

## **Whitelee Countryside ranger Service – 2015 News Stories**

### **Run The Blades 50K Event**

12-10-15

Run The Blades marked a new chapter at Whitelee, as an event truly made use of the access opportunities presented by the scale of the windfarm went ahead. Just under 70 competitors took to the windfarm and forest tracks to run their way around 50 gruelling kilometres of not that flat ground. Many people believe the windfarm to be on fairly level ground but the competitors in this first long distance race can thoroughly lay this one to rest - there are hills out there! It took almost a year to plan and prepare for the race and in the end, another longer established race clashed meaning numbers were lower than first planned - but this made managing this first event of its kind at the windfarm, a little easier.

The day of the event itself was grey and overcast with intermittent periods of heavy rain alongside a fresh and sometimes gusting wind. Not only did this cause problems during set-up but heaped even more misery on the runners. Everyone made it off on time however and it wasn't long before the countryside rangers seen the first runners appearing throughout the windfarm. The first person to cross the line did so in an amazing time of 3 hours 41 minutes and 35 seconds...the rangers could barely drive around the distance in that time!

there was only one DNF by the end of the day and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the setting for the run, something that the event organisers hope to build on in 2016. Feedback from the day indicated that sign ups for the event in 2016 should run to 100% which is incredible. We look forward to watching the event return in 2016...from our truck!

### **Scout Visit**

21-9-15

The evening of 21st September was slightly noisier than usual for Whitelee's wildlife as around 30 scouts from the 121st Clarkston Scouts came out for a ranger led session on bush-craft. The group were provided an introduction to the site and its wildlife and as is normally the case, were fascinated to know there are adders in the windfarm, before taking part in a session on fire-lighting techniques and tips. Learning how to use a traditional flint and steel proved popular, but challenging, and greater success was had with more modern fire-steels. After some time was spent on this and other useful cheats and tips, the group were treated to some insights into useful plants for food, medicine and other practical uses before heading home - and of course this was all done by torchlight making things that little bit more interesting!

### **New Whitelee Access Maps Available Now!**

26-8-15

The new Whitelee Access Project site map is now available from the leaflet dispensers at the main entrance to the windfarm from the visitor centre as well as the ranger cabin (when open), and the Whitelee visitor centre (when open). Whether exploring for 1 mile or 20 we recommend always carrying this detailed new multi-map that includes topographical information for the whole site,

bench locations, entry points etc, all in a full colour A3 size. On the rear of the main map there is also a larger scale map of the Lochgoin circuit route alongside a trail map for the Whitelee mountain bike (MTB), trails. The map(s) are invaluable if visiting the windfarm or mountain bike trails and we recommend always having one with you when going further than the first turbine.

Please also find a low resolution copy to download in the 'Related documents' section on the right of this page. This PDF copy can be printed at home or saved to mobile devices for use when out.

### **Lochgoin Access Restriction Lifted**

16-7-15

The access restrictions on the Lochgoin circuit at turbine 56 have been lifted and the full route is open once again.

### **Rangers Sent to prison!**

6-7-15

The Whitelee Countryside Rangers were sent to prison recently - but not for long! In one of the more interesting outreach requests of 2015 the rangers were asked to visit both HMP Low Moss and Shotts prisons to give inmates a series of presentations on their work, Whitelee, wildlife and wind technology. Arranged through the prison Education service, an initial visit was arranged in May to discuss plans, providing the rangers a first glimpse of life inside prison.

The first session was held at HMP Low Moss, which houses short and medium term inmates, and was about Whitelee and its Wildlife. Kate Williamson was on her own for this visit and getting through the security procedure was daunting enough, never mind trying to get a box of animal scat (poop!), and a host of taxidermy animals (fox, badger, buzzard), through the x-ray scanners too! Thankfully no hacksaws were found and the presentation went ahead in the prison library, with 17 prisoners and a few interested staff attending.

A week later and it was off to HMP Shotts maximum security prison where staff had organised a one-off World Environment Day project and as part of this, Rennie Mason gave a presentation on Whitelee, its wildlife and technology, this time in the prison chaplaincy. 20 inmates came along with a number of staff and provided some searching questions during the talk - not even the lure of cakes interrupted proceedings as Q&A overran slightly at the end. Subsequent feedback from prison staff who organised the visits has been very positive and plans are already being made for future visits in 2016 after a second visit to Low Moss to talk about windfarms and their technology had to be postponed.

The rangers enjoyed the experience as much as the inmates and one of the highlights of the 2 visits was seeing a papier-mâché windfarm landscape created by the inmates at HMP Shotts. Lessons were also learned - such as never have a chainsaw in your vehicle, just in case you are unexpectedly asked to bring it into a prison! Staff at the prisons hope that through the presentations the inmates from Low Moss might be encouraged to explore career paths in the wind/renewables industry or outdoor sectors and based on the feedback, its hoped this might bare out.

