

P14 Acheninver Coastal Path



Project Overview:

The Acheninver Path has been used by walkers to access the youth hostel for at least the last 80 years. It links to a network of local paths forming a circular route that includes the core path between Achduart and Culnacraig and onwards from Culnacraig round Ben More Coigach to Strath Cannaird. To the north the path links to a rough track which runs up to the Achlochan Peninsula.

The old path to the coast at Acheninver was uneven, eroded and waterlogged in places. The connecting coastal route to the Broch at Achlochan lacked clear way-markers and easy access. As a result, walkers in the area were more likely to contribute to erosion, trample habitats and disturb wildlife and livestock. The project, which is now almost complete, aimed to respect the original path construction and feel, whilst adding drainage features to improve water management across the path thereby reducing surface run off and further erosion. It just requires signage which will be planned in conjunction with the Heritage Signage Project. We now also have informal agreement from the landowner can extend the route via styles from Acheninver to Badenscallie.

Project lead organisation and other organisations involved: Coigach Community Development Company

Project Location: Acheninver, Coigach

Project dates: July 19 – August 2021

Project Outputs

Measure	Target	Delivered	Notes
Path upgraded and improved	850 metres	710m	ACT Heritage Lower Path 505m; carpark 21m, upper track 63m double width, mid track 110m double width, 11m single track; 2/12/20 NLHF noted target effectively met.
New path constructed	250 metres	108m	Acheninver East 108m; 2/12/20 NLHF noted output effectively met.
Volunteers engaged with the project	15	5	2/12/20 NLHF accepted "cancel", but no formal change
Training courses delivered through the project	2		2/12/20 NLHF accepted "cancel", but no formal change
Signage and information provided on site	100%		Signage and panel have been ordered for installation February 2022
Volunteer Days	60	9.3	

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.
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>As the path has existed for over 100 year and coincides with the Acheninver Hostel Renovation Project and Acheninver Plantation it forms the backbone of access to this cluster of projects and will promote greater access in the future.</i>
	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>Better path allowing easier access to the sea shore and to the Acheninver Beach.</i>
Y	9. Increased opportunities for informal recreation that promotes health and well-being benefits. <i>Easier access to Acheninver Beach, the Coastal Path and Badenscallie Coastal Path.</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 beautiful walk made easier

The path has made this walk easier, clearer and has generally improved the experience for all users. The path work was carried out sensitively and the stone work in particular is much admired and will make a lasting improvement.

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

It has made the natural heritage more accessible while celebrating the built & cultural heritage. It is now a very attractive and defined walk following a burn down to the sea shore. It has encouraged visitors and locals alike to use this route more, and for visitors it's clear to them where to go and takes them to a spectacular area of coastline and beach. It also has preserved the natural heritage by repairing erosion, avoiding future erosion and keeping walkers to a path so they are less likely to disturb wildlife etc.

What difference has this project made to People?

Since the path has been completed there has been a noticeable increase in number of walkers. Specifically the path has allowed easy access to Acheninver beach and the Achiltibuie Primary School now visit more often for Outdoor Learning Session. The path also provides

easier access to the hostel, thus supporting a local business, and links in with the growing path network in Coigach (Annex 1).

Specifically during lockdown all the paths of Coigach were explored by locals, with specific emphasis on the Acheninver Path.

“it’s a lovely path – I walk it regularly now” Local Resident

“I’ve never been there before but it’s great and the kids love it” Visitor

“People are using this route regularly and some almost daily. As I live close by I regularly see small parties of people and families making their way to and from the beach”. Project Officer

“We now have a brilliant path down to Acheninver beach that is used on a daily basis by a lot of locals and tourist when they are allowed to return. A lot of money and hard work went into making this path for all to enjoy and it should mean unrestricted access to the beach and surrounding areas at all times.” Local Crofter

Useful Links

<https://coigachcommunity.com/2019/07/20/2040/>

<https://visitcoigach.com/see-and-do/walking-climbing/acheninver-beach-2/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqmNF1dBhfM&t=153s> contains footage of the Acheninver Path

Future Plans and Legacy

- Some but minimal maintenance will be required. We used the path for an Easter treasure hunt which was very popular so we may do that again
- The school use the path to access outdoor learning regularly and will continue to access the path after the CALLP project.

Lessons Learned

What are the three positive lessons gained from the scheme:

1. Experience of tendering, employing and working with path contractors
2. Improved path has many and different benefits – and walking has increased in popularity partly due to the path and also as a safe activity during the pandemic
3. A network of paths is a great asset to an area and encourages people to get out into the landscape and explore

What are the three negative lessons gained from the scheme:

1. There were numerous parties with differing interests and there were delays due to dispute over the route
2. It was a very slow and admin-heavy process. It has taken a lot of time and diverted time away from our own core projects and priorities. It cost more than the original budget.
3. It was difficult to get definitive information regarding planning.

Funding Partners



Photographic Evidence



Path to Acheninver Beach © Julia Campbell



Water bar © Julia Campbell



Stepping stones across the boggy parts of the path @ Julia Campbell



Before and after path works © Boyd Alexander/Scottish Wildlife Trust

Annex 1: Location of Acheninver Coastal Path



Scottish Wildlife Trust
Harbourside House
110 Commercial Street
Edinburgh
EH6 6NF

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Ordnance Survey licence number 100030835.
Central Grid Reference:
Scale: 1:3,622

