

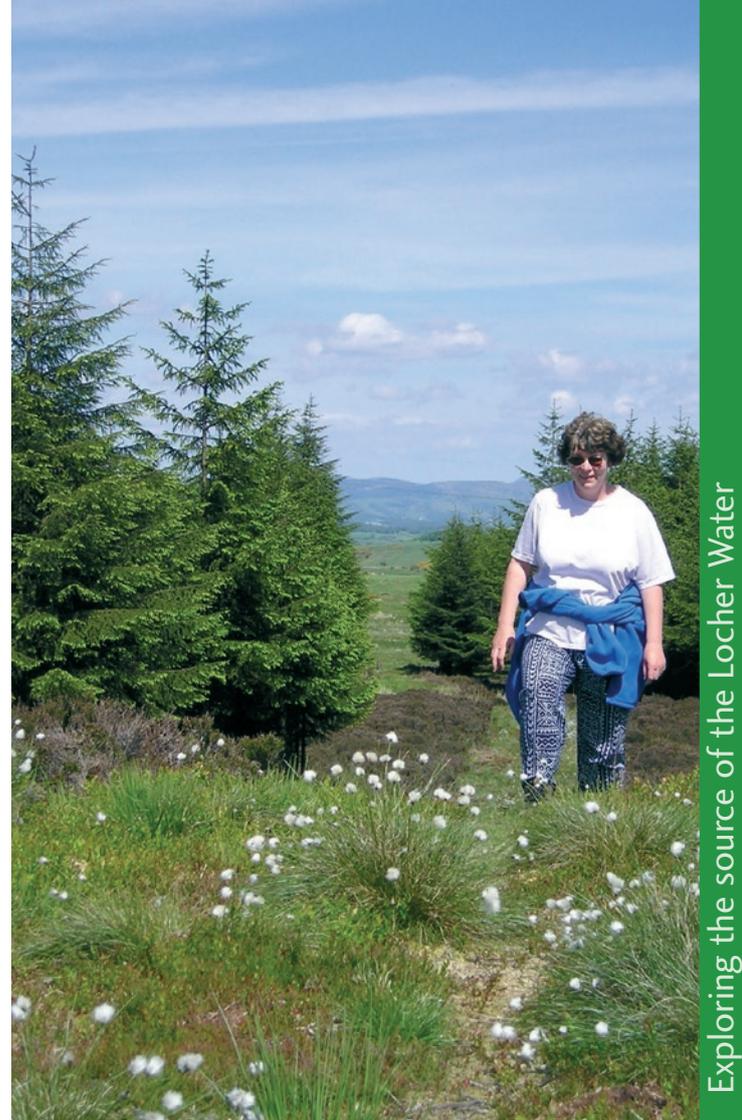
# Exploring the source of the Locher Water

This is the wildest and most adventurous route in the guidebook. You'll climb up above Renfrewshire's rolling farmland, following the Locher Water to its source through peaceful woodlands. There's plenty of wildlife to be seen, from deer and buzzards to tiny orchids and voles. If you choose to extend the walk up to Windy Hill, you can enjoy the big open spaces of the Renfrewshire moors and a spectacular panorama of central Scotland and the Highlands. Just watch you don't tread on any grouse !

