



# Tarras Valley Nature Reserve

## Winter 2023 Newsletter

Winter this year has seen discovery of rare species, project planning, outdoor classroom sessions, volunteering, filming, and all steam ahead for our biggest restoration project to date, to name but a few!

We hope the year ahead will be as exciting, challenging and rewarding as the last. We wanted to say a huge thankyou for all your ongoing support, without you, none of this would be possible.

Before we roll into 2024 with all its promise, here are the highlights from the past few months:



## People

### Community Land Week

To celebrate Community Land Week 2023, the Langholm Initiative hosted a ceilidh in the Langholm Social Club.

There was a great turnout and we enjoyed dancing to music from Ian Anderson's local ceilidh band, a special video from our Cornet crying the Langholm Fair at the Castle Craigs, piper Iain Bell playing 'Its Oor Moor Now', Kayla McVittie singing 'The Rose of Allendale', Seth Brown's acoustic set, and Hugh McDiarmid poetry read by Margaret Pool. The night finished up with a spooky legendary tale of the White Lady of Tarras from Billy



Young. Thank you to Community Land Scotland for funding the event!

## Tarras Valley Volunteers

Our volunteers have been hard at work over the last few months!

We've planted a new area with native broadleaf trees, to expand the existing Longwood woodland; cleared many Sitka Spruce from across the moorland, and cleared overgrown vegetation to open up old walking routes. We're so lucky to have such wonderful volunteers, and wouldn't be able to do all of these tasks without them!

In addition to our weekly volunteering sessions, we'll be running regular weekend sessions in the new year. If you want to stay updated, you can join our facebook page - [Tarras Valley Volunteers | Facebook](#)



## Schools and Education

As part of our engagement programme, we took part in the Langholm Academy Work Ready Day and Careers' Fair. Our aim was to talk to local young people about possible job opportunities for all interests within the environmental sector, and looking at potential future job opportunities on the Tarras Valley.

Photo credit - The Langholm Alliance

## A Symbolic Rowan is Planted on

## the Common Land

Earlier this month, our cornet, Chris Tait, and members of the Castle Craigs Club, Ewan Patterson and Dale Irving, joined us to plant a Rowan tree on the Common Land. A tree was originally planted here in 2002 to honour the founding members of the Castle Craigs Club. The Castle Craigs is a very special area of Common Land, the community of Langholm has marked its boundaries annually for 270 years.



As part of our Community Land Week celebrations, we recorded the Cornet crying the Langholm Fair from the Castle Craigs cairn.

The fair crying is part of the important and long-honoured traditions of Langholm's Common Riding.

[Watch the full video here!](#)

## Nature

### Exciting trail camera discovery!

We are delighted that we have confirmed sightings of Pine Martens in the Tarras Valley woodlands!! Our trail cameras have recorded several pine martens visiting the feeders, which were built by students from Langholm and Canonbie primary schools as part of their John Muir Awards, and set up in our woodlands. This is such big news for the comeback of an endangered species in the area. Although we had suspected we might have the ideal mixed woodland habitat for pine martens, it's certainly been a big surprise for us all to find that these amazing creatures are living on the reserve!

Pine Martens are critically endangered in England and Wales as much of their woodland habitat has been lost. In Scotland, though they have recovered a little from a dramatic decline, the species is still rare. Scotland's population is estimated at 3,700 adult pine martens and is gradually expanding South from their Highland stronghold.

These elusive, curious and playful creatures rely on the cover of woods and trees for foraging. The nocturnal species likes to use mature trees with holes and cavities to nest and they are very hard to spot! As we encourage native woodlands to expand through the Tarras Valley, we hope that we will be

creating more diverse interconnected habitat to support this species into the future.

You can watch some of the trail camera pine marten footage below!



### **Golden Eagles**

We have had so many reports recently about eagles being spotted soaring in the skies above Langholm and over the Tarras Valley.

The South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project think these two young birds (named Tarras and Wren!) have paired up and are establishing their territory right here in Langholm. Their potential range is over a large area but includes some of the Tarras Valley and we are totally delighted with the news!

### **Large scale restoration in progress!**

The Tarras Strip 36 hectare plantation felling is now well underway, with Tillhill leading the operation on the ground alongside local forestry consultant Mark Seed Forest and Land Ltd.

There has been extensive community engagement done throughout to inform and update local people about the operations, especially on the timber haulage off the site, which was a big concern locally. The team have worked closely with partners including

Scottish Power and the Council to reduce any impacts on the local community and surrounding infrastructure.

Once the felling is finished, there will be lots of events to bring people together to collaboratively shape plans for the restoration of the former plantation to native broadleaf woodlands.



# Climate

## Peatland Restoration Planning

We're continuing to work with experts at the Crichton Carbon Centre to get the first phase of our peatland restoration programme ready to commence in September 2024.

There has been a huge amount of survey, planning and consultation done to date to develop a restoration plan. The main intervention will be blocking over 500km of drains and ditches on our moorland in the first round with plenty more to come in future years.

We're going to be holding community events in the New Year once we have some draft proposals so please watch this space for more details!



# Sustainability

## Property Development

Again thanks to everyone who contributed to the questionnaire in an earlier newsletter. Lots of work behind the scenes has been taking place. Our architects have been busy doing a lot of work behind the scenes looking at planning and utilities as well as the condition of the buildings. Alongside that, our consultant Jim has been doing lots of market research and business planning - he may well be coming back to you for more input.

We are aiming to have a discussion about this in February to determine the future direction of the buildings and put together a 10 year plan for them. This will feed into the action plan for the whole reserve. Once we are further on with the planning, we will make the information available on the website.



### **Cronksbank Cottage**

We have finally secured funding to allow us to proceed with the feasibility study on this property so this work will be starting sometime in the New Year. Hopefully this will lead onto its refurbishment and bring another property available for local affordable rent. We hope to learn a lot from this process as to how we can future proof our properties with regard to energy efficiency, making them more comfortable to live in and more efficient to run.

## **Reserve Improvements!**

Hopefully we will start to see new signage and other improvements to the reserve in the New Year with financial support from South of Scotland Enterprise.

We are also looking at guided walk training for the summer season so there's lots happening for anyone wanting to visit the reserve in the future!



## **Thank you and Merry Christmas!**

As always, we are hugely grateful for everyone who has supported us and has been following the progress throughout the development of the Tarras Valley Nature Reserve.

We hope you have all had a Merry Christmas, and we are looking forward to seeing what 2024 brings!

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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