

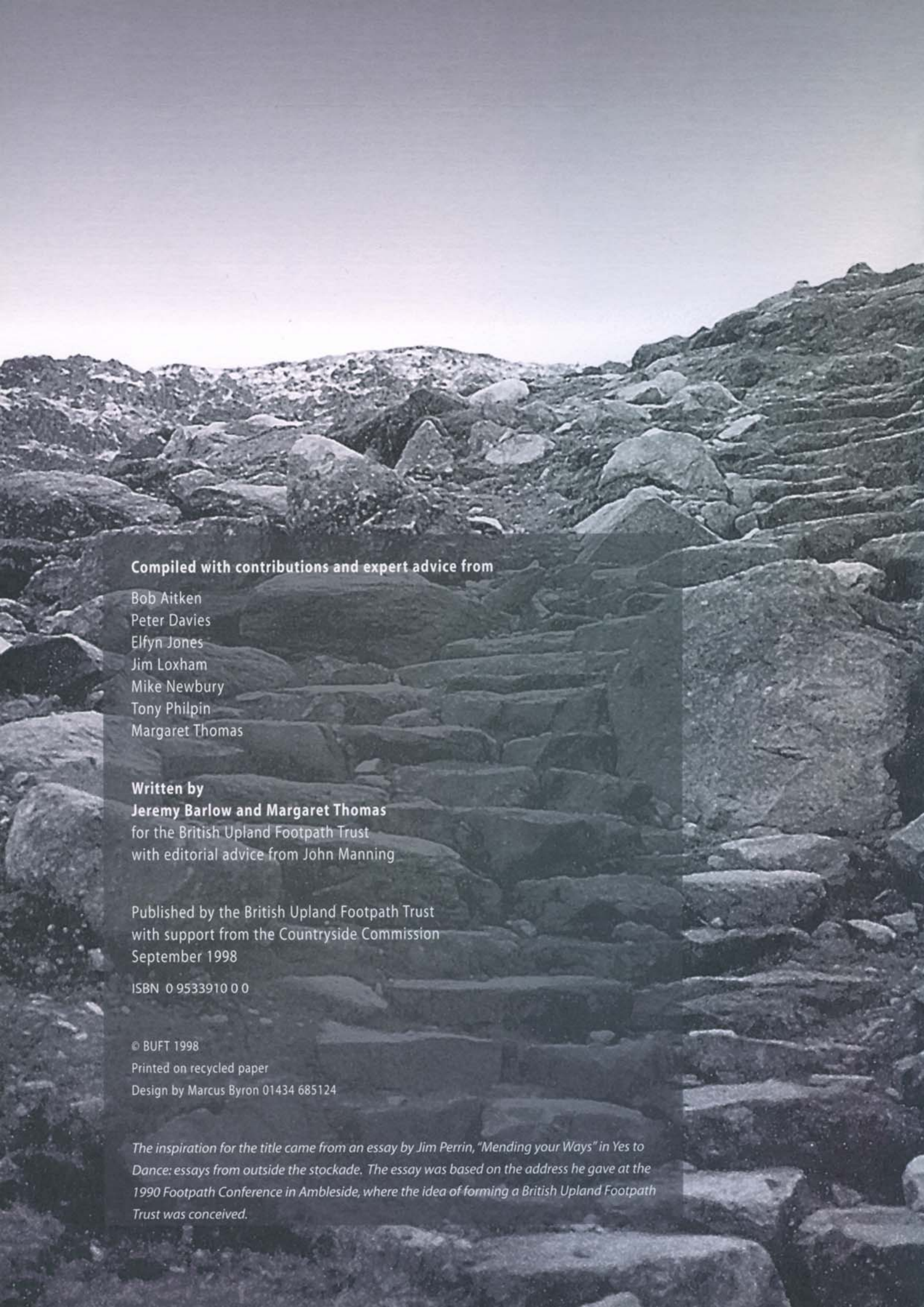


# mending our ways

.....  
the quality approach to managing upland paths







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*The inspiration for the title came from an essay by Jim Perrin, "Mending your Ways" in Yes to Dance: essays from outside the stockade. The essay was based on the address he gave at the 1990 Footpath Conference in Ambleside, where the idea of forming a British Upland Footpath Trust was conceived.*

