
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: Guidance on Path Signs and Outdoor Events

Prepared by: Bob Grant, Senior Outdoor Access Officer
Pete Crane, Senior Visitor Services Officer

Purpose

This paper highlights the steps that have been taken to produce Guidance on the Path Signs and Outdoor Events in the Park. The Board's approval is sought for both documents.

Recommendations

That the Board:

- a) Notes the processes that have been followed in developing the two sets of Guidance;
- b) Approves the Guidance.

Executive Summary

The two Guidance documents have been produced to address particular management issues in the Park that were identified during the development of the Outdoor Access Strategy. Each piece of Guidance has been developed in close collaboration with interested parties including focussed workshops on each topic and consultation exercises. The Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum has given advice at various stages of the process. The cover paper highlights how the Guidance has been developed, the issues that have arisen and how the Guidance will be promoted and publicised.

GUIDANCE ON PATH SIGNS AND OUTDOOR EVENTS – FOR DECISION

Background

1. The Outdoor Access Strategy for the Cairngorms National Park highlights two sets of issues that require to be addressed through the production of supplementary guidance – Directional Path Signs and Organised Outdoor Access Events.

Directional Path Signs

2. There is currently a wide range of designs of directional path signs within the National Park. Between Nethy Bridge and Grantown on Spey alone, for example, it is possible to encounter signs giving distances to the destination in kilometres, miles and in estimated time, all within a very short distance of each other. Similarly, a range of materials are used (including wood, metal and plastic) with corresponding variations in colour, text size and font. Such variety and some poor overall design does not give a good impression of the National Park. More importantly, for those people visiting the Park for the first time, or those who are not confident in the countryside, such variation can be confusing and off-putting.
3. To address these issues CNPA commissioned consultants “Walking the Talk” to develop a design brief for path signs in the Park. A workshop was organised with invited representatives from land managers, path groups and national organisations on the principles which should be followed for directional path signs. The following principles were agreed with the Local Outdoor Access Forum:
 - a) Path signs should primarily look to the needs of people wishing to use paths;
 - b) Information presented on paths signs should be as simple as possible and should focus on destination, distance and direction;
 - c) A consistent approach to path signs should be adopted in the Cairngorms National Park and this should apply, in time, to all signed paths;
 - d) Sign design should reflect the character of the National Park including the use of sustainable materials;
 - e) Guidance should cover three principle settings for signs:-
 - o Signs to the start of path networks (often in urban situations)
 - o Path signs
 - o Use of intermediate way marking
 - f) Design guidance for path signs in the Cairngorms National Park should be recognised as a ‘local format’ by all public agencies providing funds for path signs;

- g) The designs for the Cairngorms 'local format' should be prescriptive using the key elements of national best practice and the areas of common consensus from the workshop to produce detailed design templates. Such designs will contain high contrast lettering of a standard font of set sizes, and outside urban situations be made of wood (locally sourced where possible). Importantly, any design must be able to be made by a range of manufacturers.
- h) In addition, the design guidance should provide a short section of advice on the key design elements that make up an effective path sign for those who wish to develop their own suite of signs without the support of public funds.

Consultation

- 4. In addition to the range of people involved in the workshop and who responded in writing during the consultation period:
 - a) The Local Outdoor Access Forum has been heavily engaged in the development of this guidance and has discussed it at meetings in February, May and September. The LOAF fully supports the need for the guidance and endorsed the draft guidance at their meeting in September.
 - b) Inclusive Cairngorms were consulted and made a number of useful suggestions about how this Guidance could help make directional path signs more useful to a wider range of people.
 - c) The issue has been discussed with partners at the Delivery Teams on Outdoor Access who were generally supportive of the approach.

Issues Arising

- 5. In general terms there has been a very good level of support for the Guidance but two sets of issues are worth drawing to the attention of the Board.
 - a) Concerns from some partners – After accommodating many suggested changes to the Guidance a small number of partners remain concerned about the suggested approach to finger posts. The concerns, none of which are overwhelmingly strong, generally relate to a conflict with each organisation's current sign policy. Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) currently use green and white signs made from wood but had some concerns about the need for flexibility to use a range of materials to help give strong sense of place. Scotways currently use metal signs and have their own organisation's name on the signs. They have indicated that they would prefer to continue with this approach in the future. Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and Crown Estate at Glenlivet have concerns about colour and style

not matching their respective styles. Staff will continue to work with all four organisations as the guidance is rolled out to see if these issues can be resolved.

