

Annual Report 2017/18

Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park



Presented to the Park Authority Joint Committee
December 2018

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1.0 Introduction

Clyde Muirshiel Park Authority is a Joint Committee of Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and North Ayrshire Councils.

The priorities of Clyde Muirshiel Park Authority are: -

- Leisure activity and health
- Education and outdoor learning
- Environmental management

The benefits delivered by the Park Authority are recognised as making a positive contribution to wider national and local agendas in the areas of health improvement, active lifestyles, community engagement, volunteering and employability.

This report will present the work of the Park Authority and its staff in the year April 2017 to March 2018.

2.0 Executive Summary

Nearly six hundred and fifty thousand (644,882) people visited the Regional Park in 2017/18. This sizable number is significant when considered within the context of further reductions in resources available to the Park Authority and its staff. The cost per visitor to the unitary authorities is £1.07.

2.1 Leisure Activity and Health

The numbers of participants taking part in Duke of Edinburgh activities within the Park this year was 2121, with 245 trained, supervised and assessed by Park staff.

Additional funding was accessed to provide accessible equipment namely extra adaptive bikes for activity clients. The Park gained an impressive Gold Level Cycle Friendly Community Award, with the support of Ride 63 Cycle Club. The Club continues to grow in numbers and activities; with 150 members and a programme of popular regular rides.

Outdoor activity sessions were provided for 6398 participants.

Specialist activity days such as Spinal Injuries Scotland's Activity Showcase continues to attract new visitors to the Park. The third Scottish Disability Sport 'Wheels to Water Festival' attracted people with disabilities from all over Scotland.

Numbers attending specialist events continues to rise.

Health improvement activities include 'Health Walks' and Mental Health Improvement Programmes. The number of participants taking part in the Park's Branching Out programme has now risen to 585. These 12 week courses for people with mental health issues continue to show demonstrable improvements for the clients.

Income for Activities was £165,268 and for the Retail and Catering £148,051.

2.2 Education and Outdoor Learning

Due to the importance that the Curriculum for Excellence has on outdoor learning, the Park continues to be an important facility and is in regular use year round by local schools and groups. Environmental education sessions were delivered to 7769 people this year from pre-nursery up to secondary and tertiary education. The activities of the grant funded Tag-n-Track project contributed to these numbers.

Over six thousand people (6352) people attended over one hundred (103) Ranger supported events. Work has been done with nine schools on their Eco-School Awards.

Digital marketing and promotional activities support many education and outdoor learning messages and information provision with over one hundred thousand people engaging online.

The Tag-n-Track (TnT) grant funded project encourages understanding about wildlife and habitats, more than five thousand pupil sessions have taken place, along with events and workshops, evening talks and data collection for scientific papers.

2.3 **Environmental Management**

In total 57 habitat surveys and monitoring took place, data from which was fed into appropriate national survey databanks including butterfly, reptile and wetland bird.

The conservation volunteers provided 3743 hours (2.4 FTE) of valuable work.

At Muirshiel Country Park five hectares of Sitka spruce were removed and will be replanted with mainly native broadleaf and Scots Pine. The Ranger Service responded to the increased public interest in marine litter. Funding was secured for a number of environmental projects.

Monitoring of water quality continued at Castle Semple Loch. Chlorophyll-a levels have a general trend of lowering since 1998, this year levels were relatively low with the summer average of $14\mu\text{g l}^{-1}$. However, some aspects such as total phosphate have been increasing in recent years. Increasing levels of phosphates are likely to be associated with higher algal levels.

2.4 **Management**

The Park delivered a surplus of £19,514 on its budget. Nearly six hundred and fifty thousand people visited the Park. The Park received or enabled a number of awards or medals for develop and environmental activities.

Marketing activities took place throughout the year. The Park website is mobile enabled with an online booking system for activities and events. New equipment and events have provided additional media coverage and new audience awareness for the Regional Park.

There were 25.47 full time equivalent members of staff in 2017/18. Nine members of staff attended eight Health and Safety training courses. Given the visitor numbers written complaints for the period remain minimal.