# mending our ways

## the quality approach to managing upland paths

with foreword by

HRH The Prince of Wales



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ST. JAMES'S PALACE

Like millions of other people, I have derived enormous pleasure over the years from walking in the mountains, fells and moorlands of Britain. The wild, open landscapes of our high country have a special place in our natural heritage. Their unspoilt beauty and solitude provide a valuable source of spiritual refreshment. Yet, sadly, as more and more of us take advantage of the opportunity to make a brief escape from the stresses of modern life by walking in the hills, our recreation can all too easily contribute to the growing problem of unsightly path damage.

The work of the British Upland Footpath Trust, in promoting the highest standards of footpath work, makes an important contribution towards healing the scars of overuse and restoring the quality of the hill landscape. I have been greatly encouraged by seeing for myself, on the Balmoral estate and elsewhere, the lasting improvement which can be achieved through well-designed and executed path work. It is true craftsmanship of the highest quality.

This booklet draws together the expertise of craftsmen skilled in footpath construction and restoration in many different mountain settings across Britain. Its principal message, which I thoroughly endorse, is that quality is the key. Our generation will be judged by the way we care for these precious landscapes and I hope this booklet will inspire footpath work of the highest standards - for our successors to appreciate as much as we do.

Charles

# upland path erosion guiding principles

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**The repair and maintenance of paths in open country are subject to the following considerations that:**

- ◆ Repairs are necessary to prevent or ameliorate visual intrusion and environmental damage.
- ◆ Works should be of a high standard of design and implementation using indigenous materials, sympathetic in colour and texture to the immediate surrounding area. Uniformity of construction should be avoided, e.g. steps.
- ◆ Techniques used should protect existing vegetation and, normally, only locally occurring plant species should be used in restoration. Non local species will be acceptable only where necessary as a nurse crop and where natural succession will rapidly result in their disappearance.
- ◆ The more remote the path, the more stringently the criteria for path repairs should be applied. This will be a matter of judgement but in general, the more remote or wild the location the less acceptable an obviously engineered path will be.
- ◆ Repaired paths should be suitable to the route's use and constructed on a scale appropriate for the intended use as a footpath, bridleway or byway.
- ◆ Before any repair is agreed the question should be asked, 'is there a better solution?'
- ◆ The use of waymarks, cairns or other intrusive features, other than those traditionally established on summits and path junctions, will be discouraged.
- ◆ A sustained commitment of resources to path management will be sought, so that small scale continuous maintenance can replace infrequent, major repairs as the normal method of path management.

*Extracted from "Repairing Upland Path Erosion - a best practice guide" by Peter Davies and Jim Loxham with Gill Huggon, published by the Lake District National Park, The National Trust and English Nature*





*'Growing concerns'*

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*Adopting the principles*

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## the background

In 1990, following growing concerns about intrusive path work on the hills, moors and mountains of Britain, the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) put together an Upland Footpath Repair Policy which became widely recognised as a means of encouraging an aesthetic, environmentally sensitive and durable approach to upland path work.

To encourage adoption and implementation of the policy's principles, and to help generate funds for upland path work, it was decided that a new trust should be formed and in 1992 the BMC, the Ramblers' Association, the Mountaineering Council of Scotland and the Camping and Outdoor Leisure Association came together to form the British Upland Footpath Trust (BUFT).

In the following year the Lake District National Park Authority, the National Trust and English Nature formed the Lake District Access Management Group, and developed the principles further to

provide a common standard for Lake District path work. These were the basis of the book *Repairing Upland Path Erosion A Best Practice Guide*, published in 1996.

In 1995 these developed principles were endorsed by the House of Commons Environment Select Committee as best practice guidelines for the repair and maintenance of upland paths. The Countryside Commission was given the task of promoting them and encouraging their use.

