



## A Foreword From The Chairman

The 2009/10 financial year saw COAT spread it's work over our whole working area with our joint Cairngorms and Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER supported programme delivering on path infrastructure and health walks in Speyside, Donside and Deeside.



Our Board has undergone some changes with new Directors bringing their expertise to COAT. Peter Mackay, Jeremy Roberts and Paul Johnson bring this from their backgrounds of working at senior level in the Civil Service, conservation and countryside management. As we develop new projects it is vital that we are strongly supported by our Board Members, who are prepared to give us the benefit of their experience in a voluntary capacity. This is fundamental to the success of a small Trust such as ours. Fundamental also is imaginative management. Dougie Baird has worked tirelessly to deliver our work programme, to attract funds to support this and to keep our willing and hardworking staff busy.

COAT has extended the number and range of funding partners during the year with Highlands and Islands Enterprise, The National Trust for Scotland, RSPB, and Mountaineering Council for Scotland joining forces with our existing partners to see their objectives achieved through our Trust. We have enjoyed financial support from 10 funders during the year.



Mairi and Robert open the River Path—Studio in the Square

Uncertainties over funding in the public sector are of great concern. In times of austerity more than at any other, the value of a Trust based on partnership, and on delivering public service throughout the National Park can truly be seen. We aim to make money from our funding partners go further by bringing them together and then matching their contributions with external grant to get the most added value. We are about to embark on a £2million Upland Path project during 2010 to go on to 2014, bringing together key partners and attracting support from Heritage Lottery Fund and European Regional Development Fund. We hope that this example will not be missed by our partners in the public sector when it comes to supporting Community Paths and Health Walks in the coming years. I hope that they will see the value that COAT can add to their investment in delivering outdoor access projects throughout the National Park and surrounding area.

### 2009/10 Projects

- Braemar Path to Society Bridge
- Kingussie to Newtonmore
- Carrbridge River Path
- Craigellachie, Aviemore
- Lower Glas Allt
- Walking to Health
- Upland Path Project Devpt
- Path Maintenance

To all those who have contributed in kind and in cash and made it possible for us to lever more money from other sources, thank you. You are helping to fulfill a great need in the Scottish Countryside. To all our Board Members, staff, volunteers, supporters, partners, associate members and contractors, thank you for your guidance and your help.

PETER J. ORD, September, 2010



## TRUST MANAGERS REPORT



*The COAT Team – Ewan Thain, Murray Swapp, Sandra Holt, Dougie Baird and Alan Melrose*

During year 1 of our 2009-11 Business Plan our key aim has been to roll out a structured and targeted suite of our activity across the whole of the area, and fully establish COAT's mode of operation for the coming years, with Access Projects Officers and support for Health Walks located in the East and West Cairngorms.

During the year we have managed to get paths built in Kingussie, Braemar, Insh, Carrbridge and Aviemore. This does not tell the whole story though as a huge amount of work has been put into the development of paths for 2010/11 and we expect a good number of other Communities around the park and surrounding area to see improvements to their path network in the coming year. Chris Goodman, and now Ewan Thain in the West Cairngorms, and Murray Swapp in the East Cairngorms have worked hard to get these paths through planning and development through to construction and after-care, and I am sure you will see the benefits of their work for years to come.

Alan Melrose and his team have done a terrific amount of work in consolidating, developing and expanding COAT's Walking To Health project throughout the area. The programme is only possible because of the commitment of the Volunteers who have come forward in great numbers to lead these walks, and the time and effort given to this initiative by people around the area should provide inspiration for others across the country. Our Affiliate Representatives, Robin Blyth and Andy Dunn, have given great support to COAT and represented our Affiliate Membership at Management Group. Robin has decided to stand down this year and we thank him for his 4 years of work which have been invaluable. Sandra Holt continues to administer our office and support all of us to a very high standard, despite the ever increasing workload that comes with our growing success. She is the primary source of contact for our Affiliate Members, as well as co-coordinating our media activity.

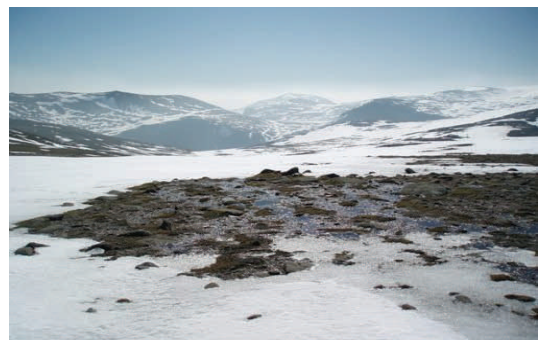
The current financial instability and uncertainty concerns all of us of course. We are dependent on bringing together funders across the public sector and beyond to realise our objectives. I aim to work up a 4 year business plan in the coming year to provide for Community Paths, Walking To Health, and Upland Paths as well as our other activities and understand how difficult it will be to secure support from our funding partners and grant bodies. Nevertheless I am confident that we can demonstrate real value to them during these times of austerity, through partnership and through maximising available grants.

