

Castle Loch Lochmaben Community Trust

Newsletter

January 2026



SCO 044045

Editorial

The Board of Trustees wishes everyone a Good New Year, and hope you all continue to enjoy the circular walk round the loch.

We are in need of a new treasurer as our current treasurer, after several years of excellent service, finds he now has too many commitments and wishes to resign. If you feel that you can fulfil the role and would like to join us see below -

A great opportunity to join a friendly and dedicated team of trustees who manage the Castle Loch on behalf of the community.

We are looking for somebody who would be willing to volunteer a few hours a month to support this local project, a background in Accountancy or Book-keeping would be an advantage but not essential.

For further information about the role please email:

castlelochcommunity@outlook.com

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Please note that your membership, although free, does show your support for the Castle Loch Lochmaben Community Trust.

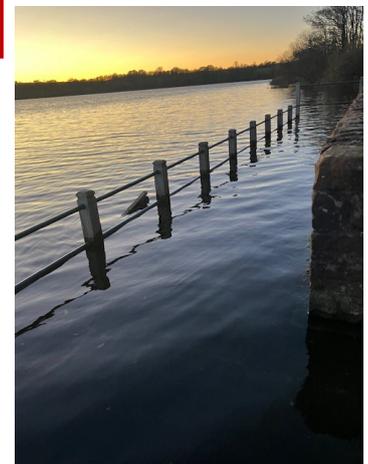
Members also receive the quarterly newsletter. If you live in Lochmaben, Templand, the Royal Four Towns or the surrounding district, you are eligible for membership. Just contact any Trustee, or Rhonda at Lochfield Cottage, if you or someone you know wishes to become a member.

Control and click on this link to join CLLCT and access the website

[CLLCT - Contact Us](#)



Car park next to the bowling green



'Accessible' pier at
A709 car park

Over November and December Castle Loch suffered a lot of flooding and the circular footpath was impassible in many places. The photos are all courtesy of Doug Fountain.

See Dougie's article on Flooding and more photos on page 2

Contacts for Castle Loch Community Trust -

Website—www.castleloch.co.uk

Email— castlelochcommunity@outlook.com

Facebook CLLCT

Flooding



Flooded boardwalk

It will not have passed unnoticed by the people of Lochmaben that we have had some very wet weather recently. This is not unusual in the autumn months but this year we had a drier six months at the start of the year- and Nature always seems to redress any imbalance.

January until the end of May was relatively dry with only 12 inches of rain over 5 months: June until the end of August was a little wetter with 13 inches over 3 months; September until the end of October had 11 inches over 2 months. However, the total for November and December combined was a whopping 18 inches, resulting in a total for the year of 54 inches which would be higher than recent years.

As a result, Castle Loch has suffered quite considerable flooding in recent weeks and, what is unusual for a Loch of its size, the water level can rise up to 2 feet over just a few days.

So where does all this water come from?

Apart from superficial drainage around the periphery of the Loch, there are only two significant burns, the Vendace Burn and the Innerfield Burn, which flow in to the Loch, but these burns do not carry a great amount of water.

So we need to look a little further afield...

There are three large Lochs, the Mill Loch, the Kirk Loch and the Castle Loch around the town, plus another three “ Kettle Lochs “ to the west of the Mill Loch. There are also three fairly major rivers close by – the River Ae, the River Kinnel, and of course the River Annan, and it is my belief that these waterways are all connected under ground and, Castle Loch being the lowest lying, ends up receiving a lot of the surplus water.



Flooded fields below Hightae

Castle Loch has only one outlet which is the Vallison Burn, which has very little fall and has become quite overgrown; this meets the Mill Burn, which runs down from Hightae Mill Loch, to become then known as the Calf Lake Burn which exits to the River Annan.

Any backflow up the Calf Lake Burn from the River Annan in flood, is prevented by sluice flaps which close under pressure and only open up again once the flooding subsides. However, the downside of that is that all the water coming down the Mill Burn and the Vallison Burn cannot get away and floods the fields below Hightae and also prevents the Castle Loch from draining until the flooding disperses. The Annan level then drops, but this is a process that can take two or three days and if the next lot of heavy rain comes too soon, then the whole process is delayed further.

However, the condition of the Vallison Burn has improved recently, thanks to the actions of the farmers whose land it passes through, and once conditions are right again the water level in Castle Loch will return to a manageable level much faster. than previously.

Doug Fountain

Play in Kirkhirst Wood

It is great to see families enjoying the play area in Kirkhirst Wood—thank you to the family who agreed for their photos to be used in the newsletter.



Habitat Officer Report Dec 25

Castle Loch Lochmaben Community Trust has been lucky enough to be awarded two sources of funding relative to Woodland Regeneration. Following a consultation with DG Woodlands, we applied for funding for over 600 tree saplings to be planted around Castle Loch. This is to promote regeneration in areas where there is none. Successful funding applications have been gratefully received from the Tree Council via their SPEN (SP Energy Networks) scheme and also from DG Woodlands.

