
CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

Title: Criteria for prioritising casework in upholding access rights and agreeing a status description

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Purpose

To propose a set of criteria that will assist in the prioritisation of casework and reporting to the Forum. Both the prioritisation and status description will be of assistance to all staff dealing with casework and in the reporting of progress to the Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum, and on occasion to the Cairngorms National Park Authority Board.

Recommendations

The Forum is invited to consider the criteria and status descriptors outlined, and offer their comments and advice on criteria, timescales and the proposed format of the report.

Background

Prioritising casework in upholding access rights

1. Potentially there is a linear scale that runs from low to high and all casework will fit at some point on that scale. To devise a set of characteristics that would tease out the full range of priorities would add an unnecessary degree of complexity. It is therefore proposed to run with 2 broad priorities (*higher* and *lower*) and a set of descriptors that can be used to judge each case. These are shown in the table below.

Higher priority	Lower priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Repeated reporting of the same issue from more than one source	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A long-term issue that has remained unresolved for some time
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recent or imminent loss, (or a change resulting in loss), or significant reduction of access rights (e.g. physical barriers and signage)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Temporary or existing discouraging signage
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing <i>complete</i> physical barriers or blockages• Barriers that are passable but only with difficulty or discriminate against specific classes of users.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Barriers where alternatives are available
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Issue affects high numbers of	

people (e.g. close proximity to communities) or sites with significant demand for access	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presents a significant safety issue 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Casework associated with planning applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary land management practices

2. Higher priority cases will engender an initial investigation within 10 working days of the complaint being received. Subsequent correspondence will be determined on a case by case basis but there should be no undue delay in dealing with high priority cases. Low priority cases will be dealt with as and when resources permit and complainants will be made aware of the likely timescales for action. Low priority cases should however be initiated within a 3 month period.

Status of cases

3. There have been a large number of access cases that have been reported to CNPA for resolution. To date, there has been no agreed means of describing their status and it has also not been clear when a case has been closed. A status and accompanying description is given in the table below.

Status	Description
Live	The case has been reported and there is a current investigation either planned or being carried out. This category will include cases that are partially resolved.
Pending	A live case where information has been sought from another party and further investigation or resolution is not possible until the third party has responded. (e.g. advise is being sought from SNH, or a similar third party, which will assist in the resolution of an issue)
Dormant	The case has not been resolved but the issue is not presently current although it is likely to recur. (Issues that are of a seasonal nature are likely to fall into this category.)
Closed	The case has been resolved or no further action is required. (All closed cases will result in the original complainant being informed.)
Out of scope	The case has been reported as a potential access issue, but on investigation it falls outwith the scope of the access legislation.

Reporting to the Local Outdoor Access Forum

4. There is merit in using both the priority criteria and status as part of the regular update on all casework issues for the LOAF. A proposed layout for the report is attached as Annex One. The format does not disclose the precise location of the issue and thus ensures that CNPA access staff and other parties can work discreetly to resolve the issue. The format does however provide an update on each case being handled and by whom.
5. There will be a need to review the proposed system of recording and reporting in the light of experience. It is proposed that minor changes are incorporated as we go along but that a thorough review is undertaken at end of March 2007.

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