Cairngorms National Park

Outdoor Access Strategy

Draft for consultation
June 2006

CONTENTS

1   Introduction

1.1   Overview

1.1.1   The Cairngorms National Park is a world renowned area where for outdoor recreation. [paragraph to be expanded]

1.1.2   The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 ("the Act") gives Scotland what is probably the best system for outdoor access in the world. The legislation offers people fantastic opportunities to enjoy the special qualities of the National Park. It provides the legal basis to much of what is contained in this Strategy. The provision of outdoor access opportunities that are well managed can also contribute very significantly to important public policy agendas such as promoting social inclusion, improving health and transport and generally improving people's overall quality of life.

1.1.3   Prior to implementation of the Act in February 2005, each of the 4 local authorities that comprise the Park (Aberdeenshire, Angus, Highland and Moray) had responsibility for managing issues related to outdoor access as part of their wider functions. Now that responsibility has passed to the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) and so it is appropriate for that organisation to lead on the development of this Strategy.

1.1.4   This Strategy has been developed to ensure a consistent and Park-wide approach is taken to the delivery and future management of outdoor access. In particular, the preparation of this Strategy provides an opportunity to review the four different approaches to management of outdoor access that have been taken by the local authorities, and to:

- set out a strategic approach that suits the special circumstances of the Cairngorms National Park;
- define policies and priorities on matters relating to outdoor access at a more detailed level than that provided in the overarching plan for the Park, the National Park Plan;
- explain the most appropriate mechanisms for undertaking work related to outdoor access;
- provide a framework for planning the allocation of resources, both by the National Park Authority and partners, over a five year period; and
- provide the strategic context for the Core Paths Plan which the Park Authority has a duty to prepare by February 2008.

1.1.5   It is important to note that this is not a general strategy for recreation. There are many forms of recreation that take place in the Park – almost too many to list. And new forms of recreation are being developed constantly, while the popularity of some the various types of recreation change over time. But most forms of informal recreation in the Park depend on the ability to take access to land and water, so this Strategy focuses on how that access can take place in an appropriate way.

1.1.6   The report is in 7 sections with a series of supporting annexes. A brief explanation of each section is shown below.

- **1. Introduction** - This section provides a brief introduction to the Strategy and explains why CNPA is leading this work.

- **2. Scene setting** - Section 2 deals with the policy background relating to outdoor access and expands on the statutory duties that now fall on the CNPA. The process that has been used to develop this Strategy is also explained.

- **3. Vision, Strategic Objectives and five year Outcomes** – Section 3 sets the out the vision for Outdoor Access in the Park, defines the Strategic Objectives and the five year Outcomes.

- **4. Action themes and Policies** – The Park Plan identifies a number of priority areas for action over the next 5 years. This section will highlight the actions required to deliver these priorities and also additional actions that will address the key issues identified.

- **5. Action Mechanisms** - This section identifies the various groups of people who are available for the management of outdoor access in the Park and explains the role they are expected to play.

- **6. Action Areas** - Action Areas provide a spatial dimension to the Strategy and identify specific issues and priorities in 8 different areas of the Park.

- **7. Park-wide Action Plan** - This section defines the actions that will be needed to deliver the Strategy outcomes identified in Section 3. along with commentary on who will benefit, the organisations involved and the monitoring that will be undertaken to ensure these priorities are delivered.

2 Scene Setting

2.1 Strategic Context

The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000

2.1.1 The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 sets out the four aims of all National Parks in Scotland. These aims are for the National Parks themselves and not for the National Park Authorities:

- To conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage
- To promote the sustainable use of the natural resources of the area
- To promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public; and
- To promote sustainable social and economic development of the area's communities.

2.1.2 The aims are not listed in priority order and the emphasis is on their collective delivery. The purpose of the National Park Authority is to ensure that the four aims are collectively achieved in a coordinated way. If it appears to the Authority that there is a conflict between the first aim and other National Park aims, then the Park Authority must give greater weight to the first aim.

2.1.3 The implementation of this Strategy will have a key role to play in the collective achievement of the National Park aims. For example, the provision of well maintained paths in suitable places will ensure that sensitive areas can be protected while visual scarring or habitat damage is reduced. Providing good opportunities to experience the outdoors at first hand will increase opportunities to understand and enjoy the special Cairngorms environment. Further, many businesses within and adjacent to the Park are reliant on the excellent range of recreational opportunities in the area. The delivery of this Strategy will help to retain and develop these business opportunities which, in turn, will help to sustain local communities.   In summary, the sustainable management of outdoor access in the Park is important to ensure that the special qualities of the Park are maintained in the long term so that they can be enjoyed by future generations.

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003

2.1.4 The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 provides everyone with access rights, as long as they are used responsibly. The Act places duties on the National Park Authority and these are explained in Section 2.2. Various powers are available to the Park Authority under the Act to carry this work forwards. This Strategy will provide the basis for undertaking this all this work in the Cairngorms.

National Park Plan

2.1.5 The CNPA is required to prepare and submit to Scottish Ministers a National Park Plan. This is a new type of Plan which cuts across organisations and sectors, bringing together all those involved in the management of the Park. It is a Plan for the Park as a whole, not just for the Park Authority.

2.1.6 At the time of writing the National Park Plan is in preparation and will be presented to Ministers to approve in late 2006. The draft Plan sets out a long term vision and strategic objectives looking 25 years ahead. Then it identifies the 7 priorities for action and investment over the next 5 year period. One of these priorities is "Improving opportunities for Outdoor Access".

2.1.7 The Plan also identifies five Guiding Principles that should be used as a check by everyone when working towards the objectives of the Park Plan:
- Sustainable development
- Social justice
- People participating in the Park
- Managing change
- Effective governance

Development Planning and the Local Plan

2.1.8 The Park Authority is required to prepare a single Local Plan to guide development in the Park. At the time of writing this Plan is in preparation. The Park Authority is the Planning Authority for those planning applications which are "called in" on the basis that they are of general significance to the aims of the Park.

2.1.9 The Local Plan and the process for consideration of planning applications for new development are important to the management of outdoor access. New developments can, for example, stimulate new demands for outdoor access or act as barrier to those seeking to access adjacent areas. Also, the formal the planning process will be important in determining whether some proposed developments (such as new bridges, substantial new works on paths) can proceed. Once formally approved, this Strategy will be a material consideration in determination of some planning applications.

Cairngorms National Park Strategies

2.1.10 This Strategy sits within the context of a number of other strategies, prepared for the National Park. The most significant of these and their relationships to the draft National Park Plan are outlined in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 – The strategic fit of the Outdoor Access Strategy to the draft National Park Plan and more detailed plans/strategies
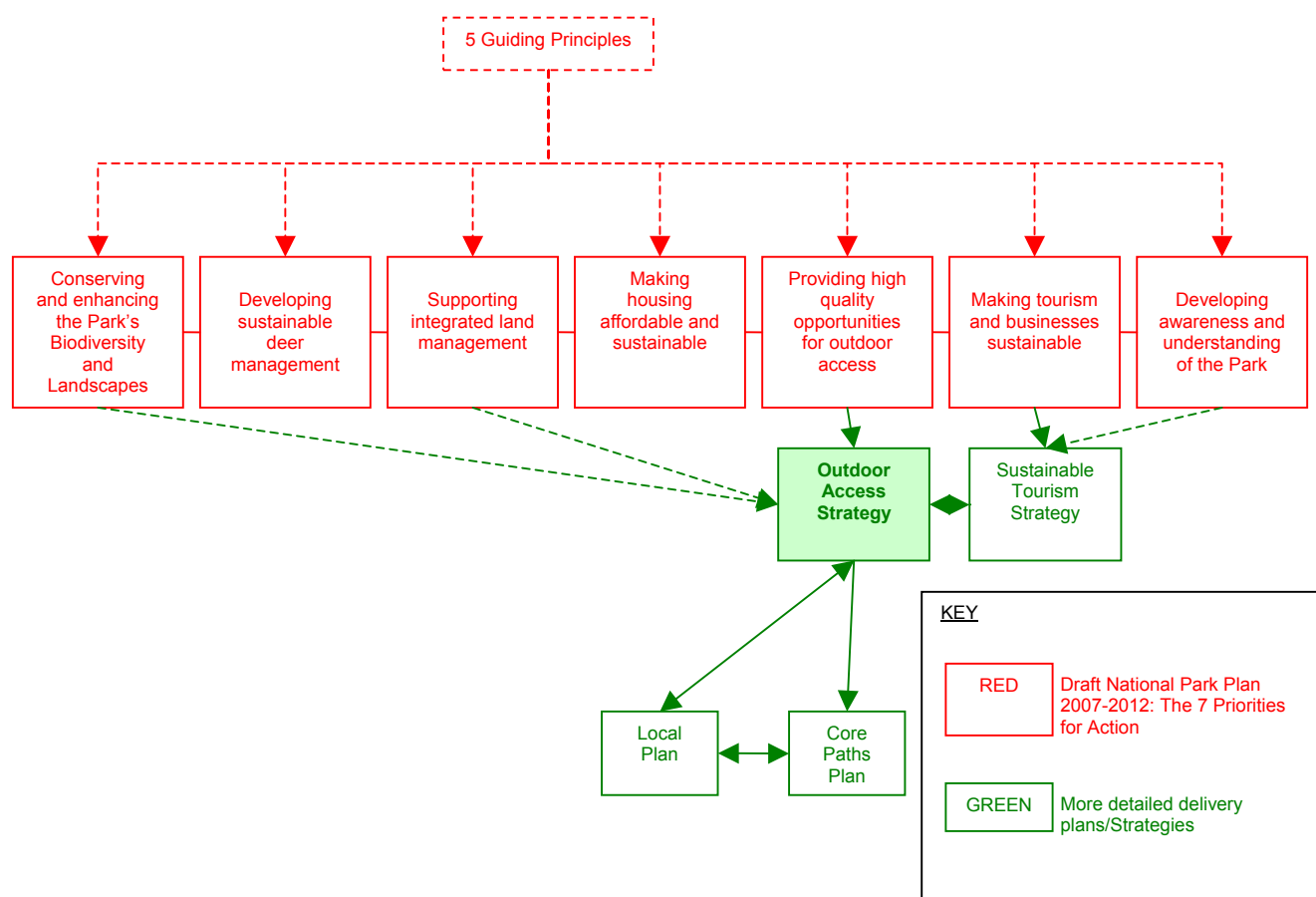
2.1.11 The Sustainable Tourism Strategy provides an agreed framework within which the CNPA and its partners should work together for the successful development of tourism in the Park. A number of the strategic objectives and priority actions identified in the strategy have implications for the way in which outdoor access will be developed and managed in the Park.

Other Strategies

2.1.12 There are a wide range of other strategies, policies and frameworks which will guide this Strategy and upon which this Strategy will have an influence. These are summarised in the Outdoor Access Audit (see below).

2.2 Statutory Duties for the Park Authority

2.2.1 CNPA has a number of statutory duties to perform relating to the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, upholding access rights, Core Path Planning and a Local Outdoor Access Forum.

Publicising the Scottish Outdoor Access Code

2.2.2   The Scottish Outdoor Access Code is the document, approved by Parliament, which sets out how to behave responsibly in the outdoors. The Code is based on three key principles which apply equally to everyone:

- Respect the interests of other people.
- Care for the environment.
- Take responsibility for your own actions.

2.2.3   CNPA has a duty (along with Scottish Natural Heritage) to publicise the Code so that everyone is aware of their rights and responsibilities. SNH has an additional duty to promote understanding of the Code.

Upholding Access Rights

2.2.4   The CNPA has a duty to uphold access rights in the Park. As the Access Authority, it is the duty of the CNPA to "…*assert, protect and keep open and free from obstruction or encroachment any route, waterway or other means by which access rights may be exercised.*"[1]   This duty applies to all land to which access rights apply.

Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum

2.2.5   The Act places a duty on each access authority to establish at least one local access forum consisting of a reasonable balance of people and bodies representing, *"…the interests of such persons, with an interest in public access on and over land including the exercise of access rights, rights of way, core paths plans and the use of core paths, and owners, or bodies representative of owners, of land in respect of which access rights are exercisable.*"[2]   Further details about the role of the Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum are given in Section 5.

Core Paths Planning

2.2.6   CNPA has a duty to develop a Core Paths Plan by February 2008. The plan will show a system of paths which are, *"…sufficient for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout their area"[3].* Core paths can be paths or routes, including waterways, and should provide a network for all forms of recreational access including walking, cycling, horse-riding and canoeing. There is a duty on the CNPA to publicise the Core Paths Plan and maps and to make them available for public inspection.

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[1] Section 13 (1) Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003
[2] Part 1 Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, Guidance for Local Authorities and National Park Authorities
[3] Section 17, Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 In June 2004 the Paths for All Partnership and Scottish Natural Heritage published a guide to good practice for developing Outdoor Access Strategies. This Strategy has been developed in line with this guidance using the process outlined in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 – The Outdoor Access Strategy Process
Scottish Natural Heritage & Paths for All Partnership, 2004

| Starting the Process |
| Access Audit | ← | • Supply • Demand • Policy • Resources |
| Key Issues |
| Main Workshop | ← | • Audit Review • Key Issues • Feedback • Strategy emphasis |
| Vision |
| Action Plan | ← | • Action themes • Action mechanisms • Action areas • Summary |
| Resources | ← | • Programme • Funding sources • Milestones |
| Consultation |
| Making it Happen | ← | • Adoption • Launch • Theme initiatives • Area initiatives • Review |

Starting the Process

2.3.2　Following an initial stakeholder meeting CNPA established a Steering Group to guide the process. The Steering Group consists of three members of the Local Outdoor Access Forum and one member from the Paths for All Partnership, a Local Authority and the Board of the National Park Authority.

Outdoor Access Audit

2.3.3　An Outdoor Access Audit was carried out to gather together all the relevant information relating to Outdoor Access in the Cairngorms. The Audit comprised four sections on the Supply and Demand for outdoor access, Policy and Resources. Gathering information together for the areas covered by the Park was challenging due to the historical split of the area into 4 local authority areas. However, the exercise was extremely useful and fed into the preparation of the State of the Park Report, which was published in April 2006 alongside the draft National Park Plan. Much of the information gathered is also now stored in digital form on CNPA's Geographic Information System.

