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Local People

Local Paths

Newsletter Summer 2011

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paths
for all

Welcome to the first edition of Local People Local Paths. This new newsletter has been designed to provide support and advice for groups carrying out a variety of paths work in communities across Scotland. We know that there are several community councils, path groups, development trusts and active individuals who are determined and driven to improving and creating paths for the benefit of locals. We hope that this newsletter will help you to share experiences, highlight fantastic developments, raise awareness of any funding opportunities and provide an update of how Paths for All can help your group with training, advice and technical support.

As this is the first edition we have selected 2 inspirational path groups for our community focus section. However we want you to get involved with this newsletter to make it worthwhile and useful for you. Get in touch by emailing localpaths@pathsforall.org.uk if there are specific issues you would like to see included in the next issue, or if you would like to tell us about your project and be featured in future articles.



Partner news

Is your path in a special place?



Placebook Scotland is a social networking site dedicated to celebrating Scotland's places, whether close to home or further afield. We have about 1200 members from across Scotland, rural and urban.

The site encourages it's members to tell people about the places they think are special through photographs, film, music and writing. We even have a few painters.

Placebook Scotland could be useful to groups by advertising events using the events calender, posting pictures and blogs about activities going on and hosting a group where your members can share their experiences and link to your website.

It can also be a source of inspiration showing what Scotland has to offer, with this many members there is always something on your own doorstep, which can help to encourage people to get out and about in their local area. www.placebookscotland.co.uk

Scottish Outdoor Access Code Update

SNH is raising awareness of the SOAC through radio, digital and press in 2 rounds of activity in Aug/Sept and March April 2012. The TV adverts will run on Youtube and STV player, press adverts will appear all the Scottish national tabloids and an audio advert will run on all of the local radio stations.



Planning a new path? Maintaining an existing path?

Don't forget to think about climate change.



SNH commissioned Walking-The-Talk to investigate the potential impacts of climate change on paths and to consider what adjustments might be needed when designing and constructing new paths or maintaining and upgrading existing paths. A copy of the report is available at www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/commissioned_reports/436.pdf

Walkable Communities: local people taking action

LIVING STREETS
PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

Local communities have a crucial role in improving the local environment for people on foot, and promoting the benefits of walking to local shops and services. Living Streets Scotland is inviting community groups to work with us to make it easier for people of all abilities to take more local journeys on foot.

The events will support communities across Scotland to take action to improve local walking environments. The events will focus on the conditions for walking of a particular street, path or area that is known to the group and in doing so will highlight the importance of walking for health, and will look at examples of built environments that encourage walking.

Key stages of the project include a

structured audit of the area in question, identifying priorities for action and submission of a report the relevant statutory authority. These stages can be delivered within two or more sessions, depending on the preference of the group.

There is no cost to the group and Living Streets can meet sundry costs such as refreshments, venue hire and small-scale group actions as necessary.

If your group is interested in the Walkable Communities project and you would like more information please contact: Janice Gray, Healthy Environments Officer, Living Streets Scotland. Email: janice.gray@livingstreets.org.uk Telephone: 0131 243 2645

Public urged to take a short walk on a long trail

For the first time, the best of Scotland's long distance paths are being promoted as a suite of trails, known as Scotland's Great Trails. Stretching from the Borders to the Highlands, the 20 trails provide 1300 miles of scenic, high quality paths around the country.

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) is behind the initiative to inspire more people to use the routes for short as well as long trips, helping promote them as a great way to discover more of Scotland by foot, bike and horseback.

To help people make more of Scotland's Great Trails, SNH and VisitScotland have produced a handy guide featuring short trips on all 20 long distance routes.

Ian Jardine, SNH chief executive said: "There is something for everyone in these trails. You can follow rivers from their source to the sea. You can immerse yourself in history, travel along old transport routes and find peace and quiet in wild, rugged landscapes. You can even get a blast of sea air on one of the coastal trails. Many are

suitable for cycling or horse riding as well. And of course you don't have to do the whole route.

We hope the guide will encourage people to explore trails close to where they live, and enjoy some of our finest countryside as well as the sights, sounds and smells along the way. Most also offer regular opportunities for refreshments and have interesting places to visit."

