

19 August 2024

LOCAL COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTES TO IMPROVEMENTS AT CORRIESHALLOCH TO ENHANCE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

- **Conservation charity has added new footpath, viewing platform and interpretation at Corrieshalloch Gateway to Nature.**
- **Enhancements follow visitor and community feedback.**
- **The new additions were made possible thanks to funding raised by players of People's Postcode Lottery**

Visitors to Corrieshalloch Gorge Gateway to Nature can now discover new areas of the Wester Ross gorge following more improvements by the National Trust for Scotland, a year after its opening.

New views of the River Droma's waterfalls have been opened following the construction of 1km of new footpaths to make more of the landscape surrounding the gorge accessible to visitors. Alongside the footpath route, new interpretation, audio descriptions and a sensory 3D orientation map of Corrieshalloch have also been introduced to share the untold stories of the gorge and how it was formed over the course of history.

The new features at Corrieshalloch Gateway to Nature, cared for and protected by the conservation charity, have been developed following feedback from visitors and locals. Over 100 visitors were surveyed in the summer of 2023 to identify the stories of the gorge they would like to hear more of, while the flow of visitors was observed to determine the most popular areas, where they slowed down to observe their surroundings, take pictures, stop and rest.

The information helped plan where the new viewing platform would be located, to make the most of the breathtaking views of the gorge. It also informed the placing of new information panels which share the rich tapestry of stories of the site, including its geology, flora and fauna and the history of its suspension bridge, commissioned by Sir John Fowler, owner of the Braemar estate, in 1874, 150 years ago.

Alongside this feedback, the team at Corrieshalloch worked with locals to uncover more of the fascinating history of the National Nature Reserve and site of special scientific interest (SSSI). Martin Hughes, National Trust for Scotland's Operations Manager at Corrieshalloch Gateway to Nature said:

"We teamed up with local geologist Pete Harrison of the North West Highlands Geopark whose help was invaluable in telling the story of how the gorge was formed. This story was positioned beside one of the new views, at the Eas Stapach (Stepped Falls), which can now be accessed by the new path network. This is a very popular spot to stop and take a picture. We then worked with Ullapool High School Gaelic teacher Lisa

MacDonald who helped us explore the importance of protecting and promoting the Gaelic language and how it can help us to read the landscape.

“The view looking at the second “new” waterfall, the Eas Creagach (Rocky Falls) was really popular with our visitors. To enable easier access, we have added a small viewing platform to allow our visitors to take in this view safely and learn all about the “*Each-UISage*”, a mythical water-horse spirit from Scottish folklore that lurks in deep or fast-flowing water, which we have loads of at Corrieshalloch Gorge.

“The suspension bridge over the gorge is 150 years old this year and is vital to a visit here. Previously the story of this bridge and this amazing feat of engineering had gone untold with many visitors astounded when they found out how old the bridge was. Our new interpretation now tells this amazing story for our visitors to read whilst waiting to cross the bridge. The viewing platform over the gorge looking back at the bridge also gave us a wonderful opportunity to tell the story of the “Guardians of the Gorge” and the ravens that nest here.

“These stories are just a small part of this stage of the Gateway to Nature project. Visitors will also be able to experience a stunning orientation model of the gorge, learn about the sustainability features of the building, learn about our living wall and experience our interactive ranger area, designed for ranger walks and educational school visits. Signage has also been improved at the carpark as well as around Lady Fowler’s Walk. To top it all off Pete and Lisa kindly agreed to share their specialist knowledge via QR codes stationed on the walk for a truly interactive experience, with visitors able to access further information online.”

Pete Harrison, Geologist at the North West Highlands UNESCO Global Geopark, said: “I was delighted to be asked to contribute my knowledge and expertise to help tell the story of how Corrieshalloch Gorge was formed by glacial activity thousands of years ago. Helping visitors understand how this geological wonder was created will add to their enjoyment and deepen their appreciation of this spectacular landscape, and the work of the National Trust for Scotland do to care for and protect this special place. It is not only an excellent example of a National Nature Reserve but also one of the 51 best sites to see Scotland’s geology, as listed by the Scottish Geology Trust. Please do come and visit and immerse yourself in nature at this spectacular site and learn more about one of the unique storylines from Scotland’s distant and more recent past.”

