



Tarras Valley Nature Reserve

Summer 2023 Newsletter

The last three months have brought lots of new life to the reserve, with colourful leaves and flowers; cuckoos calling; birds nesting, and a flock of new lambs!

You can read more about some of what's been happening below; including habitat restoration, action plan engagement, an American film-crew visit, and our first newsletter guest blog about historic Celtic culture on the land!

Photo credit - Len Macdonald



**We need your feedback - help us form
our visitor experience!**

From the earliest discussions about purchasing the land to develop the Tarras Valley Nature Reserve, the development of sustainable tourism opportunities was seen as an important part of our activity, helping to develop income streams for the reserve but also to contribute to the regeneration of the town.

We have recently taken on board Jim Bennett to help us with this and he has produced a short survey for you all. The survey is very short and easy – but if you think you might visit the reserve in the future it would be really good to get your opinions.

Accommodation Survey

Along side this we have been having discussions locally about what makes a good visitor experience. Feedback to date includes – being made to feel welcome, good information available, signage, a variety of experiences, parking, different walks, toilets, somewhere to have good coffee and cake!

At the moment the reserve has no facilities so this feedback is helpful in looking at some basic facilities which will help people explore the area. But if you have any more suggestions, please drop an email to

angela@tarrasvalleynaturereserve.co.uk

We shall look forward to hearing from you!



Developing Our Action Plan

Creating the future plan for Tarras Valley has been a big focus over the last few months. There have been lots of community drop-ins, events and even a film screening of Riverwoods to help get conversations going about what's important to people and what they want to see happen on the community land.

Topics have included everything from whole ecosystem restoration and community growing, to 'what makes a good visitor experience'.

The team are now starting to collate all the feedback that has been collected and the next stage will be working up the detail together on the key themes and ideas that have been shared to help create an initial draft for further engagement and collaboration.



Restoring our Peatlands

The Tarras Valley team have been working with peatland experts at Crighton Carbon Centre through the Scottish Government Peatland Action Programme to continue surveying the Tarras Valley for restoration works. Areas earmarked for restoration include the ditches and drains across the moorlands as well as the eroding peat hags at the headwaters of the River Tarras.

The team are working to bring forward some priority areas for action on the ground in autumn next year which include some of the largest networks of drains on the Lower Tarras across the moorland. Once these are blocked it will increase valuable wetland bog habitat acting as a huge sponge for water and helping the landscape to become more resilient to extremes in weather. Once there are some outline restoration plans, the team will hold some events for people to find out more.



Native woodland creation

We love a 'before' and 'after' and these photos taken just over a year apart really show what happens when we give nature a chance to recover. This site was a larch plantation which was a much-loved woodland locally but suffered severe damage after Storm Arwen and we had to carry out a felling operation to remove all of the fallen and snapped trees.

A year on and we have an area which looks very different, full of regenerating native trees; wildflowers; new wetland ponds full of tadpoles and dragonflies, and new seating. The site regeneration has also been helped along with an army of volunteers who have been busy planting native trees and scattering wildflower seeds to kick start the restoration.

We can't wait to see what it looks like in another years time!



Education and young people

Students from Langholm and Canonbie primary schools have been taking part in weekly sessions to complete their John Muir Awards. To work towards the 'Conservation' parts of their awards, the groups took part in a variety of different activities, including wildlife surveys; tree planting; scattering wildflower seeds; making barn owl nest boxes, and many more!

The awards aim to help build a connection between the participants and the natural world, providing an opportunity to learn about, explore and conserve the chosen area. Working with the groups to complete the awards on the reserve gives us the opportunity to engage more young people with the community land, strengthening the bond and sense of ownership.



Drystone Dyking Demo

A very successful demonstration of drystone wall (locally known as drystone dykes) building was run at Cronksbank earlier this week. The craftsman, Nathan Bell, a local dyker, undertook the repair of the wall round the tree nursery. He gave volunteers an excellent summary of the principles of dyke building.

We have lots of dykes on the Reserve that have suffered from neglect over the years. It was felt that repairing some of these, which are part of our heritage, fits well with our conservation ethos. Who knows, lessons in the art may even become part of our tourist offering in the future! Perhaps classes/demonstrations, could be run alongside hand spinning and dyeing wool, hedge laying and other ancient skills.



Los Angeles comes to Langholm!

Langholm was recently visited by a large film crew from Los Angeles, the crew were from PBS which is America's public broadcaster. Langholm was one of only two UK based film locations alongside numerous other places across the world they chose to film for a new documentary series.

The team originally contacted the Langholm Initiative a few months ago after reading about Langholm and the story of the community buy-out online. They were very keen to feature it in a new 6 part series focusing on stories of a better tomorrow. The series is all about sharing inspiring stories and innovations from across the world which are helping paving the way for a hopeful future in the huge challenges like the climate crisis.

The series is being produced by all-star award-winning team including presenter Ari Wallach and Exec Produced by world famous, platinum-selling recording artist, and film and TV producer Drake. It is going to be aired across the States and possibly through the BBC in Spring 2024. It was amazing that Langholm was chosen for this and to get a spotlight on the Town to such a huge international audience, we hope it will be a source of inspiration to other communities around the world.



Tawny Owl Chicks!

These young tawny owls were seen roosting in trees over one of the paths on the reserve earlier in the summer.

Although they were too young to fly, the owlets had started 'branching', venturing out of their nest into neighbouring trees, and giving visitors a lovely view of these beautiful birds!

Guest Blog

The article below was provided by William Young, who is an Edinburgh-based writer and hiker. He recently published a book on some of the legends, history and landscapes of the Scottish Border region, entitled "The Ghosts of the Forest". The forest in question is that same ancient woodland that the Tarras valley will help to recreate.

With an interest in both history and the environment, he offered to write a piece about the Celtic history in the area for our newsletter.

If anyone else has special interests relating to the Tarras Valley, we would welcome suggestions or contributions to our newsletter!



Guest Author - William A Young

Traces of Celtic Culture in the Tarras Valley

The empty expanses of the Tarras valley do not perhaps seem the ideal place to search for traces of human history. When it comes to one particular era however, there are far more than we might expect – and the stories they have to tell are as fascinating as any in the country.

Click the button below to find out more about the history of Celtic Culture in the area, and how it is still visible today.

[Read more](#)

Welcome to the Tarras Valley Nature Reserve

A story of hope, community and a powerful symbol of what can be achieved when we come together.

Following two epic community land-buy-outs, helped by thousands of people from all walks of life, against impossible odds, the community of Langholm now own 10,500 acres of the stunning Tarras Valley. We are now creating the Tarras Valley Nature Reserve which is one of the biggest projects of its kind in the UK for people, nature and climate.

Tarras Valley
Southern Scotland

Funds raised
£6m

Donors
Over 3.5K

Area
43 km²

© Photograph: Caroline Legg

Website Launch

We're thrilled to announce the launch of our brand new website!

Here, you'll be able to find out more about what's happening on the reserve, keep updated with our projects, find out about job vacancies, view wildlife survey data, and much more!

Launching our new website is an exciting milestone and it is an exciting and pivotal moment for any organization. Please take a minute to visit our website and tell us what you think, and remember, launching a website is just the beginning!

[Visit our new website!](#)

Please follow our social media for further updates about our projects and the work we've been doing.

With all our thanks,

The TVNR team and volunteers

The Langholm Initiative

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