

Annual Report 2018/19

Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park



Presented to the Park Authority Joint Committee
February 2020

Contents

	Page
1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Executive Summary	2
3.0 Leisure Activity and Health	4
4.0 Education and Outdoor Learning	7
5.0 Environmental Management	10
6.0 Park Management	12

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, tourism, volunteering and employability.

This report will present the work of the Park Authority and its staff in the year April 2018 to March 2019.

2.0 Executive Summary

Over six hundred and fifty thousand (657 320) people visited the Regional Park in 2018/19. The cost per visitor to the unitary authorities this year is £0.88.

2.1 Leisure Activity and Health

The number of participants taking part in Duke of Edinburgh activities within the Park this year was 827, with additional 135 trained, supervised and assessed by Park staff. Outdoor activity sessions were provided for 6144 participants to Adventure Activity Licence Authority (AALA) regulations.

Castle Semple became the HSBC British Cycling disability hub for Scotland. Park staff provided accessible cycling at Glasgow Green for the Glasgow 2018 European Championships engaging with 2200 people.

Specialist activity days took place for Spinal Injuries Scotland and Scottish Disability Sport attracting people with disabilities from all over Scotland. The Park facilitated and trained Special Olympics GB Sailing Team won a Bronze Medal in their first World Games in Abu Dhabi.

The first Clyde Muirshiel Walking Festival took place. Over ten thousand (10849) people attended Ranger delivered or supported events.

Health improvement activities included Community Network volunteers, regular Feeling Fitter walks and the delivery of two Branching Out Mental Health programmes with all participants earned their John Muir Awards.

Income for Activities was £188,063 and for Retail and Catering £150,452.

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 youth groups.

Nearly nine thousand (8758) children and young people took part in outdoor learning and eco school activities. This includes the Tag-n-Track two year grant funded project that improves understanding about wildlife and habitats.

Digital resources and promotional activities support many education and outdoor learning messages and information provision with over one hundred thousand people engaging online. The TnT project created additional digital materials.

2.3 **Environmental Management**

The first ever Regional Park osprey pair established a nest and successfully raised two chicks.

Site inspections, biological surveys and water monitoring continued to take place.

Conservation volunteers contributed 3414 hours of work in 2018/19.

2.4 **Management**

The Park delivered a small deficit of £2,276 on its budget. Over six hundred and fifty thousand people (657 320) visited the Park.

Marketing activities took place throughout the year. The Park website is mobile enabled with an online booking system for activities and events.

There were 23.76 full time equivalent members of staff in 2018/19. Given the visitor numbers, written complaints remain minimal and minor in nature, see 6.6 for details.

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. Of these Park staff directly provided training, supervision and assessment for 135 clients. Expeditions took place on foot or bikes.

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

2018/19 saw another positive year for clients with disabilities. New client groups took part in activities helping to boost participation numbers.

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

Cycling development continued within the Park this year: it is now possible to cycle all the way around Loch Thom with the opening of the (missing) 'link' path. Adaptive bikes were added to the fleet and Castle Semple became the HSBC British Cycling disability hub for Scotland. Working in partnership with Scottish Cycling the hub will use the existing expertise within the staff team to develop both grass roots and performance para cycling.

Pedal the Park sportive took place again in May attracting 320 riders.

The Park was asked to support the Glasgow 2018 European Championships by providing accessible cycling at Glasgow Green for the duration of the event. It was estimated that we engaged with 2200 people.

3.1.5 *Provide certified activity courses for the public.*

A variety of certified coaching courses ran in sailing, powerboat and paddle sports for 272 participants.

3.1.6 *Provide bespoke courses for client organisations*

We provided 5872 sessions for client groups who asked for tailor made programmes, this includes mainstream schools, ASN schools and various adult and junior care and support services.

A training programme for the Special Olympic GB Sailing Team was provided by Park staff, two local sailors received bronze medals after competing in their first World Games in Abu Dhabi in March 2019.



3.1.7 *Develop / provide specialist activity days.*

This year was the fifth 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, Accessible Sailing Regattas and a Classic Car Show.

May 2018 saw the first Clyde Muirshiel Walking Festival with 141 walkers joining volunteer walk leaders on a dozen routes across the Park. Most of the volunteer leaders were members of local rambler or hill walking groups, all of whom are regular visitors to the Park.

Clydeside Orienteers held 2 thirty person training sessions, their national event in March 2019 had 300 participants.

Over the year nearly eleven thousand people (10849) attended Ranger co-ordinated or delivered events. This included Clyde view Academy's annual sponsored walk around the Greenock Cut with a one thousand students and staff walking along the length of the Cut in a day.

In the second year of the Tag-n-Track project there were 1749 participants at 21 events including bird ringing and gull identification. Eight workshops were delivered to 123 participants including Branching Out and Community Networks. Project staff delivered 43 evening talks had 1328 attendees at a range of groups such as the Women's Rural, Scottish Wildlife Trust and the Scottish Ornithology Club.

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 438 hours of volunteering at Muirshiel Country Park.