Check out the Whitelee Countryside Rangers Facebook page to see some photos of the papier-mâché windfarm.

## **Notice of Access Restrictions on Lochgoin Circuit Route - Saturday 7th & Sunday 8th July**

4-7-15

We have been informed by Scottish Power Renewables of major turbine works taking place at turbine 56 on the Lochgoin Circuit meaning that there is no access past this point.

For anyone wishing to travel clockwise around the Lochgoin Circuit this will mean there is no access past T56, just beyond the Blackwood Hill Viewpoint.

For anyone wishing to travel counter-clockwise around the Lochgoin Circuit this means that it is not possible to complete the circuit and return to the visitor centre. We would therefore advise against taking this route.

We are sorry for the late notice and any inconvenience caused and will update on any changes as soon as possible.

## **Boggy Beasties Summer Club**

29-6-15

Please note that our 2015 Boggy Beasties Summer Club is now full and we cannot accept any further bookings! Sorry for any disappointment caused but if you've missed this years program - please get in early in 2016.

## **Run The Blades 50K Event**

6-5-15

New to Whitelee this year will be a 50 kilometre run on the 18th of July so you still have time to get the running shoes dug out! The event is being organised by the guys from Breaking Strain Events who now have over 1000 race miles of ultra running (albeit all slowly), under their belts, with experience gained in 5 different countries and in some pretty diverse environments. As such, the desire to put on an event of our own with a real focus on competitor experience has been bubbling away for some time awaiting the discovery of the ideal venue. In Whitelee's and the Run the Blades event that combination of location and experience has been found.

Run the Blades is a new ultra-marathon to complement and add to the amazing list of ultras already hosted in Scotland. Held within the stunning yet exposed landscape of Whitelee Wind Farm, the event offers a challenging course across mixed moorland and forests past wind turbines that tower 140 metres above the trail.

Bridging the gap between marathon distance and the longer ultras, 'Run the Blades' affords competitors the opportunity to step up from road to trail running and offers an introduction to ultra running.

In addition, the event is geared towards a relatively fast 50K time for those athletes with more experience at these distances and beyond. The Breaking Strain guys would love to see someone come along and lay down a marker for future years - they'll be creating a roll of honour and this will be the only chance to be the first name on that list!

Early bird tickets are available at reduced cost so get in quick.

For more information including a route map please see:  
<http://www.breakingstrain.co.uk/events/run-the-blades/>

### **Dawn Sing-along**

6-5-15

This years event for International Dawn Chorus day wasn't quite at dawn - 8am to be precise! Having run the event at 5am in 2014 the rangers thought a slightly later rise might be appreciated and from the booking numbers, this seemed to be borne out. Unfortunately the weather on the day was horrible with freshening winds and intermittent heavy rain, leading to a few cancellations on the morning. Those that still came were treated to a mix of small bird calls while taking a walk from carrot to Corsehill and back (no-one opted to have coffee at the top due to the weather - wise people!). Bird numbers were low in the end as was the mix of species with many crafty birds opting to stay sheltered and quiet but this didn't stop the group having a refreshing walk, accompanied by the sounds of dawns wonderful chorus.

### **Fires at Whitelee**

6-5-15

The countryside rangers recently had to clean up not one but 3 fire sites located on the pad for turbine 53 next to the mountain bike track! 2 stone circles had been created and fires lit inside, plus there was an additional scorched area and an area of neighbouring grassland had been lit. Added to this was a raft of unsightly rubbish scattered around. This was all found of course during the recent spell of dry, hot weather so the potential to cause an uncontrolled moorland fire in the windfarm was very real.

The Scottish Outdoor Access Code does permit fires but under strict conditions "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."

On a recent re-check of this turbine pad the rangers found that once again someone had attempted to light a fire in this area, even bring coal in with them! If you see anyone you suspect to be lighting a fire in an inappropriate location please contact the countryside rangers or another member of the site staff.

