



The People and Nature of **Wild Strathfillan**

Introduction

Wild Strathfillan is supporting community connections in and with nature, through our **'The People and Nature of Wild Strathfillan'** delivery programme.

'The People and Nature of Wild Strathfillan' is one of two key programmes in the 2025 delivery of the Wild Strathfillan Initiative. The Wild Strathfillan initiative brings people together to care for this landscape – helping wildlife to thrive, supporting local livelihoods, and ensuring the area remains a vibrant place to live, work, and enjoy.

Our second programme, 'From Lochside to Mountain-top', supported by NatureScot's Nature Restoration Fund, is working to enhance key habitats across the landscape.

Staff and Key Partners

Wild Strathfillan is coordinated by **Loch Lomond and The Trossachs Countryside Trust**, with support from **Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority**.

'The People and Nature of Wild Strathfillan' is primarily supported by two members of staff from the Countryside Trust.

- **Sharon Cawston, Wild Strathfillan Education and Engagement Officer** - Sharon leads our all our community engagement and life-long learning projects.
- **Sarah Rodway-Swanson, Programme Manager (Communities and People)** – Sarah joined the Countryside Trust in January 2025. Sarah oversees all of the Trust's community engagement and health & wellbeing delivery, including supporting Wild Strathfillan.
- **The Countryside Trust's Health Walk Coordinators** are also involved in delivering a few projects for 'The People and Nature of Wild Strathfillan'.

The two **Community Development Trusts** in the Wild Strathfillan area also lead on multiple projects.

- **Strathfillan Community Development Trust (SCDT)** – SCDT are delivering projects to raise awareness of local nature and heritage, access to local wetland and improvement to the Tyndrum Community Woodland.
- **Killin & Ardeonaig Community Development Trust (KAT)** – KAT are creating a community garden and are leading a youth skills development programme. 'The People and Nature of Wild Strathfillan' also supports the The Old Mill in Killin.



Life-long learning

We've continued to develop a range of learning and skills development opportunities this year. Working with schools, Universities and education providers we've been supporting formal learning for students of all ages, from primary school pupils to Masters degrees. We've also been delivering informal learning opportunities for residents and volunteers.

Primary Schools

Number of sessions: **11**

Number of pupils: Killin **44**, Crianlarich **23**

Our Education and Engagement Officer has continued to collaborate with colleagues from the National Trust for Scotland (Ben Lawers) and the National Park Authority's ranger service to deliver a variety of sessions at both Killin and Crianlarich Primary Schools. The topics were chosen by the schools to help them towards achieving their Green Flag Award and sustainable development goals. These topics were:

- **Caring for wildlife in winter:** these sessions included making bird feeders and hanging them in the school grounds.
- **Bumblebees:** these sessions supported the schools' efforts to achieve their Bumblebee Friendly School Awards. Pupils learnt about bumblebee ID and ecology and surveying for bumblebees. They planted flowers for pollinators in the school grounds, and shared ways to help bumblebees with the wider school and community on social media.
- **Deer:** this session with Killin Primary School we looked at 1 deer ecology and management, and the sustainability of venison and included the opportunity to handle deer antlers and deer hide.

"The children in each class were fully engaged in the activities that were provided by Helen, Sharon and Gareth. There was a good spread of activities suitable for each stage."

"The children really enjoyed the hands-on activities - making bird feeders and planting."

Images: (Left to right) Bird Feeders, Bee Surveying 1, Bee Survey 2, Making posters for social media, Posters for school grounds
Credit: Wild Strathfillan





Image: 2 heritage students with Development Officer and Chair of SCDT at the start of their placement.

Secondary Schools

Number of sessions: 4

Number of pupils: 80

This year, our Education and Engagement Officer has also worked with the local secondary school's biology department to offer classroom and outdoor learning opportunities. These sessions looked at:

- **Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS):** pupils learnt how to identify the 5 most common INNS of plants in the area, including understanding why they are a threat to biodiversity and knowing where to report any sightings of them. This is part of the Higher Curriculum.
- **Eco-systems:** in these hands-on outdoor learning sessions, pupils explored what an eco-system is and how human intervention and climate change can affect them.

