

P17 Quinag Path



Project Overview:

Quinag's paths are exposed to some of the most extreme weather that the Assynt area experiences throughout the year. The paths are also extremely popular with both local and visiting hill walkers, and have predominantly evolved over time due to recreational access. They were in mixed condition as a result of this access and the harsh climate. The erosion not only had a detrimental effect on the paths but also impacted on the soils and vegetation.

The project aimed to repair the eroded sections of path by using a pre-emptive and light touch approach. John Muir Trust used low impact methods to repair and restore the route to a naturalised path which will maintain a high quality, wild land experience for hill walkers together with protecting the fragile upland environment. Higher sections of the path were particularly at risk where rainfall and snowmelt had washed away the route. Using experienced contractors, boulders from the nearby hillside were used to stabilise the steeper ground and also to construct drainage features to shed water off the path. All work is done by hand and involves long walks into the site.

Project lead organisation and other organisations involved: John Muir Trust

Project Location: Quinag, Assynt (grid reference: NC2029) Annex 1

Project dates: April 2017 to Dec 2020

Project Outputs

Measure	Target	Delivered	Notes
Maintain the 17km of Quinag Path	17km	17	Annex 1
52m steep path repaired	52m	52	
Volunteer days	15 days	35.7	

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.
Y	5. People will have gained new skills in researching, restoring and understanding their heritage. <i>Growing number of local volunteers involved in path maintenance work.</i>
Y	6. Collected data, information and interpretation will be more accessible in the public domain including posting on appropriate websites. <i>Improved and upgraded information provided at trail head car park.</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>More interest in volunteering in respect of path maintenance as a result of this project.</i>
Y	8. Increased access infrastructure at key strategic locations enabling people to enjoy the natural and cultural heritage of the area. <i>Improved path network on Quinag, with provision of better information at the main walkers' car park.</i>
Y	9. Increased opportunities for informal recreation that promotes health and well-being benefits. <i>Improved path network helps facilitate this.</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?

Working together, building better collaboration

Collaborative working, shared information and greater involvement and trust between Partners. The benefit of shared endeavour through working on a number of joint projects has been the real win in my view, and I hope this will serve as a platform for future projects and further collaboration between project partners and neighbours.

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

In respect of this project the path network has been improved, which will longer term result in less damage to habitats on the property and increase people's enjoyment of access onto the hill, as well as their safety.

What difference has this project made to People?

It has provided a spur for further volunteering and general involvement in the management and maintenance of the hill's path network with more local people actively involved in future works and plans, which is hugely heartening.

"Airlifting 30 tonnes of stone from the opposite face of the mountain was a mammoth task. But we're confident that the stone pitching in place now provides walkers with a much safer and more robust route to the summit." Romany Garnett, John Muir Trust's Quinag conservation officer

"Quinag's accessibility and location on the North Coast 500 route make it a particularly popular hill for walkers, and its footpath has seen an ever increasing footfall in recent years,

particularly through the summer of 2020 with increased visitors to the site after the Covid-19 lockdown.” John Muir Trust

Useful Links

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_cqUf1mF5Y presentation on the work on Suilven and Quinag
<https://www.johnmuirtrust.org/whats-new/news/15-field-notes-north-west-news>

National Media

<https://www.grough.co.uk/magazine/2021/01/19/john-muir-trust-completes-path-repairs-on-quinag-in-north-west-highlands>

Future Plans and Legacy

John Muir Trust intend to carry on maintenance work and where funding allows for the gradual upgrade and repair of more sections of the hill path network. Additional path work was ongoing in autumn 2021 and path maintenance scheduled for the maintenance period.

Lessons Learned

What are the three positive lessons gained from the scheme:

1. Getting the right contractor and developing a good working relationship is vital
2. Plans may need to adapt as user pressure and extreme weather events increase
3. Involvement of local people through volunteering, and in other ways, is a great bonus

What are the three negative lessons gained from the scheme:

1. Cost and time delays of undertaking airlifts
2. Initial budgets not sufficient to cover all works required due to ongoing wear and tear
3. Achieving quotes from multiple and competent path work contractors not always straightforward

Funding Partners



Photographic Evidence



Path skills day with volunteers © R Garnett/John Muir Trust



Path skills day with volunteers © R Garnett/John Muir Trust



Path worker on Quinag © Chris Puddephatt

Annex 1: Location map of Quinag Path

