
CAIRNGORMS OUTDOORS ACCESS TRUST

Trust Managers Report – May 2009

1. Overview

The final quarter of the 2008-9 year saw intensive construction work carried out on all infrastructure projects. This was always going to be the case for COATs first, and one year, business plan, with planning and fundraising going on for the projects through the summer and autumn. The next business should be more phased, as it is over 2 years and the bulk of the fundraising has been done in advance.

The Walking to health project work was ongoing in Donside and Deeside, with plans laid to carry the project forward across the whole area.

A considerable amount of time was spent on external grant application with mixed fortunes. The joint upland path maintenance development work came to fruition, with tenders issued and contract allocated. Tendering work has also been carried out on the Health Walks Co-ordinator contract and the Health Walks Evaluation project. Lowland maintenance was carried out across the Deeside area. The current phase of upland path project came to fruition with a workshop held in April.

2. Path Networks Around Communities

Kingussie Bridge

The Bridge is now finished and signed off by the consultant engineer, though final paperwork has yet to arrive. The secondary contract on constructing the path over-ran somewhat, and at the time of writing still had some outstanding work to be completed. A media day has been set up to announce the completion of the project and it will be finished for this. A people counter has been ordered and will be installed as soon as it arrives.

Strathdon

The path is now completed, and an opening day is being organised with the school to promote use of it.

Wallace Stone have completed preliminary design for the Strathdon bridge and this will be taken forward for fundraising and planning consent through the next business plan.

Tarland

The all-abilities path has now been built and we hope to have a media day to promote it later on in May.

Lowland Path Maintenance

Maintenance and repair works were carried out across the Deeside area.

3. Mountain paths and strategic routes

Upland Path Project

The upland path surveys were completed in early April, and a workshop held to present the findings to stakeholders. Recommendations will be built into final draft, and the project taken forward, with match funding to be secured and external grant funding bids to be launched with Heritage Lottery Fund, ESEP Ltd and HIPP.

Upland Path Maintenance

A single contract was let for upland path maintenance covering the upland paths that UDAT had assimilated maintenance responsibility for. Upland Access Ltd carried out the work to a good standard.

Discussion with HIE and NTS on joint maintenance came to fruition with NTS committing £20k for Mar Lodge Estate, HIE £15,000 for Cairngorm Estate, and COAT £17,000 for Deeside. Tenders were issued to suitably experienced contractors, and the contract has been issued to Upland Access Ltd, with work due to start on Balmoral in mid-May. The team will move onto MLE in mid June and aim to be on Cairngorm Estate by mid-July.

Strategic Routes

The section of aggregate path between Potarch and Kincardine O'Neill has been completed and Aberdeenshire Council will manage the civil engineering components themselves..

4. Associated visitor infrastructure

Signposting

The project regarding standards in signposting is being developed in partnership with CNPA and will now be taken forward in the next Business Plan.

Interpretive Boards

Work on the replacing the Braemar interpretive board has been put on hold, pending work in partnership with CNPA on design standards.

Car Parking

Issues of bagged dog-mess have been brought to the fore this year. Murray and Glyn are investigating possible solutions to be trialled.

5. Promotion, marketing and development of business opportunities to generate sustainable economic benefits

All-Abilities Leaflets

The all-abilities leaflet is being worked up as an exemplar model for leaflet design within the National Park Authority. The contract has been let and is underway.

Web Design

The website has stalled, with a new design being worked up in the background. In the OS licensing constraints mean it will not be possible to publish OS maps on the web, and all such maps have been removed.

6. Health and wellbeing

The Walking to Health project continues to grow and plans have been developed to expand the range of walks to cover a wider geographic area, and also to target health specific groups such as blood pressure, diabetes, smoking cessation etc.

Tenders were drawn up and issued, one for co-ordination of the health walks programme and one to evaluate provision of health walks throughout the area. The latter should provide a template to plan and deliver a comprehensive and targeted suite of health walks across the entire area beyond 2011. The 2007/8 Upper Deeside project.

7. Development of COAT 2009-11 Business Plan

Cairngorms and Rural Aberdeenshire Community Network Project

LEADER grant has been offered from Cairngorm and Rural Aberdeenshire Local Action Groups. Unfortunately COATs CCF bid was declined, as:

- the committee would rather see projects come from individual community groups
- they did not value the linkages between increased walking, reduced driving and subsequent health and carbon benefits
- they thought other funds were available for health benefits
- they thought other funds were available for Access projects

Whilst disappointed, COAT has reconfigured the costs and income to provide a reduced project. This has been re-presented to LEADER, and a decision is expected imminently as to whether they are content to progress with the same level of finance committed, but intervention rate raising from 28% to 37%.

Upland Paths

The upland paths list will be adjusted and taken forward to match funders, HIPP and ESEP for ERDF funding as well as to HLF.

Dougie Baird - May 2009