Cairngorms Mountain Heritage Project

Evaluation report

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Contents

1   Introduction

The Evaluation Report has been undertaken by Walking-the-Talk and described the formative evaluation that took place during the project, and the summative evaluation that has been done at the end. The summative evaluation describes the outputs, outcomes and impacts of the project, measured against the targets that formed part of the bid. The evaluation considers how the project made a difference to the heritage, and how it made a difference to people.

The summative evaluation was undertaken through a series of structured interviews with people who had participated in the project, to gain different perspectives on how successful, or otherwise, they considered the project to have been. In addition qualitative and quantitative analysis of the outputs and outcomes was undertaken to assess their impacts. The learning points and recommendations should be seen in the context of the positive feedback that was provided – those interviewed were overwhelmingly positive about the work undertaken, the difference that it has made and the need to continue supporting the work done by Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust.

2   Making a difference to the Heritage

2.1   Path repair and management

The Cairngorms Mountain Heritage Project undertook repairs on 15 paths on the western side of the Cairngorms National Park. The paths were audited prior to the project (using the industry standard Amber Survey methodology) and were prioritised by stakeholders for inclusion in the project. The repairs have secured over 57km of path against deterioration and reduced the visual and ecological impact of erosion.

At the end of the project the repaired paths were audited again to assess their condition following the works.

	Path	Length (m)	Summary of condition and works
UL 1	Lairig Ghru	8774	Works during project have vastly improved the most demanding issues and light touch works have enhanced the paths overall condition. Regular maintenance will keep the route in excellent condition.
UL 3	Chalamain Gap	5417	Existing works have weathered well with little or no change. New works on west side of gap have massively improved the damaged/eroded sections towards the Lairig Ghru. Regular maintenance will keep the route in excellent condition.
UL 4	Braeriach	5320	Sections 1and 2 rebuilt entirely with existing route closed down. Sron approach/ steep shoulder received extensive works and light touch further towards summit reducing erosion and impact.
UL 5	Lairig an Laoigh - Fords of Avon	14640	Long distance route with heavy machine build on first few kms, the rest built on a light touch and/or partial basis using Remote Systems.
UL 6	Bynack More	2214	Mixture of heavy build and light touch works carried out across length during the CMH project - very good standard of work
UL 7	Strathnethy	8687	Strathnethy received some light works adjacent to Loch A'an through the CMH project using a Remote System (UALtd 2014).
UL 8	Coire Domhain to Beinn Mheadhoin	4424	Site works on CMH focussed on the very heavy damage from plateau down to Loch A'an. Light touch works up to estate boundary with NTS Mar Lodge. Remote Site in 2012 (challenging)

Path		Length (m)	Summary of condition and works
UL 9	Coire Raibeirt	2039	Substantial repairs carried out during CMH project, with significant damage repaired as additional work on first 2 sections after 2012 wash out.
UL 10	Cairngorm Plateau	4612	Cairngorm plateau worked with light touch/experimental plateau techniques, with good success. Will continue to need pre-emptive work via maintenance programme.
UL 11	Beinn MacDui from Cairngorm Carpark	7622	Path now in appropriate condition and needing maintenance only, with the exception of around 200m at NH 986 001 which requires alignment and containment work.
UL 12	North Coires Rim	1620	Route around Coire Rim from Beinn MacDui path to Plateau path. Mostly fine but needs some pre-emptive and light touch working on the descent from Coire Lochan.
UL 23	Glenfeshie	16758	High use path, with fast growing mountain bike use. First 5km heavily constructed with 14t machine.
UL 24	Carn Ban Mor	5127	High use path, with growing mountain biking. Extensively worked during the CMH project, with a variety of contractors and different contract managers.
UL 25	Windy Ridge	2079	Realigned on section 1 to more sustainable slope - heavy build and machine intensive with hand build on the stone features - heavy use in ski resort.
UL 26	Coire an t-Sneachda	2815	Path upgraded and maintained during period outwith the CMH project (UALtd 2011 2012) with major resurfacing and turved side drains incorporated. Goat Track really needs a solution, but route currently too unstable to place a work team on. Rock fall risk.
UL 27	Fiacaill a Coire Cas	908	Path completed and built from top to bottom using intensive hand built techniques.

By comparing the audit data from before and after the project, the full scale of the works becomes apparent:

Audit	Aggregate	Pitching	Revetment	Anchor Bars	Cross Drains	Water Bars	Side Ditch	Culverts
Before	*11,332m*	*833m*	*290m*	*87*	*348*	*512*	*8,404m*	*58*
After	22,776m	3,825m	2,178m	1561	638	1306	21,487m	66