***Dougie Baird - September 2010***

### Upland Path Project

A good deal of work throughout the year was put into developing and fundraising for a large scale project for paths on the mountains. The National Park area straddles the two funding areas for Scotland's European Structural Funds. Sadly we were not able to access EU funds for the mountains in the East at this time, but our application was well received within the Highlands and Islands Partnership Programme (HIPP) for hill paths in the West of the Park. We will look to identify alternative sources of funding for this work in the East Cairngorms in the future.

The funding strategy was to bring all of the match funders together into one project: Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and The Scottish Mountaineering Trust (SMT). This combined would provide one third of the money and the other two thirds would come from HIPP and Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) respectively. Funding applications were worked up and stage 1 passes received for both HIPP and HLF. A good deal of work was required for a stage 2 pass from both, and I am delighted to inform you that at the time of writing we have received offers from both and have just started the project.



The project will last for 4 years and will provide capital works to address over 16 paths covering 93km at Abernethy, Cairngorm, Rothiemurchus and Glenfeshie. The project will also provide an SVQ level 2 accredited training project to enable up to 8 people to get the skills required to work on this project. We will also trial an 'Adopt A Path' scheme whereby volunteers will be trained and supported to monitor and carry out basic maintenance for specific paths, develop a leaflet and boards explaining the issues relating to access of the mountains and requirement to carry out this type of work. The overall project cost is £2.1 million and it is very high in conservation value, will provide employment in the area and involve members of the public directly in the delivery of project outputs and outcomes.



## Community Network Paths

COAT brought together the key funding partners, CNPA, SNH, Paths for All and Aberdeenshire Council into a project with joint funding from both the LEADER bodies for the area we operate in, Cairngorms and Rural Aberdeenshire, to upgrade access infrastructure in the area as well as to develop a suite of health walks to improve public health (see below). Our Access Projects Officers are the key deliverers of the path projects, liaising with communities and land-owners, developing site plans, raising planning applications and mitigating for site sensitivity with statutory bodies.

### East Cairngorms:

The unusually hard winter caused all kinds of problems for path building with construction focussed in the winter months, the summer and autumn having been given over to development and planning.



Robert Smith MP opening the Braemar Path

Nevertheless the hardy contractors battled on with Bob Fyvie gamely using his digger as a snow plough to clear enough snow to allow him to complete work on the **Glen-shee Road to Society Bridge Path** at Braemar (picture below).

COAT also developed and negotiated paths at; Strathdon Bridge Path, Firmouth to Dinnet, Ballater to Cambus O May, Ballater Golf Course and Tarland to Aboyne cycle path and these paths will be constructed within this financial year.

Work was started on new leaflets for the Ballater network and All Abilities Paths in Upper Deeside, a map board was completed for Spittal of Glenmuick.



### West Cairngorms:

Winter also caused delays in projects but Hitrack managed to get the route from **Kingussie to Newtonmore via Loch Gynack** completed in stages through the winter.

The Shinty Club made use of it immediately it was finished with a sponsored walk to raise funds.

Elsewhere the **River Path at Carrbridge** was completed and provides a much needed upgrade and link between the village and the Ghurka Bridge which is now much more accessible and by a much wider spectrum of user. We had a nice sunny day for opening the path with retiring head teacher Mairi Robertson and Robert MacInnes from the Community Council joining us to highlight the health benefits of countryside access. A path from the youth hostel at Aviemore was upgraded giving much improved access to the **Craigellachie NNR** (pictured above) from the south via the underpass of the A9. Work was also carried out to upgrade the surface of a section of path at **Inveruglas**.



Craigellachie NNR

## Walking To Health

The year saw a huge expansion of the Walking to Health Programme with new walks being set up in the West, existing walks being supported and a suite of health specific walks being organised.

COAT now supports the Step It Up Highland groups in Aviemore and Grantown, and has organised new groups in Carrbridge, Aviemore, Newtonmore, Nethy Bridge and Kingussie. Health Specific walks are being piloted for blood pressure, weight loss, smoking cessation, new mums, cancer support while alzheimers continues to be supported. The Deeside and Donside walks at Ballater, Aboyne, Tarland, Strathdon, Logie Coldstone and Alford are doing very well.

Mandy Way joined Alan Melrose in providing co-ordination and support for the scheme, and she will focus her efforts in the West. The only disappointment was that the particularly fierce winter meant that our new walkers could not get out as early as everyone would have liked with even the pavements off lim-its until well into April.

