



**PEFFERY WAY ASSOCIATION (PWA)
FIFTH ANNUAL MEMBERS' MEETING (AMM)
THURSDAY 3 JUNE 2021 AT 7PM
TO BE HELD AT THE OLD QUARRY BELOW KNOCKBAIN
WOOD TO THE WEST OF FODDERTY**

**COMBINED CHAIR AND TREASURER'S ANNUAL REPORT
COVERING THE PERIOD 30 NOVEMBER 2019 TO 30 NOVEMBER 2020**

Summary

Despite it being a year in which the COVID pandemic interrupted all our lives, we are delighted to be able to report further good progress. The path alongside the operational railway on the slopes of Knockbain Wood has now been completed. This "difficult terrain" section links two previously constructed segments and creates a continuous length of completed path of around 2.5km. This work means that by the end of November 2020, we had completed around 3.5km of the overall 6km of path.

This report, which covers the period of our financial year i.e. from 30 November 2019 to 30 November 2020, picks out the key milestones and highlights of the project during that time.

Trustees, Members and Volunteering

We continue to be very grateful to the many volunteers who have given up their time to help us. During this year the opportunity to hold volunteer days has been curtailed significantly due to the pandemic. However, on those occasions when we were able to organise such events, the turn-out has been great. Heather and Kevin Crockett continue to manage the volunteer days and regular maintenance works for us and have done a marvellous job given the restrictions in place.

As we have said before, the PWA would be nothing without our trustees and our members and we would like to take this opportunity to thank our fellow trustees for all their hard work and you the members for your continued support.

Over the year we saw one addition to our group of trustees. Mia Sabel joined us in November 2020 and has already contributed enormously.

Construction of the path

At the end of 2019, we knew that the next bit of the path that we would construct would be the most difficult part to actually build. Within the PWA we had called this area the "difficult terrain" section. It is located on the steep slopes of Knockbain Wood just above the operational railway. It had received that name for obvious reasons. It was difficult for people to walk or cycle over and it was difficult for us to build a new path along it. However, thanks to funding being made available through a number of sources, we were able to progress the works in two sections. Firstly, we formed the base or foundation of the path with the assistance of Highland Conservation Ltd, and then with additional funding from a local crowd funding appeal, we were able to finish off the top surface. This final surfacing work was finished on our behalf by James Cameron. Completing this section of the path was a major milestone in the project. Whilst in itself it was only 350m long, it linked two other previously constructed sections to create a continuous length of completed path about 2.5km long from a point just west of Fodderty all the way to within 150m of Mill Street in Dingwall.

In construction terms, the remaining sections of path will be much more straightforward to complete.

Funding and financing support

Over the course of this year, we have been very fortunate to receive funding from a number of sources. One of these sources has been Sustrans. We are continuing to work with them on the project and they have supported us with funding for items such as a counter which has been installed at the Strathpeffer end. This counter provides useful information on the level of usage of the path. They have also encouraged us towards appointing consultants to help with the design of the path. Significant progress on this work has happened since November and more on this matter will be forthcoming in our next annual report.

During the year, we received a number of contributions or donations. Details of which are given below:

Sustrans Funding	£22,250
National Lottery Community Fund	£10,000
Dingwall Wind Coop Community Fund	£1,800
MacKenzie New York Villa Trust	£10,000
(with a further £10,000 contribution made in December 2020 just outside the period covered by this report)	
EDF Corriemollie Wind Farm fund	£3,000
The Gordon & Ena Baxter Foundation	£2,000
Pebble Trust	£2,130
Highland Council - Ward Discretionary Funds (2 wards)	£4,000

We also launched a crowd funding appeal and received a fantastic response which brought our total income from individual or personal donations and general fundraising to just under £12,000 for the year. This included one particularly significant personal donation of £4,500 to our appeal.

All of these donations are very welcome and we are very grateful for the support given.

Addressing the remaining land issues

We have formal agreements in place with landowners covering 90% of the overall route. This position has not changed since our last AMM despite our efforts. However, during the past year we have seen significant steps taken towards addressing the two outstanding sections where we do not have agreements in place.

The PWA has worked with the Highland Council to promote two different legal processes.

The first began during the previous year and involved a lengthy consultation process to designate the western half of the path as a Core Path. This process not only involves the Peffery Way but also numerous other paths across the whole of the western Highlands and is now moving into its later stages. The Highland Council has endorsed the proposal that the Peffery Way should be included in the new Core Path plans but due to one objection, the matter will have to be determined by Scottish Ministers. We are hopeful that following a further shorter consultation exercise relating to paths other than the Peffery Way, the matter will be passed to Ministers in the coming weeks.

During this year we also opened discussions with the Highland Council about them using their compulsory powers to delineate the very short remaining section of the path at the Dingwall end, in a formal Path Order. This is a process contained within the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 which effectively acts as a substitute for a negotiated access agreement and lets the Council build and maintain the path. Sadly, all but one of the four landowners involved has objected and therefore this Path Order will also have to be submitted to Scottish Ministers to determine. This process is now at an advanced stage and should be submitted in the coming weeks.

Progress since November 2020

Although not formally part of this report, since last November, we have already made further progress with the construction of another 360m of path at the Strathpeffer end taking the path up to the boundary with Millnain Croft. This has been funded with a grant from the landfill tax fund administered by FCC Communities Foundation and was constructed by John Grant.

We have also completed a link path from Fodderty Cemetery car park around the outside of the cemetery to connect with the main path at Fodderty bridge. We are very grateful to the Locketts at Knockbain for their support and help with this link path.

Next steps

Our plan for the remainder of 2021 is to apply to the recently re-opened SRDP fund for funding to cover the construction works on the remaining 1.2km of path where we have landowner agreements in place. If successful, these works should be carried out during 2022 and will leave us with only two short sections to complete.

Volunteer days

One of the many achievements accomplished by our volunteers during the year was the planting of around 900 trees on Knockbain land adjacent to the path as it drops down to the Mart Field at the eastern end. In years to come these trees will create a leafy lane for us all to enjoy.

Whilst the number of volunteer days this last year has been far fewer due to the Covid restrictions, we are keen to get them back to their normal frequency during the summer months ahead. Heather and Kevin Crockett will be organising them so please keep an eye out for emails, Facebook page messages, etc. for details.

Once again, we would like to say thanks to everyone who has supported us throughout the year. It continues to be great fun being involved in the project and if you are interested in becoming a member or joining the board as a trustee please let us know.

(N.B. The accounts of the PWA can be viewed on our website – www.pefferywayassociation.scot).

The latest year, to November 2020, has already been approved and registered with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).

Ron McAulay (Chair) and Ian Searle (Treasurer)
May 2021.