2.3.4　The Supply Audit compiled information on provision of access opportunities in the Cairngorms (e.g. path networks, open upland areas, rivers etc.) for a wide range of outdoor activities including walking, hill-walking, climbing, cycling, snowsports, horse-riding, watersports, orienteering etc. The Demand Audit examined the existing, changing and potential demand for a wide range of outdoor activities in the Park Area using survey information and existing research.

2.3.5　The Policy Audit identified and assessed the implications of national legislation, local policies, agencies and partners to allow the identification of key access policy issues. The Resource Audit then went on to examine and distinguish between current and potential resources. The Steering Group were given the opportunity to make comments on and propose alterations to the Audit.

2.3.6　The Outdoor Access Audit is a large document and can be made available on request.

Key Issues and Main Workshop

2.3.7　On completion of the audit process the Steering Group carried out an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to identify those key issues for outdoor access in the Park. These issues identified were discussed at a workshop which was held in October 2005 and was attended by approximately 70 people representing a wide range of stakeholders.

2.3.8　The purpose of the workshop was to give participants the opportunity to discuss the key issues identified in the report and add any new ones that they felt had been missed. Participants were then given the opportunity to propose

actions for dealing with these issues and who should be responsible for taking ownership of those actions. Feedback from participants at the workshop was extremely positive. The report from the workshop is available on request.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

2.3.8   A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) has been carried out in conjunction with this Strategy to examine the potential environmental impacts of the proposed policies within the Strategy.

Consultation

2.3.9   There has been good level of involvement from a number of parties in preparation of the draft Strategy including input from the Local Outdoor Access Forum, the Visitor Services, Information and Tourism (ViSIT) Forum and the various stakeholders who were invited to the workshop in October 2005.

3 Vision, Strategic Objectives and Outcomes

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 This Section sets the out the vision for Outdoor Access in the Park, defines the Strategic Objectives and the five year Outcomes

3.2 Vision

3.2.1 The first part of the National Park Plan sets out the long-term vision for the Park over a 25 year period. The Plan is structured under three broad themes with Strategic Objectives for each. The third of these is the most significant for Outdoor Access:

- Conserving, Enhancing and Managing the Park
- Communities Living and Working in the Park
- Understanding and Enjoying the Park

3.2.2 The following text is the extracted from the Vision from the draft National Park Plan.

Vision: Understanding and Enjoying the Park

Residents and visitors will enjoy, understand and support the special qualities of the Park in many different ways, through visitor and recreation experiences of the highest quality. There will be a wide range of outdoor access opportunities on both land and water available to all for responsible enjoyment, fun, spiritual rejuvenation, sport and healthy living. Everyone will be encouraged to experience the varied landscape of the Park, from the open uplands to the woodlands and rivers, in ways that respect the natural environment and cultural heritage of the area.

Visitors will come to the Park year-round to enjoy its fine landscapes, appreciate its wildlife and heritage, explore its character and take part in a range of activities. They will be fully aware of what the Park has to offer, understand the importance of conservation of the area and be keen to support this. Residents will be well-informed about the area and keen to communicate their knowledge and the needs of those living, working and visiting the Park will be mutually respected. [Source: Draft National Park Plan]

3.3   Understanding and Enjoying the Park[4]

3.3.1   Combined with the outstanding natural environment and cultural heritage, the range of outdoor activities and visitor attractions in the Park make it a place that both residents and visitors enjoy. The experiences of residents and visitors enjoying the Park should be of the highest quality. Part of the integration required in managing the Park is to promote understanding and enjoyment, including recreation, in ways that are not only consistent with the special qualities, but actively develop understanding about the Park and contribute to its conservation and enhancement.

3.3.2   The promotion and management of outdoor access and visitor services is an integral part of developing a sustainable approach to tourism, in line with the principles of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (see section 6.4 of the Park Plan). The right of responsible access to land and water, supported by the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, provides the starting point. The Park however, has an opportunity to build on this context and help those enjoying the countryside and those managing it to understand the others' needs and ensure that outdoor access contributes to all four aims of the Park.

3.3.3   The need to understand what makes the Park so special and how it functions does not just apply to visitors, but includes residents, businesses, specialist interest groups and people elsewhere in Scotland. The Park is a national asset, and effective future management relies on informed debate and understanding of the Park, and its national and international importance.

Outdoor Access and Recreation

3.3.4   Many people enjoy outdoor access in the Park in a wide variety of forms, whether as part of their everyday routine, regular visits or occasional holidays. It offers an exceptional range of recreation opportunities for people of varied interests.

3.3.5   The Land Reform (Scotland) Act and Scottish Outdoor Access Code provide for a right of responsible access to land and water. It is important to note that the responsibility lies both with recreational users and land managers. The interaction between those taking access, land management and the natural heritage is key to the integrated approach required in the Park. The challenge within the Park is to establish a positive approach to managing and taking access that not only safeguards, but also enhances the special qualities and improves peoples' understanding of the Park.

3.3.6   There are also many important sites of cultural and historic significance in the Park, some of which are vulnerable. These areas must be protected from the physical pressures arising from outdoor access and recreation and sites that are currently suffering from these pressures should be addressed. Those

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[4] Section 3.2 is taken from the draft Cairngorms National Park Plan, Understanding and Enjoying the Park (Section 7)

enjoying the outdoors can contribute to this protection through responsible behaviour and taking positive action to conserve these important interests.

Strategic Objectives for Outdoor Access and Recreation

a) Encourage people of all ages and abilities to enjoy and experience the outdoor environment;

b) Encourage responsible enjoyment of the Park so that its special qualities are understood and appreciated, and safeguarded now and for future generations to enjoy;

c) Coordinate the effort of key public private and voluntary sector interests in sustainable management of outdoor access throughout the Park;

d) Support and encourage local community involvement in management of outdoor access throughout the Park

e) Encourage responsible management of outdoor access and develop a common understanding of the needs of managers and users

f) Protect the more fragile areas of the park from pressures arising from outdoor access and recreation

3.4   Five year Outcomes

3.4.1   The draft Cairngorms National Park Plan identifies 7 Priorities for Action over the period 2007 to 2012, one of which relates to outdoor access. The five year Outcomes define the change that is to be achieved over this period.

Table 3.1: Five year Outcomes for Outdoor Access

> 1. **A wider range of people will have the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors.**
>
> 2. **Land managers and those enjoying the outdoors will have a better understanding of their respective rights and responsibilities which will positively influence behaviour and enable all to enjoy the special qualities of the Park.**
>
> 3. **There will be a more extensive, high quality, well maintained and clearly promoted path network so that everyone can enjoy the outdoors and move around the Park.**
>
> 4. **There will be greater community ownership and visitor involvement in the management and maintenance of the paths through direct engagement.**

5. **There will be better connections between public transport and outdoor access routes.**

6. **There will be locally based healthy walking groups throughout the Park and active promotion of outdoor activity by health professionals in order to contribute positively to the physical, mental and social health of residents and visitors.**

4 Action Themes and Policies

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This Section sets out the five main Actions Themes where activity is needed to address the issues highlighted from both the access audit and stakeholders workshop. Specific Policies have been developed under each of the Themes and are shown in shaded boxes. It should be noted that these are policies for the area of ground that has been designated as a National Park and not organisational policies for the National Park Authority.

4.1.2 The suite of Policies in this Section should be considered along with the Sections on Action Mechanisms, Action Areas, and the Park-wide Action Plan to determine how the issues will be addressed over the next 5 year period.

4.2 Action Theme 1: Improving path provision and quality

Core paths, lowland and upland path repair, maintenance and development

4.2.1 With responsibility for outdoor access previously being the responsibility of 4 local authorities, the priorities and approach in each area of the Park were distinctly different. When looked at afresh, and in the context of the Park as a whole, there are inconsistencies in provision of infrastructure across different parts of the Park.

4.2.2 There is no need to create a completely homogenous access network across the Park but people in each local community and community of interest (including visitors) should all have access to as wide a range of access opportunities as possible. Such opportunities should not be solely restricted to paths but should also include the provision of information through a wide variety of media. This will be partly, but not exclusively, taken forward as part of the Core Path Planning[5] exercise that will take place over the period 2006 to 2008. Many of the local networks that currently exist are of importance to those who visit the area and therefore it will be important to ensure that a clear understanding of their needs and aspirations features in future decisions that affect infrastructure or investment. Also most local path networks are of value beyond their use for recreation – their functional use and importance is covered under Action Theme 4.

4.2.3 Upland path repair and maintenance is largely driven by the need to protect fragile plant communities, to avoid the visual impact of unsightly erosion scars and provide a high quality recreational experience. Highly effective and innovative work has been carried out in some parts of the eastern Cairngorms, under the auspices of the Upper Deeside Access Trust and

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[5] Core Paths Planning is a statutory requirement arising from the Act and is explained in Section 2.

Angus Council Similar high standard work has been carried out on Mar Lodge Estate with much cutting edge work done on high ground and on the reinstatement of bulldozed tracks.   Highlands and Islands Enterprise's Estate which includes the Northern Corries has also provided a consistently high level of investment over the previous 20 years.

> ### *Case study: Mar Lodge Estate*
>
> When the National Trust for Scotland purchased Mar lodge Estate they inherited some 130kms of paths. At that time there was no organised regime for maintenance nor was there robust or consistent information on the condition of the network. A comprehensive audit of path condition was undertaken which resulted in a prioritised and costed plan for capital repair and maintenance.

4.2.4   However, paths on high ground outside these areas have not fared so well and there is a need to develop a consistent approach, based on need, to ensure that the whole path resource is managed effectively. Such an approach will recognise the need to protect and enhance the landscape and natural heritage of the uplands but also recognise the wild land qualities that make the Cairngorm mountains such a special place. Path repair and maintenance will therefore need to help retain the wild land qualities.

4.2.5   There is a currently a lack of quantitative, verifiable information about the effects of provision of (or improvement in) outdoor access opportunities (including ensuring that paths are in good condition) on visitor satisfaction and/or socio-economic returns to businesses and communities. General information exists about the popularity of each recreational activity through the Park-wide Visitor Survey [reference?, 2003] and from other national sources. There is also considerable anecdotal information about what people like and don't like. However, the return of investment in the access resource in terms of economic, social or environmental or benefits in the Park is difficult to estimate –because of lack of previous studies, methodological difficulties and the costs of collecting the information. There would be benefits in promoting greater investigation of such issues to justify future investment.

> **OAS Policy 1: Improving path provision and quality**
>
> A consistent approach should be taken to path creation, repair and maintenance in the Park on the basis of the following principles:-
>
> - The Core Path Planning process, which will involve widespread public consultation, will form the basis for the deciding on priorities for planning and management of path provision around and between local communities;
> - Investment in upland path repair and maintenance will be prioritised on the basis of a Park-wide survey, drawing on both field survey and stakeholder input;
> - Upland path repair and maintenance should strive to retain wild land qualities by ensuring that paths retain a less formal character the further the path is from places of habitation; and
> - Greater effort should be made to collect quantitative, verifiable information about the effects of investment in the outdoor access resource in terms of economic, social and environmental benefits.

Provision for people of all abilities and multi-use paths

4.2.6   Provision of outdoor access that is geared to those of all abilities is not particularly prevalent within the Park. For fully able individuals there is scope to enjoy, mountains, glens, forests, rivers and paths in and near communities. The same cannot be said for less able people with relatively limited opportunities in each of the above categories. Even where fully accessible provision exists, it is not always promoted and can remain unknown to those who would wish to benefit from its availability.

4.2.7   The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 places a requirement on service providers to ensure that where a physical feature makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to access services, service providers will have a duty to:

- remove or alter the physical feature; or
- provide reasonable means of avoiding it.

4.2.8   Accurate descriptions of what users will encounter on a route are invaluable to those who seek to actively enjoy an area that is new to them. Particular attention needs to be given to explaining the barriers that will be encountered and subjective statements should be avoided.

4.2.9   Fully accessible standards have been agreed at a UK wide level through the Countryside For All Group. Whilst there is no legal imperative to implement these standards they do provide clear guidance on all aspects of developing an inclusive infrastructure. Information on path surface, gradients and cross slopes would assist any person considering the development of a new route or improving an existing one.

4.2.10 Many obstacles that recreational users encounter are man-made and have usually been installed for land management purposes. These include structures such as fences, stiles and gates. For some users such infrastructure can be a hindrance or a complete barrier to progress. With careful design it is possible to reduce the numbers that are affected by such barriers. For example, if a stile over a deer fence can be replaced with a kissing gate a great many more people would be able to gain access to the other side of the fence and the purpose of the fence would not be compromised from the land manager's perspective. Land managers now have new duties under the Land Reform Act and should take these issues into account as part of their day to day activities and as facilities need to be replaced. However, some financial assistance may be required to encourage good practice.

4.2.11 The new access legislation provides a general right of access for all forms of non-motorised transport including walking, cycling and horse riding. Very few paths have been designed to accommodate all 3 recreational user groups but it is possible for users to generally share existing paths if they behave responsibly. There is a common perception that multi-use paths will increase the likelihood of conflict between different types of recreational users and may increase the risk of accidents. The reality is somewhat different with research demonstrating the difference between perception and reality. New infrastructure should therefore be developed with the presumption that it will be barrier free and be for multi-use.

4.2.12 There are a wide range of vehicle tracks that are also used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Generally, they provide robust surfaces that can accommodate the range of uses listed above. On occasion, however, poorly drained tracks can be further damaged by recreational use, particularly from horses and cyclists.

Provision for cycling, horse riding and water borne routes and infrastructure

4.2.13 The Land Reform Act will help to stimulate many more opportunities for certain types of access that have previously been constrained. This is particularly true for horse-riders, off road cyclists and water users.

4.2.14 The development of promoted path networks for horse-riding or cycling has not generally been as prominent as that for pedestrians. As such horse riding and cycling routes are rarely linked together and there is a lack of off-road opportunities for both user groups. Obstacles that can be readily overcome by pedestrians, and with lesser ease by cyclists, can be complete barriers to horse riders – for example stiles, kissing gates, cattle grids and some pedestrian gates. The Core Path Planning process will go some way to highlight this lack of provision in particular areas but the development of appropriate networks may well go beyond the remit of core paths.

