



CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK

Appropriate Assessment for Natura

of the Core Paths Plan **Draft**

April 2008

contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Purpose of the Draft Core Paths Plan.....	3
Aim.....	4
Objectives.....	4
3. Natura sites within the Cairngorms National Park.....	4
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's)	4
Special Protection Areas (SPA's).....	5
4. Methodology for Assessment	5
5. Screening Process.....	6
6. Assessment of likely significant effects on Natura sites	7
7. Natura Sites.....	9
Insh Marshes – SAC	9
River Spey – Insh Marshes SPA	11
River Spey – SAC.....	14
Cairngorms – SAC	19
Cairngorms - SPA.....	21
Abernethy Forest – SPA	22
Caenlochan - SAC	23
Caenlochan - SPA.....	24
River South Esk - SAC.....	25
River Dee - SAC	26
Ladder Hills – SAC.....	27
Anagach Woods – SPA.....	28
Craigmore Wood - SPA.....	29
Kinveachy Forest – SPA	29
Kinveachy Forest – SAC	30
Muir of Dinnet – SAC.....	31
Muir of Dinnet – SPA.....	32
Glen Tanar – SAC	32
Glen Tanar - SPA.....	33
Morrone Birkwood – SAC	34
Dinnet Oakwood – SAC.....	35
8. Conclusions.....	36

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Draft Core Paths Plan is subject to the requirements of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. This requirement is that plans likely to have a significant effect on Natura 2000 sites - Special Protection Areas (SPA's) or Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's) - can only be approved after an appropriate assessment of the proposal has been undertaken.
- 1.2 The Draft Core Paths Plan covers the whole area within the Cairngorms National Park boundary.
- 1.3 This assessment considers the likely impacts of the proposed core paths within the Draft Core Paths Plan against the qualifying interests and conservation of the Natura 2000 sites. This assessment concludes that with appropriate safeguarding and mitigation the Core Paths Plan will not adversely affect the integrity of any Natura sites in the National Park.

2. Purpose of the Draft Core Paths Plan

- 2.1 The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 provides everyone with non-motorised access rights¹ to almost all land and inland water in Scotland, as long as they are used responsibly. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code provides detailed guidance on the responsibilities of people exercising access rights and managing land and water. All access authorities have a duty under the Act to prepare a Core Paths Plan and to keep it under review. The purpose of the Core Paths Plan is to identify a system of paths which are, '... sufficient for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout their area'.
- 2.2 Core paths will provide opportunities for everyone, including walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and canoeists. The core paths network will enable people of all ages and abilities to get around their area whether it is for getting to the shops, walking the dog or enjoying the outdoors. Most core paths will probably be located on the lower ground and there will be especially good provision close to communities. Rivers, too can be designated as core paths.
- 2.3 The paths that are selected to make up the network can include;
 - existing paths and tracks
 - paths that need to be built
 - quiet roads
 - pavements
 - waterways
- 2.4 Where appropriate the core paths network will be well promoted, signposted and waymarked and the paths will also be marked on Ordnance Survey and other maps. We need to ensure that any path included in the core paths network is fit for use

¹ Access rights do extend to a person with a disability who is using a motorised vehicle or vessel built or adapted for use by that person subject to the Highway Code being adhered to.

or can be made fit for use within a relatively short time period after the Plan is adopted. This may mean that a path has to be upgraded or even built and, as such, it needs to be reasonable that the relevant agreements, planning permissions, assessments, finance and works can all be achieved in a two year time frame. If a suitable path has been identified during the process but it cannot be made ready within two years of the Plan being adopted, then it will be considered for inclusion as a core path in a subsequent review of the Core Paths Plan.

- 2.5** An Aim and Objectives have been identified for the Core Paths Plan to help identify the paths to be included in the core paths network. The Objectives were previously referred to as 'Selection Criteria' in the Interim Draft Core Paths Plan.

Aim

- 2.6** The Core Paths Plan will help people to enjoy and understand the special qualities of the Cairngorms National Park by identifying a network of paths which offer a wide range of high quality outdoor access opportunities.

