



Cowal Way News



Autumn 2015

Earlier this year our management company – Colintrave and Glendaruel Development Trust – received grant funding of £329,650 from the Coastal Communities Fund (CCF). This has allowed us to initiate a two year programme to upgrade and

improve our long distance tourism footpath. We have employed a full time project manager, a full time path ranger, and a part time administrator. Over the next two years we will be investing in the physical infrastructure of the path. Much of this work has been started already. (See

article below). We have also recently installed nine people counters at locations along the Way, to provide us with data going forward. (See article on page 2). We will also be erecting over 150 new waymarkers and new section signs (see our next newsletter for details).

Our investment includes plans for marketing and promotion, such as a new and improved website, social media campaigns, public relations, and collaborations with various partners including package tour companies and other long distance routes.

Path Infrastructure Improvements so far

With our Bill of Quantities supplied by the local access team at Argyll and Bute Council, we were able to identify the key works required. The most challenging part of the Cowal Way is the section near Ormidale Lodge, between Tighnabruaich and Glendaruel. After issuing our Invitation To Tender (ITT) to local companies and on the Public Contracts Scotland website, a local contractor (Ross MacArthur) was appointed.



New wooden steps and railing at Ormidale Lodge

The works have included clearing vegetation, drainage, and installing steps. The unusually wet summer has made the works more challenging, to say the least! Additional

ITT works underway include drainage and board works near Lochgoilhead, and vegetation clearance from Portavadie through to the tank landings at Tighnabruaich. There

are further works to be undertaken at different sections along the Way, and these will be carried out this year and next year, as part of our managed programme.

Rebranding Exercise

One of our first tasks as part of our CCF-supported programme, was to instigate a rebranding exercise. We wanted a brand that would represent our ambitions going forward, which is to be perceived as one of the best long

distance routes in Scotland, by our key target audiences. We issued an extensive brief to local designers and contractors and Andy Walters from Bute secured the contract (which also includes upgrading our website). We believe

that the Cowal Way's strongest selling point is the diversity of the walk – from coastal paths and beaches, to forest walks and quiet roads, to hills, lochs, waterfalls and mountains. As well as the ever changing scenery, heritage sites and abundant wildlife,

the actual walking terrain constantly changes too. We have called it "Scotland in 57 miles". We hope you like our new logo too! It will be appearing on our waymarkers, signs, website and many other communication materials.

Path Counters

A & P Chambers was appointed after a competitive tendering process (ITT). We now have counters installed at nine locations

along the path. This includes eight people counters and one dual cycle/people counter. This will provide us with key data, and going

forward we will have walkers and cyclists numbers, collected and reported on a monthly basis. This will be invaluable for planning purposes.



Customer Feature

Fraser Smith

Local man Fraser Smith cycled the Cowal Way in one day very recently (13th August), to raise funds for his wife's highland dancing school, specifically to help pupils compete at a competition in Disneyland Paris. He certainly got lucky with the weather that day. Here is what he told us about his adventure: "Cycling the Cowal Way was something I have always wanted to do, but just never found the time. I finally decided I was going to do it, and attempt it in one day. With some help and assistance from the Cowal Way team, I started the venture at 6am in Portavadie and finished at Inveruglas 14 hours later. It is one of the toughest things I have attempted (2 days would have been ideal), but also one of the most satisfying."



Interested parties can read about Fraser's adventures at <http://explorecowal.com/2015/08/14/cowal-way-in-a-day/>

New Website Launch Imminent

Our new website will be live very soon and will have the following key features: be visually more stimulating, encouraging people to stay on the site longer; a format which will work on fixed computers, laptops and importantly mobiles (e.g. smart phones, tablets); an interactive map, to help viewers to find things on the Way with ease (e.g. local accommodation, places to eat, local



shops, outdoor activities, heritage sites, etc); search engine optimisation and promotion of the website; and much, much

more. Local service companies will have a free listing, and a mailing was issued recently, inviting local companies to pay for enhanced

listings on the website. For more information please contact Cowal Way staff – see contact details at the foot of page 4.

Baggage Transfer Service



We have plans to pro-actively identify and encourage a local entrepreneur to start up this new type of service business. It is crucial for the Cowal Way to have

a baggage transfer service on offer to our customers. For example, it is estimated that over 60% of long distance walkers book this service before starting

out on the West Highland Way, and a significant number of non bookers decide to pay for this service after setting off! Watch this space for developments.

Staff Introductions

Stewart Miller, our project manager, resides in Innellan. He has a wealth of marketing, business development and project management experience gained with household

names in the UK and in overseas markets. This includes tourism and other industry sectors such as whisky, food & drink, sports, textiles, and timber.

Charlie Collins is a local man, born and bred in Dunoon. Charlie has had a distinguished career in civil engineering which has taken him to various locations worldwide.

Closer to home, he has also worked with the Forestry Commission and utility companies. Look out for Charlie's silver-coloured pick up with the Cowal Way logo!

Local Business Feature

Portavadie Marina

Without doubt Portavadie Marina is one of the iconic tourist attractions in Argyll. Located at the starting point of Cowal Way (or the end, depending which direction you decide to go), the marina has everything you need to enjoy a break: a range of 4 and 5 star accommodation, including B&B and self catering; a choice of eating venues and bars to suit all occasions; and a brand new spa and leisure complex. There are also a number of outdoor activities available, such as walking (the Cowal Way of course), fishing, yacht charters, rib boat rides, bike rental, kayaks, and also a short Caledonian MacBrayne ferry ride over the sea to Kintyre. Within five minutes there is also the Kyles of Bute nine hole golf course, offering panoramic views across the water to the island of Bute. Portavadie Marina has already received many awards in its short existence, including Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence and a Green Tourism Business Silver Award.



Sign Up to Receive our Newsletter

If you would like to receive our quarterly newsletter by email, please send us your name and email address to stewart@cgdt.org

Facebook

Follow our regular updates on the Cowal Way facebook page and don't forget to like our page!
www.facebook.com/TheCowalWay

Contact Details

If you have any interesting experiences and feedback from walking, cycling or on horseback on the Cowal Way, please get in touch with us. We'd love to hear your stories.

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