

Cairngorms National Park Authority

Core Paths Planning – FAQs

What is a core path network?

1. The core paths network will be a network of paths providing the, *'basic framework of routes sufficient for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout their area. This basic framework of routes will link into, and support, wider networks of other paths.'* (Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003). The core paths network should satisfy the basic path needs of local people and visitors for recreation and for getting about, and provide key links to the wider path network. The core paths network does not necessarily have to be linked across the entire area. The core paths network will be developed through a Core Paths Plan.

What is a Core Paths Plan?

2. A Core Paths Plan will be a plan which includes lists and maps showing the network of core paths and their relationships to other paths and supporting text which gives:
 - a) an account of the Plan consultation process
 - b) an analysis of the comments received
 - c) a reasoned justification of the choices made concerning core paths.

Why Have a Core Paths Plan?

3. The duty to plan a 'core paths system' is one of the key innovations of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, and the concept developed right from the early stages of discussion in the Access Forum that led to the legislation. The Parliamentary committee at Stage One of the Bill in the Scottish parliament recognised that *'core paths are a vital component of the access provisions which promote access and reduce the potential for conflict between the needs of land managers and those of the access taking public'*. The CNPA has a statutory duty to produce a Core Paths Plan by February 2008.
4. The Core Paths Plan should help to minimise any potential interference that access takers may have on land management operations and environmental sensitivities. The Plans should be a basis for delivering health, social, economic and environmental benefits for Scotland as a whole as well as for the Cairngorms National Park

How will the Core Paths Plan be developed?

5. The Core Paths Plan will be developed through a wide ranging public consultation with a range of interest groups and with expert advice from the Local Outdoor Access Forum (LOAF). The CNPA will work with neighbouring authorities to ensure that the core paths network works across boundaries.

When will the Core Paths Plan be reviewed?

6. The Core Paths Plan will be subject to periodic review at such time as the CNPA consider appropriate or as and when Ministers request it. One option for CNPA would be to review the Core Paths Plan in conjunction with the Local Plan in 2011.

What will a core path be like?

7. Core paths will be easy to find and follow, they will be welcoming, well sign-posted and appropriately maintained. The paths will be barrier free where possible with simple openings where barriers are necessary. Stiles should not generally be used across core paths. The paths do not have to be of a specific type or quality and can range from a simple trail cut through the grass to a formal path with a tarmac surface. A river could also be a core path.

Who will use core paths?

8. Core paths will be used by locals and visitors alike. The core paths network will cater for all types of users including walkers, cyclists, horse-riders, canoeists, people with dis-abilities etc., but not all individual paths will need to be designed or managed for every type of user.

Which paths will be core paths?

9. Core Paths will be those paths identified through the consultation process and will include functional routes in and around communities e.g. to shops and schools, and also recreational routes for leisure. The core paths network may include existing paths and completely new routes as well as some, though not all, Rights of Way.

What about paths that are not designated as core paths?

10. The Cairngorms National Park Outdoor Access Strategy is currently being developed and will provide a framework for the management of outdoor access in the Park over the next 5 years. Whilst the new access rights apply over most land and water (provided they are exercised responsibly), the Strategy has specific policies on improving route provision and quality for both core paths and for non core paths.

How will the Core Paths Plan be implemented?

11. The CNPA have a duty to draw up a Core Paths Plan but there is no duty to implement it. Through the Cairngorms National Park Outdoor Access Strategy, however, the CNPA is likely to commit to the implementation of a Core Paths Plan. Land Managers and owners will be kept well informed of the Core Paths Plan process and encouraged to get involved and recognise the potential benefits for them that a core paths network would entail. Where necessary, the CNPA have the powers to enter into path agreements to allow them to delineate, create or maintain a path over land on which access rights are exercisable.

How will the core paths network be funded and maintained?

12. The CNPA have the powers to do anything which they consider appropriate to maintain core paths (although there is no statutory duty or obligation for the organisation to do so). The physical maintenance of the path infrastructure on the ground is not the duty of any one single party and will be achieved through a number of different mechanisms, as is currently the case. Where the establishment and maintenance of a path cannot be achieved by these mechanisms there may be a requirement for direct funding from the CNPA. The CNPA, along with partners will implement the Outdoor Access Strategy of which the Core Paths Plan is a component part. Therefore, funding of the core paths network needs to be sustainable and achievable at suitable standards in the long term. To achieve this, resources must be a consideration in the shaping of the core paths network.

How will the core paths network be managed?

13. The CNPA will be responsible for the management of the core paths network and will manage each path in partnership with whoever owns the land in question. The management functions will include:
 - a) Keeping accurate records on core paths and their installations and infrastructure
 - b) Ensuring that core paths mapping is kept up to date and available
 - c) Ensuring up to date contact details are held for land managers and other interested parties
 - d) Monitoring requirements for removal of obstructions from core paths or re-instatement after ploughing, and managing any complaints
 - e) Ensuring that information on the core paths network is accurate for reporting purposes and for answering enquiries
 - f) Storing and referencing path inspection records

How will the core paths be promoted?

14. Clear sign-posting and way-marking will be required as well as information on core paths through appropriate media such as leaflets, map-boards and websites. This information should encourage the use of the paths and create confidence in their use.

The core path network will also be displayed on Ordnance Survey maps. The public need to:

- a) Be aware of the benefits of paths;
- b) Know where they are;
- c) Be encouraged to use them.

15. The Core Paths Plan, including the maps, will be available to view on the CNPA website.

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