

WILDCAT



the Newsletter of the
Newtonmore Community Woodland and Development Trust - NCWDT

www.wildcatcentre.org

wildcatnewtonmore@yahoo.com

MAY 2021



In 2000 the Wildcat Centre opened its doors as an information centre at the heart of the village of Newtonmore. It is the home of the Wildcat Trail, which was officially opened on 1st January 2000 as part of the Millennium celebrations. Ten years later the Wildcat Experience was launched to bring visitors to the village and raise funds towards the upkeep of the centre. We have survived a number of difficulties. As we journey through the Covid crisis we look for ways to move on. Please read on for further information and ways you may be able to help the Wildcat Centre continue.

WILDCAT CENTRE
FULLY COVID COMPLIANT FOLLOWING
NATIONAL GUIDELINES

- ♥ **FIXED PROTECTIVE SCREEN**
- ♥ **CONTACTLESS PAYMENT**
- ♥ **HAND SANITISER**

PLEASE WEAR A MASK WHEN VISITING THE CENTRE

CENTRE MANAGER

Lesley Allan retired in February 2021 following seven years as Centre Manager and also as a volunteer. The Trust is grateful to Lesley and wishes to thank her for her loyal, hard work and inspiration for significant changes to improve the Centre. Lesley was instrumental in redesigning the Wildcat Experience trackpack, the signage at the Centre, introducing an array of quality goods to sell and to cap it all, achieve a Visit Scotland 4* rating.



4 STAR VISITOR ATTRACTION IN NEWTONMORE
run by the
NCWDT



TRUSTEES & VOLUNTEERS

from the chair

Looking back to this time last year, little did we imagine that the Wildcat Centre would remain closed for the entire season, although we did manage some 'pop up' sessions thanks to volunteer Carol Knight.

The AGM eventually took place in November by Zoom; hopefully this year we will be able to hold it live.

Lesley Allan, Centre Manager, retired from the post at the beginning of the year and we thank her for all her hard work and initiatives. We will be advertising the position soon - watch this space!

We plan to open the Centre (fully Covid compliant) for weekends only in May and then more fully in June, depending on demand. We used the down time to have a good spring clean; the floor has been re-sanded and old paperwork, leaflets etc. cleared out to make way for new goods to sell.

The sad news is that, as many of you will have discovered, we have been reluctantly forced to close the Allt Laraidh section of the Trail due to serious and chronic erosion of the path. Following meetings with the landowner and an outside consultant it was concluded there was no financially viable way of carrying out effective repairs. Instead the Trail has been diverted down Strone Road with thanks to a work party of volunteers going out to re-site the waymarker bollards.

Elsewhere on the Trail we are continuing to upgrade gates/stiles and repair paths, in consultation with landowners and crofters.

A refurbishment programme of the Wildcat Experience models is underway, so two or three models will not be in the hunt over the coming weeks until the programme is completed.

In the meantime the remaining cats are ready to welcome visitors. Hawaii 50 has given up attempts at underwater surfing and is now afloat again on Loch Imrich.

All of this work is only possible with the help of volunteers (I may have said this before...!) so please, if you can spare any time get in touch.

Thank you once again for your continued support.

Paul Woolrich

wildcat maintenance crew

Many thanks to Jean Noble, Paul Allan and pupils of Kingussie High School for refurbishing some of our model cats.

from the treasurer

Over the last year the Trust has applied for several grants which are Covid related. We have received a grant from Highland Council and a Visitor Attraction grant from Visit Scotland for this year. The Trust intends to use this money to invest in the Wildcat Centre, Wildcat Experience and Wildcat Trail. We would welcome any suggestions but, in making suggestions, please be willing to help make it happen as we have a limit on our most valuable resource which is volunteer time.

Initial investment has been in a payment system for the Wildcat Centre that, as well as allowing us to receive contactless payments, will also enable us to keep a check on inventory. Our iPad will also allow Centre Volunteers to show visitors places of interest, via the web, with up to date information.

Shortly, we will have a large monitor in the window that will display a variety of information to passers-by. It will also display sponsored adverts which will support the costs of running the equipment and the Centre.

Eric Dodd

board of trustees

The current Board of Trustees is:
Chair: Paul Woolrich, Treasurer: Eric Dodd, Secretary Paul Allan, Lindsay Knight and Mark Thomas.

Jim Hall resigned at the last AGM and Lillias Noble was co-opted on to the Board for a brief time only.

During the lockdown the trustees have continued to meet on a regular basis via Zoom.

We would welcome anyone who feels they can contribute to the work of the Trust by becoming a trustee. If you are interested please contact Paul Woolrich in the first instance.

wildcatnewtonmore@yahoo.com
Tel 01540 673131

volunteers

Who volunteers at the Wildcat Centre?

