



The Great Glen Ways Communication Strategy
Ro-innleachd Conaltraidh Slighean a' Ghlinn Mhòir

Implementation Project Newsletter

December 2005

A' cur an gnìomh - Cuairt-litir

An Dùbhlachd 2005

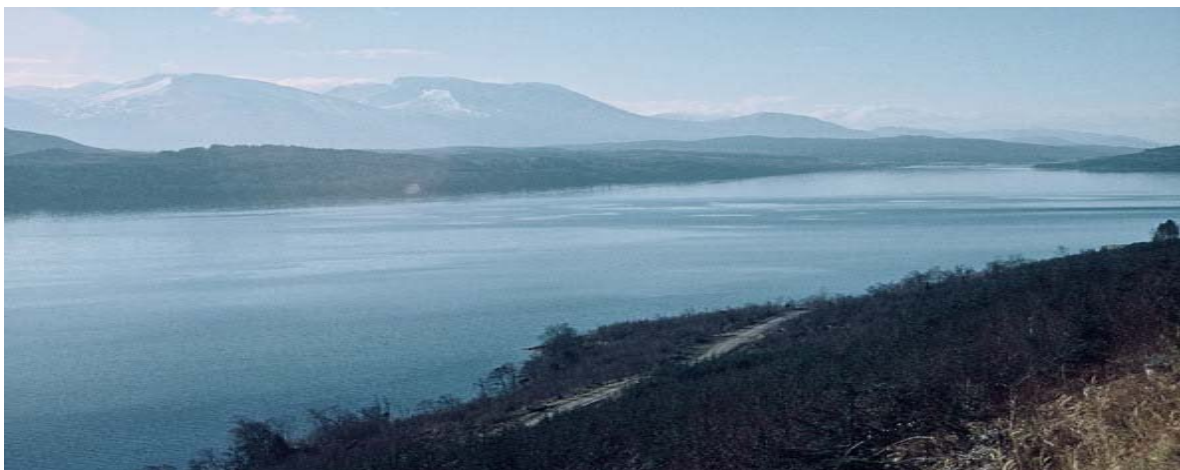
The implementation of the Great Glen Communication Strategy has started. This is the first newsletter issued to keep local councils, businesses and stakeholders informed of the progress of the project.

The Great Glen Communication Strategy was completed in March 2002. This strategy outlined proposals for a common approach to communication along the three routes which follow the Great Glen - the Caledonian Canal (opened for use in 1822), the Great Glen Mountain Bike Trail (established in 1992) and

the Great Glen Way long distance route (launched in 2002). Previous strategies, including the Communication Strategy, (see below) further developed into an Action Plan in March 2004.

The aim of the Implementation Project is to put the Communication and Interpretation strategies and the Action Plan on ground.

The objective of the project is to encourage more people to come and enjoy the three Great Glen Ways by providing facilities for visitors and by



improving visitor satisfaction. These in turn will potentially have a significant impact on the local economy by better employment opportunities within the tourism industry and other related industries. The project aims to support education and improve knowledge of natural and cultural heritage as well as ecological, social and economic sustainability.

Raising public awareness by creating a website, by informing local media and by consulting with the local communities is a crucial part of the project.

The duration of the implementation project is from August 2005 to December 2007, during which time the implementation project will be completed. The actions taken will include setting up in total 31 stone and timber structures with interpretative panels. These panels will include interpretation on the history of the Caledonian Canal, on local flora and fauna, on cultural history and on various sites of interest as well as practical information for visitors. Along with the interpretive material, new waymarkers will be set up, showing distances to the next village or section end point where appropriate, to make it easier for the visitors to find their way. The termini markers in Inverness and Fort William will be replaced by new, bigger structures. All structures designed will have a unified Great Glen Ways style and colour.

The Implementation Project is being led by the Highland Council. The management of the project is overseen by the Great Glen Ways Initiative, which consists of the four main partners: British Waterways,

Forestry Commission Scotland, the Highland Council and Scottish Natural Heritage. The European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) has contributed 45% of the project funding. A project officer was appointed in August to deliver the project in co-operation with partners.



Waymarker painted with the new Great Glen Ways colour.

Previous Plans *Planaichean Roimhe*

Various plans and strategies have been prepared in the past in the Great Glen area to raise awareness, to improve the attractiveness and employment of the area, to manage the area in a sustainable manner and to give it a unified, easily recognisable image.