4.2.15 Water based recreation is an important aspect of the suite of recreational opportunities within the Park. Difficulties have been encountered in finding suitable spots for access and egress from some rivers and lochs. In providing such sites it becomes easier to manage access, it allows for appropriate information to be displayed and targeted at users and it allows facilities to be shared with land-based users, thus reducing costs.

> **OAS Policy 3: Provision for cycling, horse riding and waterborne routes and infrastructure**
>
> The development of routes and facilities that specifically cater for horse-riding, cycling and water-borne access in the Park will be undertaken on the basis of the following principles:
>
> - More specific provision for horse-riding is required, particularly through development of promoted routes and removal of obstacles;
> - More off-road and traffic-free cycling opportunities are required (both functional routes and for recreational purposes), within and between communities. There requires to be a co-ordinated approach to network development and promotion;
> - Water based recreation has a need for low-key infrastructure at popular access and egress points. Facilities should, where possible, be shared with land based users.

4.3 Action Theme 2: Promoting responsible outdoor access and management

Increasing understanding of rights and responsibilities

4.3.1 The first part in the process of increasing understanding is to raise awareness amongst the target audience of the new rights and responsibilities that have arisen from The Act. Increasing understanding of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (and the principles that lie behind it) by both land mangers and recreational users will also contribute to the better understanding of the special qualities of the Park.

4.3.2 People generally respond positively when they understand why they are being asked to modify their actions or behaviour[6]. Many of the difficulties that have come to light since the legislation has been enacted stem from a lack of knowledge from either the user or land manager's perspective. Increasing knowledge will aid the process of understanding and encourage a more collaborative approach to resolving access problems.

4.3.3 How the respective interest groups communicate and collaborate both within and outwith their own groups will partly determine the success of the legislation. The National Park Authority, and Scottish Natural Heritage have a collective and discreet role to play in the successful encouragement of responsible behaviour, but it will depend largely on those on the ground being prepared to work collaboratively to resolve issues. Effective communication has been identified by all stakeholders as the key to success. Such

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[6] Towards Responsible use: Influencing behaviour in the countryside. SNH 2004

communication can take a wide range of formats including leaflets, websites, information boards, Ranger services and familiarisation visits to estates. The Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum also has an important role to play in the encouragement of responsible behaviour both when advising the Park Authority on access issues and when communicating to the members own constituents.

4.3.4   There is one target audience that it is acknowledged is difficult to reach. These are individuals who recreate in the countryside but do not belong to any organised club or society. For those who visit the Cairngorm mountains the percentage who are not members of walking, climbing, skiing or other associate clubs is 75%[7]. Clearly this presents a challenge and there is a need to develop methods for engaging with this group to ensure that responsible behaviour messages can be understood and acted upon.

OAS Policy 4: Increasing understanding of rights and responsibilities

The promotion of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code in the Park will be based on the following principles:

- Programmes of promotional activity will be based on targeted audiences and agreed between CNPA and SNH (and with advice from the Local Outdoor Access Forum) on an annual basis;
- Members of the Local Outdoor Access Forum will be encouraged to promote the Code amongst their respective peer groups;
- Part of an annual open Local Outdoor Access Forum event will be used to promote discussion about aspects of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code;
- Relevant information and education will be directed to the target audience through schools, community centres, accommodation providers, visitor information centres, retail outlets, etc.
- All parties will be encouraged to report problems or issues to the Park Authority who will take steps to resolve them;
- Outdoor access issues brought to the attention of the Park Authority will be logged immediately, investigated within three months and, where possible, resolved within one year;
- Issues resolved will be used as a learning tool for the Local Outdoor Access Forum, CNPA and interested parties and, where appropriate, information will be disseminated to a wider audience to encourage mutual understanding;
- Monitoring of understanding of the Code amongst the public will be required to enable success of promotional activity to be assessed;
- Issues arising that are relevant to a review of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code will be logged and fed back to Scottish Natural Heritage.

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[7] Cairngorms Mountain Recreation Survey, SNH 1998, McGregor C.

Organised outdoor access events

4.3.5   A number of organised outdoor access events already take place in the Park every year, bringing enjoyment to many and income to local businesses. Organised events are covered by access rights and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code provides guidance on the special care that organisers should take when planning such events. If well planned (in terms of site location, land manager liaison, time of year etc.) these events cause few problems and can contribute towards ensuring the Park is providing positive experiences for all users.

4.3.6   However, there are a number of concerns which have been expressed by event organisers, land managers and concerned third parties on the staging of such events. These include concerns from:

- land managers about a lack of contact or late contact from event organisers, environmental damage and disturbance to land management activities ;
- mountain users about the perceived increase in mass competitive and sponsored events on the plateau;
- a range of parties on the impacts on the natural heritage and on other people's enjoyment of the Park;
- event organisers about land managers restricting access to their ground through placement of conditions that do not relate to land management operations or environmental sensitivities;
- a number of different parties about the need for interested stakeholders to get together from time to time to discuss particular event proposals.

> ### Case study: Scottish Orienteering Association
> The Scottish Orienteering Association has developed guidance for all of their member groups which encourages early liaison with land managers and other interested parties. As a consequence they have well run and organised events that have little impact on the ground and, in the case of larger events, have very positive impacts on the local economy.

4.3.7   The length of lead in time required to ensure an effective dialogue can be undertaken and all appropriate management measures installed will vary depending on the scale of the event, the number of parties involved in discussions and the sensitivities of the area involved. As a general rule for large scale events anything up to a year or more may be an appropriate lead in time.

> **OAS Policy 5: Organised Outdoor Access Events**
>
> The Park provides an excellent location for organised outdoor access events, recognising that the area offers unrivalled opportunities for participants to enjoy the special qualities of the Park. In conjunction with partners, the Park Authority will develop and keep up to date specific guidelines for outdoor access event organisers, complementing the national guidance already available in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, and which will aim to:
>
> - guide events away from the most environmentally sensitive sites (including the higher ground in the Central Cairngorms and Lochnagar massifs);
> - minimise conflict regarding environmental and land management sensitivities by planning events on robust sites (those that are able to sustain the impacts of organised events) and at suitable times of the year;
> - minimise conflicts with other recreational users and their enjoyment of the Park's special qualities;
> - promote early dialogue between event organisers, land managers and all other interested parties; and
> - encourage participants in events to behave responsibly.

Managing recreational impacts at popular countryside sites

4.3.8   Certain areas within the Park are subject to greater recreational pressures than others. Often these pressures are greatest at popular setting off points or scenic places, close to roads. As a consequence, recreational impacts are often concentrated in relatively small geographical areas that require substantial management input. In some cases these pressures can cause damage to the natural or cultural heritage and/or impact on other people's enjoyment of the area.

4.3.9   Fortunately, as a result of previous work, the Park already benefits from a wide range of management approaches to deal with such impacts and the relevant land managers have considerable experience. The measures used include the deployment of ranger services; provision of visitor information and signs; the promotion of appropriate routes and facilities for a range of users; and targeted repair and maintenance effort.

4.3.10 In developing management prescriptions to deal further with these issues it will be important to take a holistic view of access within the Park to ensure that any problems are not displaced to other areas and that the recreational experience continues to be of high quality. Careful evaluation of all possible impacts on any form of management intervention will need to form part of the assessment process. The Management for People system, developed by

SNH[8], provides a useful framework for undertaking this work. The system and its associated toolkit help site managers to put people to the front of the planning system, providing a framework for gathering visitors information and meet the needs of visitors on a site by site basis.

4.3.11 The most significant issues that fall within this heading and which currently are not well managed relate to the impacts of camping close to roads. At a few locations in the Park camping takes place close to roads, outwith managed facilities and with so many people participating that, at times, there is a detrimental impact on other peoples' health and safety, the environment and other peoples' enjoyment of the Park. Generally such camping, often facilitated by motorised access, is not considered to be within the definition of "wild camping" in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and so is not within peoples' access rights. In these areas there is typically a scarcity of managed camping facilities and this will need to be addressed if the problem is to be resolved.

OAS Policy 6: Managing recreational impacts at popular countryside sites

Active management measures should continue to be applied and monitored at popular recreational sites in the Park so as to maximise visitor enjoyment, maintain or enhance the quality of the environment and to minimise the adverse effects of recreational use. The Management for People system (SNH, 2004) should be used at popular countryside sites within the Park where possible.

In relation to roadside camping at un-managed campsites the policy in the Park is:

- general discouragement (except for circumstances prescribed in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code)
- promoting the provision of suitable managed facilities for camping – especially in those areas where there is demand and/or where current un-managed roadside camping is causing problems
- direct involvement of the relevant ranger service in the area to provide assistance to land managers where there are problems; and
- development, in association with land managers and appropriate representative bodies, of signage that explains the problems and encourages responsible behaviour.

Car parking charges

4.3.12 There are a number of different approaches in the Park to charging for parking at countryside sites. There is currently no policy for this at National Park level although general encouragement is made to develop visitor payback schemes in the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

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[8] Management for People, SNH, 2004

4.3.13 While the creation of new car-parks will be covered by the development planning process (ie Local Plan and planning application), the charging regime at car parks is outwith the scope of planning control. There are therefore limited opportunities to directly influence the scope and scale of parking charges. Where there is public funding for the development or running of facilities there may be greater opportunities to influence the scale of fees and the use to which the revenue generated is put. The development of Park-wide policy will help to establish appropriate standards for the Park.

> ### Case study: Glen Muick
>
> Car parking at Glen Muick was previously unregulated which, on occasions, led to serious traffic problems with verges being used on a single track road, lack of turning spaces and consequent dangers to pedestrians and road users. Under the auspices of the Upper Deeside Access Trust (UDAT) a purpose built car park was created and a charge introduced for parking. The revenue generated from the car park is re-cycled into path works accounts for some £35,000 (in 2006) of new money being re-invested in the area and is traceable through the annual accounts of UDAT.

OAS Policy 7: Car parking charges

The positive management of motorised traffic at popular locations for recreational use is required. The use of car park charging schemes at key sites for outdoor access and recreation is appropriate, but only where the following principles are met:-

- Net revenue generated from car parking charges should be re-invested in caring for the natural and/or cultural heritage of the area or the opportunities to enjoy it;
- Appropriate visitor information should be provided about the objectives of any charging regime, how it is operated, and public transport options.
- To encourage understanding of the need for charges, information should be available on the use to which the income generated has been put;
- Where public funding is being sought for a car park, a condition of support should be the re-investment of any revenue generated in outdoor access infrastructure or related visitor facilities and infrastructure;
- Charges should generally apply to vehicles and not to individuals;
- Arrangements should be made to allow local/regular users to pay a reduced fee through purchase of an annual/season ticket or similar;
- Where possible, car park charges should be integrated with public transport provision, for example through integrated ticketing for parking and bus use; and
- A £2 charge per vehicle is considered an appropriate maximum charge per day (or part of day) at 2006 prices.

4.4 Action Theme 3: Promoting visitor information about outdoor access opportunities

4.4.1 There are a large number of individuals and organisations involved in promoting visitor information within the Park. Such information can take a myriad of formats including leaflets, signs, websites, interpretation panels and guidebooks. To date, there has been no consistent approach taken to the supply of information, nor how various information sources can link together to provide residents and visitors with the type of information they require. This has resulted in the current situation where individually, there exists some very useful sources of information but, taken in its totality, there is a fragmented approach that does not serve the public, nor the Park, well.

4.4.2 The Park's Sustainable Tourism Strategy has already recognised this lack of cohesion in the provision of visitor information. This has been reflected in the Priority for Action within the draft Park Plan on Developing Awareness and Understanding of the Park.

4.4.3 The production of the Cairngorms Explorer booklet with public transport timetables and information about recreation opportunities has proved very popular over the last two years. For those wishing to plan a variety of trips over several days there is no single point of contact or publication that fulfils this role. Similarly, outlets such as visitor centres and Tourist Information Centres are frequently challenged to provide information about the full range of recreational opportunities that exist in their immediate area and across the Park.

4.4.4 The more adventurous types of recreation such as downhill mountain biking, rock and ice climbing and white water canoeing are reasonably well catered for through specialist publications and websites. The less adventurous types of recreation do not fare so well, although again locally there are some very good examples of network promotion. The Upper Deeside Access Trust and Angus Council illustrate this latter point well through provision of a website with a choice of routes, clear descriptions and a downloadable map. The excellent leaflets that have been produced for some communities (for example in Deeside and in parts of Badenoch and Strathspey) are, unfortunately, not available for communities across the whole Park.

4.4.5 As a general rule, easy recreational cycling is not well promoted and information is not easy to come by, although there are many suitable places where this takes place. Glenlivet Estate is a notable exception in this regard as it does feature a range of cycling opportunities on its website as well as providing appropriate literature.

4.4.6 For the less able, information on which paths are fully accessible and what obstacles or barriers might be encountered on a route is generally poor. There are relatively few paths that can be accessed by those with particular mobility difficulties and fewer still that have accurate route descriptions that would enable less able people make informed choices as to whether a route is suitable for them.

> ***Case study: Walking on wheels***
> A new book, Walking on Wheels, (published by Cualann Press in 2006) provides information on 50 wheel-friendly trails in Scotland. The descriptions are easy to follow and the grading system used makes it very clear to readers the type of surface and gradients that will be encountered. As well as the natural and cultural heritage that can be experienced on route, information is provided on adjacent car parking and accessible toilets.

4.4.7 New publications are regularly appearing but little thought appears to have been given as to how they complement existing information. The result can often be duplication which can, on occasion, lead to confusion.

4.4.8 The target audience for some of the information provided should include those who currently do not walk, cycle, ride or paddle. The reasons why people do not undertake these activities are varied and can include lack of knowledge and confidence. In trying to encourage this group to get out it will be important to develop policies and provide information that can overcome their concerns.

OAS Policy 8: Developing appropriate visitor information about outdoor access opportunities.

There are considerable benefits of having visitor information about outdoor access opportunities that meets the needs and aspirations of all those who wish to recreate in the National Park. The policy for the Park is based on the following principles, that there should be:

- information that makes it attractive to get out and enjoy the special qualities of the Park and easier for a wider range of people to do so;
- a hierarchy of more general information about opportunities at Park-wide level and more specific information about parts of the Park;
- information about outdoor access opportunities within the Park which places the information in the context of the Park (for example by using a map), and where appropriate, using the Park brand image;
- easily available information about where to walk, cycle and ride around each community in the Park for benefit of residents and visitors;
- an emphasis on short or moderate outdoor access opportunities and information that meets the needs and aspirations of less-abled people; and
- an emphasis on outdoor access opportunities that can be reached by public transport.

