

Whitelee Countryside Ranger Service – 2014 News Stories

Access Restriction Notice: Scottish Siberian Husky Club Event - 6th & 7th December 2014

Please note that there will be a Scottish Siberian Husky Club race event on at Whitelee on the weekend of the 6th and 7th of December and as a result there will be some restrictions on access during the event.

The race event will run from 08:00am and end around 16:00 - 17:00pm each day and will be in the area of Muir Hill, Mid Hill and High Alderstocks (farm), in the south-east of the windfarm, utilising the windfarm and forest tracks in this area including a section of the main Spine Road. The nearest entrance points to the race are via High Alderstocks and Ardochrig and the turbines the race course will pass include numbers - 101, 94 (95), 80, 64, 50, 51, 37, 66, 52, 110, 67 and 83. Event organisers and marshals will be present on the course during the event to assist both race entrants but also other access users. Visitors are requested to look out for signage, crowd control measures and be guided by them as well as event staff who will advise on safe passage through the area.

During the race dog owners are requested to keep their dogs on the lead when in the area of the event so that they do not get swept up running with the huskies.

For further information about the route please see the 'related documents' section for a map showing the race area. If you have any queries regarding the event or alternative routes etc, please contact the Whitelee ranger Service.

See The Woods For The Trees

15-11-14

The carrot area of the windfarm benefited from some practical work on Saturday the 15th November when families came out to take part in our 'See the woods for the trees' activity. After a tool talk and some background to the days work, the group carried out the planting of willow cuttings in a bog area where the hope is to create an area of willow coppice. The willow will be cut as a crop on a 3 or 6 year rotation to provide straight willow rods that can be used for a variety of willow crafts and skills by the countryside rangers. Managing the willow in this way increases the longevity of the willows and is also beneficial for wildlife, creating new habitat and after cutting, causing vigorous new growth that providing food. After a morning of willow planting the rangers provided hot drinks via their Kelly Kettles during lunch, after which there was just enough time to create some habitat piles in the area also. These will provide valuable habitat for insects as well as mammals such as hedgehogs, mice etc.

After a full day of work, on what turned out to be a mild and glorious day, everyone headed home satisfied with the work they had done and the new skills and knowledge gained.

Spooktastic

24-10-14

Halloween came early to Whitelee once again with a macabre collection of characters heading to the visitor centre from 6.30pm to 8.30pm on Friday 24th, to be regaled with tales of terror and to take part in Halloween games and activities. The weather for this years event wasn't the best with rain and gusting wind most of the day but thankfully this cleared just long enough for the event to go ahead inside and outside the building. Gruesome Halloween characters started to arrive from 6.30 sharp and were met by the staff of the visitor centre as well as the countryside rangers, suitably dressed to fool any Samhain creatures that might be lurking.

The hub within the visitor centre was a hive of activity with traditional Halloween games as well as a few different activities and some recreated medieval torture devices. The rangers led groups out and around the visitor centre on their spooky walk which included tales of witches, monstrous scarecrows and gruesome murders. The scare of the night was delivered by the horrifying scarecrow tale - that caused one whole group to let out a collective, bloodcurdling scream that was heard throughout the area and even inside the visitor centre.

All in all, it was a great night of Halloween scares. The rangers will have to work hard to better it in 2015!

New Ranger Starts With WCRS

30-9-14

The Whitelee Countryside Ranger Service are back up to full strength after Kate Williamson joined the team from Rouken Glen on Tuesday. Kate is an experienced countryside ranger having previously worked as the Activity ranger at Rouken Glen, as well as with TCV and Dams to Darnley. Kate's knowledge and experience will make a valuable addition to the team.

Fabulous Fungi Foray

27-9-14

Saturdays fungal foray had 8 mushroom hunters along for an afternoon walk in the Carrot area looking for newly emerged fungi. A recce of the route the Thursday before had seen slim pickings but a couple of days of good weather resulted in a number of fresh specimens. A number of different *Laccaria* species were found as well as Cep's and Common and Spiny Puffballs but the find of the day was discovered by 2 eagle eyed children - spotting a pair of *Amanita*'s just within the woodland edge. The specimens found weren't a species known by the ranger so a sample was collected and taken back for closer inspection and after taking a spore print, were discovered to be a pale orange version of the well known Fly Agaric mushroom of legend and as used by Shamans around the world. The species was *Amanita muscaria* var. *formosa*, a new record for the area.

