

Loch of Clunie meeting

16th April 2025



Working together to protect our natural environment,
ancient monuments and local community.

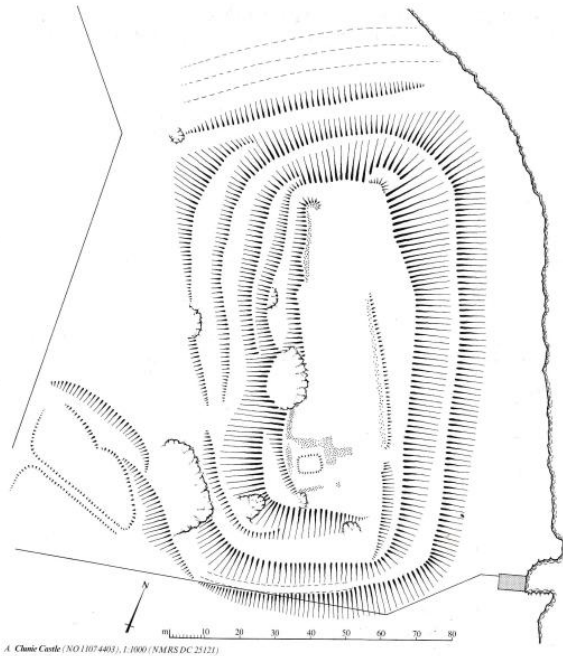
Registered Charity SC052540

Loch of Clunie



A Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
to be protected and managed for its habitat and species.

Scheduled Historic Monuments



Clunie Castle with Motte

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of
Scotland *South East Perth an Archaeological Landscape* HMSO 1994
Page 105



Townhouse (Castle) on the Island/Crannog
Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical
Monuments of Scotland *South East Perth an Archaeological
Landscape* HMSO 1994
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Waste!

Historic problem with litter, human waste, fires and overcrowding, which became severe in COVID times



Human faeces and urine
with tissues and wipes all
around the loch



Camping, alcohol, fire, food,
littering and noise

Antisocial and Inconsiderate Behaviour

Traffic blocking the roadway so emergency services or farm vehicles cannot get through



General lack of respect for the environment and crimes

Key Events Timeline

- May 2020: **Stabbing** of game keeper
- June 2020: Landowners' **Letter** sent to **MSP John Swinney** regarding crime and antisocial behaviour
- June 2020: **First public meeting** with 25 people attending; the majority voted for a ban on camping.
- August 2020: **First Clunie Loch Steering Group** meeting
- April 2021: **Portaloos** in place
- May 2021: **Clearway** in place (trial)
- June 2021: **Children's sign competition** (*next slides*)
- 2022: **Clearway** made permanent
- Summer 2022: **Bin trial** showed 6 weeks without bins 33 bags; 6 weeks with bins 300 bags.
- October 2022: **Loch of Clunie Preservation Group** registered as a charity
- January 2023: **Community Investment Fund** grant received **for educational sign**
- April 2023: National stakeholder meeting with **Scottish Cabinet Ministers** to discuss **shortcomings of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code**.
- April 2024: **Educational signage** erected (*next slides*)

Schools Competition



Competition organised by Carla Sutherland

Winning sign designed by Cadence and Kennedy Baxter, Coupar Angus PS

Educational Signage



Loch of Clunie

Loch Cluainidh, meaning 'meadow place' in Gaelic.

It is one of a chain of five kettle lochs in the Lunan Valley. These were formed 10,000 years ago when glacial ice retreated leaving large islands of ice embedded in the surrounding land. The ice melted, leaving behind hollows in which the lochs formed.

Loch of Clunie is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) due to the diversity of plant and wildlife habitats found here.

Steeped in history

The loch is home to several nationally important scheduled monuments.

