

Environmental Volunteer Network Newsletter

Spring 2016

The Volunteer Network

There are environmental volunteers across South Lanarkshire that do all different kinds of work. There are Friends groups that look after their local woodlands; horticulture groups with polytunnels and raised beds; Health Walk groups that lead weekly walks as well as regular practical conservation groups such as the Cadzow Crew (who are based at the polytunnels at Chatelherault) and the South Haugh conservation group.

South Lanarkshire Council's Countryside and Greenspace team support volunteer groups in a number of ways, one of which is by providing training courses and events to help you to learn new things and meet new people. This year we have been training volunteers how to survey for badgers, bats and ponds; how to monitor mountain bike trails; and how to manage and work with coppice and green wood. Our annual volunteer networking event this year was a trip to Whitelee Windfarm to find out about the site – thankfully the bus tour took us away from the torrential rain for a short time!

If you would like any more information about joining the volunteer network, or would like to suggest training courses just get in touch with us, using the contact details on the back page of this newsletter.

This issue we have articles that show you places to explore: Whitelee Windfarm and Cuningar Loop. Volunteer groups at Langlands Moss, East Kilbride and the WAT IF? Project have written to share what they have been doing and their plans for the future. We also have updates from the Clyde and Avon Valleys Landscape Partnership, Central Scotland Green Network Trust and various other projects and sites.

If you would like to write an article for the next newsletter just get in touch; this could be telling others about your volunteer group, site or project, or advertising events and activities you will be running.



Volunteer Networking event at
Whitelee Windfarm

Pathways, play, photography... and salmon!

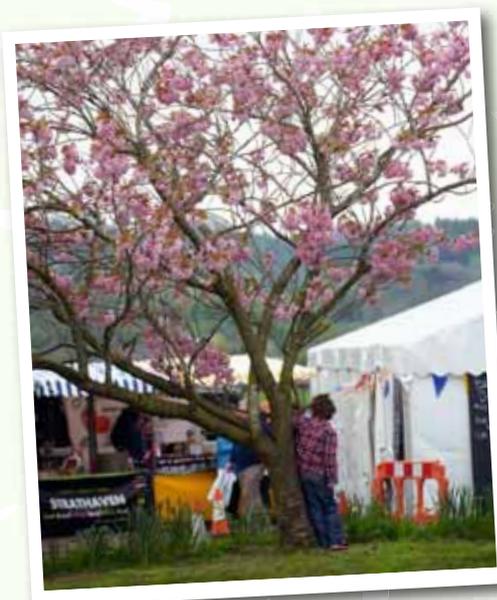
Leaping salmon



It's heating up to be an exciting year in the Clyde and Avon valleys and we're not just talking about the weather. There's a free Festival of Landscape and Heritage in May, archaeological projects are lifting the lid on hidden treasures, the Avon River will be opened up again to Atlantic salmon, access to the Clyde Walkway is being improved, more #WildTimeLAN natural play projects are in the works, and there's a chance to win a framed print of your own by entering the Clyde and Avon valleys photo competition.

Find out more about the ancient wooded gorge landscapes just bursting with intriguing culture and history, with the free Festival of Landscape and Heritage, Saturday 7 – Sunday 15 May. Walks, talks and events including Blossom Day, Robert Owen Commemoration and Bicentenary Celebrations, and Wallace Weekend, are available to view at www.clydeandavonvalley.org

Starting with Hoolet Row (Chatelherault), St Ninian's Kirkyard in Stonehouse and Broomhill House in Morgan Glen, volunteers have been digging up archaeological mysteries of the local area with CAVLP Heritage. Volunteers have been helping to build a picture of what working life was like in the past by researching and recording, including learning new 3D digital modelling skills. Free workshops relating to the textile and brick industries, mapping heritage and food production are available to groups of any age.



Blossom day last year at Overtoun Farm, Clyde Valley

To find out more about archaeological volunteering, or to sign up for a free workshop, contact Paul and Karen at cavlp.heritage@gmail.com / 01555 661 555.

The industrial heritage of the area has left lasting marks on today's landscape – including the construction of 18th and 19th century weirs on rivers that have blocked the traditional salmon run. Thanks to the construction of fish passages at Ferniegair and Millheugh weirs on the River Avon this coming summer, 200km of spawning ground will be opened up to the majestic Atlantic salmon.