Student placements

Number of students: 2

SCDT and The Countryside Trust partnered to host two MSc Heritage students from Stirling University this summer. The students were tasked with supporting the Stories of the Land oral histories and heritage project. The students undertook 10 oral history interviews with members of the local community.

"I really loved meeting everyone from both orgs and doing the interviews. I would like to be involved in the Wild Strathfillan project in some way in the future."

"It was a good experience and I learned a lot about small community development trusts and how they operate."

Both students agreed the placement was relevant to their studies. They reported that they learned new skills and improved on others from doing the placement. Feedback from the students will allow us to continue to improve our placement offering, including creating more opportunities for students to understand the wider operations of a charity.

SCDT are also looking forward to working with more students in the future, having seen how positive the experience was for both the students and the Strathfillan residents.



Images: (Left to right). Setting out audiomoths, Coring for peat, Revealing the peat sample. Credit: Trustinthepark.org

Student research projects

Number of students: 4

In 2025, Wild Strathfillan supported our first students to undertake their dissertation research projects with the initiative. These topics are:

- **Bats and Native Woodlands:** an exploration of the features important to bats at different spatial scales. Two students surveyed woodland areas to ascertain woodland type, then used audiomoths to record bat presence at each site to understand what influenced bat numbers across the various habitats in order to answering the question: *which landscape and local woodland characteristics influence bat activity?*
- **Raptors:** the student is surveying species, numbers and habits of raptors at identified vantage points in the area to build a picture of raptor presence and movements throughout Strathfillan. Their research is ongoing.
- **Paleoecology:** the student has taken a core sample from an area of undisturbed peat. They are now back in the lab studying the sample to identify the pollen present and build a picture of how the area would have looked over the past 2 centuries.

Of the two students who have finished their projects with us, both agreed that their involvement with Wild Strathfillan has helped their professional, personal or academic development. According to their evaluations, one student achieved all four of the goals they set at themselves at start of their project and the other achieved three of four, making some progress towards the fourth.

"This experience was transformative with regards to my development as a budding environmental scientist. It will no doubt be leaned on heavily as I apply for jobs in this field. I appreciated Ophelie's (Wild Strathfillan Ecology and Monitoring Officer) time in guiding us around potential monitoring sites and sharing her experience of nature-restoration work – knowledge I'll carry with me into my next role."

"I think this experience has been incredibly useful and has given me a better understanding of the roles I might go into when I graduate."



Three students also attended our **Annual Wild Strathfillan Event** to present on their experiences and findings to local land managers, project partners and community members.

SRUC case studies

Number of presentations: 2

Number of students: 19

In 2025, Wild Strathfillan was presented as a case study example to students studying on two courses at SRUC (Scotland's Rural College). These interactive sessions focused on projects being delivered through Wild Strathfillan that were relevant to the topics within their curriculums. These were:

- **Managing a woodland for leisure:** Wild Strathfillan's Education & Engagement Officer and SCDT's Community Project Coordinator presented to HNC Forestry students. The session looked at how the Tyndrum Community Woodland is managed for the benefit of the community, tourism and biodiversity.
- **Native tree and plant nurseries:** Wild Strathfillan's Education & Engagement Officer and Partnership Support Officer presented to HNC Horticulture students. The sessions used the established Glenfalloch tree nursery and new Lomond specialist plant nursery as examples to help students explore why, how and what challenges may be faced when setting up a native nursery.



Image: Community learning, propagation techniques.
Credit: Trustinthepark.org

Community learning opportunities

Number of courses: 9

Number of attendances: 86

Alongside our work with local schools, colleges, and universities, we've also continued to bring new learning opportunities into the local community. Training and workshops delivered in 2025 were:

- **Tree nursery taster sessions** at Glenfalloch nursery.
- Following the taster, another workshop gave people an opportunity to learn more about **propagation** techniques and have a go at some hands on tasks.

"It was nice that there was a more theoretical part followed, for those that wanted, by hands-on activity."

"I thought the morning session was great. Well worth coming for so much information. Tim [Glenfalloch Nursery Manager] handled it well and the handouts are excellent. I do not know anywhere else that an amateur could get so much training, for free. I guess those on college courses get it but I'm a bit old for that."



Images: Community learning, bat walk and talk.
Credit: Trustinthepark.org

Community learning opportunities continued...