4.4.9 Whilst a number of organisations and communities have developed their own way-marking system for routes there are no agreed standards and consequently the range of information provided is variable. Short walks (1 to 1.5 miles) in particular generally lack effective way-marking and frequently rely on local knowledge or map reading skills. This is particularly important if we are to encourage the inactive and other excluded groups to undertake some moderate form of exercise. Providing well signposted and way-marked routes would remove a major existing obstacle from these excluded groups taking exercise.

4.4.10 Way-marking clearly has an important role to play in helping people to find their way around but potential impact on wild land qualities should also be a consideration. The mountain areas of the Cairngorms have been influenced

by the hand of man over many centuries but the landscape is generally devoid of such obvious and intrusive infrastructure as way-marking posts. There is also the need to consider the appropriateness of encouraging people into remote areas where they may not have the necessary skills or knowledge to find their way back to safety should the weather suddenly change or the party gets into difficulty.

OAS Policy 9: Providing appropriate way-marking.

Way-marking has a crucial role in both encouraging the public to take access and in assisting them orientate their way around the Park.
The policy for the Park is based on the following principles:

- There should be a network of short way-marked routes around every community, including information to orient people and find the start of such routes;
- Way-marking information must include a direction pointer, destination and approximate distance at the start of the route;
- it should be easy to find the start of promoted paths from the heart of nearby communities;
- Giving approximate times to complete the route at the starting point will help to provide comfort to those who might otherwise lack the necessary confidence to embark on the route;
- There will be a presumption against way-marking in wild or remote areas, especially on the higher ground, where people are expected to be self reliant.
- The Park Authority will work with relevant partners to produce and keep under review technical way marking guidance, in line with national best practice, which will lead to high standards, a consistent approach and the promotion of a feeling of being within a National Park.

4.5   Action Theme 4: Promoting sustainable transport for enjoyment of the Park

4.5.1   There are large variations in the availability and suitability of public transport both to and within the Park. A lack of accessible public transport excludes some social groups and places a financial burden on households who need to then buy a car. In addition, there are clear environmental benefits from the use of public transport and, where these can be linked to walking and cycling routes, to the health of those who both reside in and visit the Park.   Lack of knowledge about the availability and frequency of public transport can also be a factor which influences the public to opt for use of car and therefore information provision also has an important role to play in encouraging use of public transport. This issue is addressed in Action Theme 3.

4.5.2   At present there is a bus and rail network connecting the communities on the western side of the Park along the A9 corridor. These also provide links to

most of the major urban settlements in Scotland. Other parts of the Park are served by bus networks, mainly connecting settlements. Parts of the Park are not well served and historically there has been poor provision between east and west; between Strathspey and Strathdon or Deeside; on the A93 between Braemar and Spittle of Glenshee or Pitlochry. In 2006 significant progress has been made with development of plans to address these shortfalls, at least on a seasonal basis. Cycle carriage is generally limited on public transport in the Park.

4.5.3   Many of the popular setting off or return points for walking and cycling are not particularly well served by public transport and this has resulted in reliance on cars and, at times, congestion on roads not designed for high numbers. Such problems are most significant in glens with "dead end" roads. Mitigating measures to date have mainly involved the creation of car parks and facilities lower down the glens and promotion of alternative destinations in the area.

OAS Policy 10: Improving public transport links

The greater use of public transport for visitors and residents alike will contribute to achievement of national health, environment and social inclusion outcomes. The policy for the Park is based on the following principles, that there should be:

- An enhanced bus service (and marketing of services) that links Strathspey with Strathdon and Deeside and Braemar with Glenshee and Pitlochry;
- where public transport subsidies are made, these should be directed towards the use of the least harmful fuels available, including bio-diesel and LPG
- adequate cycle carriage provision should be encouraged on all public transport to, from and around the Park;
- partnerships supported between councils and private enterprise to provide more bus routes that link communities to popular setting off and return points for outdoor access
- More sustainable modal choices at car parks, including better public transport information, encouraging car users to leave their cars .
- More integrated ticketing between different transport modes and between visitor attractions and transport
- More Demand Responsive Transport encouraged; and
- Acknowledgement of the role of community transport and its place alongside public transport

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4.5.4   Cycling is a popular activity within the Park and, as well as a recreational activity, serves as a practical and sustainable means of transport for school children and workers alike. A number of communities are well served by quiet roads and safe routes to school but for others, the prospect of negotiating busy and fast roads acts as a complete deterrent.

> **OAS Policy 11: Safer cycling opportunities**
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> The use of bicycles for both leisure and functional trips should be greater than it is at present. The policy for the Park is based on the following principles:
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> - cyclists require more priority lanes and safer routes to school as well as routes that are professionally engineered;
> - reductions in speed limits on functional cycling networks can increase safety and take priority away from car users on some routes; and
> - the Cairngorms National Park Authority will use the Core Paths Planning process and work with relevant transport authorities to ensure that an appropriate network of cycling routes can be provided around communities.

4.6 Action Theme 5: Promoting healthy lifestyles

4.6.3 Lack of physical activity has been described as 'the silent epidemic of our times'. Over 60% of the Scottish population is not active enough to benefit their health. This contributes significantly to Scotland's poor health record in relation to coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes and many cancers. However, Scotland is also acknowledged as a world leader in tackling physical activity by developing the first national Physical Activity Strategy- 'Let's Make Scotland More Active'[9]. The National Park can make a significant contribution to the implementation of this strategy.

4.6.4 'Let's Make Scotland More Active' recognises that inactive people moving to just 30 minutes of moderate activity, such as brisk walking can, for example:

- cut the risk of coronary heart disease by 50%;
- reduce the risk of colon cancer (inactive people are 3.6 times more at risk than active people);
- cut the risk of Type 2 diabetes by 50%; and
- be more effective than drugs for treating mild to moderate depression

4.6.5 Both national and international research supports walking as being the most appropriate activity to promote to encourage inactive people to become active. Meanwhile work undertaken by the Paths to Health Project across Scotland has identified that social/peer support is the most significant factor in encouraging inactive people to walk more.

4.6.6 There already are some schemes within the Park that have encouraged people to become more active. These include the Upper Deeside Walking to Health scheme and "Step it Up Highland" which operates in a number of villages in Badenoch and Strathspey. The benefits of such schemes are considerable and include improved physical health and mental wellbeing of

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[9] A Strategy for Physical Activity, Physical Activity Taskforce, 2003

participants and the creation of opportunities for new people to meet and to get involved in community based activities, thereby contributing to community development and social inclusion. The presence of good network of people living locally who know where to go for a pleasant short walk can also have considerable tourism benefits and the potential for the Park to market itself as a healthy destination merits further exploration. Whilst these schemes are proving successful, at present they only cover a minority of communities within the Park.

4.6.7   The Paths to Health Project encourages the setting up of local schemes through training and advice and targeted financial support. NHS health promotions are equally keen to assist in encouraging local groups although NHS Highland and Grampian may have different views about how best to take this work forwards. A GP referral scheme (Active Referral) encourages health professionals to direct patients to activities such as walking groups where they can join others in taking exercise. To assist this process a Physical Activity Directory was produced by CNPA/NHS Highland in 2005. This was aimed at GPs, other health professionals and the general public to highlight the variety of physical activities available in Badenoch and Strathspey.

4.6.8   The Paths to Health Project has also developed a pedometer pack for health professionals which can be supported with local information about where to walk. This pack has been successfully evaluated in 21 Primary Health Care settings by Strathclyde University. Paths to Health have also been piloting a number of workplace health initiatives which encourage employees to walk at lunch time as well as to and from work. Such approaches can have health and environmental benefits.

OAS Policy 12: Promoting healthy lifestyles

Encouraging inactive people to take some form of regular physical activity in the outdoors will help ensure that the resident population is healthier, will promote people's understanding of the special qualities of the Park and strengthen the local knowledge about recreation opportunities for visitors. The policy for the Park is based on the following principles, that there should be:
- provision of local Paths to Health type schemes so that they are available to residents in every community within the Park;
- encouragement of use of active referrals from GPs to walking or other physical activity clubs; and
- some marketing activity that is oriented to promote the Park as a 'healthy destination'.

5 Action Mechanisms

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 It is not possible, nor would it be beneficial, to list all of the individuals and organisations that have a role to play in the management of outdoor access. This section focuses on the principal groups of people who will be involved and explains the role which it will be necessary for them to play for the successful delivery of the Strategy.

5.1.2 This Section should be considered along with the Sections on Action Themes and Policies, Action Areas, and the Park-wide Action Plan to determine how the issues will be addressed over the next 5 year period.

5.2 Cairngorms National Park Authority Staff

5.2.1 Outdoor Access Officers at the CNPA will principally focus on implementation of the core duties of the Park Authority, development of strategic work and integration of outdoor access work with other activities of the Park Authority. The work associated with the four legal duties of the Park Authority (see Section 2.2) will take a high priority. Other work will include the allocation of funds for path repair and maintenance and development of policy and best practice advice.

5.2.2 The staff working on the sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities are likely to lead on those aspects of the Strategy relating to Transport and Health. In addition, there is a range of other staff within the Park Authority who can assist in the delivery of the Strategy.

5.3 Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum

5.3.1 The Cairngorms National Park Local Outdoor Access Forum (LOAF) was established in March 2005 and has already offered constructive advice to the Park Authority and others.

5.3.2 The Forum meets on a 10 week cycle at different locations throughout the Park. The Forum is made up of 21 individuals with a wide range of knowledge and experience drawn from four stakeholder groups – land managers, community interests, recreational users and public agencies. The objectives and functions of the Forum are:

a. To act as the local access forum for Cairngorms National Park and to undertake the functions of that body in terms of Section 25 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003;

b. To advise Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) on strategic access issues and the drawing up and adoption of a Core Paths Plan in

terms of its responsibility under Section 17 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003;

c.   To advise the CNPA in the preparation of its Outdoor Access Strategy;

d.   To advise the CNPA and any other person or body consulting it, on the existence and delineation of rights of way and the exercise of access rights;

e.   To promote responsible access and land management through assisting the CNPA in publicising the Scottish Outdoor Access Code;

f.   To promote discussion and the sharing of knowledge, awareness and good practice in outdoor access matters;

g.   To support the provision of infrastructure that improves responsible access to the countryside for all; and

h.   To offer advice that will assist in the resolution of outdoor access disputes.

5.4   Ranger Services

5.4.1   There are 13 ranger services operating within the National Park. None of these is directly managed by the Park Authority. The employers are either privately owned estates, charitable bodies, local authorities or other public bodies. Most ranger services are assisted financially by SNH, either through grant aid or as part of a larger management agreement.

5.4.2   The role currently played by ranger services in management of outdoor access across the Park is variable. Rangers employed on specific estates (or similar geographic units) are perhaps most actively engaged but only in relation to their well-defined area of ground. There they promote the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and ensure that visitors and land mangers (generally their employer) abide by the Code.

5.4.3   Rangers working over wider areas of the Park (generally those employed by local authorities) have more flexibility in the areas of ground on which they operate and therefore can play a wider role, in addition to that described above. Significant attention is generally paid to sites owned or directly managed by the respective local authority.

5.4.4   In the future a more consistent and proactive role in the management of outdoor access within the Park is envisaged with the 3 types of Ranger services dealing with outdoor access in the following manner:

- Local Authority or area rangers – operating over a wide area and devoting a significant part of their time to promote the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, deal at first hand with irresponsible behaviour and resolve access issues, working closely with outdoor access officers.
- Estate or site-based rangers – operating on and immediately around their specific sites, to promote the Scottish Outdoor Access Code to visitors (including special interest groups and local people), deal at first hand with irresponsible behaviour and liaise with outdoor access officers on other issues.
- Community based rangers – operating in and around their community, to promote the Scottish Outdoor Access Code to both locals and visitors,

deal at first hand with irresponsible behaviour and resolve access issues, working closely with outdoor access officers.

5.4.5 At the time of writing a review is under way of the various options for management arrangements of rangers in the Park. Decisions on the future funding and management of Ranger Services will be taken, in consultation with the relevant partner organisations, in late 2006. In addition SNH is commencing a national review of rangers in 2006. Both of these processes may result in further changes to the roles that rangers play in management of outdoor access.

5.5 Delivery mechanism for path repair, maintenance and improvement programmes

5.5.1 Within the draft National Park Plan's Priority for Action on Outdoor Access there is a proposal to create a dedicated Trust, or similar body, to allow partners to contribute towards agreed priority work programmes of path repair, maintenance and improvement.

5.5.2 Experience in the Cairngorms and elsewhere in Scotland has shown that that there can be considerable advantages in using a Trust or other similar mechanism to assemble funding programmes spanning several years and running the project management of the works. The particular advantages include development of commitment from a variety of funding partners around an agreed set of goals and encouragement of the planning of work programmes over a number of years. A Trust, being an independent entity and frequently holding charitable status, is also often a good mechanism for delivery of visitor payback initiatives and it is relatively easier for it to access funds from charitable sources. The Trust can also be flexible and entrepreneurial in its approach, directing resources to certain parts of its geographic area as priorities demand – for example working with very light touch where there is existing capacity at local level and taking more of a delivery role in other parts. There are of course some potential disadvantages, including:

- Perceived duplication of overlapping Trusts;
- Administration and core costs need to be found; and
- Difficulties operating over a large geographic area.

5.5.3 There are essentially two alternative courses of action to deliver the same objective but each has more substantial disadvantages. One option would be that the Park Authority recruit further staff with the skills to plan, supervise and manage substantial path repair programmes. This would have some advantages (including direct control of delivery by the Park Authority) and but there would be difficulties:
- generating significant partnership "buy-in" to programmes of work;
- accessing funds from charitable sources;
- managing large multi-year work programmes with sufficient flexibility between years;

- accessing funds form visitor payback schemes or from sales of Park merchandise.

5.5.4 The second alternative course of action would be to work through the wide range of other smaller Trusts and community companies already in existence. Again there are some advantages in terms of working with existing structures but there are significant disadvantages, including:
- very unlikely to provide necessary degree of coordination across the Park;
- lack of the specialised skills that are needed to effectively manage work programmes and very varied capacity for delivery, therefore requiring extensive support; and
- significant competition for resources between smaller Trusts likely to lead to a fragmented approach, not directed to Park-wide priorities
- difficulties accessing funds from visitor payback schemes or from sales of Park merchandise.

