

Plans for new long distance path unveiled

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Bruce Crawford MSP helped children from Trossachs Primary School to christen the Great Trossachs Path, which is due to be completed in 2015.

The 35mile-long route will form the spine of a wider network of trails throughout the Great Trossachs Forest, a large scale woodland restoration project which extends from Inversnaid on the edge of Loch Lomond to Kilmahog. A range of other paths and loops suitable for all abilities that link from the Great Trossachs Path will be promoted to visitors.

Writer and broadcaster Cameron McNeish said: "The Trossachs is somewhere that I have explored many times. It's often described as the Highlands in miniature, but that doesn't do the area justice – it definitely has its own irresistible character that is hard to quantify; it's something that you really have to experience for yourself.

"Linking the West Highland Way and the Rob Roy Way is a tantalising idea that might inspire serious walkers to try a new route combining these great trails. But also within the Great Trossachs Forest there's a tremendous variety of walks through native woodland and onto the open hill."

Bruce Crawford MSP said: "The Great Trossachs Forest is an inspiring project and this new path will improve the opportunities for recreation in this stunning area of the National Park for visitors and local people alike. I hope that many more people will come and visit the area as a result of this innovative project and that local businesses will benefit."

Sue Morris, project officer for the Great Trossachs Forest said: "The Great Trossachs Path is central to our wider vision for the area. We want many more visitors who come into the national park to stop and explore the amazing variety of walks which can be found here."

The Great Trossachs Path has been made possible thanks to funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Colin McLean, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Scotland, said: "Nature lies at the very heart of what makes Scotland special. In the Year of Natural Scotland, we are delighted to support a project which will encourage people of all ages and abilities to visit the Great Trossachs Forest to experience its incredible natural heritage. What is good for the local economy and is also good for the soul."

The Great Trossachs Forest is one of the most ambitious native woodland regeneration projects to take place in the UK for a generation. It is a partnership project between Forestry Commission Scotland, RSPB Scotland, and the Woodland Trust Scotland.

Notes to editors

The Woodland Trust is the UK's leading charity championing native woods and trees. It has more than 500,000 members and supporters. The trust has three key aims: a) to enable the creation of more native woods and places rich in trees b) to protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future c) to inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees. Established in 1972, the Woodland Trust now has over 1,000 sites in its care covering approximately 20,000 hectares (50,000 acres). In 1984, the trust acquired its first wood in Scotland. Today the trust owns 80 sites across Scotland covering 8,750 hectares.

The RSPB is the UK's largest nature conservation charity, inspiring everyone to give nature a home. Together with their partners, they protect threatened birds and wildlife so our towns, coast and countryside will teem with life once again. They play a leading role in BirdLife International, a worldwide partnership of nature conservation organisations.