"There is something for everyone in these trails"

Information on each of Scotland's Great Trails is available from the Scottish Natural Heritage, VisitScotland and Walkhighlands websites. For a free copy of the guide ring SNH publications on: 01738 458530 or email: pubs@snh.gov.uk



Community path group focus

The Dava Way Association – Moray

Providing access from Grantown-on-Spey in the Cairngorms through to Forres on the Moray Coast the Dava way is a 24 mile route going through a variety of highland landscapes. The majority of the route follows the old Highland Railway line adding character to the route which is suitable for walkers and mountain bikes. Maps of the route can be purchased locally or downloaded from the Dava Way Associations website, and the route is well sign-posted throughout the trail.

The Dava Way Association are the real driving force behind this route, applying for funding, inspiring local

volunteers to get their hands dirty and working closely with local contractors to ensure the path is fit for both tourists and local members of the public. The majority of path works and ongoing maintenance takes place through the group, who organise monthly work parties on various parts of the route, where the highlight (other than combating ditches and muddy puddles) is having a pint in the Beastie at the end of the day.

Before the group started work on the route it was unsuitable for access. Over the years the group have erected bridges and boardwalk and carried out many miles of path



resurfacing, combated disastrous drainage problems and show no signs of stopping any time soon.

So if you are looking at upgrading a railway path near you, or if you want to visit the route or even volunteer one Saturday a month visit:

www.davaway.org.uk

Did you know that PFA are now offering an advisory and support service for local groups?

We are now offering a 'one-stop-shop' service for local groups who are looking at improving or creating local paths in their area.

We want to help you!

Is your group working on existing or new path infrastructure? Are you looking to create or update path signage leaflets or interpretation boards? Or is your group trying to organise and record a maintenance plan around your local routes?

If so we can help you. This year we have been funded to work with a variety of groups across Scotland to provide advice and support, whether that is attending meetings, helping to develop plans for new routes or leaflets, helping with funding applications or

facilitating difficult partnerships. If your group is struggling then get in touch with us and we may be out to visit you soon.

Is there a health walk near you?

Have you checked out the 'find a health walk' link on our webpage? Enter your local authority area to find out where local groups are running near you.

Whether you are looking for advice on getting the community on board to raise funds or set up a path group, need help with designing your path or improving existing access, or are looking for guidance on working with landowners give us a call on 01463 725153 or email: localpaths@pathsforall.org.uk

Local People Local Paths Online

During the redesign of Paths for All's website in 2010 Development Officers took the opportunity to evaluate specific areas of the website to ensure the information and advice we provide online was relevant. The 'community support directory' which has been online for several years desperately required some attention to bring the information up-to-date for path groups, taking into account today's funding requirements and the advances in Core Paths Planning and Local Development Plans within local authorities.

Behind the scenes we have been working with Walking-The-Talk who created the original directory to create a new web area with a Planning, Doing, and Reviewing approach. We understand that groups will have different aims, as well as different levels of knowledge and experience. The new area on the website, Local People Local Paths, starts by focusing on access rights in Scotland; looking at various stages of community consultation and setting up path groups, approaches the various planning stages including surveying, designing and funding paths. It also provides advice on working with landowners, managing a path project and ensuring that groups are aware of all the



aspects of working with contractors on larger scale works. The whole area finishes by focusing on reviewing the success of path projects once installed and highlighting various training options for path volunteers.

Local People Local Paths contains a lot of information, so we have ensured it is split into 20 easily digestible chunks of information. This means that groups can focus on specific areas of interest using the contents page, or can read the whole resource from start to finish. We also have a series of downloadable fact sheets which are attached to key areas of the resource which groups can save or print for future guidance.

As this is a new area of our website, we're keen to know what you think. Does it give you all the information you need, is it easy to use, and most importantly is it useful? Get in touch and let us know and you could win a mystery prize for your path group.

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Look out for...

Six downloadable guides are currently being designed to help your group while out on site focusing on:

- path vegetation
- minor surface repairs
- drainage features
- signposts waymarkers and gates
- vandalism and clean up days
- maintaining tools

If you have an image which captures your group carrying out any of the activities above which we could use then send it to localpaths@pathsforall.org.uk All entries will receive printed copies of the guides for your group.

Do you know your technical A-Z?