Some areas of Castle Loch woodlands are showing great regeneration, such as the beech woodland along the Dalton road path and our wet carr woodland; however due to various factors such as deer-grazing, light restriction and some invasive plants, regeneration in the likes of Kirkhirst woodlands is much less. To ensure the long-term success of the new tree saplings, the volunteers have been involved in getting the ground ready for the new trees. This includes making more light spaces by reducing the amount of rhododendron present, and also removing a percentage of Sycamore and promoting ground flora species.



Going forward CLLCT hopes to plant a mixture of Aspen, Yew, Hazel and Crab apple, all native plants to the UK, which will promote the wildlife and diversity, creating a wildlife corridor from Kirkhirst woodlands to the Lochside Plantation.

Willow Tits

Castle Loch is concerned about maintaining and developing the habitat for the Willow Tit (*Poecile montanus kleinschmidti*). The Willow tit population has been threatened by loss of woodland areas, particularly wet woodlands, and has been described as one of the UK's most threatened resident bird (Back from the Brink, Willow Tit Conservation Handbook, 2021). [25221 BftB Willow Tit Handbook V6.pdf](#)



Willow tit

Castle Loch and its surrounding area has some great Willow tit habitat; however there has been no evidence of any breeding pairs seen this last year. Although single birds have been spotted occasionally, the willow tit is a very elusive and secretive species avoiding areas where other mixed tit species can be found. By reviewing our nest boxes and encouraging the right habitat we hope to change this. Apparently, Willow tits can harbour territory up to 14 hectares with a home range of up to 7 hectares, which is a large area to cover. Their ideal territory is made up of wet woodland with a high precedence of willow, birch, elder, alder and hazel and of course lots of dead standing and fallen wood. Their diet changes in summer from mostly invertebrates such as crane flies, butterflies and moths to seeds and berries in the winter months. If you think you have seen one of these amazing little birds, drop us a line.

Rhonda Graham

George Hunter Trust

CLLCT has been funded by:-













And - many thanks to all anonymous donors



Members of the Board of Trustees with David Mundell MP and Craig Hoy MSP .

National Lottery Award

Castle Loch was honoured with a substantial award from the National Lottery Community Fund and one of the conditions was that the award would be publicised.

CLLCT Board members attended a publicity event in Lochfield Cottage on 21st November and local newspapers published coverage of the visit. The award will be used to cover regular important costs.

Many thanks to the volunteers who organised the publicity event.

Wetland Bird Surveys (WeBS)

WeBS is organised by the BTO and involves counting birds at nominated sites throughout the UK on a prescribed Sunday morning each month. Currently counts are made at around 2,850 UK wetland sites such as rivers, estuaries and lochs.

A team comprising Kath Davidson, Freda Seddon and myself took over the Castle Loch WeBS counts in October 2016 together with Mill Loch, Kirk Loch and Hightae Loch. The latter was dropped from the Lochmaben group of lochs surveyed in early 2020 due to access issues. Due to other commitments, Freda left the survey team in 2019.

One hundred monthly surveys have been carried out at Castle Loch between October 2016 and December 2025. The number of months between these two dates is 111 – the 11 missing surveys were mainly due to Covid restrictions. Data for all 100 surveys are available from Rhonda.

At every survey, the number of each species observed in a 40 minute or so scan from three points around the loch (Lochfield cottage, bowling green car park and the disabled pier by the Dalton road) is recorded. Surveys are carried out fairly soon after sunrise and at the same time for each month from year to year, weather permitting. Although this does not provide a comprehensive count of all the birds present, it does give a useful snapshot of, for example, trends within and between years.

Over the period October 2016 to December 2025, the total number of bird observations stands at 15,888. This number comprises 30 species including 5 gull species.

WeBS species at Castle Loch, 2016 -2025:-

Canada Goose	Kingfisher	Shelduck
Coot	Lapwing	Shoveler
Cormorant	Little Egret	Snipe
Goldeneye	Little Grebe	Teal
Goosander	Mallard	Tufted Duck
Great Crested Grebe	Moorhen	Whooper Swan
Great White Egret	Mute Swan	Wigeon
Grey Heron	Oystercatcher	
Greylag Goose	Pochard	

Species such as Tufted Duck (3204 total count), Wigeon (1657) and Goldeneye (558) winter at Castle Loch and leave to breed elsewhere towards the end of winter. Other species such as Mute Swan (5993) and Mallard (2024) are resident throughout the year. Other species of interest include Great Crested Grebe, Whooper Swan and, more recently, Great White Egret.

**Many thanks to Drew Davidson
for this report**