

Volunteers Ready...!!!

The Cairngorms Walking to Health Project has just completed a major volunteer training initiative to deliver a suite of Health walks in the Cairngorms.

Volunteers from Badenoch and Strathspey have been finding out how to lead Health Walks. The course included training on how to set up and lead walks, as well as basic First Aid training, an important part of walk leadership. The courses took place recently; the First Aid in the Badaguish Centre in December and the Volunteer Walk Leader Course took place last Sat 16th January in Nethy Bridge Church Hall. 11 successful participants are now looking forward to leading walks in local communities in Badenoch and Strathspey. Alan Melrose, Health walks co-ordinator who delivered the training said, *“The tracks and trails in the Cairngorms National Park are ideal for local Health walk groups to deliver the undoubted health benefits of regular exercise. The volunteers are now trained and looking forward to leading the walks.”*

Volunteer Isabell Sanderson said, *“It was an excellent day and a real confidence booster.”*

Participants can be seen here practising their First Aid skills, training to become a walk leader and receiving their Certificates.





If you are interested in finding out more about the Cairngorms Walking to Health Project, attending a walk or becoming a volunteer please contact Mandy Way, Health Walk Coordinator mandy@cairngormsoutdooraccess.org.uk or phone the COAT office on 01339887777

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Notes to Editor

1. Cairngorms Outdoors Access Trust is a company limited by guarantee, Company No. SC186301 and is a recognised Scottish charity SC028028.

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2. The Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust is an innovative environmental charity created to promote sustainable access to the Cairngorms area. The company has five main strands of activity, and these can be divided into:

- **Community Path Networks** - Upgrading existing and developing new paths in, around and between communities. The objective of this work is to develop more and higher quality access opportunities for locals and visitors alike
- **Upland Paths** - Repairing eroded paths in the mountains to so that access can be sustained without damaging the landscape and environment.
- **Walking To Health** - Development of a suite of structured health walks.
- **Strategic Routes** - Work on delivery of strategic long distance routes.
- **Promotion and Interpretation** - Provision of information about Outdoors Access through leaflets, interpretive boards and signposting

3. COAT was formed out of the Upper Deeside Access Trust, with an expanded role to cover the Cairngorms National Park and surrounding area in April 2008. Key funders are Cairngorms National Park Authority, Scottish Natural Heritage and Aberdeenshire Council. Grants have been raised from a number of bodies to deliver specific projects including Climate Challenge Fund, Cairngorm Local Action Group (LEADER), Rural Aberdeenshire Local Action Group (LEADER), Paths to Health and Highland Council.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE CAIRNGORMS WALKING TO HEALTH PROJECT

Project Aims

The aim of the health walk project is to promote and encourage physical activity in a safe, social way, and get people walking more as a step to increasing their activity levels. A health walk is a short, safe, local, led walk targeted at people who would benefit from increasing their physical activity. The weekly walks last 30-60 minutes and are led by trained volunteers from the local community. Walks are adapted to suit the pace of the walkers, and are followed by a drink and chat in a local café.

Participants

Generic health walk groups are open to anyone who would benefit from coming on a short local walk with other people. They meet weekly at the same time and place so you can just turn up.

Health specific walks are targeted at people with specific health issues and the project has worked with Alzheimer Scotland and CLAN Cancer group to provide walks for people with these illnesses and their carers. We are starting a weekly walk in Aviemore in conjunction with Healthy Minds Group to promote positive mental health. We are also planning to start walks for weight management and smoking cessation groups.

Volunteers

Volunteers are the cornerstone of the project as they lead the walks and encourage a welcoming, safe and supportive environment for the walkers. Walk Leaders attend an initial Walk Leader Training day and then receive ongoing training and support including a first aid course and walk leader walk meetings.

New volunteers are required for Grantown, Carrbridge, Kingussie, Newtonmore, Laggan.

Quotes

Benefits of joining a Walking To Health group according to participants:

“I find I am getting to know people better because we talk such a lot while we walk and there are lots of laughs”

“It is great to enjoy the fresh air and exercise in such good company. I enjoy the chance to socialise further over our cup of tea.”

“In comparison to how I felt before my operation – when I was quite breathless and easily tired – I feel quite fit and cheerful”.

“I was virtually housebound because I lived in a hilly part of Aberdeen and could not walk too far. I tired easily. I can now walk further, faster and gentle inclines don't bother me at all. I am less easily tired.”

“I was lazy; couldn't be bothered doing anything. I suffered extreme back pain – had to retire early because of it. I had no energy and was overweight. I can now walk uphill effortlessly- when I joined the Walking To Health group I dreaded if a route took us up a slope. Now I walk to the village every day.”

“Now I walk or cycle to the village every day. I can easily manage walking uphill. I have high blood pressure but am on less medication than before.”