But it's not just fish that projects are encouraging into the valleys. 4 Community Links routes linking communities in the valleys with the Clyde Walkway are being improved and will be re-opened this summer too, including routes around Larkhall, Rosebank, Ashgill, Dalsersf, Law, Mauldslicie, Crossford, Nemhplar and Braidwood.

And finally, if you're looking for an opportunity to release your inner wild child, book onto #WildTimeLAN wild play sessions with Wild About Lanark and Little Pips throughout the year.

However you get out and about in the beautiful valleys, be sure to enter any pictures you take into the Clyde and Avon valleys photo competition for your chance to win a framed print of your winning image. Spring and summer entries close at midnight on the 31 May and 31 August respectively.

For more information on any of the above or to find out about volunteering and events, contact us on info@clydeandavonvalley.com / 01555 663 430.

Facebook: Clyde and Avon Valley Landscape Partnership
Twitter: @ClydeAvonValley
Instagram: clydeavonvalley

School Orchards in the Clyde and Avon Valleys

During 2015, primary schools in the Clyde and Avon Valley Landscape Partnership area have been busy learning about orchards and the environment.

The Central Scotland Green Network Trust (CSGNT) 'Plant A Mini Orchard' programme has been celebrating the traditional fruit growing area of the Clyde and Avon Valley, by helping schools to create and maintain mini orchards within their school grounds. So far, twenty-one schools have taken part, with eight schools in Carluke hoping to create a joint orchard in the coming months.

The official definition of an orchard is five fruit trees and the participating schools have all been provided with five apple trees, along with all the educational resources required to plan, plant and look after the orchard.

The pack includes advice on all aspects of orchard management and maintenance, as well as a guide for teachers to demonstrate how orchards can be used in the classroom as part of the curriculum.

Emilie Wadsworth, Heritage and Biodiversity Officer at CSGNT, said: "Orchards are a wonderful, but sadly diminishing resource,



Newfield Primary planting their orchard

with many of the small orchards in our traditional growing areas of the Forth Valley and Clyde Valley being replaced by commercial orchards elsewhere.

"Our campaign celebrates the heritage of orchards in the area and offers an excellent range of training and resources to help schools engage pupils in learning about orchards."

The project is a partnership between CSGNT, Clyde and Avon Valley Landscape Partnership, Clyde Valley Orchard Group, Larkhall Community Growers and the Castlebank Centre in Lanark. It is funded by CSGNT, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund through the Clyde and Avon Valley Landscape Initiative.

For further information about the Plant a Mini Orchard project, please visit www.csgnt.org.uk/activities/plant-a-mini-orchard



Orchard apple blossom



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www.clydeandavonvalley.com / email: info@clydeandavonvalley.com

Where the wind blows – Rangering at the UK's largest on-shore windfarm

Putting aside the whole debate about windfarms being good or bad, there is no doubting the fabulous access opportunities they can provide – something a great number of people in central Scotland have cottoned onto at Whitelee windfarm, along with the numerous international visitors to the site that are amazed by it.

Whitelee windfarm, located on the Eaglesham moors which are infamous for their wild and windy weather (ideal for a windfarm), is the UK's largest onshore windfarm covering an area of just over 30 square miles and containing 215 turbines. When the wind blows, and it really does at Whitelee, this one site can generate 539 megawatts of electricity, enough it's claimed to power 300,000 homes and save between 570,000 and 1.3 million tonnes of CO2 per year.

What's maybe not as well known about the site however is the access opportunities it provides, that Rennie and Kate of the Whitelee Countryside Ranger Service work to promote. The site contains over 100 miles of windfarm and forest tracks as well as a couple of rights of way – the most interesting of which is called the 'weavers trail', and runs from Eaglesham to Darvel and was used by weavers to transport materials and finished goods.

With so many miles of tracks to take to, more and more people are exploring the site with walking, running, cycling and horse riding proving hugely popular. There's even purpose built mountain bike (MTB), trails within 5 minutes of the Whitelee Visitor Centre, another fabulous resource the site offers with parking, a cafe, learning hub and exhibition hall with exhibits about wind energy. A visit to the centre at a weekend will find it packed with people enjoying the views from the cafe as well as relaxing with a hot drink and snack after a long walk or exhausting blast around the MTB trails.