In September 1996 more than 80 upland managers and path practitioners, representing more than 30 organisations from all corners of Britain, gathered at a workshop in the Lake District. Many were already incorporating the principles into upland path management but there was overwhelming support for a new publication to provide a clear understanding of them.

# 'mending our ways'

## the quality approach

Upland paths help ever increasing numbers to appreciate the freedom of quiet enjoyment. As such they contribute to the economy of the uplands. Sustaining their use is therefore an investment in the safekeeping of the upland landscape, and its varied habitats, that is an integral part of our natural heritage. Among all who enjoy the hills there is widening understanding that management, with the quality approach, is now essential.

Most paths in an upland landscape intrude to some degree, whether eroded or managed. The challenge is to maintain them and, while ensuring that people continue to enjoy them, sensitively minimise the intrusion of erosion and its disturbance to habitats and wildlife. Good path management does not tame the uplands but protects and enhances their value and biodiversity.

The Guiding Principles for the quality approach to upland path work are now established. **mending our ways** emphasises their importance and the continuing need for understanding, commitment and consensus from all involved, from funders to path workers, and users. To achieve consistent good quality of upland path management it aims to clarify the principles, and the important issues. It has two main purposes:

- ◆ **to remove the policy, funding and management barriers to achieving quality path work and to change thinking on important issues;**
- ◆ **to ensure that the important qualities of good path work can be put into practice and be readily recognised by funding bodies and upland managers.**

In recent years there has been a welcome increase in the amount of successful path work throughout Britain's hills, moors and mountains. The 1996 and 1997 BUFT Upland Path Award Schemes saw over twenty projects submitted, from Dartmoor to Wester Ross, by path managers and contractors intent on producing quality work. But there are also well-intentioned, but poor examples.

**Projects or programmes of work which do not follow the Guiding Principles will almost certainly fail in terms of either visual impact, environmental protection or durability. They should not receive public support.**

The British Upland Footpath Trust urges the support and endorsement of the purpose of this publication, to ensure that path management is successful and meets the standards which are implicit in the Upland Path Erosion Guiding Principles.

With this support BUFT can continue to play a role in promoting the funding and management of quality path work, and the sharing of new ideas and advice, in all areas of upland path management throughout Britain.



## Upland path management has failed when work:

- ◆ remains a visible scar
- ◆ fails to control erosion or protect the landscape
- ◆ diminishes the user's experience of the uplands
- ◆ is not durable through poor design, construction or lack of maintenance



## It has succeeded when paths:

- ◆ blend into the landscape
- ◆ control further erosion
- ◆ enhance and protect surrounding vegetation
- ◆ do not detract from users' appreciation
- ◆ are cost effective in terms of durability, and receive a sustained commitment to long term maintenance





# 'changing our ways'

## the agenda for path management

**The ultimate responsibility for achieving quality path work must rest with those managing and funding path management in upland areas.**

### **Barriers to achievement include:**

- ◆ lack of awareness of the condition, use and changing situation of upland paths
- ◆ insufficient allocation of funds with inappropriately targeted and prioritised funding
- ◆ damaging emphasis on low cost rather than best value
- ◆ unrealistic balance between maintenance, pre-emptive and major repairs
- ◆ poor communication with funders, managers, the work force and path users
- ◆ insufficient planning, supervision and monitoring of work
- ◆ insufficient staff and lack of training
- ◆ lack of commitment to sustaining quality of the work or the workforce
- ◆ ineffective integration with other aspects of upland management

A number of factors need consideration: to justify removing the barriers; to promote the quality approach; to reinforce the principles; and remove any excuse for lowering standards.

### **determine the resources**

Effective upland path management relies on available resources, in terms of funds and suitably trained staff. With the dynamic growth in enjoyment of the uplands, and continuing erosion, increasing resources are essential; for maintenance, monitoring, evaluation and training, as well as major repair projects. A sustained commitment over the short, medium and long term is the wisest way of investing in sustainable paths, the upland economy and the landscape.

