Agenda Items

1. Welcome and Introductions
   Alan Smith (chairman) opened the meeting and welcomed everybody to the first Loch Ken Trust (LKT) Annual General Meeting and made some introductory remarks: it is the first time the trustees have met in person! It’s been a tough year to get started but we’ve made good progress. The first half of the meeting will be the legal formalities we need to cover, then the second half will be questions and discussions with members.

2. Ordinary Business
   a. Report from Alan Smith
      Achievements in first year:
      • improved some signage around loch, though there is still more to do on this
      • deployed Ken Scott in the Ranger Service and hope to keep the Ranger over winter
      • ran the boat registration scheme. Thanks to Ken Scott, Martin Smee and Matthew Smee for working on safety on the water and administering the boat registration scheme.
- enhanced the profile of loch Ken: we have been mentioned in the Scottish parliament twice and have also been asked for a quote in respect of a Member’s Bill re Outdoor Education.

There is much more work still to do and it needs to be remembered that LKT is new to this and have no direct employees.

There are three main bodies of work –
   i. LKT ten-year plan. This is a key document and will govern much of what is done in future years.
   ii. Climate Ready Ken project which is all about adaptation. It is funded by Scottish government working in collaboration with Adaptation Scotland. We are one of only two organisations in the country who have been selected to participate in this.
   iii. Rural Tourism Infrastructure Plan (RTIP) which is firstly covering a baseline of where we are with regards to infrastructure. It is funded via D&G council and they have appointed an experienced consultant to carry out this work (in a private capacity he is convener of Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park).

The work of LKT has been made possible by support from Blackcraig Wind Farm Community Fund with funding from Blackcraig Wind Farm (Scotland) Limited, administered by Foundation Scotland working in partnership with The Glenkens & District Trust, NatureScot and Galloway Glens Landscape Partnership.

We’ve also been working on a Defibrillator project, supported by Awards for All and a donation from Dalry Community Centre, and got involved in this so we could add our support to develop community facilities. We are careful to do things that benefit our communities but are aware that we don’t want to succumb to mission creep.

b. Financial Statement
Mungo Bryson read a financial statement from Jamie Ingall (Treasurer):
The Accounts have been circulated to members and Mungo covered the details. There were no questions from members about the Accounts.

c. Re-elect trustees
Alan Smith noted that we have been really pleased with the variety of trustees and we were sad to lose three of them. It would be good to replace them with members offering similar skills – more on that later.

Listed Trustees:
  i. Kate Adamson
  ii. Mungo Bryson
  iii. Anne Halliday
  iv. Lizanne Henderson
  v. Richard Hermon
  vi. James Ingall
  vii. John Nelson
  viii. Alan Smith

The listed trustees were re-elected without objection.

Since the AGM Notice was issued on 20/8/21 Elizabeth Kelly (23/8/21) and John Barker (1/9/21) resigned as trustees hence did not offer themselves for re-election.

3. Additional Business
   a. Trust vacancy
We will email all members to advise of vacancies and ask for applications that include details of the skills offered. All trustees will require to stand for re-election again at the next AGM.

b. Reports

**Report from Loch Ken Trust Project Officer (Barney Fry)**

Barney Fry updated the meeting: Last January we did a public consultation event – expecting it to be the first of many! It didn’t turn out that way. I’m excited to be back in the hall.

My job had 5 main issues:

i. formally setting up the trust. We’re here – that’s great.

ii. getting a new website and better information out to the community (locals and visitors). We’ve made the first tentative steps but have loads more to do. Before we go further, we’re checking whether what we’re doing is useful and what info we should be getting to people.

iii. Doing marketing & promotion campaign for LK. Been working with VisitScotland to work out what a campaign might look like. There might be physical activities, mental and spiritual wellbeing and sustainability. That has been parked whilst we’ve been closed for Covid. Looking at how Loch Ken can better present itself to the world. Looking to welcome visitors who can respect and enjoy what we have here.

iv. Festivals and events: have had to postpone and cancel more than we’ve held. We had the Bike & Food festival in Castle Douglas recently and, with the Galloway Activity Centre, the On The Water event where the audience was afloat on the water.

v. Loch Ken Plan: our official purpose is to “...promote the natural, cultural and recreational assets of the Loch Ken area for the benefit of the public and to support sustainable local communities.” There is a public consultation on the plan – the question is ‘how do we make life round Loch Ken better for everyone? There should be space for everyone to enjoy themselves without impacting others. The consultation is open till next week. Interested? Please read the leaflet and go online to feed back.

