

Loch of Clunie Preservation Group public meeting
Wednesday 16th April 2025 at Clunie Hall 7pm till 9pm
Meeting Summary

Attendees

Representatives from fire and rescue: Frankie Shepherd and Paul Smith (Officer in charge of Blairgowrie Fire Station).

Parking and civil contingencies wardens: Andy Scott and Michal Junka

Perth and Kinross council: Hunter Hope and Frank Campbell

About 30 people which included members of the Loch of Clunie Preservation Group, residents in the local community and people who visit Loch of Clunie

Apologies

Representative from Police Scotland PC Ryan Tarbet (Community Officer for Rattray and the Glens/Alyth & Meigle) Had tried to come but ended up dealing with something else but will answer questions put to him through Janice Willsher.

Presentation

By Jim and Janice Willsher with photographs from Nikki Murphy, James Cope, Keith Geddes, Janice and Jim Willsher

Spoke of Loch of Clunie's status as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Special Area of conservation and that it has scheduled monuments with great historic value.

Gave an outline of problems which have always been but became worse in 2020 after COVID lockdown. Key events timeline showing how we became Loch of Clunie Preservation group and what has been done so far.

Talked about the schools competition for a sign and the design and erection of educational signage.

Explained about the Visitor Management programme and the agencies they worked with, Forest and Land Scotland, Police and parking enforcement, Loch Rannoch Conservation Society, Community Wardens, Community fire services and Forestry Highland Perthshire Ranger.

Presented the work the ranger team did in regeneration of the Clunie Castle scheduled monument area. They raked beaches, protected nesting bird life, picked litter and recycled tents, blow up beds, boats, pillows, towels and sleeping bags.

Proposed a “vision of the future” with a choice of the mess with tents and fires compared with a photograph of the regenerated areas by the loch at the castle.

Perth and Kinross Council Representatives

We asked the Perth and Kinross Council representatives to explain the Elected Briefing Note by Elaine Ritchie on 8th April 2025 with regard to “consolidate and review our community support and enforcement roles within Housing & Communities Service by bringing together our Parking Services and Community Safety Team into one team reporting directly to one Team Leader, as the new Community Support and Enforcement Service.”

The council also share the importance of the communities, the environment and historic monuments as we do. The council had to change due to budgets and resources.

- They will create a combined footprint for parking enforcement, emergency and visitor management
- It is about partnership working with the fire service, police and patrols which we want to be on hand
- There were 7 or 8 rangers but the new team will be a pool of ~90 people
- All previous rangers were on casual contracts without regular work
- There will be portaloos this year.
- The behavioural sign the group have designed will be made and erected
- There is also an increasing number of community resilience groups in Perth and Kinross. People look out for each other for example in a storm or a power cut. Each group has different objectives and require a willingness and agreement.
- There are also as part of this community resilience grants.
- If you have issues or more questions, communicate with Janice Willsher, the secretary of the Loch of Clunie Preservation Group and she will put it through to me (Frank Campbell)

Experiences and views of residents by the loch

- Frightened to be in their own garden
- People trespassing on the property
- Large groups of drunk people, at times intimidating
- Theft of wood from a shed
- Experience of being assaulted
- People defecating in their garden sometimes in front of them
- Leaving piles of rubbish. In 5 weeks picked up 354 bags of rubbish

- When rangers arrived, things improved greatly but recently it has started to go back to the way it was without them.
- The type of people who misbehave also don't read signs and the only way to deter them is some kind of ban
- People have engaged with them but have felt scared
- Some people have been verbally abusive
- Friday and Saturday nights are especially bad
- There are so many lovely people but a huge number of people won't educate
- We all want to feel safe and pop down with the dog without worrying that they will eat something or get injured with tackle.
- People love seeing the rangers and how much people care about this place and it is horrible there are a few people who consistently come frightening people
- What can the police enforce and are there police who can help with applying for a byelaw?
- People wonder if Police Scotland can tell us what's realistic in dealing with anti-social behaviour?

