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**Green spaces improve wellbeing – Welcome to the East Cairngorms**

In celebration of spring, the Ballater Business Association (BBA) and Braemar Tourism Group (BTG) have launched the East Cairngorms Wildlife and Nature Trail as part of their Imagine More campaign to encourage visitors to immerse themselves in nature and nurture their wellbeing.

A recent study by the Mental Health Foundation[[1]](#footnote-2) revealed that nearly half of people in the UK found a marked improvement in their wellbeing during lockdown when visiting green spaces, such as national parks. The BBA and BTG aim to encourage more people to undertake memorable outdoor experiences that positively impact their lives by visiting the East Cairngorms’ abundance of wildlife and nature.

Dan and Rachel Brown, both avid naturalists and professional ecologists, run Wild Discovery based in Crathie which provides custom-made experiences which focus on helping visitors engage with nature, wildlife and conservation projects.

*“The ancient Caledonian forest and woodlands which sprawl the East Cairngorms boasts unique enigmatic wildlife including pine martens, red squirrels, golden and white-tailed eagles, capercaillie, and red deer.*

*“Our guests always feel a sense of connection and leave inspired and reinvigorated after meeting with local projects and people who are doing wonderful work to protect the area.”*

Annie Armstrong runs Wild Braemar, bespoke experiences that allow visitors to explore, discover and connect with Scottish wildlife, culture and the local history.

“Our Scottish landscape is emersed with wildlife and nature, and what we often take for granted is new and interesting to those who join our tours. The smallest elements of nature such as fungi, flora and trees all have a story to tell. One of my recent tours included a family who spent hours just identify birds in the woodland.

“We can all be inspired by nature. Wild learning brings with it new thinking and a chance to step away from our busy lives, connecting to the sounds, sights and smells that surround us.”

Annie’s tours include wild walking and swimming, and are designed to suit any level of fitness. The majority last two hours or less, allowing visitors to make the most of their time in Braemar and Ballater.

“Lots of people want to try wild swimming but are nervous and want support to enjoy a truly immersive experience. I have always enjoyed the Braemar rivers and wanted to share my knowledge with others. The moment you enter the water it is like a “reset” with your body, all you can think about is the water and nature around you.”

The East Cairngorms Wildlife and Nature Trail is part of a series of five which aim to inspire visitors to explore the East Cairngorms as a year-round destination for outdoor activity. Each trail includes a website, promotional video, digital trail map, and trip planner.

For more information on the East Cairngorms Wildlife and Nature Trail, head to: <https://www.visitballater.com/east-cairngorms-the-jacobite-whisky-trail/>

**ENDS**.

Notes to editor:

Issued by Jane Craigie Marketing on behalf of Ballater Business Association and Braemar Tourism Group. For additional press information, please contact Rebecca Dawes via [rebecca@janecraigie.com](mailto:rebecca@janecraigie.com) or 07792 467730

**Information about Ballater Business Association**

Ballater Business Association represents businesses who trade within the Dinnet to Crathie area, who have a common interest in sustaining a thriving community through the local economy.  The BBA work in partnership with the Cairngorm Business Partnership and Visit Cairngorms to support our businesses.  In April 2021 the BBA began a collaboration with Braemar Tourism Group to work together on projects of mutual benefit and the promotion of the ‘East Cairngorms’ is the first of these initiatives, funded through a Visit Scotland Grant.  For more information contact Susan Stewart on the email secretary@visitballater.com

**Information about Braemar Tourism Group**

Braemar Tourism Group is a thriving association, promoting Braemar and Crathie to visitors and locals alike. Membership has increased recently to 55 members, all working together to encourage people to visit, stay longer and return. Braemar is in the very heart of the Cairngorms National Park (we have a close bond with the Cairngorms Business Partnership/VisitCairngorms) but we are also in Royal Deeside. Forming a collaboration with Ballater seemed the perfect opportunity to work together for mutual benefit, in promoting the Eastern Cairngorms as a year-round destination. Please contact Sarah, Chair of the BTG for more information sarahhubbard21@gmail.com

1. https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/nature/nature-research [↑](#footnote-ref-2)