Dirt Crit MTB Event

21-9-14

On a glorious sunny Sunday East Renfrewshire Council's new mountain bike trails at Brown Hill played host to the second round of the WoSCA MTB Dirt Crit series race on Sunday the 21st of September. The event was organised by the East Kilbride Road Club and Scottish Cycling and was the first organised MTB race event in the new facility and 32 kids from age 8 up to 16 took part, starting the day with a skills test where competitors could gain time to be used in the race within the race. The skills section consisted of 3 different skill tests including a bottle pick-up, skinnies and a tight slalom course - with each of the 3 tests getting progressively harder.

After the skills section the real racing began with massed starts for each age class from turbine 53. First off was the under 8s, quickly followed by the under 10s, 12s, 14s and 16s. The new trails stood up well to this first event and good use was made of the braided sections for overtaking, something that can be particularly difficult in MTB racing. Daisy Taylor took victory in the under 8 category from East Kilbride Road Club and her older brother Finlay won the under 10s. The under 12s was won by Kieran Ballard and the under 14s/16s by Logan Boyd from Clydesdale Colts.

A small crowd of proud parents as well as interested passers by enjoyed watching the action and while all of this was going on, there were also cycle groups making good use of the skills trail and pump track, illustrating how the design of the MTB facilities are perfectly suited to having multiple groups and users making use of the area at the same time.

New Whitelee MTB Trail Plan

17-9-14

A new trail plan of the Whitelee mountain bike track (MTB) has been produced by the track designers on behalf of the Whitelee Access Project and will be available for free both from the Ranger cabin and the Whitelee visitor centre in due course. For those that can't wait or prefer to just print their own, the new trail plan can be found in the 'related documents' section of this page. The plan not only shows the layout of the track but includes the names/types of all the technical trail features so will be invaluable for anyone planning their first visit or parents wanting to see which sections of the tracks best suit their children's riding abilities before visiting.

Strollers - Scotland Outdoors magazine

17-9-14

Scotland Outdoor's magazine visited Whitelee on the 16th to see the windfarm for the first time. They came to see the new mountain bike track as well as the other access/outdoor pursuit opportunities the windfarm provides and first on their list of things to do was to meet and come out on the walk with the Stroller Striders group. 21 strollers came on the morning, another excellent turnout, and were happy to chat and be photographed by the guys from the magazine as they went. Along the way they also managed to talk to other users of the site, dog walkers, cyclists, runners etc. Later on it was down to the mountain bike facility not only to see this, but to have a go around the

new tracks. It's fair to say they were impressed not only with the MTB tracks but all that they saw during their visit. The magazine comes out in November so will be one to watch for on the shelves.

Neilston Development Trust Visit

17-9-14

The Whitelee ranger service were glad to help with a visit by community members from Neilston, many visiting the windfarm for the first time. The visit was organised by the Neilston Development Trust who provided transport and cycle leaders as well as organising transport for everyone's bikes via the Whitelee rangers. On arrival on site, the group were given a short introduction to the windfarm by WCRS before heading off in different groups - some tackling the Lochgoin circuit, others the new mountain bike track and a small group of walkers opted to travel by foot rather than peddle. The weather was sunny and dry for their visit and by the end of the day everyone had enjoyed their visit and were impressed by the access opportunities, facilities and scenery of the site. Hopefully it won't be long till they make a return visit.

Whitelee Mountain Bike Facility Restrictions - 21st September 2014

10-9-14

There will be a Youth Series Dirt Crit mountain bike race taking place in the Whitelee MTB site on Sunday 21st of September that will result in access restrictions within the site. The event will run from 9am till 5pm and during this time there will be limited access to the site and facilities. The intention will be to allow limited access to the public for cycling (mountain biking), between races, but during racing it will not be possible to make use of the MTB facility for cycling. It will be possible to spectate the event while it is taking place and restrictions are limited to cycling activities only.