3.0 Leisure Activity and Health

3.1 Outdoor leisure activities will be resourced and developed in line with market demand.



3.1.1 *Maintain standards for related governing body accreditation.*

Clyde Muirshiel Park gained Adventure Activity Licencing (AALA) Accreditation, Royal Yachting Association (RYA) Accreditation and British Canoe Union (BCU) Accreditation.

3.1.2 *Provide for Duke of Edinburgh Awards (DofE).*

Duke of Edinburgh activities continue to increase in the Park with experiences for 1668 participants (102 groups). Of these Park staff directly provided training, supervision and assessment for 245 clients. Expeditions took place on foot or bikes.

3.1.3 *Develop accessibility within the Park and its activities.*

2017/18 saw another positive year for clients with disabilities. New trails for hand cycles and mountain trikes were introduced in Parkhill Wood to allow riders who are getting fitter, access to longer routes.

3.1.4 *Develop cycling within the Park and surrounding area.*

Cycling development within the Park took a number of forms this year: adaptive bikes were added to the fleet. Big Bike Revival days took place with Cycling UK, this generated new members for Ride 63 and helped people from the local area who were new to cycling or had not done it for while get involved in both leisure and commuting activity in an attempt to reduce local car use.

The Regional Park was recognised for a number of development and environmental activities being shortlisted for Scottish Mountain Bike Community Project of the Year 2017, details can be found here <http://clydemuirshiel.co.uk/clyde-muirshiel-shortlisted-for-mtb-award>.

With the support of Ride 63 Community Cycle Club the Regional Park gained an impressive Gold Level Cycle Friendly Community Award by Cycling Scotland in recognition of efforts to get more people in the locality cycling, details can be found here <http://clydemuirshiel.co.uk/top-community-cycle-award-for-cmrp/>

3.1.5 *Provide certified activity courses for the public.*

A variety of certified coaching courses ran in sailing, powerboat and paddle sports for 219 participants.

3.1.6 *Provide bespoke courses for client organisations*

We provided 5335 spaces for client groups who asked for tailor made programmes, this includes mainstream schools, ASN schools and various adult and junior care and support services.

3.1.7 *Develop/ provide specialist activity days.*

This year was the third year that we have provided mass participation events for both Scottish Disability Sport and Spinal Injuries Scotland. Both days were hugely successful with people coming from all over Scotland to take part in accessible sports, have discussions with support services and find out from the sport governing bodies what they could do in their own locality.

3.1.8 *Develop/ provide specialist events.*

Events for the period have included, Pedal the Park 100km cycle sportive, the Bog Stomp 10km trail run, Stargazing Nights, Model Yacht Championships, Orienteering and Running events, Accessible Sailing Regattas and a Classic Car Show.

3.2 **The Park will continue to work with health services to facilitate health improvement activities.**

3.2.1 *Facilitate volunteering opportunities with community care groups.*

Park staff worked with Community Networks Adult Assisted Needs Group who provided 147 hours of volunteering at Muirshiel Country Park.

3.2.2 *Facilitate Health walk programmes.*

The programmes provided 54 walks to a total of 465 participants.

These include Community Health walks in Lochwinnoch, The Renfrewshire Feeling Fitter Walk Programmes, the Inverclyde Health Walking Group and the annual "Pound and Pace" staff led charity walk around the Greenock Cut.

3.2.3 *Develop and deliver ecotherapy programmes.*

The numbers participating overall in our Branching Out mental health recovery programme has now risen to 585. One programme ran this year at Muirshiel Country Park.



Walkers on the Windy Hill path, Muirshiel Country Park

3.3 Capitalise on opportunities to improve the parks assets and infrastructure.

3.3.1 Carry out review of assets and ensure they are yielding maximum benefit.

3.3.2 Seek appropriate funding opportunities.

The Park continues to access where possible alternative funding streams in order to improve service. Grant funding has supported new cycling infrastructure and mountain trikes, activity and mental health development programmes and conservation volunteer activities.