Stone pitching on Windy Ridge

Aggregate surface with anchor bars on Braeriach

The project constructed approximately 11km of hardened aggregate surface, built 3km of pitching to protect steeper slopes and installed almost 1,500 anchor bars and almost 2km of revetment to help retain the aggregate. Drainage was improved by digging 13km of ditches and 300 cross drains to keep water off the paths, along with 800 water bars to shed water from the path surface.
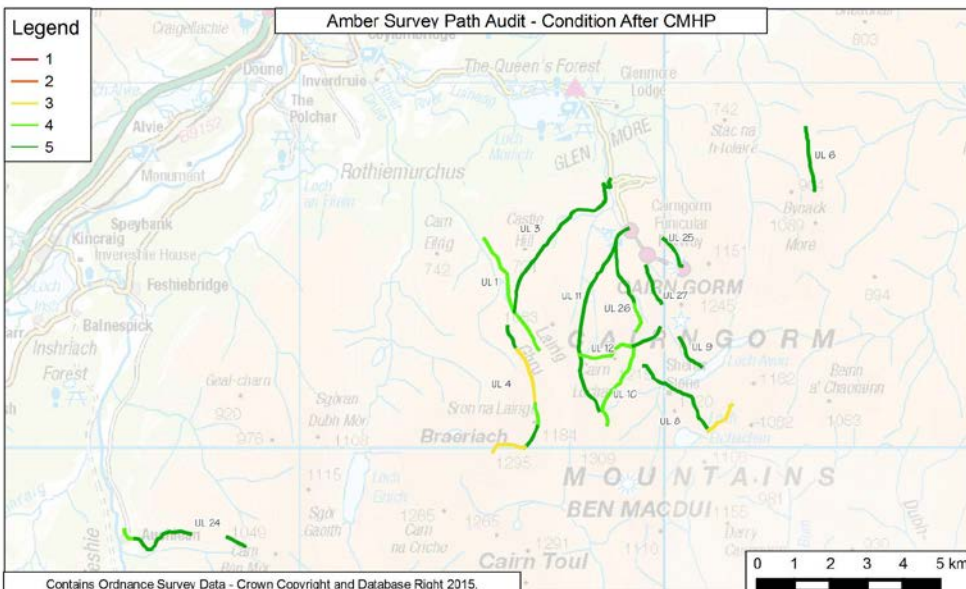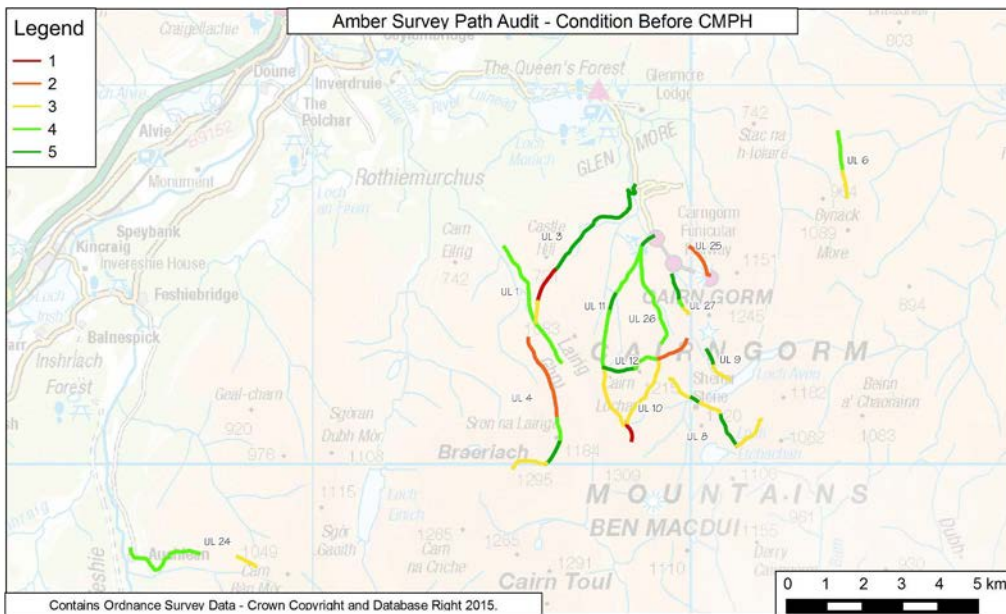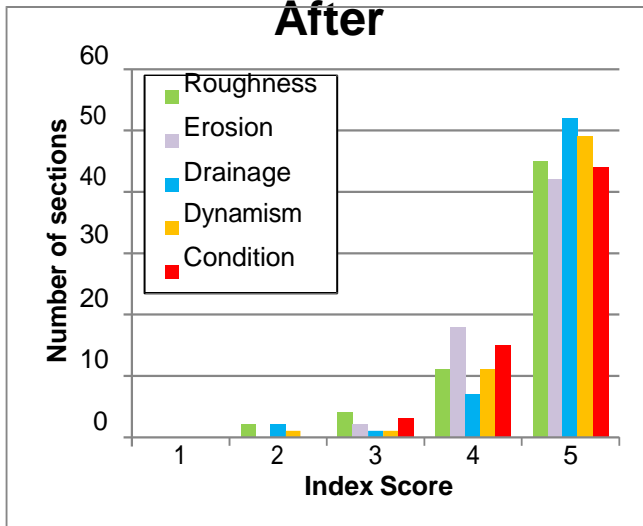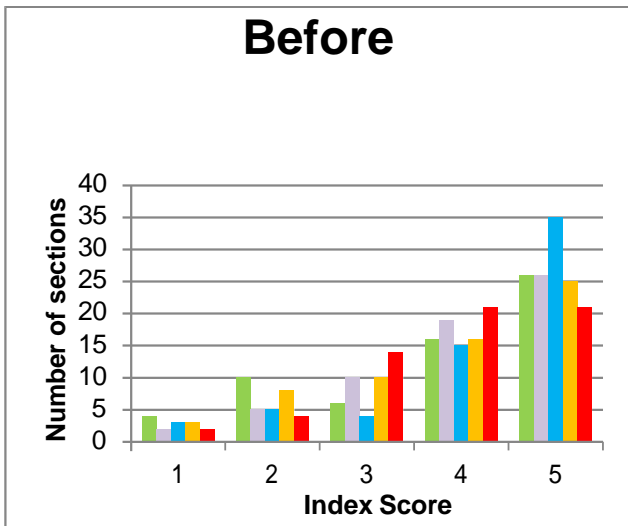
The two audits did not record the paths sections exactly the same – this was partly through realignment of some paths and others through surveyor error. However, 62 of the 86 sections surveyed are comparable, so these have been used to determine how the condition of the paths changed as a result of the project. The Amber Survey uses qualitative data to measure five aspects of path condition.