During the summer even the visitor centre is a great place to see some of the huge array of wildlife the windfarm contains – with skylarks singing from high, red grouse warning from the undergrowth, brown hares sprinting past and insects of all sizes busying around. So far 95 bird species have been identified at Whitelee including a range of raptors such as short-eared owl, hen harrier, merlin and peregrine. Supporting them are around 145 plant species, 60+ insect species (so far), a range of mammals and elusive amphibians and reptiles including common lizards and adders. Not only is the windfarm great for walking, cycling etc for health reasons, but

there is plenty of wildlife to spot along the way; the rangers provide information and guides through their website to enable people to identify their sightings. And if this wasn't enough – there are a number of interesting historical sites as well as spectacular views to take in with the Blackwood Hill viewpoint (with a toposcope and seating provided), being a popular destination – and only taking around 30 minutes to get to from the main visitor centre carpark. The viewpoint is on the 'Lochgoin Circuit', an 8.1 mile circular route that's popular with all ages and interest groups, and thanks to its wide construction, ideal for walkers, cyclists, dog walkers and horse riders to intermingle without anyone getting in each other's way.



Common lizard





Boggy Beasties event at Whitelee

The 2 person ranger team spend much of their time providing guided walks, talks and educational sessions for schools, colleges and groups – all free of charge too, but even they admit that it hasn't been possible to explore every area of the windfarm yet. The rangers also provide an annual program of free events and activities for members of the public ranging from good old fashioned ranger led walks, to craft events, history walks, seasonal celebrations and their often booked out 'boggy beasties' summer kids club. Head along on a Tuesday morning at 10am for a regular parent and baby stroller group that the rangers lead.

The windfarm has 7 further entry points to the visitor centre entrance, many of which will be upgraded with free parking and interpretation in due course, and each one is different in character and the access opportunities it provides. Ardochrig at the South Lanarkshire end of the site is popular with dog walkers and walkers and plunges straight into Whitelee forest, a commercial

plantation that's great for spotting Bullfinches or Roe Deer, and that is completely different in character to the rolling blanket bog habitat encountered at the visitor centre end.

So, if you like a healthy walk or cycle or want to go bird watching or wildlife spotting, then consider a trip to Whitelee. The windfarm is easy to get to and there is always something to see or do. If you need any help on where to go to see something or would like to bring a group for a visit then why not contact the rangers, or pop into their cabin next to the visitor centre, to get some helpful advice and up to date news on what to see or do – they're always happy to help.

Phone: 0141 614 0962

Web: www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/whitelee
www.facebook.com/whitelee.countrysiderangers

Twitter: @whiteleerangers

Flickr: www.flickr.com/photos/whiteleerangerservice/

WAT IF?

WAT IF? (Woolfords, Auchengray and Tarbrax Improvement Foundation) Community Trust covers Woolfords, Auchengray and Tarbrax and all settlements within 5km of Stallashaw Moss in South Lanarkshire. We work with local residents to improve and promote the area, with projects ranging from the refurbishment of Woolfords Village Hall to a Community Minibus Trial.

Pathway Projects 2016

One of the main themes of the Community Action Plan that forms the basis of all WAT IF? projects is 'Greenspace and Heritage', and the priorities within this theme is for off road paths for recreation and access to the countryside. Although the 3 villages and settlements within the WAT IF? area are in rural settings, access to safe off-road paths is limited.

There has been considerable work done in the last year by the Paths Working Group, which consists entirely of volunteers and is supported by the Trusts Development Officer, Jemma. There are 11 routes which have been identified as part of the pathway project and these range from minor roads which link up villages, to off-road routes across fields.

Two of these routes have been prioritised this year as they will require extensive work and fundraising. Both routes are still in the scoping stages, but it is hoped that work can commence by late summer.



Muirhall School Route – looking back at Auchengray Primary

Muirhall School Route

The plan for this route is a boardwalk, which will be directly accessible from Auchengray Primary School as well as having public access, and will lead across a field, into plantation forestry and then potentially link up to the Muirhall Wind Farm track. This provides an off-road path for the school to use without having to go off school grounds, and will also provide the residents of Auchengray a safe off-road path for walking.



