

CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

Title: **Promoting Recreational Opportunities Responsibly within the Cairngorms National Park**

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Purpose **This paper summarises the results of the consultation exercise that has taken place to date on the proposed policy and seeks the views of the Forum on the next stage of the process.**

Advice Sought

The Forum is asked to:

- a) Note the feedback from the consultation exercise;**
- b) Consider how effectively the draft policy meets the concerns raised by land managers and others; and**
- c) Consider and advise on proposals for further engagement.**

Background

1. At the Forum meeting on 17 February this year a discussion took place on how to best influence those involved in promoting recreational opportunities in the National Park. A number of concerns had been reported to CNPA over the last year (summarised in Annex 1). In general terms the issue centred on the fact that while the system of responsible access rights was generally working well in the Cairngorms, a pattern of concern had built up over the last year about some aspects of promotion.
2. To move the issue forwards CNPA drafted a short paper with a proposed new policy for the National Park and sought feedback from a range of interested parties in a consultation that ran between 22 June and 24 July. A copy of the consultation paper and draft policy is shown at Annex 2.

Feedback

3. There was a very good level of response with over 30 responses received from a wide range of stakeholders including land managers, outdoor writers, recreation and conservation organisations, activity providers, tourism interests, and public bodies. A summary of the main points made in individual responses is shown in Annex 3. Many

responses also had detailed changes to suggest to the draft policy and supporting text and good ideas about how the work could be extended or developed.

4. The views for the consultation can be summarised as follows:

a) Is there an issue here to be addressed?

The tenor of the responses is that there is an issue here worth addressing. However, the Aviemore and the Cairngorms Destination Management Organisation/ Chamber of Commerce and some activity providers are less convinced and there is a need for further discussion. Several respondents asked CNPA to be more specific about the sort of promotion that was causing concern and who specifically was concerned.

b) Does the proposed policy help address the issue?

Views on this were a little more mixed but the vast majority of respondents supported the draft policy and/or made positive suggestions for changes that would improve it. The Aviemore and the Cairngorms Destination Management Organisation/ Chamber of Commerce and some activity providers preferred an alternative approach, for example, putting in place a resource to influence Web 2.0 sites proactively. SRPBA have suggested that more thought be given to how to influence the promoters and suggested that more emphasis be placed on awareness raising of both the Code and the Act. They also said that CNPA should be more active in gathering evidence of problems, investigating and assisting in conflict resolution.

c) What changes to the draft Policy are required and what further work should be undertaken?

A great number of individual suggestions were made for changes some through making minor modifications to the text, some commented on tone and content. A number of common themes emerged including the need to link the Policy more strongly to the existing material in SOAC and how to address the challenge of influencing the recreation promoters. Many positive suggestions for further work that could be based on the policy were made. Several examples of current practice were given that help to demonstrate good practice. A summary of responses is shown in Annex 3.

Advice sought from the LAF

5. In the light of the above it would be helpful if the LOAF could advise on the same three questions raised above:

- a) Is there an issue here to be addressed?
- b) Does the proposed policy help address the issue?
- c) What changes to the draft Policy are required and what further work should be undertaken?
- d) What other mechanisms might be appropriate to best influence promotion of recreational opportunities

A suggested way forwards

6. The consultation has been useful in demonstrating the range of different perspectives on the issue and the work that is required amongst stakeholder groups to reach consensus. There is little doubt that some of the concerns raised have arisen through a misunderstanding of what is being proposed. In light of this the following approach is suggested:
 - Proceed more slowly – to allow time for thought and further discussion with all interested parties;
 - Further discussion with the Aviemore and the Cairngorms DMO/ Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce and the Activity Providers Group Activity Providers and with a wider range of interested parties including Cairngorms, Rothiemurchus and Glenmore Group and other relevant forums and groups;
 - CNPA reconsideration of the draft policy and further advice sought from Local Outdoor Access Forum;
 - CNPA Board consideration.

7. It is proposed that these discussions will take place over the next few months and whilst this will inevitably delay any final outcome, there will be broader benefits.

Further Advice

8. Are there any other groups or individuals with whom we should be discussing the proposals?

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Annex I

A number of concerns have come to light on promotion of activities that have the potential to cause problems. These problems can impact adversely on existing land management activities, nature conservation interests, erosion and other peoples' enjoyment. The map below provides an indication of the locations where such problems have arisen.

They have involved producing maps of routes that might impact on nature conservation interests, descriptions of routes that are not suitable at certain times of year and images of routes where the ground condition and activity is likely to cause an adverse impact. The table below summarises the location and concerns raised.

Table I

| Location | Land owner | Nature of the problem |
|------------------|----------------------|---|
| Abernethy NNR | RSPB | Maps produced commercially for mountain bikers that have the potential to impact on capercaillie. |
| Glenmore | FCS | Informal bike routes promoted that are within environmentally sensitive area. |
| Rothiemurchus | Rothiemurchus Estate | Impacts on evening and night stalking from mountain biking. |
| Braeriach | Rothiemurchus Estate | Mountain biking on the Braeriach plateau and Lairig Ghru |
| Glenfeshie hills | Glenfeshie Estate | Impact on tracks when frost is coming out of the ground. |
| Balmoral | Balmoral Estates | Repeated use of promoted tracks by one activity causing erosion problems. |
| Glen Muick | Balmoral Estates | Conflicts between different users on a narrow mountain path. |
| Kinveachy | Seafield Estate | Maps produced commercially for mountain bikers that have the potential to impact on capercaillie. |
| Ballater | FCS | Promotion of a route that goes close to capercaillie lekking area. |

The location of these sites is shown on the map overleaf.

Map I

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