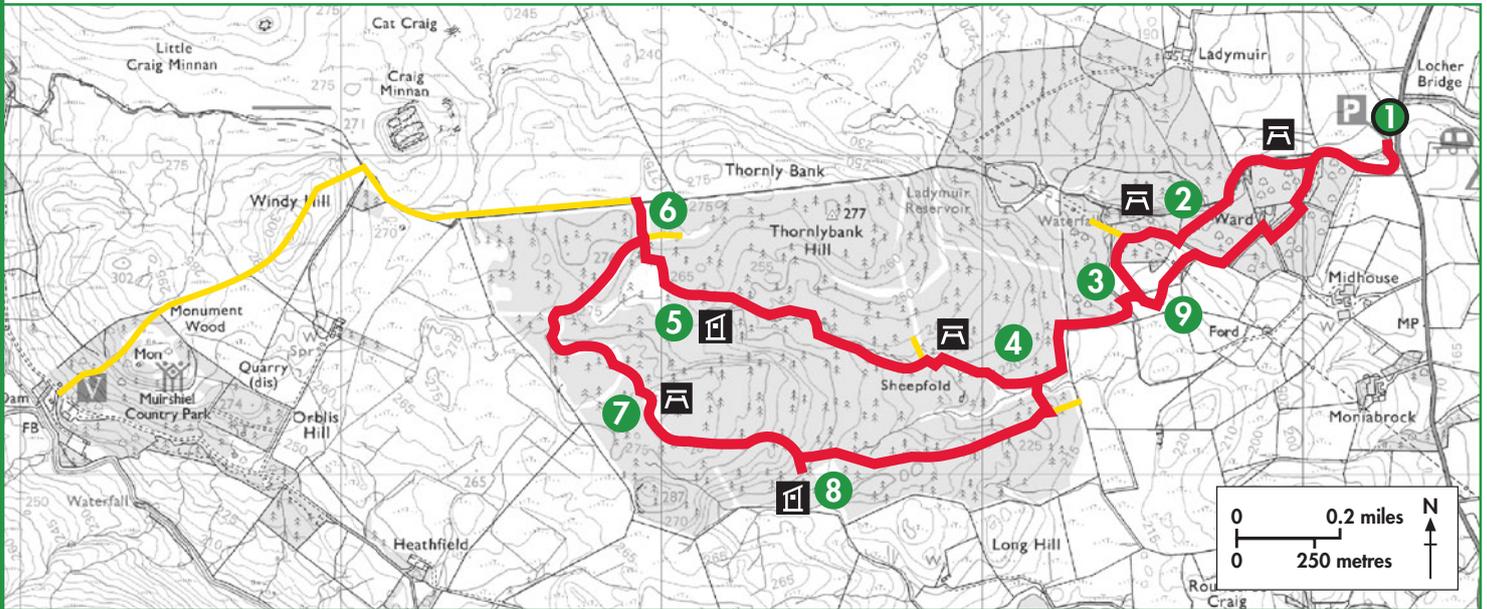
**Start and finish** The walk starts at a car park in the countryside, on the B786 between Lochwinnoch and Kilmacolm. The car park is about 5.5km (3.5 miles) from Lochwinnoch and 6km (4 miles) from Kilmacolm (grid ref NS 352640).

**Distance** 7km (4.5 miles). Allow 3 ½ hours. If extending the walk to the top of Windy Hill (an extra 2.5km /1.5 miles), allow another hour.

**Terrain** Boots or wellies definitely required. Parts of the walk are very wet underfoot – expect to get your feet wet if not wearing wellies! Most of the walk is on grassy paths, but they can be muddy, unclear, rough uneven and boggy in places. Bring warm clothes, it can be cool even in the summer.



# Exploring the source of the Locher Water



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**1** From the car park, go through the pedestrian gate on your left. Follow the wide grassy track which bends round to the right. After 300m there is a sharp left bend. A few metres beyond, the path splits at a waymarker post. Turn right. The path leads up a short steep slope, into some Scots pines, and down to a little stone bridge over the burn. Continue along the path, crossing two more bridges over the burn, bear right after 2nd bridge and

cross the wall and then up a short steep section to a T junction with a wide track. Turn right.

**2** Follow this wider track for nearly 200m until it divides at a waymarker post, directly underneath electricity transmission lines. Turn left. The grassy path climbs gradually uphill, through two old stone dykes. At a waymarker post about 20m beyond

the second stone dyke, turn very sharp right along a fainter grassy path.

