
CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

Title: Update and look forward for the next 3 months

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Purpose: This paper provides an update and flavour on the main areas of work undertaken and planned to deliver the key themes in the Outdoor Access Strategy by the CNPA staff and partners.

Advice Sought:

Forum members are asked to note the work undertaken and planned. Any questions, comments or suggestions are very welcome.

Action Theme 1: Improving path provision and quality

IMPLEMENTING THE CORE PATHS PLAN

1. **Path Signs** – CNPA staff are currently putting together a project to install new path signage in and around Boat of Garten and Carr Bridge. Initial land owner discussions have been favourable and it is hoped to get the project completed by the end of March 2011. The next stage will be to develop a two year LEADER funded package of works for communities such as Grantown, Strathdon, Dulnain Bridge, Aviemore and Kincaig.
2. **Community Path Leaflets**- The new leaflets for Carr Bridge and Grantown are currently under development and will be published by the end of March 2011 adding to the ones already produced for Boat of Garten, Nethy Bridge, Ballater and Kingussie.
3. **COAT** - have been moving projects forward very quickly as part of their current two year business plan a flavour of which is:
 - a. **East** -Path works and way marking on the improved link between Dinnet and Glen Tanner (UDE4) has started, once this has been completed the same contractors will be starting the new path sections on the Cambus O May to Ballater path (UDE59) on the south side of the Dee. Paths works for the new Strathdon Bridge have started but the bridge agreements are still being finalised. Funding has also now been secured for a new path between Aboyne and Tarland.
 - b. **West**- Contractors will be starting shortly on the Heron Trail (LBS70) in Boat of Garten and negotiations are ongoing on the new bridges over the Allt na Feithe Buidhe in Newtonmore which will complete the link between Kingussie and Newtonmore (UBS34).

4. **The Speyside Way Extension** – The statement for the inquiry is being finalised and will be submitted for legal advice in the course of the next month. Other agreements are currently being negotiated along the route.
5. **Laurel Bank Lane (Tesco Fence)**- Since the Core Paths Plan has been adopted CNPA has been in correspondence with Macdonald Aviemore Resort about the removal of the fence blocking access to and from the resort. CNPA offered to have the fence removed and the pavement made safe at public expense. Regrettably this offer was refused and the potential for further legal costs being incurred was a possibility. We do however understand that negotiations over the Section 75 agreement are very close to concluding and once in place, full access will be restored. CNPA look forward to this happening in the not too distant future.

Action Theme 2: Promoting responsible outdoor access and management

6. **Managing informal camping**- CNPA staff recently met with Invercauld Estate to discuss informal camping in and around Braemar over the course of the summer. Monitoring over the summer demonstrated that litter was the most persistent problem and that number of campers is dictated by the weather. The highest recorded number of tents in 2010 was 24 on the 25th of July. A full breakdown of informal camping across the Park in 2010 will be presented at the February meeting.
7. **Outdoor Access Events**- The Cairngorms Business Partnership Events and Festival Coordinator, Carole Butler, is now in post and will be looking at developing an integrated diary of events across the Park. On the 27th of October Paul Corrigan chaired the third biannual open meeting for Event Organisers and Land Managers. The autumn meeting reviews events that have taken place and teases out issues so they can be discussed and ways to address them in the future agreed. Key topics raised were the Aviemore Half Marathon, encouraging early dialogue with land managers and SNH and making the most of the special qualities of the Park.
8. **Promoting outdoor access opportunities responsibly** – The CNPA is hosting a course for land managers on the 18th of November looking at innovative ways of managing dog walkers on their land. The CNPA is also helping coordinate a workshop at the Scottish Countryside Rangers gathering on the 15th of November again looking at innovative ways of managing dog walkers. We are continuing our support to the Grantown dog walkers who are developing a code of conduct for dog walkers using Anagach Woods. In collaborating with Forestry Commission Scotland, we have funded a literature review of studies into influencing behaviour of dog walkers to make an assessment of how relevant this is for the National Park.
9. **Area of Special Protection – Loch Garten** – The Wildlife and Environment Bill has reached the committee stages in the Scottish Parliament. One change that will arise if the Bill is enacted will be the repeal of a designation called a Special Protection Area. There are only seven in Scotland and one in the National Park at Loch Garten. RSPB have written to the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee indicating their contentment with the repeal but only if substitute powers can be put in place. Both Scottish Natural Heritage and CNPA have written to the Committee advising that we believe mechanisms already exist to assist in the management of access at this site and that RSPB staff and volunteers are already managing access very successfully. A copy of