3.4 Maximise income generation via commercial activity.

3.4.1 Outdoor Activities income was £165,268. Overall numbers participating are down, this is in part due to a reduction in funding available to some of our client groups and in part due to limitations placed on provision by our lack of changing facilities during peak periods, details are outlined in the table below:

| | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Mainstream Adults Taster/multi activity places | 1120 | 1135 | 705 |
| Mainstream Junior Taster/multi activity places | 1238 | 860 | 1584 |
| Additional Support Needs (ASN) Junior taster/multi activity places | 2545 | 2099 | 1191 |
| ASN Adult taster/multi activity places | 956 | 1174 | 1166 |
| Accessible Powerboat Experiences | 470 | 431 | 225 |
| Duke of Edinburgh provision | 377 | 355 | 245 |
| Coaching course places all disciplines | 295 | 344 | 219 |
| Total places provided | 7001 | 6398 | 5335 |

3.4.2 Retail/Catering

Income for retail and catering this year was £148,051, less than previous years. However in real terms a surplus of £11,447 has been generated as outlined in the table below by reducing costs, streamlining operations and increasing margins.

| Income Year | Salaries | Spend | Income | Deficit (+)/ Surplus (-) |
|-------------|----------|--------|---------|--------------------------|
| 2014/15 | 97 553 | 91 297 | 171 916 | 16934 |
| 2015/16 | 93 615 | 78 967 | 175 855 | -3273 |
| 2016/17 | 86 165 | 62 199 | 167 364 | -15,708 |
| 2017/18 | 78 366 | 58 238 | 148 051 | -11,447 |

4.0 Education and Outdoor Learning

4.1 Promote the Park as a platform for Outdoor Learning

- 4.1.1 *Facilitate school, college and university visits*
7769 educational sessions were delivered by the Regional Park Ranger Service as well as those delivering the Tag-n-Track Project.



Ranger staff at Castle Semple Country Park (CSCP) and Muirshiel Country Park (MCP) led 49 school visits, delivering to 1720 students and 9 college/university groups with 33 participants.

46 school visits took place at or near the Greenock Cut Visitor Centre (GCVC), 12 at Lunderston Bay (LB) and 7 educational sessions were delivered within school grounds, to a total of 835 students.

Tag-n-Track delivered 240 workshops to 80 classes, 4 were ASN. The total numbers of pupils receiving the three sessions was 1738 (ie 5214 visits).

- 4.1.2 *Raise awareness of the Park and its resources through marketing and promotion via professional networks.*

One of the Park's Senior Rangers is a member of the Scottish Countryside Ranger Association Council which is working on promoting increasing levels of partnership between the South West Scotland Regional Ranger Services.

The Park hosted staff from Pentlands Regional Park to look at similar problems and issues in the management of Regional Parks.

Park staff contribute to a number of networks and partnership activities such as 'Marine Conservation Society Beach Watch', 'British Marine Federation', 'Local Area Tourism Partnerships' as well as work with Scotland's Rural College (SURC), University of the West of Scotland (UWS) and University of Glasgow.

The historic "Greenock Cut Oak" has an important role in outdoor learning opportunities, it was runner up in the Woodland Trust Scotland's Tree of the Year Awards 2017.

4.2 Deliver, monitor and review a programme of informative events for visitors of all ages, linking into curriculum outcomes where appropriate.

- 4.2.1 *Deliver learning activities to groups, including schools, youth organisations and summer groups.*

Learning activities ranged from basic pond dipping and rock pooling sessions with nursery pupils, introduction to food chains and mini-beast surveys with primary schools to bush craft skill and potamology (river studies) with secondary school pupils. A breakdown can be seen in the table on the following page.

| Type of group | Numbers undertaking learning activities at GVCV& LB | Numbers undertaking learning activities at MCP & CSCP |
|--------------------|---|---|
| School - Nursery | 206 | 153 |
| School - Primary | 975 | 1422 |
| School - Secondary | 221 | 77 |
| School - College | 0 | 33 |
| Adult Group | 0 | 379 |
| Youth Group | 0 | 224 |
| Total | 1402 | 2288 |

Sessions are mostly delivered within the Park, but outreach work is undertaken and delivered within the community or schools.

Over six thousand people (6352) people attended over one hundred (103) Ranger lead or supported events during the period.