3.2.2 *Facilitate Health walk programmes.*

The programmes provided 60 walks to a total of 698 participants. This has included 43 Community Health walks in Lochwinnoch with 314 participants, The Renfrewshire Feeling Fitter Walk Programme with 8 walks and 220 participants and 9 walks with 164 participants for the Inverclyde Health Walking Group.

3.2.3 *Develop and deliver ecotherapy programmes.*

The 'Branching Out' Mental Health Referral programme at Muirshiel Country Park this year ran over 13 weeks providing 105 participant activities, this was

part funded by the Forestry Commission in partnership with CMRP. Inverclyde SAMH secured funding to be able to start a 3 month Branching Out programme in March 2019.

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.*
Progress has been made reviewing Park assets. Processes are underway to consolidate Park resources to improve efficiency and accessibility. Opportunities to improve the visitor facilities at Castle Semple Visitor Centre are being explored through the Castle Semple Infrastructure Enhancement Project, funded by Renfrewshire Council and Greater Renfrewshire and Inverclyde LEADER.

3.3.2 *Seek appropriate funding opportunities.*
Alternative funding streams continue to be explored in order to improve service. Grant funding has supported 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 £188,063. Overall numbers participating (details in table below) are up on the previous year, despite the ongoing limitations (lack of changing rooms).

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Mainstream Adults Taster/multi activity	1135	705	745
Mainstream Junior Taster/multi activity	860	1584	1814
ASN Junior taster/multi activity	2099	1191	1967
ASN Adult taster/multi activity	1174	1166	840
Accessible Powerboat Experiences	431	225	371
Duke of Edinburgh provision	355	245	135
Coaching course places all disciplines	344	219	272
Total places provided	6398	5335	6144

3.4.2 Retail and Catering income this year was £150,452 up slightly on the previous year. Efforts to reduce costs and streamline operations while still providing a countryside welcome and visitor information continued.

Café operations went contactless at Muirshiel and Greenock Cut Visitor Centres, all sites stopped using plastic straws.

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*

Ranger staff engaged with over seventy groups (72) visiting the Park, more than eight hundred (827) people were doing their Bronze expeditions for the Duke of Edinburgh Award.



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

Park staff contribute to a number of networks and partnership activities such as 'Marine Conservation Society Beach Watch', 'British Marine Scotland', 'Sport Scotland Professional Officers Group', '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.

Park staff contribute and often host the both the Inverclyde and Renfrewshire Access Forums. Staff membership of the Scottish Countryside Ranger Association Council continues.

The Park hosted Rangers from Whitelees Wind Farm and the North Ayrshire Council Ranger Service. The visits encourage partnership working and the sharing of good working practices.

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.*

The total number of educational participants in the year was nearly nine thousand (8758). This number includes school work done on the grant funded Tag and Track project.

Learning activities ranged from work with school groups to family friendly events such as responsible access events and walks, habitat and wildlife awareness activities. Outdoor learning includes 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 with secondary school pupils. A breakdown can be seen in the table on the following page.

Type of group	Numbers undertaking learning activities at GCVL & LB	Numbers undertaking learning activities at MCP & CSCP
School - Nursery	67	95
School - Primary	1105	701
School - Secondary	659	271
School - College	0	124
Talks	442	120
Eco-schools	0	126
John Muir/ D of E	0	35
Total	2273	1472

Sessions are mostly delivered within the Park, however outreach work is undertaken and delivered within the community or schools where appropriate. An example is Kilmacolm Primary who wanted to make use of their proximity of local woodlands. On a weekly basis a class had a morning session delivered by the Ranger, totalling 339 pupils over 8 weeks.

Tag-n-Track delivered 228 workshops to 76 classes, 6 were ASN. The total numbers of pupils receiving the three sessions was 1671 (ie 5013 participants).

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 the Rangers connectivity to a wide variety of CfE outcomes and experiences from across the whole curriculum.

4.2.3 *Contribute to eco schools programme*

Many schools now have successful eco-schools status. In Renfrewshire/North Ayrshire there were seven visits to primary schools with 26 pupils taking part. In Inverclyde there was one visit to St Joseph Primary school in Greenock where the Ranger team helped create a new willow weaved structure.

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 website has online booking facilities and regular blog and social media content. Use of social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter and You Tube continues. In March 2019 there were 3000 'likes' on Facebook and 1900 'followers' on Twitter. The videos on You Tube have been viewed over 80,000 times. The Instagram account continues to grow in popularity and has over 900 followers with regular comments and interactions with the public promoting events activities and the showing the day to day working life of the Park staff. TripAdvisor content is also monitored and actioned as appropriate.

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

This was the second full year for courses and events being booked online. Social media activities 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 Programmes, Annual Report and Route Guides for walks or cycles.

The Tag and Track Project (images below) created a lot of digital information, with many 'Blog' items on the Park website about the Gulls and project activities. 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.*



Inspections continue to take place at all the visitor centres 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.