Station Way

This route links the village of Woolfords with the settlements at Cobbinshaw, which used to be an important railway station for the area's industry. The route follows the railway, which would have traditionally been the route that residents walked to get to the railway station – this provides opportunity for interpretation. The route crosses the county boundary, from Woolfords in South Lanarkshire to Cobbinshaw in West Lothian.

The other routes have work programmes which range from simple vegetation clearance, to signage, and four are on hold until construction of two new windfarms is complete.

For more information on WAT IF? see www.watif.scot, or contact Jemma on jemma@watif.scot or 07539 430 734.

The Renewable Energy Fund

The renewable energy fund is money received from renewable energy developments within the South Lanarkshire boundary. They are to be used to help communities affected by them to improve their quality of life and the local economy.

This fund is for capital projects within 10km of a participating renewable energy development. It currently applies to the wind farms at Whitelee, Pates Hill, Stallashaw and Blacklaw. Capital projects are usually long-term projects to acquire, develop, improve and/or maintain a capital asset such as land, buildings or roads.

The two options are:

Main renewable energy fund - grants over £10,000 up to 50% of total 'eligible' costs.

Local grant scheme - grants of less than £5,000 and up to 100% of total 'eligible' costs for smaller community-based projects.

Please see the Renewable energy fund download for maps and more information.

www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/info/200168/getting-involved-in-your-community/744/renewable-energy-fund

Woodland coppicing at Redlees

On a cold, wet Sunday in January the 78th Lanarkshire (3rd Blantyre) Scouts, Cubs, Leaders and friends enjoyed a skills sharing session. As well as learning about the NATO phonetic alphabet, open fire bread making, wood chopping, fire lighting and other skills, the group was introduced to the almost lost art of coppicing.



Warming up around the campfire at Redlees

This is a form of sustainable woodland management which allows an indefinite number of stems to be harvested from the trees over time. Coppiced trees can live to be a great age, and some of the oldest trees in British woods are coppice stools (the name for the stump that the stems grow from).

In Redlees we are lucky to have a beautiful hazel coppice, and by cutting it in a seven year cycle we will not only have a sustainable source of hazel poles, but will provide a habitat for many plants and animals that require an open woodland setting.

The group hopes to return to Redlees later in the year to try their hand at charcoal making using some of the wood they have harvested.

If you would like to know more about Redlees Urban Fringe Park in Blantyre please contact Susan at susan.mcneish@southlanarkshire.gov.uk

A week in the woods!

Late October 2015, there was a hive of activity on a small industrial scale, in the woods at Mauldslie Estate. A number of Rangers from North and South Lanarkshire, as well as volunteers from Phoenix Futures and Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health (LAMH) took part in a Traditional Woodsman's Coppice and Greenwood Skills Course.

The course included:

- Understanding of coppice and the basics of greenwood working
- Identifying and applying appropriate coppice management and restoration techniques and practices
- Identifying a variety of native tree species and their suitability for greenwood working and products
- Correctly and safely using a variety of specialised greenwood tools as well as correct tool maintenance
- Conducting basic greenwood techniques to make a variety of products
- Understanding how to load and fire a charcoal kiln and the subsequent grading of the material

The course trainees plan to run a programme of taster sessions and events in 2016 with other organisations and community groups, to give them the skills and confidence to run similar events with their peers and the public.

These events are in the pipeline with dates and details to be confirmed. We'll keep you posted!



The Woodsman's Course at Mauldslie Woods, with charcoal kilns

Recovery through Nature with Phoenix Futures

South Lanarkshire Countryside and Greenspace (CAG) have been working in partnership with Phoenix Futures, in supporting their Recovery through Nature (RtN) programme, for the past 9 years.

Phoenix Futures is a charity and housing organisation which has been helping people overcome drug and alcohol problems for over 40 years. Their RtN programme, formerly known as Conservation Therapy, connects people using Phoenix's services with nature to aid in their recovery. Each programme operates 1 day a week over about 12 weeks, and participation is voluntary. RtN challenges participants to work in a natural environment as part of a team and take ownership of conservation activities.

RtN has shown an increased treatment completion rate from 46% to 77%, and participants report improved mental and physical health, increased self-esteem and confidence, and enhanced belief in their ability to change as a result of the programme.