Our current team is: Ian Gibson, Carol and Lindsay Knight, Ali Ogden, Sue Oxley, Mark Thomas and Paul Woolrich.

MEMBERSHIP of NCWDT for 2021 IS JUST £10.
MEMBERSHIP FEES REPRESENT A VITAL SOURCE OF INCOME FOR THE TRUST. PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP OR CONSIDER JOINING – **NOW!**

MAINTENANCE

The Trust now completed the final stage of the signage project with the installation of new fingerposts on the Trail and in the village. It was disappointing that some of the signage has had to be removed following the closure of the Allt Lارايدh section of the Trail. The alternative route is now sign posted via Strone Road.

A new gate has been installed at Milton Wood to replace a rather shaky stile.

A new gate has also been installed on the path above the cemetery.

Thanks to our work party volunteers:
Paul Allan, Eric Dodd, Lindsay Knight,
Andy Rowe, Mark Thomas and Paul Woolrich.

We are also looking out for more volunteers to use our brand new lightweight, easy to use, strimmer along the Wildcat Trail – especially beside the banks of the Spey. We have also purchased new health and safety gear. If anyone would like to help, please get in touch.

Eric Dodd, Treasurer and Paul Allan, Secretary, with old and new finger posts at the Jack Richmond Memorial Park.



Paul Woolrich, Chair, above landslip by the Allt Lارايدh



New gate by Milton Wood

HAWAII 50



A replacement HAWAII 50 (NO 87) was taken out onto Loch Imrich during April. Thank you to Laurie Skudos for his help and canoe.

While fixing him to the anchor the remains of the previous model were found languishing in the sludge of the waters. It is reassuring to know the cat was not the victim of vandalism as previously thought.

BACK in the HUNT!



Scaredy Cat (No9) and Cats' Protection (No89) have now been adopted and are once again part of the Wildcat Experience.



New gate on the path above the cemetery



INFORMATION

Save Our Wildcats – NCWDT have formed a liaison with Save our Wildcats which we anticipate will be to our mutual benefit.

From SOW –

we are building on the work of **Scottish Wildcat Action** the first national conservation plan for wildcats. We are based at the Highland Wildlife Park where:

Breeding enclosures at the conservation breeding for release centre are nearly complete. Once complete, the centre will have the capacity for up to 50 wildcats

- Wildcats have started arriving at the centre

- Winter field surveys (to establish suitable release sites) have now been completed

- In addition to the current team, we have recently recruited 2 dedicated veterinary surgeons and 4 experienced project field officers.



You can download the Mammal Mapper App and submit your sighting/image. These databases will help our field team when we go on to assess other potential release sites in the future.

ARE YOU LOCAL? If you photograph a possible wildcat and you live in Badenoch and Strathspey, please email Saving Wildcats directly: wildcats@rzss.org.uk

<https://savingwildcats.org.uk>

CAN YOU HELP?

As we find our *new normal* The Wildcat Centre enters into the next stages of its development.

Lots of exciting changes are happening.

Would you like to be part of the ever developing Wildcat Centre?

Could you spare a few hours to volunteer at the Wildcat Centre or do you have any skills you could bring to the Board of Trustees? Maybe you are not sure if you have the right talents! Why not get in touch and ask for some more information?

www.wildcatnewtonmore@yahoo.com

or call 01540 673131 to leave a message - or drop in at the Wildcat Centre during opening hours.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Find up to date information on our website
www.wildcatcentre.org

Please find us on facebook
– and like us!



WILDCAT CENTRE

During Lockdown the floor in the Centre has been given a makeover, sanding and varnishing, and it looks like new again.

In light of Covid-19 restrictions and requirements the Trust has invested in contactless payment equipment and a protection screen around the desk area. Access to the Centre, when open, will follow national guidelines.

The Trust is also installing an information screen in one of the windows. This is an exciting development and will display videos, photographs, information about the Centre and the village. We also anticipate generating some income by encouraging local businesses pay to advertise on the screen helping to fund it and the Wildcat Centre.

To draw visitors' attention to the Wildcat Centre, feather banners will soon flutter outside the Centre when it is open. The banners will also be used when the Wildcat Centre goes roving to the Highland Games, The Highland Folk museum etc – just as soon as life starts to find a new 'normal'.

Model maintenance

We are aware many of you with model cats in your care have reported the need for some repairs over the past few months. All these cats are on a list and now restrictions under the Covid crisis are changing we have begun a thorough maintenance programme. Please could everyone else give their cat a gentle wash and let us know if there is any damage or flaking paint and we will add you to the list.

wildcat centre manager

The position of Manager is now being advertised. Tasks are wide-ranging and include meeting the public, computer and social media skills, and much more. If you would like details of this part time, seasonal position please contact Paul Woolrich for further information.

email: wildcatnewtonmore@yahoo.com

NCWDT

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Scotland Charity No.27576