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It would be great to hear your questions and comments:

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# FOOTPRINTS

The Footpath Fund Newsletter 2011-12



**The Footpath Fund supports two teams that deliver world-class mountain and wild land conservation all over Scotland.**

Formerly known as the *Sole Trading Fund*, the Footpath Fund has a new name but the same vital purpose – to protect Scotland's mountains and wild land from the devastating effects of erosion.

## THE MOUNTAINS FOR PEOPLE PROJECT MFP



MFP team at work on Torridon, Wester Ross, Spring 2011.

The Mountains for People project, now in its third year, is a dedicated team of Trust employees and contractors who tackle large-scale path repairs at National Trust for Scotland countryside locations. The team re-establish path networks, halt erosion damage, encourage natural vegetation regeneration and ultimately ensure the long-term conservation of the landscape at Glencoe, Torridon and Arran.

## THE MOUNTAIN PATH MANAGEMENT TEAM MPMT

The MPMT is a Trust-employed team that maintains paths across four National Trust for Scotland countryside locations: Glencoe, Ben Lawers, Goatfell and Ben Lomond. Once expensive repairs have been carried out to bring paths up to standard and halt erosion, it's up to this team to ensure that standard is upheld. Without the MPMT, the pressure on paths from extensive walking and extreme weather would lead to further erosion damage and destroy natural vegetation.

The team have worked together for years and their combined expertise is unrivalled in the UK, but that doesn't mean they don't face challenges. With more stretches of path being repaired by MFP, the MPMT must spread themselves over more locations to do the follow-up maintenance.



The MPMT heading up Coire na Tulaich to the Buachaille Etive Mòr ridge. Ben Farrington, Jan Plasil, Simon Westaway and Nan Morris.

'The 2011 season started with hill fires in early May, then snow and gales! But I have once more been amazed by the commitment of the team. Despite all the weather problems thrown at us, they have kept up both their work rate and their morale, so the project remains on track.'

Bob Brown, MFP Project Manager



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a place for everyone

'Areas of Torridon and Kintail urgently need long-term maintenance regimes put in place following work done by the Mountains for People project and the Kintail Ranger Service. Every penny donated to the Footpath Fund really does help us here on the ground.'

Alasdair Eckersall, MPMT Manager, Ben Lomond Manager, Ranger Naturalist



Base Camp Tom Na Gruigaich, Torridon

## BEN LAWERS NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE, PERTSHIRE

The MPMT have tackled some very challenging sites this year, which tested even the most experienced members. They had a very long walk at **An Stuc** in the Ben Lawers range, climbing 3 hours every day before they could begin work. The team were there to define a stretch of path in order to protect the fragile vegetation that grows on the steep high-altitude slopes in this region.



Ben Lawers

## GLENCOE, LOCHABER

The MPMT regularly battled the elements to climb to the steep route at the **Am Bodach** ascent at the east end of the **Aonach Eagach** ridge. Work on this site was vital to protect the fragile vegetation. Some of the most challenging worksites of the year were much lower down the mountain, when the team were struggling to even get a spade into the ground during the coldest December for 100 years.



Clearing snow from frozen ground to lay stone.

As part of the MFP project minor works were carried out on the **Lairig Gartain** route by a local contractor to complete last year's repair. This has seen the more visually subtle sections restored to create a continuous path right through the mighty Lairig.

The high section of the **Stob Coire Altruim** path has seen vast amounts of gullying and erosion over the years and, as a popular ascent/descent route from the famous **Buachaille Etive Mòr**, it experiences high volumes of walkers. Stone had to be flown in from a nearby source to avoid stripping the site of what little material remained there. Contractors have been working on the site since spring, and hope to have completed the top section by the end of the July. Work on the route will continue throughout the summer and, funds permitting, a final section lower down will also be restored, completing the entire Altruim path.



Buachaille Etive Mor, Glencoe

**Coire nan Lochan** is a very popular path that sees continual use all year, and the work we carried out last year below the Lochan was well received by hill-walkers. We hope to start work on the remaining section by late summer. This will complete the entire Lochan path, too!



The MPMT carrying out landscaping repairs in Coire nan Lochan, Glencoe

Work on **Lairig Eilde**, which began last year, is now complete and the result is a robust path that has been created right up to the saddle.





Helicopter delivering stone to Coire nan Lochan, Glencoe

## TORRIDON, WESTER ROSS

Repair work has been carried out by MFP on **Tom na Gruagaich** to a very high standard, and there is now a fully restored path running up to the saddle. The MPMT also spent time in Torridon maintaining stretches of the Tom na Gruagaich path by improving the surface quality and drainage. In the past, Torridon has not been a usual working location for the MPMT, but the demand for maintenance is growing as more paths on the Trust's mountains locations require aftercare.



Erosion damage, Torridon

At 986 metres high, **Sgurr Mhor** represents the summit of **Beinn Alligin** and is blessed with some of the most awe-inspiring views in Scotland. Surrounded by beauty, you would think it would be a great place to work. Unfortunately, the reality is quite different. Hill fires, severe gales, minimal visibility and (of course) driving rain, while living out of Everest-standard tents on the hill, create an impossible working situation at times. Nevertheless, the MFP team worked hard to reduce the scar just below the summit. The long-term plan for this site is to allow natural regeneration to take place, as landscaping is not possible due to the sensitive vegetation at this altitude.



Walkers enjoying the landscape, Torridon.

## ARRAN

Work took place on the path from the saddle up to the summit of **Cir Mhor** using our Remote Accommodation System, which is a pioneering system used by the Trust to allow the workers to stay on the mountain, saving time and money. Unfortunately, the System was badly damaged in high winds and storms in late autumn 2010, so we were unable to complete the work. However, we are confident that the path will be finished by winter 2011.



Laying stone at Coire Lan, Arran

Mobile granite slopes, combined with western Scotland's weather, present unique challenges on Arran with every section of repair. **Cir Mhor** has suffered greatly from erosion over the years, but it is not our intention to create an 'easy' path for walkers on this testing mountain. The main aim is to halt and stabilise the erosion, while creating a sustainable path through the damaged zone.

Repaired sections on the **North Goatfell Ridge** and **Coire Lan** routes are almost finished and they show no sign of problems despite high rainfall and prolonged snow cover. The team used new techniques in some areas, so they plan to revisit the sites to check their work.



North Goatfell Ridge

Work on the **Three Beinns** is scheduled to begin this summer and should be completed in spring 2012.