### **Whitelee Mountain bike Orienteering Event Report**

6-5-15

Whitelee played host to it's first mountain bike orienteering event on the 19th of April when 43 riders pitted themselves against the clock, and the Whitelee terrain, to win. This was a 4 hour MBO Score mountain bike orienteering event, where 30 electronic control points were placed across an area, and competitors are given a map showing where they all are and what points each is worth, and the objective is to get as many points as possible in the time limit. There are severe penalty

points for being over the time limit, so route planning and re-planning, and good navigation are required, along with fast riding. The day started with a beautiful warm sunny morning with only a light wind, but as the day wore on, a fairly strong easterly breeze developed. Trail conditions were dry and dusty. Sign on was on the deck at the Visitor Centre and everyone got themselves signed in, and admired the spectacular views across the windfarm before getting organised and setting off for their 4 hours of riding. The size of the course area and the effects of the wind put a lot of riders behind schedule, and even with re-planning, most riders were having to push hard to get to the finish in the time limit, or at least to minimise points losses for being late. The organisers intercepted many of the riders at the finish and they were exhausted but happy with their efforts.

When the course was set, it was believed it would tempt the best riders to try to get to every control and "clear" the course, and this proved to be correct. However no-one quite managed it. The highest score of the day (and winner of the male solo category) was Paul Payne, who made it to 29 out of 30 controls and was back with 6 minutes to spare, for a score of 520 (out of a possible 525), winning by 20 points from Gary Thompsett, with a 3-way tie for third. In the women's event, Angela Brand-Barker had a fantastic ride to win with 465 points (third best score of the day overall), beating Alison Gillies and Rosemary Byde to second and third respectively. David and Neil Wilkie won the men's pairs, Keith and Lindsay Leinster won the mixed pairs and Ailsa Curtis and Sarah Williams won the women's pairs. In the Generations category, for parents and children, Alan Anderson and his son Fraser, who is 7, got a fantastic 170 points, having reached 11 of the controls, and won the prize supplied by the Visitor Centre of 2 day passes to the Glasgow Science Centre.

There were a couple of riders who suffered mechanical issues, and the organisers are especially grateful to an anonymous local doctor in the Hareshawmuir area, who was out for a walk when he met a competitor with a wrecked chain. He took him to his house and lent him a chain from one of his own bikes to get him on his way.

At the end, the competitors enjoyed soup, coffee and cakes and compared notes on which routes were best and where they went wrong. The overall winning rider covered something like 88 kilometres to win the race!

Full results are here:

<http://www.bmbo.org.uk/images/event/540ce03ea3ce4784e169a23512e7dd59.html>

Alternative race report is here: [http://www.bmbo.org.uk/results/report.php?event\\_id=652](http://www.bmbo.org.uk/results/report.php?event_id=652)

### **Greyhound Awareness League Visit**

6-5-15

We're pleased to say that the Greyhound Awareness League have chosen to hold a walk for the at Whitelee this summer. Around 30 dogs will be coming to the visitor centre on the 25th of May at 11am and people are invited to come along to meet the dogs and join the walk - bring your own dog too. If you don't have a dog it's not a problem - maybe you could adopt one of the many Greyhounds looking for good new homes - they make wonderful family pets!

### **Parkhill Secondary - Big Bivouac Build**

14-4-15

The rangers have been working with a group of 12 pupils from Parkhill secondary school in Glasgow over the last few months, helping them work towards their John Muir Trust 'conservation award'. The group have been carrying out their work in the Carrot area of the windfarm and as well as providing the group with reference materials and kit to help them explore the area, the rangers also provided expert I.D. help and worked closely with them on building a large group shelter (bivouac), from natural materials found in the area. The shelter build was great for building team spirit and provides a great focal point for anyone camping in the area, as well as doubling up as a handy bird hide. Built over a number of weeks the shelter makes a fun addition to the area, and to the windfarm, and even though the outer thatching will eventually die away, the timber frame below can be used time and again.

Sadly while working on their award one of the group fell ill and tragically passed away just before completion of the bivouac and it was testament to the groups strength that they were determined to see the work through to the end and on finishing the shelter, present a certificate of completion to the parents of their departed friend.

The teachers and students now plan to return to the windfarm very soon to spend the night in the shelter and were also planning to bring the schools head teacher up to see their work.

### **Egg-ssential Easter**

14-4-15

This years Easter event proved as egg-ceptionally busy as ever with over 300 people taking part in what was a very busy day for the countryside rangers. Thankfully the weather was warm and dry meaning that families could take to the Easter egg trail without getting soaked - and everyone enjoyed the challenge of the trial and the brainteasers! As well as the egg trail there was the opportunity to decorate a boiled egg before taking part in one of the big egg rolls, down the track to turbine 40. As always this was the highlight of the day with the kids (and some parents!), relishing in smashing the little egg they had so carefully decorated - it's amazing what people will do for a chocolate egg. As if this wasn't enough, there was also colouring in, finger puppets and the famous ranger badge maker which meant that the kids were kept busy (and happy), for hours. The local wildlife (and a few dogs), also enjoyed the event with a bounty of obliterated eggs left over to feast on! For photos from the event please see the Whitelee Rangers Facebook page.

