

2nd AGM of the Balloch Castle Country Park Regeneration Group.
Thursday, 5 September, 2024.
Balloch House Hotel.

Chair's Report.

We would like to start by thanking those who are attending this evening for your support and interest.

Apologies have been received from... (See minutes)

We would also like to thank Michael Mason for his contribution of the banner, and Jim Duncan who has given us permission to use his photographs.

We would like to thank WDC for paying for the Group's public liability insurance.

Thanks to Ian Bain from WDC Greenspace who has facilitated our Partnership Meetings and taken the time to walk round the Park with us to discuss a variety of things.

We have patiently waited for the response to our formal Partnership Agreement with WDC. This has been with the WDC Legal team, we really hope the joint signing is not far off. This is important as we need to have shared aims, business plans and action plans for anything to progress.

We completed a Business Engagement Survey as part of the Riverwoods Pioneer project at the beginning of the year, responses were enthusiastic, but not numerous! We were paid £450 for this project, the idea being to help businesses to become involved in Community project and that in turn help with community cohesion.

We were pleased to take part in the John Muir Way Celebration in the Park in April. This gave us a good opportunity to engage with people and promote the group. We were able to explain how important the Park is for biodiversity and what an excellent place the Park is for outdoor recreation. John Muir's love of nature and our admiration for his work was the catalyst for this event; it has been 10 years since the John Muir Way was completed.

We attended the WDC Biodiversity event in Church Street, Dumbarton. It was busy and some useful contacts were made.

We carried out a visitor count in February to compliment the other counts already done at other times of the year. We average 1.2M visits to the Park per annum.

We have walked the Park with Visit Scotland's new Regional Director, Lynne Cooper. Lynne was impressed at the train service which makes visiting the Park easy. She was surprised by the number of foreign visitors in the Park on a wet Tuesday. Lynne said that in Visit Scotland terms we are included in the Glasgow City Region, as she said tourists do not pay much attention to County boundaries and we can greatly benefit from our proximity to Glasgow.

We agreed that promotion for the LLTNP and Balloch Castle Country Park at Queen

Street station, should be looked at, given the importance of sustainable travel.

We had Ross Pollock, the Tourism Adviser for the LLTNP attend our meeting in April. We have tried again to encourage the LLTNP to put on a Ranger patrol in the Park.

A Ranger presence would make visitors feel welcome, provide information and make the Park feel more cared for.

The LLTNP have carried out water safety training in the Park this Summer.

Fraser McLaurin, who was brought up in the Park, has developed an App all about the Park. He attended one of our meetings and we hope to support each other and do a joint living history project, all available through the App. Fraser has a fountain of information to share.

We have presented to both Kilmaronock CC and BHCC in the past year. Both are very supportive of what we are doing. A big thanks to Andy Sinnott who has come from Kilmaronock this evening to help with the technicalities of a hybrid meeting.

Thanks to Catherine we are up to date with Microsoft 365, we now have domain addresses as Trustees and an efficient means of sharing documents.

Grand Bequest, our partners in digital imagery and architectural project management for building restoration, have offered to survey the North Lodge and to produce images of what could be done. We hope this will go ahead very soon and we can seek funding for internal works, the Council covering the external costs.

Tonight, we have a presentation from EFTEC – Economics for the Environment Duncan Royle is here, and he has already given his time with a full presentation to ourselves and WDC Officers earlier this year. We thank Duncan very much for joining us. We hope to have the funds to complete a Natural Capital Account of the Park very soon.

Our second presentation will be from Cara Bowden about a project that we will be doing within the Park with CHAS. We thank Cara and CHAS' enthusiasm to work with us.

And finally, my thanks to our trustees for all their time and commitment.