
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR INFORMATION

Title: Core Paths Plan Update

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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide the Board with a progress report on the Core Paths Plan in preparation for a further paper to be brought to the Board in October for decision.

Recommendations

- a) It is recommended that the Board note the progress to date on developing and implementing the Core Paths Plan.

Executive Summary

The formal consultation on the Draft Core Paths Plan concluded on 30 June 2008. CNPA staff are currently working with interested parties to resolve objections. At their meeting in late October Board members will be asked to approve any proposed changes to the Plan as a result of these objections. It may be necessary for a Local Inquiry to be held on any outstanding objections. Work is also being carried out with partners to progress implementation of the Core Paths Plan on the ground. A system for monitoring the condition of core paths is also being developed.

CORE PATHS PLAN UPDATE - FOR INFORMATION

Background

1. The Board gave permission to carry out the final formal public consultation on the Draft Core Paths Plan in January of this year. The consultation was completed on 30 June 2008 and a report detailing the results of the consultation was sent to Board Members in August (see Annex 1). This paper is intended to update Board members on the process for dealing with objections and the Local Inquiry process. Board members will be asked to take a decision on any outstanding objections and proposed changes to the Plan at their meeting on 31 October.
2. The paper also provides information on work being carried out in relation to implementation of the Core Paths Plan once adopted.

Process for Dealing with Objections

3. The recent public consultation on the Draft Core Paths Plan was the third and final consultation. The CNPA are now working with interested parties to try and resolve objections received. This may involve a specified change to the Plan, or some other particular resolution, with the objector then withdrawing the objection. Unlike the Local Plan there is no process for publishing changes to the Plan for further consultation. Recommended alterations to the Plan and any objections that we have been unable to resolve will be presented to the Board for decision in October. If all objections are withdrawn then the CNPA can move to adopt the Plan. If any outstanding objections remain, however, then the Plan will be subject to a Local Inquiry.

Core Paths Plan Local Inquiries

4. Where a valid objection has been raised and not withdrawn then a Local Inquiry will be held. The Local Inquiry will investigate specifically whether or not the Core Paths Plan will, if adopted, be sufficient to give the public reasonable access throughout the area. Further guidance on the Local Inquiry process can be found on the CNPA website or made available on request. If a local inquiry is necessary it is likely that it will be a paper based exercise rather than a full hearing process. We are unable to predict a timescale for this process, should it be necessary, at this time.

Adopting and Implementing the Core Paths Plan

5. Once the Core Paths Plan is adopted the CNPA will work with partners to implement the Plan. A number of paths within the Plan, amounting to 22km, are new paths that will need to be constructed within two

years of the Plan being adopted. Other paths will require work to improve their surface or signage where appropriate. An Implementation Plan is being drawn up to identify which paths and areas are a priority for work, who should lead on this work and possible funding sources.

6. The CNPA have already been working with different groups to take forward some of the proposed core paths which have not been subject to objection. For example the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT) is already working to develop proposed core paths in Strathdon and Kingussie. Their next two year business plan will also focus considerably on low ground path implementation. Transport Scotland is taking forward a proposed off-road route at Laggan. In Grantown-on-Spey the CNPA are working with a local community group and local estates on a project to develop a number of proposed core paths in the area. This project is seeking funding through the Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP).

Favourable Condition

7. A system is being developed to help identify where resources are needed to develop the core paths network. A suite of indicators is currently being identified to measure what might be called "favourable condition" for core paths. These indicators will help to monitor progress on the implementation of the network and ultimately set targets for improvement. Similar systems have been adopted by SNH in monitoring SSSI's and in England and Wales rights of way are assessed against an agreed set of Best Value Performance Indicators. A workshop is planned with interested parties on 4 September to help us develop this further.

Next Steps

8. A decision paper detailing outstanding objections and proposed changes to the Draft Core Paths Plan will be brought to the Board for decision on 31 October. Board members will be kept informed of progress on the Implementation Plan and Favourable Condition monitoring for core paths.

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