
CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

- Title:** Developing volunteering in path maintenance
- Prepared by:** Bob Grant, Recreation and Access Programme Manager
- Purpose:** This paper explores the key requirements for a successful volunteer programme and seeks the Forum's views on how this might be best achieved.

Advice Sought

The Forum's views are sought on the following topics:

- a. Should there be consideration of rolling out a volunteering programme across the whole National Park or should we focus in on where existing work is being undertaken?
- b. Is a co-ordinator role similar to the one delivering Health Walks a useful model to follow or are there other useful models worth pursuing?
- c. What other organisations might be well placed to host volunteer work?
- d. Are there funding sources that can be tapped into to deliver this area of work?

Background

1. Members of the Forum recognised the benefits that can derive from volunteers undertaking path maintenance and sought further information on how this might be taken forward. This paper highlights what is required to encourage volunteers to take part in an activity, retain enthusiasm and suggests a number of mechanisms that could make this happen in the future.
2. The National Park Partnership Plan sees a key role for volunteers to support nature and charges all the organisations involved in delivering the Plan to "*Develop the opportunities for practical volunteering to support nature and outdoor access in the National Park.*"

Key elements of a good volunteering programme

3. Whilst there is an expectation that volunteers are generally self-motivated there are some key requirements to make sure their efforts are well directed. These are:
 - a. Training needs to be provided, where required;
 - b. Tools, storage and potentially protective clothing should be supplied;
 - c. Development needs to be considered to increase skill levels or develop new skills;
 - d. Supervision and co-ordination is required to ensure effective delivery; and

- e. The volunteer needs to be treated and valued as if they were a paid employee.
4. To achieve these requirements we therefore need to consider:
 - a. where the projects are located,
 - b. who can provide the co-ordination role,
 - c. whether there are existing organisations that can deliver the work; and
 - d. how it can all be funded.
 5. At present, volunteering programmes are supported on Mar Lodge Estate by the National Trust for Scotland, at a number of RSPB reserves and through Ranger services. Volunteer path work is also carried out in Kingussie and, just outside the National Park, in Tarland. The Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust also supports volunteer effort through the “Adopt a Path” programme. It will be important therefore that any proposals for expansion should complement these excellent delivery mechanisms.
 6. The Health Walks programme provides an interesting comparison where health walks take place on a weekly basis in almost all communities in the National Park and are delivered by around 40 trained health walk leader volunteers every week. They are however co-ordinated through a single person who is contracted by the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust to ensure all volunteers are appropriately trained and have a point of contact for advice, information and who also provides motivation to these volunteers who can often work in isolation from other leaders.
 7. To help the National Park Authority and partners develop this further, the Forum’s views are sought on:
 - a. Should there be consideration of rolling out a volunteering programme across the whole National Park or should we focus in on where existing work is being undertaken?
 - b. Is a co-ordinator role similar to the one delivering Health Walks a useful model to follow or are there other useful models worth pursuing?
 - c. What other organisations might be well placed to host volunteer work?
 - d. Are there funding sources that can be tapped into to deliver this area of work?

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