

**CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM**

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**Title:** Promotion of paths and path networks and involvement of land managers

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**Purpose:** To raise the Forum's awareness of the issues surrounding promotion of paths and path networks, and to seek advice on what steps should be taken to involve land managers.

**Advice Sought:**

The Forum is asked to consider the issues raised in this paper and provide initial advice on how they might be addressed through an interim policy statement.

**Background**

1. The Outdoor Access Strategy for the Park has a positive policy about promotion of visitor information (see Policy 10 below). The Park Authority is currently considering how it should guide those people who wish to promote particular paths or path networks about how to work with land managers. We have some ability to influence this through the use of the Brand, or through funding assistance via LEADER, the Scottish Rural Development Programme and the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust.
2. Some land managers promote paths on their own ground but there are many others who also wish to promote access:
  - a) Communities wishing to promote local access opportunities around their village;
  - b) Specific recreational groups or organisations wishing to promote area-based opportunities – e.g. the Trail Maps for off-road biking; or a River Spey Users map; the VisitScotland mountain bike guide
  - c) National organisations wishing to promote linear routes e.g. the NCN Route 7 or the Scotways Hill tracks leaflet;
  - d) Commercial guidebooks e.g. the SMC Munros and Grahams guides;
  - e) Numerous websites promoting a whole range of activities e.g. [www.walkhighlands.co.uk](http://www.walkhighlands.co.uk) or <http://www.walkwithbuggies.com/>;
3. The promotion of paths and routes is a potentially contentious area. On the one hand we are aware that some land managers feel

uncomfortable about other people promoting paths or routes over their land without their knowledge, involvement or consent. This can be particularly problematic when a route is suggested that causes significant problems or annoyance.

4. On the other hand, the rights of responsible access in Scotland are extensive and do not prevent anyone from promoting routes who wish to do so. Most promotion of routes and paths is done without land manager involvement – through guidebooks, magazine articles, websites, etc. With the advent of the internet and more use of contributions from users themselves (through blogs, websites, etc) it is increasingly difficult to control how promotion takes place.
5. To some extent, some of these issues will be addressed once Core Paths are designated. The paths will be shown on a wide variety of maps and land managers have been widely consulted in their development.
6. There are four main ways in which promoters of paths could liaise with land managers over route promotion
  - a) **NO CONTACT** – prior to promotion
  - b) **INFORM** – identify land managers and inform them of their intention to promote particular paths
  - c) **INVOLVEMENT** – as above, but ask if there are any matters that land manager would wish them to take into consideration
  - d) **PERMISSION** – ask permission of the land manager to promote (i.e. if they say “no” then it won’t happen)
7. In addition promoters could consider one of two ways that they deal with land management issues regarding the routes they promote
  - they may take a *proactive* approach – any of the steps b) to d) outlined above
  - they may take a *reactive* approach – agree to deal with issues that may arise as a result of their promotion of the route

**The following issues need to be considered:**

- a) The question of “new” promotion of routes – for example, does the fact that a route is already widely promoted ‘allow’ others to promote it?
- b) The risk of negotiations with land managers resulting in information incompatible with access rights and the Code
- c) The insufficiency of land ownership information available to third parties to make contact with landowners
- d) The difficulty for promoters of routes that cross multiple landowners boundaries e.g. a map of the River Spey showing access and egress points etc; a leaflet about the Badenoch Way; the Scotways Hill Tracks leaflets

- e) The difficulty of trying to promote a joined-up network if individual land managers out of a number, object to promotion
- f) The risk that 'over rigorous' conditions would deter would-be promoters from seeking Park Authority funding support or use of the brand
- g) The recourse that land managers have, and to whom, if promotion is having a negative impact on their management
- h) The difficulty of deciding "whose" promotion is having a detrimental impact (ref above)
- i) The means available to land managers to influence promotion

### **The way forward**

- 8. The following steps are suggested to help in the future:
  - a) CNPA will develop an interim policy for the Outdoor Access Strategy on path promotion and land manager involvement with the intention of defining best practice and what to do when things go wrong. This would be incorporated into the Strategy at the next revision.
  - b) CNPA will develop guidance on a set of conditions which could be tied in to the receipt of grant aid from CNPA or other partnership funding bodies, or permission to use the National Park brand.

**The Forum is invited to discuss and give their comments and observations on this matter**

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**OAS Policy 10:**  
**Developing appropriate visitor information about outdoor access opportunities.**

There are considerable benefits of having visitor information that meets the needs and aspirations of all those who wish to actively enjoy the National Park and promotes messages about respect, care and responsibility. The policy for the National Park is based on the following principles, that there should be:

- good quality information that makes it attractive to get out and enjoy the special qualities of the National Park and easier for a wider range of people to do so in full awareness of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code;
- an emphasis on the promotion of outdoor access opportunities within the National Park that can be taken without significantly damaging sensitive natural and cultural sites or features, and information as to how people can reduce their impact on the cultural and natural heritage of the National Park whilst participating in their chosen activity;
- a hierarchy of more general information about opportunities at Park-wide level and more specific information about parts of the National Park;
- an approach that is based on the principles of market segmentation so that different user groups are identified and then provided with information which is appropriate to their needs;
- information about outdoor access opportunities within the National Park which places the information in the context of the National Park as a whole, for example by using a map of the National Park, and where appropriate, using the National Park brand;
- an emphasis on providing easily accessible information about where to walk, cycle and ride around and between each community in the National Park for the benefit of residents and visitors; and
- an emphasis on short or moderate length outdoor access opportunities and information that meets the needs and aspirations of less-able people, including accurate route descriptions.