

New John Muir Way to bring jobs to West Lothian



A new study estimates that over 207,000 users of the John Muir Way will create or secure over 170 jobs and pump £3.9 million into the West Lothian economy over five years.

The new long distance route will open on 21st April 2014 – which marks both the Scots-born naturalist’s birthday and the centenary of his death. It’s anticipated that more than 9,000 walkers, cyclists and horse riders will complete the 134-mile route from Helensburgh to Muir’s birthplace in Dunbar in the first year.

Over 2,700 of the many businesses along the route already provide trail-related services and are set to benefit such as cafes, pubs, bed and breakfasts, and hotels. But the route is also creating a host of new business opportunities for new services from baggage transfer, trail taxis and horse transfers, through to maps and guides.

A John Muir Way economic impact study has estimated that 130 jobs will be created or safeguarded in the first 12 months rising to over 1,000 jobs over five years with £42 million of economic benefit for local businesses.

Visit West Lothian Chair Person, James Bailey said: -“The John Muir Way should lead to an increase in visitors staying in the local area which will be a welcome addition for businesses.

“Along the route walkers will be able to spot some of West Lothian’s magnificent historic properties including Hopetoun House and House of the Binns. The Way will take them into historic Linlithgow which offers a fantastic range of good quality accommodation, restaurants and bars making it an ideal stop off point or overnight stay. We are really looking

forward to seeing the economic benefits this route will bring.”

The John Muir Way is a flagship project of the Central Scotland Green Network which is being developed by Scottish Natural Heritage. It is anticipated that there will be £3 million of direct expenditure in the first year, with this set to rise to over £25 million over five years.

Ron McCraw of SNH, explained:- “One of terrific things about the John Muir Way is that it runs through so many communities with attractions and services. So walkers, cyclists and horse riders can stop off for a cup of tea, have lunch or stay overnight quite easily throughout West Lothian and along other parts of the route. This is a great benefit to both those using the Way and businesses along the route.”

Keith Geddes, Chair of the Central Scotland Green Network Partnership Board, commented: -“Supporting the local economy was a key part of the plans to create the John Muir Way and we are focused on supporting both existing enterprises as well as attracting inward investment and new businesses to the area.

“We are confident that the route will have a positive impact on the local economy and will increase tourism and support rural communities.”

For further information about the John Muir Way please contact johnmuirway@snh.gov.uk

Submitted by [Scottish Natural Heritage](#)