

## **Whitelee Countryside ranger Service – 2016 News Stories**

### **Stroller Striders Winter Program 2016 - 16**

30-11-16

In a change for the 2016/17 winter months, the group will continue to meet at the Whitelee visitor centre and make use of the windfarm tracks through December. Access to the outside toilets is available at the visitor centre but due to the closure of the centre to the general public at this time, the cafe etc is closed. We will continue to meet at 10am at Whitelee through December up until the 20th December.

Please note there will be no strollers on the 27th December or 3rd January.

From January 10th the group will switch to meeting every Tuesday at 11am at alternate parks. At the winter locations, Rouken Glen Park and Calderglen Country Park, the walk lengths are approximately 4 miles but are on various surfaces. The walks take approximately 1.5 hours with parents pushing their babies all bundled up in their push chairs/strollers. Grandparents, friends and the family dog are welcome to come along as well. The walk is free and there is no need to book in advance - just come along and join the group, enjoy the walk and have a good chat with fellow parents along the way.

The group is informal and members can come and go depending on how busy they are each week. The countryside rangers accompany the group all the way to provide help if required.

Please contact the countryside rangers for further information or if you have any questions.

### **Crimbo Crafternoon**

04-12-16

We're feeling very festive after our Crimbo Crafternoon event. We had over 80 people through the door to have a go at willow weaving with our expert willow weaver Geoff Forrest. Willow stars were all the rage this year, decorated with holly and ivy, and a dash of gold, silver or snow spray for those final touches. Other crafts included willow Christmas trees and ornate paper snowflakes and 3D trees. A fun family event to kick off the festive season!

### **Ravens (*Corvus corax*)**

11-11-16

If you're near the visitor centre end of the windfarm at this time of year - keep your eyes open for the Ravens. These impressive big birds are often overlooked as being crows - they are in the same family of course and are the largest of the Corvid or crow family. An old

Scottish name for the raven is 'corbie', which is thought to have derived from the Latin 'corvus'. There are lots of old tales about ravens such as one Scottish legend that tells of an evil hag called Cailleach who appeared in the form of a number of birds, including the raven, and feasted on men's bodies! These highly intelligent and playful birds are great to watch however and thankfully the old wives tales haven't been held against them.

Ravens are easy to spot due to their size but they also have a distinctive, short gurgling croak call that they make while flying along. They are regularly seen flying over the visitor looking for tasty treats!

## **Spooktastic**

28-10-16

Wicker Man was the theme of this year's Spooktastic Halloween event. The Visitor Centre was filled with some creepy characters taking great delight in scaring visitors young and old. The hub was filled with the usual gruesome games and activities, and our spooky walks were very popular, with our own rendition of 'Ring a Ring o' Roses' in the dark. We love Halloween, and are looking forward to next year's event already!

## **Witchin' Warm Up**

19-10-16

Once again our Witchin' Warm Up event was extremely popular, with around 200 people taking part in our wand and broom making workshops. All of our materials disappeared like magic! Some scary monsters were also created in the crafts corner, and a fun time had by all.

## **Mucky Hands Garden Action Day**

18-9-16

A number of young families descended on the Ranger Cabin at Whitelee to help us spruce it up. We started with some good old-fashioned weeding, getting rid of the encroaching Coltsfoot and grasses next to the decking area, before raking and turning the soil in preparation for planting some lovely heathers and lavender. Amongst the heathers, some bee holes were created by recycling the plant pots that came with the heathers.

A trellis was also put up at the end of the cabin, with some ivy planted to start climbing. Many thanks to all the families who came to help, the area around the cabin is looking a lot tidier and we look forward to the colours produced by the heather throughout the year.

The Rangers finished the day by creating a wildflower area outside the Visitor Centre which will hopefully produce a fantastic colourful display next summer.

## **Action Medical Research Charity Walk**

11-9-16

Action Medical Research are a charity which supports and provides funding for research that focuses on diseases and conditions that effect children. They were founded in 1952 during the time of the polio outbreak in the UK and helped develop the polio vaccine which lead to the eradication of the disease. Since then the charity have spent an incredible £115 million which has went on to support and fund research that is saving the lives of thousands of children in the UK.

On Sunday the 11<sup>th</sup> of September the charity took to Whitelee windfarm for a walk to raise money and awareness of the charity. The day was a great success with a turnout of 80 walkers and 17 dogs! The dogs came along with their owners and wore costumes in the hope of becoming the best dressed dog on the day; it was very colourful! They raised an incredible £1600 all of which will go to the charity and help fund and support vital research.