### **the financial resource**

A substantial increase in nationally adequate and consistent funding is a basic requirement, but priorities for appropriate allocation need to be balanced. Direction of substantial resources towards acutely damaged high-profile paths, in a valued landscape, is understandable; capital projects are easy to relate to and have an obvious appeal to elected members, to managers themselves and to funders, particularly private sponsors or charitable trusts. With the ever increasing pressure on upland paths major repair projects will inevitably continue.

But there is a pressing need to shift the focus of investment towards a sustained level of funding for pre-emptive work and long-term maintenance. As well as protecting the upland landscape and its varied habitats this will protect past investments, allow progressive damage to be 'nipped in the bud' and, eventually, may eliminate the need for major capital works.



*Enjoyment of the upland paths*



*The erosion continues*



## the human resource

A skilled workforce is essential to achieve quality work on the ground. Higher levels of management need to make a commitment to staff provision and direction if the full work force, from path manager to path worker, is to be encouraged to appreciate and apply the quality approach. At all levels there should be good financial reward for skilled work; more opportunities for training and skill sharing; improvements in vocational qualifications; greater job security; all resulting in committed motivation.



*The skilled workforce*

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## know the path system

If funds are short and path erosion is evident, investing in surveys which produce no results on the ground can be a difficult decision for managers. But subjective “quick-fix fire fighting” may not provide the right long-term solution and will often prove a waste of valuable resources which, with strategic planning, could be better spent on understanding the problems.



*The wrong long-term solution*

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*Obvious severe erosion*

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## survey the condition

Surveys are essential in objective path management. Severe erosion may be obvious but an understanding of the changing condition of all parts of the upland path system comes from comprehensive condition surveys and subsequent monitoring. The comparative and changing condition will indicate the priorities and levels of maintenance, pre-emptive and major work programming.

## survey the use

Path managers often rely on familiarity with use for a complete picture. This can rarely be comprehensive, especially over a wide area. Structured surveys of numbers, patterns and needs will identify why problems have occurred and may continue to occur. They also highlight essential elements to build into path design for success. Usage trends, particularly continuing growth, have important implications for deciding on management techniques, and on long term maintenance plans.

## integrate management

Condition and use surveys identify where erosion can be tackled through positive user management, for example encouraging the use of more sustainable paths with appropriate car parking, visitor information or, if practical, by diverting or resting a path. Where path work is necessary, positive user management remains an important aspect.



## make good use of knowledge and resources

Appraisal of the path system's changing situation gives managers a source of information with which to reach decisions about planning and prioritising work, and prepare bids for funding. Available human and financial resources can be balanced and targeted to prioritised maintenance programmes and major works.

### **maintenance**

Shifting the balance of prioritised funds will promote the principle of a sustained commitment of resources for maintenance. This should be a priority throughout all stages of path management, from long term monitoring and maintenance of undamaged paths to after-care of restoration work. Combined with minimal intervention or pre-emptive work on eroding paths this can avoid, or delay, serious erosion. High-cost, major impact, restoration works will, ultimately, take place rarely and only where still found to be essential.

If the investment of time, money and skill in any completed work is not to be wasted after-care maintenance needs planning before work starts and including in the original bid for funding. An effectively planned, specified and implemented programme, based on knowledge of the condition and use, can do away with the need for further major repairs.



*Evidence of after-care maintenance*



*Development of path erosion - before*



*After - erosion stalled with pre-emptive path definition and landscaping*



## major works

Major works will be necessary if pre-emptive work can't provide a sustainable solution, or when a built path has failed through lack of maintenance or bad design, specification or supervision. Resources must be available to achieve high standards in these throughout the entire path work process.



*Failed built path - poor design compounded by lack of maintenance*

**design** - as the starting point for all good path work, the design must be right. Tried and tested techniques should be adapted to local situations, and continually improved to achieve the principles. The views of interested organisations and users need to be considered.

**specification** - detailed specification of the design, techniques, and end-product, provides a basis for quality control and achieving the principles on the ground. Clear specifications can be effectively communicated to path workers, and reinforced through supervision.