Our technical officer Kevin Fairclough has been busy creating a new glossary of path construction terminology to help path groups and access staff tell the difference between an 'as dug' path from an asphalt one, or the benefits of a cross drain or a culvert for drainage.

The glossary can be found under technical advice in the Developing and Managing Paths section of our website. It's in an easy A-Z format with images and specific information on each term – there may just be a prize if you can find a technical term Kevin hasn't listed!



Training programme update

During March 2010 Paths for All held a conference in SNH Battleby inviting community path groups from across Scotland to get together with access officers and other agencies to discuss what groups were achieving on the ground and what support they currently need. Over 100 people attended the event and we used the information collated to develop a training programme specifically for local groups working on paths.

The initial pilot courses, held during 2010 at Oatridge College covered basic technical skills on path surveys and design, path construction and path maintenance. In conjunction with health walking schemes we also ran two workshop events in social marketing and working with volunteers.



Overall the feedback from these courses was very positive and highlighted a demand from local groups to access technical training. During summer 2011 we launched a very similar series of basic technical courses, this time being held at SNH Battleby from July through to October to encourage groups from other areas to attend. If you are on our database you should have received information on these courses.

The path survey and design basics was held on 27th July and the **path construction and CDM Basics** was held on 31st August. **The path maintenance basics course** will be held on 21st September – this course is already fully booked but we are still taking applications to see if there is scope to run an additional course later in the year!

The **Biodiversity and Paths course** will be held on 19th October at SNH Battleby. It is an introductory course demonstrating the opportunities and possibilities for enhancing biodiversity

through creative construction and management of paths.

Additionally we are going to be running 3 networking events where there are 'hubs' of community path action. Details of these events will be circulated soon and we will be working closely with groups in local areas to find out what training needs or issues you would like us to address during these sessions.

Finally we will be running a **funding workshop** and a **path promotion event**. Dates and booking details for these courses will be available soon on our website.

Keep up-to-date on all our training by signing up to our fortnightly e-bulletin. Just click the link on our homepage www.pathsforall.org.uk

National Path Demonstration site information area

Paths for All with Scottish Natural Heritage have two National Demonstration Sites at Oatridge College and SNH Battleby highlighting different aspects of path building techniques, surfaces and signage options. We are currently developing a webpage to promote both sites so that groups unable to visit either facility can still find out the technical detail and information.





Community path group focus

Ecclesmachan, Threemiletown and Uphall Countryside Path Improvement Project, West Lothian

During the Core Paths Planning process, Ecclesmachan and Threemiletown Community Council actively took part in the consultation process for their local draft plan – asking for seven routes, predominately Public Rights of Way to be included within their local area. The Community Council were disheartened when all requested routes were not included in the second draft following the consultation process. The Access Authority had determined that the paths would require improvements to make them more accessible, which would not be possible within the timescale for the Core Paths process.

Rather than accept their local paths not being included, Gordon Allan and two other members of the Community Council carried out an initial survey of the top three paths highlighted to be the most important to the community. When reporting back to their local community meeting the group realised that two of the paths would require initial work to be carried out by a contractor

(therefore requiring funding), with the ongoing maintenance responsibility falling to the Community Council and path volunteers. The third route did not require as much work and the group set into motion a programme of maintenance which started in 2009.

