



southern uplands partnership  
*living land, living community*

# SUP NEWSLETTER

## *Project updates...*

Welcome to the latest Southern Uplands Partnership projects updates!

Suddenly we seem to have switched from spring to summer, with greenery and blossom all around and fledgling birds being fed by hardworking and hassled parents! We hope you're enjoying the season wherever you are.

In these pages, you can read the latest news from Southern Uplands Partnership's projects and core team, including: development of an exciting new upland habitat restoration project, new recruits to several projects and community engagement across the board!

*Keeping in touch*



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### IN THIS EDITION...

#### *SUP led/hosted project updates:*

- *Undoing the Silence of the Southern Uplands*
- *South West Scotland Coastal Way*
- *Connecting Threads*
- *Dumfriesshire East Community Benefit Group*
- *South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project*
- *Talla Hartfell Wild Land Area*
- *South West Scotland Environmental Information Centre*
- *Loch Ken Trust*

*Southern Uplands Partnership Team Updates: Pip, Sheila, Katy, Darren*

*And finally...*



## *Undoing the Silence of the Southern Uplands: Black Grouse Project*

### **Using the totemic species of black grouse, the development of our upland landscape restoration and community project continues apace.**

Over the last half century southern Scotland has experienced unprecedented change and pressure to its upland habitats, biodiversity, land use and the communities that reside here. Taking black grouse as a signature species to illustrate these changes, this once abundant upland bird has declined in southern Scotland by up to 69% between the 1990s and 2005. Their gurgling calls were once common in our soundscape, while the spectacle of strutting males gathering en masse at lek sites is a sight few will see today.

**Did you know?** Black Grouse are one of only 3 British birds that exhibit lekking behaviour, where males gather to perform their bubbling calls and posturing to attract hens, who choose their mate.



*Images by Malcolm Stott,  
taken in the Moorfoot Hills*

### **Habitat works...**

Having received funding from the NatureScot Nature Restoration Fund in December 2022 to develop a landscape level project plan, the Southern Uplands Partnership, as the lead party, RSPB Scotland and numerous key partners, have spent the last few months identifying locations for practical habitat works, and researching and costing the actions. These works will include everything from low density native tree planting and ditch blocking, to no-fence collar grazing and setting up of tree champion schools. The core focus areas are Galloway Forest Park and Cairnsmore of Fleet National Nature Reserve (NNR), Lowther Hills, Langholm Moor, Tweedsmuir/Moffat Hills, Moorfoot Hills. The project partners currently include RSPB Scotland, John Muir Trust, Borders Forest Trust, Tarras Valley, Forestry and Land Scotland, Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, National Trust for Scotland, NatureScot, and numerous

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## *Undoing the Silence of the Southern Uplands: Black Grouse Project contd.*

Estates and individual farmers. If you are a landholder/farmer in any of the above areas and would like to be a part of the project, please do get in touch.

We have also contracted Connicks (<https://connicksgroup.co.uk/>), an environmental consultancy, to undertake a specific piece of research in the use of no-fence collar technology for grazing with both cattle and sheep in an upland environment. This site-based piece of work will then help inform the roll out of this land management technique across farms in the five focus areas.

We have until the end of June 2023 to complete this part of the project planning, closely followed by the July deadline to submit the full funding application into NatureScot. If successful, this will allow for the habitat works to start in autumn 2023.

### **Cultural and community activities...**

Occurring alongside the habitat strand of works, we are also exploring Heritage Lottery funding to help develop a plan for various cultural, arts and community activities. We don't quite know what these areas will look like just yet, and, if the funding application is successful, this will allow us to catch up with communities in and around the black grouse focus areas to discuss the sorts of activities you would like.



Darren Flint (SUP Project Officer) and Julia Gallagher (RSPB Scotland) out at dawn in the Tweedsmuir Hills for one of the many black grouse lek surveys happening each April and May across southern Scotland. A definite three males seen and a possible fourth.