The TnT project had 2066 participants over 20 events including bird ringing and gull identification. Six workshops were delivered to 77 participants including Branching Out and Community Networks. Seven evening talks had 344 attendees at a range of groups such as the Women's Rural, retired NHS Workers, Paisley Natural History Society, Scottish Ringers and Scottish Ornithology Club. The project has helped to engage people and interest them in the importance of wildlife on our doorstep and the wider countryside.

4.2.2 *Establish clear links between educational activity and Curriculum for Excellence (CfE).*

Rangers continue to work alongside teachers, to ensure that educational visits cover numerous sections within the CfE. While it might be obvious that a visit would entail links to the sciences they also connect to a variety of CfE outcomes from across the curriculum.

4.2.3 *Contribute to eco schools programme*

There were seven outreach visits to schools and nurseries in Inverclyde delivering sessions to 216 pupils. In Renfrewshire/North Ayrshire there were two visits to primary schools and two visits to nurseries delivering 619 sessions.

4.3 **Use the Park's digital resources to maximise the scope for learning.**

4.3.1 *Maintain the Park's online profile, expanding reach where possible.*

The mobile enabled website with online booking facilities and regular blog items went live in November 2016. In 2017 the website had 4.5 million hits, translating to 196,961 visits by 106,936 unique visitors; this is compared to 87,615 visits by 87,615 visitors respectively in 2016.

Using social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter and You Tube continue and are used to communicate with Park users and promote Park activities. By March 2018 there were 2500 'likes' on Facebook and 1800 'followers' on Twitter. The videos on You Tube have been viewed over 55,000 times. The Instagram account is a year old and has 550 followers. TripAdvisor content is also monitored and actioned as appropriate.

4.3.2 *Provide a contemporary suite of accessible digital information.*

A mobile enabled website is in operation, this was the first full year for courses and events being booked online. Social media activities on Facebook and Twitter continue and have expanded to Instagram to increase reach.

The mobile enabled website allows more information to be easily viewable, as new resources are developed; content is being made available online examples of this include the Conservation Volunteer Programme, Complaints Policy and What's on Guides.

The Tag and Track Project (images below) creates a lot of digital information, the many 'Blog' items over the year on the Park website about the Gulls gives a clear picture of some of the project findings. A student from the University of the West of Scotland Paisley analysed Geographic Information Data of bird movements for their thesis.



5.0 Environmental Management

5.1 Enhance the Park's natural heritage whilst safeguarding key species, habitats and landscape character.

5.1.1 *Deliver a comprehensive regime of inspections and maintenance whilst undertaking and contributing to environmental surveys and information gathering exercises.*



Regular inspections continue to take place at all the of the visitor centres within the Park to ensure compliance with Health and Safety (H&S) legislation. Defects and damage is reported to the appropriate council for repairs. The response to repair requests varies; any repair that is an urgent H&S risk is dealt with promptly; however some tasks are being neglected as they are not deemed a priority. While minor repairs may not be a H&S priority the overall effect is that parts of the Park are not being presented in their best light.

Rangers undertake year round biological surveys and submit their findings to national data bases to help monitor ecological trends. 57 habitat surveys include birds, butterflies, dragonflies, reptiles and vegetation have been done.

5.1.2 *Manage conservation volunteering activity.*

The work plans for the Regional Park hosted volunteer groups are co-ordinated and overseen by the Ranger Service. The Youth Volunteer Group, many of whom are working towards their Duke of Edinburgh award contributed 407 hours.

The constituted Castle Semple Conservation volunteer group has successfully applied for several grants during the year enabling new work to be undertaken. The group did 1493 hours of work, activities included; tree planting, alien species removal, hedge maintenance, litter removal and wildflower garden work.

The Greenock Cut Conservation Volunteers are a constituted group undertaking volunteer work every Saturday. They did 1843 hours of volunteer work. The Volunteer Group have been successful in securing funding for additional tools and equipment and for the delivery of monthly 'Conservation Blitz' events in 2018.

