

# Volunteers learn workplace skills as they make Brathay's boathouse accessible to all



Volunteers from Network Rail have built an accessible path to Brathay's boat house and gained a business benefit in the process.

As an act of corporate social responsibility, over 30 staff, working with Network Rail partners Stobart Rail, Amco, QTS, Murphy and Travis Perkins, spent six days building the new path for us.

The 450 metre long path navigates fields and the varying gradients between Brathay Hall and the boathouse on the Windermere shoreline. It was constructed using donated equipment and material including 116 tonnes of stone, two large gates, 1,300 nails and 80 fence posts.



Previously, wheelchair users had to travel by minibus to a public jetty in order to access the boating activities.

Charged with supervising the project was Network Rail's Scott Cowser and Helen Little. In their early 20's and at the start of their careers, they both commented on how much they had enjoyed the challenge of doing something different as well as picking up valuable site management skills in the process.

Scott, who coincidentally came to Brathay's Coniston centre as a primary school aged pupil, says it's been a privilege to be involved in such an innovative volunteering programme that has far reaching benefits.

"In my current job I rarely get out on site and manage a team of people on the ground. It's been a great experience and revealed issues I can plan for in future work projects."

Helen Little, who is half way through a HNC Civil Engineer course explained that the project allowed her to put some of what she had learned at college in to practise. "It has helped me develop a better understanding of how a project should be run and sorts of things that can crop up" said Helen. "It was a big responsibility but I had plenty of support from experienced NWR staff."

Dyan Crowther, Route Managing Director for Network Rail, said it was Brathay's work with children and young people from communities all around the country that inspired them to get involved.

She said: "We were delighted to use some of our construction and engineering skills to provide the new path. It's not only helped make the boathouse accessible but we've gained workplace skills in the process. It's been a win-win situation for us all."