- b) Branding – there was some support, primarily from land managers, for including a variety of brand images on the directional path signs. The incorporation of brands is discouraged in the Guidance as many of the paths in the National Park pass over multiple ownerships and, from a visitors' perspective, this can be both confusing and appear disjointed. The Guidance suggests that if it is important for land managers to inform users of their involvement in the management of a path then it can be done through threshold signs, trail-head map-boards, leaflets or web sites. This argument holds true for the National Park brand and staff therefore will encourage the use of the brand at thresholds and on other promotional material rather than on each of the finger posts.

Recommendation

6. **That the Board approves the Directional Path Sign Guidance.**

Outdoor Access Events Guidance

7. The policy on outdoor events in the Outdoor Access Strategy recognised the need for more detailed guidance to help both event organisers and land managers to address a number of concerns that had been expressed. At the same time the National Access Forum recognised that more detail is required than is currently contained in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. It was agreed that CNPA should pilot the development of guidance to suit the specific needs of the National Park and which could provide a useful example for other parts of Scotland. To take this matter forward a small Steering Group was formed, made up of representatives of land managers, event organisers, tourism businesses and Scottish Natural Heritage (National Access Forum Secretary) and CNPA staff. SNH also made a financial contribution to the work.

Consultation

8. To help scope what was required a facilitated workshop was held in December last year which invited a broad range of event organisers, land managers, tourism businesses and public agencies to discuss what the guidance needed to cover and the best format for it to take. Around 60 delegates attended the workshop.
9. The workshop report led to the Steering Group developing draft guidance. This was sent to all those who had been invited to the

workshop and all members of the Cairngorms Rothiemurchus and Glenmore Group. The consultation ran from the end of June until the end of August. Fourteen responses were received and the Steering Group has reflected on each response.

10. The LOAF has been actively involved in the shaping of the guidance and have discussed the emerging guidance at meetings in February and August this year. In addition, a number of LOAF members attended the workshop and two members were involved in the Steering Group.
11. The Guidance shown in Annex 2 to this document is generally supported by all Steering Group members.

Issues Arising

12. Once again there has generally been a good level of support for the Guidance. Most of the suggestions received during the consultation have been incorporated into the guidance but several issues are worth drawing to the attention of the Board.
 - a) *Tone and content* – The Steering Group were agreed that the tone of the Guidance should be very positive about events in the Park. Events provide a great way for people to get out and enjoy the area and are also of considerable social and economic value. However, the content of the guidance should deal with the particular issues that have arisen in the past so as to improve the overall planning and managing of events and the quality of experience for all concerned.
 - b) *Sensitive sites and timing* – a number of respondents wanted the guidance to be very specific about managing events away from specific environmentally sensitive sites and defining when events could not take place. The Steering Group, whilst understanding the desire for such prescription, decided that the potential range of events and the highly variable nature of site sensitivity would make it extremely difficult to be so prescriptive. Instead the approach used is to rely on dialogue, at the earliest possible stage, with the land manager(s) and other appropriate bodies.
 - c) *Location* – The Aviemore - Glenmore area is a particularly popular part of the Park in which to hold events. Whilst for the most part this is very positive, the situation can lead to potential problems. There were differing views expressed as to whether the area should be specifically mentioned and the Steering Group was divided on the issue. With upwards of sixty events taking place in this area annually and the co-ordination and management that this requires, it is proposed that special mention is made of the area in the guidance with the suggestion

that extra care will be required in planning and managing an event in the area.

Recommendation

13. **That the Board approves the Outdoor Events Guidance.**

Implications

Financial Implications

14. Both sets of guidance will be professionally designed in a similar style to the Outdoor Access Strategy with a limited print run of hard copies produced. The cost of design and printing will be around £2,250 each. In addition, both will be designed for web use. An allocation has already been earmarked for both these pieces of work.

Presentational Implications

15. Both pieces of guidance will be publicised to the respective relevant audiences through direct correspondence with all those who have contributed to the consultation exercises and, if appropriate, by targeted press release or contact with specialist publications. There may be some interest in the work at national level as we are demonstrating best practice in resolving complex and contentious issues that affect other parts of Scotland.

Implications for Stakeholders

16. As a result of the close collaboration with interested parties during the development of the two sets of guidance it is anticipated that there will generally be widespread support. In relation to the paths signs guidance it will be expected that applicants for public funding of signs will comply with the guidance.

Next Steps

17. The work to undertake the design of the guidance is scheduled to be completed by the end of December 2008.

Bob Grant
Pete Crane
13 October 2008

bobgrant@cairngorms.co.uk
petecrane@cairngorms.co.uk