

Delivering Upland Path Maintenance in the Cairngorms

Organisation Name

National Trust for Scotland, Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust, Highlands and Islands Enterprise



Infrastructure Location

Cairngorms National Park

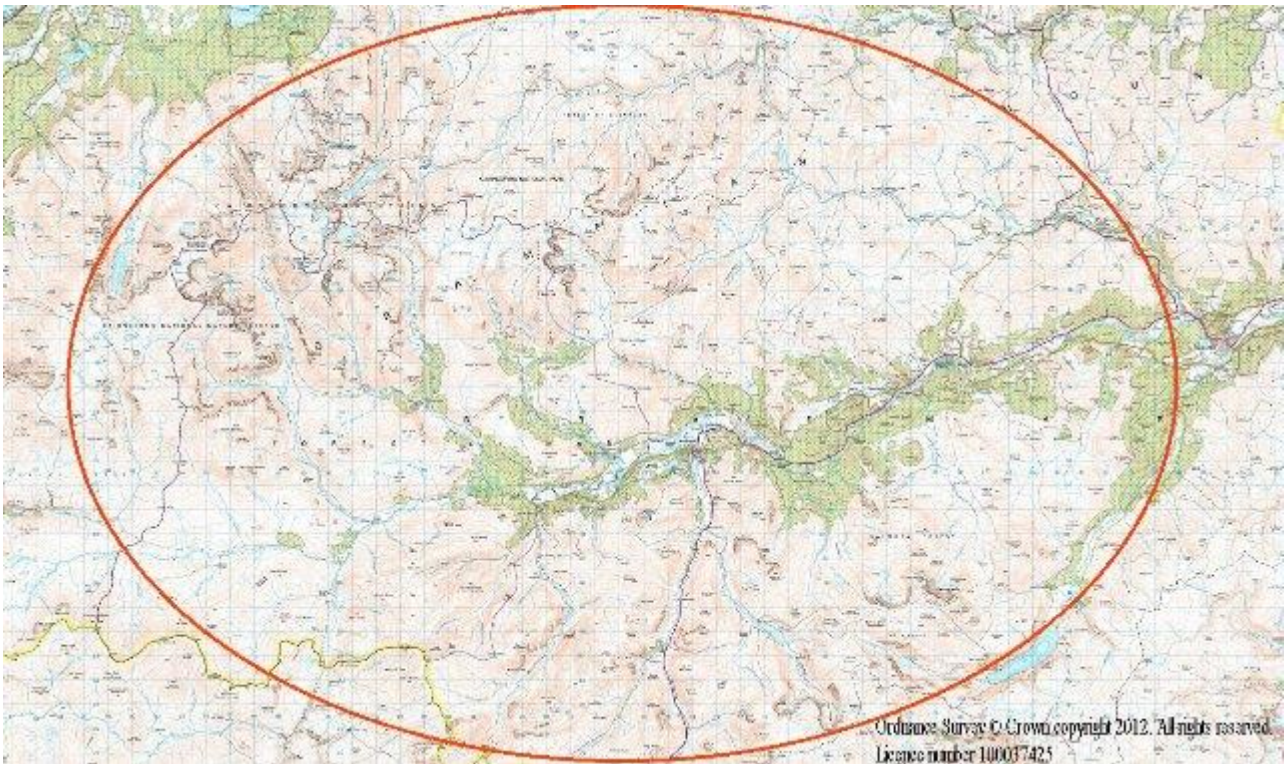
Date of Completion

01-Dec-2012

Context

The benefits of partnership working

The National Trust for Scotland, the Upper Deeside Access Trust (now the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust) and Highlands and Islands Enterprise have been very successful in generating funding for, and carrying out upland path improvements works, over the last 10 - 15 years. The path work on the Mar Lodge Estate, the Upper Deeside mountain path network and the Cairngorm Estate has involved programmes of capital works of varying magnitude, including £1.3 million of path work carried out by the National Trust for Scotland.



Path maintenance was fragmented with different techniques in terms of the physical work, and how contracts were tendered and managed. A combination of contractors, a seasonal path maintenance post, seasonal rangers and volunteers were used across the area.

Each of the three organisations had liabilities in terms of path maintenance and needed an effective way of meeting them. As such, it was decided to set up a partnership working arrangement that had the following objectives:

- To implement common standards of work across the Cairngorms;
- To remove duplication of effort in terms of the tendering and managing of contracts;
- To pool resources and hence improve the economies of scale.

Technical Aspects

How the system works

The partnership working arrangement was first established in 2009/10 and all organisations were enthusiastic about the proposal of jointly delivering upland path maintenance.

The three organisations continue to meet at the beginning and end of each maintenance season to discuss and agree their priorities for the year. Each path has been audited, and their resulting management documents determine the work that is required. Some of the paths, particularly those on the Mar Lodge Estate, have had fairly elaborate management documents produced, which have helped to inform the decision making process.

Each path, included within the partnership working arrangement, has been allocated an agreed number of 'man days' (one day's work by one person) annually for maintenance purposes, and therefore an estimated cost is allocated to each path. There is no service level agreement between the organisations. Once the annual work has been agreed, the contract is let on a day works basis. In effect, a daily rate is agreed at the procurement stage and this is applied to all the paths across the area. A good quality and trusted contractor is the key to making this system work efficiently.



Outcomes

Some 145km of path are maintained annually across the Cairngorms National Park area.



Financing

Funding for the path maintenance work comes from the three organisations:

- Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust – funds the work from income received from car parking at Spittal of Glenmuick, sale of leaflets and consultancy work;
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise – funds the work from their revenue budget;
- The National Trust for Scotland – funds the work through an endowment.

The budget for the work is £52,000 which maintains 145km of path.

Evaluation

- All of the organisations are pleased with the arrangement and all core objectives have been met;
- Good partnership working is essential for the maintenance works to succeed. Members of staff involved from the three organisations meet at least once per year to discuss and agree the work priorities. This partnership working has provided much added value, leading to other joint working partnerships and similar contract arrangements;
- A good quality and trusted contractor is essential for this type of contract. They need to have remote systems of working as some of the paths are very inaccessible;
- The area is expansive, but the advantage of this is that it gives flexibility for the work as low level and high level paths can be balanced;
- The area will shortly be extended to include Glen Feshie and has the potential to be expanded in the future.

Contact Details

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