On The Trail Of The Covenanters

10-9-14

The weather was perfect on Saturday for our Covenanters history walk and 10 interested parties came along on the 8 mile walk, taking in a number of covenanting sites within the windfarm while also being provided a broad overview of the time by the countryside ranger service. The time period of the Covenanters can be challenging to decipher but one thing that is not in doubt is the strong connections the Whitelee area has with this period of Scotland's history. The walk stayed largely on the Lochgoin circuit route, starting and ending at the visitor centre, and stopping at a number of sites to hear about them before going to the Lochgoin monument. Unfortunately the Covenanters museum at Lochgoin farm was still closed for refurbishment but on reaching the monument the group were provided an overview of the museum and the history of the time period. All in all it was a great day and hopefully helped peak the interest of everyone involved to go in search of more local history.

Anyone interested in the covenanting history of the site, of the other intriguing history of the area should look at the history section of the website.

Barnstorming Bats

10-9-14

Unfortunately due to bad weather the Barnstorming Bats event had to be cancelled. Not only was the weather a health and safety issue for participants, but bats would not emerge from the roost during periods of high wind and rain, preferring to wait for better weather. During long periods of poor weather for example bats will go into a 'torpor' which is a state of reduced activity where the metabolic rate, body temperature etc are reduced to conserve energy. It is not full hibernation however as the bats can quickly 'wake' and become active again.

The Dams to Darnley rangers, who were running the event for WCRS as they were on annual leave, contacted everyone they could and went to site to meet anyone that they couldn't contact. WCRS would like to thank the Dams to Darnley rangers for their help with the event and would also like to apologise to everyone that was booked for the disappointment of the event cancellation but without the bats, there was little point in running the event in unsafe weather conditions.

Fashioning Flames

20-8-14

Despite the best efforts of the weather the Fashioning Flames activity was a roaring success. After a quick change of venue where the rangers brushed back some trees within a woodland area and installed a basher for cover, the worst of the wind and rain was kept out. A full house of families in the morning got to experiment with everything from fire-drills (friction fire), to flint and steels; firesteels to tricks of the bush crafter. There was even some demonstrations of more unusual methods using 9v batteries and steel wool for example. By the end of the session everyone had managed to ignite a tinder bundle using their preferred method of fire lighting.

The afternoon session was for adults only but followed a similar program but with more emphasis on trying the methods for longer. There was great excitement when one of the group lit a tinder bundle from a hot coal generated using the bow-drill friction fire method...on his first ever attempt! The rangers were as excited as him, and also happy that they must have been teaching them well! Again, at the end of the day everyone got to light their tinder bundle using their preferred method and got to experiment with some tricks and other methods. All in all it was a great day despite the weather, everyone learned some new methods for fire lighting and thankfully, no accidental fires were started so everyone left happy.

Dragons On Film

13-8-14

Unfortunately there were no takers for this event, possibly due to the summer holidays, but that didn't stop the ranger service heading along to a well known dragonfly and damselfly pond at the eastern end of the site, near Ardochrig. The small innocuous looking pond always has always got Odonata (dragonflies and damselflies), patrolling around it through the summer months and in fact the rangers had been trying for over 4 years to catch one of the larger dragonflies found there to positively identify it. Saturday the 26th July 2014 proved to be the day that the mystery of what

dragonfly it was solved. After lots of missed attempts and standing on a log in the pond for around 20 minutes one of the large bright green and blue dragonflies was caught in a net. It was long suspected that the species was Common Hawker (Aeshna juncea), but this notoriously difficult species to catch had been true to form in previous attempts to capture it. Thankfully with one now caught it was easy to identify this wonderful looking dragonfly that even sat long enough for some photos to be taken that can be seen on the Whitelee Countryside Rangers Facebook page.

Boggy Beasties 2014

13-8-14

The Ranger Service kids summer club - the Boggy Beasties has ended for another year after a great summer. This years theme was of course...the Commonwealth Games, something that the children loved. They got to try Whitelee versions of everything from the shot putt to cycling, running to dodgeball and at the end of the 6 week summer program were presented a medal for their efforts. It wont be long now until planning for the next year has to begin!