The day entailed a short walk from the visitor centre to the Blackwood Hill viewpoint and back again, roughly 4 miles in total. At the top of the hill a photographer and a bag of props waited for each group to make the day even more memorable. In short, the day was a success, the weather was great and everyone had a fantastic time at the windfarm. We hope to see them again with a future event at the windfarm!

### **Christian Aid Fundraising 'Power Walk'**

10-9-16

On Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September, Christian Aid Scotland held their first 'Power Walk' fundraising event at Whitelee as part of their 'Another Way' campaign. The walk took in the Lochgoin Circuit with a shortcut across the Lochgoin dam wall cutting out a mile and taking the distance down to 7 miles. A shorter 3-mile route to the Blackwood Hill Viewpoint was also available for those who didn't want to tackle the big one. The sun was shining as the 40 walkers headed out into the windfarm to stride along and to learn about how climate change is affecting people from all over the world. On completion of their route, everyone got a medal and a big pat on the back for their effort! We're already looking forward to seeing them return next year!

### **Blackwood Hill Viewpoint**

16-9-16

The Blackwood Hill viewpoint path is fully open once again after some required repairs and maintenance.

### **B764 Moor Road Closure**

08-9-16

The B764 Moor Road is fully open once again.

## **Crafty Campfire Cooking**

29-8-16

With no den/bivvy building event this year the outdoor enthusiast at Whitelee might have thought they were being ignored by the rangers, but in a move intended to broaden the bushcraft offering, the rangers came up trumps again with a campfire cooking event on Sunday 28th August.

6 families made their way to the Carrot side of the windfarm where they had a great day in the sun gaining some handy campfire firelighting tips, and cooked up a feast of food. Participants were provided some handy recipes to try for the event, or could bring their campfire favourites. Parents and their children worked together to get their fires going, before cooking up everything from sausages to...campfire pizza, that went down a storm!

## **Run The Blades Festival Of Running**

29-8-16

Saturday 23rd July 2016 saw the second incarnation of the 'Run the Blades' event at Whitelee windfarm. Following the successful inaugural event in 2015 the organisers expanded it for 2016 with the addition of 10k and 21k distance courses alongside the 'ultra' 50k race. The number of competitors was also expanded significantly, with 370 participants taking part across the 3 race distances. On this second running of the event weather conditions were far more favourable than in 2015, which had seen near-storm force winds and driving rain and as the runners set off from next to the Whitelee MTB trails, they made quite a sight disappearing off into the windfarm.

The 10K men's race was won by Matthew Leckie in 42 minutes and 17 seconds and the women's race by Julie Stevenson in 47 minutes and 40 seconds. The 21K distance was won by Cris Walsh in 1 hour 17 minutes and 53 seconds and the women's race by Olivia McBride in 1 hour 35 minutes and 18 seconds, while the 50K events were won by Lee Muir in an impressive 3 hours 29 minutes and 39 seconds and Shona Young in 4 hours 24 minutes and 35 seconds, both setting new course records from last year's event.

Congratulations to all the competitors that took part across all race distances and age categories. Feedback from event organisers and participants was extremely positive and plans are already in discussion for what's hoped will be another successful event in 2017, putting the event well and truly on the race calendar. Check out the Countryside Rangers Facebook page for photos from the event.

## **Dirt Crit 2016**

17-8-16

Please note the Dirt Crit series race in the MTB facility has been cancelled.

## **Run The Blades Festival Of Running**

15-7-16

The windfarm will once again play host to the 'Run The Blades' running event, this year expanded to include a 10K, half marathon and 50K race routes, covering most of the windfarm and with up to 500 runners. The event village and race start/finish line will be at turbine 53, next to the mountain bike tracks. The Whitelee visitor centre will be utilised for event registration in the morning but this will not affect general visitors to the centre.

Parking for the event will be off site or within the operational windfarm on the first array road with turbines 9 and 24 on it but public access will be maintained throughout.

At the start of each race it will be necessary to hold general access until all the runners are away. The runners will run from T53 in an anti-clockwise direction around the site but at the start they will use the single track path at the western end of the mountain bike tracks. Access will be restricted on the path at this time but will only be for a short duration before full access is restored.

There will be no access restrictions within site as a result of the races once the runners are away from the start and visitors should not be affected.

## **Canine Capers**

9-7-16

This years canine capers didn't disappoint for fun and hilarity with dogs! It was a rather wet, windy and miserable day for everyone but there was the steady stream of people who'd come to try the dog agility course, try the games and socialise their dogs. As always the 'fetch the sausage' game didn't disappoint with only a couple of dogs making any attempt to bring the sausage to their human companions - the best were those that ran back and almost made it, before defiantly eating it just out of reach! The agility course proved popular as always with everything giving a few goes - with some of the dogs breezing round while others were comic stars of the day.