**Report from Boat Registration Officer (Martin Smee)**

I have been Tasked by the trust over the past 3 years to administer the boat registration scheme and to ranger the water to try to ensure boats, canoes, paddle boards & swimmers act Responsibly & Safely.

On the Positive side
The loch seems a lot busier both with boats & unpowered craft than previous years.
The boat registrations are up over 50% on last year. At the moment we are at 314 registrations with still a few more to come. With Covid last year we were down at 203 registrations from 279 registrations pre-Covid in 2019. In summary, we are 35 up from 2019 with 2-3 winter months still to go.
On the Negative Side
We have had a serious rise this summer with call outs & complaints. A busy week would range between 50 & 100 issues. Although a minimal number of these were speed related from boats (we give boat owners a 10-15 min chat on the rules when they register, which helps massively with any future misdemeanors once they launch) or the odd crayfish trapping issue, predominately the vast majority of these were connected to paddle boarders & canoeists who had accessed the loch with no idea the water was zoned & managed. We also had our fair share of problems with folk keen to cool off in the hot summer trying to swim across the loch.

Better signage at access points would alleviate most of the problems and make it safer for everyone using the Loch.

c. Report from Loch Ken Ranger (Ken Scott)

I’ve been going round loch to meet as many landowners and businesses as possible since I’ve been in position from late April. Officially I work 20 hours per week. In total, I’ve logged 400 duty hours and 2,000 miles on patrol round loch. There have been 88 incidents (not including general litter-picking but I do record the more serious incidents of fly-tipping, wild camper messes, etc.)

The majority of incidents are fly-tipping, fishing on private land/killing fish, moving hazard buoys, campfires, crimes, disorder/abuse (6), toileting waste (6), parking complaints (5)

- Many enquiries – 62 – mostly about fishing, kayaking, canoeing, SUP,
- I’ve provided 20 weekly updates to trustees.
- Phone calls: I haven’t tallied all calls but since 17 August there have been more than 100 calls.
- Emails – 132 in and 76 out for August which has been a typical month.

It has been exciting and very challenging at times. I’ve introduced myself to and done formal training with other rangers, the police, and have completed other online training courses. I’ve joined the Countryside Rangers Association.

It’s the public areas that have become very popular that have caused problems. Water levels have been low from the winter and the dry summer has opened up areas for people to camp on the lochside. Plus, the international travel restrictions mean numbers have been high. eE have pretty much coped but not everyone is satisfied. In my opinion we are unlikely to see these high numbers again.

Other issues include: fishing rights, camping/accommodation around the Loch – I’m hoping to put up a map on our website to cut down issues.
I have regularly liaised with the Fire Service, SEPA, D&G Police, the Roads Department, Drax, Forestry Land Scotland, GGLP etc to work alongside these groups/organisations.

We have had feedback about the Loch being tidier in many places. My regular patrols are appreciated. A lot of stuff has been put in place in the four months to date which remain ready if further funds can be found for next year. Generally, it has been very low-level policing and litter picking and not as much on education and wildlife conservation as I would hope to do in future.

d. Current projects & plans for the future

The Trustees are planning to meet at the end of October to hold a development day to get cohesive thoughts about our future plans.

Some current things happening:

BBC have been in touch to do work re COP26. They’re planning a pre-COP26 programme on climate change and its impact on communities and are looking for people to talk who’ve been affected by floods (for interviewing next week).

RTIP – we will see what the report comes up with (the report is funded by Scottish Govt/VisitScotland). Stage 1 is a baseline study – what might be a good idea and how could it be funded. We are confident if things are flagged up we should be able to find a way to fund them.

