

# National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 15

## The Mountains & The People Project – Mid-term update



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### *Paper for noting*

#### 1. Purpose

1.1 To note the mid-term review of The Mountains & The People (TMTP) project.

#### 2. Recommendation

2.1 Board are asked to:

- a) Note the outputs of The Mountains & The People project to date:
- b) Note that the Park Authority will be:
  - i. Supporting the concluding stages of the project
  - ii. Developing a plan to deliver the post project legacy requirements of path maintenance and volunteer engagement

#### 3. Contribution to National Park Partnership Plan and Our 5-year Plan

National Park Partnership Plan:

Outcome 2: Landscape Qualities  
Outcome 5: Recreation Opportunities  
Outcome 8: Visitor Management  
Outcome 9: Health & Learning  
Outcome 12: Sustainable Population  
Outcome 13: Community Empowerment

Our 5-Year plan:

Priority 2: Visitor Infrastructure  
Priority 4: Attractive, Accessible and Healthy Destinations

#### 4. Introduction

4.1 [The Mountains and The People](#) is unique five year landscape scale project. It is the flagship project of the Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and in partnership with Scotland's two National Park Authorities, Cairngorms and Loch Lomond & the Trossachs, Forestry Commission Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage.

4.2 The project vision is to involve the people of Scotland, and beyond, in the enhancement and protection of the wild and special qualities of the mountains within Scotland's National Parks. The work has included significant upgrades to key mountain paths and engaged many people through training, volunteering and educational programmes. This paper summarises project metrics and achievements

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to date and outlines how we will develop a strategy to safeguard the legacy of the project for future generations.

### 5. Background & Delivery

5.1 TMTP (2015-20) has two fundamental aims:

- a) To support recreation and conserve the special qualities of the National Parks' mountains
- b) Involve the people of Scotland in the enhancement with training; education; volunteering and visitor participation.

5.2 It has the following objectives:

To RESPECT the natural heritage of our mountain landscapes through;

- Public engagement through Ranger led events, film production and interpretation;
- Awareness raising through sporting events and media activities;
- Next Step guided walks introducing people to the benefits of accessing our mountains;

To RESKILL the conservation workforce of tomorrow by:

- Delivering 36 Environmental Conservation SVQ training opportunities;
- Supporting roll out of the Rural Skills Apprenticeships;
- Producing educational resources and providing teacher training;

To REPAIR damage to our nation's fragile upland landscapes through;

- Capital investment in 125km of path repair and maintenance;
- 1200 days of Conservation volunteering opportunities for people of all abilities;
- Delivering an 'Adopt-A-Path', path maintenance, monitoring and reporting.

The project is a multi-partner project including: Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland, Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Forestry Commission Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage.

### 6. Success Measures

6.1 The key measure is delivery of outputs agreed with HLF for Lomond & The Trossachs National Park, these are:

- a) 44 km of mountain paths upgraded
- b) 23 mountain paths monitored and 'adopted' by volunteers
- c) 600 days of volunteering
- d) 50 conservation work parties

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### 7. Finance

- 7.1 The project is funded by a variety of sources, including a HLF grant, financial contributions from partners, other third party grants and trust funds, along with substantial in-kind contributions from a range of sources, including COAT Volunteers and the partners. Staff from both National Park Authorities are involved in helping to deliver outputs and along with Forestry Commission Scotland and Cairngorms NPA; we have a ten year commitment to ensure maintenance of paths post project.

The total project value = £6,168,383

Financial contributions

<b>Partner</b>	<b>5 Yr. contribution</b>
Heritage Lottery Fund	£3,260,000
Loch Lomond & The Trossachs NPA	£525,000
Cairngorms NPA	£275,000
Scottish Natural Heritage	£200,000
Forestry Commission Scotland	£525,000
Scottish Mountaineering Trust	£25,000
Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland	£348,000
Charitable Trusts	£152,000
Private Sector / Donations	£11,795

The Park Authority makes a capital contribution of £105,000 per year towards the delivery of the project.

- 7.2 The project budget is so far largely on track. Projected management costs incurred by OATS have to date exceeded expectations, largely due to under estimating the amount of input required on planning, communications, partnership engagement and site management. Additional time is also required from OATS to complete the charitable trust and corporate fundraising requirements. Contingency is budgeted for and available, and a request can be placed with HLF to cover such costs.

### 8. Policy & Strategic Context

- 8.1 The project delivers against five outcomes of the current National Park Partnership Plan 2018–2023, through enhancing, protecting and conserving the mountain environment, supporting and promoting recreation, and providing volunteering, training and employment opportunities:

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Outcome 1: Natural Capital  
Outcome 2: Landscape Qualities  
Outcome 5: Recreation Opportunities  
Outcome 9: Health & Learning  
Outcome 11: Sustainable Growth

8.2 Additionally the project helps deliver against 2 priorities within Our 5-Year Plan:

Priority 2: Visitor Infrastructure  
Priority 4: Attractive, Accessible and Healthy Destinations

### 9. Monitoring Data

9.1 Monitoring data indicates the Park's mountain paths sustain a sizable number of users each year. The mean values derived from three years' of people counter data are;

The Cobbler c.42,000/yr.  
Ben Lomond c.40,000/yr.  
Ben A'an c.45,000/yr.

