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## **NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND LAUNCHES ANNUAL FOOTPATH FUND APPEAL AS COUNTRYSIDE VISITORS CLIMB**

- **Charity appeals for Footpath Fund donations as countryside visitors increase by 16 percent in first half of the year**
- **Footpath team works in all weathers to repair and maintain more than 300 miles of path in some of Scotland's most stunning locations**
- **Fixing Scotland's footpaths keeps places looking beautiful and protects country's fragile ecosystems**

The National Trust for Scotland has launched its annual Footpath Fund appeal to raise funds to support the maintenance and repair of more than 300 miles of paths as 2024 visitor numbers to the charity's countryside locations increase by 10 percent so far.

The conservation charity's team of five path makers and specialist contractors ensure the 275 miles of upland footpaths, and a large section of the Trust's 155 miles of low-level paths, remain accessible and in good condition for the millions of people who visit the countryside properties each year. This work not only prevents erosion scars and protects the fragile ecosystems where walkers may inadvertently stray from paths, but it also makes visiting these places more accessible for more people.

The ongoing maintenance and repair of the footpaths is vital as they face numerous challenges. Year on year, millions set out to enjoy Scotland's outdoors. Visitors to the Trust's countryside properties have increased from 900k in the first half of 2023 to just over 1m in the first six months of this year.

Three of the Trust's most visited countryside places include Ben Lomond, which has grown 27% since 2022 with over 31k visitors; Grey Mare's Tail, which has increased 34% over the same period to 25k; and St Abb's Head, which has grown by 86% to 51k visitors - an increase of 24k people.

High footfall naturally wears the paths down and when coupled with the Scottish weather's swings from sun to snow in a single day, erosion is exacerbated, which risks lasting damage to the countryside and its vulnerable biodiversity. Additional funding is necessary to support these crucial ongoing works.

Bob Brown, Upland Path Manager for the National Trust for Scotland, said: "Our footpaths lead visitors to Scotland's nature, heritage, and beauty so it's crucial we provide our footpath team with the resources they need to maintain them. Their work is vast and wide-ranging, including recent rebuilding work at Grey Mare's Tail where flash flooding blasted holes into the path.

"Walkers inadvertently carved new routes through delicate ecosystems as they strayed from the flooded path into the surrounding habitats, endangering native flora and

fauna. The footpath team not only repaired the damaged sections, but they also helped protect it in future by improving drainage systems to mitigate increased flooding. This is often made especially challenging due to many of the sites we work on having important geological and botanical attributes and Special Scientific Interest categorisation. Rather than use existing but protected materials on site, all rebuilding materials are acquired elsewhere and airlifted in.

“By maintaining and repairing footpaths that blend seamlessly into the landscape, they ensure everyone can enjoy the unique beauty of our hills and mountains, both today and for those that follow in our footsteps.”

Donations to the Footpath Fund help the Trust to progress its ambitious mountain path restoration plan to tackle damaged sites at Ben Lawers, Ben Lomond, Glencoe, Goatfell, Torridon, and Kintail.

They also support pre-emptive work to counter the effects of increased visitor numbers and climate change on natural habitats and footpaths; conduct audits on the state of lowland paths and develop a plan of work to ensure they're maintained to the highest standards; and trial new repair techniques to ensure work continues to be as effective and sustainable as possible.

For more information or to make a donation, visit: <https://www.nts.org.uk/footpath>

## **ENDS**

### **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.

Scotland's largest membership organisation, the National Trust for Scotland relies on the support of its members and donors to carry out its important work.

For more information on the National Trust for Scotland visit [www.nts.org.uk](http://www.nts.org.uk).

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