- Roughness – the presence of boulders and loose cobbles on the line of the path
- Erosion – the depth and extent of the eroded area
- Drainage – the wetness of the surface / evidence of surface water
- Dynamism – likely rate of deterioration
- Condition – overall state of the path / damaged area

These indices are each scored between 1 and 5, where 1 is severe and 5 is minimal. The surveyor needs to have a good knowledge of path and environmental conditions and the analysis is based on 'absolute' rather than 'relative' scoring (i.e. a score of 1 would be the same level of damage anywhere in Scotland, rather than any ranking or classification within the paths assessed). More information about the survey technique is available at www.snh.org.uk/uplandpathmanagement/

The following table and charts show how the different indices were scored before the project and afterwards. They represent the number of sections with each score and demonstrate the shift from low scores (typical of severely damaged paths) to higher scores (typical of undamaged or managed paths).

Index	Status	Score				
		1	2	3	4	5
Roughness	Before	4	10	6	16	26
	After	0	2	4	11	45
Erosion	Before	2	5	10	19	26
	After	0	0	2	18	42
Drainage	Before	3	5	4	15	35
	After	0	2	1	7	52
Dynamism	Before	3	8	10	16	25
	After	0	1	1	11	49
Condition	Before	2	4	14	21	21
	After	0	0	3	15	44

Before / After — bar charts of Number of sections vs Index Score for Roughness, Erosion, Drainage, Dynamism, Condition

Amber Survey Path Audit - Condition Before CMPH

Amber Survey Path Audit - Condition After CMHP

The diagrams and maps highlight the dramatic difference that has been made as a result of the path works using technical methods but this is clearly visible on the ground even to the most casual observer. The following images illustrate the visual benefit of the path works, and over time, the remnant erosion on the path margins is expected to diminish as the vegetation takes hold.

Lairig Grhu before
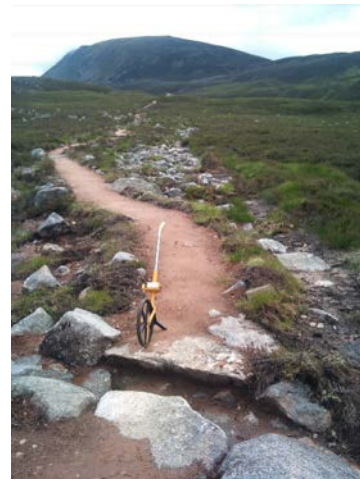
After completion of work

2.2   Contract Management

large amount of the work undertaken within the project involved managing contracts to repair and restore popular routes to and through the mountains. This required highly skilled and specialised knowledge of path construction and contract management. COAT's objective was to reduce the amount of stone pitching required and improve the retention of aggregate surfacing, which has always been challenging in the Cairngorms due to the underlying granite geology. However, the biggest challenges related to climate and location of the paths.

2.2.1   Remote accommodation system

There is a point where the distance from the nearest vehicle access is too great to allow effective work on site. The repeated long walk-in has a strong demoralising effect and shortens the working day. Some of the sites within the project were so remote as to make it unviable to undertake path repairs unless the walk-in could be avoided. COAT was able to build on earlier versions of temporary accommodation used by the National Trust for Scotland and designed a new modular system of accommodation and ancillary services that could be deployed by helicopter.

The significant development for COAT's system was the use of battery power with back-up generators, rather than running generators for all power requirements. This meant that the generators were able to run for minimal periods and the batteries provided power in between using an inverter, reducing the consumption of fuel significantly compared with generator only power supply.

Feedback from contractors who used the system was very positive. The team morale was improved and gave more flexibility in working practices due to the short distance from accommodation to work site. Small 'tweaks' to the layout of the kitchen unit were suggested and

more attention is required to make the windows midge-resistant. Productivity and quality of work from teams using the Remote Accommodation System were high.

Deploying, operating and dismantling the Remote Accommodation System were not without challenges. Helicopters were used for transporting the units and weather conditions prevented the removal of the system at the end of 2013. However they were retrieved, serviced and redeployed in 2014. The power system required additional attention, but fortunately did not fail.

2.2.2 Fixed price contracts

Where full restoration of a path could be defined and quantified fixed price contracts were used to ensure best-value from contractors. Excavators and low-pressure tracked dumpers were used on a number of paths where they could safely access the site, as a means of reducing overall contract costs, increasing the rate of output and ensuring that the quantities of materials were sufficient to produce a robust surface. Where the terrain was unsuited to mechanised plant, teams specialising in hand-built techniques were contracted. This was, in general, a successful approach. Challenges arose in a small number of cases where different contractors were used for different sections, which led to inconsistencies in style along a path and some of the stone features needed to be redone to meet the expected quality standards.

