

Mountain Scars

A blight on our landscape



Outdoor
Access
Trust
for
Scotland



The eroded path or 'scar' up Carn Liath on Beinn a'Ghlo

The combination of Scotland's cold, wet windy weather, steep hillsides, friable soil and fragile vegetation cover makes the upland areas particularly susceptible to erosion from even a relatively small number of users. The result ends up as unsightly scarring of our precious wild landscapes as seen above on Beinn a'Ghlo.

Beinn a'Ghlo is the collective name for the range of three Munros east of Glen Tilt in Highland Perthshire. The southerly peak in the range, Carn Liath is a landmark from the south, looking over to Blair Atholl towards the Scottish Lowlands. Noted for its badly scarred path running up its south-west shoulder, it is representative of so many of our mountains in Scotland and beyond.

A designated Special Area of Conservation (SAC) as well as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Beinn a'Ghlo is home to several species of upland ground nesting birds, five of which have recently been elevated into the Birds of Conservation Concern 4 category otherwise known as the 'red list for birds'. The increase in the popularity of hillwalking has led to informal paths developing, causing the

destruction of these precious wildlife habitats.

Not surprisingly, the Carn Liath path was established as a priority 1 path – the highest priority possible. Restoration of this steep and testing route started in August this year however, so challenging is the terrain that the restoration work will take a further two years to complete.



INSIDE.....

Chairman's report Chairman Ian Moffett gives his review.

Lowland Paths Speyside Way, Community Paths and more....

The Mountains and the People Upland Paths,, volunteers, training and education....

Annual Report 2017 - 2018

WHAT A YEAR....

A Foreword From The Chairman

What a year this has been! At the beginning of the year, we changed our name to Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland – OATS for short. The change was necessary to reflect the growth and expansion of our activities throughout Scotland and marked an extremely thrilling time for the Trust.

We are now half way through our five-year project, The Mountains and The People, and are exactly where we need to be with both the capital and activity elements of the project – you can read more about the detail of this project on pages 4-7.

Extending the Speyside Way has been a large focus for us this year along with a number of other lowland paths throughout the North of Scotland.

Fast approaching our 20th year, the future certainly looks bright for the outdoor access industry and we look forward to developing more upland and lowland projects whilst protecting our natural heritage throughout Scotland.

As always, I would like to extend my sincere thanks and gratitude to Dougie Baird, OATS CEO for the tireless work he does for the Trust, not forgetting of course the rest of our small team who continue to demonstrate such dedication for the work we do.



IAN MOFFETT,
October 2018

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP

As part of our fundraising efforts, we have recently introduced a new initiative by inviting companies to sponsor an upland path. We have started the program with five paths, all on Balmoral Estate in the Cairngorms National Park and plan to introduce more paths in both of Scotland's National Parks in the coming months.



Our first sponsor is TAQA, an oil and gas operator based in Aberdeen who have sponsored Broad Cairn. Part of the vast, rolling Mounth plateau, Broad Cairn climbs to a height of 3274 feet with a distance from base being around 5-6 miles.

We are very grateful to TAQA for being the front runner with this initiative and look forward to working with them on a number of volunteering days for their employees.

The paths currently available to sponsor are;

- Meikle Pap – classified as a Munro top
- Glas Allt – waterside walk built by Queen Victoria
- Dubh Loch – jaw dropping huge imposing mountain
- Lochnagar – one of our most iconic Munros

To find out more about being one of our corporate sponsors, please contact our Business & Communications Manager, Lisa Barnard on 013398 87777 or email lisa@outdooraccesstrustforscotland.org.uk

A huge thankyou to all who support our work



LOWLAND PATHS - a brief update

Speyside Way

In the Spring of 2017, the Speyside Way upgrade work was completed with the new Auchernack Bridge being installed. At 12m span and 2m width, this new bridge replaces the previous bridge which was too narrow - particularly for cyclists who frequently saw themselves hitting their handlebars off the sides!

Development work on the Speyside Way continued throughout the year for the final 2.6km link from Tromie Bridge down to Ruthven Barracks near Kingussie. Ahead of this section, a 1km track upgrade was completed in the early Summer between Inveruglass and Drumguish.

Community Paths

7 Bridges path

This popular route used to take people along a busy section of the South Deeside Road and therefore a safer off-road route had been a long-held aspiration for the local community. Missing the first opportunity for funding for community paths five years ago, a determined set of contributors ploughed ahead, contributing to the construction of the path. Thanks must therefore go to the Cairngorms National Park Authority, Improving Public Access Fund (Rural Payments), Ballater Royal Deeside, Marr Area Partnership and ourselves, who enabled construction of this much needed route to be completed over the Winter period.



The Strathdon Bridge Path

This path became another casualty of Storm Bertha in August 2014 only to be hit again by Storm Gertrude in 2016. The resulting diagnosis was rather than repairing with aggregate, only to be washed down the River Don during the next storm, to use a plastic mesh on the most vulnerable sections which in time will be intertwined with grass, hopefully allowing future flood waters to 'glide' over the path - and have a path for use once the flood waters have subsided.

