

P20 Clachtoll Ranger Hut



Project Overview:

The objective of this project is to increase the provision of information relating to the natural and cultural heritage around Clachtoll. The previous Clachtoll Ranger Hut was sited at the Clachtoll Beach car park (grid reference: NC 03954 27324) since the 1980s. It housed information on local wildlife, plant life, history, and geology under the remit of the Highlife Highland Countryside Rangers, formerly part of the Highland Council. The Ranger Hut was previously managed by the Highland Council and discussions about possibly replacing it have taken place over the last few years. However, there was no scope for the hut to be replaced or its condition improved under its ownership by Highlife Highland.

The car park is accessible to vehicles and pedestrians through the nearby campsite, and to walkers coming around the headland from Clachtoll Broch. Clachtoll is situated on one of the roads used by the North Coast 500 driving route, which has been estimated to bring an additional 29,000 visitors along the route¹ annually.

We were inspired to take this opportunity to deliver the project by news of the other exciting work going on across all of CALLP.

Project lead organisation and other organisations involved: North West Highlands Geopark (Project Lead), Historic Assynt, Highlife Highland Countryside Ranger, Assynt Field Club

Project Location: Clachtoll Beach Carpark

Project dates: October 2021 – March 2022

Project Outputs

Measure	Target	Delivered	Notes
Information hut built	1	1	Positive local feedback on design
Information boards installed	1	3	Plus display cabinet
Volunteer days	20	15	Build phase only - many more will be delivered in future use of hut

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.
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 hut houses information that highlights the natural, geological and cultural heritage of Clachtoll and the surrounding area with particular reference to the Broch.</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 hut has replaced and upgraded an old information point and the information presented to visitors to Clachtoll</i>
	5. People will have gained new skills in researching, restoring and understanding their heritage.
Y	6. Collected data, information and interpretation will be more accessible in the public domain including posting on appropriate websites. <i>The new information panels have been designed to make information more accessible and to increase the amount of information presented.</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 visibility of the visually striking hut is encouraging more visits by residents of the area..</i>
	8. Increased access infrastructure at key strategic locations enabling people to enjoy the natural and cultural heritage of the area.
	9. Increased opportunities for informal recreation that promotes health and well-being benefits.

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 hut will be a lasting physical legacy to the difference that CALLP has made to the communities in and visitors to Assynt.

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

The hut is a significant improvement over the previous building both functionally and aesthetically. We now have a physical asset that enhances the display and explanation of local natural and human heritage. The exhibition in the huts ties the Broch and the Soils projects together and now provides a lasting opportunity to engage members of the public with the findings of both projects in an integrated way.

What difference has this project made to People?

People living in close proximity already well aware that the area is of national significance have voiced a sense of pride in the building, This has been echoed on social media and by the positive report in the press The hut will be an easily identified meeting point for the guided

walks and activities which are important for healthy leisure and educational activities for all age ranges and the building now has access for wheelchair users. The interpretation will inspire visitors and locals to explore the area with an increased understanding and local business owners have a focal point to which they can direct visitors. There is clear information on how to get to the Broch and where to see wildlife, geological and natural features. The smart new building and attractive interpretation will lead people to understand that they are in a special place, the visitor experience will be enhanced, and respect for the environment will be increased.

Useful Links

<https://assyntfireandwater.aocarchaeology.com>
<https://www.nwhgeopark.com>
<https://www.highlifehighland.com/rangers/>
<https://www.assyntwildlife.org.uk>

Future Plans and Legacy

- Regular updates on what wildlife to look out for throughout the year.
- Updates to interpretive displays if and when material becomes out of date.
- Monitoring and maintenance of the physical asset.

Lessons Learned

What are the three positive lessons gained from the scheme:

1. Great collaboration between 3 local bodies providing information and input.
2. Confirmed the ability of NWH Geopark to manage delivery and ownership of physical infrastructure.
3. Positive local feedback on the design confirmed effort in carefully considering design during tender evaluation.

What are the three negative lessons gained from the scheme:

1. Issue of VAT certificates not always accepted by supplier.
2. Late change in contract holder resulted in additional volunteer input from NWH Geopark.
3. Location meant the project was more exposed than usual to weather and cost inflation risk.

Funding Partners



Photographic Evidence

Progress photographs of construction of the Clachtoll Ranger Hut.



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