- **Bat talk and walk** with Lomond Bat Group to learn about bat species. Lots of bats happily obliged us with their presence when the group headed out to learn how to use a bat detector too!
- Following the talk and walk, some people took up the opportunity to be trained to carry out **waterways bat surveys**. 4 participants headed out following the training to gather more data, and have signed up to do this annually, sharing data with the Bat Conservation Trust.



Images: Community learning, bat walk and talk.
Credit: Trustinthepark.org

"Just enough time in the hall for a short introduction to bats then out for a lovely evening walk at sunset."





Images: Community learning, INNS training.
Credit: Trustinthepark.org

Community learning opportunities continued...

- **Invasive Non Native Species (INNS) identification** training to teach participants how to identify the 5 most common INNS plant species in the area.
- **Lichen workshop** with Dr Oliver Moore from Plantlife. On this guided walk participants learnt about the various species of lichen considered to be rainforest indicator species.
- **Autumn textile workshop** led by artist Eilidh Weir. Eilidh led a walk through the community woodland to notice natural items, which were used as inspiration to create a nature inspired mini-banner. This workshop was a bit different to our usual sessions, and allowed us to meet two community members who have not previously engaged or attended any Wild Strathfillan events.
- **Pinewoods talk** with James Rainey from Trees for Life exploring the state of Scotland's Caledonian pinewoods. Our partners at Glenfalloch estate also gave a short presentation on their own work to protect and expand pinewoods locally.

"Very good and generated some interesting discussion"

"The intro by Glenfalloch was a good idea as it showed the relevance of the main topic and updated us on what was happening locally."

Looking forward: partnership with KAT

At the end of the year, KAT who are already involved in several Wild Strathfillan projects, also came on board within our 'short courses' project to develop and deliver a youth-focused rural and nature-based skills development programme. KAT are already identifying young people aged 16-25 who may be interested and benefit from the programme. We've been coordinating with a variety of external partners to create training opportunities and look forward to delivering these in 2026.



Images: (Left) Community Learning, Bannerr Workshop (Right) Lichen workshop
Credit: Trustinthepark.org





Image: The Old Mill, Killin

Celebrating and connecting our people

We've continued to help facilitate opportunities for people to connect with each other, and with the cultural and social heritage of the area. This includes offering Wild Strathfillan's support to established projects in the area – **Walk in the Park** and **The Old Mill** as well as our new partnership project **Stories of the Land**.

Community and stakeholder engagement

We've continued to seek opportunities to share information and updates on Wild Strathfillan with local communities. Although we tried one dedicated drop-in this year, we found that attending existing events to meet people where they're at has been more effective for engaging people. Some opportunities we joined in 2025 include:

- Environmental Action Killin's AGM
- A couple of Walk in the Park's walks, including a pop-up walk in Tyndrum
- Killin Agricultural Show

Our community learning opportunities have also proved to be an effective engagement opportunity. These are doubling as both training/learning opportunities, as well as a chance for us to share information about Wild Strathfillan and nature restoration locally.



Image: Drop-in at Killin community



Image: Stall at Killin Agricultural Show hub



Image: Stories of the Land workshop Credit: TrustinthePark

Celebrating another year of Wild Strathfillan

- Annual event attendees **24**

In November, we held our Wild Strathfillan Annual Event. This event was an opportunity for our stakeholders, partners and the local community to come together and learn more about how the initiative is progressing. Wild Strathfillan's Monitoring & Ecology Officer and Education & Engagement Officer gave updates on the work they've been delivering, before we welcomed our three student speakers.

Interactive workshops gave attendees an opportunity to feed into Wild Strathfillan, including creatively contributing to our shared vision and offering insights to help shape our Stories of the Land project. After lunch, a determined group headed out on a couple of rainy site visits.



Image: Rainy site visits (Holy Pool) Credit: Ophelie@TrustinthePark.org





Images: (Left) Crianlarich Strength and Balance first anniversary, (Right) Killin Walk in the Park.