Questions and observations from members

Roland Chaplain: There are a number of people around the immediate shore who do not realise LKT’s sphere of influence extends to other lochs and areas. Would LKT welcome applications from trustees from these areas? At Woodhall Loch ten local people have been asked to pay for access to the loch for swimming/launching non-powered craft. This was raised at Balmaghie Community Council. Those involved want to know the legal position when a factor/landowner demands payment. Should it be discussed and considered?

Ken Scott: I’ve been in touch with Balmaghie Community Council– the landowner is not allowed to do this. They are now looking to gather statements and get the police involved – it seems to be a criminal matter.

Alan Smith: We welcome applications for Ordinary Membership from anyone who resides in the environs of loch Ken and all Ordinary Members can apply to be a Trustee.

Roland Chaplain: A swimmer in Woodhall Loch was almost entangled in fishing line left across the loch with baited hooks and left unattended.

Ken Scott: I’m aware of another similar situation on Loch Stroan and have passed information to Forestry & Land Scotland (FLS) who have responsibility for that loch.
Finlay Porter: Wildlife should have chance of a ‘close season’ when people are not launching kayaks etc during nesting seasons.

Alan: We are aware of these issues and will raise them with RSPB. LKT is not about turning us into the Lake District. We include environmental issues when considering our work.

Barney: the health of our ecosystem is crucial to what we do and is core to our purpose. We are proposing that we get an honest appraisal of what’s there now and what we have to measure, manage and track to measure the health of our ecosystem. For example, we could need to track half a dozen key species to monitor the overall health of the ecosystem.

Richard Hermon: RTIP – consultant is James Stuart – if anyone feels something they have to say, I urge people to engage with James e.g. if you feel strongly about environmental issues, where you launch your kayak, fishing lines in the Loch etc it really important to get it logged with RTIP. The more he gets, the more balanced the approach in the report will be. I’m not sure of the process but encourage people to engage via Alan Smith.

Re trustees: trustees should be those who are contributing to LKT. Are we limited to 12 if there are eg 15 who can contribute with experience, acumen etc that would be helpful? We’ve had 3 trustees who’ve left this year and all were great contributors.

Alan: RTIP: James Stuart– we will email all members updating re RTIP and including details for them to feed into James. He has a list of people to speak to already but we would welcome others getting involved. Trustees: Our constitution limits us to 12 but this can be increased if two thirds of members agree at a members meeting. If LKT Board becomes much bigger – remember we are a two tier SCIO – many more than 12 could potentially make it more difficult to get things done.

Richard Hermon: we are looking for more trustees and should see who applies and then decide how many – once we know who can contribute.

Alan Smith: we will email all members and will consider the applicants with the relevant skills. We’d be delighted to receive lots of applications.

Caroline Yates: Do the trustees have power to co-opt?

Alan Smith: Yes, but within the limit of 12 trustees (after checking the Constitution). One of the 12 trustees is appointed by the owners of Galloway Hydro Scheme (currently Drax).

Barney Fryer: Checking the LKT constitution, LKT can appoint non trustees to sub-committees.

Finlay Porter made a point about the Galloway Hydro owners being “off-shore interests”.

Graeme Dickie: Drax are a British company. There has been a significant change of direction in looking after communities compared to the previous owners. Drax have made good progress on, for example, community projects, power station refurbishments, contributions to GGLP and the multi-million pound refurbishment of Glenlochar barrage etc. Drax are hoping to contribute to LKT Ranger costs.
John Nelson: re dirty camping – In open conversation Alan has commented about the wide ranging nature of ‘Scottish access rights’. What he has said is true, to an extent, but we must provide e.g. self-cleaning toilets in Crossmichael, Parton, New Galloway, Mossdale etc. before we promote the area further as it is becoming a serious issue.

Mungo Bryson: we are promoting responsible use. If you provide facilities and people go outwith that – and access fields all over place – what happens to businesses?

Alan Smith: Promote is ‘difficult’ - we don’t want a NC500!

John Nelson: You are encouraging more people to visit so we need more facilities. There is funding available and so we should look to access that.