**From Locherwood...** You will see two quite different types of woodland on this walk. The first is Locherwood Community Woodland, at the start and finish of the walk. This was planted in the mid 1990s as a woodland with free access for local people and is a haven for wildlife. The trees are still very young, so it feels very open compared to older woodlands. The trees are mainly native to Scotland – species like oak, birch, ash and rowan. They support a whole range of other local flora and fauna, including lichens, wild flowers, insects, birds and small mammals. As you walk through the woodland, you'll hear lots of birds and see many flowers, depending on the time of year.

**3** The path curves round and crosses a footbridge over the Locher Water after 100m, ignore path to the right. A few metres further on, the path runs alongside a straight fence and wall for 200m up to the edge of a dense forest, where it turns sharp left between the forest and another fence and wall (can be muddy) for another 200m. You will come to a small information board for Ladymuir Woodland immediately before a burn. Turn right at this sign, through the trees but parallel with the burn on your left. The path isn't clear at this point, but after 50m you'll see a footbridge on your left.

**4** Don't cross this bridge, but keep going in the same direction

along the right hand side of the burn just inside the trees. After 20m, the path becomes clearer – although it is extremely muddy for another 100m. (You might wish to keep to the edge of the burn instead, where it is wet but less muddy.) After the muddy section, the path continues along the right hand side of the burn to a little footbridge. Cross the footbridge and continue along the left hand side of the burn, where the path becomes clearer. Head towards a picnic bench slightly uphill. A short distance later ignore a path to the right over a footbridge. After another 800m, your path switches to the right bank. 500m further again, you will reach a bird hide looking out over a big clearing. In the clearing is source of the Locher Water.

**...to Ladymuir** The second type of woodland is Ladymuir Forest, after point 4 on the walk. This is a much denser plantation of Sitka Spruce trees. It is a few years older than Locherwood, having been planted in the mid 1970's. It also has quite different origins. The woodland was planted for the value of its timber rather than for recreation or nature conservation, and the trees will eventually be harvested to be processed for paper and building. Over the years, nature has made a home here too. You might catch glimpses of roe deer, owls and buzzards as you walk through the forest – or from the bird hides. There are plenty of smaller things to see as well: depending on the time of year, it could be orchids, butterflies or blaeberrries!

**5** From the bird hide, continue along the path on the right hand edge of the big clearing. After a small footbridge and short muddy section, the path leaves the clearing and heads up a forest ride (a grassy corridor through the trees) to the right. About 100m from the clearing, there is a small sign at a path crossroads. Carry straight on towards the wall and fence in front of you on the edge of the forest. There is an information panel and good views north to the bigger hills of the Highlands.

**6** Unless you want to extend your walk to Windy Hill (see box), go back to the path crossroads, then turn right, marked by a blue arrow on a waymarker post. This follows a faint path along a forest ride, with some wet sections. Ignore smaller gaps in the trees off to the right and left. After 500m, the forest ride narrows and seems to come to an end. Follow the faint path round to the left, up another forest ride which is quite boggy. After another 500m, this leads to a short steep section with two picnic benches at the top. This is the highest point of the main walk.

**Extension to Windy Hill** From the stile just beyond the crossroads, you can see Windy Hill just beneath the skyline about 1.5km away to the left, along the line of the wall. The panorama from the summit is tremendous. If you want to extend the walk to Windy Hill, cross over the stile, and follow the wall on your left (poor path). After 1 km, the fence bends to the right and there is a small group of trees on your left. Immediately after the trees, there is a stile over the fence and a faint path leading up firmer ground to the cairn at the summit of Windy Hill (316m high). Return the way you came to the crossroads.

