

P18: Culag and Little Assynt Paths



Project Overview:

Culag Community Woodland Trust Ltd (CCWT) owns and manages on behalf of the community two areas of land in Assynt for amenity use:

- Culag Woods – a 40 hectare mixed woodland in Lochinver, and;
- Little Assynt – a 1,200 hectare estate approximately 5 miles east of Lochinver.

Both contain a variety of paths which have been worked on at various points since CCWT was established in 1995. Technical upgrades and repairs were required on short sections of several paths to improve old pitching, replace wooden steps and improve drainage to reduce the impact of future adverse weather and keep future maintenance liabilities and costs to a minimum.

The path improvements at both Culag Woods and Little Assynt aim to improve the experience of path users giving better access to people of “more abilities”. The additional features create easier access to both areas enabling the woodlands to be enjoyed by more people. More access means more people become connected to these places which in turn can lead to more volunteers to help look after the woodlands. An increased awareness of the local environment can help foster individual and collective responsibility for the natural environment.

Project lead organisation and other organisations involved: Culag Community Woodland Trust

Project Location: Culag Woods and Little Assynt Estate, Lochinver

Project dates: May2019 – February 2021

Project Outputs

Measure	Target	Delivered	Notes
New stone pitching steps on the School Path	12 metres	12 metres	See Annex 1
New stone pitching steps on Billy’s Path	10 metres	10 metres	See Annex 1
Re-profiled path to reduce the gradient	3 metres	3 metres	See Annex 1
New timber/recycled plastic steps on Billy’s Path	10 metres	10 metres	Stone steps installed. See Annex 1

Measure	Target	Delivered	Notes
New drainage ditches on Loch an-t Sabhail Path and Leitir Easaidh Path	20 metres	20 metres	20m completed
New stone steps on Ken's Path & Loch an-t Sabhail Path	15	7	Only 7 steps required with 5 Loch an t-Sabhail path, 2 Ken's path
Resurfacing on Loch an-t Sabhail Path	100 metres	5 metres	Loch an t-Sabhail path
New water bars on Ken's Path & Loch an-t Sabhail Path	10	9	6 water bars and 3 cross drains as needed
Volunteer Days	8	2.7	
Compost toilets at Little Assynt recommissioned	2	2	

Scheme Outputs

How has the project contributed to the CALLP Scheme Outcomes:

	1. The key features of the Coigach and Assynt Landscape will better understood and restored with a fit for purpose system in place to ensure the benefits are sustained.
	2. Where appropriate the connectivity and diversity of selected habitats will be mapped.
	3. Increased awareness and understanding amongst all individuals and groups of what makes Coigach and Assynt special and the threats to the unique heritage.
	4. Important elements of the built, cultural and natural heritage will be recorded, improved, made publicly accessible and celebrated by the local community.
	5. People will have gained new skills in researching, restoring and understanding their heritage.

	6. Collected data, information and interpretation will be more accessible in the public domain including posting on appropriate websites.
	7. Local groups and individuals understand, enjoy, value and take action in the Coigach and Assynt area in ways they did not at the outset.
Y	8. Increased access infrastructure at key strategic locations enabling people to enjoy the natural and cultural heritage of the area. <i>Improvements to path network within community woodland areas.</i>
Y	9. Increased opportunities for informal recreation that promotes health and well-being benefits. <i>Path network giving improved access for more abilities to outdoor areas benefitting mental and physical wellbeing.</i>

Reflecting on the last 5 years, what's the one thing that you're most proud of that has come from your project being part of CALLP?

The recommissioning of the compost toilets at Little Assynt - Although not included on the original project brief an addition to the project was approved in 2019 to assist with the emptying of the facilities which are sited in a remote location. The toilets had been misused by the public and a way of educating and informing users in order to keep the toilets functioning in the future needed to be developed. By being able to offer toilet facilities in a remote area has helped reduce disturbance to the natural heritage from members of the public, especially during a time that has seen an unprecedented rise in the numbers of people accessing Little Assynt Estate, following easing of pandemic restrictions.

What difference has this project made to the built, cultural and natural heritage of Coigach and Assynt?

Improvements to community path networks – limited habitat damage and erosion close to the paths. Channelling rainwater appropriately, reducing the amount of extra maintenance required. Increasingly warmer and wetter winters in recent years have increased the amount of erosion the paths have experienced; new drainage features will help to mitigate against this.

What difference has this project made to People?

