



Report on activities 2021/22

Summary:

Strategic progress/investment at Kinneil remained hampered by the ongoing pandemic, plus challenges and restructuring within both Historic Environment Scotland and in Falkirk Council (after re-incorporating Falkirk Community Trust, and local elections), together with other enormous external events such as war in Europe, and economic/political crisis. Nevertheless some positive projects and partnerships progressed.

It has been a huge challenge for volunteers to keep going, given impacts on their own personal commitments as well, and to continue delivering levels of support which are disproportionate and not sustainable, much of which support and co-ordination would at many historic sites of comparable scale and significance be properly resourced and undertaken by paid staff.

The Committee were again busy across numerous fronts, and some of the main highlights (including relevant activities by others) since last year's AGM are listed below. Over this summer we have focused on doing what we can to welcome visitors to Kinneil, and keeping it in the public eye, in spite of everything. As ever we owe huge thanks to all the committee members, volunteers and supporters who do so much and make it possible.

2022 and 2023 mark the Centenary of Kinneil House and Estate first becoming public heritage assets. The Council and Historic Environment Scotland have so far still done little specifically to celebrate or capitalise on this, or to progress jointly the still untapped main opportunities of the Kinneil Masterplan 2015-25.

2021: October

- Sustrans [Foreshore development project](#) steering group meeting & [installation of new interpretation panels](#). This project on National Cycle Network Route 76 won 1st Prize for Exemplary Initiatives at European Greenways Awards.
- Froglife visits Kinneil Primary School, facilitated by the Friends, for a [session to create a panel for their 'Mapestry'](#).
- Promotional support for Kinneil Estate Scavenger Hunt run by Church at the Barony, & weekly Step Forth walks.
- Kinneil Fortlet features in ground-breaking [VisitScotland UNESCO World Heritage trail and video](#).
- Intensive, successful lobbying effort for Falkirk Council's Executive Committee, 19 October. In debate on Kinneil walled garden, [Councillors across parties agreed an amendment](#) calling for more progress on Kinneil Masterplan and for a further report in 2022 with definite plans for Kinneil Estate as a whole, including options for a potential National Lottery bid. They also approved ongoing investment in wall repairs and planned infrastructure improvements at the walled garden itself, and commended the work of both the Friends of Kinneil, and [Sustainable Thinking Scotland](#).
- Kinneil House remains closed. Our volunteers continue to provide [free outdoor guided tours to visitors every Saturday at 2pm until the end of November](#), including special Hallowe'en event on 30 October.
- On behalf of the Friends, guide [Iain Kirkman supports 'Pilgrimage to COP26'](#) walk via Bo'ness Foreshore.

November

- James Watt's revolutionary steam engine is [portrayed by UK PM on world's stage at COP26](#), Glasgow, as an unfortunate milestone on the journey to climate change: conceived in Glasgow, but developed/tested at Kinneil.
- Discussions begin with Historic Scotland about 2022 plans, then progress falters thereafter.
- Kinneil House, Estate & Foreshore feature in new [Historic Scotland blog and video on sustainable tourism](#).
- Case study on Kinneil House community value [features in 'History Scotland' magazine Nov/Dec edition](#).
- Sustrans Foreshore project [installs new heritage cast-iron bench](#) at Bo'ness Harbour.
- Ongoing work with Falkirk Community Trust on new winter 'Hidden Heritage Trail' leaflet.
- Committee volunteer Yvonne McBlain tidies shrubbery outside Kinneil Museum & plants spring bulbs there.
- Production of new Friends Christmas card, for sending to all members with Christmas newsletter.

December

- Vice-Chair Jane Hogg creates & delivers [Kinneil Museum Christmas activity + free prizes](#).
- Observation from Kinneil of historic demolition of Longannet chimney landmark.
- Falkirk Council provide draft Grant Offer letter for the [£85k of Community Choices funding](#) for enhancements to the 'Hidden Heritage' play trail. (Note: 10 months later, the letter still has not been finalised by the Council).
- Committee Christmas get-together... but later in month, COVID partial lockdown restrictions return.