2.2.3 Light Touch or Low Visibility techniques

As an alternative to full construction of a path, 'light touch' techniques can be used to restore the damaged area – apparently minor work to define the line of the route and help restore the landscape impact of the route. 'Light touch' has also been used to describe early intervention, where minor works can be used to prevent further deterioration of a path.

The name is somewhat counterintuitive in that the techniques can require a high degree of intervention and they need a thorough understanding of the physical conditions and ways in which mountain visitors use the route. The outcome of these techniques is a low visibility route, and this term may be a more accurate reflection of the objective of the works undertaken in this project.

Feedback was sought from the contract manager and individual contractors who undertook the work, in order to develop a more useful description of the outputs and outcomes of these techniques.

The main difference between full construction and low visibility approaches, from a path management perspective, is that low visibility routes are not prescriptively designed. Successful implementation is dependent on highly skilled workforce, competent contract management and trust. The contract manager provides an outline specification and a set of design guidelines, which the contractor then interprets on the ground though a negotiated contract. Working to a 'day rate' rather than fixed price places the emphasis on quality but requires the contract manager to ensure that progress continues satisfactorily to cover the intended amount of path. Much of the work revolves around selecting and defining the most attractive line, and blocking alternatives.

The low visibility routes combine the technical expertise of path construction with a high degree of aesthetics, which means that not all contracting companies will have the experience or aptitude to

undertake the work. The contract manager also needs to have a clear understanding of the route and be able to express the required standard of work. It is a combination of these factors that appears to lead to the best outcomes.

The techniques are not suited to all locations, and feedback suggests that they are best reserved for the most visually sensitive areas where a fully constructed path would be intrusive.

3 Making a difference to people

3.1 Organisational considerations

COAT emerged from Upper Deeside Access Trust which had an established track record of delivering path repair and visitor management within a defined part of the Cairngorms National Park. The expanded operation, which provided the opportunity to deliver the Cairngorms Mountain Heritage Project, also presented a number of risks and challenges. The Board of Directors and Chief Executive identified a number of issues that were managed during the delivery of the project.

3.1.1 Cash Flow

For an organisation with only limited capital assets, running a large project with high turnover presents a real risk of encountering cash-flow problems. Contractors need to be paid promptly for work delivered, but organisations providing grant aid need to be confident that money has been spent effectively before funds can be released. This inevitably leads to a gap where the organisation is effectively 'out-of-pocket' and needs to rely on reserves to cover the shortfall. COAT was very grateful to Cairngorms National Park Authority which was able to 'front-load' its funding, which significantly eased the cash-flow pressures. The risks associated with cash-flow are potentially critical for the organisation, and tend to be bottle-necks, which means that contingencies need to be put in place for future projects to ensure that there is a sufficiently large 'working capital' that can be underwritten.

3.1.2 Strategic direction

COAT has developed into a highly specialised organisation to deliver an identified need, rather than supplying general 'environmental services' within a geographical area. This was a deliberate strategy of the Board of Directors but has inherent risks if funding within this relatively 'market' becomes difficult to secure. Successful delivery of high profile projects, such as Cairngorms Mountain Heritage Project, is important in maintaining the reputation of the organisation. However, pressure to deliver on a project-by-project basis places stress on the core of the business to remain lean and geographically flexible. This also means that staff continuity can be difficult to achieve and some loss of 'corporate memory' is inevitable between projects.

The enhanced strength in contract management and project delivery as a result of Cairngorms Mountain Heritage is an important aspect to acknowledge – for the Board of Directors to continue their support in this area demonstrates the long term commitment to managing the assets and liabilities that COAT has accumulated and inherited.

3.1.3 Staff structure and management

COAT is a small organisation with a very lean structure. This keeps the overheads to a minimum but means that there is very little 'margin for error'. The Board of Directors recognise that they have high dependency on specialised staff.

The practice of project-orientated teams is well established to provide the full range of skills required to deliver a project and the approach taken by COAT fits very well with best practice in project management. However, staff who are wholly funded by a specific project can introduce an

additional element of risk, where funding is not available to retain staff beyond the end of the project. It is natural, and understandable, for individuals to seek alternative employment to provide continuity of income and this potentially impacts on COAT's ability to deliver the latter stages of a project. It can also result in skills and experience being lost between projects.

Whilst staff turnover is can be beneficial for injecting new ideas and enthusiasm into an organisation, losing valued members of staff through lack of funding continuity can have a negative impact. There are examples of employment models that incentivise staff to stay until the end of a project (e.g. London Olympics). This includes for example, building in a bonus payment on conclusion of the contract period, or offering a contract that extends beyond the completion date. This would require agreement from funding bodies as well as careful consideration by the Board of Directors, but could be accommodated within existing budgets so that overall staff costs were not affected – and other staff were not disadvantaged.

3.2   Path worker training project

The training project was set up to offer a structure programme of learning based around path construction skills. It comprised an eight month period of intensive training and completion of practical tasks for eight trainees. The course was designed to meet the requirements of the SVQ Level 2 qualification in Environmental Conservation allowing participants to demonstrate competence in the relevant areas.