With the increased interest in the marine environment, numbers supporting the Lunderston Bay clean of marine debris continues to rise with 192 people helping during the reporting period. Park staff shared their expertise in this area supporting others with clean-up volunteer activities at the Cloch Lighthouse and at Inverkip Bay.

5.1.3 *Undertake local conservation projects and input to regional schemes where appropriate.*

Five hectares of Sitka spruce were felled at Muirshiel Country Park. These areas will be replanted with mainly native broadleaf and Scots Pine. In addition, a new path will contain an avenue of aspen clones to create a central feature of conservation interest.

Rangers and volunteers continue to provide data to the Marine Conservation Society for the EUs "Marine Strategy Framework Directive". The MSFD Requires that Member States take measures to achieve or maintain 'Good Marine Environmental Status', as part of this the monitoring sea debris is recorded at regular intervals at Lunderston Bay and reported to the Marine Conservation Society who then in turn present the data in a report which is submitted to the UK government and EU.

5.1.4 *Engage staff in training and CPD opportunities to maintain and improve upon skill level.*

Staff are encouraged to look for and apply for training they deem appropriate to the tasks they undertake in their job role. Training has included Hill and Moorland Walk Leader Assessment, Ride Leadership Award, Bikeability Trainer, Dyslexia Training, Dementia Awareness, Social Media Integration, Mountain Woodland Conference, Skills and Techniques in Wetland Bird Survey.

5.1.5 *Seek funding for environmental management projects.*

Seeking funding can be a time consuming endeavour and does not always result in a successful outcome. While there are many sources of funding opportunities the fact that the Park is considered Local Authority means that the opportunities are narrowed. That being said, successful funding enable projects to take place at Muirshiel Country Park, Lunderston Bay and the Greenock Cut Visitor Centre.

The Tag-n-Track Project was delivered throughout 17/18 with £39,987 of funding from LEADER Greater Renfrewshire and Inverclyde towards the previously granted funding from Heritage Lottery Fund (£66,100).

5.1.6 *Monitor Water Quality*

Monitoring of the water quality ensures the safe operation of water based activities at Castle Semple Loch and is also an important determinant of biodiversity. The continued collaboration with University of the West of Scotland and monitoring the site is necessary to determine any actions that may be required to improve water quality and biodiversity.

5.2 **Work collaboratively with other stakeholders involved in the provision of outdoor management.**

5.2.1 *Consider opportunities for cooperative outdoor management where there is benefit to the Park and its visitors.*

This work is ongoing and includes SEPA, Forestry Commission and local stakeholders.

6.0 Park Management

6.1 Financial Performance Summary

The Park budgets achieved a £19,514 surplus for this financial year. This was in the main due to a reduction in insurance and vehicle costs. Details of the expenditure and income lines can be seen in the table below.

Expenditure

| | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 |
|--------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Employee Costs | 809,781 | 726,242 | 743,713 |
| Property Costs | 45,809 | 42,533 | 57,101 |
| Supplies and Services | 197,786 | 168,205 | 195,182 |
| Contractors | 17,201 | 19,720 | 11,807 |
| Transport and Plant | 49,567 | 40,092 | 43,387 |
| Admin Costs | 85,954 | 71,855 | 63,455 |
| Payments to other Bodies | 1,600 | 1,820 | 1,749 |
| Total | 1,207,698 | 1,070,467 | 1,116,394 |

Income

| | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Grants | (15,339) | (14,115) | (73,822) |
| Sales Fees & Charges | (199,025) | (165,741) | (165,268) |
| Retail & Catering | (175,855) | (167,364) | (148,051) |
| Miscellaneous | (56,505) | (44,161) | (55,967) |
| Requisition from member authorities | (808,100) | (692,800) | (692,800) |
| Total | (1,254,824) | (1,084,181) | (1,135,908) |
| (Surplus)/ Deficit | (47,126) | (13,714) | (19,514) |

6.2 Park Visitor Figures

Nearly six hundred and fifty thousand people visited the Regional Park in 2017/18. Visitor figures are reported as the number of visitors per site, as outlined below, this is based on car counter data and observational records.

| | 2015/16 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Greenock Cut | 77 437 | 80 759 | 53 797 |
| Lunderston Bay | 215 425 | 217 068 | 218 221 |
| Castle Semple | 320 184 | 359 295 | 335 438 |
| Muirshiel | 36 419 | 37 007 | 37 426 |
| TOTAL | 649 465 | 694 129 | 644 882 |

6.3 Marketing Activities

Marketing activities took place throughout the year utilising local press, websites, posters, leaflets and social media channels. The Park helped with content and images for the new Renfrewshire website www.paisley.is.