We are delighted to report these repairs were completed over the Autumn and Winter 2017.



Consultancy- *This year much of our focus was around surveying potential routes.*



Dava Way

- Condition survey and recommendations for work for 35km of the DavaWay between Forres and Grantown.
- Surveying of two circular path upgrades for the Forres Woodland Trust.
- Feasibility study for the Torphins Path Group, identifying routes between Torphins/Lumphanan & Torphins/ Banchory.
- Surveying the core path network in and around Torphins, assessing for improvements.

UPLAND PATHS FOCUS

We have now reached the half way point in our five-year project, The Mountains and The People – a £6.4M programme in partnership with both of Scotland's National Parks, Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland and Heritage Lottery Fund.

The past twelve months have seen many upland paths upgraded included various well-known routes such as Cairn Liath, The Snub, Ben Vorlich, Ben Lui and The Cobbler. What follows then is a snapshot of some of the most popular routes that have been worked on this year in both of Scotland's National Parks.

Ben Dubhchraig

A popular peak in the Crianlarich region of Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park and an integral part of the Ben Lui range, Beinn Dubhchraig is often included in an ascent with neighbouring Ben Oss, offering an interesting and diverse walk.

The path is in poor condition with little or no previous path management having taken place and requires an extensive upgrade over the next two years, including a replacement bridge which has recently been built and installed on site.



Newly built Allt Gleann Bridge on Ben Dubhchraig



Corrie Chash & Broad Cairn

Situated on Balmoral Estate with access from Loch Muick, this old stalkers path leads to the munro summits of both Broad Cairn and Cairn Bannoch. A dual machine and hand build path project, the existing path was repaired during 2017/18 with stone drainage features and sensitive landscaping to reduce erosion and stabilise the existing heavily damaged path line.



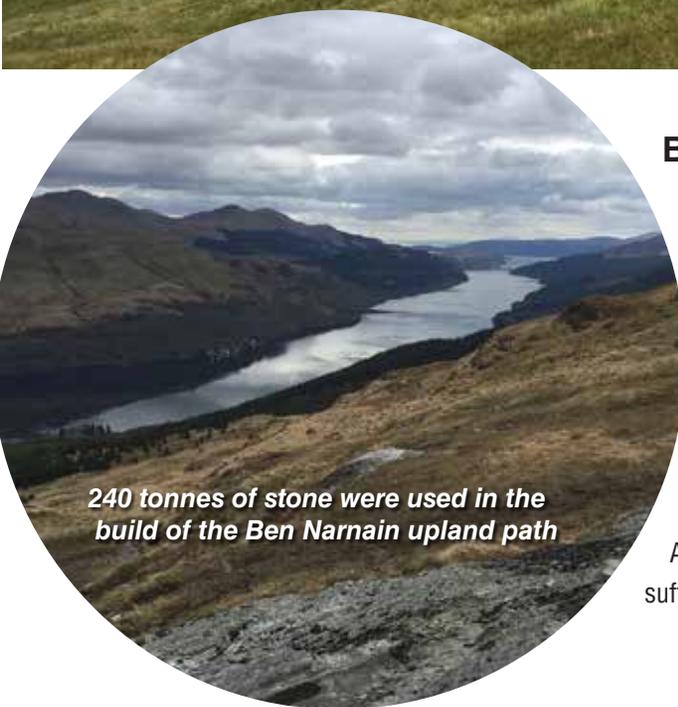
UPLAND PATHS FOCUS

Ben Ime

At 1,011m, Ben Ime is the highest peak in the Arrochar Alps which are renowned for their steep, rugged and rocky nature.

Accessed from the shore of Loch Long, Ben Ime offers a super walk with the view from its summit taking in the nearby Alps and further south along the Cowal Peninsula over moorland, hills, mountains and sea lochs.

2017/18 saw section 1 of this path completed with sections 2 & 3 to be completed during 2019/20.



240 tonnes of stone were used in the build of the Ben Narnain upland path

Ben Narnain

Rising to a height of 3038ft directly from sea level, Ben Narnain is a highly popular and challenging Munro, offering an exhilarating walking experience for even the most seasoned climber. Due to its location and accessibility, Ben Narnain is often one of the first Munros many new walkers will tackle.

Flanked by The Cobbler and A' Chrois, Ben Narnain offers a range of walks at any time of the year on its own and is an integral component of the ever popular three peaks walk. The views from the summit overlooking the Arrochar Alps are superb with the added bonus of wonderful views to the south and west looking down Loch Long and out towards the Argyle peninsula.

As a result of its popularity and sheer steepness, sections of the path route were suffering badly from drainage and erosion issues.



Beinn a'Ghlo return

This peaty wet stalker style path in Highland Perthshire is a popular route from Beinn Mhaol Bealach which, as a result of little or no previous maintenance, has slowly deteriorated over time. During 2017/18 we have completed phase I of this path repair using light touch works where the minimum amount of work necessary was used to keep walkers to a specific path line.