Our thanks to everyone who came out on what wasn't the best day. We look forward to 2017!

## **New Ranger**

4-7-16

WCRS were happy to welcome a new seasonal ranger, Ryan Ward, into the team at the start of July. Ryan comes with a wealth of experience from working as a ranger at Rothiemurchus Estate in Aviemore and will be a great addition to the team - make sure and say 'hi' if you spot him out exploring the windfarm.

## **Temporary access restrictions on Whitelee MTB Trails - Monday 4th & Tuesday 5th July 2016**

8-7-16

The access restrictions are now lifted and work is complete.

30-06-16

PLEASE NOTE: TEMPORARY ACCESS RESTRICTIONS WILL BE IN PLACE AT THE WHITELEE MOUNTAIN BIKE (MTB) TRACK.

- Southern sections of Inner and Outer Loops will be closed.
- Main western entrance track will also be closed.
- Alternative entrance to MTB tracks at eastern end of trails.
- Please see map and obey localised access restrictions and warning barriers within the MTB site.
- Skills loop and pump track should remain accessible.

We apologise for any inconvenience caused.

## **Bug Out**

25-6-16

The weather wasn't exactly bug friendly on Saturday but we still had around 60 parents and children along for our Bug Out event, to look at the insects/invertebrates of the windfarm as part of National Insect Week. As all good rangers are, we were prepared for this with a 'lab' set up in the hub inside the visitor centre with microscopes, identification guides and a selection from our dead insect collection for everyone to look at. On our first foray out to bug hunt the first group found numerous bugs hiding in the undergrowth including bumblebees, spiders, flies, caterpillars and an amazing parasitic wasp. After such a great haul of finds we headed in to identify them and look at them in more detail.

Sadly the weather got extremely wet not long after our first foray out but it didn't dampen the spirits of everyone who visited us in the hub. We looked at the catches from earlier in the day as well as getting up close to dragonflies, beetles, bees, spiders and true bugs using our collection of dead insects! All in all it was a fun day with both parents and kids alike saying how much they enjoyed looking and hearing about our amazing insects in more detail.

## **The Day The Sun Stood Still**

20-6-16

What can be said about this years summer solstice event other than...fantastic! By 9pm we had over 40 massed and ready to go and with mild weather and breaking cloud, everything

was in place for a great evening. The event started with a short recital from 'Walk' by Henry David Thoreau, emphasising the importance of sauntering - as that's what we'd be doing on the way to the Blackwood Hill viewpoint. After this we set off for the Blackwood Hill, now with a few additional late arrivals.

On arriving at the viewpoint the group were provided with a hot tea or coffee by the rangers, as the group continued to swell with more late arrivals, taking us to over 50 for the evening - all out to enjoy not just the solstice but the 'strawberry moon' that was also forecast. During hot refreshments it looked as if the clouds wouldn't part for us to enjoy the best of the evening but thankfully, around 10.15pm the clouds parted to reveal a bright, red tinged moon that the rangers quickly got their telescope onto - revealing a beautiful bright, pinky moon. After allowing everyone time to enjoy this the focus was moved to a small 'litha' fire that had been lit by the rangers.

The litha fire is said to be a sacred fire and during the solstice, it is said to be cleansing - anyone who wished to, could cross the fire, leaving their problems in the flames as they did so and emerging on the other side with new focus for the year ahead. Fantastically...everyone decided to have a go! After some further chat and moon gazing everyone started to head back to the visitor centre, but all said how enjoyable the evening had been and how grateful they were that the weather had cleared for us to provide such a great night.

## **T29 Access Restrictions Lifted**

31-5-16

Please note the access restrictions at turbine 29 are now lifted.

## **Turbine 29 Temporary Access Restriction**

27-5-16

There will be a temporary track closure to turbine 29 on the south side of Lochgoin reservoir on Sunday 29th May so that vital maintenance can be carried out on the turbine. Barriers will be erected in the vicinity of the junction near turbines 73/74 and at the opposite end of the track near turbines 14/30. For your health and safety you are advised not to go past the barriers. An alternate route is possible on the track to the north of turbine 29, running along the side of the reservoir, allowing the Lochgoin circuit route to remain open.

Restrictions are anticipated to be in place for 1 day but are weather dependent and may run for longer. Please follow any advisory signage in place during the work.

