

# Scottish Pilgrimage Gathering: Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2014

The Vine Conference Centre, 131 Garvock Hill, DUNFERMLINE KY11 4JU

## BRIEFING NOTE 1.3 August 2014

Following the success of the first Pilgrimage Gathering attended by 80 delegates last year, the Scottish Pilgrim Routes Forum & Forth Pilgrim have organised a similar event. Public interest in off-road pilgrimage travel continues to rise, reflected in the 100% increase in SPRF membership in the past years to 50 organisations & individuals, as well as increasing publicity for the development of specific long distance Pilgrim Way walking routes across Scotland.

The theme of this day is designed to appeal to a wide audience, in particular members of faith networks, environmental organisations & tourism businesses with an interest in wider public enjoyment of Scotland's countryside and natural heritage. The overall aim of the Gathering is to bring together organisations & people sharing an interest in the development of pilgrimage travel & heritage tourism in Scotland today.

The website [www.scottishpilgrimagegathering.co.uk](http://www.scottishpilgrimagegathering.co.uk) provides a draft program, on-line ticket booking system, contact points & details of venue location & public transport. More information will be put on this website, including updates to the programme & downloads of other relevant docs. Those attending the Gathering on the day will receive an information pack & feedback instructions. Our aim is to become a fixture in the annual Scottish calendar.

**Paul Wheelhouse, the Scottish Government Environment Minister** will open the morning session of the Gathering with a keynote speech.

We are delighted to welcome the following distinguished line up of speakers for the morning programme.

- **Professor R J (Sam) Berry** MA, DSc, FSB, FRSE was Professor of Genetics at University College London from 1974 to 2000. He is a Past President of the Linnean Society, British Ecological Society, European Ecological Federation, and Christians in Science; he was the Gifford Lecturer in Glasgow 1997-98. Much of his research work has been in Scotland – on island mice, Shetland moths and Fair Isle skuas. Sam Berry's books include *God and the Biologist* (1996), *God's Book of Works* (2003), *Natural History of Islands* (2009) and *Ecology and the Environment* (2011). He is the recipient of a Templeton UK Award for 'sustained advocacy of the Christian faith in the world of science' and of the Marsh Award for Ecology.
- **Chris Baines** is one of the UK's leading independent environmentalists & an award winning writer and broadcaster. He is best known as a champion of urban wildlife and wildlife gardening and he has been an enthusiastic advocate for cross-sectoral partnership working for more than 40 years. Chris works as a self-employed freelancer, and advises government ministers, local councils and senior executives in major water, minerals, finance, construction and housing companies, on environmental practice. Critically, this role now includes acting as environmental adviser to the Alliance for Religions and Conservation, and the world-wide Green Pilgrimage Network.
- **Professor Richard Oram** [FSA \(Scot.\)](#) is the Professor of Medieval and Environmental History at the [University of Stirling](#) and director of the University's Centre for Environmental History and Policy. He received his undergraduate training at the [University of St. Andrews](#) where he also carried out his doctoral research on which he published his book *The Lordship of Galloway* in 2000. Richard says: "My landscape-based research in Environmental History provides a perfect

excuse to undertake extensive fieldwork in the Scottish mountains and to climb as many as possible in search of medieval property boundaries, shieling sites and hunting grounds, all followed by detailed post-trip critical analysis in the nearest pub.”

The afternoon programme: Workshop sessions on the long term role of four key stakeholders in the development of Pilgrim Way walking routes. Local churches, landowners, tourism businesses and local NGOs. All have a vital role to play in developing a wider community ownership of these routes as a public resource accessible to all. Securing long term agreement and providing appropriate infrastructure for new designated walking routes in partnership with private estates & national agencies such as SNH, Forestry Commission Scotland & Visit Scotland will be fundamental to developing off-road pilgrim travel.

## **Why Does the Gathering Matter?**

The development of pilgrim walking routes is highly relevant to many key Government policy priorities - improving countryside access, promoting a physically healthier society, and developing more economically resilient rural communities. In 2013, SPRF actively responded to the Scottish Government's Consultation on the National Planning Framework 3 Main Issues Report and Draft Framework. As a result, the proposed Fife Pilgrim Way and Iona – St Andrews Pilgrim Way – two of SPRF's key projects - are now among the 22 priority long distance routes included in the National Cycling and Walking Network adopted in June 2014 for long term implementation recognised by the Scottish Government under the NPF3 framework.

In 2012 Forth Pilgrim facilitated the formation of a partnership of organisations working together to establish a dedicated **Fife Pilgrim Way** LDR linking Culross and North Queensferry with Dunfermline and St Andrews for a distance of 109 km across Fife. Since then, the proposed route has had a professional feasibility study completed under Scotways management, funded by the Central Scotland Green Network with added support from Fife Council and the Fife Coast & Countryside Trust. We hope to hear an update at the Gathering.

Significant progress has also been made in the past 12 months on discrete sections of the proposed coast to coast Iona – **St Andrews Pilgrim Way** LDR across the heart of central Scotland. On Mull, SNH has confirmed its intention to fund a feasibility study to create a largely off-road walking route linking Fionnphort and Craignure across the island. This follows similar SNH support for a new 'Road to the Isles' LDR footpath covering the Oban to Tyndrum section. Further east in Strathearn, a local community group network led by Roseanna Cunningham MSP has launched a campaign to establish a 'Three Saints Way' LDR footpath linking Killin to St Andrews.

In the south west, 2013-14 has also seen considerable publicity for a highly successful local initiative pioneered by Paisley Abbey as part of its 850<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations to establish a Glasgow – Whithorn Pilgrim Way walking route. On a more political level, the Scottish Government's recent pledge to support the creation of a St Ninian's Way network of routes to Whithorn as a European Cultural Route will give the Pilgrim Way a wider strategic relevance.

Expect to hear much more about all of these projects and initiatives and others at the 2014 Scottish Pilgrimage Gathering!

For more information on SPRF membership, meetings and events, visit [www.sprf.org.uk](http://www.sprf.org.uk)

**Nick Cooke**  
Secretary, Scottish Pilgrim Routes Forum

**Roger Pickering**  
Forth Pilgrim & SPRF