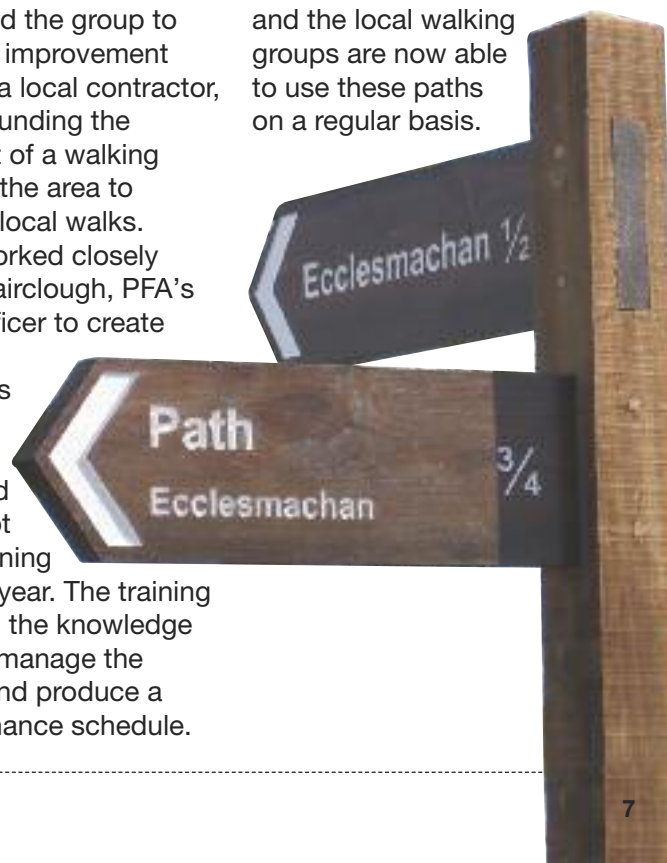
‘local walking groups are now able to use these paths on a regular basis’

The Community Council, with support from West Lothian Council’s access officer and Paths for All were successful in obtaining £12,500 from Awards for All and LEADER which allowed the group to carry out the improvement works using a local contractor, additionally funding the development of a walking brochure for the area to promote the local walks.

Gordon worked closely with Kevin Fairclough, PFA’s Technical Officer to create the design specifications for the routes, and also attended the three pilot technical training courses last year. The training gave Gordon the knowledge and skills to manage the contractor, and produce a path maintenance schedule.

The group were also successful in gaining a small grant through PFA in 2010 for tools to carry out additional maintenance to the routes.

Due to the groups ongoing work the paths are now of the standard required. West Lothian Council has indicated these three paths will be added to the Core Paths Plan at the next review stage, commenting that this is “one of the first community led initiatives in West Lothian seeking to stimulate the upgrading of paths”. Moreover, the Community Council have linked into the health walking programme ‘Put Your West Foot Forward’, and the local walking groups are now able to use these paths on a regular basis.





Technical tip of the season

Does your drainage work?

Kevin is always on hand to give advice to local path groups or access officers through his 'ask the technical officer a question' link on our website or via kevin.fairclough@pathsforall.org.uk

For this first issue we asked him for some tips on path drainage, following such heavy rains this August which affected a lot of paths across Scotland.

Poor drainage is the cause of many path problems. Failure of a drainage system due to lack of maintenance may well result in damage to path surface requiring expensive repairs.

Unsurprisingly, drainage systems do require regular maintenance in order to keep them functioning properly.

It's good path management practice to produce and adopt a maintenance schedule for the drainage system as well as the path surface and other related infrastructure such as gates, seating, etc. This schedule should consist of inspection checks and a list of regular maintenance tasks. Most importantly, it should say when, and how frequently, these checks and tasks are carried out.

Problems from drainage system failure can be more

noticeable and damaging during wet weather, so inspection checks and maintenance tasks should be planned with this in mind.

Inspection checks and maintenance tasks for drainage systems can include:

- Check and clear silt, leaf litter and other debris in ditches, at entrances and outfall ends of drainage features and on stone surface of french drains and filter drains. Dispose of arisings carefully. Ensure it doesn't end up back where it came from!
- Check for standing water on stone surface of french drains and filter drains indicating a blockage. If installed, empty the silt trap and unblock the pipe. If there is no silt trap and the pipe can't be unblocked, replace drain stone and blocked pipe, and install a silt trap in the blocked area to prevent it happening again.
- Check for scouring or erosion at outfall ends of drainage features. Remove any obstructions that may be restricting water flowing out.



- Check for scouring of ditch bottom and undercutting of side walls. Remove any obstructions that may be restricting water flow along the ditch. Regrade bottom of ditch where water is standing and not flowing. Widen and re-batter side walls where undercutting has occurred or is likely, until stable.
- Check culvert headwalls and water bar, cross drain and left stones are firm and secure. Replace loose or missing stones.

For more information about maintenance, the manual – *'Lowland Path Construction, A Guide to Good Practice'* – covers all aspects of maintenance planning, schedules, inspection checks and maintenance tasks.

Contact us

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Paths for All is a partnership organisation, for a full list of our current partners please visit our website: www.pathsforall.org.uk
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