**If you would like further details about the project or are keen to be involved, please message [darren@sup.org.uk](mailto:darren@sup.org.uk)**



This project is supported by the Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund, managed by NatureScot

# South West Scotland Coastal Way

RICHARD CLARKE

## From Richard Clarke, Coastal Way Development Officer:

Progress has been going well with new funding applications being submitted and further engagement with community groups and key stakeholders. Work has begun on the Sandyhills to Portling path, with the cutting back of the ever-encroaching gorse. This is being undertaken by the Dumfries and Galloway Criminal Justice Scheme that will be ongoing throughout the summer, funded by the Robin Rigg Community Fund. The proposed route has now reached Dalbeattie and further scoping work is being undertaken heading West with the aim to reach Portpatrick soon.

Below are two routes along the Solway coastline, which showcase some of the fantastic walks that can be enjoyed. There are so many paths that many of us will be aware of, such as the Rockcliffe to Kippford path, but the two below are very much less well known and offer their own little rewards along the way for your efforts. These two sections will be included within the long-distance route and are on the core path network.

## Southernness to Mersehead:

Distance 6.5km Time 1.5 hours

Terrain: Sandy beach with sections on forest tracks

Access: Parking available in Southernness, with public toilets. Public transport available from Dumfries and Dalbeattie.

NB This is a tidal section, with very fast and dangerous tidal activity, please check the tide times before your visit.



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## *South West Scotland Coastal Way contd.*

RICHARD CLARKE

The majestic lighthouse at Southernness which has been standing guard over these waters since 1749, but now retired from duty and is a distinctive landmark on this stretch of the Solway. The clean white sands sprawl out before you with views towards the coastline of Sandyhills, and across the estuary towards the Cumbrian fells. The final destination is the RSPB reserve of Mersehead which is a haven for breeding waders and wildfowl on this wetland and saltmarsh habitat. Once you have reached this point, the choice is yours to either walk back to Southernness, or hop on the bus for the return leg.

### **Castle Corner to Glencaple:**

Distance 8.5km Time 2.5 hours

Terrain: Tracks, paths and quite roads.

Access: Parking at Castle corner, with buses available from Dumfries

NB This route does use public roads, so please observe the highway code.

This walk takes you firstly to the magnificent triangular Caerlaverock Castle which has seen many battles since it was built back in the 13th Century, and then onwards toward Ward Law which served as a vantage point to warn the occupants of the Castle of imposing attacks. This now serves as a reward for the ascent from the Solway, and greets you with spectacular views across the Solway.



After traversing the ridge, with the Nith on one side and the rolling countryside to the other you'll enter the village of Glencaple which was a fishing village and a major port back in its day. Now it serves you with a well-earned rest before your return leg, or choose to take the bus back.

## *Connecting Threads*

[WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/TWEEDRIVERCULTURE](https://www.facebook.com/tweedriverculture)

### **Introducing the newly-expanded Connecting Threads team!**

We are (l-r) Joanna Helfer, Kerry Jones, and Emily Cropton, River Culture Animateurs for Lower, Middle, and Upper Tweed respectively, Rachel Hunter, River Culture Curator, and Aled Haywood, River Messenger.



The team came together for a 3-day tour of the River Tweed from source to sea at the start of the month, which served as a fantastic introduction to the project, to our areas of work, and to each other. Starting at a rather soggy Tweedsmuir, the Tour took in towns, villages and rural areas along the length of the river, finishing in a similarly soggy Berwick on the Wednesday afternoon (we were blessed with sunshine in between!)

Highlights include: standing in the seemingly infinite blackness of the disused Neidpath railway tunnel (and imagining an installation of a light-up disco dancefloor), happening upon Rob Longworth from the Trimontium Museum in Melrose testing out a replica Roman ballista on a green near the Abbey... with carrots instead of bolts, a visit to Robert Smail's Printing Works in Innerleithen where we were treated to a tour and demonstrations of the presses in action, lunch on a vintage bus at Chain Bridge Honey Farm, and being invited in to see the beautiful handmade salmon procession regalia at Horncliffe Memorial Hall.



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## *Connecting Threads contd.*

[WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/TWEEDRIVERCULTURE](https://www.facebook.com/tweedriverculture)



The team are looking forward to a busy summer programme of projects and events including bringing artist Mark Zygadlo's WaterOrgan to three locations along the river, song walks and performances by folk singer, Kirsty Law, shooting short films in community gardens with Film Our Gardens, and much more! Watch this space for more info...