Phase II of the build is planned for 2019/20.

TRAINING

This year has seen another two training courses completed as part of The Mountains and The People project. We are delighted with the results with all fourteen Trainees completing their SVQ level 2 in Environmental Conservation as well as their John Muir Award 'Discover' level.

During their six-month training course, the trainees were involved in repairing paths and mountain habitats in areas such as Ben Lomond, Mar Lodge Estate, Loch Muick, Craigmore and the Arrochar Alps.

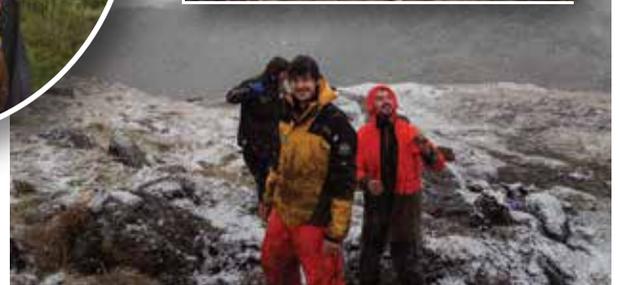
Following their extended placement earlier in the year, four trainees were offered employment with McGowan Ltd at the end of their training in November 2017 and have since been working on the construction of an upland path at Sliabh Liag cliffs.

"The quality of training OATS has delivered to its trainees in upland path construction techniques, mountain awareness, habitat management and environmental good practices is second to none. Each of the former trainees are now a valued member of the McGowan's team", praised Ross McGowan, MD McGowan Ltd.

Where are they all now? Well, we didn't appear to put any of them off working on the hills! All fourteen trainees are wishing to continue their careers in outdoor conservation with eight already having secured positions in path work and a further two as countryside rangers. Well done to all our 2017 trainees.



The new McGowan employees at the Sliabh Liag cliffs on the south west coast of Donegal





VOLUNTEERING

A huge push has been made over the last few months on Adopt a Path, our flagship volunteering initiative which is being delivered as part of The Mountains and The People project. We are delighted to report that a new dedicated website for this crucial activity has been launched and is working well at www.adoptapath.org.uk

Adopt a Path allows those passionate about Scotland's mountains to become custodians of some of our most iconic hill paths, helping to conserve fragile upland landscapes by inspecting and reporting on erosion damage and potential path issues, enabling maintenance tasks to be targeted to best effect.

This year we have delivered five training sessions for both new and existing 'adopters' in both of Scotland's National Parks, teaching them how to undertake meaningful surveys - safely.



Huge thanks go to all our 'adopters' who between them have adopted 35 paths and conducted 28 surveys to date. Well done!

Education

During the year we led two practical sessions for students from Balfroun High School and McLaren High School in Callandar as part of the LLTNPA Junior Ranger Programme.

Health Walks

This year we ran six very successful Next Step Health Walks in partnership with Ramblers Scotland.

Events

30 events were organised where we spoke to over 1700 people, raising awareness of the plight of our upland paths



Still smiling on a very wet Ben Venue



Volunteers on Jocks Road in taking a well earned rest



Building a new footbridge on Glenlivet Estate

RE-INVENTING THE WHEEL....

The outdoor access industry is changing. The public purse is no longer able to provide the level of funding we have seen in previous years. But nothing else has changed - the conservation of our upland and lowland paths and surrounding habitats still needs to carry on, even more so now with a huge increase in visitors to our shores.

Innovative solutions are therefore required to ensure the funding for sustainable public access is secured, enabling the conservation and protection of our natural heritage throughout Scotland to be maintained. Here at OATS, we've made a start....

Unique partnership on Skye



Just before the end of this year, we were delighted to announce a unique partnership with the Minginish Community Hall Association (MCHA) on the Isle of Skye.

Following years of serious congestion on Skye, especially around some of its visitor 'hot spots', an unprecedented collaboration between two charities – OATS and MCHA – was reached, enabling the start of essential car parking facilities at the hugely popular Fairy Pools site on the island. With over 130 car parking spaces planned along with much needed toilet facilities and visitor information all on site, the news has been extremely well received by all.

The unique partnership means that MCHA will acquire the site via community asset transfer from the Forestry Commission Scotland and will lease the site to OATS to build, manage and maintain the car park.

Car parking charges will be applied which will be donated to OATS, enabling further conservation projects to take place both on Skye and other areas in Scotland. Is this Social Enterprise way of working the way forward? Dougie Baird, OATS CEO firmly believes so saying, "Not only will local employment be boosted through the creation of new jobs, the income from the car parking will be re-invested into access projects to protect our unique and precious environment here in Scotland."



Thank You To All Who Support Our Work:

OATS 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 wide range of public bodies, NGOs, private companies and private individuals.

Balmoral Estate not only supports us with a donation but the arrangement with Balmoral Estate for Spittal Of Glenmuick Car Park is of the highest importance to OATS, providing income that we can use to leverage grants for projects.

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