**supervision** - continuity of management and supervision, with regular inspection of work in progress, is fundamental to maintaining quality, and path workers' morale. Supervisors should appreciate the principles and be committed to achieving quality.

Sharing skills and experience, and learning from results on the ground, is important for continual improvement in design, specification and supervision to achieve the quality required. Managers should provide the support and staff time for this to be effective. The quality approach needs to be continually emphasised to all involved.

Funders and senior managers must be satisfied that all management and design options have been investigated and high standards have been implemented.

## improve and sustain the quality

### evaluation

How successfully a project's objectives are being met should be checked through all stages of the work. Such checks can identify improvements for any management aspect of both it and future projects. Evaluation is useful in training path workers, supervisors and managers. Importantly it can indicate to funders that the quality approach works.

### monitoring

Resources must be available to monitor completed path work, especially through the bedding-in period, to ensure that drains are effective; landscaping has 'taken'; and path use is contained. Use of restored lines should be assessed, as changing patterns may aggravate further erosion. If the path line isn't used then an objective of the work has failed. User-appreciation is an important element in determining success, and the need for improvement.



*Path use not contained - aggravating erosion*

### further training

Path workers must be encouraged to appreciate and achieve good path work, with pride in craftsmanship continually promoted. Resources should be available for training programmes to improve, update and consolidate the skills and quality of all involved, as an important part of funding path management.



## integrate upland management

Path management needs integrating with other aspects of upland and recreation management if it is to succeed, and help people to see, understand and appreciate more of our natural heritage. The views of all interested organisations and users should be considered. The principles alone cannot ensure erosion control, particularly where unsustainable grazing levels intensify wider erosion and hinder habitat and landscape



*The scars of unsustainable grazing levels*

restoration. While this specific barrier to success might not be within the control of the path manager it remains a crucial issue, with far reaching implications, and a nation-wide issue that must be addressed. Other important aspects include the siting of car parks and visitor facilities, organised 'events', path promotion, and recreational, or agricultural, vehicle use.



*Management implications of badly sited visitor facilities*

## communicate the objectives

This is an important element of implementing the quality approach to upland path management.

**path workers** need clearly specified path designs, reinforced by committed supervision. They should be involved in practical decisions about the design and specification of works, both before and during the works.

**path users'** role and responsibilities should be emphasised, with encouragement to monitor the quality of path repairs. Their views should be sought and constructive criticism acted on, so long as other aspects of quality are not compromised.

**funders and managers** must be aware of the principles involved, appreciate the reasons for failure and success and acknowledge the objective to achieve 'the best' - not just 'good enough'. The 'quality approach' will fail if funds continue to be available for poor or inadequate work.



# 'managing our ways'

## putting the principles into practice

### quality management of upland path repair

Path work should comprise the minimum required to prevent visual intrusion, repair damage and prevent further erosion. High standards of appropriate design, specification and supervision are the goal throughout. Maintenance starts and completes the process, and should continue through future management. At all stages the question should be 'is maintenance or pre-emptive work sufficient?'

### start maintenance before path damage occurs

Planned and managed programmes of routine maintenance are essential to halt or prevent erosion. Regular monitoring of the path network condition is necessary to be familiar with places where problems are, or might occur in future. Early management can then be initiated - particularly regular vegetation support and drainage control which may be all that is ever required. Where feasible small path diversions might be appropriate to allow vegetation to recover.



*Problem developing - drainage control and vegetation support needed*

### if damage occurs, pre-empt the need for repair

Early recognition and action are vital and save money. When maintenance can not cope with the level of erosion, pre-emptive work may prevent major repairs. Effective drainage control and vegetation management can prevent vegetation and soil loss; small improvements to the path surface and surrounding ground can prevent off-path use and widening erosion. Pre-emptive work should be of equivalent design and quality to major works.