## *Dumfriesshire East Community Benefit Company*

[WWW.DECBG.ORG.UK/](http://WWW.DECBG.ORG.UK/)

March saw the allocation of £183,000 of funding to local projects from Ewe Hill 16 and Solwaybank windfarms. The projects ranged from big to small and across a broad spread of activities. Sports and recreation projects were the subjects of several successful applications including the replacement of drainage at the Eaglesfield recreation ground, tennis fun days in Canobie, the creation of an outdoor space for bush craft training for the Xcel Youth project in Langholm and funds to support a pigeon racing club in Ecclefechan to buy new timers. Village halls in Kirkpatrick Fleming, Eskdalemuir and Rigg all received funds to replace windows. The Tarras Valley Nature Reserve was successful in its bid for support to upgrade a disused house to Passive House standards to provide a highly energy efficient home for affordable rent.



Jamie Dent, DECBG's Community Officer, has been working to support emerging projects for the upcoming next funding round, for both **Ewe Hill 16 and Solwaybank Community Benefit Funds**, with a **deadline of 31st July 2023**. He has also run a workshop on project development and funding in Langholm, the first in a series of events to be run in Eskdale and south Annandale.

## *South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project*

[WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/EAGLESINSOUTHERNSKIES/](https://www.facebook.com/eaglesinsouthernskies/)

**The translocation season** is off to an early start with a successful collection of a chick in the last week of May.

Three new territories have been established by the maturing translocated birds. Beaky (C11) and Skan (C17) continue as a pair, building a second nest within their territory in Spring 2023.

Sadly, one of the youngest translocated eagles, Sula (B50), was discovered dead in early February 2023. Tests confirmed that there was no definitive cause of death and she had been in excellent condition. All other eagles are doing well with some journeying far and wide. Edith, a sub-adult from the first winter translocation became the first SSGEP eagle to visit Northern Ireland in February 2023.

David Oakes and 'Edith the Stout'  
([goldeneaglessouthofscotland.co.uk](http://goldeneaglessouthofscotland.co.uk)).



*Sula*

**Community Outreach** have been busy across the south of Scotland with project talks, new Eagle Champions sessions – now being taken up by Guides as well as Scouts – attending the BUAS Countryside Day for all P5 pupils in the Borders and Eagle Schools in Hawick, Yarrow and Kirkhope.

Working with Hornshole Greenway, the South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project delivered outdoor sessions in April and May to schools in the Hawick cluster as well as visiting with Stan the Golden Eagle.

Ray Lowden from Kielder Water Birds of Prey Centre brought along Stan and a host of other raptors to consolidate a fantastic period of eco-learning for the primary students of Hawick.

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## *South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project contd.*

[WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/EAGLESINSOUTHERNSKIES/](https://www.facebook.com/eaglesinsouthernskies/)

Ray was in action again for a morning of filming at Bowhill for the SSGEP film with Yarrow and Kirkhope Primaries who are participating in Eagle Schools for a second time. They were two of the first schools to join the programme and named Edward from the first translocation season. They spent the morning building Eyries and learning about raptors with Ray to showcase this element of the project for the film.



Jax

Filming has also taken place at The Eyrie exhibition, Raeshaw Estate with the Southern Uplands Moorland Group and Carrifran with NatureScot, the SSGEP Chair, Scottish Raptor Study Group and Borders Forest Trust. This season's translocation will also be filmed.

The project attended the Police Scotland Open Day in Dumfries this May. Even Moffy the Eagle made an appearance (many thanks to Police Scotland Youth Volunteer Ross Morton for 'suiting up' on a very hot day!!).



At the start of June, SSGEP will host a visit from Canadian students. Their itinerary includes a guided walk, project talk and volunteering in partnership with the John Muir Trust on Glenlude Estate.

Working alongside a local festival delivery team, preparations for Moffat 2023 are well underway with highlights including talks from Iolo Williams, Ewan Miles and Jim Crumley.

## *Talla Hartfell Wild Land Area*

DONALD GREIG

**GIS mapping** - Community workshops have been run in Tweedsmuir and Ettrickbridge as part of the natural capital GIS mapping report being researched and written by a team from the Wild Land Research Institute and Leeds University. The completed report will be available by the end of June.



*Mapping natural Capital in Tweedsmuir*

**Film** - we have completed the planning stages of the new film about the Wild Land Area but have delayed filming for interviews to June to allow for lambing to end. We expect filming to be completed by the end of June.

