
CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

Title: Cairngorms LOAF Annual Event 2006

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Purpose

To invite discussion amongst the Forum regarding the purpose and structure of the LOAF annual event in April 2006

Recommendation

That the Forum advise the Park Authority on:

- a) the proposal that the event is themed around Core Path planning
- b) the suitability of the date and venue
- c) the proposed target audience and means of publicity

Rationale

1. The Paths for All Partnership and SNH's Guide to Good Practice flags up the importance of enabling wider participation in the work of the Local Outdoor Access Forum. It suggests that an annual meeting or conference may allow for the more active involvement of the wider membership and that to make the most of such gatherings there should be opportunities for small group discussion and exercises to allow information, ideas and opinions to be shared and fed back into the work of the Forum. In this context 'wider membership' should be taken to mean the interest groups and communities with an interest in outdoor access matters.
2. Within the CNPA, the timing of the first annual meeting coincides with that of the need to launch the core path planning process. This gives an ideal opportunity to kill two birds with one stone by hosting a 'themed' LOAF event in which the key topic is core path planning. Members of communities and interest groups together with LOAF members and CNPA Board members will have an opportunity to learn about the basic principles of Core Path Planning and shape how it will be rolled out. It is suggested that the day could help inform people about:
 - what core path planning is
 - how the Park Authority are intending to do it
 - how they can get involved

Location and Date

3. At the last meeting it was agreed that Strathdon would be a suitable location for the first annual event of the Forum. It was felt that it is central enough for those coming from both the west and east sides of the Park to reduce travelling times all round, and that there would be merit in raising the profile of this less well-known corner of the National Park in respect of the opportunities for outdoor access that lie therein.

4. Lonach Hall would provide an excellent venue for a large gathering of people and is being currently re-furbished – this will be completed in time for the planned date. It provides a large hall and a smaller hall, ample car parking and will be suitable for all-abilities access. The adjacent hotel - the Colquhonnies Inn - would be an obvious choice for catering and we are awaiting further details of their menus and prices.
5. As the event is going to largely attract people from residential communities around the Park, it is felt that in order to accommodate as many people as possible it would be sensible to have the event on a Saturday, so that those in full or part time employment are able to attend. The date chosen is **Saturday 22 April 2006**, which falls just after the Easter holidays.

Target Audience

6. The challenge will be to make the event as inclusive as possible whilst truly engaging with those who will play a lead role in Core Path Planning in, or on behalf of, their communities, whether of geography or of interest.
7. One matter to resolve is how open the event should be? On one hand it could be scaled to be completely open to all-comers, advertised widely in the general press and structured as a drop-in day with no prior indication of numbers required. The event would then be best regarded as an “open day” where most of the information would **flow out** to an audience whose knowledge of access rights, the work of the Park Authority and Forum in access and core path planning could be assumed to be negligible or basic.
8. On the other hand there are strong benefits in having an event, which is targeted at a more specific audience. Firstly, when core path planning commences, it is expected that within communities themselves there will be the need to raise awareness, and therefore this event should not necessarily be seen as the first or only opportunity for the general public to find out more about Core Path Planning. Secondly by targeting those within communities – of geography and of interest – with a more sophisticated knowledge of outdoor access in the Park, there is a greater opportunity for a **two-way** flow of information, and using breakout groups to best effect. Thirdly, the other issue to consider is the capacity of the hall and logistical matters such as having workable sized breakout groups, and being able to pre-determine numbers for catering or the number of facilitators required. An event along these lines would have places limited to a maximum number and participants would be asked to register their interest in advance.
9. Therefore, the type of event proposed in this paper would follow a similar structure to that of the Outdoor Access Strategy Stakeholders day, based on direct invites to specific organisations and individuals. The main groups of invitees will mirror the list of those invited to the Outdoor Access Strategy stakeholder contacts with some important additions, namely specific representation will be invited from the communities around the Park. A breakdown of numbers and interested parties is outlined below:
 - 2 people from each of the 26 Community Council areas within the Park (52)
 - Chairperson from each of the neighbouring Local Outdoor Access Forums (5)
 - Access Officers from the neighbouring local authorities (5)
 - CNPA staff (5)
 - Board members (25)
 - Representatives from key interest groups and governing bodies (25)
 - LOAF members (21)

10. Based on the figures above, the absolute maximum number likely to attend would be around 135 – more realistically we could have the same numbers as the OAS Stakeholders workshop, in the region of 60-70 persons.

Publicity

11. Community representatives, stakeholders, Board members, access staff and chairpersons from neighbouring LOAF's will be invited by letter in early March with a deadline for response in early April. A further option would be to place advertisements aimed at the general public in the local press – however if the intention is to try and engage an audience of people who are the 'movers and shakers' of access in their communities, invites of an open nature in the press may be of limited value.

Format of the Day

12. It is proposed that the event will run from 10am to 4pm and would be chaired by either the Convenor or Vice Convenor of the Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum. It is further proposed that short presentations should be delivered on the following topics:

- The Forum's first year – Convenor or CNPA staff
- What is Core Path Planning about? – Paths for All staff
- How does the Park Authority intend to undertake Core Path Planning? – CNPA staff
- The Newtonmore Pilot Project – Newtonmore Woodland Community Development Trust speaker

13. Additionally it is suggested that there should be an opportunity for different user groups to present their activity and tell the audience the bare bones of what their activity entails, the spectrum of activity it covers, how their activity can benefit from core paths and what a core path might mean to them. The key presenters should be people with knowledge of the different ways in which access rights can be exercised i.e. a horse-rider, a cyclist, a walker, a canoeist and a parapentist. There should also be a presentation from land managers representing hill ground and agricultural interests; and a presentation from the disabled community. *It is suggested that Forum members with relevant expertise might like to consider taking on these presentational roles?* The intention behind this proposal will be to introduce community leaders likely to be involved in CPP to the breadth of activity that is taken on and over core paths, and help them to take into account the variety of expectations and requirements of users and needs of land managers. Each of these presentations should last no more than 10 minutes.

14. There should be opportunities for Q&A sessions and breakout groups. The task-orientated format for the breakout groups at the Outdoor Access Strategy worked very successfully and would be well worth emulating.

Timing

15. Friday 10 March - Letter to communities and interest groups
Week beginning Monday 20 March - Adverts in the Strathy, Deeside and Donside Piper, The Press & Journal, Northern Scot and Forfar Dispatch Group
Thursday 13 April – Deadline on bookings, final numbers confirmed to caterers
Saturday 22 April - Date of gathering at Lonach Hall, Strathdon

16. Comments are invited from the Forum on the following matters:

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- c) the proposed target audience and means of publicity

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