Culag Woods and Little Assynt play an important part in the lives of the local community. Not only are they visited daily by many people, schools access various areas in the woodland for outdoor learning, the local field club hold walks and events there, High Life Highland run events throughout the year, the local Wildlife Watch group are often holding sessions in the woodland, volunteer groups from John Muir Trust and schools from outside the area come to help look after the infrastructure and habitats.

See

Annex 2 Social media posts
for quotes from social media posts.

Useful Links

[Culag Community Woodlands Trust - Urras Coille Coimhearsnachd Chùlaig \(culagwoods.org.uk\)](http://culagwoods.org.uk)

Future Plans and Legacy

At a recent CCWT Board of Directors meeting a discussion was held to specifically look at ways to engage new volunteers. From the path project it has become clear that there are several ongoing maintenance items that require regular attention to keep the path network and other infrastructure fit for purpose for future generations. From this discussion a potential project is being developed. The working title of the project is the *"The Tree Generation"*, a project that aims to recruit and employ a volunteer group leader to:

- set up a volunteering programme and build a bank of local and other volunteers, to assist with ongoing maintenance tasks
- carry out maintenance tasks as required at Little Assynt and in Culag Woods
- maintain tools and outdoor learning equipment
- engage with visitors to the woodland as part of regular visits to Culag Woods and Little Assynt

Lessons Learned

What are the three positive lessons gained from the scheme:

1. Flexibility of funding has enabled additional items of work to be included
2. Gained a good understanding of the how the compost toilet really works in practice
3. Developing new maintenance plans for the future

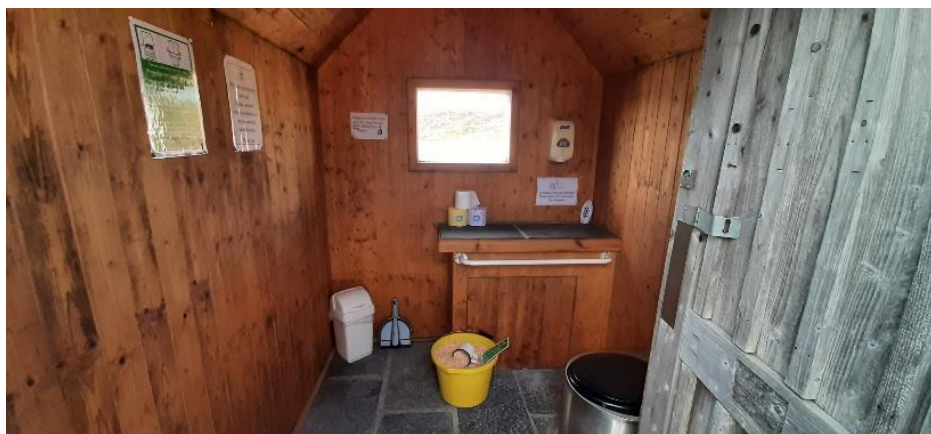
What are the three negative lessons gained from the scheme:

1. The amount of volunteer input was low due partly to not having a volunteer group leader
2. Maintenance tasks will be required at least annually
3. Can be problematic where appropriate weather and contractor availability does not coincide

Funding Partners



Photographic Evidence



The working refurbished compost toilet at Little Assynt © Fiona Saywell/Culag Community Woodland Trust



New steps and water bar at Little Assynt © Fiona Saywell/Culag Community Woodland Trust

