



Annual Report 2010/11

A Foreword From The Chairman

The 2010/11 financial year has been a significant year for COAT, bringing to a close our second business plan, and laying the foundations for our third. The next four years will see COAT achieving high volumes of work across all four of our main strands of activity within the current operational area which expanded during the year to include Atholl and Glen Shee. Securing grants and partnership funding from a wide variety of sources has been the key to this. However, we must not become complacent, and we shall soon be considering the content of our next work plan and consulting with our partners on the way ahead for COAT beyond 2015. It is important that we have firm plans and funding in place well before then.



Our Board of Directors are working together to ensure the framework is in place to carry COAT forward over the coming years. Financial management, health and safety, risk assessment, corporate structure and tax systems have all been reviewed and modified for the coming challenges.

COAT expanded significantly towards the end of the 10/11 financial year with three new members of staff recruited specifically for our new mountain project. Sandra Holt, our Trust Administrator, moved south with her husband towards the end of the year and her post has been filled by Moira Bruce. We are dependent on our staff's enthusiasm and hard work to continue achieving all the work that has been generated by the



Dulnain Bridge—Riverside Path Opening

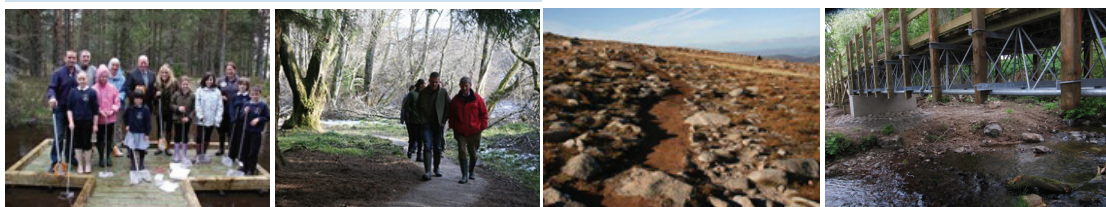
Contents

- Trust Manager's Report
- Cairngorms Mountain Heritage Project
- Community Network Paths
- Walking To Health
- Affiliate Representatives
- Path Maintenance
- Strategic Routes
- Financial Summary

grants we have secured. In the end this is how we will ensure all our access projects deliver what we have promised to those who have shown their faith in us.

COAT has come a long way in a short time, and this has only been possible with the generous support of our many funders and partners, the guidance and support of our affiliate members and other key stakeholders, and the enduring commitment of our Board and Staff. There are challenges ahead in the coming years, not least the uncertainties in public sector funding, but I am confident we can continue our work, and hopefully expand it, with all of your help.

PETER J. ORD, September, 2011



TRUST MANAGER'S REPORT

The 2009-11 plan is now complete, and we have achieved all of our targets, and a little more. This has only been possible by bringing in a wide range of funding partners, and then using their combined contribution to lever in external grants such as Heritage Lottery Fund, European Regional Development Fund, LEADER and Climate Challenge Fund.

Our range of activity has seen the first prioritised tranche of community paths upgraded in a wide spread across the area. Our Cairngorms Mountain Heritage (CMH) project has started and links conservation of the mountains with sustainable tourism. The training scheme provides skills training which should lead to employment opportunities in access. Our Walking To Health programme has expanded from 8 to 23 walking groups covering many of the settlements across the area. In the 2 stage Tarland to Aboyne cycle route we are trying out new approaches to developing access, by providing a long aspired for off-road path between the villages built to cycling standards. Our work on the Deeside Way and Speyside Way provides development of new, as well as maintenance of existing long distance strategic routes. Lastly our mountain and lowland path maintenance programmes provide long term management of the path infrastructure created.



These initiatives collectively contribute to key government objectives on heritage conservation, sustainable development, public health, climate change and creating employment.

We can only sustain both quality and quantity of work through the hard work and commitment of our staff, volunteers and contractors. Murray Swapp and Ewan Thain work on our community networks programme, strategic routes, promotion and interpretation. The CMH project team has been recruited, with Boyd Henderson the project officer, Gordon MacDonald providing training and Julia Kelt providing project admin. Sandra Holt has left for pastures new, and we wish her the very best. Moira Bruce has come in as Trust Admin. Alan Melrose and his team are developing the Health Walks into an exemplar of what can be achieved. There are challenges ahead both in delivering our current objectives and in developing our next ones, and we greatly appreciate the support of the many stakeholders involved. We will continue to consult and involve the wider range of individuals and groups with an interest in access in the National Park and surrounding area.