When the training course was opened to applications, 370 forms were requested and 150 applications were received. With only eight spaces the recruitment process focussed on finding quality candidates who had the potential to contribute to the path industry. The selected trainees came from a diverse background and COAT made a conscious decision to bring together a range of existing skills and potential to contribute to a team – some came straight from education, some had volunteer experience and were looking for qualifications to enhance their employability, and others were looking for a complete career change.
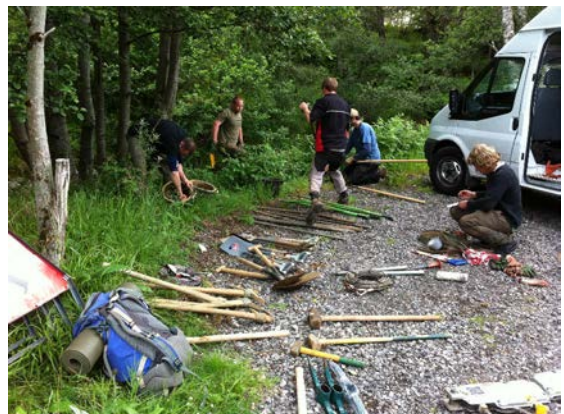
Eight trainees completed the training course successfully and gained the SVQ qualification in Environmental Conservation. During the course the trainees were able to use their newly acquired skills to deliver aspects of the path management programme – for example, they worked on the Windy Ridge path as a 'live' training site.

As a result of the training project, eight new path workers became available to the industry. Six trainees found work immediately and remain in the industry. Feedback from the three trainees who responded to the evaluation request was overwhelmingly positive. All three are still working in the path industry and regard the training course as being essential in helping them find work.

A new company Cairngorm Wilderness Contracts (CWC) was formed by three of the

trainees as a direct result of the course. This company was then able to bid for contracts that were let by COAT as part of the Cairngorms Mountain Heritage Project. This new company increased competition in a relatively small market which helped to ensure that path contracts were competitively won. The company remains in business and has expanded to provide employment for six people.

Support from HLF meant that it was possible to set up an SVQ accredited centre, allowing continuation of training for two more years, and the intention is to continue the training scheme in the future, with new levels of qualification being made available. The impact of this centre is to supply the industry with a source of skilled labour, with workers who already hold the values of upland path conservation. It has increased the capacity of the industry and has enhanced the career opportunities of the course participants. The ripples of this impact are spread across mountain areas of the UK.

At a personal level the course had a life-changing impact on the individuals concerned. One trainee highlighted how the course had given him confidence to pursue a new career having done some voluntary work but been unable to find paid employment – he is now considering setting up his own company.

Another trainee commented that the course gave him an opportunity to make a fundamental life change, moving home and vocation and it was clear from the interview that it had been a positive experience.

The third trainee interviewed had nothing but praise for the support provided by COAT, having gained new skills and confidence. He was able to secure employment using these skills and has settled in a new area.

3.2.1 Learning points and recommendations

The team-focussed nature of trainee selection was seen as an important contributor to success by both staff and trainees. Selecting candidates that can work together but also potentially have complementary skills allows the course to deliver enhanced benefits by sharing ideas and mutual support. There is always danger of individuals not 'conforming' and staff need to remain vigilant to keep the group engaged and prevent disagreements from 'taking root' – feedback suggests that this was done effectively.

The SVQ qualification does not, on its own, provide all the necessary 'paperwork' to make a trainee immediately employable, despite demonstrating considerable commitment to the industry. Feedback from contractors and trainees has suggested that it would be beneficial to integrate additional qualifications within the course to add value. Trainees could, for example be guided through the Construction Skills Card Scheme process to gain the Skilled Worker card. The Contractor Plant Competence Scheme is an essential part of the construction industry and adapting the 360° excavator training to gain the plant operators 'Red Card' would make their skills more easily recognised by a contractor.

The accredited centre is highly valued by trainees and contractors alike and is an important part of sustaining a fragile specialist industry. It should therefore be supported in the long term to ensure that the necessary skills and quality workmanship is available to service the ongoing need for path management.

3.3   Cairngorms Adopt A path Scheme

The Cairngorms Adopt a Path Scheme (CAPS) was initiated part way through the project after an initial engagement with volunteers foundered. As a result of staff changes the volunteer coordination was let as an external contract to Walking-the-Talk.

There were a number of constraints for COAT which guided the development of the scheme, mainly relating to supervision of volunteers and work standards – there was insufficient capacity within the project to run practical sessions for path maintenance or repair so the main focus of the volunteer activity was on monitoring condition of paths that are part of the management and maintenance programme. This programme included paths repaired under the Cairngorms Mountain Heritage Project, NTS Mar Lodge Estate and paths that had previously been repaired by UDAT (COAT's predecessor organisation).

CAPS was developed in partnership with the North East Mountain Trust (NEMT), which was also an important source of volunteers. Time was spent discussing the needs and likely capabilities of volunteers before drawing together a pilot scheme based on using volunteers to monitor the condition of mountain paths. The agreed approach was to report condition through descriptions and photo records, based on identified sections of path, so that any maintenance issues could be easily located. The path sections were based on the original path audit, and a Geographic Information System (GIS) was developed to cope with the spatial data.