5.5.5 There is a already an excellent example of an existing Trust within the Park in the Upper Deeside Access Trust who have very successfully bid for and managed substantial, path improvement programmes spanning several years. The Trust has operated over a wide area, working in partnership with respective land managers in both public and private sector to deliver agreed outputs. Public feedback about such works has been extremely positive.

5.5.6 Similarly the National Trust for Scotland has pioneered techniques of upland path repair and maintenance using a dedicated peripatetic team covering a range of mountain properties in their ownership. This approach has allowed effective programmes of pre-emptive "light touch" work to be undertaken by highly skilled teams as part of larger path restoration programmes.

5.5.7 Work is ongoing by Park Authority staff to assess the potential for the use of a Park-wide Trust or similar delivery mechanism within the Park and, at present, this is the favoured option. It is envisaged that such a Trust could operate as a Company Limited by Guarantee with a Board of Trustees which included representatives of the main funding organisations and some other interested parties. To attain charitable status it would need to apply to the recently empowered Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, demonstrate it had charitable objectives and provides a public benefit. Experience has shown that there are advantages in keeping the Board of Trustees small and having complementary mechanisms to bring in officers in the form of a management group. The combination of these structures, along with a dedicated staff would collectively bring the necessary finance, management, and corporate governance skills required to operate such a Trust.

5.6   Other mechanisms for delivering the Strategy

5.6.1 **Community Based Trusts or Similar Organisations** - There are a number of small, community based organisations in and around the Cairngorms National Park which have been extremely successful in improving and maintaining local path networks to date. These local groups have good local

knowledge of the current path networks and the types and levels of usage of the paths in their areas. These local groups could provide an effective lead for the Core Paths Planning community consultation exercises as well as assisting in guiding non core path network projects. Maintenance of path networks could be undertaken by such groups with overall co-ordination provided by the Park Authority with support from the proposed Park-wide Trust.

5.6.2 **Local Authorities -** Although the responsibilities for outdoor access have moved from the local authorities to the National Park, there are still a number of discreet roles that are fulfilled by local authorities. These include providing access solutions that are within a road corridor, pavements, car parking and other related transport issues. Some local authorities own or directly manage some sites or structures with the Park. There is a need for the Park Authority to work closely with each local authority to ensure that solutions that require a multi-agency approach are funded and co-ordinated effectively.

5.6.3 The same issues relate to the new **Transport Partnerships**. The North East Scotland Transport Partnership (NESTRANS) and the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS) which are now statutory bodies and who work to pursue improved transport services and infrastructure in their areas. NESTRANS and HITRANS both operate within the Cairngorms National Park area. Joint working between the CNPA, Local Authority transport departments and such bodies is essential to deliver actions on public transport.

5.6.4 **Health professionals:** Implementation of this Strategy in relation to health will require partnership working with those directly in touch with the target audience - health professionals, voluntary health sector, community organisations, etc. While organisations such as Step it Up Highland and the Deeside walking initiative can assist the Park in meeting health objectives there may be merit in establishing a standing group to advise on the best way forward.

5.7 Other stakeholders

5.7.1 **Land Managers** - There are a large number of different land managers within the Cairngorms National Park area and many provide excellent outdoor access opportunities on their land, some which are managed and maintained without public support. The Core Paths Plan process may present opportunities for land managers to guide recreational users onto areas of their land which are more appropriate. Land managers also have the opportunity to develop access opportunities on their land through Land Management Contracts. It is acknowledged that the current amount of funding available through Tier 2 would not be sufficient to include all paths within each farm unit. It will, however, provide the first opportunity for land managers to receive a payment for access related maintenance. Future funding for public benefits associated with land management are likely to encourage co-operative bids from a number of adjacent land managers which may offer even greater benefits for overall route management. Further attention needs to be given to integrating the LMC support to land managers with the work of the Park

Authority as access authority to ensue that priority paths are maintained and appropriately promoted.

5.7.2 **Local Businesses** - There are already many businesses based on the outdoor access resource within the Park. Local businesses and business associations are increasingly recognising the benefits of path networks as a tourist attraction and something which is beneficial to their business. It will be important for the CNPA to highlight demand on which new business opportunities could be based and potential for new linkages between services or greater coordination. One innovative and successful scheme of path sponsorship is currently in place at Nethy Bridge and this may be a useful model to use across the Cairngorms National Park. Similarly a new initiative in the Badenoch and Strathspey area, the Aviemore and the Cairngorms Destination Management Ltd, may result in a significant new income stream for projects, some of which may be available for outdoor access related work.

5.7.3 **Public agencies** – The delivery of the Strategy will help to meet the objectives of public agencies in a wide range of fields including tourism, health promotion, forestry, economic development, sport promotion and conservation of the natural and cultural heritage. It will be important to keep the relevant public agencies fully involved in the implementation of this Strategy so that the widest range of benefits can be realised.

5.7.4 **Groups to Share Good Practice locally** - The high number of different initiatives relating to outdoor access at a local level and the degree of enthusiasm for such work has prompted a demand for groups that share information and experience. A good model for such a group is the Deeside Access Group which currently meets twice a year with the chairmanship shared between the Park Authority and Aberdeenshire Council. It is envisaged that the Park Authority could play a useful role in convening one or more similar groups so that the entire Park is covered. These more local groups for practitioners would complement the work of the Local Outdoor Access Forum. More local groups representing different types of recreation will also be a useful resource in delivering the themes of the Outdoor Access Strategy.
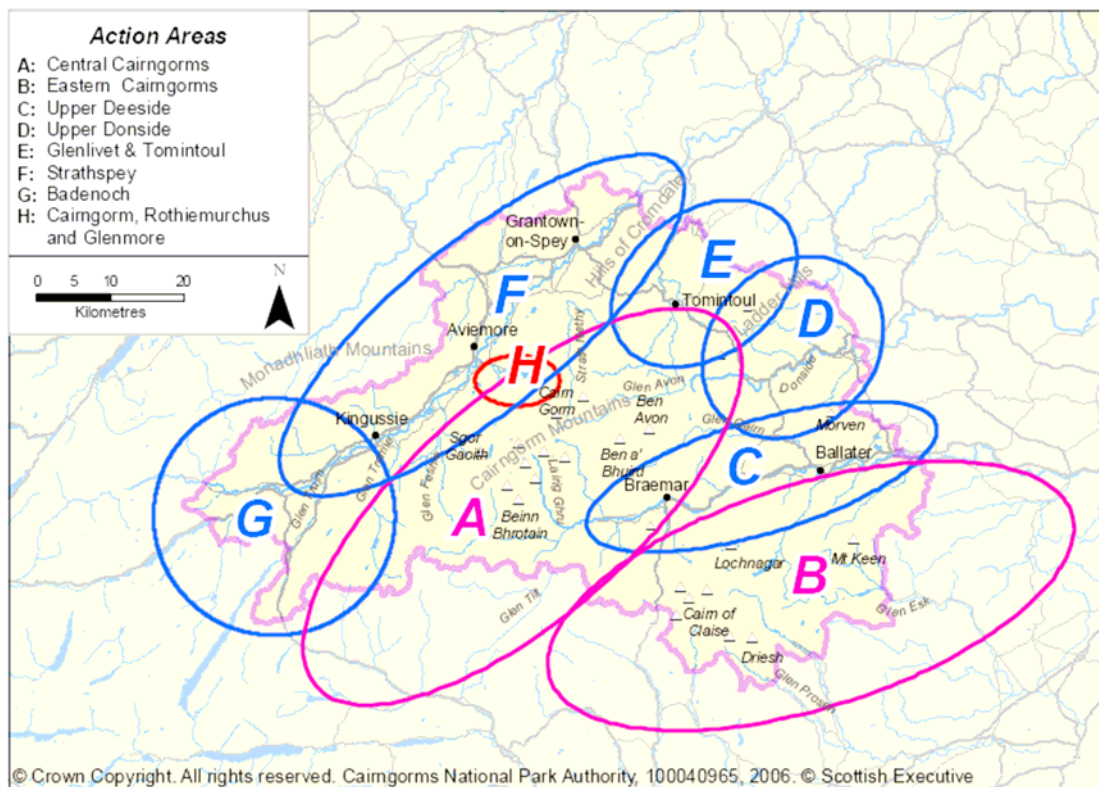
6   Action Areas

6.1   Introduction

6.1.1   Action Areas have been identified to provide a more detailed spatial dimension to this Strategy. It should be noted that the Action Themes and Policies identified in Section 4 relate to the whole National Park. The specific issues and priorities identified for Action Areas in this Section should therefore be viewed as complementary to those policies.

6.1.2   Figure 6.1 provides an illustration of the areas within the Park that are considered to have distinct characteristics and requirements in terms of outdoor access. The areas overlap with one another and extend beyond the Park. They are intended to be general areas only and the lines do not represent specific changes in landscape or character on the ground. The colours used in the map are to assist with visual representation only and do not carry any prioritised significance.

Figure 6.1 Action Areas

6.2   Action Area A: The Central Cairngorms

Figure 6.2 Action Area A
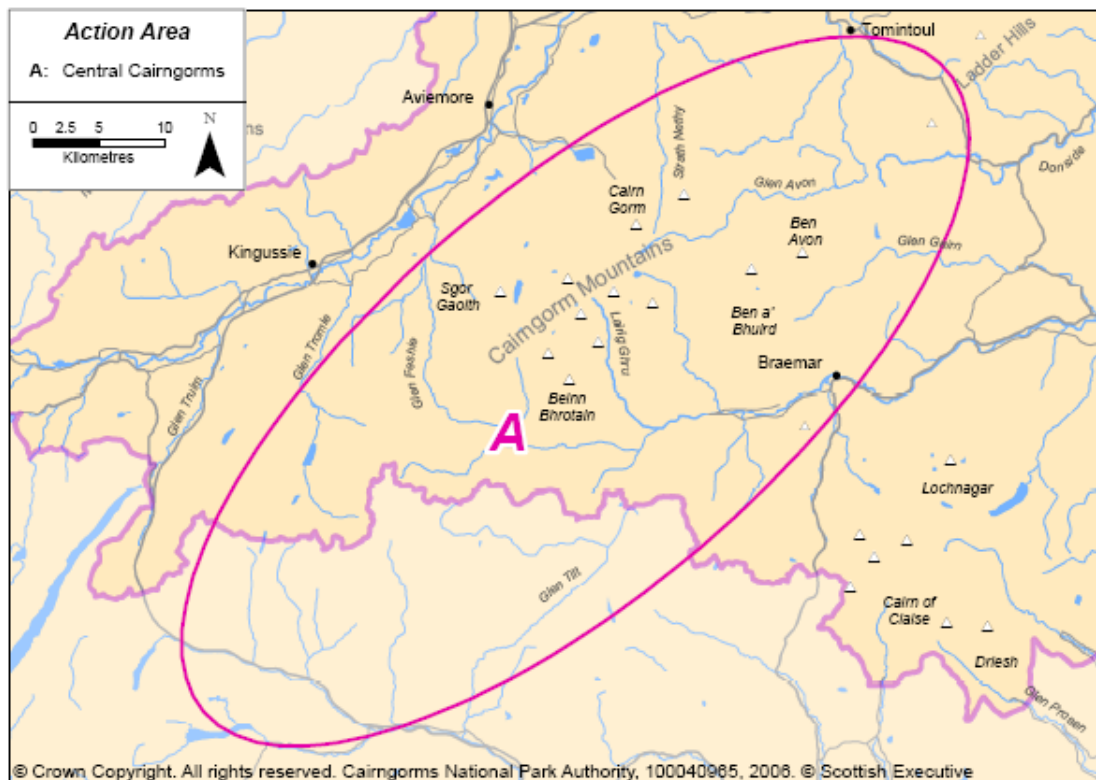
Description

6.2.1   The Central Cairngorms are characterised by an upland landscape much of which lies within the montane zone (land above 600 metres). Twenty of the Munros (hills over 3,000ft) that exist within the National Park fall within Area A. The area is predominantly free of built development and inhabited settlements and is managed for forestry, deer and grouse shooting, nature conservation and recreation. The Rivers Dee, Don and Avon have their headwaters in the Central Cairngorms and many of the tributaries of the Spey also run from the area. Loch Avon and Loch Einich are the largest water bodies in the area. The Deeside and Lochnagar National Scenic Area and the Cairngorms National Scenic Area fall within Area A as does the Cairngorms National Nature Reserve together with the Cairngorms Special Protection Area and Special Area of Conservation.

6.2.2   A wide range of recreational activities take place in the area, providing an important resource for both local people and visitors. Numerous upland paths and mountain passes provide access through and onto the mountains. Many people value the area for its wild character and it is visited by people from all over the world. There are a large number of upland paths and tracks providing access throughout the area. Many of these tracks have historical significance and one or two can be truly be described as iconic. The area can be accessed from numerous setting off points, the most popular of these being at Coire Cas, which also provides access to the Cairngorm ski centre, and at the Linn of Dee.

Key outdoor access issues

6.2.3   The upland area is an extremely fragile environment which is susceptible to damage from the cumulative impact of recreational users. There is a need to promote responsible behaviour and ensure that access to the high ground is not made easier in order to help minimise the potential environmental impacts. Paths should be maintained so that they provide a sound and attractive surface for users.

6.2.4   Access to the area by public transport is limited and most people generally arrive by car, requiring car-parking facilities. This can lead to the exclusion of people who do not have access to a vehicle. Paths close to car parks receive intensive use and generally need higher specification and maintenance regimes. One advantage of the use of such concentrated setting-off points is that visitor information is more readily targeted to the required audience than if parking was more disperse.

6.2.5   This area is in demand from time to time by those wishing to organise mass participation events that rely on outdoor access rights. The sensitivity of the natural heritage and visitors' enjoyment of the wild landscape character means that such events in this area can be problematic unless very carefully planned.

6.2.6   Most of the higher paths in this area have been designed and constructed for pedestrians. Cycling and horse use can have a negative impact on the path surface and drainage. Some of the higher paths have also proved difficult to repair with the standard techniques used on Scottish hill paths. For example, it has been difficult to determine a suitable path line that users would follow on some of the broad Cairngorms ridges. Experimental work in the area and collective review of experience by practitioners has helped to address such issues.