## **'Run The Blades' Returns To Whitelee**

23-5-16

Endurance runners with a taste for wild, challenging terrain are being invited to participate in the second 'Run the Blades' event at Whitelee Windfarm near Glasgow on Saturday, 23rd July

'Run the Blades', which is organised by Breaking Strain Events, offers three race options - a 50k ultra-marathon, half marathon and 10k - within the unique setting of the UK's largest on-shore windfarm. The iconic site is otherwise used to power some 300,000 homes by way of 215 huge (130 - 140 metre) wind turbines!

Whitelee is located on Eaglesham Moor just 20 minutes from Glasgow, with the wild, windswept environment ideal for power generation. However, the site's 130kms of trails, spanning mixed moorland and forestry, also offer exhilarating conditions for outdoor activities, whether it's running, cycling, or horse-riding.

Despite heavy rain last year, competitors in the inaugural event were invigorated by the elements and enthralled by the scenery and wildlife, which is why so many have signed up again in 2016 and are spreading the word to a growing number of enthusiasts. On a clear day - which we're obviously hoping for in 2016 - you can see down into Glasgow and the Clyde Valley and, if you're really lucky, all the way to Northern Ireland looking west. We're runners ourselves and believe we've found a classic challenge that's going to run and run!

Lee Peyton, Director of Breaking Strain

'Run the Blades' is taking place by kind permission of Scottish Power Renewables, Forestry Commission Scotland and other local landowners with support from Whitelee Access Planning Group and sponsorship from Scot JCB.

Whitelee Countryside Ranger Service, which is provided jointly by East Renfrewshire, East Ayrshire and South Lanarkshire councils, has worked closely with organisers to help deliver what will be another thrilling event.

As well as being a great venue for events like 'Run The Blades' there are fantastic facilities at Whitelee including a network of waymarked trails, mountain bike trails and a visitor centre complete with café, offering a great day out for all the family.

To find out more, or to sign up for the 10k, half marathon or 50k at £20, £25 or £31, respectively, visit the the [Breaking Strain website](#).

## **New Walk, Cycle, Trek Route Through Cleughearn Plantation**

23-5-16

The Whitelee Access Project has created a new route through the Cleughearn Plantation, near the Ardochrig entrance to the windfarm. The path takes visitors on a circular journey through the plantation and is partly surfaced and partly off-track and is a great way to go deep into the woods where it's possible to spot birds such as the stunning Bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*).

## **Corse Hill Fence Removed**

29-4-16

The high security fence that has persisted on top of Corse Hill for some years now after the removal of the radar installation that was previously there, has now been removed. This opens up the hill with fantastic views in all directions. Next up for the site - the Whitelee Access Project are looking to create a viewpoint installation similar to that found at Blackwood Hill.

## **B764 Moor Road Closure**

20-4-16

Please be aware that the B764 is closed to vehicle traffic at the top of Polnoon/Montgomery Street in Eaglesham. Pedestrians and cyclists can still use the route. Work will be ongoing until the 29th May unless completed sooner. A diversion route is in place for the duration of the works but please note this will add time to your journey. Please see the diversion map in the 'related documents' section.

## **Great Grey Shrike Spotted at Crook Hill**

14-4-16

News came through from the Scottish Ornithologists' Club local rarity alert bulletin last week that a Great Grey Shrike (*Lanius excubitor*), had been spotted at Crook Hill in the windfarm (NS5745). These very scarce and fascinating birds arrive from Scandinavia in the autumn to overwinter in the UK, sometimes staying until April/May before returning to their breeding grounds. Population estimates number the UK overwintering population at around 63 birds! They are a medium sized bird that at a distance can appear like a Magpie (*Pica pica*), and are often seen sitting on perches from where they hunt. They can also be seen chasing down and flushing prey items and have the curious habit of impaling prey such as small birds, mammals and insects onto thorn bushes to larder them.

Interestingly on visiting the windfarm for the very first time in 2010, the countryside rangers recorded a great grey at Flow Moss (NS563455), which is more or less the same spot indicating that this is likely the same bird holding territory in this area.

## **Ravens and Short-eared Owls**

7-3-16

If visiting the visitor centre end of the windfarm or taking to the Lochgoin circuit route, keep your eyes and ears open for Ravens (*Corvus corax*), and Short-eared Owls (*Assio flammeus*), which have been seen regularly in these areas recently.

Short-eared Owls are medium sized day flying owls, making them stand out straight away, but also have a mottled brown body with pale underwings to help identify them. At this time of year the males make dramatic acrobatic flights to attract a mate, flying up high, hovering and then descending quickly with exaggerated wing beats and while singing and making occasional wing claps. They can also be seen 'quartering' or hunting, flying low over the ground, before accelerating down to strike at an unsuspecting prey item - and making quite a sight to see.

