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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## **FOR INFORMATION**

**Title: PROMOTING THE SCOTTISH OUTDOOR ACCESS CODE – RESPONSIBLE DOG OWNERSHIP**

**Prepared by: Fran Potheary, Outdoor Access Officer  
Bob Grant, Senior Outdoor Access Officer  
Justin Prigmore, Outdoor Access Officer**

### **Purpose**

To inform the Board of an initiative to promote responsible dog ownership in the National Park.

### **Recommendation**

That the Board note this proposal for a targeted publicity campaign promoting responsible dog ownership and management in the National Park.

### **Executive Summary**

It is proposed that CNPA coordinate an events and publicity campaign to raise awareness amongst the general public about responsible dog ownership and management and to influence behaviour to ensure greater compliance with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code for the benefit of land managers, other recreation users and conservation interests. The campaign will be based around three key messages about dogs relating to farming; natural heritage and dogs in public open spaces.

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## PROMOTING THE SCOTTISH OUTDOOR ACCESS CODE – RESPONSIBLE DOG OWNERSHIP - FOR INFORMATION

### Background

1. Under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act, the Park Authority has a duty to *publicise* the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC), while Scottish Natural Heritage has a duty to *promote understanding* of the Code. Following discussion with the Local Outdoor Access Forum we are keen to move to a more strategic and targeted approach to undertaking such work. This has led us to focus significant attention on the issue of responsible dog ownership and dog walking in the countryside.
2. Responsible dog walking has been one of the primary targets of the SNH's nationally-led SOAC promotion and education programme, focusing on a reminder of 'good practice' with dogs in relation to dog waste, cattle and other livestock, and nesting birds. The key messages have been distributed by direct mailing, outdoor advertising, and production of practical resources such as an advice leaflet, posters and dog tidy bags. A fresh campaign will be launched in March 2010 and this provides us with an excellent opportunity to reinforce the national work at a regional and local level in way that meet the special management needs of the Cairngorms.

### Discussion

3. Within the National Park, general concerns have been expressed by land owners, conservation interests and the public focused on three main areas: dog waste; farming and stock issues and natural heritage issues (e.g. ground nesting birds and disturbance). These concerns are raised in a number of ways ranging from formal channels (e.g. community council meetings; reporting access issues and the Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum meetings); and through informal contact (e.g. everyday communication with partners and agencies). The Cairngorms LOAF selected the topic of "dogs in the countryside" as the subject matter of a participatory video they have made in collaboration with the Macaulay Institute. Furthermore, as 2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity, and there is a clear link between a healthy Park that is rich in biodiversity, and people ensuring that their dogs' behaviour does not jeopardise this.
4. Notwithstanding the above concerns, the campaign has to strike the correct balance. We would not want to suggest that dogs are unwelcome in the National Park, or to convey an impression that the National Park is overwhelmed by dog-related problems. Therefore the tone of the campaign is intended to be positive and welcoming to dogs, whilst drawing attention to, and giving advice on the behaviour change required to deal with the occasionally negative aspects of their presence.
5. The aim is to run an events and publicity campaign to raise awareness amongst the general public about responsible ownership and management and to ultimately influence people's behaviour to ensure greater compliance with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code for the benefit of land managers, other recreation users and conservation interests.

6. The campaign will be based around three key messages about dogs that we want to promote within the CNP relating to: farming; natural heritage and dogs in public open spaces. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code offers guidance on these issues and will be the backbone of messages put out in the context of the National Park (see **Annex I** for further details).
7. The key outputs of the project will be:
  - a) A media campaign utilising local press and radio, to convey the responsible dog ownership messages. Articles in Park Life, Community Newsletters, etc will be targeted, and a dedicated webpage will be created on the Park Authority website. The press campaign will have a timeline linked closely to seasonal considerations – (e.g. autumn for dog fouling messages; late winter/early spring for lambing and livestock messages; early to mid spring for woodland ground nesting birds and late spring for upland issues). Where there are opportunities to link in with neighbouring local authority or agency campaigns, these will be utilised.
  - b) Enhanced distribution of existing resources (e.g. SNH posters and dog poo bags, and the development of new resources such as the Inca cut-out displays (like the “ambient” sheep) for selected ranger bases, Visitor Centres and events.
  - c) Setting up opportunities to meet with the public and promote the messages through fun and educational activities at events. Potential events identified so far include: the Grantown show; the Braemar Gathering; the Forestry Commission Top Dogs Day Out; the Kingussie Gala and Caper Watch. Each of the Ranger Services will be invited to identify specific events or opportunities to promote responsible dog walking/ownership messages.
  - d) Assessing the value of the Green Dog Walkers scheme by speaking to other operating local authorities – Fife and Falkirk – and, if suitable, promoting its implementation at identified habitual dog walking areas in the National Park.
  - e) Building on the successful February 2009 event, organising and delivering one Land Based Business Training course on “Dogs and the Code” for the general public in Deeside.
  - f) Organising a workshop for land managers, looking at the issues and solutions for managing dogs and dog walkers including the role of the police and dog wardens, clarifying legislation, and how to communicate with the public through use of signage, public interaction, etc.

## Consultation

8. Consultation has taken place in the development of the plans to date with the Local Outdoor Access Forum, the Cairngorms and Rothern and Glenmore Group and local authority dogs officers. Further discussions are planned at the annual gathering of ranger services in early December to promote ranger involvement. Further ideas and suggestions are always welcome.

## Financial Implications

9. For CNPA a modest budget of between 3 and 5k per annum is proposed for the campaign and associated activities on the promotion of SOAC. In addition funding will be drawn in from partner bodies such as SNH and FCS for particular activities and

the staff time of various organisations (e.g. local authority dogs officers) will be utilised. The Land based Business Training project will help deliver the two training courses and will be applying for external funding from SNH.

### **Next Steps**

10. In consultation with partners this campaign is currently being developed and implemented over a rolling programme timed to coincide with key seasonal considerations as highlighted.

**Fran Pothecary**

**Bob Grant**

**Justin Prigmore**

franpothecary@ cairngorms.co.uk

bobgrant@cairngorms.co.uk

justinprigmore@cairngorms.co.uk

**Annex I. Scottish Outdoor Access Code Guidance for Key Messages in CNPA Responsible Dog Ownership Campaign.**

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| <b>Farming</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Never let your dog worry or attack livestock</li><li>b) Don't go into fields where there are lambs, calves or other young animals</li><li>c) Do not take your dog into fields of vegetables and fruit (unless on a clear path)</li><li>d) If you go into a field of farm animals keep as far from possible from the animals and keep your dogs on a short lead or under close control</li><li>e) If cattle reach aggressively and move towards you, stay calm, let the dog go and take the shortest, safest route out of the field</li></ul> |
| <b>Natural heritage</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) During the bird breeding season (usually April to July) keep your dog under close control or on a short lead in areas such as moorland, forests, grassland, and loch shores</li></ul>  |
| <b>Public places</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Remove faeces left by your dog in a public open place</li><li>b) In recreation areas and other public places, avoid causing concern to others by keeping your dog under close control</li></ul>  |