An amazing place for people and for wildlife

Beautiful Loch Leven lies at the heart of an area that perfectly lends itself to our landscape-scale approach to conservation – a Futurescape we’re calling Living Loch Leven. The loch itself is not only an internationally-important wildlife site, but is already a fantastic success story for habitat restoration. For years here, poor water quality posed a major threat for wildlife, and also made life hard for those who depended on the loch for their livelihoods. Only through many different organisations working together was the loch able to recover and become the haven for wildlife and people that it is today.

Our vision now is to build on this success and regenerate the entire landscape around Loch Leven for nature, by creating a network of wildlife-rich habitats that will contribute to the large-scale restoration of green space across Fife and Kinross. The aim will be to improve the quality of life for residents, and provide more reasons for visitors to want to stay longer.

Our work so far

The Loch Leven National Nature Reserve (NNR) – the loch, its islands and its shores – have for decades now been managed by a group of organisations – Scottish Natural Heritage, local authorities, landowners and RSPB Scotland – working together to improve the quality of the wildlife habitats. RSPB Loch Leven reserve, established in 1967, now attracts over 50,000 visitors a year. We’re proud, too, to have joined another partnership initiative. The Loch Leven Catchment Management Partnership has achieved great results in improving the water quality around Loch Leven. Our expertise is now helping identify more opportunities to achieve a full restoration of the freshwater ecology that makes these waters so special.

Environmental education is one of the keystones of our vision for a Living Loch Leven – not only to raise awareness of the present and future threats to wildlife, but also because we want local people to be proud to have this fantastic natural resource on their doorstep. The learning programme we have developed with our partners has reached tens of thousands of local children over the years. A central focus is “place-based learning” – the idea that a place and its community, together with the surrounding landscape it shares with nature, forms an integrated whole – a kind of ecosystem in which everything is connected. The “Growing up with Loch Leven” project introduces pupils – and teachers – to the value and beauty of their countryside with outdoor activities that are varied, challenging, and plenty of fun too.

Homes for all: Loch Leven and around

Wetlands can include all sorts of specialised bird habitats – reedbeds, open water, fens, wet grasslands and bogs – and Loch Leven has them all. The loch has the largest nesting duck colony in Britain, on St Serf’s island; a great variety of wading birds, thousands of wintering waterfowl (including pink-footed geese), and spectacular visiting birds of prey such as white-tailed eagles and ospreys. There is great potential to attract rarer birds to nest here too, like black-necked grebes, marsh harriers, bearded tits, water rails and other reedbed-dwellers, and for bitterns to winter here – adding to the wildlife attraction of the area all year round.
What’s next?
Our main aim is to ensure that Loch Leven and its catchment area are in the best possible shape for nature, encouraging a wide range of birds and other wildlife to live in a network of vibrant habitats. There is immediately great potential for restoring and creating a network of habitats that will be “stepping stones” to the loch itself. Some of these already exist and can be enhanced, but others, such as wetlands, can be created through working with partners to achieve a range of additional benefits, including better water quality and flood risk management. We will identify these and then build on this natural resource with a programme that will help people enjoy, value, and derive economic benefits from a living landscape.

Get in touch
We want to hear your ideas about how we can work together to make Living Loch Leven even better for people and wildlife:

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We are working with many local partners, including Scottish Natural Heritage, Kinross Estates Company and Perth and Kinross Council, and are part of wider initiatives such as the Central Scotland Green Network and catchment management plans.

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The RSPB is a member of BirdLife International, a partnership of conservation organisations working to give nature a home around the world.

Futurescapes is the RSPB’s contribution to landscape-scale conservation throughout the UK. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a registered charity: England and Wales no. 207076, Scotland no. SC037654. Images: Loch Leven by Mark Hamblin and osprey by Danny Green (both rspb-images.com). Maps produced by RSPB CDMU © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. RSPB licence 100021787. 020-1-0967-13-14