Ravens are huge black birds, larger even than Buzzards (*Buteo buteo*), with stout beaks and are in fact the largest of the corvid or crow family. They are highly intelligent and inquisitive birds and are known to mate for life. At this time of year they are regularly seen, and heard, passing overhead making a distinctive 'korrp' call as they do, helping to distinguish them from crows.

If you spot either of these two species, or any other wildlife, the countryside rangers would love to hear about them.

## **Whitelee Stroller Striders Back At The Windfarm**

7-3-16

Our popular parent and baby walking group, which has been running since 2011 and seen over 300 participants take part, has returned to Whitelee after the winter tour.

The group meets every Tuesday morning at 10am at Whitelee visitor centre between March and December. The walk starts at ~10am, covers ~4 miles, and takes approximately 1.5 hours with parents pushing their babies all bundled up in their push chairs/strollers. Grandparents, friends and the family dog are welcome to come along as well. The walk is free and there is no need to book in advance - just come along and join the group, enjoy the walk and have a good chat with fellow parents along the way.

The group is informal and members can come and go depending on how busy they are each week. The group meet at the main entrance gate into the operational windfarm (next to the large threshold information sign), before heading out. When the weather is poor the group may decide to take a shorter route and when conditions are good - enjoy stretching their legs over the full distance, taking in some spectacular views along the way. The countryside rangers accompany the group all the way to provide help if required.

New for 2016 - every 3 weeks there will be the option to add an extra couple of miles to the walk, to help progress fitness. Those wishing to do this will continue on with a ranger leading and those that aren't ready for this yet can return to the visitor centre with the second ranger.

At the end of the walk most members head to the visitor centre for a well earned hot drink, and to make use of the baby changing facilities.

During the winter months of December, January and February, due to the closure of the visitor centre, the group go on location at parks around the partner councils of the Whitelee Access Project. At the winter locations, Rouken Glen Park, Dean Castle Country Park and Calderglen Country Park, the walk lengths are approximately 4 miles but are on various surfaces.

Please contact the countryside rangers for further information or if you have any questions.

## **Whitelee Access Planning Group 2015 Meeting Minutes Available**

7-3-16

If you would like to know about the workings of the Whitelee Access Planning Group, the 2015 meeting minutes are now available from here:

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## **Whitelee Stroller Striders Winter Programme**

This is our popular parent and baby walking group which meets every Tuesday morning at 10am at Whitelee visitor centre between March and December. During the winter months of December, January and February, due to the closure of the visitor centre, the group go on location at parks around the partner councils of the Whitelee Access Project.

The group is informal and members can come and go depending on how busy they are each week. At the winter locations, Rouken Glen Park, Dean Castle Country Park and Calderglen Country Park, the walk lengths are approximately 4 miles but are on various surfaces.

Download of our winter programme, including locations, dates and times:

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The walks start at 11am and take approximately 1.5 hours with parents pushing their babies all bundled up in their push chairs/strollers. Grandparents, friends and the family dog are welcome to come along as well. The walk is free and there is no need to book in advance - just come along and join the group, enjoy the walk and have a good chat with fellow parents along the way.

The group meet at the main car parks at each park before heading out. When the weather is poor the group may decide to take a shorter route and when conditions are good - enjoy stretching their legs over the full distance, taking in some spectacular views along the way. The countryside rangers are with the group all the way to provide help if required.

At the end of the walk in each location there is access to a hot drink as well as changing facilities.

Please contact the countryside rangers for further information or if you have any questions.

## **Visitor Centre To Re-open**

27-1-16

The Whitelee visitor centre will re-open for business next week on the 3rd of February. The centre is only open Wednesday to Sunday through February and goes back to 7 day a week opening in March. As part of preparations for reopening the staff were given an extended tour of the windfarm by the countryside rangers, showing them the various entry points as well as a number of areas of interest, popular spots and routes etc so that they can provide the best information possible to visitors.

### **Road Closure on Ardochrig Road**

25-1-16

Please note that there are currently road works on Ardochrig road, north of Skeoch Farm preventing vehicle access up this section of the road to the windfarm entrance at Ardochrig. It is possible to avoid the roadworks and use High Cleughearn road to get to the Ardochrig entrance however. This is the road that is west of Ardochrig road. The roadworks are planned to last approximately 2 weeks and diversion signs should be in place in due course.

### **2016 Events Programme**

The 2016 events program will be available from libraries in the 3 council areas the windfarm covers as well as from the Whitelee visitor centre, ranger cabin and other outlets.