

P13 Postie's Path



Project Overview:

The path needed considerable repair and improvements to increase its accessibility to a wider range of users while protecting the coastal environment and natural beauty of the area. The two ends of the path needed to be repaired and upgraded to give a good easy access path. The mountain section of the path needed clearer way-marking, helping to maintain the path in a suitable wild land condition whilst helping walkers avoid losing their way. The sections at each end of the path are of gentler gradient and here a more formalised machine constructed path has been developed in places. This was extended and consolidated, as well as an upgrade to the existing rough path line, with repairs to the sections in worse condition. Local community engagement was important in shaping work, planning and delivery, and in developing linkages to other related projects such as other path projects.

Project lead organisation and other organisations involved: Scottish Wildlife Trust

With: Coigach Community Development Company, Highland Council and Keanchulish Estate

Project Location: Coigach

Project dates: August 2019 – Jun 2021

Project Outputs

Measure	Target	Delivered	Notes
Management and maintenance plan	1	1	Draft Management and Maintenance Plan Completed
250-400 metres of path upgraded	250	372	Eastern section of path completed 372m in phase I. Western section of path completed 10m in phase II.
Waymarkers installed.	25	20 new, 20 repainted, 1 reinstated	20 existing waymarkers re-painted. 20 waymarkers made and installed and one stone waymarker re-instated.
Information & interpretation boards installed.	2	2	2 interpretation panels installed People counter installed to monitor footfall
Assistance with construction works	20	21	21 Volunteer days

Scheme Outputs

How has the project contributed to the CALLP Scheme Outcomes:

Y	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. <i>People can enjoy recreational hiking along the Postie's path now it has been improved for better access and helping walkers to avoid losing their way.</i>
	2. Where appropriate the connectivity and diversity of selected habitats will be mapped.
Y	3. Increased awareness and understanding amongst all individuals and groups of what makes Coigach and Assynt special and the threats to the unique heritage. <i>The interpretation panels provide important information about wildlife and local historic features to increase awareness and understanding of the importance of the wildlife reserve and footpath.</i>
Y	4. Important elements of the built, cultural and natural heritage will be recorded, improved, made publicly accessible and celebrated by the local community. <i>The Postie's path upgrade has improved a path which holds a significant cultural and historic value locally.</i>
Y	5. People will have gained new skills in researching, restoring and understanding their heritage. <i>The interpretation panels provide interesting information about the natural and cultural heritage of the area. Volunteers have assisted with footpath work and developed new skills in footpath maintenance.</i>
Y	6. Collected data, information and interpretation will be more accessible in the public domain including posting on appropriate websites. <i>A people counter has been installed along the Postie's path to monitor use and footfall.</i>
Y	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. <i>The path will be maintained by Scottish Wildlife Trust staff and volunteer work parties which engage people to enjoy and take action and be stewards of the land in Coigach.</i>
Y	8. Increased access infrastructure at key strategic locations enabling people to enjoy the natural and cultural heritage of the area. <i>The path upgrades will ensure more people can access and enjoy the natural and cultural heritage of Coigach.</i>
Y	9. Increased opportunities for informal recreation that promotes health and well-being benefits. <i>The path upgrades provide increased recreational opportunities which promote health and well-being.</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?

A Path for All

The Trust is proud of this project being part of CALLP which has enabled us to strengthen good relations with the local community. The Postie's path is well loved by the local community as well as visitors and we are proud to have improved the path for all to enjoy. In addition, our volunteer work parties have engaged local volunteers, as well as volunteers from further afield in looking after this important footpath which plays an important part of the heritage and landscape of Coigach.

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

- The improved path and interpretation panels will attract more walkers and enable people to enjoy the natural and cultural heritage of the area.
- Increased opportunities for informal recreation that promotes health and well-being benefits.
- Increased awareness and understanding amongst local people and visitors of what makes Coigach and Assynt special and they understand, enjoy, value and take action in the Coigach and Assynt area in ways they did not at the outset.

What difference has this project made to People?

The path is safer and easier for walkers to navigate. The interpretation panels provide information about the path, safety, local wildlife and history.

Quote from Bill Wilder, local resident: “*What a great job your contractors have done on the Postie's Path. The interpretation panels, on their very splendid cairns, are excellent: lots of good information for both visitors and local alike, really well presented, and made to last. The pathwork itself is a real work of art: no more need to tread off the path to avoid boggy holes, and some really fine steps in steep places. And stepping stones across the burns that will not wash away in the next spate. Having worked on some of the stretches as a volunteer, it is just great to see how it is done by the professional. So many of us will come to thank you for all this for many years to come.*”

Quote from Marta Zabalegui Bosque and Elizabeth Harwood, Volunteers “*We feel so lucky we took part in a project like this one. The Postie's path was such a nice place to discover. We really enjoyed our days out there painting the signs, improving the path and walking the route. Now that the path is ready, we recommend everyone to give it a try!*”

Useful Links

[Postie's Path - Coigach & Assynt Living Landscape \(coigach-assynt.org\)](http://coigach-assynt.org)

<https://scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk/reserve/ben-mor-coigach/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KT4BGZ0dQGw> YouTube presentation of the work on the Postie's Path

Future Plans and Legacy

Continue to maintain the Postie's path and associated infrastructure. Continue to promote the path and monitor footfall and trends.

Lessons Learned

What are the three positive lessons gained from the scheme:

1. To engage contractors with plinth design before applying for planning permission.
2. Effective, early engagement with the community is key for successful project delivery.
3. Working with the local community enabled a good insight into the history of the Postie's path. Whilst recollections varied, we successfully pieced together all recollections to provide, for the first time, a more accurate interpretation of the history of this iconic path.

What are the three negative lessons gained from the scheme:

1. Volunteer commitment will waiver without continued leadership and without varied and interesting work.

2. COVID brought unforeseen challenging and such an event must be considered in future project risk assessments.
3. The contractor's report of work completed was incomplete due to staff turnover. In future the contract document should specify exactly what contractors need to report so it matches with the NHLF reporting requirements.

Funding Partners



Photographic Evidence



Stone pitching on the Posties Path © Michelle Henley/Scottish Wildlife Trust



Interpretation panel at Culnacraig © Fiona Saywell/Scottish Wildlife Trust



Volunteers installing waymarkers on the Posties Path © Michelle Henley/Scottish Wildlife Trust



Stone pitching and waymarker at Geodha Mòr © Michelle Henley

Annex 1: Route of the Postie's Path