9.2 Additionally figures from the last 9 months of people counter data from Conic Hill show c.55,000 ascents.

9.3 Annual weather variation has a clear effect on visitor numbers, however monitoring over the past five year period indicates a general trend of increasing numbers of hillwalkers in the range of 2-5%/yr. at monitored sites.

### 10. Mountain Paths & Infrastructure

10.1 To date, the project has completed nine sections of path in the National Park including; Ben A'an, Ben Lomond, Ben Narnain, Ben Ledi (main path) and two phases on the Cobbler. The work has provided a cumulative total of 28km of new-built path.

10.2 Work is still required on 11 sections of path to complete the capital programme, these sections are either being prepared, awaiting planning permission, or partially complete. Once complete, the capital programme will provide 44km of new mountain path in the Park. No significant risks to completion have been identified at this stage.

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- 10.3 The project has also installed three bridges. Two bridges (Ben A'an and Ben Lomond) are located on FCS owned land. The third bridge is located on privately owned land, crossing the Allt Gleann Auchreoch on the approach to Beinn Dubhchraig.
- a) To date, the capital programme has encountered three problematic sections of path in the Park:
- i. Beinglas – due to the scarcity of suitable local construction material, improving this route will be a challenge. OATS are examining options.
  - ii. The Cobbler – the landowner (FCS) regard the route as a mountain path which must be maintained to a suitable standard for hill access. Scottish Water has a right of motorised access to the nearby hydro dam and any damage to the forest road or hill path due to motorised access will need to be repaired.
  - iii. Ben Ledi (Stank Glen) – the route is a popular mountain bike descent and due to topography, path braiding and drainage issues, improving and consolidating the route will be challenging. OATS are currently assessing alignment options.

## 11. Training

- 11.1 The project has trained 24 people in path construction techniques also providing a Level 2 Scottish Vocational Qualification in Environmental Conservation. A number of trainees are now working in the path building industry, with others progressing on to other related work-areas or further education.

## 12. Volunteering

- 12.1 There are two elements to this work; conservation volunteering and the Adopt-a-Path initiative. To date, 71 individual work parties have been delivered in the National Park, providing 562 volunteering days (3374 hours) on path improvement and maintenance.
- 12.2 The Adopt-a-Path scheme has 14 volunteers taking care of light maintenance and reporting on 13 individual paths in the NPA. A further nine paths (including Ben Vorlich – Sloy, Beinn Dubhchraig, Ben Vane, Ben Venue and Balquhidder) will be available for adoption once capital works are complete.

## 13. Education

- 13.1 The project has supported the National Park Junior Ranger programmes with practical pathwork conservation tasks annually, with two schools engaged in 2017

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and three in 2018. Dates are currently being secured for the 2019 Junior Ranger Programme. As part of the development of the Education Resources and Case studies for schools to learn about the project, the Activity Project Officer held workshops with Geography teachers at the annual Scottish Association of Geography Teachers conference to promote the project and the Park Authority resources and support that is available. This allowed informal feedback, new contacts and feedback on the resource pack. The Park Authority will support and promote the new education resource as well as planned teacher CPD training in 2019.

### 14. Key Progress to date and Next Steps

- a) So far TMTP project has delivered positive and progressive outcomes for both Scottish National Parks, including well-built mountain paths, skills and training which have led to qualifications and employment, and a range of volunteering opportunities.

The 28km of built-path has been recognised for its quality by the outdoor community, and the Park Authority has received many positive comments about the improvements, removing participation barriers and contributing to a national legacy of conservation and recreation in the mountain environment.

- b) To ensure the post-2020 TMTP legacy is safe-guarded for future generations, Section 6 of the HLF Stage 2 application details maintenance responsibilities for the paths and interpretative boards resides with OATS, with costs being satisfied through revenue streams created within OATS, both National Park Authorities and partners. There is a shared understanding that Park Authority partners will continue to support the volunteer programmes.
- c) Elsewhere in the UK, different models have developed for sustainable long-term path maintenance, ranging from charitable trusts, local authority support, and volunteer networks. One example is the 'Fix the Fells' initiative in the Lake District National Park, where maintenance and capital repairs are delivered through a matrix of financial support, volunteering including training (path work, mountain skills, first-aid etc.), maintenance walks, supervised 'work parties', corporate endorsement and using Park Rangers. The project has rolling programme of recruitment and around 130 volunteers, providing over 2,200 days in 2017.
- d) Work is currently being undertaken by Park Authority staff to develop and deliver a sustainable legacy and maintenance programme which places realistic responsibilities upon the Park Authority and all partners when the capital phase finishes in 2020. It is likely that a mixed approach to maintenance will be developed which maximises the legacy benefits of the established volunteer and training programmes, along with

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specialist contractors. There are opportunities to develop the legacy further to offer new maintenance, management and funding opportunities across the wider path network with programme opportunities around long distance routes, lowland paths, 'Green Job' creation and integrated health initiatives.

### 15. Conclusion

- 15.1 Board are asked to note the above information and support the concluding stages of the project, including the legacy planning. The Project is on course to deliver the intended length of path work on the targeted priority upland routes. The volunteer and training elements of the project have surpassed original expectations and offer potential legacy opportunities which can spread to other projects and initiatives in the Park.

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