Supported Walking

- Number of walks **48**
- Number of participants across year **39**, including **7** new
- Number of evening walks **14**
- Number of participants across summer evening programme **15**
- Number of Strength & Balance sessions **47** Killin, **49** Crianlarich
- Number of Strength & Balance participants across both **35**

Wild Strathfillan has supported the continued delivery of Walk in the Park and Strength & Balance in Strathfillan, part of the Countryside Trust's Park-wide programme of delivery. Our supported, volunteer-led activities help people to stay active, social and connected with nature. Our activities have continued weekly. Walks and **Strength & Balance** have continued weekly. Crianlarich Strength & Balance also celebrated their first anniversary in November!

"The sessions are a great way of meeting local friends but particularly useful to address muscular weakness issues. May the sessions long continue!" - John, Crianlarich participant.

Special walk activities this year have also raised the profile of Strathfillan. The Killin walking group have visited Tyndrum for an away walk three times this year, exploring the Tyndrum Community Woodland.

Un-anticipated intergenerational opportunities

Our Strength & Balance groups have been building intergenerational connections with their respective local primary schools, following introductions made by Wild Strathfillan's Education & Engagement Officer.

Crianlarich Strength & Balance participants had a visit over the road to Crianlarich to the Primary School. The visit was organised to give the school's Eco Club, who were leading the school's bumblebee project, an opportunity to showcase what they had learnt through the summer term.

"The kids done an excellent job in their presentation. They knew so much and shared it confidently with us." - Strength and Balance participant.

In both Killin and Crianlarich, the Strength & Balance group and primary school came together for some movement-based festive celebrations.



Image: Volunteer away day: tour of SRUC from John Holland .

Our annual Volunteer Away Day was also hosted in the Strathfillan area this year. This included a morning walk and talk with Dr John Holland at SRUC's Hill and Mountain Research Centre to learn more about the local area, farming and their work for biodiversity and nature restoration.

Following lunch, the group enjoyed a walk through the Tyndrum Community Woodland.



"A great event. Very informative. Jaw dropping scenery. Good company and a very nice lunch." – Walk Leader volunteer on away day



Image: Volunteer away day: group in Tyndrum Community Woodland .





Stories of the Land

- Number of interviews **18**

In August, we brought on Paul Saunders as a contractor to work with SCDT and KAT on our Stories of the Land project. Stories of the Land explores the past, present and what the future could look like for Strathfillan and Killin communities and landscapes, mainly through oral histories from residents.

Since then, Paul has undertaken 8 further oral history interviews to add to interviews already completed by our MSc Heritage students and by SCDT Board members. Having transcribed and reviewed these interviews, Paul is now identifying thematic topics and matching interview excerpts to bring the story of the land to life.

We've heard stories about railways; farming and shepherding; forestry and land-use change; community life; tourism and outdoor activities and heritage. These stories came from a diverse range of voices including multi-generation farming families, former railway workers, business owners, artists, estate managers and long-term residents.

The Old Mill

- Number of visitors **16,054**

The Old Mill is a flagship project for KAT and Killin. The Old Mill sits next to the Falls of Dochart, and offers visitors and the local community alike an opportunity to engage with local heritage.

This year, Wild Strathfillan helped support an intergenerational project and exhibition recognising 65 years of Killin Primary School. Memories of school life in the 1960s were collected, and intergenerational interviews between Killin Primary School pupils past and present were facilitated by a local storyteller. Memories of home economics classes inspired the creation of a 'Peevers rug'. All the collated materials, including digital content, were displayed in an exhibition and an event at The Old Mill. Over 5000 people visited the exhibition.





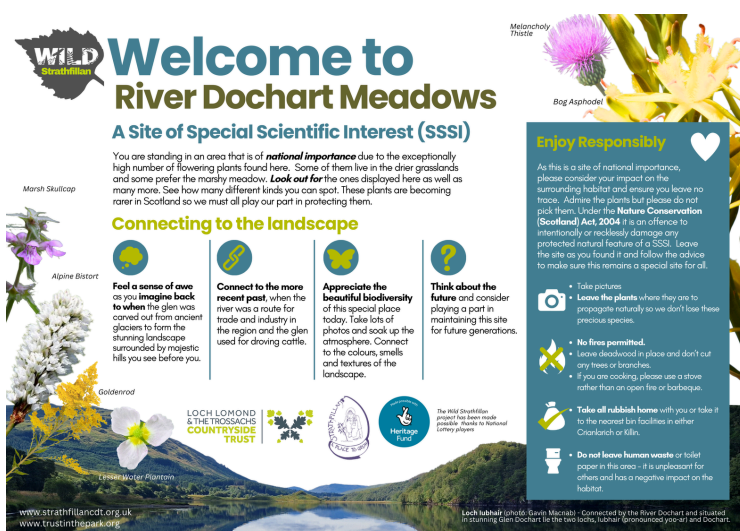
Image: Loch lubhair Credit: Trustinthepark.org .

