
CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

Title: Core Paths Plan – the Forum as a statutory consultee

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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the role that the Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum has as a consultee in the development of a Core Paths Plan and to seek views on the best means of determining the collective view of the Forum.

Recommendations

Cairngorms Local outdoor Access Forum members are asked to:

- a) Note progress with the Core Paths Planning process;
- b) Consider and recommend the most effective means of providing a collective view on the interim draft Core Paths Plan.

Background

1. Core Paths Planning is a statutory duty of the Cairngorms National Park Authority and the Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum (LOAF) is a statutory consultee during the formal consultation on the Core Paths Plan. (The formal consultation is likely to take place in the spring of 2008.) Guidance from the Scottish Executive also encourages engagement with the LOAF during the informal stages of developing the Core Paths Plan. This advice has been followed through the first public engagement in the latter quarter of 2006 and in the development of criteria in a joint workshop with the Park Authority Board in January 2007. The second round of informal consultation will take place between April and June 2007.

Update on progress

2. The National Park Board approved a more 'inclusive' version of the Interim Draft Core Paths Plan on Friday 23 February. Two options were proposed for a network of core paths in the Cairngorms. Option one offered a more basic network. Option two consisted of a more extensive network with the inclusion of the River Spey as a proposed core path. The proposal included existing promoted and way-marked paths close to settlements identified through the public engagement process. An Interim Draft Plan, which will detail all the paths, will now be drawn up and is due to go out for an informal public consultation within the Park between April and June.
3. Land managers, recreational users, communities, visitors and relevant agencies will all be consulted to help the Park Authority determine whether the Interim Draft Core Paths Plan fulfils the statutory obligation of core paths. All those who wish to respond will be asked the following questions:

- Is the proposed core paths network sufficient to give people reasonable access throughout the National Park?
- Have we got the selection criteria right? Why?
- Have we selected the right paths using the selection criteria, or are there gaps, omissions or inconsistencies in our approach?

Issues

4. There have already been considerable benefits accruing from the LOAF's engagement in the core paths planning process. These include: reflecting the views of land managers, communities, recreational users and public bodies; helping to shape the criteria; and inputting, and occasionally chairing, at engagement meetings.
5. There is now a need to consider the most effective method of the LOAF commenting on the Interim Draft Core Paths Plan. The advice received from the LOAF prior to the first round of public engagement was very much about the process of engagement. The second round is different, as views are being sought on the three questions posed in paragraph 3.
6. The next meeting of the LOAF is scheduled for 21 August after the consultation period has ended. The options available are therefore:
 - **Option 1:** LOAF members individually to supply views on the 3 questions posed during the consultation period which will be collated and circulated to fellow members. It would then be for the LOAF to determine the best means of providing an agreed response from the Forum to the Park Authority; or
 - **Option 2:** The Park Authority would present a paper reflecting on the outcomes of the public consultation which would provide an early indication of potential changes to the core paths network. This would be presented to the LOAF meeting on 21 August seeking an agreed response on the extent of the network and any proposed changes.
7. Neither option precludes LOAF members from responding as individuals to the consultation exercise. Members are encouraged to attend meetings and to provide their individual views on the adequacy of the network. The disadvantage of Option 1 is that it is unlikely to achieve a collective view and, potentially, could be time consuming for the Forum. Option 2 offers the opportunity for a full debate and has the advantage of that debate taking place after the public's views have been heard and analysed. **Option 2 is therefore recommended.**
8. The period after the public consultation will be used to consider, analyse, review and negotiate on the extent of the network. The Forum's views will be sought again on 27 November, prior to a paper being presented to the CNPA Board in December, on the draft core paths plan.

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