2022: January

- Ongoing restoration by Falkirk Council of Kinneil walled garden walls, + installation of bespoke new cast-iron gates.
- Our James Watt Supper has to be postponed due to COVID restrictions.
- Meetings & correspondence with long-awaited new Falkirk Community Trust Parks Team Leader about range of park management issues needing attention. (Note: 4 months later this officer moved to a different position at Helix Park).
- Falkirk Junior Bike Club run [Kinneil X](#) cyclo-cross event in estate.
- Participation in Falkirk Council's online 'Budget Conversations' sessions.

February

- Bikepacking Scotland, Visit Falkirk & renowned cyclist Mark Beaumont feature Kinneil Foreshore/Estate in [new video](#).
- [Launch of new digital 360° guided audio tour of Kinneil House and James Watt Cottage](#) produced by Falkirk Community Trust 'Great Place' project on their 'Falkirk Explored' app, in association with Friends.
- Continuing refresh of our [Kinneil web site](#), with much [added new content](#), by the [PR Store](#) supported by Sustrans.
- [Online talk](#) given to Friends of Reading Museum about the Antonine Wall.
- Pruning of Kinneil orchard, and later, spring planting at Museum tubs.
- Friends have to respond to park issues concerning metal detecting, fishing, motorised vehicles & other anti-social behaviour.
- Initial meetings to assist a Kinneil House annual course project undertaken by the whole student group on the HES/Stirling University MSc course in Technical Building Conservation.
- TCV return to Kinneil Estate with a Council-supported apprentice training initiative on conservation activities.
- Friends also support TCV [outdoor volunteer Sunday](#) tackling invasive species in woodland fringes. This followed Falkirk Council also using a funding grant to remove invasive cherry laurel trees in parts of the estate.

March

- Forth Environment Link run a ['Bo'ness cyclebus'](#) event from Kinneil House to Blackness.
- Detailed work to discuss and respond to planning application for major housing scheme at Crawfield Road.
- Historic Scotland share limited 2022 Kinneil House opening plans for discussion.
- In Scotland's Year of Stories 2022, we resume regular Saturday outdoor guided tours, running fortnightly, with a [walk on a 'Mary Queen of Scots' theme](#) in support of the Hippodrome Silent Film Festival.
- Postponed [James Watt Supper 2022](#) held at Corbie Inn.

April

- Falkirk Community Trust is [formally abolished](#) on 1 April and re-integrated within Falkirk Council.
- Vice-Chair Jane Hogg creates [Easter 'I Spy' activity](#) for the estate
- Return of traditional annual outdoor [Easter Sunday service](#) at Kinneil Kirk.
- We publish new [film about 'The Kinneil House Great Escape' on Easter Sunday 1562](#) – 3rd Earl of Arran's tragic story.
- Play featuring Kinneil Colliery during miners' strike is [staged at Traverse Theatre](#), Edinburgh.
- We publish [first in a series of blog posts](#) marking Kinneil's Centenary as a public heritage asset and park.
- Edinburgh Interlopers Orienteering Club bring [event](#) to Kinneil Estate.
- Our new sub-group on engaging young people, led by Yvonne McBlain, meets.
- [First Historic Scotland Kinneil House open day since 2019](#) takes place, followed by lengthy correspondence and discussion with them about its marketing and organisation.
- [Litter pick](#) with Bo'ness Community Cleanup Group at Kinneil Foreshore.
- Forth Environment Link [foraging walk](#) in the estate.
- [Sustainable Thinking Scotland open days](#) and [workshops](#) resume in Kinneil walled garden.