Events, such as Pedal the Park and the Bog Stomp had their own marketing plans and created partnership working opportunities, media coverage and new audience awareness for the Regional Park.

The legacy of Race2theGames 2014 has continued. The creation of the Special Olympic Scotland West Sailing Team in 2016, with training at Castle Semple Loch by Regional Park staff, for the Special Olympics held in Sheffield in August 2017 resulted in two silvers and a bronze medal. The same athletes will make up the Special Olympics Great Britain (SOGB) sailing squad for the World Games in 2019 which will be held in Abu Dhabi, all the training is happening at Castle Semple Loch with Regional Park staff, this activity has resulted in media coverage.



Regional Park boats (and staff!) took part in Scotland’s Boat Show at Inverkip – both generated media coverage and new audience awareness.

The Park was recognised for a number of development and environmental activities. An impressive Gold Level Cycle Friendly Community Award by Cycling Scotland, a shortlisting for Scottish Mountain Bike Community Project of the Year 2017, details can be found here <http://clydemuirshiel.co.uk/clydemuirshiel-shortlisted-for-mtb-award/> and the historic “Greenock Cut Oak” was runner up in the Woodland Trust Scotland’s Tree of the Year 2017 increasing the Park profile and generating new audience awareness

The Tag-n-Track Project Officer, Hayley Douglas, has continued to present wildlife stories on STV Glasgow’s primetime evening programme ‘Live at Five’ broadcasting to central Scotland. This has provided the Park with a regular television profile focusing primarily on wildlife and conservation activities both within the Regional Park but equally at other locations in Central Scotland.

Various corporate volunteer groups work in the Park created media coverage.

6.4 Staffing

The staff totals (in Full Time Equivalents, FTE) for each team:-

| Team | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Management | 1.43 | 1.2 | 1.2 |
| Administration | *5.29 | *4.8 | *4.4 |
| Ranger | 7.02 | 7.0 | 6.83 |
| Activities | 5.81 | 6.5 | 5.02 |
| Visitor Services | 5.75 | 5.75 | 4 |
| Estates | 2.18 | 2 | 2 |
| Cleaning | 3.07 | 2.95 | 2.02 |
| Total | 30.55 | 30.20 | 25.47 |

*Includes the Countryside Officer and Technical Assistant.

During the reporting period there were 1.6 FTE Project Officers on the 2 year grant funded Tag and Track project.

6.5 *Health and Safety*

The Park management continues to work to align Health and Safety policy and practices with those of Renfrewshire Council, the servicing authority.

Eight Health and Safety training courses, taking 14.5 days were attended by nine members of staff.

Thirty one incidents/accidents occurring during the period. Twenty three were injuries to visitors - notably falls when cycling and minor cuts and bruises. These figures are very low given the 644 882 visits annually to the Park and the range of activities taking place.

6.6 *Feedback and Complaints*

Feedback is received in many forms including social media channels, via survey monkey from courses and events, paper forms and thank you letters and public profiles on Trip Advisor (TA) for each Park site

Written complaints for the period are:

| | | |
|---------------|--|---------|
| Regional Park | Conservation Activities | 1 |
| Castle Semple | Lochshore Path Potholes | 2 |
| | Quality of Bins | 1 |
| Muirshiel | Food Offering in Café | 2 (TA) |
| | Potholes & Poor Trails | 11 |
| Greenock Cut | Toilet & Centre Opening Hours | 1 (TA) |
| | Toilet Opening Hours | 4 (2TA) |
| | Signage | 1 |
| | Lack of maintenance/investment in Centre | 2 |



The Greenock Cut Oak by Naill Benvie