

PROTECTING RURAL
LANDSCAPES
for future generations

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
in rural Scotland

RAISING AWARENESS
landscape - people - economy

ANNUAL REVIEW

THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF RURAL SCOTLAND 2020
www.aprs.scot

New APRS Educational Resources for 2021

Discover more about Scotland's new Deposit Return System, Green Belts and National Parks. You can also book a FREE visit, online or in person with our Education Manager at education@aprs.scot



Educator Resources - Countryside Protectors

Educator notes, worksheets, video and maps for early years to senior phase - Deposit Return, Green Belts and National Parks.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2020

- Launching our *Countryside Protectors* education programme
- TV coverage of the Borders and Galloway National Park campaigns
- Securing substantial funding for our Green Belts Alliance
- Marking the 20th anniversary of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000
- Supporting the launch of *Landscape for Place and Success*



APRS

Covid-19

For APRS, as for all other charities, 2020 was dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

All staff were required to work from home from mid-March onwards, and were supported in doing so through appropriate IT provision and advice and regular communication with the Director and Trustees. All documents and images were transferred to cloud storage and made accessible to all staff. All internal and external meetings were held by video conference during this period.

We experienced some delays in securing donations from charitable trusts and reductions in the amount of those donations. However, these were more than offset by grants from the Coronavirus Business Support Fund and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, so the pandemic had no significant overall effect on our financial situation. We requested a reduction in office rent from our landlords, but this was declined. We were therefore obliged to continue paying rent, service charges, broadband and phone costs for an office which we did not occupy for most of the year.

Scottish National Parks Strategy Project

Our joint project with the Scottish Campaign for National Parks (SCNP) calls for a national strategy for a network of National Parks across Scotland, including at least one coastal and marine National Park.

We issued our Galloway National Park socio-economic report to MSPs and Councillors. We provided policy and technical advice to the Borders and Galloway National Park campaigns. We discussed a potential business debate with opposition parties at Holyrood. We published our *Leading The Way* blog on protected areas and rural recovery, a set of Frequently Asked Questions and a briefing note on the international campaign to protect 30% of land for nature by 2030.

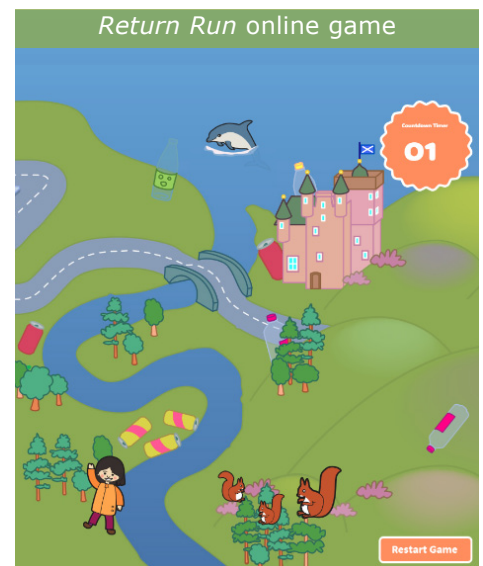
We objected to the Argyll & Bute Proposed Local Development Plan (LDP), as it had dropped its National Park proposal majority support from consultees, and responded to East Ayrshire Council's Main Issues Report, supporting a Galloway National Park. We agreed a Communications Strategy with advice from SCNP President, Robert Wight of the Scots Magazine. In July we issued a press release marking the 20th anniversary of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, with four MSP quotes, generating substantial media coverage. We liaised with the Campaign for National Parks over the Glover Review of protected landscapes in England and Wales.

Have You Got The Bottle? Campaign

In 2017 our *Have You Got The Bottle?* campaign persuaded the Scottish Government to introduce a deposit return system (DRS) for drinks containers, to reduce litter, boost recycling rates and tackle climate change.

The final DRS regulations were passed by the Scottish Parliament in May, with the start date delayed until July 2022 and targets until 2023; we issued a press release and briefed all MSPs, welcoming progress but criticising the start date. We provided comprehensive briefing and training to Girlguiding representatives prior to their meeting with the First Minister re DRS. We organised a DRS study visit to Lithuania for Austrian and other NGOs and journalists.

Campaign Manager Jenni Hume went on maternity leave from May to December. We employed Joanna McFarlane as our new part-time Education Manager to set up and deliver a national APRS education programme. She prepared written and online education resources, including interactive online game *Return Run*, for our DRS and other projects. The *Countryside Protectors* education brochure was published in November along with the online game, an educational video and a range of other educational resources.