The Great Glen Tourism Development Strategy dates from 1994 and it grew from the need to seek ways of strengthening the tourism product of the Highlands. There had been a significant

downturn in the level of tourist activity in the Highlands prior to the preparing of the strategy. It was therefore regarded urgent to encourage and support the development of effective partnerships and to increase the level of economic benefit derived from tourism.

The specific objectives included encouraging visitors to spend more time in the Great Glen, to stimulate repeat visits, to attract additional visitors during the off-peak season, to increase levels of visitor expenditure in all settlements of the Great Glen, to increase opportunities for permanent employment within the tourism sector and to maintain and where appropriate, enhance, the quality of the natural environment.

The Great Glen Interpretive Project prepared a report as part of The Great Glen Tourism Development Strategy. The aim of this project was to develop a framework to co-ordinate the provision of interpretation throughout the Great Glen. It emphasised the partnership approach to interpretation. Creating a unified image for the Great Glen was one of the main objectives of the project.

The Area Framework for Interpretation for Lochaber and Inverness areas was prepared in 2000. The key objectives of the project were to promote the understanding and enjoyment of the natural and man made environment, to promote good practices and effective partnerships in the planning and the maintenance of interpretive facilities and to encourage community involvement.

The outcome of the project was that interpretation in these areas, and in the whole of the Highlands, could be very patchy and of varying quality. It was stated that the task for those charged with funding and developing these areas were to provide good quality, planned interpretation and filling the gaps of the interpretation.

The Great Glen Communication Strategy was completed in March 2002. The report stated that it was a high priority to up-date signage and interpretation along the routes. It aimed to achieve a co-ordinated approach to the ways of communication that would ensure that signage was clear and maintained to a high standard, enhance the image of the area and encourage visitors to explore the recreational potential of the whole glen, and thus contribute more to the tourism economy. The report provided detailed, hands-on guidelines on design, provision of interpretation, training, funding, and launched recommendations for an action programme.

These plans and strategies further developed into an *Action Plan* in March 2004. The overall objective of the plan was to "produce a practical action plan that clearly sets out the steps to be taken to implement a single identity to the signage, information and interpretation of the three Great Glen Ways and act as an advocacy document for relevant funding bodies". The planning project aimed to create a unified identity to the Great Glen Ways, to protect and enhance the Great Glen's "sense of place" and to progress the communication and interpretation strategies into action and on the ground.

The action plan includes background information on the visitor structure, risk assessment and an introduction to best interpretation practices. The core of the plan was to create a very practical "manual", giving details on costs, funding and the delivery of project. The action plan contains a style guide with technical drawings on every planned structure, and action sheets were prepared for each structure, stating eg. the site location, land owner, structure style, orientation and contents. Much of the implementation project is based on the information in the action plan, making it a very crucial document in the delivery of the project.

**Profile of the Great Glen Ways
Communication Project Officer**
*Fiosrachadh mu Oifigear Pròiseact
Conaltraidh Slighean a' Ghlinn
Mhòir*

Born in Helsinki, Finland, Anu Hjelt studied ecological zoology at the University of Helsinki and graduated as a Master of Science in 1998. Simultaneously with the university studies, she completed a one-year long Wilderness Guide course at the Rovaniemi Forestry School, Finnish Lapland.

Her work career has involved her with a wide variety of biological field work during and after studies. Later, she has worked as a Nature Guide (equivalent to the ranger work in Britain) at Nuukio National Park and as a PR Manager at the Finnish Museum of Natural History. From 2001 to 2004 she worked as a Senior Planning Officer at the Northern Finland Natural Heritage Services of Metsähallitus, the Finnish state organisation for forestry and nature conservation. The 3.5- year long LIFE/Nature project included

preparing management plans for five project sites, planning recreational facilities, signage and interpretation as well as organising nature surveys and raising public awareness on nature conservation.

If you have any questions, ideas or you want to know more about the implementation project, please don't hesitate to contact the Project Officer (contact details below).



Project Officer Anu Hjelt

Anu Hjelt
Great Glen Ways
Communication Strategy Project Officer
Auchterawe
Fort Augustus
PH32 4BT
Tel/Fax: (01320) 366633
Mobile: 07818 244483
E-mail: anu.hjelt@highland.gov.uk