Rangers undertake year round biological surveys and submit their findings to national data bases to help monitor ecological trends. 57 surveys including birds, butterflies, dragonflies, reptiles and vegetation were undertaken.

In 2011 a number of sites were identified as being potential good osprey nesting sites. Manmade nests were created and installed by Park staff and have been kept in a good state of repair. This year this work paid off with the first ever Regional Park osprey pair establishing a nest and successfully raising two chicks which were both ringed by Park Staff.

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. As a measure of algal amounts 'Chlorophyll-a levels' have had a general trend of lowering since 1998. However, Chlorophyll-a has been increasing slightly since 2012, this year had a summer average of 15 µg/l-1. Total phosphate has been increasing these are associated with higher algal levels. 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.

5.1.2 *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 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 (GCCV) did 1208 hours of work, this excludes their attendance and contribution to the larger public volunteer

events like the beach cleans. They were successful in securing funding for additional tools and equipment, for the delivery of monthly 'Conservation Blitz' events, for two new gates to improve the core path access into Leapmoor forest from Shielhill nature trail, to purchase non slip treads for the nature trail board walk and trail markers for the five walking routes.

The quarterly beach cleans at Lunderston Bay were supported by 153 people contribution to 306 hours of work. All the debris is recorded and weighted with the data sent to the Marine Conservation Society for their annual report.

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

At Muirshiel preparation work for a new path was initiated to connect the Upper Countryside trail to the lower path network. Volunteers have planted an avenue of aspen clones to create a central feature of conservation interest. During the winter, burning of the sitka brushings commenced.

Over 700 juniper and 30 aspen were planted at the Cample Burn.

The data gathered at beach clean events goes to the Marine Conservation Society and onto Scottish and National Government – the findings will support the EU's new "Marine Strategy Framework Directive 2020"

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 appropriate to the tasks they undertake in their job role, this year this has include chainsaw refreshers, Willow weaving for nesting birds, first aid, oral history and site visits to Whitelees and the Beaver Project on the River Tay.

5.1.5 *Seek funding for environmental management projects.*

The Tag-n-Track Project was delivered throughout 2018/19 with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and LEADER Greater Renfrewshire and Inverclyde.

Park staff support the Volunteer groups apply for funding to delivery conservation activities in the Regional Park.

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, Scottish Power and local landowners and stakeholders.

6.0 Park Management

6.1 Financial Performance Summary

The Park budget had a £2,276 deficit for this financial year. Expenditure and income lines can be seen in the table below.

Expenditure

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Employee Costs	726,242	743,713	727,082
Property Costs	42,533	57,101	38,634
Supplies and Services	168,205	195,182	134,825
Contractors	19,720	11,807	25,369
Transport and Plant	40,092	43,387	34,946
Admin Costs	71,855	63,455	61,107
Payments to Oth Bodies	1,820	1,749	1,804
Total	1,070,467	1,116,394	1,023,767

Income

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Requisition Income	(692,800)	(692,800)	(576,500)
Sales Fees & Charges	(165,741)	(165,268)	(188,063)
Grants	(14,115)	(73,822)	(32,863)
Retail & Catering	(167,364)	(148,051)	(150,452)
Miscellaneous	(44,161)	(55,967)	(73,613)
Total	(1,084,181)	(1,135,908)	(1,021,491)
(Surplus)/ Deficit	(13,714)	(19,514)	2,276

6.2 Park Visitor Figures

Over six hundred and fifty thousand people visited the Regional Park in 2018/19. Visitor figures are reported as the number of visitors per site, as outlined below, this is based on car counter data and observational records.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Greenock Cut	80 759	53 797	70 664*
Lunderston Bay	217 068	218 221	228 288
Castle Semple	359 295	335 438	320 052
Muirshiel	37 007	37 426	38 376
Total	694 129	644 882	657 320

*educated estimate, full car counter data not available

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 Renfrewshire website www.paisley.is.

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

The Park was recognised for a number of cycling developments, environmental activities and for supporting training to gain a Bronze medal at the Special Olympic World Games.

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

6.4 *Staffing*

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

Team	2016	2017	2018
Management	1.2	1.2	0.7
Administration	*4.8	*4.4	4*
Ranger	7.0	6.83	6.45
Activities	6.5	5.02	4.32
Visitor Services	5.75	4	4.27
Estates	2	2	2
Cleaning	2.95	2.02	2.03
Total	30.20	25.47	23.76

*Includes the Countryside Officer and Technical Assistant.

During the reporting period there were an additional 1.2 FTE Project Officers on the 2 year grant funded Tag and Track project.

6.5 *Health and Safety*

The Park continues to work to align Health and Safety policy and practices with those of Renfrewshire Council, the servicing authority. There were no RIDDOR reportable incidents.

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.

Written complaints for the period are:

Regional Park	Online content – temp issue	1
	Communications from staff	2
Castle Semple	Footpath surfacing – temp issue	2
	Toilet Opening Hours	1
Lunderston	Toilet Opening Hours	2
	Tree Felling for Bus Stop	1
Greenock Cut	Refurbishment of Toilets/Building	1