6.2.7   The path repair process in the area is challenging, not least because of remoteness. In recent years an innovative approach has been taken through the use of temporary accommodation for path workers. The environmental sensitivity of the area also causes some difficulties for path managers. For example, the geological and geomorphological value of some sites has precluded the collection of stone for path repairs. SNH has developed useful guidelines to ease the planning process. Concerns have been expressed that different approaches to path repair have been taken on different land management units within the Area. There is need to agree standards that can applied across the area.

Priorities

Priorities in this area are:

- Promotion of responsible behaviour to minimise impacts to the sensitive natural and cultural heritage of the Area;
- Development of a comprehensive understanding of path condition

(building on the comprehensive work done on land owned by National Trust for Scotland, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and through area-wide surveying undertaken by the Upper Deeside Access Trust) in order to set priorities for repair and maintenance;

- Putting effective maintenance regimes for paths in place, especially relating to previous capital repair works;
- Specifying and agreeing with partners standards for path repairs that are appropriate to the sensitive landscape character of the area;
- Sourcing of materials for path repair/maintenance that do not adversely affect natural or cultural heritage;
- Further development of path repair techniques in the most difficult upland situations (for example, on broad, exposed ridges); and
- Managing organised events so as to minimise adverse effects on the special qualities of the area and peoples' enjoyment of them.
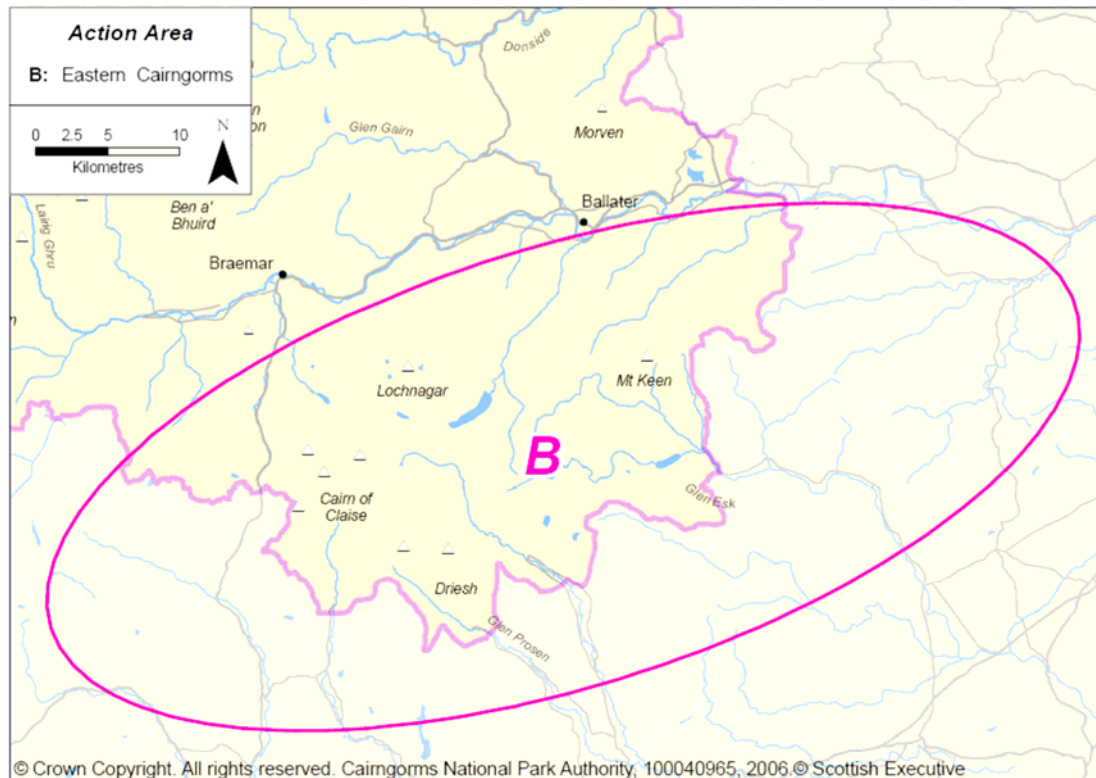
6.3 Action Area B: The Eastern Cairngorms

Description

6.3.1 The Eastern Cairngorms have a similar landscape character to Area A. The Area is characterised by an upland landscape with numerous glens and rivers, the most notable of which are Glens Isla, Prosen, Clova, Doll and Esk to the south of the hills and Glens Tanar, Muick, Callater and Clunie to the north. The rivers in the area are tributaries to the Rivers Dee and to the North and South Esk. Loch Muick and Loch Lee are the largest water bodies. The Deeside and Lochnagar National Scenic Area falls within Area B as does the National Nature Reserve at Glen Tanar and at Corrie Fee (previously Caenlochan NNR). The area is sparsely populated with small numbers of scattered settlements in the glens, predominantly falling within Glen Tanar, Glen Muick and Glen Clova.

6.3.2 The Eastern Cairngorms are a popular location for recreational users from much of Angus and Aberdeenshire as well as farther afield. The glens provide a range of opportunities with both low and high level options. There are a number of old drove roads and vindicated Rights of Way in the area providing passes through the mountains between the Angus Glens in the south and Deeside in the north. Glenshee ski centre lies to the east of the Area. The outdoor access resource has been strengthened considerably over last few years as result of the Eastern Cairngorms Access Project which comes to an end in late 2006.

Figure 6.3 Action Area B

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Key outdoor access issues

6.3.3 Many of the same issues described for the Central Cairngorms also apply to this Area. The upland area is a fragile environment which can be susceptible to damage by recreational users.

6.3.4 The management and maintenance of upland paths and tracks of the Eastern Cairngorms has been addressed through the Upper Deeside Access Trust (UDAT) and through specifically funded projects such as the Eastern Cairngorms Access Project (ECAP). It is important that this work continues as part of a Park-wide approach to the management and maintenance of upland paths and tracks.

6.3.5 Again, as with the Central Cairngorms, access to the area by public transport is limited and as such people generally arrive by car requiring parking and causing intensive usage of paths and tracks in areas where car parking is available. This can lead to the exclusion of people who do not own their own vehicle and also the creation of 'honeypot' areas of high pressure access. Many of the popular walks in the area are through routes which may require transport at either end.

Priorities

Priorities in this area are:

- Promotion of responsible behaviour to minimise impacts to the

sensitive natural and cultural heritage of the Area;

- Development of a comprehensive understanding of path condition (building on the comprehensive work done through the Eastern Cairngorms Access Project) in order to set priorities for repair and maintenance;
- Putting effective maintenance regimes for paths in place, especially relating to previous capital repair initiatives;
- Further development of path repair techniques in the most difficult upland situations (for example on exposed ridges);
- Sourcing of materials for path repair/maintenance that do not adversely affect natural or cultural heritage;
- Managing organised events so as to minimise adverse effects on the special qualities of the area and peoples' enjoyment of them; and
- Provision of suitably managed campsites in areas close to Braemar and in the Angus Glens to minimise problems caused in the Area by excessive roadside camping.

6.4 Action Area C: Upper Deeside

Description

6.4.1 The Upper Deeside Area covers the upper reaches of the Dee Valley which is the second most populated area in the Park after Badenoch and Strathspey. There are large tracts of commercial forestry on Deeside as well as native Pine woodlands and birch woods. There are some agricultural fields on the Strath with grouse and deer moorland towards the edges and hills and mountains beyond. Much of the Deeside and Lochnagar National Scenic Area covers the area. The Muir of Dinnet National Nature Reserve at Dinnet and a small section of the Glen Tanar NNR also falls within the Area.

6.4.2 Deeside is a popular tourist destination in part due to its Royal connections at Balmoral. It is also extremely popular with recreational users for both low level access and as a starting point for accessing the Central and Eastern Cairngorms. The settlements on Deeside generally have very good path networks within and around their villages which is largely thanks to the work of the Upper Deeside Access Trust (UDAT), working in conjunction with local land managers. There are numerous paths and tracks providing access throughout the area, some of which link into Action Areas A and B. There are three permanent orienteering courses in the area.

Figure 6.4 Action Area C
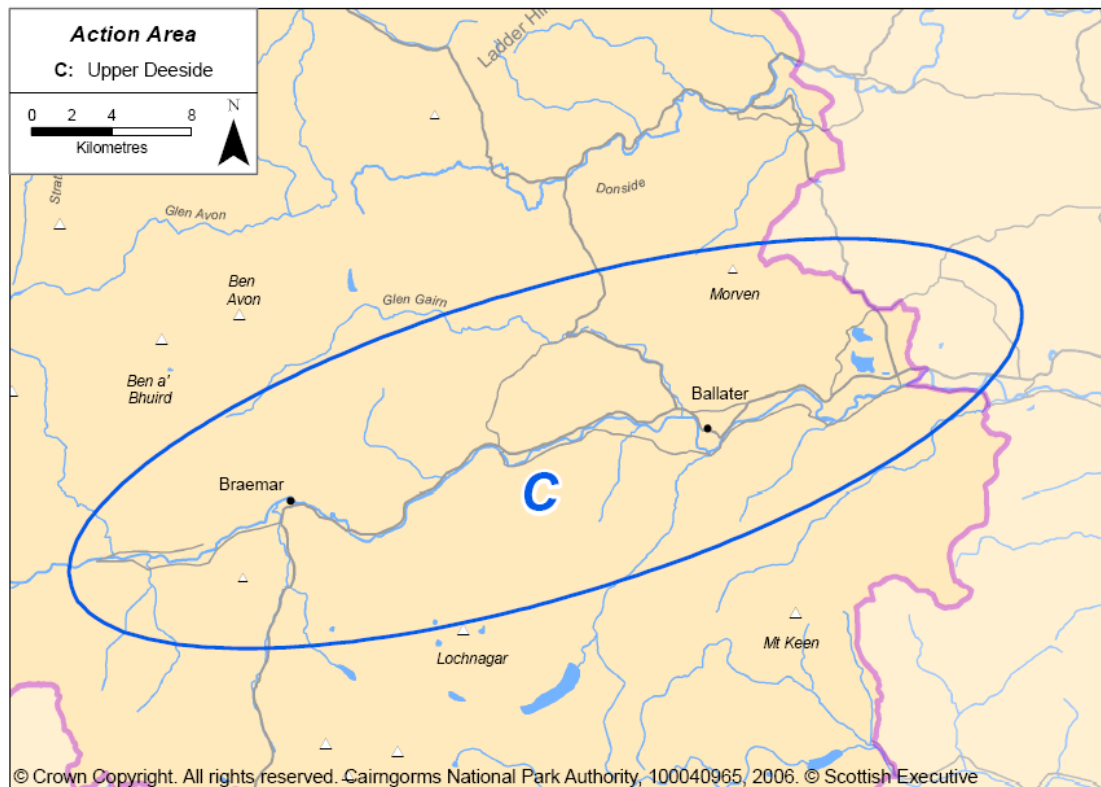
Key outdoor access issues

6.4.3 Path networks within and around the settlements are generally well developed but there is a lack of promoted and way-marked off-road links between settlements. Many of these links already exist but are not promoted or managed as such, the exception being the old railway line between Dinnet and Ballater which is promoted for walking and cycling.

6.4.4 There are a number of pony trekking businesses on Deeside but there is little promotion of the area for horse-riding tourism and a lack of information about rights and responsibilities and suitable routes.

6.4.5 There are a number of cycle hire businesses on Deeside but as with horse-riding, there is little promotion of the area for cycling and a lack of information about rights and responsibilities and suitable routes.

6.4.6 In some areas on Deeside, the provision of promoted routes or information about suitable routes for people of all abilities is very limited, for example around Braemar.

6.4.7 The River Dee and its tributaries are popular for kayakers and canoeists but infrastructure and information about access and egress points is limited.

6.4.8 There are a number of permanent orienteering courses in the area but further opportunities may decrease due to potential disruption of protected species. There is a lack of provision for trail-O (all-abilities) and mountain bike orienteering.

Priorities

Priorities in this area are:

- Building on the excellent work done by Upper Deeside Access Trust and land managers to maintain existing path networks;
- Identifying the need for and developing better path networks around communities and links between communities through Core Paths Planning process;
- Providing safe walking and cycling routes to school and work places;
- Completion and effective management (including marketing) of the multi-user long distance route from Aberdeen to Ballater;
- Development of further opportunities for less-abled people, especially around Braemar.
- Provision of information and infrastructure (where appropriate) for water users on the Dee and other water bodies.

6.5 Action Area D: Upper Donside

Figure 6.5 Action Area D
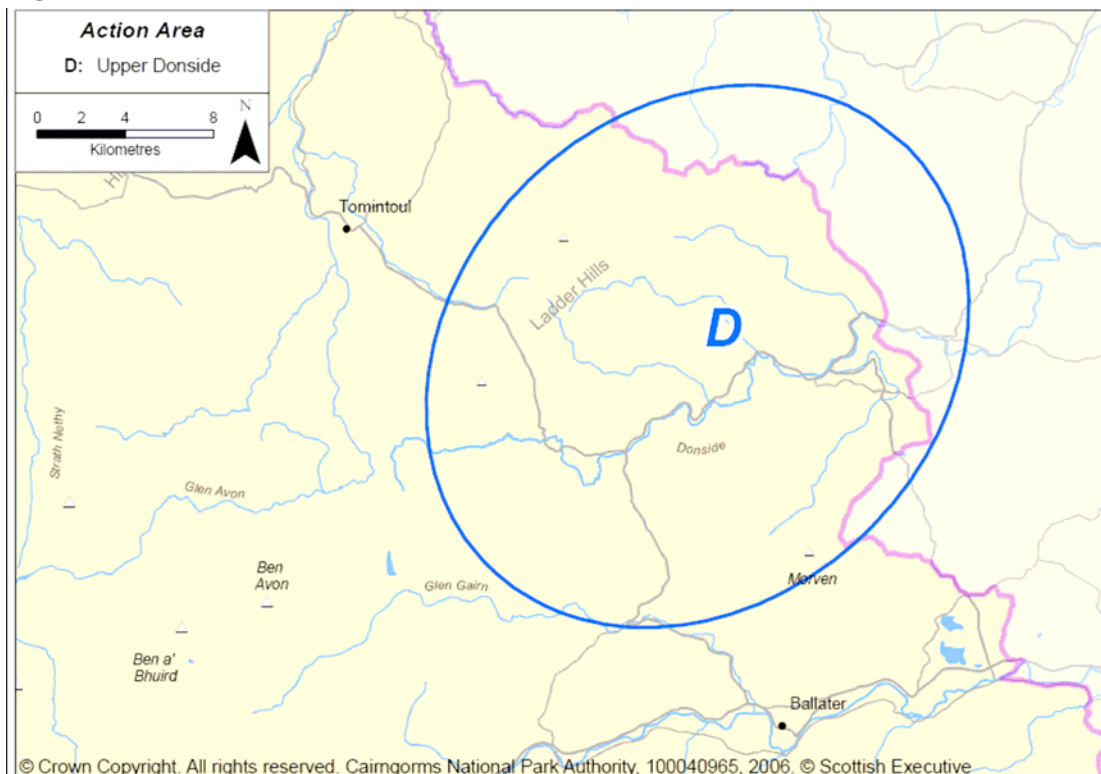
Description

6.5.1   Area D covers the area known as Strathdon on the upper reaches of Donside where the A944 road runs down the Strath adjacent to the River Don. There are settlements scattered throughout Strathdon adjacent to the main road and up Glen Buchat including Corgarff, Roughpark and Bellabeg. The Ladder

Hills lie to the north of the Strath and Morven and surrounding hills to the south. A large proportion of the Strath is forested with large tracts owned by the Forestry Commission. Much of the area is managed as Grouse moorland and some for agriculture.