*Major repairs pre-empted - loose stone removed to define an improved surface*



## if major repair is unavoidable follow the guidelines

### use appropriate, local, natural materials

Locally-derived, indigenous materials that blend with the surroundings should be used whenever possible. Imported stone, when it has to be used, should match in geology, colour and texture. If man-made materials are unavoidable for drainage, or non-biodegradable geo-textiles considered the only technical solution, they should be completely, and permanently, hidden.



*Locally derived stone - blending with surroundings*



*Naturally derived local material - giving a natural appearance to path surface*



*Locally imported stone not matching local geology - man made drainage material and path edging not hidden*



*Man made drainage material - not permanently hidden*



*Locally derived stone successfully used for drainage*



## avoid uniformity

Visual uniformity can be avoided by varying the line, angle and width of the path, particularly with sensitive landscaping of the path edges. Surface material should have a natural appearance. Regular “stepping” on pitched paths should be avoided. Formal steps should not be used at all.



*Uniformity avoided with varied width and line*



*Path edges softened and width varied with sensitive landscaping*



*Unsuitable uniformity of path surface, width and line*



*Stepping not avoided, unsuitable uniform stone used and path edges insensitively landscaped*



*Regular stepping avoided on a pitched path*



## restore and enhance the surrounding environment

Restoration methods should prevent further habitat damage and promote re-colonisation of natural species from the surrounding area. Path lines that minimise visual intrusion and damage to landscape features and prevent short-cutting should be chosen. Landscaping with and around natural features can contain use of the path, naturalise path edges and stabilise eroded slopes. Barriers or fencing should only be used when temporary and crucial to protect vegetated areas.



*Successful re-colonisation of native species*

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*Selected path line minimising visual intrusion*

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*Path line and landscaping unsuccessful in preventing short cutting*

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*Landscaping, using natural features, successfully containing path use*

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*Fencing protecting revegetated area against over grazing*

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## make it appropriate to use

A restored path should be satisfying to use and, with sensitive landscaping subtly encourage users to stay on the path. This can be achieved by varying the line, making use of natural features and making the path better to use than surrounding ground. Design and techniques should suit the gradient, minimising it wherever possible. On steep paths design should allow adequate footholds for downhill use.



*Path use unobtrusively encouraged with landscaping*



*Inappropriate 'encouragement' of path use*



*Appropriate design and line selected to minimise gradient and encourage use*



*Evidence of design and steep line not encouraging use*



*Design allowing good footholds for downhill use*



*Steep path with difficult footholds for downhill use*



### **minimise future maintenance**

The need for future maintenance will be minimised by using high standards of design and construction with durable materials. Drainage should be adequate to control storm flows. Attention to landscaping and stabilising erosion will promote early bedding-in of the repaired route.



*Good design and construction of adequate size drain*

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*Poor design of drain - inadequate size and requiring continual maintenance*

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### **'no tame paths through wild country'**

Sensitivity to the impact of management is crucial in remote areas - doing the minimum to remedy and prevent further erosion. Regular survey, maintenance and pre-emptive work are particularly important to reduce the level of repairs. Where major repairs are necessary sensitive management should be stringently employed. Careful consideration of design, techniques and working methods is essential to ensure that repairs blend into the landscape and do not interfere with the ecology. Where feasible, consideration should be given to resting an eroding path by small diversions. Cairns or waymarks should not be used unless crucial to defining a restored line.



*Insensitive technique protecting local ecology but intrusive in remote landscape*

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*Sensitive technique blending into the landscape*

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## programme maintenance to prevent further major work

Investment in good path work must be protected. Planned and managed after-care, applied to well-designed and constructed projects, should eliminate further major works. Initially, use of the restored path line must be consolidated and off-path erosion stabilised, after which regular maintenance must be instigated. Regular inspection, evaluation and monitoring of the effectiveness of all elements of the path management is the most important feature of after-care. It promotes familiarity with the maintenance requirements, and continuing improvement of quality.



*Lack of maintenance - erosion not stabilised and further major works needed*

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*Investment protected by maintenance - with path use contained and erosion stabilised*

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# conclusion

## the way forward

**mending our ways** outlines a number of issues involved in achieving the quality approach to good upland path work. **changing our ways** presents the reasons for removing funding and management barriers, and **managing our ways** illustrates how quality should be considered at every stage of path management.

