



The National Trust
for Scotland

Balmacara Estate Quarterly Newsletter

Issue 20 – May 2005

Balmacara Country Day – 14th May

The annual Balmacara Country Day will be held at Lochalsh Woodland Park, formerly the Forestry Commission campsite, on 14th May. A full programme of the main events is provided on the reverse side of this shortened newsletter. The day promises to be a great day out for the whole family. Admission and parking are free, as are all the activities. We have a few new attractions this year including a junior mountain biking course and huskies from the Sled Dog Association of Scotland, and if it is not too hot they might even perform a display of mushing around the site. Some old favourites are back including the log sawing contest. The dog agility course (for children and their dogs, but please keep the dogs on a lead at all times) and a countryside themed fancy dress competition, so remember top get dressed up kids! The event starts at 11:00 and everything is free, so don't miss out on the fun!!!

Progress on House Sites in Plockton

Since the last newsletter there has been some significant progress on the housing front in Plockton. The Housing Association has undertaken a feasibility study into developing the Burnside site for affordable letting accommodation. This study was carried out by a firm from Skye called Rural Design who consulted the community council, crofters and NTS on the plans. Further detailed work is still being done, including design drawings for the houses and investigation into sustainable heating solutions. The site could contain about 24 houses of varying sizes. The NTS and the Housing Association are keen to ensure that quality design is central to this development so that it provides good affordable and sustainable housing for the community for the future. There will be a public to discuss these proposals very soon. Watch the notice boards in Plockton for details of the upcoming meeting.

Study into New Visitor Facility at Plockton Car Park

Funding for the feasibility study into the possible development of the two garages at the Car Park in Plockton has now been confirmed. The NTS and SNH have committed a total of £2,000 for the study and it is hoped that this will be started during the coming summer months. This initiative is the direct product of the public meeting held by the NTS last July in Plockton Village Hall. Strong views were expressed on the need for some kind of visitor orientation and information facility along with a museum, or other visitor centre. This project aims to establish whether or not it would be feasible for the NTS to redevelop these two buildings into some kind of visitor information centre. The costs and possible income streams will be investigated and it is anticipated that there will be a further open meeting held in the village, sometime during the study to establish in more detail what kind of facility the village thinks would be best. Suggestions, or notes of interest in subsequent meetings, are very welcome, so please contact the Balmacara Estate Office, details provided at the foot of this page.

Recruiter Post at LWG

Diane Sugden from Achmore has been appointed on a seasonal basis as Recruiter/Receptionist at Lochalsh Woodland Garden. Diane starts work at the garden on 16th May with the principal duty of recruiting new members to the Trust and taking admissions to the garden. It is expected that this new post will improve the overall visitor experience at the garden by providing additional information about the garden and the wider estate and the activities and attractions available throughout the area.

Skye & Lochalsh Local Plan Review

The Local Plan for Skye and Lochalsh is being reviewed this year. The Highland Council aim to complete the review this year and there will be several public meetings to ensure that communities have the opportunity to feed their ideas and concerns into the planning process. The NTS strongly encourages people to embrace this opportunity to influence planning. This is your opportunity to propose areas for housing and other forms of development, to seek social and recreational facilities, promote important access routes, landscapes, habitats and land uses that you do not want to lose. The NTS will be reviewing its Balmacara Estate Management Plan next year (2006) and we will be looking very carefully at what is proposed in the Local Plan and how it might affect our work at Balmacara and will be taking this opportunity to promote our aims for the area.

Traditional Croft Management Scheme

The NTS has approved funds for the development of a Traditional Croft Management Scheme pilot to be developed at Balmacara Estate. The project will run for three years and has attracted match funding from SNH. We are still seeking additional funding from LEADER+ and from NTS sponsors, although this would merely allow us to expand the scope of the project. The pilot will be based around Drumbuie, Duirinish and Plockton crofting townships and work will begin on developing the scheme with the crofters over the coming months. For more information please contact the Balmacara Estate Office.

Lochalsh Woodland Park Steering Group

The Lochalsh Woodland Park Steering Group was officially created at the AGM on 15th February held in Auchtertyre Community Education Centre. The Group's aims include ensuring the future community use of the old Forestry Commission campsite at Balmacara and promoting its development as a Woodland Park. The Group has been working with Forestry Commission Scotland and NTS to develop a management concordat that will set up the partnership between the three organisations to allow this development to move forward. The Group is still looking for members from around Lochalsh, and is ideally seeking one member from each community council area, although they do not necessarily have to be members of any community council. If you are interested please contact the Balmacara Estate Office.