A "dead hedge" alongside the Wham Pond



Phoenix Futures working at the Wham Pond at Chatelherault



This winter the RtN programme has assisted CAG and Froglife Project staff in rejuvenating the Wham Pond at Chatelherault Country Park, Hamilton, as a prime wildlife habitat for the survival of amphibians. Volunteers from Phoenix's Glasgow Residential Service collected cut sections of trees from the pond's edge to create habitat piles and restore a 'dead hedge', which creates a suitable terrestrial habitat for amphibians.

Volunteers from the Glasgow Residential Service also assisted CAG at Laverock Hill, Hamilton, a site close to Chatelherault Country Park. The volunteers felled non native coniferous trees and cut down Rhododendron bushes, and used the material to create habitat piles and build a 'dead hedge' at this site.

Cuningar Loop Woodland Park

Cuningar Loop, the exciting new woodland park facility in Rutherglen is due to open fully to the public later this year.

Currently the site is open at the weekend from 10am-4pm for people to come and have a shot of the wonderful facilities on site

including the bike pump track, bouldering zone, adventure play ground and trim trail.

Forest Enterprise Scotland's project manager Joneen Clarke said "we are really pleased to have the park open at the weekend for the local community to enjoy and are hoping to have the park open fully from April this year. Feedback from our come try days has been very positive so are looking forward to a busy year at the park".

Members of the public are encouraged to check the Cuningar Loop website www.scotland.forestry.gov.uk/visit/cuningar-loop for the full opening date and for information on future events due to be held at this fantastic new park. Cuningar Loop can currently be accessed from Downiebrae Road, off Dalmarnock Road and is part of the Legacy of the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games.



Play area at Cuningar Loop Woodland Park

Look out for wildlife this spring and summer

While you're out and about this year, why not keep an eye out for wildlife, and share your records. Many organisations are interested in your findings, to keep tabs on what is happening with various species and to help find out what is happening in the countryside. Here are just a few ways you can get involved:

- The Big Butterfly Count. Over 52,000 people took part in this national survey last year which helped show what is happening to butterflies across the country. You can download butterfly charts from the website, enter your records and find the link for a free butterfly recording app for your phone at www.bigbutterflycount.org Join in from 15 July – 7 August by counting butterflies in your garden or local Greenspace for 15 minutes.
- Take part in the Big Pond Dip to help find out what is living in ponds and what makes a good pond for wildlife. There is a sheet to fill out with information about your pond, and the creatures you find in the water: freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/get-involved-2/big-pond-dip/dip/ Get in touch with the Ranger Service (contact details on the last page) if you'd like to borrow pond dipping equipment.
- Do you see frog spawn in your local pond? Count the clumps to contribute to the Big Spawn Count this Spring: freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/get-involved-2/big-spawn-count/
- If you drive along single-carriage roads you can take part in the Mammals on Roads survey from July to September: send in your sightings – dead or alive! There is a "Mammals on Roads" app for your phone, identification guides and more information is available from ptes.org/get-involved/surveys/road/
- Become a Wildlife Champion for Sustrans by adopting a 1 mile stretch of the cycle network. You will receive training to help you to survey for wildlife. Volunteers can also help look after their section by picking up litter and getting involved with habitat management work days. Find out more at www.sustrans.org.uk/ncn/map/national-cycle-network/biodiversity-conservation/creating-corridors-wildlife or by emailing laura.white@sustrans.org.uk



Comma butterfly



Froglife's Living Waters

One of the newly dug ponds at
Langlands Moss, East Kilbride

Launched in North London in May 2008, the Living Waters project soon spread to South London, Glasgow, North Lanarkshire, Sheffield, Towcester and Northamptonshire.

And finally... South Lanarkshire!

This exciting project has both created and restored prime wildlife habitats in urban greenspaces and parks, using networks of local volunteers with a focus on rejuvenating our disappearing ponds.

Two new pond sites were created near the Hamilton Mausoleum and next to the old car park at Langlands Moss, East Kilbride. Restoration work has improved ponds at Chatelherault Country Park (Pylon pond and Wham pond) with those at Barnhill in Blantyre and Holmills Community Woodland (Cambuslang) to be improved later in the year.