the advice that CNPA sent to the Committee is shown in Annex 1. RSPB have been invited to the Forum meeting to seek the views of Forum on their proposals but are unable to attend.

Action Theme 4: Promoting sustainable transport for the enjoyment of the Cairngorms National Park

10. **School trips from Aberdeenshire into the Park-** The CNPA, in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council, is developing a scheme to cover the costs of transporting school children into the Park from across Aberdeenshire. The focus of the trips will be to work with Rangers and others to explore and learn about the Park.

Action Theme 5: Promoting healthy lifestyles

11. **Health Walks –** Since April 2010 there has been 118 led health walks across the Park with the number taking part ranging from 2 to over 18.

Other National Park Initiatives

12. **Sustainable Tourism Strategy-** The Cairngorms Business Partnership has recently consulted on a marketing framework for the Park. A further workshop is to be held on the 8th of November to refine draft content.
13. **Land Management Forum-** The meeting of the Land Management Forum will be taking place on the 25th of November with topics as diverse as Wild Land Accreditation and the Deer Framework.
14. **Board and boundary changes-** The Park officially grew on the 4th of October and now extends to Blair Atholl and Killiecrankie. The four new Scottish Government appointed Board members have now started and they are Angela Douglas, Gregor Hutcheon, David Paterson and Brian Wood. Cllr Allan Wright and Cllr Kate Howie have been nominated by the Moray Council and Perth and Kinross Council respectively. Perth and Kinross Council's Core Paths Plan still needs to go through an inquiry before it can be adopted. Once Ministers direct the Council to adopt the plan subsequent issues arising on the paths within the Park in northern Perthshire will be dealt with by the Cairngorms National Park Core Paths Plan. With regards to the other duties as an Access Authority effectively the Forum now covers the new area and new access cases will be taken up by the CNPA, existing cases will be resolved by Perth and Kinross Council unless Forum advice is sought where they will transfer to the CNPA.
15. **Review of the Local Bio-diversity Action Plan-** The CNPA is currently taking stock of the delivery of the LBAP in line with recent changes in funding some of the options being considered are a trust model of delivery.
16. **Recommendations to the CNPA Board on our future work with ranger services-** Following on from the discussion at the last LOAF meeting the following recommendations were made to the Board:

- Note the effectiveness of the unique partnership approach adopted for managing ranger services in the National Park, and approve £148,600 of expenditure for ranger grant 2011/12.
- Approve the development, with partners, of a focussed strategy to guide the work of all ranger services in the National Park.
- Approve the transfer of £27,000 for Atholl Estates Ranger Service from SNH to CNPA for use as grant-aid in 2011/12.
- Note the situation in Aberdeenshire and the intent to develop, with partners, options to enhance the ranger presence to promote responsible behaviour. Any proposals that require additional funding to be approved by Board.

17. Options for the Biennial Report- The last biennial report of the Forum covered the period April 2007 to March 2009. The next report will cover the period from April 2009 to March 2011. Aspects of the report are fairly standard covering membership, attendance, costs as well as particular projects. It seems opportune as many long standing members will be stepping down to provide testimonials from these members on their experiences as Forum members. Other ideas for content are most welcome.

18. LOAF Recruitment- After the February 2011 meeting 6 new members will need to be recruited; these are four community seats, one land management and one recreation seat. The intention is to have the new members in place by the May 2011 meeting so recruitment will commence in February 2011. It is hoped that some new members will come from Highland Perthshire.

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