6.5.2   There is a permanent orienteering course in the area and promoted walking trails at Ben Newe. There has been recent work carried out to develop trails around Bellabeg. The Lecht ski centre lies to the north west of the area.

Key outdoor access issues

6.5.3   Path networks within, around and between settlements in the area are generally limited with only a few exceptions. The A944 is the main link between communities but it has poor sight lines and is subject to fast moving traffic. There is no safe off-road route to provide people with access between communities – in particular there are no safe routes to school.

6.5.4   Bellabeg is the first main settlement reached by people entering the Park on the A944 and is used by people driving to the Lecht ski centre and from east to west through the National Park. At present there are limited recreation opportunities in the area which may encourage people to stop or to set out for Upper Donside in the first place.

Priorities

Priorities in this area are:

- Identifying the need for and developing better path networks around communities and links between communities through Core Paths Planning process;
- Maintaining existing path networks;
- Providing safe walking and cycling routes to school and work places, especially near Bellabeg;
- Development of further opportunities for less-abled people, especially around settlements and close to features of interest.

6.6 Action Area E: Glen Livet and Tomintoul

Figure 6.6 Action Area E
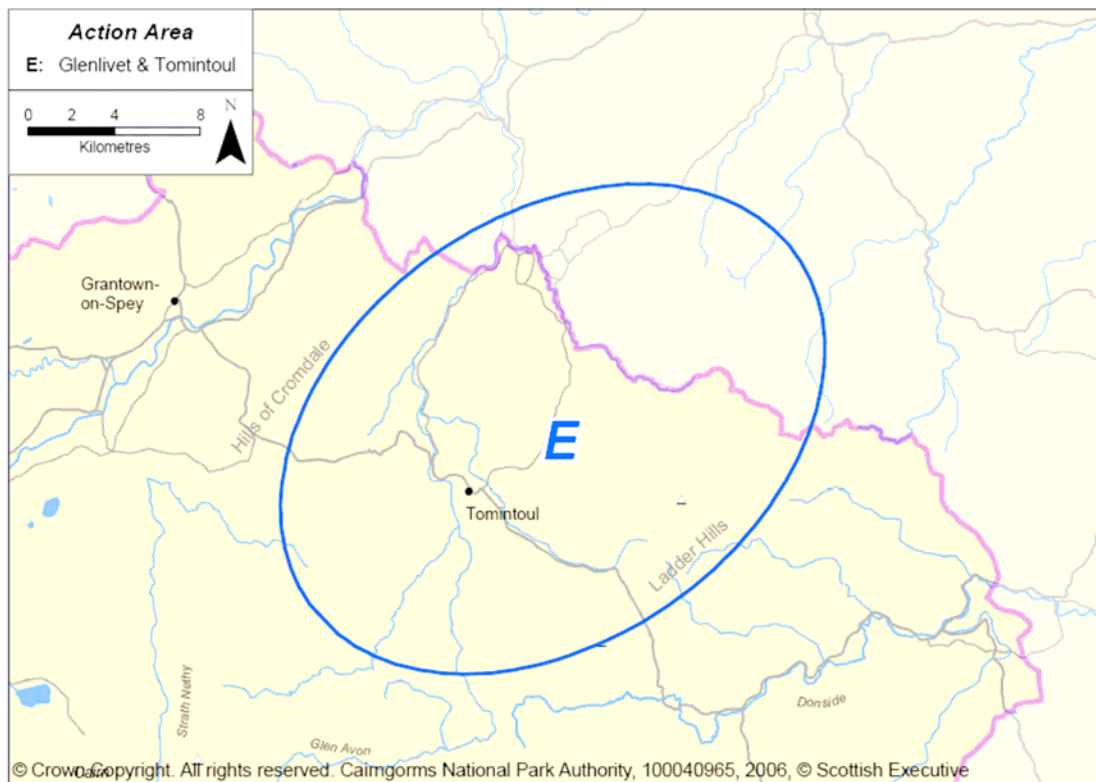
Description

6.6.1   Glenlivet and Tomintoul are bounded by the Cromdale Hills to the north-west and the Ladder Hills to the south-east. The rivers Avon and Livet run through the area with predominantly open moorland and some agricultural fields and forestry in between. Tomintoul is the main settlement in the area with small scattered settlements up and down Glen Livet, including Tomnavoulin, Knockandhu and Glenlivet itself.

6.6.2   The Crown Estate own and manage most of Area E and have undertaken a large amount of work to provide one of the best path networks in the Cairngorms National Park. There are 11 routes promoted for walking, 6 for cycling and one for all-abilities access. A spur of the Speyside Way runs through Glenlivet and terminates at Tomintoul. The area also offers a large number of quiet roads for recreational cycling. The Lecht ski centre lies to the south east of the area.

Key outdoor access issues

6.6.3   The Spur of the Speyside Way has never been formally adopted although this has been of little apparent consequence to the operation and promotion of the route. The spur currently terminates in Tomintoul.

6.6.4 The network of paths and the general provision for recreation opportunities in the area is generally excellent, yet it is not well known outwith the immediate area.

Priorities

Priorities in this area are:

- Building on the excellent work done by Crown Estate to maintain existing path networks;
- Marketing the excellent network of existing paths and recreational opportunities;
- Identifying the need for and developing better path networks around communities and links between communities through Core Paths Planning process;
- Providing safe walking and cycling routes to school and work places;
- Consideration of benefits of adoption of the Tomintoul Spur as part of the official Long Distance Route; and
- Development of further opportunities for less-abled people, especially around settlements and features of interest.

6.7 Action Area F: Strathspey

Figure 6.7 Action Area F
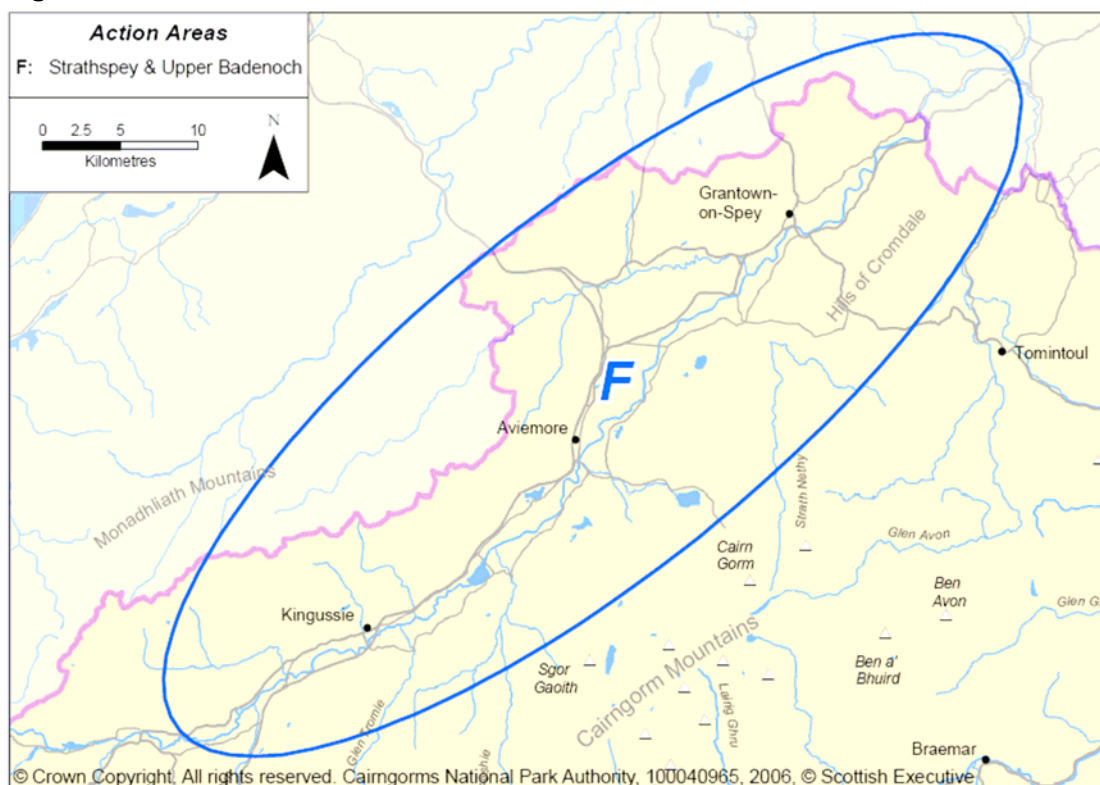
Description

6.7.1 Area F is the most highly populated area in the Cairngorms National Park. The Strath is bounded by the Monadhliath Mountains to the north-west and the Cairngorm Mountains to the south-east; the River Spey runs along the valley floor. The A9 is the main road in the area providing links to Inverness and Perth. The rail network mirrors the road route with halts at 4 settlements within this area. The main settlements run along the edge of the River Spey and include Grantown-on-Spey, Aviemore, Kingussie, Newtonmore, Carrbridge, Nethy Bridge, Boat of Garten, Cromdale and Dulnain Bridge. Abernethy Forest NNR, Craigellachie NNR, Insh Marshes NNR all fall within the area with part of the Cairngorms NNR and NSA also covering the area.

6.7.2 Much of the Strath is covered in native woodlands of pine and birch providing a wide range of recreational opportunities in very attractive settings. The Spey has numerous tributaries in the area which, along with the river itself, provide excellent kayaking and canoeing opportunities. Loch Morlich and Loch Insh are both popular watersports venues. Badenoch and Strathspey is a very popular destination for recreational users because of the wide range of opportunities available. The majority of the settlements have good path networks and the existence of the Speyside Way, Dava Way, Badenoch Way and National Cycle Route 7 means that the settlements are generally well connected with good off-road routes. The Cairngorm, Rothiemurchus and Glenmore corridor also lies within the area but as it has so many access issues concentrated in such a small area it will be dealt with as a separate Action Area (H).

Key outdoor access issues

6.7.3 There is an inconsistency across communities in the provision of path networks. Some communities have well developed and promoted networks within and between them whilst others (e.g. Cromdale and Dulnain Bridge) have none. Some communities have a number of paths in and around their settlements but there is a lack of co-ordinated information on the networks as a whole.

6.7.4 There are a number of pony trekking businesses in the area but there is little promotion of the area for horse-riding tourism and a lack of information about rights and responsibilities and suitable routes.

6.7.5 There are a large number of cycle hire businesses in the area but the information provided is largely uncoordinated and there is a lack of information about rights and responsibilities.

6.7.6 The River Spey and its tributaries are popular for kayakers and canoeists but infrastructure and information about access and egress points and rights and responsibilities is uncoordinated and limited. There are some concerns that increased use of the river for watersports will have a detrimental impact on fishing interests. There are also issues with the use of some access and egress points.

6.7.7 The area is extremely important for orienteering but recently opportunities in the area have been limited due to concerns about protected bird species. There is need to find a range of appropriate sites and agree protocols that allow events to proceed, respecting the environmental sensitivity.

6.7.8 The long standing plan to extend the Speyside way to Newtonmore has moved forward some way in recent months. A route has almost been identified but considerable work requires to be undertaken to put the route in place.

Priorities

Priorities in this area are:

- Building on the excellent work done by some community-based Trusts and land managers to maintain existing path networks;
- Identifying the need for and developing better path networks around communities and links between communities through Core Paths Planning process;
- Providing safe walking and cycling routes to school and work places;
- Completion and effective management of the Speyside way extension to Newtonmore;
- Ensuring that Speyside Way is suitable for multi-use;
- Development of further opportunities for less-abled people;
- Work to develop opportunities for orienteering events in line with environmental sensitivities;
- Provision of information and infrastructure (where appropriate) for water users on the Spey and other water bodies.

6.8 Action Area G: Badenoch

Figure 6.8 Action Area G

Description

6.8.1   Badenoch is bounded by the Monadhliath Mountains to the north and the Cairngorm Mountains to the east and is characterised by River Spey which flows from west to east and the River Truim flowing from south to north. The A9 and A86 run through the area adjacent to the rivers. The main settlements are Newtonmore, Laggan and Dalwhinnie. The area is less forested than Strathspey and opens out into open moorland and the Drumochter Hills to the south. Kinloch Laggan, Loch Ericht and the Creag Meagaidh National Nature Reserve lie to the west of Area G just out with the Park boundary.

6.8.2   Newtonmore has a good network of paths, largely thanks to the work of the Newtonmore Community Woodland and Development Trust done in conjunction with local land owners. There are promoted paths in the Laggan area but these are dispersed away from the settlement and there are limited promoted opportunities within the settlements of Dalwhinnie and Laggan themselves. The Forestry Commission Wolftrax centre near Laggan provides mountain and downhill biking opportunities as well as promoted trails for pony trekking and walking. The National Cycle Network passes through Dalwhinnie.