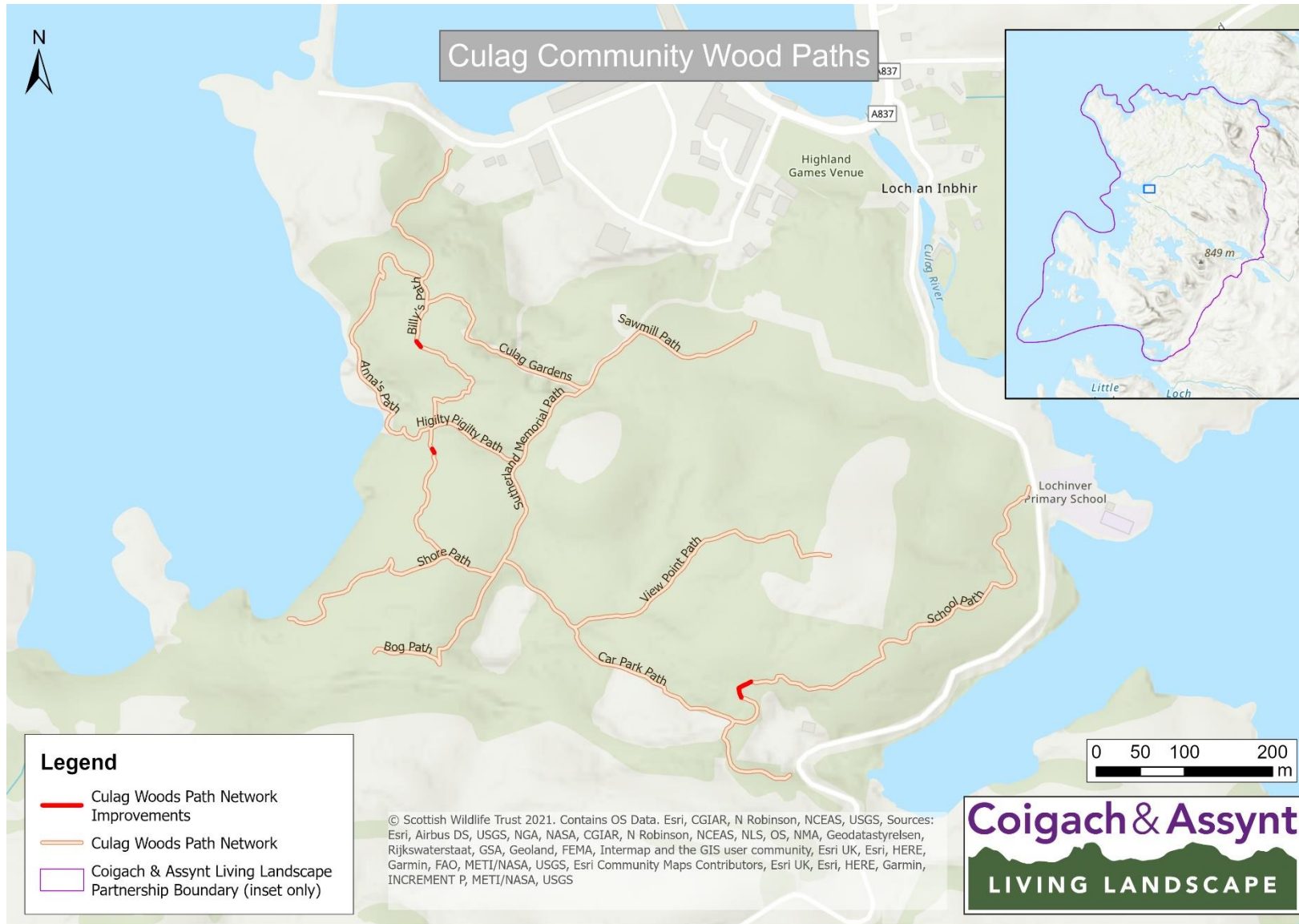


Strimmed path verges at Little Assynt © Fiona Saywell/Culag Community Woodland Trust



Steps on Billy's Path at Culag Woods under construction © Fiona Saywell/Culag Community Woodland Trust


Annex 1. Maps of Culag Woods Path Network



Annex 2 Social media posts

Culag Community Woodland Trust Ltd
Published by Fiona Saywell · 7 May 2019

Path repairs are starting this week in Culag woods. Path builders will be carrying out much needed repairs on Billy's path as well as on the school path. Feel free to contact us with any questions at info@culagwoods.org.uk. See you in the woods! 🌲 Thank you to the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Highland Council Ward Discretionary budget for funding these works.



5 People reached · 13 Engagements · — Distribution score [Boost post](#)

13

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Comment as Culag Community Woodland ...

10 May 2019 · 🌐

A huge thank you to the person or group who has been working in Culag woods and have replaced the rickety wooden steps, between the top of Anna's path at the wishing tree and the 'troll bridge,, with brilliant stone steps. They look so natural and as though they have been there for ever and yet they have appeared within the last week. Brilliant job.

and 50 others · 5 comments · 1 share

Like · Comment · Share

All comments ▾

ACT heritage had been contracted to help fix the path! Isn't it wonderful? 🙄
Like · Reply · Share · 2 y · 1

it is just fantastic thought I was hallucinating 😊
Like · Reply · Share · 2 y · 1

They are lovely steps 🙌
Like · Reply · Share · 2 y · 2

aren't they just x
Like · Reply · Share · 2 y · 1

So lucky to have the Culag Woods, & all the wonderful work that's put into them. A joy for every generation in the community - from Playgroup, Primary School & there on up!
Like · Reply · Share · 2 y · 4

Write a public comment...