

# **Upland Path Advisory Group – background information for site visit July 2013**

## **THE VISIT**

As well as visiting the Remote Accommodation System, we will be able to visit 3 sites: Lower Sinclair Line, Upper Sinclair Line and Sron na Lairige and have the opportunity to discuss the work. We will also be joined by the Cairngorms Adopt a Path Scheme coordinator and have a discussion on how volunteers help with monitoring and maintaining the upland paths.

## **THE CABINS**

The cabins are small and whilst you will be able to look in them, we will not all be able to get in them at the same time, or spend time in them. They are designed for 4 people and are the living quarters for the contractors so we need to be considerate of their privacy.

## **PEOPLE**

Lizzie Cooper is the Project Coordinator for the Cairngorms Mountain Heritage Project and The Path Skills Training Project.

Gordon Paxton-White is the Path Contract supervisor for the CMHP and oversees the capital contracts run under the CMHP.

Chris York, Walking the Talk, is the Cairngorms Adopt-a-path Scheme co-ordinator.

## **CAIRNGORMS MOUNTAIN HERITAGE PROJECT (CMHP)**

A 4 year £2.1 million project to repair upland mountain paths across the west Cairngorms National Park.

Project overview:

- Deliver a prioritised programme of upland capital path works.
- Develop and implement a maintenance regime for sustainable access for future generations.
- Develop and implement the Cairngorms Adopt-a-Path Scheme.
- Develop participation and learning schemes to engage local communities.
- Deliver a path skills training course & create employment opportunities.

### **CMHP AREA**

Path works are concentrated on 16 paths over 6 estates in the West of the National Park:

- Rothiemurchus Estate
- Glenmore Forrest
- Abernethy Estate
- Cairngorm Estate
- Glenfeshie Estate
- Mar Lodge Estate



### **THE PATHS**

UL1 Lairig Ghru

UL3 Chalamain Gap

UL4 Braeriach (Site visit location)

UL5 Lairig an Laoigh

UL6 Bynack More

UL7 Strathnethy

UL8 Beinn Meadhion

UL9 Coire Raibert

UL10 Cairngorm Plateau

UL11 Ben Macdui

UL12 North Corries Rim

UL23 Glen Feshie

UL24 Carn ban Mor

UL25 Windy Ridge

UL26 Coire an Tsneachda

UL27 Fiacail a Coire Cas

### **PROGRESS**

(As at 31/12/12)

- 45 Planned Contracts
- 27 Completed Contracts
- 60% of capital works completed
- 24.5km of capital works completed
- 4 paths completely finished

### **FUNDERS**

The Cairngorms Mountain Heritage Project is funded by the following organisations:

- The Heritage Lottery Fund
- European Regional Development Fund
- Cairngorms National Park Authority
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- Highlands & Islands Enterprise
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
- Scottish Mountaineering Trust
- Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust

## **UL4 BRAERIACH**

Braeriach is the third highest mountain in Britain at 1296m and is the highest point in the western massif of the Cairngorms, separated from the central section (containing Ben Macdui and Cairn Gorm) by the pass of the Lairig Ghru. The summit has a crescent shape, with several corries.



### **SINCLAIR LINE – SITES 1&2**

- An attempt to realign the approach path to Sron na Lairige in the mid 2000s' has failed due to poor construction/design and imported materials.
- Following surveys and consultancy of the condition of the path it was decided to be better value to realign approach than rebuild existing path.
- Remove this path and construct path on original desire line known as the Sinclair line.
- Creates an attractive 'line of sight' for walkers either descending Sron na Lairige or approaching from Chalamain or Rothiemurchus directions.
- Helps to reduce and contain the present erosion on the original Sinclair line by utilizing the materials within this damaged area and recycling them to construct path and features .

### **SRON NA LAIRIGE – SITE 3**

- Heavily used path from the Lairig Ghru up to the summit of Braeriach and onto the plateau.
- Lower section built circa 2000, ends after approximately 100m from saddle.
- Huge scar created by water runoff and heavy use by walkers.
- High build on lower approach to Sron na Lairige required to manage and contain erosion issue (650m).
- Light touch solution required higher up to define desire line and reduce damage spread.
- RAS system deployment to assist with the construction of path and accommodate workers. (Due to the long walk in/out per day plus a full days work, local accommodation is cost effective).