Keep Potterton Green

APRS Green Belts Alliance

The APRS Green Belts Alliance promotes the value of Scotland's 11 Green Belts and co-ordinates the activities of community-based Green Belt action groups across Scotland.

The Alliance made a detailed submission to the Call for Ideas for the forthcoming National Planning Framework 4, supported by 17 local groups and other organisations. We wrote to Scotland's Chief Planner regarding a loophole related to housing land supply calculations, which was allowing housing development in unsustainable locations. Shortly afterwards the Scottish Government issued a consultation aimed at addressing this issue, leading to positive changes to Scottish Planning Policy in December.

We advised enthusiastic new Aberdeenshire group Keep Potterton Green on opposing Green Belt housing allocations in the Proposed Local Development Plan (LDP). Scone and District Community Council and Keep Potterton Green joined the Alliance. We advised local people on opposing speculative development on a Green Belt golf course near Milngavie, and on proposed Green Belt 'enabling development' for the restoration of a listed building in Renfrewshire. We responded to the Argyll & Bute Proposed LDP, supporting no loss of Helensburgh Green Belt, and to Edinburgh's Choices for City Plan 2030. We researched current methodology for housing needs assessment and published maps of Scotland's Green Belts on our website.

Town & Country Planning

We aim to encourage genuinely sustainable development in rural Scotland, including advising our members and other people on how to respond to proposals which affect their local landscapes.

We responded to the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (LDP), calling for removal of Green Belt housing sites at Potterton, and to the proposed Aberdeen LDP. We submitted an objection to the proposed Space Hub Sutherland on the grounds that this is an issue for the National Planning Framework and due to adverse effects on protected areas for landscape and biodiversity. We formally requested the Scottish Government (SG) to call this application in for determination by Ministers. The SG subsequently instructed Highland Council (HC) to notify it if it intended to grant permission, which HC

duly did; however, the SG cleared it back to HC which then issued approval.

The proposed Coul Links golf development in Sutherland, to which APRS and many other NGOs had objected, was refused by Scottish Ministers on advice from a Reporter. Planning permission was refused for egg sheds at Hutton in the Scottish Borders, to which APRS member Hutton & Paxton Community Council had objected based on APRS advice. We submitted an objection to the proposed Rigghill wind farm in Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park. We advised local campaigners in Galashiels over Scottish Borders Council proposals to build a new Galashiels Academy in Scott Park and for major development in the Hollybush valley. We advised a member of the public about preventing destruction of a historic drystone dyke in Aberdeenshire.

Members & Volunteers

APRS relies heavily on the generosity, financial or otherwise, of its members and other supporters and volunteers. The charity is very grateful for all the help it receives.

Thank you to all our members and volunteers who make possible all of the work described in this Review. Please pass this Review on to anyone you think might be interested in becoming a member, to help us make 2021 an even better year for Scotland's rural landscapes.

Please follow APRS on:

 www.facebook.com/APRSScotland

 www.twitter.com/APRSScotland

Communications & Partnership

We aim to raise awareness of the importance of Scotland's landscapes to its people and economy, through working in partnership with individuals, other charities, local authorities, government and public bodies and through publicising our work to our members and beyond.

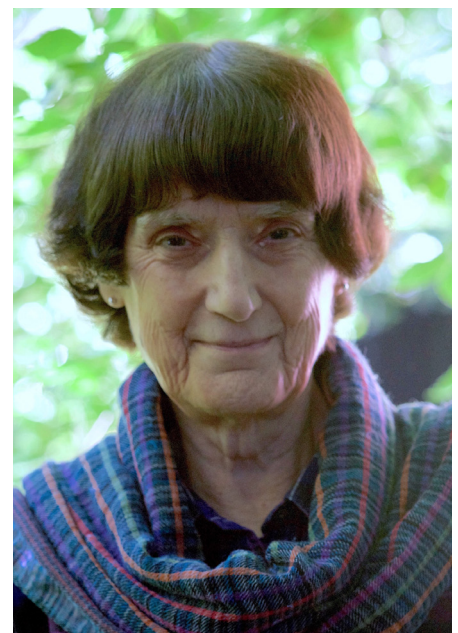
We commenced planning for a possible 2021 conference on Scotland's protected landscapes, in partnership with the Scottish Campaign for National Parks, the John Muir Trust and The National Trust for Scotland. We redesigned and developed our website to include the new learning materials and online game. We issued our Spring *Rural Scotland* newsletter in electronic form due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but returned to posting paper copies of the Autumn newsletter. We published two website Bulletins for our members and posted regular updates on all of our campaigns and our policy and planning work on Facebook, Twitter and our website.