Fires in the windfarm

31-7-14

Visitors to the windfarm are requested to please refrain from lighting fires unless they are absolutely necessary and only in situations where it is safe to do so. Access rights apply to the lighting of fires when camping for example but responsible access users should only light a fire when it is required and preferably a stove should be used rather than an open fire.

If lighting a fire please make sure it is off of the peat as this can easily catch light and burn underground. Underground peat fires have been known to burn for decades and can be extremely dangerous. Fires should be lit away from buildings, turbines, HV cables and other infrastructure within the windfarm.

What the Scottish Outdoor Access Code says:

Wherever possible, use a stove rather than light an open fire. If you do wish to light an open fire, keep it small, under control, and supervised - fires that get out of control can cause major damage, for which you might be liable. Never light an open fire during prolonged dry periods or in areas such as forests, woods, farmland or on peaty ground or near to buildings or in cultural heritage sites where damage can be easily caused. Heed all advice at times of high risk. Remove all traces of an open fire before you leave.

MTB Skills Trail Open

21-7-14

The last remaining section of the Whitelee MTB trails is now open for use. Completed at the end of last week and open over the weekend the Skills Trail is an area for riders to test and develop their riding skills on a variety of technical features contained within in a short track. This is the final section of the MTB trails completed meaning the full Whitelee MTB trails are now open for use for free, 7 days a week.

Use of the trails has been excellent since opening with lots of family groups, kids groups and experienced riders taking to them. The picnic area and shelters have also proved popular not just with riders but with groups and families looking to watch riders out on the tracks.

Whitelee Mountain Bike Trails - Now Open!

26-6-14

The Whitelee mountain bike trails are now open for use. There are still some small technical trail features (TTFs), to be completed and the skills loop is still under construction but the main inner and outer trails are complete and open to ride as is the pump track at the eastern end. More details of the official launch event held on Wednesday 25th as well as updates on the track to come soon.

Summer Solstice Supper

26-6-14

It was a busy Saturday for the ranger service after being out at Darvel gala day, it was back to Whitelee to take a guided walk on a wonderful evening to celebrate the summer solstice. The weather was mild and dry and thankfully there was enough of a breeze to keep the midges at bay as a group of around 26 took a leisurely walk out to the top of the Dunwan Hill to see the last of the sun's rays. Along the way the group were treated to some wildlife sightings before heading to the top of Dunwan where tea (traditional and nettle), and coffee (normal and Dandelion), were served from Kelly Kettles. After light refreshments everyone returned safely back to Whitelee visitor centre feeling enriched after seeing out the longest day of the year in such glorious surroundings - just a shame it marks the turning point in our summer.

Darvel Gala Day

26-6-14

The rangers headed for Darvel in East Ayrshire on Saturday the 21st for Gala Day where they provided an information stand on Whitelee and the work of the Whitelee Access Project/Countryside Ranger Service as well as craft activities for the kids. The gala was well attended and from around 1pm onwards there was a huge influx of people coming to hear music, see the shows and of course, talk to the rangers. There was lots of interest in the work of the access project highlighted by a colourful display of photos from the wide range of activities and events that the rangers have provided at Whitelee and of course the new mountain bike facility was a popular talking point. As children happily made crafty bugs, parents chatted about Whitelee with most people having visited already and enjoyed the facilities and access opportunities. Thankfully the weather stayed dry for the whole afternoon before it was time to pack up and head to the next event.

Clydeside Orienteers - Whitelee Courses Launch Event

10-6-14

The permanent orienteering courses will be officially launched with a race meeting and coaching sessions by the Clydeside Orienteers this Saturday 14th June. 4 courses have been installed at the

windfarm including beginners (2.5km), intermediate (4km), advanced (6km) and for the really adventurous, challenge (10km). Orienteers are welcome to come along and there will be coaching available from the Clydeside Orienteers for beginners or those looking to improve (£2 for adults and £1 for children/students). Start times are from 10 till 11am, meeting at the Whitelee visitor centre. For more information please contact info@clydesideorienteers.org.uk

Boggy Beasties Summer Club

5-6-14

The Whitelee Ranger Service kids Boggy Beasties summer club has had a huge amount of interest in the last few days. Due to this please note that our register for the sessions is now filled and we can no longer guarantee places. Any new applications for the Boggy Beasties will therefore be placed on a reserve list in case of cancellations.