May

- We announce that [our Saturday afternoon guided outdoor walks will run weekly](#) over the summer. One of these later in month is a [children's storytelling walk](#) devised by committee volunteer/guide, Yvonne McBlain, and another is a [Roman walk](#) by volunteer Adrian Mahoney.
- Local elections take place.
- Ongoing correspondence and discussions continue on issues with Falkirk Council's £85k 'Community Choices' grant.
- Detailed application to new [Climate Forth potential grant scheme](#).
- We help to promote Froglife pond creation [volunteering days](#) at Kinneil Foreshore.
- Strathkelvin Riding Club [show](#) in the estate.
- [Publication of new regional guides](#) to the Antonine Wall.
- Kinneil Museum featured in new Visit Falkirk/Simply Emma [accessibility guide](#).
- Hosting of special [tour by members of Linlithgow Civic Trust](#).
- Building Conservation MSc Student Group [give inspiring presentation](#) in Stirling of Kinneil project & recommendations.

June

- [Bo'ness Performance Car Show](#) returns to estate – we are not involved but Historic Scotland open Kinneil House.
- TCV '[Green Gym](#)' returns to Kinneil Estate.
- Filming for new Rediscovering the Antonine Wall film, [to be screened on 24 October](#).
- [@kinneil](#) passes 2,000 followers on Twitter (our [Facebook page](#) has >3,000 followers and >2,600 likes).
- Sustainable Thinking Scotland host visit by Minister for Higher Education, Further Education, Youth Employment and Training, and also [win 'Climate Conscious' award](#) at SCVO Scottish Charity Awards.
- Sub-group meeting with Historic Scotland about engaging young people.
- After several weeks planning, Commonwealth Games [Queen's Baton Relay visits Kinneil House](#) at start of Fair Week, welcomed by Kinneil Band, 2021 Fair Queen Ellie, and some other children and representatives for a local 'photocall'.
- Bo'ness Fair – Historic Scotland [open house on Fair Saturday](#).

July

- After improving Foreshore Railway Crossings, Sustrans also install new maritime-themed play area and an audio post adjacent to Bo'ness Harbour.
- Meetings, guided visit and detailed correspondence with Falkirk Council's restructured senior managers for 1) Kinneil Museum and 2) Kinneil Estate. Council demolishes large glasshouses and continues wall repairs at walled garden.
- Kinneil featured in [new John Muir Way film](#).
- [Litter pick](#) with Bo'ness Community Cleanup Group at Kinneil Foreshore.
- No Historic Scotland Kinneil House open days to take place during peak summer school holiday season. We continue to offer a weekly Saturday outdoor tour, including sometimes the children's storytelling tour and Roman-themed tour.

August

- Kidz Stop Nursery and Cleanup Group install [new anti-litter board](#) at Kinneil Woods, sadly vandalised a few days later.
- Special Saturday [outdoor tour featuring story of Kinneil Hill Climb](#).
- Sustainable Thinking Scotland host '[Happy Potato Day](#)' in walled garden.
- Hosting of [visit](#) to Kinneil House & Museum by members of Colinton Local History Society.
- Historic Scotland Kinneil House open day near end of August.
- We organise [evening bat walk](#) with Council Ranger Lesley Sweeney to mark International Bat Night.
- Hosting of Scottish Local History Forum annual '[Walk & Talk](#)' visit to Railway Museum, Corbie Inn & Kinneil House.

September

- [Talk](#) to Linlithgow Civic Trust on '*Kinneil: Over 2,000 Years of Scottish History*'.
- Special tour for 3rd Bo'ness Scouts' Beaver group.
- [Cycling hill climb event](#) by West Lothian Clarion Cycle Club.
- [Kinneil Hill Climb event](#) returns: we support Historic Scotland house open day + feature in event programme.
- Sustainable Thinking Scotland hold [sustainability](#) and '[Bountiful Bo'ness](#)' harvest events at walled garden.
- With existing 2022 open days all fully booked, Historic Scotland open for two added days for [Doors Open weekend](#).
- We return to organising [Big Roman Week](#), with a series of talks, walks and other events on Roman heritage.
- Hosting of popular and successful [Big Roman Day](#), with support from partners, at Kinneil House.
- Friends [urge Councillors to act](#) after anger at Kinneil Masterplan report.
- Representing Kinneil at [British Association of Friends of Museums](#) annual conference, this year held in Dundee.

Ian Shearer (Chairman), October 2022