Enabling engagement with nature

We've continued to develop our projects that facilitate connectedness and local accessibility to nature and encourage responsible access to special habitats to protect them.

SSSI awareness raising and behaviour change

During the summer, we installed two interpretation panels at Loch Lubhair in the layby and carpark. This signage highlights the importance of the area for flowering plants as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). In particular, we hope these interpretation panels will encourage responsible access to the site, including a request for no fires and to take rubbish home, as Loch Lubhair often suffers from negative impacts of visitors, especially with the lack of available funding for rangers in the Strathfillan area.



Images: (Left) Interpretation panel design (Right) Interpretation in situ.

Credit: Trustinthepark.org

Wild Strathfillan's Education and Engagement Officer has also been assessing the visitor impact at other SSSIs and designated sites in the area to identify where this project can have the most impact next.





Images: (Left) Foraging plantain (Right) Making plantain balm.

Eco Club

- Number of sessions **11**
- Number of pupils - average of **7** per session

In addition to curriculum-based sessions, Wild Strathfillan's Education and Engagement Officer supported Crianlarich Primary School's Eco Club again in 2025. There were two main themes that sessions focused on this year:

- **Bumblebees:** these sessions looked at bumblebee identification, planting for pollinators, surveying for bees and more. The Eco Club pupils then took some of the lead on the whole school sessions mentioned earlier. They also hosted participants of local Strength and Balance class for an intergenerational session where the Eco Club told their visitors what they had learned.
- **Foraging and magic:** the pupils were really interested in these ideas, and so these sessions helped them learn about the properties of native plants such as sorrel and meadowsweet and using foraged plantain to make a balm for nettle stings.

"It has been fantastic having you organise and run Eco Clubs. The clubs have shown good progression of learning and have given pupils opportunities to share their knowledge with their peers and the community. There has been a lovely mix of outdoor activities both within and out with school grounds. I'm looking forward to continuing this again next year." – Crianlarich Primary School teacher



Images: (Left) Making magic wands (Right) Summer Holiday session.

Making "magic wands" with gathered leaves and plants representing different properties they wanted to have. For example, oak leaves for strength, rowan leaves for protection, plantain for health, etc.

Wild Strathfillan also delivered a session as part of the local 'Saplings' summer holiday club. This was a whole day of woodland activities, including den building, camouflage, nature art, foraging and bug hunting which took place in the Tyndrum Community Woodland.

- Number of holiday club participants **10**



Image: Bird ID skills session with Kinross Ecology. Credit: Trustinthepark.org

In Step with Nature and Nature Ambassadors

Through Wild Strathfillan, we've been able to introduce more nature and local heritage experiences into Walk in the Park Killin's regular walk schedule. A highlight from 2025 was the opportunity for walk leader volunteers and participants to again build their bird identification skills on an interactive training walk with Kinross Ecology, supporting them to become 'nature ambassadors'.

Walk in the Park Killin participants have also continued to engage with the Countryside Trust's ongoing In Step with Nature initiative. Through this nature connectedness initiative, participants are invited to learn more about a focus topic each month and take part in a small challenge. Topics in 2025 have included:

- An invitation to practice **winter tree ID** with a simple guide
- A focus on **bluebells**
- A focus on seeds and an invitation to go on a **seed scavenger hunt**. This topic coincided the our autumn seed inspired textiles workshop.
- A foray into the **old wives tales, myths and alleged magical properties of wildflowers**.





Images: Before photos of the site – Credit: Eilidh Graham.

Killin Community Garden

KAT have identified a site for the creation of a new Community and Sensory Garden. The site sits between the Killin Sports Pavilion, Bowling Green and Tennis Courts and the Main Street in Killin. Just before Christmas, we appointed a garden designer, who is a recent graduate who lives in the National Park to work with KAT, Killin Sports Hub and community and youth groups members to create a plan for the garden.

