



**Cairngorms
Outdoor
Access Trust**

A Foreword From The Chairman - Peter Ord

We are now well into our second year of operation covering the whole of the Cairngorms National Park. This follows ten years operating only in Upper Deeside and Donside with a happy association in Angus in partnership with Angus Council. Aberdeenshire Council have supported us from before the beginning of UDAT and the support of their Councillors and officials has been magnificent. The work currently being managed by COAT on the Deeside Way reflects our symbiotic working relationship which we hope to follow with the CNPA and with other Councils.

The extension of the National Park into Perthshire may increase our work if we are invited to do so. In that event we shall proceed slowly and shall explore the footpath and access needs of the area with all who are interested before devising a work strategy, following the approach which we have adopted elsewhere.

Our three-year audit of the work required and requested by our partners and associate members on the Mountain Paths of the Cairngorms has come to an end and the resulting report, which can be read on our website, is a most impressive document. This has been sent to the HLF and the ERDF with our request for funding. Our hope is that a 5-year project might begin to address some of the more serious path and access problems which have been identified. This report is by no means comprehensive. It is a distillation of the thoughts and concerns of many people and has been tempered by what we think might be achievable in the next few years. At the end of that time, if we are successful, there will remain many issues still to be addressed. With your support there is a very long future programme of work to be undertaken.

Dougie Baird has been our manager for eighteen months and has made a huge contribution to our work on the ground and in the office. Thank you Dougie, for all that you are achieving. Our thanks also to our staff, Murray in the east, Chris in the West and Sandra in Aboyne. Alan has also raised COAT's profile with his Walks to Health programme. Please make yourselves known to these members of COAT and let them know your thoughts about our proposals. Pat Chalmers retired as chairman of COAT in April 2009 after his second stint. Pat was the inaugural chairman of UDAT twelve years ago and has guided us into our current very strong position. We owe him many thanks for work undertaken quietly behind the scenes.

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 supporters, partners, associate members and our contractors, thank you for your guidance and your help.

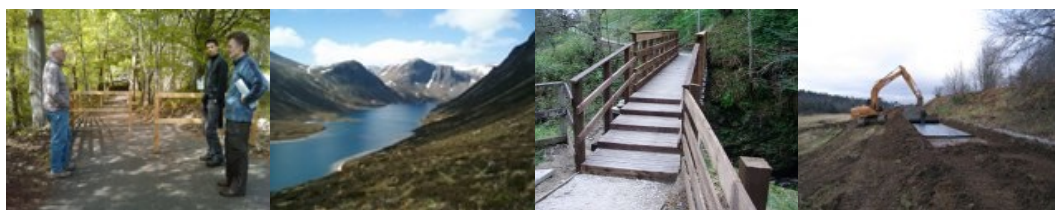
PETER J. ORD, September, 2009



Anne Begg (MP) launches COAT at Loch Kinord, with Peter Ord (COAT Chair), Murray Ferguson (CNPA), Dougie Baird (COAT), and Edward Humphrey (Landowner, Dinnet and Kinord Estate). Copyright CNPA/Stewart Grant

2008/9 Projects (pages 2 to 4)

- Gynack Bridge, Kingussie
- Strathdon School Path
- Tarland All Abilities Path
- Inveruglas, Kincaig
- Deeside Way
- Walking to Health
- Upland Path Audit
- Maintenance
- Spittal of Glemuick



TRUST MANAGERS REPORT

One of the first aspects of expanding the operational area to cover the whole of the Cairngorms National Park and surrounding area, was to restructure the company in order to provide a service beyond Deeside. Murray Swapp became the East Cairngorms Access Projects Officer, with responsibility for community path, interpretive and promotional projects east of the Lecht, including Deeside, Donside and Angus. A new full time post of West Cairngorms Access Projects Officer was created to be based on the West side of the park. Chris Goodman was recruited to this post in November and he has the same responsibilities west of the Lecht, and south to Dalwhinnie.

Sandra Holt works part time and provides COAT's administrative and secretarial requirements, based in our office in Aboyne. She also works with our Affiliate Representatives in disseminating information to the wider membership, as well as coordinating PR. Alan Melrose is our Health Walks Co-ordinator, and has responsibility for our Walking To Health Project. He supports our voluntary Health Walk leaders, and develops and promotes our walks programme throughout the area. Pat Funrevel is COAT's Car Park Attendant at Spittal Of Glenmuick,

The company has five main strands of activity, and these can be divided into:

- **Community Path Networks** - upgrading existing and developing new paths in, around and between communities. The objective of this work is to develop more and higher quality access opportunities for locals and visitors alike
- **Upland Paths** - Repairing eroded paths in the mountains to so that access can be sustained without damaging the landscape and environment.
- **Walking To Health** - Development of a suite of structured health walks.
- **Strategic Routes** - Work on delivery of strategic long distance routes.
- **Promotion and Interpretation** - Provision of information through leaflets, interpretive boards and signposting

At the launch of COAT we had one year of guaranteed funding to develop and deliver a suite of projects across the area reflecting these aims, as well as to develop a second business plan and to secure funding to implement it. It was clear from the outset that the best way forward was to bring together funding partners with an interest in access, and to secure related external grants to beef up the scale of work we will be able to achieve. The following pages give a summary of how we fared with this approach in our first year. We are now embarked on a 2-year follow on plan and I look forward to working with you and on your behalf in the coming years.



