
CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

Title: Update and forward look May 2008

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Purpose:

To provide a six-monthly update on the main areas of work undertaken by CNPA staff, not covered by the agenda, and plans for the months ahead. The report is structured in two parts (looking back and looking forwards) and also uses headings from the Outdoor Access Strategy.

Advice sought:

The Forum is asked to note the work undertaken since the last meeting and the main areas of work anticipated over the next few months. Questions, comments and suggestions are all welcome.

Update on main areas of work undertaken since last Forum meeting

1. IMPROVING PATH PROVISION AND QUALITY

1.1 Draft Core Paths Plan

The final and formal public consultation on the Draft Core Paths Plan began on 1st April and will run through to the end of June. A number of responses have been received so far showing both support for the Plan and in some cases requesting a change to be made to it. Of the responses received to date, the majority have indicated that they think the network is sufficient to give reasonable access throughout the area. Where someone has asked for a change to be made to the Plan this has been logged as a formal objection. The CNPA will then have 3 months from the end of the consultation to work with any objectors to try and get objections withdrawn. At their meeting in August LOAF members will be updated on progress and asked for advice on any proposed modifications to the Plan.

1.2 Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust

The Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust came into effect on 1 April and a Business Plan for the first year of operation is due to be finalised this month. Early work will focus on delivering improvements on some path networks around communities and developing a prioritised list and funding package for upland paths. A workshop was held in March to start the upland path prioritisation process and this has assisted considerably in ensuring a consistent approach is taken throughout the mountain areas.

1.3 Funding opportunities for communities and land managers

Funding support for communities is now channelled through New LEADER under the main priorities *Revitalising Communities* and *Progressive Rural Economies*. The programme is worth £1.4 million and will run until 2013, funding projects between £1000 and £100,000 in cost and available to any constituted group, charity or company limited by guarantee. As a general rule funding up to 45% of total costs will be available. Decisions on funding applications will be made by the Cairngorms Local Action Group based upon advice given by the Outdoor Access Team.

Funding for both land managers and communities is now also available through the new Rural Development Contracts (RDC) Rural Priorities, and funding is also available directly to land managers through RDC Land Manager Options. This fund, part of the Scottish Rural Development Plan, is administered collaboratively between SNH, FCS and the Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate (SGRIPD). To help raise the quality of applications the CNPA is employing two Land Manager Support Officers to help potential applicants access the scheme. The Outdoor Access Team will also provide an advisory role to applicants and staff administering the scheme.

1.4 Glenmore Off-Road Route

Work commenced in January on the last remaining section (5.4km) of the Aviemore to Glenmore off-road route. The work was delayed briefly by the unexpected late snow but progress has been good since and the work is scheduled to finish around mid June.

2. PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE OUTDOOR ACCESS AND MANAGEMENT

Outdoor Access staff (FP and AQSS) were involved delivering workshops organised by SNH and the Institute of Outdoor Learning promoting the Code to outdoor instructors throughout Scotland.

Information sheet for land managers finished and ready for publicising

3. PROMOTING VISITOR INFORMATION ABOUT OUTDOOR ACCESS OPPORTUNITIES

3.1 Interpretation in the Cairngorms

The Interpretation Guidance providing advice on how to “tell the stories” of the Cairngorms will be published in June. The publication will be followed by a series of workshops encouraging people to use the guidance to set their stories in the context of the National Park. For example the story of logging at Laggan is interesting but when linked to logging at Abernethy and Deeside and the floating of timber down the Spey it becomes a feature of the National Park.

3.2 Panoramic maps

Three of the five panoramic views of the Park have been completed. Installation of the paintings in car parks at Dinnet and Drumochter has been delayed and is now expected in June. We are also looking at ways in which the panoramas can be used in community notice boards and sold commercially with income derived going to environmental improvements in the CNP.

3.3 Ranger Services

In the winter of 2007/08 the Boards of both organisations agreed to transfer the SNH discretionary ranger grant in the National Park to the CNPA, subject to it not reducing the overall public support for rangers. The final decision will be made by CNPA Finance Committee on 16th May. If approved CNPA will take on the funding role from 1st April 2009 and ranger work programmes will be explicitly linked to the delivery of agreed actions in the National Park Plan.

3.4 Point of Entry Marker Project

All permanent granite markers have now been installed except for Laggan, which is scheduled for June/July 2008, and Drumochter which has been removed from the programme due to the Scottish Government announcement to extend the southern boundary of the National Park. Both the north and south bound lay-bys at Drumochter have been upgraded. The northbound lay-by has been landscaped with heather planted bunds and stone dykes and will include a panoramic painting of the National Park.

4. PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT FOR ENJOYMENT OF THE PARK

4.1 The Heather Hopper

The 501 Heather Hopper bus service will run again in 2008. It will run for 20 weeks duration between 12th May and end of September and the buses will run twice a day, 7 days a week leaving from Ballater and Grantown on Spey. Some services will use accessible buses, some will carry up to 4 cycles free of charge, and others will run in-service from Newtonmore and Grantown. CNPA and partners, including Cairngorms Hostels, are aggressively marketing the service this year to raise the 136 per week usage figures in both 2006 and 2007. The service is co-funded by CNPA, Highland Council and Aberdeenshire Council. The commercially run 502 service from Banchory to Pitlochry via Braemar and Glenshee will run again, over a longer period to match the 501

4.2 The Cairngorms Explorer

This has been published again for 2008. It incorporates all public transport bus timetables, taxi and train information. Alongside the timetables, Cairngorms on a Shoestring promotes a series of activities, mainly active travel options, which can be done cheaply around the Park. It also includes more access information and guidance. It is co-funded with HITrans and NESTrans.

5. MISCELLANEOUS

5.1 National Access Forum

A paper from the National Park Authorities was presented to the National Access Forum meeting in February which sought views on a number of issues relating to core paths. These included the merits of including paths on Ordnance Survey maps, the need for establishing a monitoring system for determining progress and issues relating to consistency in including paths across access authority boundaries. Whilst there was acknowledgment of the issues raised there was no indication that progress on the issues would be adopted consistently across Scotland.

5.2 John Muir Award

The John Muir Award Officer is working with Scottish Association of Countryside Rangers and Glen Tanar Estate to organise a Europarc Junior Ranger camp in late July. Thirty four Junior Rangers and adult mentors will spend a week camping and learning about the Cairngorms with young people from the area.

We anticipate that the 5,000th John Muir Award in the Cairngorms will be presented in 2008 and we intend to celebrate this milestone.

Forward look to main areas of work anticipated before the next update paper (Forum meeting of 11 November 2008)

- Consultation over planning applications at the Lecht and Glenshee to construct mountain bike trails
- Planning and executing the Outdoor Access Event on 27 September 2008 in Braemar
- Finalising the recruitment of new Forum members – to date (2 May) there have been 15 applications for the posts, including 3 of the reserves from last year, indicating a small but strong field again. Adverts were placed in the local press on two consecutive weeks and invitations were sent to various NGO's and contacts on the Land Based Business Training database. A small selection panel will consider the applications after 9 May – the closing date - and new Forum members will be in place from August 2008.
- Finalising the Outdoor Events guidance
- Promotion of access opportunities by third parties – the Park Authority's position regarding support and endorsement
- A review of the three court cases - Gloag, Snowie and Tuley - and an examination of the implications

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