



Official Opening of the new Car Park at Cormonachan Community Woodlands

Liz Evans, Chair of the Cormonachan Woodlands Association, opened the proceedings by introducing James Fraser, Chair of Friends of Loch Lomond & Trossachs who would officially open the new car park. Douglas Locke, Secretary, read out the names of those apologising for not being able to attend.

Liz gave a short history of Cormonachan Woodlands with its ancient Atlantic oaks dating back into thousands of years of history and appearing in the first maps of the area in the 1700s.

From 1999 to 2011, Ardroy Outdoor Education Centre used the woodlands for educational purposes during the time when Liz was Head of Centre, retiring in 2009. During that period 2.5 km of paths were constructed with benches installed and the resource centre, Jan's Hideaway was built.

When Fife Council closed the centre in 2011, a couple of years later, Ardroy was reopened as a social enterprise charity and Liz was asked to be a director and is to this day. Cormonachan Woodlands was an important educational aspect of the work of Ardroy with around a thousand primary school children visiting each year.

It was decided to establish the Cormonachan Woodlands Association in 2015 to manage the woodlands on behalf of the community and Ardroy. A Memorandum of Understanding was agreed with Forest Enterprise Scotland, the land owners, for the association to manage 58.9 ha for the woodlands in December 2016. There are now 71 Guardian Members supporting the association with an annual subscription.

One of the greatest problems to overcome had been the lack of parking space as initially there were only two car spaces. After a year of fund raising from members, locals, the Scottish Landfill Communities Fund and Friends of Loch Lomond & Trossachs, the association raised just over £6.25K and the car park was constructed to hold eight cars and an Ardroy minibus. Fortunately Drimsynie Construction gave the association a very good price for the construction and the car park with the signs and gates were completed in June 2017 and to be officially opened today.

Thanks go to Anna Wynne for donating the car park plans and to Douglas Locke, who worked tirelessly to obtain the funding for the car park. Thanks also go to the volunteer members who cleared the car park area, erected the signs, gates, bench and fencing. The car park and woodlands walks are now being used very regularly by members and visitors.

At this point James Fraser was asked to officially open the car park.

James gave a brief speech thanking everyone involved and that Friends of Loch Lomond had been very pleased to have been associated with this valuable project. He said he was also a director of Ardroy and knew how important Cormonachan Woodlands was to the education of the primary school children who visit the woodlands throughout the year.

He then formally opened the car park by removing the Saltire flag off the slate "Cormonachan Woodlands" sign which was applauded by those who attended the opening of the car park.

Following the opening ceremony, Liz took many of those attending on a guided walk around the Squirrel Trail and showed the work of the association and that of Ardroy. She showed them the rare sticky fungus in the hazel groves; the Squirrel Trail signs; the sculptures that are being erected; the clearance of the underplanted Sitka spruce trees that are being felled; the benches and picnic tables that have been erected; the open fire enclosure used by Ardroy's instructors for the primary school children where there was a group attending; the resource centre, Jan's Hideaway used for instruction & lunch breaks; the Red Squirrel Ropeway and where we intend to erect a squirrel hide and how the paths are strimmed to maintain the paths suitable for walking on all year.

The hour's tour ended back at the car park where everyone was thanked for attending and giving their support to Cormonachan Woodlands and the Cormonachan Woodlands Association.

For more information visit - www.cormonachan-woodlands.co.uk