The main objective of the scheme was for volunteers to acts as 'eyes and ears' on the ground, helping to identify where maintenance was required. Where volunteers chose to help with unblocking drainage features this was encouraged, but there was not expectation for them to do practical work, and more technical intervention was strongly discouraged. Theoretically the volunteers would do their survey prior to the maintenance team going out, and the information would be useful to guide the team – knowing where damage had occurred and the scale of any problems would help with targeting limited resources.

A series of training sessions were organised and a recruitment 'campaign' was undertaken. Together with annual meetings with volunteers the scheme was continuously adapted to account for the needs of volunteers and COAT's maintenance programme. Feedback from volunteers was gathered through these sessions and one-to-one conversations. A workshop session was also held for land managers whose paths were part of the scheme and the scheme coordinator kept in touch with the maintenance contractors to provide information and gather feedback.

Date	Location	Numbers attending
April 2012	Glas Allt, Balmoral Estate (training)	8
September 2012	Glas Allt, Balmoral Estate (training)	4
February 2013	Aberdeen (feedback meeting)	10
April 2013	Lecht Ski Centre (land managers workshop)	9
September 2013	Faicaill a Coire Cas, Cairngorm Estate (training)	6
January 2014	Aberdeen (feedback meeting)	14
May 2014	Faicaill a Coire Cas, Cairngorm Estate (training)	5
June 2014	Carn Crom, Mar Lodge Estate (training)	6

The first reports were sent by email, which resulted in problems with sending large images. A website 'portal' for volunteers was created (www.outdoorcairngorms.co.uk) as a means of allowing volunteers to submit reports online rather than by email. The site was developed to limit 'write-access' to volunteers but allow them to upload photos and reports. In the final year of the project an additional feature was added to allow the maintenance team to upload their reports, which meant that volunteers could see the work that had been done. All the reports can be seen publicly.

Year	Number of returned reports	Length of path monitored
2012	8	41km
2013	14	61km
2014	17	86km

CAPS has demonstrated that it is possible to engage with volunteers to help maintain paths and develop greater understanding of the issues related to path management. The enthusiasm of volunteers and organic growth of the scheme have shown that there is demand among users of the mountains to contribute to the care of paths.

3.3.1 Learning points and recommendations

There was no formal link between the maintenance programme and CAPS, which made it more difficult to coordinate reports and maintenance – the contractor's priority was delivery of maintenance across the range of paths included in the maintenance contract, and did not overlap well with the paths that were adopted and monitored early in the scheme. Managing the expectations of volunteers and contractors proved to be challenging partly because there were limited resources to address the needs of the paths adopted within the wider maintenance programme.

Contractors have relatively narrow 'windows of opportunity' for carrying out maintenance and need to be able to trust the information available. Although volunteers were encouraged to submit their reports within these 'windows', it was not always possible for them to do so. This meant that up to date information was not available to the contractors for many paths. Sometimes the contractors did not remember to check the maintenance reports, so didn't benefit from the 'intelligence' that had been gathered. This meant that the efforts of the volunteers were not fully recognised and the potential benefits, of using the volunteers to help identify priority maintenance, were not maximised.

There was a change in contractor in 2014 and this provided an opportunity to introduce the reporting back to volunteers through the website – this strengthened the link between monitoring by volunteers and maintenance by contractors. The previous contractor had helpfully contributed photos of work done but was not required to produce reports in a format that could be easily distributed to volunteers. It is recommended that reporting via the web portal be made a part of the

maintenance contract – this allows COAT to manage the contract efficiently and shares information with the volunteers without additional effort.

Some land managers are more relaxed than others about volunteers helping to maintain paths on their land. It would be beneficial for land managers that have paths added to the scheme to attend one of the volunteer training sessions – this was helpful in re-engaging NTS with the scheme when the maintenance contract was taken back 'in-house'.

Some volunteers are keen to do practical tasks as well as monitoring. This would require additional training to ensure quality and safe working, and it would be prudent to restrict this activity to supervised groups – to minimise the risks to health and safety, and monitor work quality.

3.4 Other forms of engagement

The Activity Plan included a range of opportunities to interact with target audiences through different media and forms of communication. Some of these activities were easy to integrate with the work done to protect and enhance the Heritage, but others proved more challenging to deliver in the context of the project. The outcomes and impacts are also variable and there are some key lessons for future projects.

3.4.1 Talks & Events

A series of themes talks was developed and offered to local and regional groups. Some hillwalking clubs took the opportunity to find out more about the project and there were repeated attempts to encourage groups to engage with the talks programme. The reasons for groups not taking up the opportunity are unknown (suggestions from within the project mainly focussed around whether clubs and societies were concerned that they might invite a begging bowl into their meetings). However, talks were given to North East Mountain Trust (twice), which is a key organisation within the mountain user community, and the Association of Cairngorms Communities which is a forum for local residents. The target of eight talks was met, and although the numbers reached through this type of communication were not very high, the level of engagement was high, with positive feedback from those attending.

COAT also attended and organised a number of events for the general public and specific audiences. Targets were exceeded for the number of events and the target audiences were notable. COAT attended a Scottish Parliament Event at Holyrood where there were opportunities to interact with politicians and policy makers. COAT also hosted a field meeting of the Upland Path Advisory Group, which drew attendance from across Scotland as well as representatives from Lake District National Park. The annual public meetings of COAT were extremely well attended and provided opportunities to engage with COAT's affiliate membership and show examples of how the project was progressing.