The Living Waters Project aims to:

- Promote ponds and the surrounding habitat as vital habitats for the survival of amphibians and reptiles
- Create, restore and ultimately raise awareness of standing water habitats in our parks and greenspaces
- Encourage standing water habitat creation in Biodiversity Action Plans and new development schemes
- Increase suitable terrestrial habitat features for amphibians and reptiles
- Monitor and survey chosen sites for amphibians and reptiles



The digger in action at the Hamilton Palace Grounds pond site





What's happening at... Langlands Moss Nature Reserve

The Friends of Langlands Moss (FOLM) are a small group of dedicated volunteers who help maintain Langlands Moss Local Nature Reserve - a raised Bog to the south of East Kilbride. The last year has been a very productive one for FOLM.

We have had several visits from Butterfly Conservation's "Bog Squad" that have helped us to use up all of our stockpiled damming material. They have also been measuring the depth of peat in the bog: 8 metres which indicates the Moss is approx. 7000 years old. The deepest peat at the central dome of the bog has not been measured yet - the true age of the bog is probably older.

Auldhouse Primary School have been using Langlands for Forest School activities with their teacher; the school has become very involved with the LNR and the pupils love visiting it. So much so that they held their Halloween Party there this year!

Unfortunately the LNR was subject to vandalism with picnic areas, seats and bins burned. The fence at the wildflower meadow was also damaged as was one of our main entrance signs. We involved the local police in protecting the area and as a result of their vigilance the vandalism seems to have settled for the present. Many thanks to Police Scotland for their assistance, who are continuing to monitor the area. Community Payback have been working hard to replace the picnic area for our events.

At the beginning of the summer we were awarded a grant of up to £500 from Volunteering Matters for Scotland. We purchased plug plants and some shrubs for the

wildflower meadow in July. In the autumn we purchased 1000 bluebell bulbs for the wooded areas as we had been very encouraged by the number of bluebells which had flowered in June from the bulbs planted last October. We also ordered snowdrops and wild daffodils to continue to enhance the wildflower meadow which were planted by the children of Auldhouse Primary School on 3 November.

We had several public events including our annual Beasties and Bogs event which is always popular. Froglife hosted an event at the end of June for us and we held the

"Batman and Mothin" event on Friday 4 September. This is an educational evening to reach out to the community and teach them about local biodiversity: we were overwhelmed by the number of bookings for the evening!

During the year our Chair Maureen has spoken to several

groups about our achievements on Langlands including guilds and rurals, EK stroke club, James Hutton Institute in Aberdeen, SRUC at Ayr and EK Library.

Recently Froglife have started work on a pond close to the former car park. This should be fully ready in spring we would also like to install a pond dipping platform and are investigating grants. A new management plan is currently being written which will help to guide the management of the bog over the next 5 years, including the surrounding woodlands.

To find out more about FOLM visit the website www.folm-ek.org/ and facebook page www.facebook.com/FriendsOfLanglandsMoss



One of the newly installed dams at Langlands Moss

Outdoor Play in Morgan Glen

The happy sound of children playing filters through the trees early on a Sunday morning in Morgan Glen, Larkhall. Families are playing in a dappled, sunlit glade building dens, making mud pies or resting in the hammock.

Little Pips Outdoor Play are a group of parents and toddlers who got together after last Summer's successful **#WildTimeLAN** project. As volunteers, they are supported by the Ranger Service and have been lucky enough to receive funding from CAVLP for kit, insurance and training. Their sessions, which are once a month, are so popular that they have to use an online booking system!

If you would like to know more about Little Pips, or would like help in setting up something similar at your site in South Lanarkshire, please contact Susan on susan.mcneish@southlanarkshire.gov.uk



Little Pips kids relaxing in their hammock

Get in touch!

To see previous copies of this newsletter visit www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk and search for "Volunteer Newsletter".

If you would like to join the volunteer network, suggest courses/ events, or would like any more information, please get in touch with us using the details below.

Contact us

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Like us at "South Lanarkshire Countryside Rangers"
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Email: cag@southlanarkshire.gov.uk

Phone: 01355 236644

Write to: Countryside Ranger Service, Calderglen Country Park, East Kilbride G75 0QZ

If you need this information in another format or language, please contact us to discuss how we can best meet your needs.

Phone: 0303 123 1015 Email: equalities@southlanarkshire.gov.uk

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