Key outdoor access issues

6.8.3 There are limited path networks within the communities of Laggan and Dalwhinnie although good opportunities exist nearby. Dalwhinnie has a good link to other communities via National Cycle Route 7 but there is no promoted and managed route which links Laggan to other communities.

6.8.4 People living in the area are highly dependent on private car use due to limited public transport provision and the distances required to travel between communities and to services.

6.8.5 There is good provision of pony trekking routes in the area but there is little promotion of the area for horse-riding tourism and a lack of information about rights and responsibilities and other suitable routes.

6.8.6 There continues to be a high demand for mountain biking including that offered through a managed facility similar to Wolftrax at Laggan.

Priorities

Priorities in this area are:
- Building on the excellent work done by some community-based Trusts and land managers to maintain existing path networks;
- Identifying the need for and developing better path networks around communities and links between communities through Core Paths Planning process;
- Providing safe walking and cycling routes to school and work places;
- Development of further opportunities for less-abled people; and
- Completion and effective management of the Speyside way extension to Newtonmore.

## 6.9 Area H: Cairngorm, Rothiemurchus and Glenmore

Description

6.9.1 Area H covers the Cairngorm, Rothiemurchus and Glenmore corridor, an area which is subject to the highest levels of pressure for outdoor access in the Park. There are an estimated 500,000 visitors annually to the Glenmore and Rothiemurchus area. The area is predominantly covered in native pinewoods and is home to the Glenmore Forest Park. The combination of lochs, pinewoods and the mountain backdrop combine to create an exceptionally attractive and popular setting for recreational activities. The Cairngorm ski centre and Estate lies at the east end of the corridor. The area is estimated to be the setting off point for around half of the people accessing the Central Cairngorms - this estimate rises to 74% in winter months. There are a

number of small scattered settlements along the corridor including Inverdruie, Coylumbridge and Glenmore.

6.9.2 The area provides opportunities for many different recreational users. Loch Morlich is the largest water body in the area and is popular for a wide range of water sports and family beach-based activities. Rothiemurchus Estate and Glenmore Forest Park offer numerous trails for walking and cycling as well as horse riding and ski touring in times of snow. The car park at the Cairngorm ski centre is the main setting off point for climbers wishing to access climbs in the Central Cairngorms. A number of outdoor pursuit centres base their activities in this area. Glenmore Lodge - Sportscotland's internationally recognised training facility – is based in Glenmore and attracts large numbers of individuals to the area who become regular repeat visitors.

Figure 6.9 Action Area H
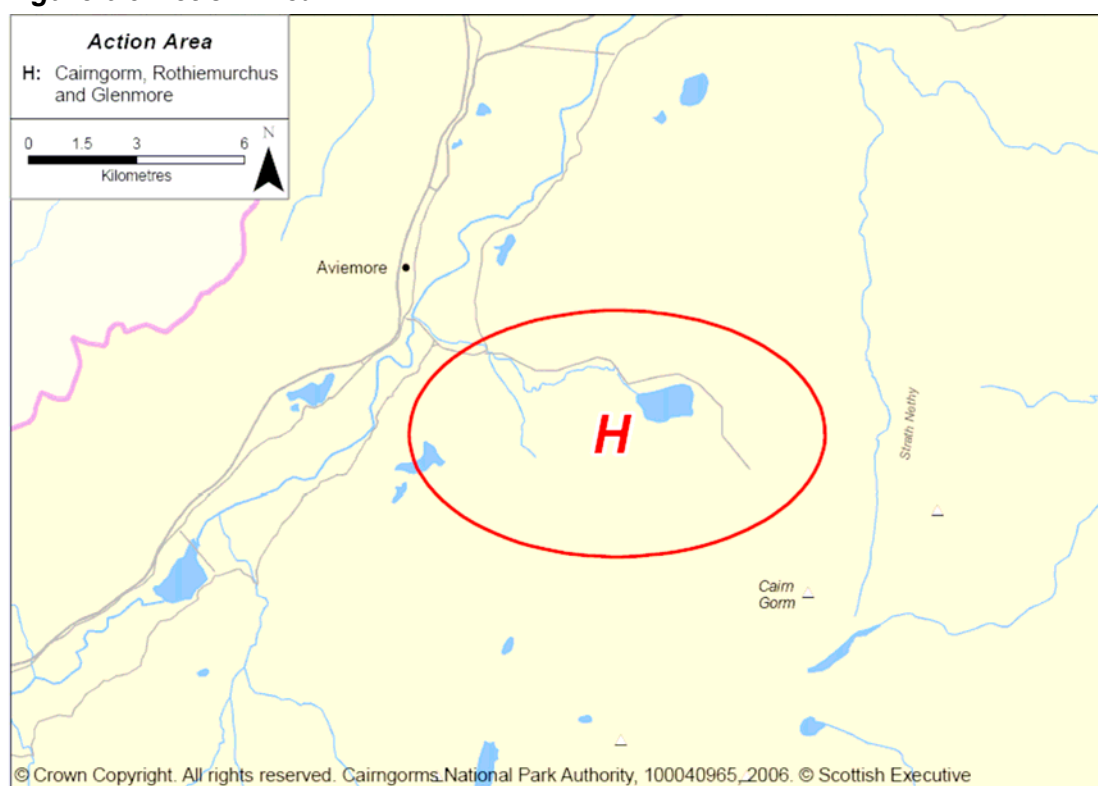
Key outdoor access issues

6.9.3 In Area H there are a great many people taking access to the surrounding area from the same place. This puts a great deal of pressure on the natural and cultural heritage. The forest landscape is generally able to absorb large number of visitors without impinging on the enjoyment of others.

6.9.4 There is a requirement for better off-road walking and cycling links along the corridor to allow people to access recreation opportunities safely and without relying on motorised transport.

6.9.5 The area is extremely important for orienteering but recently opportunities in the area have been limited due to concerns about protected bird species.

There is need to find a range of appropriate sites and agree protocols that allow events to proceed, respecting the environmental sensitivity.

6.9.6 Due to the high numbers of people and the wide variation in types of activity there is potential for interaction and problems between users.

Priorities

Priorities in this area are:

- Building on the excellent work done by some land managers to maintain existing path networks;
- Identifying the need for and developing better path networks around communities and links between communities through Core Paths Planning process;
- Providing safe walking and cycling routes to schools and work places;
- Developing further opportunities for less-abled people;
- Promotion of responsible behaviour to a wide range of audiences through Glenmore Lodge, existing visitor centres and the many ranger services in the area;
- Improving cycle carrying capacity of buses;
- Improving uptake of public transport for recreational use; and
- Completion of Glenmore off-road route.

7 Park-wide Action Plan

7.1 Introduction

7.1 This Section sets out the specific actions that are to be undertaken over the next five years to meet Strategic Outcomes identified in Section 3.

7.2 The action table below (Table 7.1) clearly identifies each action along with who has responsibility, when the action should take place and the monitoring requirements to ensure the objective will be met in an appropriate timescale.

7.3 It should be noted that this Section focuses on actions across the National Park. Inevitably a number or the actions relate to specific geographical areas within the Park and these actions are also reflected in the priority measures that relate to each of the Areas covered in Section 6.

Table 7.1 Park-wide Action Plan

THEME	Actions	Who / What will benefit	Action Needed	By Who?	When?	Monitoring needs
Improving route provision and promotion	Improved provision of functional walking and cycling routes to serve schools and work places where appropriate	All residents and visitors to the Park	A full understanding of current route provision in each community	CNPA staff in consultation with communities	Information to be gathered during Core Paths Planning process 2006 to 2008	Feedback to be provided during CPP consultations.
	Strategic routes completed: • Extension of Speyside Way • Ensure Speyside Way is suitable for multi-use • Completion of Aviemore to Glenmore Off–road Route • Completion of long distance route from Aberdeen to Ballater	All parties interested in single or multi day trips and those who are less able. Business along the route will also benefit from the economic spin-off.	Agreement of relevant landowners and SE approval for the extension. An audit of existing paths and a costed implementation plan to improve to multi-use standard.	SWMG, CNPA, THC, DMO	Extension approval to SNH in September with SE approval by end of 2006. Audit for multi-use to take place in 2006 with funding identified for improvements in 2007 - 2009	N/A
	A Trust or similar mechanism established to allow partners to contribute towards agreed priority work programmes	CNPA (by freeing up staff time) and all communities (by having an effective delivery mechanism)	Legal advice and Board approval will be required	CNPA staff in consultation with other public agencies	By Oct 2006	N/A

THEME	Actions	Who / What will benefit	Action Needed	By Who?	When?	Monitoring needs
	Core Paths Plan completed by February 2008	All communities and communities of interest.	Full and effective consultations with all interested parties.	CNPA staff and community liaison officers	2006 to 2008	Feedback to be provided during CPP consultations
	Core Paths Plans for each community used as the basis of planning and managing future work	All communities and communities of interest.	A costed and timed programme of works together with the identification of all funders.	CNPA staff, Trust and communities	2008 -2010	Review mechanism required to ensure capital works are being maintained.
	Continued production of the Cairngorms Explorer public transport timetable	All residents and visitors to the Park especially those without access to private motor vehicles	Information to be gathered from bus and train operators on an annual basis	CNPA staff	Annually	N/A
	Monitor effectiveness of pilot cross-Park bus service	Residents and visitors who wish to move between Dee side and Strathspey	Agreement to be reached with an operator	CNPA staff, bus operator and transport partnerships.	Annually	Service period research

THEME	Actions	Who / What will benefit	Action Needed	By Who?	When?	Monitoring needs
	Current and latent demand for public transport routes within and to/out of the Park assessed	All residents and visitors as information gathered will assist in making the case for better provision.	Audit of demand	CNPA and transport partnerships	2006 audit	N/A
	Itineraries and promotional initiatives linking visitor sites and public transport	Visitors to the Park	Co-ordination of visitor information with tour operators schedules	Relevant business interests , VS and CNPA	Annually	Annual monitoring
	Cycle carriage provision on public transport and associated promotion	Residents and visitors who would wish to combine cycling with longer journey requiring public transport	Buys operators to fit carriage facilities and train drivers (if required)	Bus operators	Ongoing	Annually
	Good understanding of visitor profiles (numbers , trends, distribution, attitudes, perceptions, etc) through visitor monitoring	Ultimately, all who enjoy the Park as decisions will be based on robust data	Monitoring regime to be designed, funded and put in place	VS, CNPA, SNH	To be costed and funding agreed in 2006. Rolled out once all other actions are complete.	Annual monitoring

THEME	Actions	Who / What will benefit	Action Needed	By Who?	When?	Monitoring needs
	High quality and dynamic visitor information, both pre- and post-arrival, available through development of a single website portal for visitor information	Visitors	Co-ordination of existing info and agreement that CNPA acts as advisor to all bodies developing visitor info.	CNPA, VS	Website available from 2007 onwards	6 monthly monitoring through Sustainable Tourism Strategy monitoring process
	Programmes to encourage people to habitually exercise in the Park	All residents and visitors, but primarily targeting inactive people	Co-ordination and support of active living, health walking etc with relevant Health Boards. Investigation of potential to market Park as health destination	Health Boards, Paths to Health, CNPA Vist Scotland SIUH UDWH SF FCS	On-going	
Supporting responsible outdoor access and management	A series of 'Sharing Good Practice Groups' for practitioners in the Park (based on model of Deeside Access Group)	All groups that have an interest in the successful implementation of the access legislation and new access infrastructure.	Create an access group in the Strathspey area if communities are supportive of such an idea.	CNPA staff with relevant communities and interest groups.	2007	Group to meet twice annually.

THEME	Actions	Who / What will benefit	Action Needed	By Who?	When?	Monitoring needs
	Mechanism for integrated management of strategic routes, including integration of the Speyside Way Long Distance Route and River Spey	Funders and managers of the Speyside Way	Agreement of Speyside Way Management Group	SWMG	Build into future DMP which will run from 2009	N/A
	Systems for land managers to report access problems/issues	Land Managers.	Publicity of CNPA role in resolving access disputes	CNPA, NFUS, SRPBA, SGA, BASC, DMG	Continuing	Quarterly monitoring required for Op plan
	Systems for residents and visitors to report problems on paths and signs and any outdoor access issue	Residents and Visitors	Publicity of CNPA role in resolving access disputes	CNPA, ACCC, BHS, MCofS, SCA, SOA, RA, SROWAS	Continuing	Quarterly monitoring required for Op plan
	Adoption of sponsorship schemes for paths	Residents and visitors	List of potential businesses to be drawn up and contacted	CNPA	2008 - 2011	N/A
	Potential visitor payback schemes including car-parking and menu/accommodation surcharges investigated and pursued where appropriate	All residents and visitors through monies raised being re-invested in access infrastructure.	Policy to be approved through Outdoor Access Strategy.	CNPA, DMO and all public sector bodies	October 2006	

THEME	Actions	Who / What will benefit	Action Needed	By Who?	When?	Monitoring needs
	System to encourage adoption and maintenance of low-ground paths by local community path groups	Communities that have networks of paths not currently being adequately maintained.	Communities to be approached as part of CPP exercise to consider the benefits of maintaining networks themselves.	All communities	From September 2006 onwards.	Register to be maintained of communities that wish to pursue this option
	A proactive plan to publicise the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and promote understanding and awareness of it, based on agreed target groups	All land managers and recreational groups	Co-ordinated and targeted publicity to key stakeholder groups.	CNPA, LOAF and SNH	Now and on - going	To be considered as part of feedback on numbers of issues raised by land managers and access takers
	A scheme to promote compliance with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code on a whole land management unit basis	All relevant land managers	Co-ordination from the relevant interests and buy in from all concerned	NFUS, SCF, SRPBA, SEBG, CNPAS, SNH and other land managers	From 2007 onwards	
	Regular exchanges of experience and communication between land managers and recreational interests	All land managers and recreational groups	Venue and timing of an event to be agreed with the stakeholders	CNPA, ACCC, BHS, MCofS, SCA, SOA, RA, SROWAS, SRPBA, NFUS, SCF	Annual consultation on best timing	Feedback required on success of each event to help shape future event.

THEME	Actions	Who / What will benefit	Action Needed	By Who?	When?	Monitoring needs
	Annual workshop for land managers on responsible use in relation to access	Land Managers	Venue and timing of an event to be agreed with the stakeholders	CNPA, SRPBA, NFUS, SCF	Annual consultation on best timing	Feedback required on success of each event to help shape future event.