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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## FOR INFORMATION

**Title: LONG DISTANCE ROUTES IN CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK**

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### **Purpose**

To update the Board on our work on long distance routes in the Cairngorms National Park.

### **Recommendations**

**That the Board notes the overview of long distance routes in the National Park and recent progress in taking forward extensions to the Speyside Way and Deeside Way.**

### **Executive Summary**

There are nearly 200 miles of promoted long distance routes in the Cairngorms National Park. This paper briefly outlines these routes and CNPA's current priorities for work in maintaining, improving and extending these routes. An update on current work is provided along with an estimate of future expenditure.

## LONG DISTANCE ROUTES IN CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK - FOR INFORMATION

### Strategic Context

1. There are a number of long distance routes that run through the National Park. These vary in condition, accessibility and promotion. They also vary in management arrangements and status, with only Speyside Way designated an official Long Distance Route (LDR). This paper provides a brief overview of the routes.
2. Over the last year there has been considerable work undertaken on both Speyside Way and Deeside Way and this paper provides an update on this core activity for the National Park Authority.

### Summary of Routes

3. Table I below provides summary of promoted routes long distance routes in the National Park

**Table I Summary of Long Distance Routes in Cairngorms National Park**

Name	Route	Dist. (miles)	Status	Lead Agency
Speyside Way	Buckie to Aviemore	65	Official LDR Way marked & promoted	Moray Council Highland Council CNPA
Speyside Way Spur	Cragganmore to Tomintoul	15	Spur to LDR Way marked & promoted	Moray Council CNPA
Speyside Way Extension	Aviemore to Newtonmore	20	Ministerial approval for extension to LDR. Work in progress.	CNPA
Dava Way	Grantown-on-Spey to Forres	24	Way marked & promoted	Dava Way Association
Deeside Way (NCN 195)	Aberdeen to Ballater	45	Way marked & promoted	Aberdeenshire Council
Deeside Way Extension	Ballater to Braemar	18 est	Initial feasibility study competed	CNPA
Cateran Trail	Circular route in Angus, Perthshire & Glenshee	64	Way marked & promoted	Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust
East Highland Way	Fort William to Aviemore	83	Promoted ( a virtual route not way marked on ground)	
Badenoch Way	Dalraddy to Ruthven	11	Way marked and promoted	Kincraig Community Council
National Cycle Route 7	Killicrankie to Slochd	67	Way marked and promoted	Transport Scotland Perth & Kinross Council Highland Council

4. In addition to the routes identified in Table I there are also a number of 'loose proposals' for additional long distance routes through the Cairngorms being mooted including a route from Glen Clova in Angus to Braemar using existing mountain paths.
5. The routes deliver a range of public benefits including:
  - a) Health and wellbeing through physical activity
  - b) Recreation
  - c) Economic through tourism
  - d) Education
6. The use of these routes varies considerably including:
  - a) Recreational: 'end to end' users seeking a long distance challenge.
  - b) Recreational: using part of the route for a shorter journey, and combining part of the route with other paths.
  - c) Functional: using part of the route to get to a destination such as shops, school, and work.
7. Use appears to be primarily on foot or increasingly by bicycle.
8. Data on the numbers using these routes is fragmented and more work is required in compiling this information. The following estimates indicate significant use as well as potential to increase that use:-
  - a) Speyside Way: 2750 all-way and some 50,000 part-way users
  - b) Dava Way: c.400 all-way users and some 3,000 part-way users
  - c) Cateran Trail: 2000 all-way users
  - d) Deeside Way: currently sourcing numbers but 40% are considered to be cyclists and 10% horse riders, with 5% all-way users.

### **Priorities for Work**

9. With nearly 200 miles of promoted long distance routes in the National Park we have given priority to work where we are the lead agency or where we can effectively support the work of partners to improve routes.
10. Figures of use clearly indicate that long distance routes are important as part of local networks and we give priority to work that improves that functional use and also allows access by a range of users including cyclists.

**Speyside Way (Existing)**

11. We have an ongoing commitment to maintain and promote (in partnership with Highland and Moray Councils) the route from Aviemore to Mains of Dalvey. This section is now 14 years old and showing signs of age. In the last two years major improvements have been undertaken to sections between Nethy Bridge and Aviemore.
12. This year we will develop a detailed plan for a range of improvements from streamlining the ongoing maintenance, to path condition improvements and potential realignment to allow a greater range of users. Highland Council is also looking at the potential to improve the line of the path between the CNP boundary and the border with Moray, and Sustrans has identified the route as potential for a new NCN Route 79.

**Speyside Way Extension**

13. After 10 years in the planning the Speyside Way Extension now has ministerial approval for the route. It is identified as a priority in the National Park Partnership Plan and draft National Planning Policy Framework 3.
14. Following lengthy negotiations with the landowners work is now underway on Speyside Way extension. Working in partnership with Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust, funding and planning permission has been obtained for four sections of new route from Aviemore to Ardgael, south of Kincaig. Work on these is scheduled to be completed in July.
15. In addition to the current work, Sustrans Community Links funding has offered £115,000, subject to match funding, for two further sections between Aviemore and Kincaig. Planning permission, path agreements and match funding is being sought for these sections this spring in order to develop them in autumn.
16. Beyond the construction outlined above we need to develop detailed plans including planning permission and path agreements, and funding, for the remaining sections of the route to Newtonmore. This continues to be a priority and depending on funding it seems likely that this will take three to five years to complete.

**Speyside Way Spur**

17. The upgrade of part of the Speyside Way Spur is included in the Tomintoul and Glenlivet Landscape Partnership Lottery bid. If successful this will bring in substantial funds to upgrade and improve this route.

**Deeside Way Extension**

18. We funded an initially feasibility study into potential routes from Ballater to Braemar. This identified significant challenges in finding a suitable off road route between Ballater and Crathie with any solution in being unlikely within the next five years. There are however potential options for an off road route between Crathie and Braemar and we intend to progress these as resources become available.

**National Cycle Route 7**

19. National policy encourages the development of segregated paths along new trunk road development. We are working with Transport Scotland and Sustrans to ensure that the proposals to upgrade A9 include provision of a segregated multi use path. As with other long distance routes, use is not only 'end to end' but a well designed path can also provide links to other community path networks for both recreation and functional access. One of our main priorities is to ensure that there are good links to communities and businesses from any new route.
20. We are also working with Sustrans to look at the potential for the Speyside Way Extension to become an off road variation to NCN7.

**Resource Implications**

21. Future resource allocation of both staff and finance for this area will be developed through our next Corporate Plan. This paper provides an update of the current position within current programmed resources.
22. The work identified above is a major commitment for our staff time and our current priority for long distance routes remains completion of the Speyside Way. There is no capacity in the current year for additional work in this area.

**Financial Implications**

23. In March 2014 the Capital Investment Plan identified the following expenditure estimates on long distance routes:-

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Estimate</b>
Speyside Way Extension	£1m
Speyside Way Existing	£500k
Speyside way Spur (as part of Tomintoul and Glenlivet Landscape Partnership)	£280k
Deeside Way	£500k

**Stakeholder & Presentational Implications**

24. There is a lot of interest from a range of stakeholders in developing and promoting long distance routes so we need to keep both partners and users regularly updated of progress.
  
25. In order to deliver our existing commitments we also need to ensure that we are not distracted and diverted onto new projects, and concentrate on work that is already programmed.

**Next Steps**

26. We will update the Board as progress is made.

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