Effective management and implementation of the Guiding Principles should produce consistently high quality path work but it's up to those who fund and manage upland path work to ensure that the necessary resources, skills and management support are available. The actions required to pursue this approach, both individually and collectively, are summarised as:

- ◆ A clear endorsement of the Guiding Principles and their illustration here, by all upland managers and funders of path management.
- ◆ The integration of the quality approach into all aspects of managing upland paths throughout Britain.
- ◆ A shift in emphasis towards pre-emptive work and sustained maintenance.
- ◆ An ongoing nation-wide assessment of current and future funding requirements for major restoration projects and programmes of maintenance and pre-emptive works.
- ◆ A sustained commitment of resources from funding bodies to enable these requirements to be met at the appropriate standard, not just for implementation but for monitoring, evaluation, training and project supervision.
- ◆ A nation-wide system for prioritising work and targeting funds appropriately.
- ◆ A clear commitment from all funding bodies that individual projects or programmes of work will only be funded if they meet the standards implicit in the Guiding Principles and illustrated by this publication.



*A feature of the past?*



*A brighter future?*





## British Upland Footpath Trust

The British Upland Footpath Trust is a registered charity (established 1994), which was set up by the Ramblers' Association, the British Mountaineering Council, the Mountaineering Council of Scotland and the Camping and Outdoor Leisure Association.

The Trust's charitable objectives are "to improve the quality and standard of footpath works and maintenance in the uplands by raising funds and grant aiding footpath schemes which observe and satisfy the terms of the Upland Footpath Policy".

BUFT aims to bring benefit to upland path repair programmes by:

- raising the profile of upland path repair work through promotional workhelping
- to improve and maintain standards through training and information exchange
- tapping new sources of funding for upland path repair

Although direct funding of pathwork has been limited to four major path projects, BUFT has developed a distinctive role as an independent body promoting quality and interaction among upland path managers, consultants and practitioners. Two major conferences and workshops have been held and a path information network has been developed. To raise the profile of good path work two award schemes have been run and reported on.

This booklet has been produced, with the support of the Countryside Commission, to further the aims within the overall objective of improving the quality and standard of footpath works and maintenance in the uplands.

For further information please contact the British Upland Footpath Trust at the number below.

Further copies of this publication are available at £5.00 (inc. p & p) from  
BUFT, PO Box 96, Manchester, M20 2FU  
Tel 0161 445 4747 Fax 0161 445 4500



## a quality approach to managing upland paths

### the objectives

- ◆ To establish endorsement of the Guiding Principles by all upland managers and funders of path management, and to show how pathwork can be carried out in accordance with the principles.
- ◆ To ensure that the quality approach is integrated into all aspects of managing upland paths in Britain.
- ◆ To shift the emphasis towards pre-emptive work and long term maintenance.
- ◆ To achieve an ongoing nation-wide assessment of current and future funding requirements for major restoration, maintenance programmes and pre-emptive projects.
- ◆ To win a firm commitment from funding bodies to enable these requirements to be met at the appropriate standard, for monitoring, evaluation, training and project supervision as well as implementation.
- ◆ To establish a nation-wide system for prioritising work and targeting funds appropriately.
- ◆ To encourage funding bodies to only support projects which meet the standards laid down by the Guiding Principles and illustrated by this publication.



The British Upland Footpath Trust invites, and urges, all funding bodies, agencies, owners and managers of upland areas to support and endorse the purpose of this publication, and ensure that projects with which they are involved are successful and meet the standards which are implicit in the Upland Path Erosion Guiding Principles.

### already supported and endorsed by:

Countryside Commission • Countryside Council for Wales • Scottish Natural Heritage • English Nature • British Mountaineering Council • Mountaineering Council of Scotland • Ramblers Association • Camping and Outdoor Leisure Association • Lake District National Park Authority • The National Trust • The National Trust for Scotland • Council for National Parks