### **Wild Weather Wisdom**

11-3-15

Unfortunately the infamous wild Whitelee weather struck on Saturday meaning that participants at the wild weather wisdom event never got to test their new weather forecasting skills outside. Funnily enough the countryside rangers were out on site on the Thursday before the event and were able to forecast that the weather would be poor on the event day - this was done by looking at the clouds. On the Saturday low Stratus and Stratocumulus clouds obscured the sky meaning that none of the other cloud types, that provide information on what the weather is going to do, could be seen. The attendees enjoyed the presentation and the time that would have been spent outside, gave way to lots of questions and discussion.

### **Birdbox DIY SOS**

17-2-15

The sun was shining and the birds were singing on Valentine's day when the rangers took to the decking area at Whitelee visitor centre to build a lot of bird boxes! Keen bird lovers hoping to make new homes for their feathered friends turned up sharp and were ready to go at 1pm, just as soon as the rangers had set up. The air was filled with the sounds of hammering as 5 happy families started construction of their boxes in the first round. Very soon there was a cue waiting to make a kit and the rangers were kept extremely busy for the duration of the event. It was great to meet so many bird lovers who were keen to make new homes for the birds but also talk about the best way to encourage birds in their gardens or where to site and look after their newly built bird homes.

By the end of the day there was ~ 42 bird boxes built in the space of two and a half hours and lots of happy people left with beaming smiles looking at their handy work. All in all it was a great celebration of national Nest Box week.

### **Arty Marty Returns to Whitelee**

8-2-15

On Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> February, our very own Arty Marty said 'Bonjour!' and took up residence in the hub of the Whitelee Visitor Centre complete with palette, moustache and a French accent to boot - all to the great delight of the children who visited.

There were lots of fun arts and crafts activities on offer for the whole family, from badge-making and colouring in, to finger puppets and fluffy bugs. Visitors created some magnificent beasts from a mish-mash of pine cones, pom-poms, pipe-cleaners, feathers, and clay; including birds, spiders, butterflies, squirrels and some more unconventional flamboyant monster snakes to add to the menagerie.

Visitors took time to create some spiky seed hedgehogs, made from apples and sunflower seeds, to feed their feathered friends. There was also the opportunity to add to the Whitelee collage, weaving natural objects through the woollen web.

Arty Marty would like to say 'merci!' to all those who participated in our first event of 2015. Everyone had a fantastic time getting messy and creative, and Arty Marty was certainly very impressed with the standard of work - 'Tres bien!'

### **Whitelee Visitor Centre Re-Opens**

30-1-15

The Whitelee visitor centre will re-open for the 2015 season on the 4th of February, operating for this first month with reduced opening times. The centre will be closed Mondays and Tuesdays and open Wednesdays to Friday from 10am to 3pm. At weekends the centre opens from 10am till 5pm. A return to full, 7-day a week opening, begins in March when the centre is open from 10am to 5pm every day.

### **GDOŚ - LIFE group study visit for professionals from Poland**

30-1-15

The Whitelee Ranger Service played host to a group of 24 professionals and community members from Poland on the 28th and 29th of January. The group have been travelling in Europe looking at

different windfarms and how they were developed, operate and are managed, looking to learn new ideas and best practice to take home with them. They were introduced to Whitelee through a presentation followed by questions provided by one of the rangers at their hotel in Glasgow before following this up the next day with a visit to the windfarm.

On the day of their visit to Whitelee there was 7 - 8cm of snow on the ground and more forecast but this didn't deter anyone and the rangers took them on a guided walk through the site to the Blackwood Hill viewpoint. The group were keen to learn about the development of the windfarm, how access is encouraged and managed by the Whitelee Access Project and ranger service as well as the ecology and habitat management of the site. To assist with this the rangers were joined by the Whitelee Access Project Officer (Nick Prower) as well as staff from East Renfrewshire Council planning department and ecologists from Scottish Power Renewables.

During the walk they were taken by the stunning views and free and unimpeded access to the windfarm - and were lucky enough to spot a group of Red Grouse feeding close by the track. Lots of photos were taken as this is a species not found in their homeland. At the viewpoint they enjoyed some spectacular views before the famous Whitelee weather closed in with more snow. On returning to the visitor centre there was a short Q&A session before email addresses were exchanged to continue discussions before the group left.

The group leaders conveyed through their interpreter how much they had enjoyed the visit and how they were encouraged by the excellent resource that the windfarm provided for the public to use, the wildlife that could be seen and the unique character of the site. In Poland the public cannot generally visit windfarms with only some being open to public access and they left encouraged with the approach that has been adopted in Scotland