
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: PROPOSED EXTENSION TO THE SPEYSIDE WAY

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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to:

- provide feedback to Board on the public consultation exercise undertaken on the proposed Speyside Way extension; and
- to highlight the outstanding issues that remain to be resolved and seek agreement from the Board on how to take these forward.

Recommendations

That the Board:

- 1. approves in principle the new recommended route; and**
- 2. delegates authority to officers to work through the Speyside Way Management Group and undertake such further negotiations as are required to enable a satisfactory route proposal to be presented to SNH.**

Executive Summary

The Board agreed at the meeting of 8 October 2004 that a public consultation exercise be undertaken to explore the feasibility of a “preferred route” to extend the Speyside Way from Aviemore to Newtonmore: a distance of some 34 kilometres. The consultation exercise was completed at the end of March 2005 and there was a good level of participation. Analysis of results indicated the need to vary the preferred route in 4 sections. Since that time, some further negotiations with interested parties has taken place and a variation to the preferred route is proposed. There are however a small number of outstanding issues with the new proposals and the Board is asked to consider the issues and recommendations for each section where a variation is proposed and to consider whether they are content to give their in principle support to the extension.

PROPOSED EXTENSION TO THE SPEYSIDE WAY *For Decision*

Background

1. The power to approve an extension to an existing Long Distance Route rests with Scottish Ministers and it is the duty of Scottish Natural Heritage to consult with planning authorities through whose area the route passes, prior to submitting the documents to Scottish Ministers. To assist Scottish Natural Heritage with this process, CNPA agreed to lead the Speyside Way Management Group on much of the route feasibility work.
2. The original desire, when CNPA took on the route development work, was to have a preferred line agreed with all concerned before asking SNH to seek approval from Scottish Ministers. Unfortunately, due to a number of on-going discussions, detailed in paragraphs 7 to 12, this has not yet proved possible. Sufficient clarity has however emerged through the consultation exercise and in post consultation negotiations to suggest that a final solution is close to hand. It is therefore proposed to seek Board support in principle to this line subject to a satisfactory conclusion to the detailed negotiations with the relevant landowners. Colleagues within the Speyside Way Management Group will continue in their active collaboration to resolve these outstanding issues.
3. There has been significant public interest in extending the current southern terminus of the Speyside Way from Aviemore to Newtonmore. To bring this aspiration to reality, the Board agreed¹ to a joint approach with other agencies which resulted in a temporary Development Officer being appointed to explore the feasibility of such a route. The Development Officer's report was subject of a further Board² paper which indicated that a full public consultation exercise should be undertaken on a "preferred route." The line was selected by the Speyside Way Management Group having regard to the Development Officer's report.
4. The public consultation exercise took place between 13th December 2004 and 25th March 2005 and a summary of the feedback received is shown in Annex 1 to this paper. A total of 56 responses were received and these are also detailed in Annex 1 and included land managers, individuals, community councils and associations, public bodies and tenants.

Issues raised during the public consultation

5. The consultation posed three questions:
 - Are you in favour of extending the Speyside Way?
 - Are you in favour of the rationale used to evaluate the route options?
 - Do you support the line of the preferred route?
6. There was overwhelming support for the principle of an extension with thirty-four positive responses and no negatives. Thirty respondents did not comment on the

¹ CNPA Board November 2003

² CNPA Board October 2004

rationale although eight commended the approach taken. There were, however, sixteen who questioned the scores given. Half of the respondents questioned elements of the preferred route. The consultation has therefore been very effective in identifying issues with the preferred route and providing suggestions for alternatives. The Speyside Way Management Group have therefore re-appraised the preferred route in light of these comments and have been exploring alternatives with land managers. Comments on the rationale were incorporated into the evaluation of the alternative options to the preferred route. A brief commentary on each of the sections consulted upon is shown overleaf together with an update on the changes to the preferred route with progress towards a satisfactory conclusion. To assist understanding of the proposed changes to the 'preferred route' a map is attached at Annex 2. This illustrates the new recommended route as a black and white dotted line and sections that were previously the preferred route but now no longer thought appropriate marked as a red dotted line. The total length of changes to the preferred route amount to some 9.8 kms which equates to approximately one third of the proposed extension.

7. **Aviemore to Dalraddy – section 1 (8.4 kms) – change proposed.** There was considerable opposition to the favoured line which crossed the A9, passing Lynwilg House, following the Allt na Criche to Alltnacriche before contouring along the hillside passing Ballinluig farm before descending to Dalraddy. Specific concerns focussed on the steepness of the slope on ascent, the question of privacy for two residential properties and the possible impact on a commercial shoot. This route would also have been costly to build due to the number of burns required to be bridged. Other options considered also raised issues of privacy and potential impact on protected wildlife. One option that was not considered during the consultation but was suggested at a later date was a route on the south side of the A9 but on the north bank of Loch Alvie. This proposal would address the concerns in relation to privacy and potential impact on commercial activities. As the estate in question (Kinrara) has recently changed hands, CNPA has yet to discuss the feasibility of this route with the new owners although the proposed route has been communicated to them recently.
8. **Dalraddy to Kinraig – section 2 (4 kms) – no change.** There were few comments received on this section of the route and no opposition.
9. **Kinraig to Feshiebridge – section 3 (2.4 kms) – change proposed.** Both privacy and land management concerns were raised during the consultation and a number of respondents suggested an alternative that avoids these difficulties. The new proposal will avoid Invereshie Farm and Feshiebridge by taking a line from the end of the Kinraig shinty pitch through to Balnеспick farm. A full discussion on the new line has yet to take place with the relevant land owners.
10. **Feshiebridge to Tromie Bridge – section 4 (10.7 kms) – change proposed.** Three main issues were raised during the consultation. The first was with regard to Uath Lochans and the desire to retain it as a little known resource that should be “discovered” rather than promoted through being included in a long distance route. The second concerned privacy and the likely loss of amenity value to residents at Inveruglas. The third suggested that the route was straying too far from the Spey and should use the existing Badenoch Way. Each of these points have been reviewed and