1 Prehistoric Crannog

Towards the north side of the loch are a pile of stones, occasionally visible when the water level is low, which is the remains of a crannog. This is a man-made island which may have been constructed from a mixture of timber posts, driven into the loch bed, and piles of stones. Crannogs have been found across Scotland, with archaeological evidence going back to Neolithic times, and the oldest are known to be around 5,000 years old. These were built and used for thousands of years, possibly as dwelling places as well as defensive forts.

2 Pictish stronghold and Royal palace

Between Clunie Church and the loch there is a natural mound with trees and plants. This is the site where there used to be a castle and a moat. The moat would be an earth mound with ditches and banking around it, and possibly a wooden castle on top of it. Evidence suggests there may have been a fort there around 849 AD.

Evidence has been found showing Picts in the area from 700 AD to 1000 AD. In 843 AD Kenneth I, also called Kenneth MacAlpin, the King of Scots, became King of the Picts and the Scots of Dalriada which meant he also became the King of Alba. The Chronicle of the Kings of Alba, also called the Old Scottish Chronicle, contains the first known written record of Clunie in 903 AD. He is said to have built a palace at Clunie, either on the castle hill or on a crannog.

Above the loch is the Royal Forest of Clunie where kings went hunting by horseback, handing animals into a holding pen called Buzant Dykes. A royal castle or hunting lodge was likely to have been built in 1200 AD to 1300 AD as Edward I occupied it in 1296 AD. Robert the Bruce went hunting there in 1320 AD. At this time there would have been beavers, wolves and wild boar. There is evidence of a later stone-built castle on the hill as well as a chapel.

3 Medieval Bishop's Tower House

The third scheduled monument is visible as a ruined townhouse on the loch island, surrounded by trees. This is a partially built on another crannog site. A tower house was built in the 1500s by the Bishops of Dunblair and consisted of 3 stories with a spiral staircase. It had a large kitchen fireplace and a granary oven. There was also a chapel to St. Catherine.

The old tower was remodelled into a country house in the 16th and 18th centuries. It is reputed by locals that each type of tree in Scotland was represented on the island. Locals would row out to the island for Sunday school parties. Loch of Clunie Caring Club was founded in 1825, and on 8th December 1921 they held a dinner in the 'Clunie Castle' with food from the Royal House, Balmorosa.

"A most enjoyable evening was spent with song, story and sentiment, the meeting breaking up at the same time, when all got safely to land." John MacCallister

A unique habitat

Loch of Clunie has what is called open water transition for which is an area that is constantly wet and - if left - will eventually become wet woodland. This can be maintained by beavers, which were extinct from Scotland for over 400 years. Beavers eat water plants such as water lilies, bog laurel and other grasses. The wet loch creates places for a variety of fish, benthos, dragonflies and damselflies. Amphibians such as frogs need it for breeding and they will hibernate in the mud at the bottom of ponds. Young fish (fry) have a safe haven here, and they will eat the insects and grow into larger fish on which others will feed.

Beavers create a nesting place for birds such as Reed Buntings, whose young eat many of the insects. Bats such as the Daubenton's fly low over the loch to catch insects. This is local wildlife, the connection between the landscape, plants, insects and wildlife, all of which rely on the habitat.

As well as the wet loch, the loch itself is mesotrophic, meaning it contains a moderate level of nutrients. There are very few mesotrophic lochs in the UK. The levels of nutrients and phosphates in the loch provide ideal conditions for a very rare plant, slender reed (Najas flexilis), to grow in the loch, in water between 1 and 5 metres deep. Clams built upstream by beavers can filter and help prevent phosphate or other pollutants from the land flowing into the loch.

A fragile place

On 4th September 1966 a farmer looking down from the Braes (hill) of Forneth saw the 'lochs' on fire. Two visitors to the abandoned house had lit a campfire fire. Due to its location the fire service could not attend, and the building was destroyed. The ruins remain visible on the island to this day. A great loss.

Today the beautiful Loch of Clunie still attracts visitors to its wooded shores. Please help to keep this special place for everyone by following the Scottish Outdoor Access Code - the right of responsible access.