Alan Smith: the RTIP might well recommend this and it will report in December. The answer isn’t necessarily to bring in thousands of people who spend loads. It could be people visiting and enjoying the environment.

Mungo Bryson: there are business opportunities and also opportunities to access to the water that aren’t currently being used. It would be good for business development if people came to the area to run businesses and their families went to the local schools etc.

Alan Smith: a lot of funding is available only to a charity/SCIO etc so private businesses can’t get funded. Stage 2,3 or 4 of the RTIP could enable businesses to get more support. We’re at the start of the journey and would look to leverage further funding later in the RTIP process.

Mungo Bryson: we should be encouraging young families to move here to run businesses. It needs time, effort and enthusiasm to make it happen.

A point was made from the floor about taking a wider consideration of access to our area to include non-business contexts.

Barney Fry: we need right infrastructure to support the people who are here. Now is the time to feed into the plan.

Alan Smith: It forms part of the greater National Park discussion and with the new Scottish Government coalition with the Green Party National Park designation might be more likely to happen.

Alan Smith: Asked Lizanne Henderson to explain some of the work she is involved with at the University of Glasgow, Dumfries campus.

Lizanne Henderson – we are working to try to set up a responsible tourism qualification to start September 2022. It could be relevant to this area. For example, some placement students could work on issues in this area – with LKT and local businesses.

Alan Smith: LKT is looking to do something special, is not merely replicating what has been done elsewhere.
Richard Hermon: It looks like another National Park award might be made soon. What’s LKT’s position and will we engage on this?

Alan Smith: We’ve purposefully not taken a view on windfarm development, national parks, pylon schemes etc. The trustee development session would be the place where we need to discuss and decide whether to take a position.

Lois Aitkenhead: I agree with John Nelson re infrastructure – I can’t see any conflict between the point John made and the matter of businesses. I’m glad the trustees will consider it. Provision should be made for people who don’t want to be on a campsite but do want to camp.

Alan Smith: Under the Land Reform Act there certain things you can do but there are unintended consequences. Bye-laws are not always the answer (they haven’t been in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park). It would be a minimum of three years before they could happen and that would only be IF everyone agreed, which is unlikely. There is no political will for the ones we think we need round the Loch.

Helen Keron: Thanks for LKT members and trustees for giving up their time for all this work. We have achieved important stuff. We all appreciate the trustees’ efforts and I hope you remember that you must put personal interests aside for LKT duties. Thank you very much for the work - it is needed. All our communities will be better for it. I’m looking forward to being part of it and helping where I can.

John Nelson: GGLP are doing a Viking invasion next week – the Vikings are bringing their own toilets (!) It’s September 16-19 Sep with two days of school visits and Saturday and Sunday for adults.

Raewyn Thomson: access to the Loch is for all and not just access for business facilities, eg Boat o’Rhone and Parton Mill where fishers access land. There is mess left. If looking to encourage visitors to access the Loch and not just to access business, we need to seriously consider toileting facilities. I’ve spoken to Pauline Drysdale and she has approached Drax for support. The trustees should take it on board.

Alan Smith: There are many possible solutions to this issue.

Graeme Dickie: There are similar issues at Loch Doon where their ranger is spending a lot of time litter-picking foul waste.

Roland Chaplain: re trustees I’d like to mention Richard Kirsch who has carpentry and woodland skills and knows people who realise they can work remotely in areas like ours. This forms a major part of the potential for future housing. Can I say LKT welcomes people who are looking to re-populate area/use local housing?

Alan Smith: I suggest the first thing would be for him to join as member then he’ll be eligible to apply to become a Trustee if he is interested.
Debbie Murdoch: We’ve not seen half as much wild camping since Ken has been patrolling. We actually have otters now on our land.

Barney Fry: When I describe LKT to people, it’s putting our communities at the heart of decisions that affect them. It is up to everyone to feed into it. For sustainable local communities, we need people, planet and prosperity (the UN sustainable development goals). We’re trying to keep plans grounded to local people. Now we’ve been asked to train town planners across UK re adaptability for climate change. Please get involved.

4. AOCB
No other business was raised. Alan Smith thanked everyone for their time and contributions and closed the meeting.