Cairngorms Mountain Heritage Project



Nic Bullivant on the Windy Ridge path

The Cairngorms Mountain Heritage Project had European Regional Development and Heritage Lottery Funding confirmed in August and the project started immediately in September to push out a works programme before the winter set in.

Path contracts were carried out at **Lairig Ghru**, **Windy Ridge**, **Lairig an Laoigh**, and **Bynack More** and the **Miadian**. Recruitment was completed by the turn of the year with all project staff starting work by February, and a lease secured for CMH project office accommodation at the Dell Bothy, Rothiemurchus. Boyd Henderson and Julia Kelt will work on getting path contracts out, developing Adopt A Path volunteer scheme, interpretation and promotion. Gordon MacDonald has started the training programme, with 8 trainees working towards Level 2 SVQ accreditation in Environmental Conservation.

Some of the sites are too remote to walk in and out from each day, and so COAT is developing Remote Accommodation Systems for this work with sites scheduled for Shelter Stone in 2012, Braeriach in 2013, and near Fords Of A'an in 2014.

Path Maintenance

Upland Path Maintenance was carried out across the area, with the partnership between Highlands and Islands Enterprise, National Trust for Scotland and COAT working very well. This provides a consistent standard of work across the area.

The annual programme of maintenance on COAT's lowland path network was carried out including repairs, drain clearance and strimming.

Strategic Routes

COAT was engaged by Aberdeenshire Council on contract to develop and deliver the next phase of the Deeside Way, between Slewdrum and Potarch Bridge with over £310k worth of work carried out on path and bridges. Maintenance was carried out on the Speyside Way, though development of the Speyside Way Extension had to stop whilst concerns over the route of the path were raised with CNPA by one of the landowners



Community Network Paths

Work was once again concentrated in the winter months, and was hard-going with temperatures recorded at -21 C by the contract teams in January.

The Boat of Garten **Heron Trail** was upgraded to all abilities standard with a pond dipping platform provided for the local children. Timber was generously provided by BSW Timber. Footbridges and an aggregate path were installed at



Molly shows Dougie how to 'pond dip' Frances Porter

Insch Woodland. A heavily built path with steps, gate and extensive drainage was installed at Dulnain Bridge's **Riverside Path**, with a good deal of input from Muckrach Estate on path agreement. A new leaflet was produced for Kingussie path network in partnership with CNPA and the Community. COAT will charge for this, as with all our leaflets, with all proceeds going towards maintenance of the community path network.

Affiliate Representatives

Affiliate Representation is of the highest importance to COAT, as the elected representatives feed directly into the COAT business plan on behalf of our Affiliate Membership. Andy Dunn (West) and Malcolm MacIntyre (East) were elected last year. Owing to very high work commitments Malcolm had to stand down during the year. Paddy Wright has been deputising for him admirably. Both Paddy and Andy sit on management group and get involved throughout their areas, showing terrific commitment and our thanks go to them for their efforts.

The Firmmouth path from **Dinnet to Glen Tanar** was built early in the winter, providing an aggregate path link through the woodland. The **Ballater to Cambus O May** path was also completed at this time, providing a return loop from Ballater linking into the Deeside Way. The **Strathdon Bridge Path** was constructed from the Colquhounie hotel to the site of where a new bridge will be built next year, providing a return loop to the village. A short section of path was upgraded linking in to **Ballater Golf Course**. The paths were completed with support from Cairngorm LEADER, SNH, CNPA, and Aberdeenshire Council.

One of COAT's more adventurous projects has been the 2 phased **Tarland to Aboyne Cycle Path**. Phase 1 was funded by Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER, Aberdeenshire Council, Scottish Enterprise and MacRobert-



Footbridge being installed at Tarland to Aboyne

Trust, and completed during the year with 2 major footbridges and a key section of path installed. Stage 2 was developed in partnership with Tarland Development Group and will be supported by Climate Challenge Fund and Aberdeenshire Council. It is due to complete in 2011. The Ballater leaflet was revamped and reprinted, and an All Abilities leaflet was produced for Deeside and Donside.

