£3.2m National Lottery grant to help tackle serious



Vital works undertaken on Ben Lomand

Taking in iconic peaks such as Ben Lomond, Ben A'an, Beinn A Ghlo and Lochnagar, the Mountains and the People project will tackle some of the worst path erosion problems in Scotland by training young people and volunteers to care for the upland landscapes and habitats.

The project will give 48 young people the opportunity to learn essential countryside skills while gaining SVQ accreditation to help them into employment. Additionally, a volunteer programme will recruit, train and support volunteers in carrying out basic construction work, maintenance and habitat management, while visitors will be given information to ensure that they don't damage the special environment that they have come to enjoy through talks, events and social media.

In total, a distance of 124.5km of eroded upland paths will be restored and upgraded. They will then be monitored through an Adopt-a-Path programme through which regular users of the paths will provide feedback on their condition, enabling problems to be tackled before they become a major issue.

Colin McLean, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Scotland, said: "Scotland's National Parks encompass some of the country's most iconic landscapes and are vital for their contribution to tourism as well as for the health and social benefits of the millions of people that enjoy them. Thanks to National Lottery players, we are delighted to be able to

support a project which encourages people to take ownership of this rich heritage. Their newly-learned skills will not only make a positive difference to their own lives but will play an important part in looking after the future of Scotland's magnificent landscapes."

Dougie Baird, Chief Executive of the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT), added: "The Mountains and The People is a project designed to bring the people of Scotland together to help look after some of Scotland's most precious national assets – the mountains of our National Parks. Mountains in Loch Lomond and The Trossachs and the Cairngorms are so important for nature and as places people can escape the hustle and bustle of modern life. The HLF funding means we can now get started and with all partners help protect the Scottish landscape for millions of people to enjoy."

Sarah Lawther, who undertook COAT training in Aviemore last year, said: "I found the COAT training course a really worthwhile experience. It was well managed and great emphasis was placed on finding relevant work after it. I was lucky enough to gain many weeks work experience with Cairngorm Wilderness Contracts, a company who set themselves up off the back of the training course four years previous to me. The values they carry as a company in conservation and environmental good practise really spoke to me as I care passionately about conservation, especially in the Cairngorms as I grew up walking these mountains. I am fiercely proud to be working for this company when this is what I get to show my friends and family. I love my job, I love this place and I feel so incredibly lucky to be part of the conservation of this beautiful mountain environment."

Facts and figures

Cairngorms National Park

- 1.4million visitors annually
- Covers an area of 4,528sq km
- Includes five of the UK's highest mountains
- Contains the largest continuous area of ground over 1000m in Britain
- Is home to 25% of Britain's threatened species

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park

- Four million visitors annually
- Covers an area of 1,865 sq km
- Includes 61 SSSIs and 8 Special Areas of Conservation for the protection of rare and endangered habitats and species
- Its habitats support golden eagle, peregrine, merlin, ptarmagin and mountain ringlet butterflies as well as rare mosses and lichens

Further information

Images of representatives from the partner organisations of this project are being taken against the backdrop of Ben Lomand by Mick McGurk (07966 244 083) and will be distributed to your picture desk.

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