**Future initiatives** - a list of potential initiatives for development is being compiled based on conversations with stakeholders across the Talla-Hartfell project area. We are aiming to present this list to communities over the next couple of months.

## *South West Scotland Environmental Information Centre*

[HTTPS://SWSEIC.ORG.UK/](https://swseic.org.uk/)

**South West Scotland Environmental Information Centre (SWSEIC) has been recruiting.** Thanks to support from the Holywood Trust and Dumfries and Galloway Council, we have just completed recruitment for a one year intern post. News of the successful candidate will appear in a future issue.

We also have Aidan Bathgate, a master's student from University of Glasgow, working with us on a summer placement.

Our spring meeting for wildlife recorders was held in Castle Douglas in April, attracting more than 100 participants. It was a hybrid event, transmitted live on the day, but for anyone who missed it, all the presentations were recorded and are now available on [SWSEIC's YouTube channel](#).



At the same site, you will also find a video, filmed by volunteer Lucy Hadley, of our completed Wild Mammals at Home project, which loaned out trail cameras for people to use in the gardens. Though the project has now finished, the equipment is still available for people to borrow and collect more records.

We are now busy planning for a range of outdoor wildlife recording events this summer with various community groups across Dumfries and Galloway and Ayrshire, many of them run in partnership with the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere. To keep in touch, sign up to the SWSEIC monthly newsletter via our website: [Join the SWSEIC mailing list \(mailchi.mp\)](#).

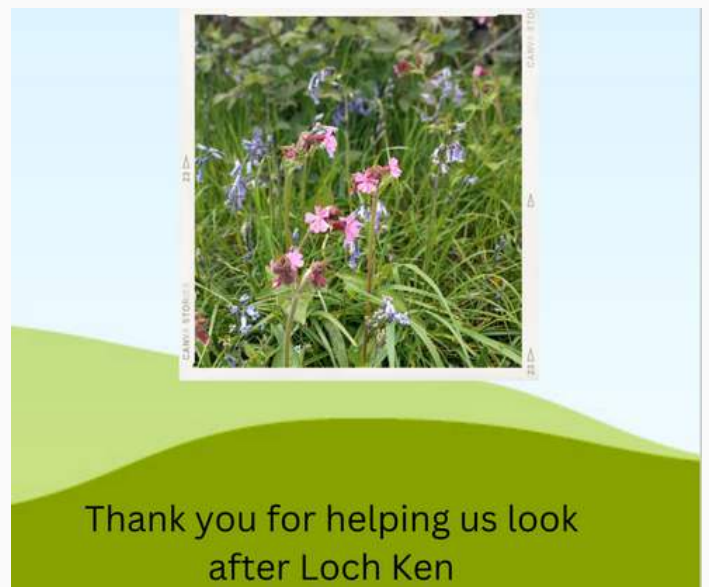
## *Loch Ken Trust*

[HTTPS://LOCHKEN.ORG.UK/](https://lochken.org.uk/)

**Great funding news for Loch Ken Trust this month**, with two funding awards to report. Drax plc, the owners of the Galloway Hydro Scheme, have approved funds to cover the core staff team (Barney and Lindsay) through to the end of March 2024. They have also secured the biggest ever grant from the Blackcraig Community Windfarm Fund for the Loch Ken Ranger Service, which will cover the cost of a Ranger for three years. This show of faith from the local community will provide a foundation for the growth and development of the Ranger Service.

You can read more news from Loch Ken Trust at:  
<https://lochken.org.uk/about/newsletters/>

### Education Programme Underway



## *Southern Uplands Partnership Core Team Updates*

PIP TABOR / SHEILA ADAMS / KATY EWING / DARREN FLINT

### **Pip's news...**

**It is great to see the list of people employed by SUP steadily growing (now 20). We now have two internships as well – giving local young people the chance to benefit from the amazing skills of the SUP team. If current project proposals get positive funding decisions, this number could grow further in the next couple of months.**

Having finished the Regional Land Use Partnership (RLUP) contract for South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) in March, we have been asked to help with the next stage of the pilot which is the development of a Regional Land Use Framework (RLUF). This will be a strategic approach to helping land managers make decisions that will deliver benefits for climate, nature and economy. The report on the work to date will be published shortly.