- Avoid overcrowding by moving on to another location.
- Use proper toilet facilities, however, if unavailable, carry a towel to bury human waste and urinate well away from open water, rivers and burns.
- Use a stove - please don't light fires. Never cut down or damage trees.
- Leave no trace - take all your litter home.
- Switch off power only please - power craft pollute and disturb.
- If in doubt, ask the landowners for advice.
- Access rights are not an excuse for anti-social or illegal behaviour.

Scan the QR code below or visit the website www.lochofclunie.org.uk to learn more about this special place.



Designed, researched and written by Janice Willsher
Designed and illustrated with artwork by Chris Mitchell

Educational Signage Installation



Unpaid work team installed the sign

Visitor Management Programme

In 2021 Community Greenspace and Visitor Management started the Perth and Kinross Visitor Rangers Service, initially funded for two years and then permanent seasonal work.



Many agencies were involved in the Perthshire programme, not just the rangers, including:

- Forest and Land Scotland
- Loch Rannoch Conservation Society
- Community Fire Services
- Police and Parking Enforcement
- Community Wardens
- Forestry Highland Perthshire Ranger

Improved Signage at Clunie Castle



Clunie Castle area Before and After



Regeneration of Flora and Fauna



Beaches Raked to remove Nails, Glass, Cinders



Looking Smart!



Protecting Nature

Ospreys' nesting tree takes a lot of protecting as people want to camp there and they lit fires. The beavers also started gnawing at it. Fencing was put up to stop the beavers - and signs for people.



Fire at Ospreys' nesting tree



Signage



Beaver Fencing

Discarded Fishing Tackle



Discarded BBQs and Fires

Rangers spoke with people about ground fire risks. If people still intent on lighting fires then they were asked to bring logs and use off-ground firepits.

People wouldn't always put the fire out when they departed.



Nothing Wasted

Towels, tents, sleeping bags, blow up beds and boats collected and recycled



The Future?



or



Briefing from PKC

Practical parts of the briefing by Elaine Ritchie we want to understand more about on two slides

This review looks 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 a new Community Support and Enforcement Service.

Briefing from PKC (continued)

The Visitor Management Service is within the scope of this review, and we can reassure you that under the proposed reorganisation its current activities will continue.

The changes mean we would no longer have to rely on a few seasonal staff but would instead have a team of fully trained Community Support & Enforcement Officers. These officers will be the front-line staff, working closely with our communities and partners. An important part of their duties will be to continue rural patrols and engage with communities, visitors and campers by providing advice and assistance.

We will have the intelligence to target hot spot areas and sufficient resources to address any issues, working in partnership with Police Scotland and the SFRS.

We are also looking at options to continue the provision of portable toilets at hotspots.

Elected Members should be assured that under the future plans our staff will continue to work with visitors and communities to manage the impact of visitors and provide advice and support to people who visit our area.

We are also contacting community groups to reassure them that this important service will continue.

NatureScot Response

Response from NatureScot when asked why campfires and tents were not banned, as well as the protection of wildlife.

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>

Discussion Points

Fire Safety

Dial 999 or 101?

Applying for Byelaws (alcohol, camping)

Portaloos – or something more permanent?

Litter

Additional Signage

Crime – logging, preventing

Roadways and Clearways

Funding – How, and for what?

How can Landowners help?

How can public organisations help?

How can we help?

How can you help?

Actions: Who, What, Why, Where and When?

Future Signage?

hello

Welcome to Loch of Clunie. To help us look after the countryside and protect this special place, please:

- take your litter home
- don't discard fishing tackle
- no ground fires or BBQs
- don't cut branches or damage trees
- keep noise to a minimum
- park sensibly (avoid £100 parking fines)
- be aware motorised boats are not permitted

This would be metal, A3, and in four places –

- The bridge
- The Craigie Junction layby
- The portaloo layby
- The Church car park





Thank You