Whitelee MTB Update

2-6-14

Work is progressing well on the Whitelee mountain bike trails after a slower start than expected due to bad weather. The main trails as well as the viewing area and pump track are largely completed barring some final dressing off. The skills area still has some work to go and there remain some sections of the inner trails to be completed. The finishing date is now anticipated to be mid to late June. Please check back here for further updates.

Reptile Rummage

2-6-14

Well done to the 12 intrepid explorers who gave up their Sunday morning to take to the moors in search for basking adders and lizards during Whitelee's first 'reptile rummage'. The group went off the tracks and headed through the heather to search under reptile refugia (roofing felt tiles), placed out by the countryside rangers and weren't disappointed with a common lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*), seen under the first groups, very first refugia tile. No adders were unfortunately seen but a total of 3 lizards were spotted including a tailless one that had presumably shed its tail to foil an attacking predator. A number of young frogs were also found before the day was wrapped up with everyone heading home encouraged to keep a look out for these fascinating and private animals.

Whitelee Rangers get CRIMP'ing!

21-5-14

The whitelee countryside rangers have begun carrying out riverfly monitoring on the Dunwan and Ardoch Burns, both of which flow from the windfarm. This ongoing monitoring work is part of the Clyde River Foundations work to monitor for changes in water quality using riverflies as indicator species of water quality and health. Each month the rangers will visit the two burns and carry out sampling to identify and count the various larvae of riverflies which are excellent indicator species. The information is then fed into the Clyde Riverfly Monitoring Partnership (CRIMP), monitoring program and can be used to check for drops in water quality. Not only is this information extremely

useful in monitoring for pollution incidents for example but provides further information about the wildlife of the area.

Early Bird Opera

3-5-14

The Whitelee ranger service were on site just as the sun made its first appearance over Glasgow on the morning of the 3rd May. This was for their Early Bird Opera event which was part of International Dawn Chorus day when thousands of bird lovers around the world head out at dawn to listen to the chorus of bird song that peaks at that time of the morning. Accompanied by an experienced bird surveyor it wasn't long after arrival that the first sighting was made - a pair of Short-eared Owls passed directly overhead, moving out the windfarm to forage. Not long after the first hardy members of the public arrived for the event - sadly only 3 in total this year due to a last minute cancellation. Undeterred everyone set off in good spirits, just as the sun started to come into full view. The group took a 4 mile circular route from the Ardochrig entrance and back and were treated to a veritable orchestra of bird song from the wonderful melodious song of the Goldcrest to the constant calls of shy Cuckoo's. By the end of the walk at 7.30am the group had seen and heard from 26 different bird species and left thoroughly contented by the experience - even if it was a very early start. Unfortunately two minutes after the members of the public left, one of the elusive Cuckoo's turned up at the Ardochrig entrance and sat in a tree calling! The full list of birds recorded included: Short-eared Owl, Mistle Thrush, Robin, Wren, Chaffinch, Goldcrest, Song Thrush, Siskin, Willow Warbler, Lesser Redpoll, Dunnock, Crossbill, Blackbird, Mallard, Teal, Grasshopper Warbler, Reed Bunting, Meadow Pipit, Cuckoo, Buzzard, Stonechat, Grey Wagtail, Linnet, Swallow, Goldfinch and Stock Dove.

Whitelee Stroller Striders- Inspiring Others

23-04-14

After running successfully for over three years, the Whitelee Stroller Striders parent and baby walking group, has been chosen by Paths for All as a case study to feature on their new website, showcasing all the great walking activities available for families. The case study will outline how the group runs, what was done to set it up and how people might benefit from taking part in a walking group such as this. The rangers talk about setting up the group and some of the regular walkers will be able to share their experiences of taking part in the Whitelee Stroller Striders activity too, discussing what it means to them. The Stroller Striders walking group meets every Tuesday morning at Whitelee without fail, and has enjoyed large numbers throughout the spring with up to 28 parents, babies and dogs coming along to enjoy the 4 mile walk around the windfarm.

