



Friends of the Ochils
Scottish charity registration number SC 022034

ANNUAL REVIEW & FINANCIAL REPORT 2020-21

CHAIR'S REPORT 2020-21

For much of the past year we have continued to operate under the constraints imposed by Covid 19 but our work has progressed using virtual communication and, where allowed, site visits. However, in general our experience has been that a number of key developments with which Friends of the Ochils (FOTO) is involved have not progressed quite as quickly as we would have hoped, often through delays experienced by other organisations with whom we are involved.

We continue to respond to applications for commercial forestry in the Ochils, working with agents to ensure that our voice is heard, particularly at the design stage of any development. Agents can vary in the degree to which they involve other interested parties such as FOTO but, when they do, constructive discussions relating to such matters as access, deer fencing, retention of key views, the use of broadleaf trees within the planting mix can lead to designs that are subsequent improvements on the originals.

Deer fencing continues to be of concern as long lengths of fencing without crossing points may well result in safety issues if it needs to be crossed in bad weather. Meanwhile we are encouraging agents to indicate on longer stretches of fencing the direction and distance to the nearest crossing point.

We still await the final outcome of the extensive Coulshill planting proposal and, specifically, whether or not Scottish Forestry will require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the development. Given its size and complexity, we believe it does require an EIA and therefore we await the Scottish Forestry decision with particular interest.

In May 2021 we were able to submit detailed comments to Scottish Woodlands, the agent for Coulshill, in which we raised a number of key issues including the impact of the planting on the landscape, biodiversity, cumulative impact with surrounding forestry, access and on peat.

Prior to submission of the FOTO comments, we liaised with other interested parties including the PKC Access Forum and the Strathearn Riders & Rural Access Group, particularly on access issues. We also drew on the expertise of specialists such as Liz Lavery, Botanical Ecologist, and FOTO member, Alistair Godfrey, and we are very grateful to them for sharing their expertise with us.

We appreciate that there will be a range of views amongst our members on the extensive planting of commercial forestry in the Ochils but we accept that, such is the drive towards more tree planting in Scotland, by the time an application has been finalised for a decision by Scottish Forestry and placed on the public register, it is very likely to be approved. The best we can hope for by raising any concerns early is that the more negative aspects of a planting proposal have been ironed out by the time Scottish Forestry makes a decision. Changing policy on a more fundamental level would no doubt require a significant change in policy at government level.

Meanwhile, as detailed in last year's Annual Report, FOTO is working alongside the Forth Rivers Trust to get a peat restoration project off the ground in the Ochils. Again, it is taking a little longer than anticipated but the signs are still positive and we would hope to see such a project through to fruition. Peat restoration is such an important aspect of the climate change agenda that it would be good to see a successful project underway in the Ochils.

It is still relatively quiet on the windfarm front in the Ochils but, given the emphasis on the repowering, extension and expansion of existing windfarms as detailed in the draft National Planning Framework 4: Policy 19 Green Energy, one might anticipate applications for such developments in the years to come. We will respond to any applications as appropriate but with an emphasis on avoiding the Ochils becoming a windfarm landscape as opposed to, what it is at present, a landscape with windfarms.

The creation of a structure for the Ochils which will improve the co-ordination of the management of the Ochils is being proposed in some quarters. Some would want to see the establishment of an Ochils Regional Park whereas others would prefer some kind of Upland Partnership. A lot more discussion and debate is required before any such structure emerges but FOTO will make sure that it participates in relevant discussions. We would want to ensure that any overarching development for the Ochils reflects the current issues associated with upland areas, particularly those driven by the climate change agenda. In the past regional parks were seen very much in terms of their contribution to recreation whereas now there are, in addition, many other issues that require to be co-ordinated and managed. It is to be hoped that FOTO can work with national bodies such as the Central Scotland Green Network and NatureScot (originally Scottish Natural Heritage) to drive the agenda to secure a more coordinated approach to the management of upland areas such as the Ochils.

The committee continues to meet regularly via Zoom, with four meetings held over the past year but, hopefully, face to face meetings can resume over the coming year. As detailed in the Finance Report, FOTO membership has fallen over the past 12 months. Sadly, a number of our long standing members have passed on, including Doug Tulloch who was a member of the committee for a number of years. Doug had a great love of the Ochils and made a valuable contribution to the work of FOTO, including revitalising our Facebook page.

Although we still have a membership of over 120 it will be important to increase that membership over the coming year and the committee will make this a particular target for FOTO. Meanwhile my thanks goes out to you all for renewing your membership thus helping FOTO to achieve its aims and objectives.

Finally, my thanks is, once again, extended to the FOTO Committee for their continued help and support in furthering the protection of the Ochil Hills for the enjoyment of the many thousands who visit each year, and to members such as Drew Jamieson and Alistair Godfrey, who, along with colleagues in such bodies as the Access Forums, have provided their significant expertise in relevant areas. Also, my thanks goes to Iona Roberts for independently examining the accounts and agreeing to be re-appointed for the year ending 30 June 2022.

Stuart Dean. Chair, Friends of the Ochils

PURPOSE AND GOVERNANCE

The objects for which Friends of the Ochils was established are identified in the Constitution (last amended November 2006):

- a] To promote and conserve the landscape, natural beauty and wildlife of the Ochils, and to protect the historical and social character of the surrounding communities.
- b] To encourage consistent implementation of good planning policies appropriate to the other objects of the Association.
- c] To support responsible and well-behaved public access to the Ochils consistent with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.
- d] To promote appropriate study of and research into relevant fields of interest pertaining to the Ochils and its local communities, and to promote dissemination of the results of such study and research.