Crianlarich Wetland

With support from Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority, SCDT successfully acquired, via Community Asset Transfer, an area of land including their existing Community Garden and a wooded wetland area.

SCDT have designed a covered outdoor classroom on a short boardwalk to help local people and pupils to engage with and learn about nature in this wetland area. SCDT applied for planning permission. In 2026, we hope to deliver phase 1 of this project – to construct the covered classroom platform in the nearside of the wetland.



Images: The wetland site in glorious July sunshine.





Images: (Left & right) Tree Planting in Tyndrum Community Woodland, (middle) removing Sitka Spruce regeneration

Tyndrum Community Woodland and Shelterbelt

- Number of volunteers who've supported in Tyndrum Community Woodland **41**

With SCDT, we facilitated three more volunteer days this year supporting woodland enhancement at Tyndrum Community Woodland. Local volunteers joined a day of tree planting, whilst volunteers from Forth Valley College and JPMorgan Chase & Co. supported the removal of non-native Sitka Spruce regeneration.

Also supported through Wild Strathfillan's 'From Lochside to Mountain-top' delivery programme, SCDT have been leading the process of consultations to secure required consents and permissions in order to fell c. 7 hectares of non-native conifers in Tyndrum Community Woodland. SCDT have also been regularly clearing windblown trees in the Shelterbelt.

A range of volunteers

We've been able to offer a few other opportunities for people to volunteer with Wild Strathfillan this year.

- Forth Valley College students and staff supported tree planting at SRUC's Hill and Mountain Research Centre near Tyndrum.
- Local volunteers have supported at Glenfalloch native tree nursery.
- Local and National Park Authority volunteers joined Wild Strathfillan staff to plant 1400 trees along river courses in Cononish Glen near Tyndrum.



Images: (left) Tree Planting in Cononish Glen, (right) Forth Valley College tree planting at SRUC



Evaluation

We continuously monitor and evaluate all our activities. The results of some of this ongoing evaluation has been mentioned throughout this report.

Attitudes and Engagement Baseline Report

- Number of adults consulted by Outside the Box **32**
- Number of primary school children consulted by Outside the Box **36**

In addition to the ongoing evaluation of our activities, we are also working with an independent organisation, Outside the Box, to help us understand the attitudes and perceptions amongst local communities and stakeholders of Wild Strathfillan, and of their local natural and cultural heritage.

Outside the Box finished their Phase 1 engagement in May 2025, delivering a report which provides a baseline of community attitudes and perceptions. Outside the Box used a combination of attending existing activities to meet and talk with participants, focus groups, 1:1 conversations and online survey to engage with local people.

The baseline report suggested that a lot of the community did not have much knowledge or awareness of, or involvement in, Wild Strathfillan at the start of the year. Below are some of the actions we have taken as a result of learnings from this report:

- Creation of a leaflet that introduces and summarises the initiative, which has been distributed at community events
- Using Wild Strathfillan team meetings to share updates on the many projects staff are involved with between each other, so that all staff feel confident referring to and raising awareness of the breadth of Wild Strathfillan's work
- Expand the target audience of our Wild Strathfillan newsletter to reach those outside our immediate delivery partners
- Diversified our community learning opportunities to reach new people – e.g. offering a textile workshop; hosting evening events earlier and designed to be family friendly.



We hope that the momentum built through all of the other activities detailed in this report have also helped to raise awareness and engagement with Wild Strathfillan. Outside the Box will complete Phase 2 consultation later in 2026 to allow us to track changes in attitudes and perceptions over time.

Conclusion

The People and Nature of Wild Strathfillan' delivery programme continues for another year, supporting community connections in and with the outstanding natural and cultural heritage in and around Strathfillan and Killin. We look forward to continuing to progress all of the projects covered in this report, plus a couple more that will launch in 2026.

Keep up to date

- Visit: www.trustinthepark.org/wildstrathfillan/
- Subscribe to our newsletter: www.trustinthepark.org
- Follow us on Facebook or Instagram: @trustinthepark

Get in touch, we'd love to hear from you!

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