ITV Border News broadcast items on the campaigns for a Borders National Park and for a Galloway National Park. We secured extensive press coverage of our work over the year, including in the Herald, National, Press & Journal, Third Force News, Scotsman, STV, Sunday Post and Times. This covered subjects as varied as the delay to the deposit return system and calls for more ambitious targets, controversies over proposed spaceports and campaigns for more National Parks.

Governance & Management

APRS is governed by an Executive Committee of eight Trustees, and benefits from several dedicated volunteers and a 20-strong advisory Council.

John Foster CBE, who was APRS Vice-President from 2002 to 2018, sadly passed away in July aged 99. At our AGM, held by video conference due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we elected photographer and author Patricia Macdonald as our new President for a first three-year term. We thanked retiring Vice-President Charles Strang for his six years of service and welcomed his continuing involvement with APRS as a Member of Council. We thanked retiring Trustees Mike Gascoigne and Karol Swanson for their six years of service; they also remain on Council. Andy Dorin and John Esslemont were elected to Council and Judith Crabb and John Esslemont to the Executive Committee. Director John Mayhew posted a video on YouTube summarising the 2019 Annual Review in advance of the AGM. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic we successfully held all four Executive Committee meetings via video conference, but reluctantly decided to cancel both our Spring and Autumn Council Meetings. Early in the year we installed new fibre cable, router and network cabling in the office in order to separate our broadband provision from that of our landlords, but unfortunately made little use of this due to the office closure.



Our new President Patricia Macdonald

Policy Development & Advocacy

We seek to protect and enhance Scotland's rural landscapes for future generations and to promote effective planning and landscape protection systems in Scotland, through active involvement in national policy development and advocacy.

We published manifesto proposals for the 2021 elections on Green Belts, National Parks and the circular economy, and submitted them to relevant staff in all political parties. Vice-Chair Rebecca Hughes represented APRS on the Executive Committee of the new Scotland's Landscape Alliance, which launched its landmark *Landscape and Place for Success* publication. Rebecca also represented APRS on Scottish Environment LINK's Green Recovery Group, which advocated proposals to the Scottish Government (SG) which would put the environment at the heart of Scotland's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. We made a detailed submission to the SG's Call for Ideas for its forthcoming National Planning Framework 4. We responded to Edinburgh Council's consultation over Access and Camping in the Pentland Hills Regional Park.

Fundraising & Membership

We rely on generous support from charitable trusts, private companies and our members to carry out our work.

The Susan H Guy's Charitable Trust donated £20,000 towards our Green Belts Alliance project, and substantial anonymous contributions were received towards both our Deposit Return System project and our National Parks project. We received the first instalment of a three-year core funding agreement from the Craignish Trust (£2,000 per annum) and several other donations towards unrestricted funds, including £3,500 from Mrs M H McMillan's Charitable Trust, £2,500 from the Whitley Animal Protection Trust and £1,000 from the Cruden Foundation. We received a £10,000 grant from the City of Edinburgh Council through the Coronavirus Small Business Support Fund and grants totalling £2,790 from the UK Government through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Our members and others have now contributed nearly £1,100 over several years through the *easyfundraising* initiative, which generates charitable donations from online shopping at no extra cost.

Plans for 2021

In 2020 we agreed a comprehensive Business Strategy 2021-23 covering all aspects of the work of APRS. This sets out the principal outcomes we aspire to achieve by 2023:

- Stronger protection for Green Belts in National Planning Framework 4
- A National Parks Strategy promoted by the Scottish Government
- Scotland's DRS launched on time in 2022 and meeting its 2023 targets
- Education project launched with secure funding
- At least one further project contributing to our aims and supporting our costs
- Scotland's Landscape Alliance recognised as a leading player in national policy debates
- Rural communities better equipped to engage in local planning and landscape debates
- Greater public awareness of APRS and its activities
- More secure core funding

John Mayhew | Director | March 2021

APRS is the charity which promotes the care of all of Scotland's rural landscapes.

We aim to:

- protect and enhance Scotland's rural landscapes for future generations
- promote effective planning and landscape protection systems in Scotland
- encourage genuinely sustainable development in rural Scotland
- raise awareness of the importance of Scotland's landscapes to its people and economy
- promote the activity of land managers who care for Scotland's landscapes

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