We ran a number of courses for Emergency First Aid and Nordic Walking for Leaders, and will look to develop a full evaluation of the project against targets in partnership with Leaders and participants in the coming year. Anecdotal feedback from Leaders and participants alike highlight the social as well as the health benefits of the health walks, and you get an increasing sense of strengthening communities every time that you look at this.

New Volunteer Leaders continue to come forward, and we hope that public funders and policy decision makers appreciate the level of delivery of key government targets on public health that are being achieved overwhelmingly by volunteers within the Cairngorms National Park and surrounding area.



Nordic Walking Training Course

## 2009/10 Financial Report

### COAT Income 2009/10

Scottish Natural Heritage	116,500
Cairngorms National Park Authority	175,000
Paths For All	11,500
Aberdeenshire Council	18,175
Highlands and Islands Enterprise	15,000
National Trust for Scotland	20,000
Cairngorms LEADER	56,256
Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER	8,966
Balmoral Estate	3,000
Landrover	7,000
Donations	500
Car Park Ticket Sales	39,405
Consultancy	16,347
Sale of Leaflets	2,375
Interest	1,612
<b>Total</b>	<b>491,636</b>

### Costs

Community Network Paths	120,307
Walking To Health	29,139
Mountain Paths	93,547
Infrastructure/car parks etc	9,823
Information/Interpretation	4,634
Irrecoverable VAT + Interest	52,914
<b>Total</b>	<b>496,596</b>

### Governance

Management, Admin, Professional	56,208
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## Maintenance

A programme of maintenance was carried out on the community paths that COAT is responsible for.

COAT also delivered a programme of upland path works covering the Upper Deeside, Mar Lodge Estate and Cairngorm Estate paths. This is an innovative approach to mountain path maintenance bringing together The National Trust for Scotland, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and COAT. The work was carried out by Upland Access Ltd and with all parties very positive about the experience it was agreed to continue this in 2010/11.

## Affiliate Membership

Our Affiliate Membership is very important to us and we would like it to have a breadth as wide as possible with community groups, users, land managers, landowners, non governmental organisations, public bodies and others with an interest in outdoors access throughout the area. We would encourage any groups or individuals to contact us at the address below. There is no charge and all affiliates will be mailed quarterly reports, be entitled to vote on affiliate representation and will be invited to our annual public meeting. We have also revamped our web page with a forum which we hope affiliates will use to communicate with us and each other.

Robin Blyth and Andy Dunn have put in a sterling effort in contributing to the management group and helping in the development and delivery of the business plan, and our thanks go out to them for this.

## Lower Glas Allt

Scottish Natural Heritage contributed almost £50,000 to enable COAT to upgrade the path at Glas Allt Shiel. The area around the footbridge had been badly washed out and the lower zig zags above the dyke needed rebuilt completely. The contract team worked through till Christmas to produce a fine standard of work.

## A Big Thanks to Those Who Support Our Work

COAT would be unable to carry out the level or standard of work we do without financial support from a wide range of bodies. The work within this business plan has been supported by Cairngorms National Park Authority, Scottish Natural Heritage, Aberdeenshire Council, Cairngorm Local Action Group LEADER, Rural Aberdeenshire Local Action Group LEADER, Paths for All and Balmoral Estate.

We are very grateful to Landrover for provision of a support vehicle for COAT's use, and Rothiemurchus Estate for letting us use their upstairs office for our West Cairngorms Office. A big thank you in particular to all of our Volunteer Leaders without whom our Health Walks programme could not exist. Their contribution to the wellbeing of their communities should be an inspiration to all.

Our Board expanded this year to take on new Trustees with specialised areas of interest. We are a voluntary organisation and our Trustees take no payment yet take responsibility for COAT and provide support to the manager and staff on a regular basis.

## Deeside Way

Aberdeenshire Council approached COAT towards the end of 2008 to manage construction of the remaining phase of the Deeside Way between Potarch Bridge and Kincardine O'Neill.

COAT was also charged with the development of a specification for the rest of the Deeside Way with a view to construction in the next few years, pending successful fundraising. This included preparation of path specification and management of consultant engineers on engineering design and planning.

### Cairngorms Outdoors Access Trust

#### East Office

Unit 1 Aboyne Castle Business Centre,  
Aboyne, Aberdeenshire, AB34 5JP  
T: 013398 87777 F: 013397 20077

#### West Office

Dell Farm of Rothiemurchus,  
Aviemore PH22 1QH  
T. 01479 810766

E: [info@cairngormsoutdooraccess.org.uk](mailto:info@cairngormsoutdooraccess.org.uk) [www.cairngormsoutdooraccess.org.uk](http://www.cairngormsoutdooraccess.org.uk)

COAT is a company limited by guarantee, Company No. SC186301 and is a recognised Scottish charity SC028028.

Registered office: Johnstone House, 52-54 Rose Street, Aberdeen AB10 1HA.