Cairngorms Paths

Deeside and Strathdon Paths with Easy Access



Walking To Health



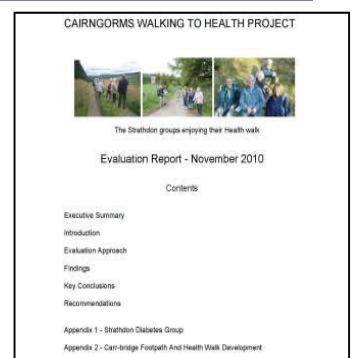
Cameron MacNeish hands out kit and certificates to walk leaders at Kingussie

The Walking to Health programme really hit the heights this year, with the programme now extending to 23 walking groups supported by 40 volunteer walk leaders. The success of the project is really down to the commitment and drive of our Volunteers and we held an event in Kingussie to celebrate their achievements as highlighted by the excellent Evaluation Report that was completed at the end of the year.

The report shows that the walks are really making a difference to the lives of people in the park, with health walkers taking and giving support to each other in their weekly excursions, and we hope to use the programme to show just what can be achieved when committed members of the

public are prepared to give up their time to help their communities. The report also shows that there is demand for the programme to expand further to provide up to 40 walking groups in our current operational area.

The project is generously supported by Rural Aberdeenshire and Cairngorms LEADER programmes, as well as Paths To Health, CNPA and SNH. Alan, Mandy and Jane have extended support, training and guidance to walk leaders throughout the year, as well as canvassing health professionals to promote the programme to patients, advocacy work promoting the best practice outwith the area, and in compiling the evaluation report.



Income		Expenditure	
<i>Grants</i>		<i>Charitable Activities</i>	
SNH	66,499	Community Path Networks	370,958
Cairngorms National Park Authority	245,000	Mountain Heritage Project	137,292
Heritage Lottery Fund	66,312	Walking to Health	37,815
Balmoral Estate	3,000	Visitor information and interpretation	8,940
Paths To Health	11,500	Path Maintenance	58,033
McRobert Trust	20,000	Staff costs	116,063
Aberdeenshire Council Upper Deeside Access	40,000	Office and Running Costs	33,013
Highlands & Islands Enterprise	36,250	Publicity, PR and meeting costs	1,247
Cairngorm Leader	99,107	Car Park Rent and Maintenance	6,318
Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER	38,120	Vehicle donated	7,000
Scottish Enterprise	30,000	Interest	595
RSPB	8,000	Professional Services	1,125
Highlands and Islands Partnership Programme - ERDF	62,914	Depreciation	6,464
Scottish Mountaineering Trust	2,500		£784,863
	£729,202	<i>Governance Costs</i>	
<i>Donations</i>		Management and Administration	40,842
Landrover	7,000	Office Running Costs	9,453
Events/Donations	3,000	Accountancy	1,321
Others	503	Professional Services	3,164
	£10,503	Bank Charges	128
<i>Income Generated</i>		Auditors' remuneration	2,820
Sale of publications	2,481		£57,728
Map Sales	232		
Consultancy	20,869	Total Expenditure	£842,591
Path Maintenance	35,000		
Spittal Of Glenmuick Car Park Ticket Sales	36,722	Net Expenditure	(£6,779)
Interest	803		
	£96,107		
Total Income	£835,812		



A Big Thank You To All 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 and Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER, MacRobert Trust, Paths For All Partnership, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, RSPB, Scottish Mountaineering Trust, Heritage Lottery Fund and European Regional Development Fund.

The arrangement with Balmoral Estate for Spittal Of Glenmuick Car Park is of the highest importance to COAT, providing vital 'seed corn' to allow us to match up funding from partners and grants to great effect. We are very grateful to Landrover for provision of a support vehicle for COAT's use, and Rothiemurchus Estate for donating use of their upstairs office for our West Cairngorms Access Projects Officer earlier in the year. A big thank you in particular to all of our Volunteer Leaders without whom our Health Walks simply would not happen.

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

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Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd 's nan Eilean

