

NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND MEDIA RELEASE

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Mountain fire climb as National Trust for Scotland's £1.9million footpath programme announced

Flaming torches have been lit and mountains across Scotland have been climbed as the National Trust for Scotland announces a £1.9million five-year programme of investment to repair and upgrade 273 miles (440km) of upland walking routes.

On Saturday evening a 'Torchlight Challenge' saw around 150 walkers simultaneously climb Arran's Goatfell, Scotland's most southerly Munro Ben Lomond and Ben Lawers at Loch Tay, all of which are cared for and maintained by the National Trust for Scotland.

The walkers reached each summit around 9pm and the torches combined at each site to create a beacon, uniting the three groups and could be seen across the peaks.

The conservation charity has been at the forefront of upland path repair in Scotland for many years repairing paths and setting up a strategic plan to protect treasured and protected areas. The new five-year programme of work will focus on 10 locations throughout Scotland: Ben Lomond; Ben Lawers; Glencoe; Goatfell; Grey Mare's Trail; West Affric; Kintail; Mar Lodge Estate; St Abb's Head and Torriden.

Bob Brown, Upland Path Manager for the National Trust for Scotland, said: "As a charity wholly funded by our members and supporters, we rely on campaigns such as the Torchlight Challenge and The Footpath Fund to help maintain and preserve our sensitive mountain environment.

"Paths not only make the mountains accessible but they protect the wider area too. When paths get in to a bad state of repair people avoid the damaged sections. This leads to 'path creep' as people walk on the vegetation either side, widening the path and damaging the surrounding area.

"Mountain path work is expensive and as a charity we rely on The Footpath Fund to allow us to maintain and restore the paths hillwalkers love about Scotland.

A programme of work is due to begin immediately, starting at Goatfell on Tuesday (30 April). The upper slopes of Arran's most popular hill path attracts visitors all year round and NTS has undertaken work on the path to ensure that visitors can continue to enjoy this spectacular area but until now, work has been small scale and reactive.

Just days after the Torchlight Challenge, a team of local contractors will be hauling tools up the mountain to begin work on a phased restoration of the top sections of Goatfell, ensuring that both habitat and landscape are protected and allow continued enjoyment of Arran's best-loved mountain.

Mark Bishop, Director of Customer & Cause at National Trust for Scotland, said: “Our new footpath programme is our most ambitious yet and, with the help of our loyal supporters, we will be able to implement crucial repairs and maintenance to guarantee the future of Scotland’s most stunning and significant landscapes.

“The Torchlight Challenge teams have got us off to a flying start with their fundraising efforts, all of which will play a vital role in protecting and preserving Scotland’s treasured sights and landscapes.”

To find out more about supporting the National Trust for Scotland, go to www.nts.org.uk/donate

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