3.4.2 On site communication

Temporary signs were placed on the work sites, partly as a means of ensuring that visitors were aware of the health and safety issues of passing through a construction site, but also to promote the work being done. However, the number of interactions between members of the public and path workers was not counted.

3.4.3   Interpretive Panels

Finding suitable sites for interpretation panels proved to be more problematic that had been anticipated. It was known to be inappropriate to permanently install any panels next to the paths for landscape reasons but sites within car parks or visitor centres were not made available for various reasons. Eventually two locations within mountain bothies were agreed and the panels were designed and produced.
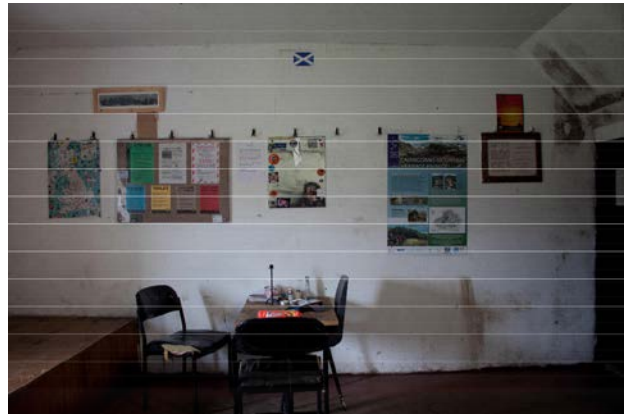
Attempts were made to use a collaborative process to develop the content but this also proved difficult to achieve – planned workshops were cancelled due to lack of uptake. One-to-one engagement was used instead to make sure that the content was suited to its purpose.

Although the targets were met, the outcomes and impacts did not reach their potential and it suggests that this form of communication has limited value for this type of project, unless the delivery organisation has control of facilities such as car parks and visitors centres.

3.4.4   Leaflets

A leaflet was developed to promote the work of the project to the general public (e.g. visitors to the National Park). A copy of the leaflet is available online at:
http://www.cairngormsoutdooraccess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/CMHP-leaflet.pdf

A second leaflet, aimed primarily at raising funds for maintenance, was produced and distributed via targeted media.

3.4.5   Podcasts

COAT produced a series of online video 'podcasts' that are based on stories of the Cairngorms and the work of the Trust. COAT undertook promotional work to gather ideas for podcasts – requests were sent to volunteers and a 'flier' was distributed widely by email and placed prominently on the COAT website. Three different approaches were taken which give rise to a range of 'styles' within a family of videos:

- Professional story tellers regaling myths and legends of the Cairngorms;

- Personal experience of 'mountain ghosts', filmed as a reconstruction;

- Staff exploring the work of COAT has been doing through the Cairngorms Mountain Heritage Project

The medium of online video and audio podcasts has developed rapidly in recent years and the proliferation of material on sites such as YouTube means that the topic and content are often prioritised over production quality. However, these videos have all been professionally produced and have a very high standard of production and post-production. They are available through Vimeo and on the COAT website, but as yet they have not been widely promoted as a 'series'.

Whilst the story telling approach is likely to be interesting and engaging for some people it has limited resonance with COAT and these videos are not identifiable as being linked to the project, except through the branding – they could easily have been produced by, for example, visitscotland or a historical society. One of the problems with this type of 'podcast' is that it does not clearly define the communication objective and the impact of these videos is therefore limited – it is difficult for the viewer to make a link between the management of mountain paths and the topics explored by the video.

However, the two videos covering the work of the Trust can be seen more positively with respect to the overall project. The presenters show their passion for the work and give insights into the issues faced in managing the mountain heritage of the Cairngorms. These videos have great potential for sharing knowledge and promoting the outputs and outcomes of investing in people and paths in the Cairngorms, and the quality of production also potentially gives them credibility with a wider audience than, for example a home-made / hand-held camera video. These videos could be used for advocacy with potential supporters and policy-makers. Promoting these two videos in this way would increase the impact of the project.

Future work in this area would benefit from considering how such materials can be used to promote the issues being tackled by the project, their potential use for increasing awareness and understanding of path management techniques and possibly for training purposes with, for example, volunteers.

3.4.6 News and specialist media

COAT worked proactively and reactively with the news media and other organisations to promote the project and present opportunities to engage directly with audiences. The topic of mountain path management was relatively easy to 'place' in the news media and some of the news stories lent themselves to particular media (e.g. the deployment of the Remote Accommodation System using a helicopter made good TV coverage). Inclusion of stories in TV news bulletins gave COAT high impact, reaching a much wider audience than would have otherwise been possible. Targets for stories in newspapers were easily exceeded and raised the profile of COAT, HLF and the management of mountain paths.

Targets	Outputs		
	2012	**2013**	**2014**
4 articles to TV	0	2	1
4 articles to Radio	1	1	0
5 to national press	5	2	1
12 to local press	11	5	3
2 Feature articles to specialist publications	7	3	5

The opportunities taken represent a part of the potential for raising the profile of the project, and feedback suggests that COAT did not capitalise on opportunities that could have been available. However, for a small organisation such as COAT, the pressure of delivering the project meant that the 'hard' outputs were occasionally prioritised over contributing to the 'soft' outputs and outcomes.