Discussion about having byelaws

- Alcohol byelaw
 - See it work well in New Zealand in places
 - Merit in responsible drinking
- Camping byelaw
 - People are fed up with the level of camping and the repercussions
 - People feel intimidated
 - Camping byelaws have been used in National Parks why can't we?
This can be designated areas you pay for.
 - Scottish Land & Estates have been helpful and are trying to facilitate
 - A lot of the council and their partners' time is taken up due to irresponsible camping
- Fire byelaw
 - Lots of campfires on the ground damage flora and fauna
 - Hazard if not put out properly
 - Nails and screws on the beaches
 - Cutting of live trees and gathering of branches
 - Fear of wildfire, especially when high risk

Mentioned response by NatureScot when the secretary sent an email asking why campfires and camping is allowed with the Site of Special Scientific Interest and Special Area of Conservation status:

Clunie Loch is a Site of Special Scientific Interest already, so any damage to the natural features could potentially be an offence under the Nature Conservation Act, and Wildlife and Countryside Act, so can be reported to the police, as of course can other wildlife crimes, like disturbance to ospreys. <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/1080>

This may have some legal backing but we require the police to advise and be involved in policing any byelaws, if these are possible with the Loch's special status.

Response from council representatives

Partnership with police planned to have a team out till 10pm at night.

The rest of the management team can educate and provide support.

If, as a group, you want to explore exclusion orders and a no camping order it is the balance between rights and responsibilities.

Please report any anti-social behaviour and criminality as this provides statistics which advise the required police presence

If something goes wrong you want to be able to phone somebody and know that somebody is coming to help

We will be out there to support you as it is an equal partnership

CCTV discussion

- Would CCTV be an option?
- One problem is having no evidence to be able to say who has committed a crime
- Nothing can be observed all the time and usually someone says it was somebody else
- This requires a lot of investment and so not likely to be available through the council
- There is a mobile unit but this is more suited to pre-planned events.

Motorised boats

- Any motorised boat with a propeller, which includes electric boats is not allowed due to the rare plant life in the loch

Fishing

- It is a civil offence to fish without permission
- About 3 to 5 people are entitled to fish on the loch

- Only allowed 3 boats maximum owned by heritable rights
- We tried to start a fishing club with a volunteer prepared to manage it but it didn't get off the ground and so is something to potentially try again.

Paul Smith with fire and rescue service

- We work in partnership with the visitor management teams
- We have spoken to people camping with fires and 90% people listen
- We can come and put a fire or BBQ out but this doesn't stop them relighting it
- We also have to think about our own safety or if someone is cutting down trees, for example, we request Police Scotland to attend.
- We cover a vast area and so can't come and put out a campfire but if there is a risk of wildfire that is different.
- Appliances can be held up and Perth or Pitlochry come at times like that

Question:

It was high wildfire risk with campfires all along the loch side with one fire in woodland on private land. Phoned traffic to advise of traffic problems and then asked about the fires. Advised to phone 101 which was delegated to a resolution team. 5 hours later they advised to phone the fire service on 999 if a fire is not properly controlled. What do we do?

When to call the fire brigade answer:

- If you have a concern about the individuals and their ability to manage the fire.
- If they are drunk
- The fire is close to tents
- Dry ground and vegetation
- What you described in the question is a 999 call as we would have put that out. No need to have a fire in woodland when a high wildfire risk.

Any further questions for the fire and rescue just get in touch and we will be out to work with the team. If any concern and fire out of control don't be afraid to call as an emergency.

Closing comments by people:

- It is helpful to see all the services seem to have a clear plan what happens this year

- Everyone works together
- Loch of Clunie Preservation Group should look at what we can do over the next 3 years
- One way may be to make Loch of Clunie a Nature Reserve
- Look at the possibilities of byelaws and the law regarding the SSSI and SAC status

Thank you to those representing the council, fire and rescue, parking and contingencies for attending the meeting in the evening and a big thank you to the rangers who have worked hard and been a part of the community. Thank you to all the other people who have come along this evening