Committee members are elected from the membership for a three year period at the AGM, or may be co-opted. Nominations are sought through various channels. The Committee members constitute the Trustees with responsibility for governance consistent with Scottish charity law and regulations. Office bearers are elected by the Committee. Policy and strategy are agreed at committee meetings. However, the Committee increasingly communicates virtually using emails and associated technologies. As previously, it works within agreed strategic frameworks and operational discretion is delegated to specific Committee members leading on particular activities.

COMMITTEE (TRUSTEES)

			<i>Year of initial election</i>	<i>Current period of office</i>
<i>Chair</i> Stuart Dean	Viewfield Muckhart FK14 7JN	01259 781551 stuartdean535@btinternet.com	2005	2020-23
<i>Vice Chair & Treasurer</i> Malcolm Best	Glenquey Farm Glendevon FK14 7JX	01259 781358 malcolmglenquey@yahoo.com	2011	2020-23
<i>Secretary, Membership Secretary,</i> David Scott	Bridge of Allan	01786 832248 dcbScott@tiscali.co.uk	2008	2020-23
Marilyn Scott	Bridge of Allan	01786 832248 Mbn123@gmail.com	2016	2020-23
Chris Bowness	Dollar	07964102084 bowness.chris@gmail.com	2018	2020- 23

MEMBERSHIP REPORT 2021

Membership of the Friends of the Ochils has decreased over the 12 months to 30 June 2021 and we end the period with 126 Life, Family, Individual and Concession members (at 30 June 2020: 140), plus 5 Group members. The reasons for the decline are members passing on and non-renewals. Trends in membership are shown in the table below.

Trends in membership up to 30th June 2021

	2000	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Honorary Life	-	1	1	1	1	2	3	3
Life	15	20	20	21	20	20	21	21
Family	28	37	37	33	30	31	31	30
Individual	44	42	39	41	33	35	36	31
Concession	39	25	23	22	21	18	18	11
Total personal*	154	162	157	151	135	137	140	126
Community	6	6	6	5	5	7	7	5

* Each Family member is counted as 2 people.

If you are a member, please think about ways we could introduce more people with an interest in the Ochils to the Friends of the Ochils. For example, how about giving a friend a gift membership for a year or more?

As always, we would very much welcome having more people on the Committee. If you are passionate about the Ochils and would like to play a role in our work, please do get in touch!

Although we have an excess of expenditure over income for the 12 months to 30 June 2021 (there is more information on this in the Treasurer's report) we still have a significant accumulated surplus and in the absence of plans to spend significantly more money, the Committee once more recommends leaving subscriptions unchanged for 2021-22. Subscriptions are £3 for concessions, £5 for individuals, £7.50 for families, £15 for groups and £100 for Life Membership.

FINANCE REPORT 2021

The Income and Expenditure Report for the year ended 30 June 2021 (30 June 2020) and the Balance Sheet at the same dates are shown below. The Income and Expenditure Account and the Balance Sheet have been independently examined by Iona Roberts and signed by her on 29 January 2022 without qualification.

For the year ended 30 June 2021 expenditure exceeded income by **£231** (year ended 30 June 2020 income exceeded expenditure by £189) and at 30 June 2021 we had net assets of **£8,852** (30 June 2020 - £9,083). Total income for the year ended 30 June 2021 is down compared to the previous year; this is due almost entirely to a drop in membership. Unfortunately, there have been several deaths during the year and a number of non renewals – we are aware that some of these non renewals were simply an oversight and that those members have, or will, subsequently rejoin. Expenditure for the year is up compared to the previous year due primarily to the cost of the Newsletter (our first and largest for a while) and a much greater postage cost incurred in distributing the Newsletter and the AGM papers. We expect the postage to be less in 2022 as a result of the number of members who have authorised communication by email. These increased costs were partly offset by the absence of any spend on Conference and Promotions and General Administration.

Friends of the Ochils
Income and Expenditure account
For year ended 30 June 2021

	Year ended 30 June 2021	Year ended 30 June 2020
	£	£
Income		
Subscriptions	487	634
Donations	72	88
Bank Interest	2	4
Total income	561	726
 Expenditure		
<i>On charitable objects</i>		
Newsletters & Annual Review	621	154
Website	171	153
Conference & Promotion	0	163
<i>On Administration</i>		
General administration	0	67
Total expenditure	792	537
 Excess of (expenditure over income) for the year	£ (231)	£ 189

**Friends of the Ochils
Balance Sheet
At 30 June 2022**

	<u>2021</u>	<u>2020</u>
	£	£
Current Assets		
Bank of Scotland current account	2,334	2,339
Bank of Scotland savings account	7,018	7,016
Cash in hand	-	-
Total Current Assets	<u>9,352</u>	<u>9,355</u>
Current Liabilities		
Creditors	<u>500</u>	<u>272</u>
Total Current Liabilities	<u>500</u>	<u>272</u>
Net Current Assets	<u>£ 8,852</u>	<u>£ 9,083</u>
Accumulated Funds		
Balance at 1 July	9,083	8,894
Excess of (expenditure over income) for the year	<u>(231)</u>	<u>189</u>
Balance at 30 June	<u>£ 8,852</u>	<u>£ 9,083</u>

Notes to the accounts

1. Expenditure is recognised on the accruals basis, expenditure is not deferred and income is recognised when received.
2. Subscriptions are charged at the full yearly rate in the year of joining. Subscriptions for all subsequent years of membership fall due on 1 November each year.
3. As previously reported approximately **£1,650** of the Charity's funds are dedicated to future Campaigning and are not available for other purposes.
4. No remuneration is paid to any Committee member or any relative of a Committee member.
5. Expenses are paid to Committee members only in respect of verifiable costs incurred by them on behalf of Friends of the Ochils.

Malcolm Best, Treasurer, 29 January 2022