**How far can you see ?** This may be a woodland walk, but on a clear day you can see a long way... From the information panel just after the cross roads (point 6), you can see north across the Clyde to the Luss Hills above Loch Lomond, nearly 30km away; to their left, the rougher hills are the Cowal hills in Argyll, above Dunoon and Lochgoilhead, about 40km away. From the picnic benches at the highest point, you look over the trees to Misty Law and Hill of Stake, the highest – and roughest - points in Renfrewshire. Once you're back into Locherwood at point 9, the view takes in Paisley, Glasgow and the Campsies; to the north are the Highlands, past Ben Lomond to Ben More and Stobinian above Crianlarich (60km away); and to the east are the Pentland Hills near Edinburgh (75km away). But the best panorama is from the top of Windy Hill – where you can see everything!

Looking north to Ben Lomond



**7** From the picnic benches, continue in the same direction along the edge of the trees, by a narrow path following a forest ride. After about 1 km from the benches, the path and forest ride bend sharply left at a waymarker post. Before you turn left, carry on through a gap in the trees about 10m beyond the waymarker: just through the gap is a bird hide with a bench, a good spot to have a rest and watch for wildlife.

**8** Go back to the waymarker post. Continue along the path, downhill along the forest ride. There are some quite boggy sections over the next 1.5 km or so, where the path fades: just continue along the forest ride, the path does reappear again. 100m before an old gate at the edge of the forest, the path turns sharp left out of the forest ride, over some bare rock and down to the footbridge you saw at point 4. Cross the bridge and turn right along the edge of the trees to the information panel, back the way you came earlier. Continue to retrace your

steps along the path by the fence, over the footbridge after about 500m to the waymarker post at point 3 (100m from the footbridge).

**9** Turn right along the wide grassy path. At some mature trees after 300m, you join another track coming in from the left. Turn right, following the blue and green waymarkers. The track bends to the left and leads down towards a house. When you reach the main track to the house, turn right (away from the house). After 30m, turn left along a wide grassy path, indicated by red/blue/green waymarkers. Follow this path, ignoring a track off to the left at one point (you went that way earlier). The path takes you back to the car park about 1 km from the house.

Black grouse



Point 7. From Ladymuir plantation south west to Mistly Law



Red campion



## Getting to the start

**Bus and rail** The start of the walk is difficult to reach by public transport, as it is in the countryside 4.5km from the nearest bus routes (Bridge of Weir and Lochwinnoch) or rail station (Lochwinnoch or Johnstone). We suggest you take a taxi from any of these and then arrange to be picked up later.

## Ring ‘n’ Ride information

You can use the SPT 965 Ring ‘n’ Ride Service call 0845 123 5048 (booking line open Mon-Fri 0900-1600. Buses operate **Mon - Sat 0700-1800 & Sunday 0900-1800. You must book at least two hours ahead.**

**Bicycle** The start of the walk is 4.5km from Lochwinnoch on National Cycle Network cycletrack 7 between Paisley, Johnstone, and Irvine. From Lochwinnoch, cycle along the B786 towards Kilmacolm and Greenock (see Car directions for precise details). This road is hilly and, although quiet, has fast moving traffic. It is not suitable for inexperienced cyclists. Bring a lock for your bike.

**Car** The simplest approach is via Lochwinnoch, which lies just off the A760 approximately halfway between Glasgow and Largs. Turn right off the A760 in Lochwinnoch along the B786 towards Kilmacolm, Greenock and Port Glasgow. The walk starts at an

unsigned car park on the left hand side just over 5km from the A760/B786 junction. The car park is 200m beyond a farm entrance on your left marked “Midhouse Farm”. If you go past a brown tourist information sign for “Barnbrock Park HQ”, you’ve gone too far.

## Refreshments

There is nowhere to get refreshments on the walk, so please bring something with you. There are a few picnic tables marked on the map. Lochwinnoch has shops and a delicatessen to buy sandwiches and snacks. See Castle Semple, Lochwinnoch walk for details.

## Further information

The walk lies on the edge of **Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park**, only a few hundred metres from the Park headquarters and campsite at Barnbrock Farm. For more information about the Park or to contact their Ranger service, visit [www.clydemuirshiel.co.uk](http://www.clydemuirshiel.co.uk) or telephone 01505 614791.