Paths for All are keen to encourage other groups to set up 'Buggy Walks' across the country and are using the experiences of the Whitelee group to show how enjoyable it can be and to offer some tips on things to consider when starting out. To read the full case study and hear about other walks for families, please visit the Paths for All website via the external websites section to the side of this page.

Easter Eggstravaganza

21-04-14

The weather was glorious on Easter Sunday and there were lots of people out walking, cycling and exploring the tracks at Whitelee while the sun shone. Many of them decided to take part in the Rangers Eggstravaganza with a total of 86 families finding the egg treasure at the end of the hidden nest trail. The eggs the children collected were all decorated beautifully before taking part in the big egg rolling competition down the hill and getting suitably smashed up, only to be promptly replaced with a much more tempting and tasty chocolate egg from the Easter bunnies basket! The adventurous eggs also took part in an obstacle course, trying to make their way through slalom course, drainpipes, balance beams, and rope spirals without falling from the cradle safety of their plastic spoon. Everyone had a great time on Easter Sunday, including the rangers, who would like to thank everyone who took part and made it such a fun day! Check our events page for details of more events coming up soon at Whitelee with the rangers.

Whitelee Mountain Bike Trails (MTB) - Work Now Underway!

03-1-14

What a great start to 2014 - work has now begun to construct a network of bespoke mountain biking trails set close to the Whitelee visitor centre.

The new development, which lies just 500 meters from the visitor centre, will bring a new and exciting dimension to cycling at the site, adding to the network of tracks across the site that are already popular with cyclists.

This exciting development has been designed by renowned Bristol based trail specialists Architrail who were responsible for the Beijing Olympics and Glasgow Commonwealth mountain bike courses.

Set within a former borrow pit created during construction of the windfarm, the new course is within easy reach of the Whitelee Visitor Centre. Once up and running the facilities will suit a wide range of users, from beginners to more experienced riders and will be open for use free of charge, 7 days a week. The addition of a pump track and skills area will promote skill development amongst younger or less experienced riders and a large picnic and viewing area, with wet weather shelters will also be provided for visitors, making the facility ideal for visiting families or adventurous school groups looking to train pupils in mountain biking skills.

Work, which started in late January, is due to for completion in early May 2014.

East Renfrewshire Council's environment convener Councillor Vincent Waters said: "I am delighted the contractors are now on site. This is a very exciting addition to Whitelee Windfarm's facilities and will attract mountain bike enthusiasts, from not just Glasgow and the west of Scotland, but from all over the country.

"I have been told that some cyclists travel up to three hours each way to similar mountain bike facilities and having this unique location within the country's biggest on shore windfarm, is bound to lure people to Whitelee."

For further information please see the press release in the Related documents section or contact the Whitelee Access Project Officer, Nick Prower, using the details above.

Stay up to date with work by following the Whitelee Rangers via Facebook, Twitter and Flickr in the External websites box.

Whitelee Stroller Striders- Winter Tour

3rd December 2013 - 25th February 2014

The weekly parent and baby walking group, that meets every Tuesday morning will continue to run throughout the winter but will take place at different locations. As always, please come suitably dressed with warm clothes, sturdy footwear and a rain cover for the pushchair. Due to extreme weather we may need to cancel the walk. As the walk may be cancelled due to extreme weather or for further details on the walk, please contact the Countryside Rangers on 0141 6140962, or via Facebook for up to date information.

December Location

From the 3rd December, the group will be going 'on tour' and visiting other neighbouring parks to Whitelee. The first stop is to Calderglen Country Park in East Kilbride for three weeks in December. The group will meet at 11am on the 3rd, 10th and 17th of December, gathering at the main visitor car park before heading off on a walk of around 2 miles.

January Location

After the two week Christmas break, the walking group will move to Dean Castle Country Park, Kilmarnock in January. The walk will leave from the main visitor car park at 11am on the 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th January 2014.

February Location

In February, the tour will be completed by a month long visit to Rouken Glen Park in Giffnock. Meeting at 11am on the 4th, 11th, 18th and 25th February, the group will leave from the Boating Pond and enjoy a brisk stroll around the park.