

CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

Title: Core Paths Plan – Update & Next Steps

Prepared by: Sandra Middleton, Outdoor Access Officer

Purpose: To present the Forum with the results and preliminary assessment of the Interim Draft Core Paths Plan consultation for advice.

The Forum is asked to:

- a) Note the results of the consultation on the Interim Draft Core Paths Plan and agree that the main issues identified in the consultation be taken forward as per Forum and Steering Group advice.
- b) Advise on the proposed change to the aim of the Core Paths Plan.
- c) Advise on the proposed changes to the criteria used to select core paths.

Background

1. Under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) has a statutory duty to draw up a plan for a system of core paths sufficient for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout their area. The CNPA are developing this Core Paths Plan as a three stage process. The first stage was to engage with a wide range of people to raise awareness of core paths planning, to find out which paths in the National Park are important to them and why, and to discuss any issues that may be of concern to different interest groups. The information obtained was used to develop an Interim Draft Core Paths Plan. The second stage in the process was to carry out an informal public consultation on the Interim Draft Core Paths Plan, this was done from 1st April to 30th June 2007. The Plan will now be revised accordingly and submitted as a Draft Core Paths Plan to Scottish Ministers in February 2008 for approval to carry out a formal public consultation (Stage 3).

Consultation on the Interim Draft Core Paths Plan

2. Development of the Core Paths Plan is currently at stage 2 in the process. The informal public consultation on the Interim Draft Core Paths Plan is now complete and results are being analysed. A Consultation Report (see Annex 1) has been compiled which details the process, who got involved, the feedback received, the main issues arising from the consultation and conclusions and next steps.

Recommendation:

3. That the Forum note the results of the consultation on the Interim Draft Core Paths Plan and agree that the main issues identified in the consultation be taken forward as per Forum and Steering Group advice.

Aim of the Core Paths Plan

4. As a result of the consultation on the Interim Draft Core Paths Plan it is proposed that the aim of the Plan be revised to better represent the needs of land managers. To this end, it is proposed that the final sentence of the aim be replaced with the following:

“The Plan should give land managers the opportunity to positively manage access in a working environment and assist the National Park Authority, working with partners, in the effective overall management of the network.”

Recommendation:

5. That the Forum advise on the proposed change to the aim of the Core Paths Plan.

Criteria for selecting core paths

6. As a result of the consultation on the Interim Draft Core Paths Plan it is proposed that the criteria used for selecting core paths be revised. The wording of the criteria needs to be made clearer and the needs of land managers better represented. The criteria also need to better reflect the need to include existing popular paths in the network and also the priorities identified within the Outdoor Access Strategy. To this end, it is proposed that the selection criteria be amended as follows:

7. The core paths network in each area should:

- a) Help to conserve the natural and cultural heritage of the Park and encourage people to enjoy it in a responsible way.
- b) Help those living and working on the land;
- c) Help to deliver the priorities for each area identified in the Outdoor Access Strategy;
- d) Provide for a range of activities;
- e) Provide for a range of abilities;
- f) Include a range of popular paths;
- g) Include paths within and between communities and to public transport connections.

Recommendation:

8. That the Forum advise on the proposed changes to the Core Paths Plan Selection Criteria.

Next Steps

9. The issues arising from the consultation and advice given by the Forum will be taken to the Core Paths Plan Steering Group for guidance on how best to proceed. The modified selection criteria and the consultation responses received will then be used to revise the core paths network and plan. A Draft Core Paths Plan will be brought before the Forum for comment in November 2007 before being presented to the CNPA Board for approval to submit to Scottish Ministers.

sandramiddleton@cairngorms.co.uk

8 August 2007