

Lumphanan Paths Group: The Comply Heritage Path Project

Scotways Small Grant 2021-2022 Report:

The purpose of this application was to seek funding to complete clearing and draining a local right of way from Lumphanan Old School to Milton of Auchenhove GK24, locally known as The Comply.

In the days before the Old Schoolhouse was closed in the 1960's, this route was used for many years by children from the West Side of Lumphanan to reach school. It is recognised as a Heritage Path by Scotways. Lumphanan Old School appears on maps dating back to mid 19th Century and The Comply is shown as part of a longer track crossing over the hill via Loch Coull towards Tarland, and it has been sign posted at each end by the Scottish Rights of Way & Access Society.

Opening up The Comply would allow us to progress the Lumphanan Paths Group's overarching aim to reinstate local rights of way and other recognised routes to reconnect the village of Lumphanan with neighbouring villages.

The track has become overgrown and waterlogged due to blocked drains and ditches rendering it impassable. We have already secured full funding to repair the bridge where it crosses a burn, and to rehang access gates (Marr Area Partnership + matched funds LPG) and matching funding has been awarded from NESTRANS.

We have completed most of the drainage and ditching work which was the priority to make the path passable again. This was achieved through funds awarded by Scotways. The source of the water causing most of the problems was traced to a broken pipe near the top of the track. This was easily repaired and rerouted into a new ditch. This work took less time than anticipated and the path is drying out well. Our volunteers also reduced work time by the contractor by completely clearing undergrowth which would hamper his progress.

More work is still required further down the track where it crosses a small burn. We have funds from Aberdeenshire's Community Mental Health & Wellbeing (AVA) to repair the bridge and reinstate gates either side of the crossing. This will also involve our ditching Contractor in further work to direct surface water back into the burn. This will be done as the ground continues to dry out and conditions improve to allow heavy plant to access this part of the track with minimum damage to the ground.

After lockdown, more people locally came to appreciate the paths in our area and are now aware of the work we are doing to improve their access to the countryside. We have attracted more willing and skilled volunteers and their efforts have really made a huge difference. The large sitka spruce blocking the top of the path has been removed and the broom and gorse has been cleared making our contractors work more efficient.



Sitka Spruce blocking the top of the Track close to the Old School....



...this was removed most efficiently by one of our skilled volunteers (a tree surgeon)

.. a level area was cleared and will form a base for a memorial bench to Betty Moir who lived along The Comply (see People and Places page on our website: www.lumphananpaths.org)..



..James, our contractor at work revealing the well-built stone wall still in good condition, and evidence for a cobbled track surface 30cm or more down beneath the mud...



...and a broken pipe responsible for the worst of the flooding



...now fixed and working well.

Our wonderful volunteers hard at work clearing and burning undergrowth and overgrowth on one of several work days since the beginning of the year....



Summary:

We have now completed the work for the Scotways funded part of the project.



Top section from Old School down to the bottom of the hill....

Looking East from near the bridge....

Looking West...



The Comply is now a pleasure to walk again.

Although the work to clear the track so far has been relatively straight-forward, and it is now passable again, clearing the last stretch of the track from the burn to Marywell has revealed that the fence on the north side of the track is in very poor condition and no longer stockproof. The next step is to address the boggy area at the bottom of the hill, near the bridge, by directing surface water back into the burn, and then we'll see to the fencing repairs.