

Cally Boundaries Project First Year Report

Introduction

The Cally Boundaries project has exceeded our expectations in terms of the amount of work carried out by volunteers to clear the walls and make them ready for rebuilding, the amount of wall conserved and the favourable comments on the effect which this work has had, particularly on the approach to Gatehouse of Fleet.

While a small amount of work is still to be done on the haha and the first phase of the policy dyke on the approach to Gatehouse, credit for achieving more than expected can be put down to a combination of factors including the efficient management of the project by Solway Heritage and the management of the National Scenic Area volunteers by the NSA ranger, the readiness of the dykers to fit in with the work rate of the volunteers and the positive response to the training provided.

Linking Communities and Land Together.

The Cally Boundaries project is fortunate in that it physically links the settlement of Gatehouse of Fleet with the Designed Landscape of Cally, which lies to the South of the town. Regular reports have been made to the monthly meetings of the Community Council and there has been very positive feedback on the striking improvement made to the approach to the town, indicating that the community sees the project achieving its objective. There has also been positive feedback from the walkers who use the Cally woods and have seen and spoken to the dykers and volunteers at work.

Achieving Targets

The project has set out to maximise the use of volunteers. While the numbers of volunteers working on the project has not grown significantly over the year the dedication of those involved has been striking and the hours worked and submitted in the first year have far exceeded the amount calculated for the local work in kind contribution. The training days have also proved popular and a number of volunteers have greatly increased their understanding of the art of dyking. The project was fortunate to be provided with a kissing gate to allow pedestrian access at Robbers' Gate on the approach road to Gatehouse. This allowed the project to lay on a more advanced training day, building cheek ends to fit in with the new gate. While the project has benefited from both the Galloway Forest volunteers and the Walking Free volunteers we were sad to hear that, due to a change in the funding arrangements for the Walking Free centre, they are now no longer able to participate in community projects.

The National Scenic Area ranger includes the volunteer days on a monthly newsletter sent to volunteers and posted on the Gatehouse web site. He keeps a record of the volunteers who have participated in volunteering and training days. We are awaiting clarification of the personal details required before submitting the numbers involved.

Milestones.

At the end of the first year the project had achieved a number of milestones. However, as the length of dyke which has been repaired has exceeded expectations there is still some work to be done on the main policy dyke on the approach to Gatehouse. We were also awaiting the felling of some trees on the haha and once this is done it will allow a small

amount of further work to be carried out. We are also awaiting a permanent information board, which has been prepared, to be placed at the demonstration dyke within Cally Woods where the wall was completed last summer. As indicated, we have been able to hold a few more training sessions than envisaged and a point was made of offering training to the Walking Free volunteers and the Galloway Forest volunteers, some of whom were also able to achieve specific certificates, for instance in using a chain saw during their work on the project. A school project was organised which was enjoyed and well reported in the school newsletter. Work has already begun to clear the sunken wall and the phase two dyke of overgrowing vegetation and preparations have been made to hold a two week volunteer camp during the summer.

Economic Development

The project has provided useful employment to two teams of traditional dry stone dykers. While not one of the targets, we have noticed that the skilled dykers are giving employment to young professional dykers. There has been a much expressed view that the work has greatly enhanced the approach to Gatehouse. While the benefit of this cannot be measured, the feedback is encouraging at a time when the tourist industry is experiencing difficult trading conditions.

Promoting, Recording and Monitoring

Opportunities have been taken to promote the project in well read publications such as *Dumfries and Galloway Life* and the Dry Stone Walling Association's own publication. The project was chosen by Forestry Commission Scotland as an example of good partnership working for a visit by the Director General, Mr Rollinson. Mr Kanani, head of the Big Lottery, Scotland also visited the project with the convenor of Dumfries and Galloway Council. These events have been recorded and posted on the Gatehouse web site. There has been an ongoing photographic survey of the project and photographs have been used on a number of occasions to illustrate progress. A presentation to the Gatehouse Development Initiative was attended by a member of the Dumfries and Galloway Leader team.

Solway Heritage has continued to provide management advice and has monitored the work of the dykers on a regular basis. Solway Heritage has also kept in regular touch with the dykers regarding their work schedules and is also playing an important role in organising the summer work camp and activities with young people.