are commented on. The Uath Lochans are promoted within Forestry Commission Scotland's land holdings. There is a car park and picnic area and therefore the argument of excluding the route from this area so that it can be "discovered" does not appear to reflect the current management of the location. Management issues have been discussed with the Forest District Manager and it was concluded that the preferred route should stand. The section of path that will pass the Inveruglas residents is a claimed Right of Way and has been on the existing Badenoch Way for some time. There is therefore already managed access along the route at this location. Finally, the route does depart from the Spey at a number of sites for both practical and amenity reasons. The proposed line will still be relatively close to the Spey and will offer an attractive change of scene by taking in the Uath Lochans.

11. **Tromie Bridge to Ruthven – section 5 (3.3 kms) – change proposed.** Issues raised in relation to livestock management are currently being discussed with the farmer. The fall back position would be to use the B970 for one kilometre to avoid the fields in question as they are used for rearing young bulls. One advantage of this might be that the route passes the popular Ruthven Barracks.
12. **Ruthven to Newtonmore – section 6 (5.8 kms) – no change.** Whilst there was some support for the use of the Sustrans route, a number of correspondents were against it on the grounds that it did not provide a pleasant recreational experience because it was both adjacent to the road and tarred. The most popular alternative was to take a line adjacent to Kingussie golf course following the Gynack Burn and passing Loch Gynack before descending into Newtonmore at Strone which would link into the existing wildcat trail. There is much merit with this alternative proposal but there are concerns from both existing owners about impacts on commercial activity and from the golf course. The Loch Gynack option would also take the route a considerable distance from the Spey and the character would be significantly different from the remainder of the route. In addition, the cost of developing a route across this ground to the required standard would be high. The advantage of the Sustrans route is that it currently exists thus reducing the cost of development and the timescale within which the route could come to fruition. It may however be possible to develop the alternative Loch Gynack route over time.

Policy Context

13. Long Distance Routes help promote understanding and enjoyment of the natural and cultural heritage of the area. By undertaking long walks or rides, users experience the special qualities of the Park at a pace that encourages a better understanding than those whose trips are more transitory. Long Distance Route users also contribute to the economy of the area through demand for overnight accommodation, eating places, pubs and other linked facilities adjacent to the route. Long Distance Routes are also used extensively for short walks and provide valuable links to other path networks. There are further economic benefits for the local area arising from maintenance work. There are also considerable health benefits from such journeys.

Delivering Sustainability

14. A well managed Long Distance Route will provide a managed access facility that contributes to sustainable transport, economic benefits and improve health to both the local communities and all those who will travel along its length.

Delivering A Park for All

15. Contributing to the development and maintenance of the Speyside Way and possible extension is an action identified within the current Corporate Plan. The longer term aspiration for the route is to make it more accessible with barriers being removed wherever possible and to move towards full multi-use.

Delivering Economy, Effectiveness and Efficiency

16. The proposed extension, once endorsed by Scottish Ministers, will be administered through the Speyside Way Management Group. This mechanism allows for the pooling of resources, savings through economies of scale and day to day management through a dedicated team.

Financial Implications

17. Recent Long Distance Route Development has been a collaborative effort involving all bodies who will have a role in the future management of the route. It is proposed that, should the route be approved by Scottish Ministers a similar approach would be adopted in this case. As well as the capital investment from bodies on the Speyside Way Management Group, external funding will be sought from other sources such as the Community Environmental Renewal Scheme (Aggregates Levy). Whilst the capital costs of any such development would fall on the Speyside Way Management Group, the on-going maintenance, once the route is in place, will fall on CNPA. Funding of the on-going management of the route will continue to be administered by Moray Council through the Speyside Way Management Group. The costs of managing the route are shared on a pro rata basis by the 3 managing authorities: CNPA, Moray Council and The Highland Council. As the proposed section will fall exclusively within the CNPA boundary, the additional cost will fall exclusively on CNPA. A full assessment of the additional staffing and maintenance funding required to ensure the route meets the nationally agreed standard for long distance routes has yet to be undertaken. This will only be possible once the route has been finalised and the costs of any new path agreements known. However, an indication of the likely costs would be in the order of £130,000 for one-off capital works which would be shared from the sources indicated above. The additional annual contribution towards management and maintenance is expected to be in the range of £58,000. This would mean an overall annual contribution towards the route's management and maintenance of £115,000.

Presentational Implications

18. There has been a considerable amount of public interest in the extension of the Speyside Way. Whilst the proposals contained in this paper will meet the aspirations of many of the individuals and organisations that commented, a number will be disappointed that their favoured line has not been recommended. CNPA and other members of the Speyside Way Management Group may receive further representations from those who are not satisfied with the reasoning and recommendations contained in this paper.

Next Steps

19. If the Board agree the new preferred line, subject to satisfactory conclusion of the outstanding issues identified in this paper, then CNPA staff will ask the Speyside Way Management Group to take these proposals to SNH with a view to SNH seeking approval from Scottish Ministers for the extension. Approval for the detailed spend on capital and management will be sought from the Board at the appropriate time.

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