

OUTDOORS

KIT OF THE WEEK

**LIFESTRAW STEEL WATER FILTER**

LifeStraw have created a personal water filter to celebrate the outdoor specialist firm's 10th anniversary.

The device is made of durable stainless steel and includes two-stage water filtration process to reduce chlorine, bad taste and odour, and remove bacteria. The LifeStraw Steel weighs just 113g, measures 20cm by 2.5cm and is easily carried.

To use, you simply place the filter end in water and then drink through the mouthpiece at the other end.

The LifeStraw Steel also offers hope to youngsters in the developing world.

For every LifeStraw water filter sold, one child in rural Kenya receives safe water for an entire school year.

It costs £45-£50.

■ Find out more at lifestraw.com or search online for UK sales.

SHOW IDEAL FOR GOOD SPORTS

A Scottish Cycling, Running & Outdoor Pursuits Show is



launched at the SECC Glasgow from March 11-13, promising an interactive, informative and inspiring weekend for all the family.

Visitors can meet exhibitors from the world of active pursuits, including some big brand names such as Cube, Merida, Bianchi, Decathlon, Islabikes and Keela and there will also be live sporting demonstrations, coaching and training advice.

A spokesman said: "Want advice on the best way to train for a triathlon, to test ride a big brand bike, tips on running, clothing and footwear? Then this event is for you."

■ See www.scrops.co.uk



CHALLENGE A popular event

RIDE AND RUN IS GREAT FUN

Entries have opened for the Dunoon Ride and Run taking place on April 2.

The unique event is a multi-stage enduro-style race organised by No Fuss Events on the beautiful Cowal Peninsula.

The first part is a 31-mile road cycle that follows the format of a sportive, including three time-trial sections.

After a break to regroup with friends and fellow competitors, the run starts.

The 9.1-mile route has road, trail and track and includes four stages.

■ See www.nofussevents.co.uk



SUMMIT SPECIAL
Work on conserving our fragile mountain environments is getting a vital boost

£6.1m scheme on right path

FIONA RUSSELL

The Mountains and The People scheme begins this year, not only investing in maintenance of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs and the Cairngorms but creating education initiatives to get fans of the great outdoors aware of what is needed to care for our beautiful wilds.

Advice and ideas

A new Scottish National Parks initiative, The Mountains and The People, swings into action this year.

The £6.1million five-year project aims to conserve our fragile mountain environments through improved paths and accessibility in both of Scotland's national parks, Loch Lomond & The Trossachs and the Cairngorms.

The two parks encompass some of the country's most beautiful landscapes and contribute to Scotland's tourism economy as well as offering health and social benefits for the millions who enjoy them. But their popularity, combined with heavy rainfall, is damaging the habitat and causing visible scarring to the landscape.

Through The Mountains and The People, there will be a two-pronged campaign to maintain this special environment and to educate and encourage public accessibility and knowledge.

The project's main funder is the Heritage Lottery Fund and is being co-ordinated by Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust in partnership with both of Scotland's national park authorities, Scottish Natural Heritage and Forestry Commission Scotland.

Tom Wallace, activity programme manager for the initiative, said: "This year, we are rolling out our plans for large-scale capital investment in the infrastructure of our paths,



REPAIRS Many mountain hiking paths have been badly scarred

both upland and low-level. We will focus on repairs, upgrades and some minor re-routing to create a network of paths that are accessible and enjoyable to a wider number of visitors."

Some of the first projects will focus on routes in Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, including the Arrochar Alps, Ben A'an, Aberfoyle and Callander areas.

Tom said: "In some places there has been scarring and damage from a high number of walkers but there are also other issues, such as drainage, the impact of weather and places with sensitive wildlife habitats."

At the same time, the scheme will begin an educational programme. Tom said: "It is vital for the long-term benefit of our beautiful landscapes that people better understand the benefits of conservation and management."

"We want to invest in creating opportunities for volunteer work and training roles."

The people-focused projects that will be part of the longer-

term initiative include vocational training courses.

He added: "The SVQ training courses for young people will focus on the maintenance of mountains and could lead to employment opportunities."

There will be a conservation volunteer programme to train, guide and support volunteers to carry out practical path work.

Another idea is an Adopt a Path programme, giving people the responsibility to monitor and report on the condition of paths. Schools, colleges and universities will be invited to take part in an educational programme.

Meanwhile, a series of events, guided walks and online activity will help to better inform visitors to the parks about the importance of managing paths.

Tom said: "We look forward to making a positive difference in Scotland's two national parks."

■ See www.cairngormsoutdooraccess.org.uk for further information.

Join me on my adventures in Scotland's great outdoors by checking out my award-winning website at www.fionaoutdoors.co.uk – you'll find lots of great information about walking, cycling, running, other outdoor activities and kit reviews.