Chris Goodman, Murray Swapp, Sandra Holt, Dougie Baird and Alan Melrose

Tarland All-Abilities Path

Alastrean Woods contains some beautiful woodland and fantastic views of Deeside. Existing trods however meant that it was not accessible to people of all-abilities. COAT took forward the project to develop a circular all abilities trail, covering some 1.2km. Development was done with the current all-abilities standards very much in mind, and a great deal of care was taken over slope, alignment, top surface and provision of rest 'perches' and benches at strategic locations.

The work was undertaken with support from Rural Aberdeenshire Local Action Group LEADER and SNH. The MacRobert Trust were incredibly helpful in the development and planning of the project.

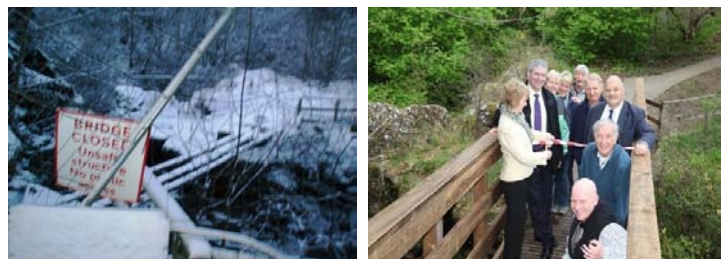


Anne Begg (MP) was kind enough to join COAT once more to formally open the Tarland All-Abilities path and 'road test' it with the Deeside Access Panel.

Gynack Bridge and Path

The lower footbridge spanning the Gynack Burn between the Cross Restaurant and Gynack Road was condemned over 2 years ago. The wooden bridge had been built on two sections of old railway line and the structure was not considered safe for public use. Kingussie Community Development Company (KCDC) approached COAT to take forward the project to replace the bridge on their behalf in April 2008.

COAT developed the project, raising the planning application, carrying out the ecological survey and delivering the work. Funds were raised from Cairngorm Local Action Group (LEADER) and Highland Council, with the balance coming from CNPA. The contract on the bridge was completed in March 2009 and the path by April 2009.



Before and After! (Right) Environment Minister Roseanna Cunningham joins David Green (CNPA Convener) Dougie Baird (COAT) and the folks from KCDC to formally open the bridge in May 2009. c Aviemore photographic/CNPA

Walking To Health Project

Paths To Health and NHS Grampian Health both gave grants to assist the programme. The Deeside Walking to Health project was expanded to cover Donside during the year. The programme delivered area based walks in Logie Coldstone, Tarland, Aboyne, Strathdon, Alford, Ballater and Braemar. The project also worked with Alzheimers Scotland to produce health walks specifically for people who suffered from the condition. Our Volunteer leaders are the cornerstone of the project, and Alan supported 22 leaders in delivering the walks programme with around 150 people per week attending the walks.

COAT is currently developing the project across the park – including a new suite of health walks targeting specific health groups such as smoking cessation, blood pressure, diabetes and weight loss. The programme is a central part of COATs strategy of integrating development of infrastructure with facilitation of it's use. There are a myriad of public benefits to increased walking by a wider spread of the population, including improvements in public health, reduction in carbon emissions, improvement to social infrastructure and promotion of the Park as an inspiration for the development of outdoors access.



Upland Path Project



Cairngorms Mountain Heritage Project



Upland Path Audit

The Upland Path Audit is a culmination of two rounds of evidence gathering and consultation to identify and prioritise the upland paths in the Cairngorms National Park that most require work in order to enhance and protect the upland landscape and heritage to which they give access too. The first of these was carried out in 2007/8 under the Cairngorm Upland Path Priorities Assessment (CUPPA) project, to identify all of the promoted routes in the area, the second was the Cairngorms Upland Path Audit which was carried out during 2008/9.