## **REMOTE ACCOMMODATION SYSTEM (RAS)**

The Remote Accommodation System (RAS) was developed to support workers engaged on path contracts far into the mountains, with in excess of a 1½ hour walk in. The RAS was initially deployed at Shelter Stone in 2013, is currently in operation on Braeriach, and will be deployed in the Loch A'an basin in the summer of 2014.

### **RATIONALE**

We use the RAS for the following reasons:

- **Maximise time on site** - Locating the RAS in the desired location allows contractors to maximise time spent onsite and make the best possible use of the weather window at this altitude.
- **Increase Productivity** - Walk in time at this level could account for up to 40% of the total contract cost.
- **Worker welfare** - A long daily walk into and out from a worksite on rough and steep terrain can contribute to damage of knee and ankle joints of path workers, the extent of which may be difficult to ascertain until the damage is irreversible.
- **Emergency Shelter** - In such geographically remote locations with little or no mobile phone coverage the units provide an essential emergency shelter keeping the casualty safe and secure until evacuation can be implemented.

### **THE ACCOMMODATION UNITS**

The system is designed for a team of 4 and there are 4 units:

- Kitchen/Dining
- Bunkhouse
- WC with composting toilet
- Tool store/drying room

The fully welded units are fully waterproof no matter what the weather and are all fitted with midge screens, making life more comfortable for the contractors. It was impossible to get the larger units under 1 tonne (airlifting capacity) so these units were deployed in two sections and assembled on site.

### **POWERING THE RAS**

The power system for the RAS consists of:

- Two 15 KVA generators
- An inverter system with 2 battery banks.
- A controller unit to manage planned start times and usage-prescribed generator start-up.
- Three fuel tanks.

The generators are programmed to start up only when the batteries drop beneath 40%, whereby they provide both peak energy and recharge the batteries at the same time. Our power system is low fuel dependent, to reduce carbon emissions and the need to fly in and store excessive fuel. The use of two generators reduces wear and tear, and provides back up should one fail to prevent the need for recovery of a damaged unit by helicopter.

### **WASTE MANAGEMENT**

There are three types of waste produced: general refuse, recyclables and human waste from the composting toilet. All waste is sorted and stored in water and vermin proof containers and removed at the end of the contract when it is disposed of.

### **DEPLOYMENT, MAINTENANCE, STORAGE**

The RAS withstands very heavy use in a challenging environment. Assembling the system, keeping it working on site, recovering, repairing, cleaning and storage are vital to operating the system. Building on expertise developed in-house during the Sustainable Tourism at Mar Lodge Estate Project 2002-7, COAT and NTS were able to develop and service an operational RAS to the highest environmental standards for the Cairngorms Mountain Heritage Project.

## **CAIRNGORMS ADOPT A PATH SCHEME (CAPS)**

As well as the Capital works being carried out under the CMHP COAT is also undertaking a maintenance programme of works both for the completed CMHP paths and others across the Cairngorm National Park.

To allow COAT to prioritise maintenance requirements we require the following:

- Regular path inspections
- Consistent survey information

There are limited resources available to carry out this work, leading to the development of the Cairngorms Adopt-A-Path Scheme, which allows volunteers to play a vital role in managing and maintaining mountain paths.

Groups (e.g. hill walking clubs) or individuals are encouraged to adopt one of the 60 paths available and commit to surveying it once a year. Volunteers receive full training and support, they learn how to:

- Undertake path condition surveys
- Record the information
- Undertake minor maintenance

COAT uses the information provided by the volunteers to focus resources and the maintenance budget to where it is most needed.

### **PROGRESS**

The scheme is in its early days but already we have:

- 17 trained volunteers.
- 20 adopted paths representing 120km.
- 60% of priority 1 paths, 33% of priority 2 paths, 20% of priority 3 paths.
- 7 survey reports returned representing 38km.
- Use of the returned survey information to direct maintenance
- Review session with volunteers
- CAPS workshop with land managers to report on and develop the scheme.





Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust  
Dell Bothy  
Dell or Rothiemurchus  
Aviemore, PH22 1QH  
Tel: (01479) 810766

[www.cairngormsoutdooraccess.org.uk](http://www.cairngormsoutdooraccess.org.uk)  
or find us on facebook