Lisa MacDonald, Ullapool High School Gaelic teacher, said: “I’m delighted that the Corrieshalloch Gorge project placed the Gaelic culture and heritage of this beautiful location at the heart of the development from the outset. The link between place and people is strong, and Gaelic is a crucial part of the past, present and future of those ties. It is a pleasure to work with an organisation that is keen to listen for the beating heart of the Gaelic language around us.”

Martin expressed his gratitude to National Trust for Scotland members and supporters alongside other organisations, such as People's Postcode Lottery, who have supported the development of this next stage of the project.

"It is thanks to the continued generosity of our members alongside the funding raised by players of People's Postcode Lottery that has enabled this project and supported our charity to care for, protect and share the wildlife, nature and landscape of this special place for the benefit of everyone, now and into the future."

Players' funding has supported the conservation charity's Love Our Nature project since 2022 which benefited from £900k last year. Further funding confirmed for 2024/25, awarded through the Postcode Earth Trust, has supported the development and construction of the new footpaths, viewing platform and interpretation at Corrieshalloch Gateway to Nature. Support from People's Postcode Lottery has enabled other nature conservation projects across a variety of different habitats including coastal and marine areas, peatlands, wetlands, woodland, and eight National Nature Reserves cared for by the Trust. Players of People's Postcode Lottery, have now raised over £3.4m since 2014 to support the National Trust for Scotland.

Head of Charities at [People's Postcode Lottery](#), Laura Chow, said: "We're thrilled that funds raised by our players are able to support the new improvements at Corrieshalloch Gateway to Nature. The additions will help to engage more people with nature and connect visitors to our beautiful landscape at the National Nature Reserve through the new information boards, footpaths and viewing platforms. They can immerse themselves in the sights and sounds of the gorge and learn more about all of the vital work of the National Trust for Scotland do to protect and share this amazing place for everyone to enjoy."

Construction of the facilities at Corrieshalloch Gateway to Nature started in February 2022 before being opened to the public in April 2023. The project, saw the creation of 1km of new footpaths, a new gateway to nature centre, featuring toilets, a take-away café and blue and grey waste provision for motorhomes, an extension to the car park to accommodate more vehicles and two electric charging points. The £3.1 million project was made possible by £1,297,071 funding from the Natural and Cultural Heritage Fund led by NatureScot and part-funded through the European Regional Development Fund.

One of the eight extraordinary Natural Nature Reserves in the National Trust for Scotland's care, Corrieshalloch Gorge is located 12 miles south of Ullapool and boasts a spectacular mile-long canyon through which the River Droma rushes. This breath-taking scene can be viewed from a suspension bridge, and visitors can also follow trails through woodland and look out for the rare species of flora and fauna that call the gorge home.

The Love Our Nature project supports the National Trust for Scotland's vision to care for, protect and share Scotland's nature, beauty and heritage for everyone, as outlined in its 10-year strategy, launched in 2022. For more information on the National Trust for Scotland, visit www.nts.org.uk.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

Images: <https://www.flickr.com/gp/133918740@N04/66s1F94Z0K>

About the National Trust for Scotland

Established in 1931, the National Trust for Scotland is Scotland's largest conservation charity and cares for, shares and speaks up for Scotland's magnificent heritage.

Over the last 90 years the Trust has pioneered public access to and shared ownership of some of the most magnificent buildings, collections and landscapes in Scotland. It cares for more than 100 sites, from ancient houses to battlefields, castles, mills, gardens, coastlines, islands, mountain ranges and the plants and animals which depend upon them.

In March 2022 the National Trust for Scotland launched *Nature, Beauty & Heritage for Everyone*, its ten-year strategy which sets out the ambitions of the charity over the coming decade. From speaking up for Scotland's heritage which doesn't have a voice, to improving the lives and wellbeing of people across the country, and responding to the climate and biodiversity crisis, the Trust will build on its work in recent years to grow its impact and conserve and restore more of Scotland's heritage, as it moves towards its centenary in 2031.

For more information on the National Trust for Scotland visit www.nts.org.uk.

The National Trust for Scotland is a charity registered in Scotland, Charity Number SC 007410.