A more planned proactive approach to PR in future projects would be beneficial to reaching out more widely through news media.

3.4.7   Conference

The idea of organising a conference at the end of the project was investigated thoroughly. Discussions were held with SNH and other potential partners but it was not possible to come to a mutually beneficial agreement about the scope and timing of the conference. As a result, COAT proceeded with organising a conference focussed on the Cairngorms Mountain Heritage Project, with invited speakers, site visits and workshop sessions. Unfortunately bookings were too low for the event to be economically viable and COAT did not have the funds to subsidise the conference to the level required. The conference had to be cancelled meaning that COAT was not able to showcase the impacts of the project in the way intended.

3.4.8   Dissemination of information to activity providers

COAT undertook a survey of outdoor activity providers that use the project area to gain an understanding of how they interpret mountain path management to their clients and what information they might find useful for this purpose. The survey was undertaken through survey monkey and elicited 22 responses (of which 21 were among the target audience) and there was a very mixed response. Whilst almost all gave their clients information about mountain paths, the messages being given varied from general information about the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, to showing examples of work done and discussing the issues of funding the work.

The responses showed that less than half were aware of the Mountain Path Appeal and Cairngorms Adopt-a-Path Scheme at the time, and only half said that they would definitely be interested in receiving a briefing note about the project.

Following the survey, it was decided to concentrate efforts on improving the COAT website and to use this as the means of providing information to activity providers.

3.4.9   Online media

The COAT website was fully revamped during the life of the project. This provided an opportunity to improve the way that COAT communicated via the internet and allowed more information to be shared with different target audiences. The website includes a 'library' that has examples and case studies, and has potential to add more documents as required.

COAT also started using Facebook to engage with people, but this proved difficult to service beyond frequent updates. However some of the contractors and trainees use Facebook for personal and professional purposes and this allowed COAT to 'piggyback' on their social media activities.
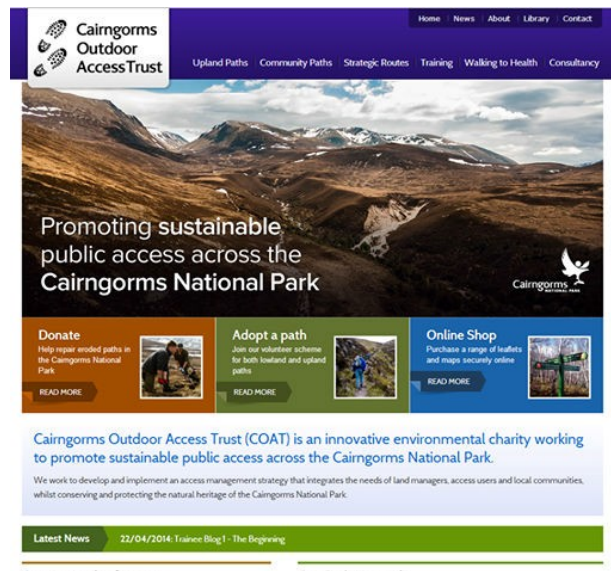
The redesign of the website, with new structure and functionality was an important part of making information available more easily. For example a Google search for 'Cairngorms paths' lists the COAT website number 7 and 8. Searching for 'Cairngorms path repairs' puts the COAT website at number 1 and 2. This means that information about the project and is outcomes are more easily accessible to a wide audience.

In terms of online presence and penetration, compared with other organisations doing similar work, COAT can be shown to be favourably positioned, particular with respect to its size and available resources:

Google search results for '*mountain path repairs*':

1. The National Trust for Scotland Mountains for People Project

2. The National Trust for Scotland - Footpath Fund

3. Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT) | Mountain Path ...

4. Path Repair Techniques - Fix The Fells

5. Major boost for Scottish mountain path repairs | Walkhighlands [NTS]

6. Lake District Path Repair

7. [PDF]SNH Commissioned Report 8: Upland footpath repair ...

8. Fixing the Fells - National Trust

9. Repairs for eroded mountain path - BBC News [Lake District]

10. Experts called in to repair mountain path - Perthshire / Local ... [John Muir Trust]

3.5   Learning points from other forms of engagement

Discussions with individuals involved with the delivery of the project revealed a number of conflicting issues and priorities that had an effect on the engagement with people. It appears, at times, that some activities revolved around delivering targets within the original bid, rather than adapting to changing circumstances to deliver outputs and outcomes more focussed on the needs of the audiences. This is a common challenge where ideas generated during the development of a project turn out to be less appropriate when they are delivered. Funders need to ensure that their grants deliver impacts that are aligned with their aims, but organisations also need to make sure that they adapt activities to suit the changing needs of target audiences.

The skills, experience and interests of most of those involved with the project lie firmly within delivering high quality paths and it is apparent that work relating to this was easily prioritised. The pressures of these tasks meant that other activities took a back seat. Coupled with COAT not having dedicated resources for promotion and PR, there are challenges in maximising the opportunities to highlight the organisation's excellent work to the wider public. It would be unfair to conclude that these activities are more important than managing the heritage, or that staff were incompetent, but recognising the value of ongoing efforts to communicate about COAT's work may help to integrate these activities more effectively. A proactive approach by all staff and directors towards engaging with external audiences is recommended to help make a cultural shift, and these minor changes are likely to result in large benefits for the organisation and the sustainable management of mountain paths.