenges

As you would expect there have been a few challenges along the way. The destruction of the bird hide by fire, and a break-in of the outbuildings and Lochfield Cottage all diverted time, effort and funds away from other priorities. The equipment lost and damage to locks and doors were each expensive to replace, however new security measures, such as lighting, cameras and police Smartwater will hopefully help deter future issues. Discussions are under way about how to fund a replacement bird hide along with exploring the options for how to use Lochfield Cottage.

Volunteers, Community and Activities

Much of what we have achieved over the course of the first year has been down to our band of volunteers, who turn out in all weathers and never flinch at the task ahead. Since we started the first session back in March 2014 we have had a fantastic 220 volunteer visits, donating a total of 650 hours. We just could not afford to buy in this sort of support and manpower - thank you to everyone who has helped.

The main task this year has been to clear the route of the new fence and path along the eastern side of the loch. Gangs of volunteers turned out daily clearing it, in time for the contractors to come on site during August.



Volunteers finishing off the new path.

The path was sympathetically placed to avoid the most sensitive areas and, where possible above the common flooding points. This now means you can walk all the way around Castle Loch, which is approximately 3 miles and takes about an hour and a half.



Volunteers making Bird boxes

During December we planted over 1500 beech whips, primarily along the side of the A709, which in time will create a fine looking hedge and new cover for the birds. The clearance of rhododendron by hand is a seemingly never ending task, but an important one to stop it from swamping the native woodland.

Volunteers made, with the support of D&G Rangers and Action Earth, bird boxes of various designs. This will help some of our regular and the more infrequent woodland visitors, including blue and great tits, robins, willow tits, red-starts and pied flycatchers.



Lochmaben 1st Girl Guides sprinkling native wildflower seed

The 1st Lochmaben Girl Guides joined us for their *Community* badge endeavours and created a Scottish wild flower garden, and just started with us are three young men doing their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Awards.



Kingfisher interpretation board by Innerfield Burn

The Annandale Young Farmers and Lockerbie Rotary helped with the clearance of the new path route. We also work closely with Jaybees Nursery and have created a new Forest Kindergarten seating area so the smallest legs can now reach the woods and enjoy the wonders of nature.

Litter is an ongoing problem (dropped onsite, blown in or thrown from passing vehicles) and litter-picking is a constant activity. Many regular walkers pick litter as they walk round, and we really appreciate this.

Ways to Give Support ...

Keeping Castle Loch a wonderful place for both wildlife and visitors takes an extraordinary amount of work, effort and money. Without the generous help and support of so many people the charitable Trust could not undertake all the work needed.



Volunteers making bird boxes

Numerous local businesses/community groups, and many individuals have donated money, time and equipment.

Other ways of supporting Castle Loch:-

Volunteering

As a *rule of thumb* we meet on the 1st Saturday and 3rd Thursday at Lochfield Cottage, by the car park on the A709. These run between 10am – 1pm and tend to be outdoor work.

Regular Giving

This is the latest way to offer your support and ensures Castle Loch has a steady income for both planned work and those unforeseen dramas. This method enables you to set up a regular monthly or one-off donation. The forms are available from CLLCT and the website.

Shop

It is possible to shop and support Castle Loch. We have a range of clothing with the logo, which can be ordered from the website or Lochmaben Post Office.

For those of you who shop online, we have an **Amazon Wishlist** with things that support the work of the Trust, and to suit all pockets – simply search Castle Loch under the Wishlist section on the Amazon website.

For wider online shopping, we've also set up an account with www.easyfundraising.org.uk. This is a free service and you simply go on to the website, select Castle Loch as your charity and then access your chosen shop eg Amazon, Ebay, Argos, John Lewis. We then receive a small donation from the shop on the amount you have purchased - it is very simple!

Fundraising activities

Maybe you would like to run an event in aid of Castle Loch, perhaps a coffee morning, book sale or musical soiree; alternatively why not think of us when picking a charity to support for your sponsored challenges during 2015.

For more details go to
[www.castleloch.org.uk/
getting-involved](http://www.castleloch.org.uk/getting-involved)
or
**pop by Lochfield Cottage
for a chat.**

Castle Loch Community Trust is grateful for funding from the following organisations:-

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