

Luss Report – October 2012

From Culross to Luss – Nick Cooke, SPRF Secretary

Nick summarized the development of the Forum over the past 9 months, covering the wide spectrum of interests represented, organisational progress, current pilgrim route development projects and wider liaison. A range of local community organizations, churches, social enterprises, businesses, public agencies and the Scottish Government are now interested and supportive. As next steps, the Forum would need to consider how it should operate, what its ultimate goals should be, and what standards should apply in defining designated pilgrim routes that were fit for purpose.

Pilgrim route development across Scotland – work in progress:

Fife Pilgrim Trail Network - Roger Pickering, Forth Pilgrim.

Roger described the work of Forth Pilgrim, a social enterprise he had set up to promote pilgrimage educational work. With support from SPRF, current discussions were taking place with Fife Council, Fife Coast and Countryside Trust, landowners and others about a designated Fife Pilgrim Trail walking route linking St Andrews with Culross and North Queensferry, utilizing elements of the core paths network and historic pilgrimage sites in Fife. A prospective 'spinal' route has now been identified and mapped as the basis of further landowner negotiations.

'Scotland's Pilgrim Journeys' – Brian Fraser, Scotland's Churches Trust.

Brian explained that SCT was the merger of the former Scotland's Churches Scheme and the Scottish Churches Architectural Heritage Trust, with the SPJ project being stated in 2011 to promote and enable access to churches and sacred sites along routes with a generic pilgrimage theme to cater for the growing 'faith tourism' market in Scotland. Initial funding has been provided by Scottish Enterprise, Historic Scotland and others. So far, SCT has identified six routes as journeys between sacred sites, but these would not be designated footpaths and they would offer different travel options, including car. Maps and narratives associated with each route are being developed. See website: www.sacredscotland.org.uk

Planned ' Scotland's Pilgrim Journeys' routes:	
St. Columba's Journey	Kintyre to Iona and Portmahomack
St. Andrew's Journey	St. Andrews to Iona

St. Cuthbert's Journey	Melrose to Lindisfarne and Durham
St. Margaret's Journey	Edinburgh Castle to Dunfermline
St. Ninian's Journey	Edinburgh/Glasgow/Ayrshire coast to Whithorn
St. Mungo's Journey	Glasgow/Edinburgh to Whithorn and St. Asaph in Wales.

Iona to St Andrews – John Henderson, Walking Support.

John explained that for him the idea of creating a long distance coast to coast pilgrim walking route of 150 miles started in 2008 with a meeting with Roseanna Cunningham, MSP. The inception of SPRF had stimulated him to form an electronic sub-group of local interested parties covering different sections. Identifying the optimum off-road route poses various challenges, for example on Mull from Fionnaphort to Craignure and east from Oban to Dalmally, but good progress was being made in identifying route choices catering for all levels of walker, using a set of key criteria. John outlined how he saw the project progressing, with a report from the development group on a preferred spinal LDR route being produced by spring 2013.

Luss – Scotland's 'Green Pilgrimage City' - Rev Dane Sherrard, Luss Parish Church

Dane welcomed everyone and spoke about the launch at Assisi in 2011 of the new global interfaith Green Pilgrimage Network set up by the Alliance of Religions and Conservation, an offshoot of the WWF, for which Luss was chosen to be Scotland's 'green pilgrimage city'. Pilgrimage began at Luss after the martyrdom of St Kessog in 520 AD and today there are 750,000 visitors to the village every year. The Parish Church has worked with the local community and businesses to establish a separate pilgrimage centre, residential 'pilgrim's palace' accommodation, and a pilgrimage trail around the adjoining glebe meadow. A new 'memorandum of understanding' between the Church and Argyll and Bute Council, committing both parties to promote faith tourism and environmental conservation, will be showcased by the Green Pilgrimage Network.

Dane then led everyone across the Parish Church to view a promotional video, and from there to visit the Pilgrims Palace residential accommodation before the group walked around the glebe meadow pilgrimage trail. An excellent communal lunch was provided in the Manse by Dane's team, allowing everyone a further opportunity to meet and get to know one another.