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## CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

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- Title:** Update on promotion of responsible outdoor access in the Cairngorms National Park
- Prepared by:** Adam Streeter-Smith, Outdoor Access Officer
- Purpose:**
1. To update members on the work undertaken to date promoting responsible access in the Park.
  2. To seek advice on key priority messages in the Park
  3. To seek advice on site specific advice with regards to informal camping and campfires

### Background

1. The Park Authority has a duty to promote the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. “Tread Lightly in the Park” is the main campaign (see annex 1) by which the Park Authority and its partners, Ranger Services, Visit Cairngorms and land managers, promote key messages on what the exercise of responsible access looks like in the Park. The key messages in “tread lightly” agreed by the LOAF, ranger services and key partners at the end of 2019 were:
  - Responsible dog walking
  - Campfires
  - Outdoor cooking
  - Biking and:
  - Litter.

### 2020- Reflections

2. 2020 for many reasons was an unprecedented year with hotspots across the Park experiencing high levels of informal camping, fire lighting and litter. Collectively Ranger Services across the Park with the support of the CNPA Seasonal Ranger Service engaged with a lot of visitors. In their conversations with visitors the following themes started to emerge:
  - A general lack of awareness of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code
  - Strong cultural norms i.e. traditions round fires and family gatherings
  - A desire to behave responsibly but acting out of misinformation
  - A need for consistency of message from a variety of sources

## **2021- Moving forward- revised messages and site specific messages**

3. Across Scotland public agencies, the Police and other key partners are looking to develop a more coordinated approach to visitor management in terms of headline messages, infrastructure and regulation. The CNPA and key local partners such as the Cairngorms Business Partnership and NatureScot are heavily involved in this process.
4. At a national level the key driver is to raise awareness of the code and the key tenants of care, respect and responsibility and to develop campaigns around particular activities such as camping and dog ownership. Key to the success of these campaigns is that they dovetail with “local” advice in the Cairngorms National Park.
5. In discussions with key partners and Ranger Services the key focus for code messaging in the Park in 2021 needs to focus on dog ownership, informal camping and fires. Annex 2 sets out the opportunity to amend the existing TLitP messages making them more specific and directive.

### ***What are member’s views on key priority messages in the Park?***

## **Moving towards a stronger message for key hotspots**

6. Recognising that some hotspots in the Park experience excessive amounts of informal camping and campfires and their associated problems there is a clear need to develop site specific advice to mitigate against the cumulative impacts. This could include “no fires” and/or “camp for one night only”.
7. As the Access Authority we feel this is justified and competent under the auspices of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act and Scottish Outdoor Access Code.
8. In 2010, the CLOAF supported the use of wording to “Keep your dog on a lead during the ground nesting bird breeding season”. Members agreed with the principle that in order to promote responsible dog ownership, messages needed to be clear and consistent across the National Park. Wording exists within the code (p.106) that can remove this ambiguity and allow for clearer messages to be used.
9. The National Access Forum guidance on managing access and ground nesting birds backs this up. It states that if approaches based on site planning and design, and on promoting responsible behaviour, have been thoroughly explored and evidence indicates that these have been inadequate to meet conservation obligations, site managers may at that stage consider additional measures. Such proposals would be likely to involve ‘stronger’ requests to visitors.
10. Such measures could, in principle, be open to legal challenge under sections 14 and/or 28 of the LRA. Their robustness to such challenge would largely depend on clear evidence of need and proportionality, and on the consensus in support of their adoption – in particular on the support of the access authority.

11. It will be a matter for Police Scotland to determine if conduct outwith of this advice is excluded from access rights because an offense is being committed.
12. To ensure such changes in advice at a site level are robust and have consensus it is proposed that a simple test is deployed, see annex 3, which sets out the key criteria for site specific advice.

***Are members content that a more robust line of access advice can be taken at key hotspots?***

## **Annex I- Tread Lightly in the Park**

To convey these messages to the public the Park Authority developed the following resources:

- A concertina leaflet;
- A3 fold leaflet for Landmark leaflet units;
- Flash cards for use on social media;
- High fire risk posters for point of sale locations;
- Seasonal advisory signs in the standard SNH sign template;
- Bespoke seasonal signage for Boat Woods;
- Webpage;
- PowerPoint presentation for Duke of Edinburgh Award groups in Aberdeenshire.

These key campaign messages are also conveyed through the following:

- Regular social media posts on Active Cairngorms twitter and Facebook;
- Active Cairngorm's E-bulletin;
- Press;
- Lego films;
- CNPA Comms during April;
- Species spotlights.

## Annex 2

## Draft key messages for 2021

Target Audience	Current Message	Draft Revised Message
Dog owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From April to August, keep your dog on a short lead or close to heel in areas of ground nesting birds.</li> <li>• Avoid fields with livestock - particularly young animals.</li> <li>• Clean up after your dog. Put any waste in a bin, or take it away. In more remote areas, remove it off the path.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From April to August, keep your dog on a short lead or close to heel on moorland and the open hills.</li> <li>• In woodlands with capercaillie, please follow all signage and keep you dog on a lead as requested.</li> <li>• On farmland, please do not enter fields with young animals and avoid fields with cattle and sheep if you can.</li> </ul>
Informal campers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pitch your tent well away from cars, roads or buildings.</li> <li>• Keep the numbers of your group small. Move on after a couple of nights.</li> <li>• Remove traces of your camping site and any litter. Carry out what you carry in.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please follow all on site signage and advice from rangers.</li> <li>• To camp responsibly do so away from roads and buildings, keep your group small and remove all traces of your campsite including litter.</li> </ul>
Camp fires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never light a fire during prolonged dry periods or in woodlands or on peaty soils.</li> <li>• Never cut down or damage trees.</li> <li>• Keep fires small, under control and supervised at all times. Ensure a fire is completely out and remove all traces of it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do your bit for nature and choose not to light a fire, please use a camping stove instead.</li> <li>• Never light a fire in woodlands or on peaty soils.</li> <li>• Never cut down or damage trees.</li> </ul>

**Annex 3**

**DRAFT considerations for time limited site based advice:**

If most of the answers are “yes” then a more robust time limited site based advice can be supported.

Test	Y/N
Is the location a clearly defined and recognised ‘hotspot’ in the area visitor management plan?	
Is the location an environmentally designated site?	
Has the impact of informal camping and irresponsible behaviour been monitored and reported over multiple seasons?	
Is there strong evidence of environmental damage or breach of the peace caused by the cumulative impact of irresponsible behaviour (uncontrolled fires, criminal damage, fly tipping etc)?	
Is there evidence of alternative approaches to visitor management being tested (signage, engagement, enhanced facilities etc)?	
Are there suitable alternatives nearby?	
Is there a long-term plan for improving visitor management at the site?	
Is the site covered by a Ranger Service?	
Has the LOAF been consulted on the proposal?	

**Any decision to support robust time limited site based advice will have to be approved by the CNPA Management Team.**