<https://south-scotland-regional-land-use-partnership-pilot-luc.hub.arcgis.com/>.

There are lots of really exciting local community initiatives aimed at tackling climate change by promoting renewable energy, active transport, electric car-clubs, local food growing, etc. Many of these came together at an excellent Green Summit held back in March. Since then, we have been working with a number of these to apply to Scottish Government for funds to establish a climate action “hub”. The exact nature of this hub is still to be determined, but we anticipate it will involve creating some posts to help existing groups do more, to share experience, to work together and also help get new groups started. We hope to have the application submitted later this month.

### **Sheila's news...**

**It has been a busy spell for recruitment**, with the appointment and induction of the new Connecting Threads team members, which also involves the purchase of equipment, setting up IT etc. I was involved with the appointment of the new SWSEIC Intern and finally getting superfast fibre to premises broadband at the SWSEIC office in Kirkgunzeon felt like quite an achievement!

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## *Southern Uplands Partnership Core Team Updates*

PIP TABOR / SHEILA ADAMS / KATY EWING / DARREN FLINT

### **Sheila's news cont.**

Recruitment for the Chief Executive post is live until 16th June. If you would like to lead and work in an award-winning organisation, you can find the details and how to apply here [Chief Executive – Job Opportunity | Southern Uplands Partnership \(sup.org.uk\)](https://sup.org.uk).

I have also been heavily involved in supporting project team members with funding applications. A tender exercise in March for accountancy, audit and payroll services saw Farries, Kirk and McVean being appointed as Accountants and Auditors for both SUP and SUP Services Ltd. We look forward to working with Farries, Kirk and McVean and thank JRW Accountants for their services over the years.

As I also provide a financial and secretariat service for Dumfriesshire East Community Benefit Group (DECBG), March and April were particularly busy with Board meetings and processing applications to the Ewe Hill 16 Community Benefit Fund and Solwaybank Community Fund.

### **Katy's news...**

**Since March** we've been finalising the work on the Dumfries and Galloway Council's 'Greener Events Toolkit' in collaboration with Dumfries and Galloway Council's Events team and Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere. The Toolkit is designed to be a comprehensive guide for Community Events organisers on how to plan events and festivals while being aware of potential environmental impacts. The toolkit will be launching in June and we look forward to the roll-out and hope that this toolkit helps events organisers develop and deliver excellent rural events while minimising any harms to place, people and wildlife, present and future!

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## *Southern Uplands Partnership Core Team Updates*

PIP TABOR / SHEILA ADAMS / KATY EWING / DARREN FLINT

### **Katy's news cont.**

This year, SUP has taken on a greater role in the Environmental Alliance for the South of Scotland (EASoS), an alliance of environmental experts and organisations from across the South of Scotland whose members have been brought together to facilitate our collective environmental ambitions and actions for the region.



*Hybrid Dumfries meeting held at Dumfries Baptist Church on 31st March*

Two meetings were held at the end of March, funded by South of Scotland Enterprise - one in Dumfries and Galloway and one in the Scottish Borders, each including two excellent presentations and discussions around them. Combined notes from these can be read at the link at the foot of this page:

<https://sup.org.uk/projects/environment-alliance-for-the-south-of-scotland-easos/>

I've also been working to identify potential members to add to the EASoS mailing list. If you work for/with nature and biodiversity anywhere across South Scotland and would like to be involved, please get in touch with me at: [easos@sup.org.uk](mailto:easos@sup.org.uk)

I also attended my first meeting of the Dumfries and Galloway Learning for Sustainability Partnership in May, and heard about many great local collaborations between Dumfries and Galloway schools and other organisations in helping our young people get to grips with sustainability in all sorts of creative and fruitful ways. I look forward to more involvement in future!

### **Darren's news...**

See 'Undoing the Silence of the Southern Uplands' section above!

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AND FINALLY...

## And finally...

The best Katy's little camera could do on full zoom towards the Osprey nest at Threave Nature Reserve as we passed it during the wonderful Galloway Glens/ National Trust for Scotland event: 'Walk on the Wild Side' on 18th May – perhaps not wildlife photographer of the year quite yet! For better photos and incredible film of the nest, see the Threave Ospreys NTS Facebook page at:  
<https://www.facebook.com/ThreaveOspreys>



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