

# Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust Path Building Trainees.

<http://carrbridgenews.co.uk/read/area-news/trainees-career-path/>

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A footpath construction skills training course being run by the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT) is now underway in the Cairngorms National Park.

The course forms a part of the Cairngorms Mountain Heritage Project and runs for eight months, based at various locations within the park.

The eight trainees are working towards an SVQ in Environmental Conservation as well as an industry recognised certificate in path skills. Competition for places on the course was stiff, with COAT receiving over 200 applications from

across the UK. It left the man in charge of training for the Cairngorms Mountain Heritage Project, Gordon McDonald, with the very difficult task of narrowing it down to just eight successful applicants.

He said: "The level of interest in the training posts far exceeded our expectations but we finally got our eight and they have certainly hit the ground running. The trainees are with us for 8 months and the course should prepare them to hopefully gain employment with the various contractors working on the 4-year Cairngorms Mountain Heritage Project.



"The trainees will learn their trade 'on the job'. There will be on-site instruction in building upland and lowland paths and topics such as First Aid, Health and Safety and woodland work will also be covered as well as other skills relevant to working in the challenging and rewarding field of conservation."

The course got underway at the end of April with an induction day for the trainees which involved a talk from Bob Grant the Cairngorms National Park Authority's (CNPA) senior outdoor access officer.

Since then, the trainees have carried out maintenance work on the main footpath leading to Carn Ban Mor in, Glenfeshie. This work involved cleaning out drains and ditching with a small element of resurfacing work on the path. This work gave the trainees a chance to become familiar with the different elements of a footpath and how valuable simple maintenance can be in prolonging the life and condition of a path.

The trainees have more recently turned their attention to Creag Bheag near Kingussie. Cairngorms Mountain Heritage Project Manager, Boyd Henderson explained: "This popular local hill gives excellent views over the surrounding area, however in common with many Scottish hills and mountains, it is suffering from a certain amount of erosion caused by many trampling feet.

"Here the trainees have constructed and repaired over 200m of footpath to help combat this erosion and bring it under control. In the process they have been practising dry stone techniques, drainage methods and a wide range of other path construction skills and are already well on their way to

becoming proficient in the skills necessary for a career in practical conservation.”

COAT is an innovative company dedicated to the development and delivery of outdoor access projects within the Cairngorms National Park and surrounding area. The training project receives funding from the CNPA, Scottish Natural Heritage, The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and The Scottish Mountaineering Trust. For more information on COAT and to follow the progress of the budding path-builders, please go to:

[www.cairngormsoutdooraccess.org.uk](http://www.cairngormsoutdooraccess.org.uk)