
CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

Title: The Outdoor Access Strategy – the way forward

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Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to provide an update to the Forum on progress to date with the development of an Outdoor Access Strategy for the Cairngorms National Park and the actions required to finalise the strategy.

Background

1. The development of an Outdoor Access Strategy is a key requirement for the Cairngorms National Park Authority as it will form an important, component part of the Cairngorms National Park Plan. The strategy will provide a prioritised framework for access delivery throughout the Park over the next 5 years. At the Forum meeting held in June 2005 three Forum members agreed to assist Park Authority staff in the development of the strategy. Further assistance was sought and given from the Park Board and from Aberdeenshire Council.

Progress to date

2. The key steps in developing an access strategy start with an audit of supply and demand. These are complemented by a review of the policy context within which access can take place and the resources that have been secured to date. The next stage of the process is to identify key issues that emerge from the audit. The final phase in the completion of a strategy is to develop an action plan which determines a method for resolving all the issues raised. Progress has been made through the first 2 stages identified above and more details of work done to date are shown below.
3. The Steering Group has provided feedback on 3 component parts of the access audits, the vision and the issues paper that was tabled at the Stakeholders workshop.
4. The finalised issues paper was circulated to all Forum members, Park Authority members and all those attending the stakeholders workshop on 25 October at the Lecht ski centre. A summary of the issues raised was also tabled at the workshop and formed the basis for discussion on that day. The summary issues identified, before and on that day, are shown in Annex 1.
5. The purpose of the workshop was:
 - to bring together all the key stakeholders who had an interest in outdoor access within the Park,
 - to identify and prioritise the key issues that need to be addressed within the Outdoor Access Strategy, and
 - to start to identify both the actions required to address the issues raised together with organisations who would be required to lead on their implementation. In addition, some of the risks and barriers that would require to be overcome were also highlighted.

6. Around 60 delegates attended the workshop and a full report has captured the issues, discussions and views of all the delegates. The report has been sent to all delegates and copied to Forum members, Park Authority members and others who were unable to attend. Copies can be made available to any other interested parties on request.

The next steps

7. The report, together with the issues paper, will form the next stage of the process which will be to develop an action plan. The format for the action plan will be discussed and agreed with the Steering Group at the next meeting which is due to be held on 17 November.
8. Thereafter, the draft action plan will be prepared and will be tabled as a discussion paper for both the Board meeting to be held on 13 January and for the next meeting of the Forum scheduled for 24 January.
9. Comments from both these meetings will be used to make final revisions to the paper. Final approval of the strategy will be subject to Board agreement on 10 March. A revised timeline with the key milestones is shown in Table 1 below.

Proposed Timeline & Key Milestones

Date	Process	Milestone
25 th Oct '05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Run Stakeholder meeting to discuss the key issues and vision for outdoor access in the Park 	Completion of Stakeholder Meeting
15 th Nov '05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present progress report to Local Outdoor Access Forum meeting for comment 	
17 th Nov '05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting of OAS Steering Group to discuss format of Action Plan OAS 	Present format(s) for action plan
7 th Jan '06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide Local Outdoor Access Forum and CNPA Board with the draft OAS 	Completion of draft OAS
13 th Jan '06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present draft OAS to CNPA Board 	
24 th Jan '06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present draft OAS to Local Outdoor Access Forum meeting for discussion 	
10 th March '06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present OAS and proposed funding delivery mechanisms to CNPA Board meeting for approval Launch of Outdoor Access Strategy and Core Paths Planning process 	Completion of Outdoor Access Strategy

Mar/Apr '06 (TBA)	• OAS Steering Group Review Meeting	
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Annex 1

Summary of key issues for Stakeholder workshops

1. There is a lack of a co-ordinated approach in dealing with a number of different policies that affect the natural heritage of the Cairngorms National Park e.g. conservation issues and the new access rights and responsibilities.
2. The natural and cultural heritage of the Park need to be better understood by all who recreate in the Park so they can minimise their impact.
3. There is an inconsistency across communities in both provision (e.g. path networks) and information (e.g. boards and leaflets).
4. Upland paths require a Park-wide approach to both management and maintenance.
5. There is a requirement to establish a full range of experiences for disabled access takers including an accurate and consistent approach to the description of facilities.
6. There should be a presumption towards multi-use paths that should be barrier free. Failing that the least restrictive option should be the norm.
7. More off-road and traffic free cycling opportunities are required together with a co-ordinated approach to network development and supporting information.
8. More horse riding opportunities are required together with a co-ordinated approach to network development and supporting information.
9. Water based recreation has a need for sustainable infrastructure at access and egress points.
10. Orienteering opportunities are decreasing because of potential disruption to Capercaillie and there are limited opportunities for other types of orienteering e.g. trail (all abilities) and mountain bike.
11. Management is required to ensure the natural and cultural heritage of the Park is safeguarded at popular setting off points.
12. There is an inconsistent approach to car parking charges and reinvestment across the Park.
13. There is a high level of variation in understanding amongst land managers of their rights and responsibilities arising from the new access legislation.
14. There is a high level of variation in understanding amongst recreationalists of their rights and responsibilities arising from the new access legislation.
15. The public transport network needs to link effectively with recreational opportunities and path networks both for communities and visitors.
16. Large scale events need to be managed so that their impact on the natural and cultural heritage, on land management operations and on the enjoyment of other recreational users is minimised.
17. A consistent delivery mechanism for both capital and maintenance projects requires to be established that makes best use of all available funds.

Issues added on the day by delegates

- 18. There is a need to manage potential conflicts between different recreational user groups.*
- 19. There is a lack of baseline data on both usage levels and environmental impacts.*