The path audit was designed to provide an overall assessment of the current condition of the mountain paths in the Cairngorms National Park and as such provides a detailed and prioritised breakdown of costs required to bring the upland path resource to an acceptable standard, such that it can be run on revenue based activity only. The project will be taken forward with HLF and EU funding applications in the next business plan

Deeside Way

Aberdeenshire Council approached COAT towards the end of 2008 to manage the construction of sections of the Deeside Way between Potarch Bridge and Kincardine O'Neill. The contract was let in January with more than 2km of aggregate path laid by the end of March.

The subsequent civil engineering aspects of the project were to be carried out by Aberdeenshire Council.

Inveruglas/Insh

The Kinraig and Vicinity Community Council approached COAT during 2008 and asked if we could do something to improve the section of path running behind Insh. It is a right of way and the drainage system had collapsed completely. A new drainage system was dug in initially and the wet muddy surface scraped back to expose the original surface. It was a bit rough so an aggregate cap of fine surfacing was built over the surface.



Strathdon School Path

The path runs behind the local primary school between the settlements of Roughpark and Bellabeg and there was a great opportunity to offer a safe route without having to walk on the road. Candacraig Estate agreed the route and details with COAT. The Scottish Governments Climate Challenge Fund awarded a grant in recognition of the projects aims to encourage children to walk or cycle to school rather than be taken by car. Cairngorms Local Action Group (LEADER) and SNH also contributed funding to the project, and it was completed in April 2009, with a formal opening in May.



School Children try out the new path at Strathdon

2008/9 Financial Report

COAT Income 2008/9

Cairngorms National Park Authority	£150,000
Scottish Natural Heritage	£40,000
Aberdeenshire Council	£15,000
Cairngorms LEADER	£26,149
Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER	£19,000
Climate Challenge Fund	£25,000
Paths To Health	£12,500
Highland Council	£7,000
Landrover	£3,500
Balmoral Estate	£3,000
NHS Grampian	£2,475
Donations	£526
Sale Of Leaflets	£4,083
Consultancy	£5,250
Interest	£3,545
Spittal Of Glenmuick Car Park	£37,718
£354,746	

Direct Costs of Charitable Activities

Staff costs	£74,113
Travel and vehicle use costs	£6,975
Training, ppe & survey equip	£639
Office premises and oncosts	£12,686
Equipment Use Costs	£933
Mountain Path Repairs	£9,039
Low ground path development works	£123,400
Publicity, PR and meeting costs	£1,546
Visitor Information and Interpretation	£2,540
Car Park Maintenance	£1,619
Car Park Rental	£5,340
Walking to Health Project	£29,061
Vehicle	£3,500
Depreciation	£5,948
£277,339	

Governance

Staff costs	£31,562
Office Running Costs	£5,385
Accountancy	£520
Professional Services	£3,167
Bank Charges	£36
Auditors' remuneration	£1,700
£42,370	

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 the 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, Climate Challenge Fund, and Balmoral Estate.

We are very grateful to Landrover for provision of a vehicle for COAT's use.

A big thank you in particular to all of our Volunteer Leaders without whom our Health Walks programme could not exist.

Maintenance

A full programme of upland and lowlands maintenance works was carried out on the network that COAT is responsible for. This is vital to the upkeep of the work that we develop, though it is always difficult to resource.

COAT spent time during the year developing a proposal to manage a shared Mountain Path maintenance programme with Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the National Trust for Scotland. This culminated in agreement for a £50,000 programme for 2009/10, an exciting innovation in the field of mountain path management.

Spittal Of Glenmuick Car Park

It is vital that COAT has a clear way to raise income, for provision of maintenance as well as to pump-prime external grants in partner projects. Our agreement with Balmoral Estate to allow COAT to charge for parking at Spittal Of Glenmuick is a vital aspect of COAT's business model, and one of the few ways that users of paths can directly contribute to path maintenance in Scotland.

The arrangement was developed under UDAT, whilst Deeside was the operational area and one of the biggest challenges for COAT will be developing new revenue streams as our maintenance liabilities increase with the development of access projects across the whole of the National Park.

Affiliate Representatives

COAT brought forward an established Affiliate Membership from UDAT. In our first year we have increased this, particularly with community groups in the West of the Park. We will look to further expand our Affiliate base in the coming years.

At our public meeting in September 2008 Andy Dunn was elected Affiliate Representative for the West and Robin Blyth for the East. They provide a vital link between the Affiliate Membership and COAT management, sitting on our management group and advising on the delivery and development of COAT's business plan. We extend our wholehearted thanks to them for all the time and effort that both have put into our first year.

Cairngorms Outdoors Access Trust

Unit 1 Aboyne Castle Business Centre, Aboyne,
Aberdeenshire, AB34 5JP

T: 013398 87777 F: 013397 20077

E: info@cairngormsoutdooraccess.org.uk
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.



Scottish Natural Heritage
All of nature for all of Scotland