Objectives

- 2.7** The core paths network will:
- a) Help to conserve the Park's natural and cultural heritage and encourage people to enjoy it in a responsible way;
 - b) Help those living and working on the land;
 - c) Help to deliver the priorities for each area identified in the Outdoor Access Strategy;
 - d) Provide for a wide range of activities;
 - e) Provide for a wide range of abilities;
 - f) Include a wide range of popular routes; and
 - g) Include paths within, around and between communities and to public transport connections and places of local importance.

3. Natura sites within the Cairngorms National Park

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's)

- Ballochbuie
- Cairngorms
- Coyles of Muick
- Creag nan Gamhainn
- Dinnet Oakwood

- Glen Tanar
- Green Hill of Strathdon
- Ladder Hills
- Morrone Birkwood
- Morven and Mullachdubh
- River Dee
- Muir of Dinnet
- River Spey – Insh Marshes
- River Spey
- River South Esk
- Kinveachy Forest
- Dinnet Oakwood

Special Protection Areas (SPA's)

- Ballochbuie
- Caenlochan
- Cairngorms
- Glen Tanar
- Lochnagar
- Muir of Dinnet
- River Spey – Insh Marshes
- Abernethy Forest
- Anagach Woods
- Craigmore Wood
- Kinveachy Forest

4. Methodology for Assessment

4.1 Working closely with Scottish Natural Heritage colleagues, each proposed core path in and adjacent to a Natura site has been screened in order to determine whether or not it has a significant impact on the Natura site. The paths have been selected on an area by area basis based on the 'Action Areas' identified within the Outdoor Access Strategy². These areas have also been used for the purposes of this assessment. The River Spey due to its length and significance and the fact that it straddles multiple Action Areas, has been assessed in its own right.

4.2 Core path status is likely to involve the following:

- Signposting and waymarking of low ground paths, if this isn't already in place.
- For paths in upland or more remote terrain (LBS127; GR7), marker posts at the start/finish of paths, if these aren't already in place.
- Promotion of the paths (eg via leaflets, websites), if this isn't already in place. Promotion of upland/remote paths will be less extensive than that of low ground paths.

² Enjoying the Cairngorms: Cairngorms National Park Outdoor Access Strategy 2007-2012 (CNPA 2007), is available on the CNPA website or on request.

- More chance of management and maintenance, if a suitable regime isn't already in place. Any plans for rebuilding or repairing paths would be subject to a separate Natura assessment, once the detail is worked up.
 - Promotion of responsible behaviour.
 - For paths in upland or more remote terrain, information at the start/finish of paths about the type of conditions to expect on the path and the recommended skills and equipment needed to follow the path, if this information isn't already in place.
- 4.3** In practice, almost all the paths proposed as core paths already exist on the ground and a significant proportion of them are already promoted both with signage and in promotional literature. This means that the changes arising from core path status will be minimal. Any exceptions have been identified in this report.
- 4.4** A matrix has been completed to consider each proposed area network against the Natura sites and identify where there is:
- No likely significant effect on the qualifying interests
 - A likely significant effect requiring an appropriate assessment to determine whether or not there will be an adverse impact on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site.
- 4.5** After undertaking this appropriate assessment one of the following conclusions has been reached for each area network:
- The proposed area network will adversely affect the integrity of a Nature site
 - The proposed area network will not adversely affect the integrity of a Natura site
- 4.6** Changes and mitigations measures have been identified to address any of the potential effects. Those effects that are uncertain will be addressed at the project stage through normal planning and development procedures.

5. Screening Process

- 5.1** Table 5.1 below lists the Action Areas, and the River Spey, and indicates those areas with a potential impact on Natura Sites as identified through consultation with Scottish Natural Heritage.

Action Area	Appropriate Assessment Required?	Reason
The Central Cairngorms	No	SNH's advice is that the proposals in the Draft Core Paths Plan for this area are not likely to have a significant effect on the qualifying interests of any of the Natura sites. An appropriate assessment is therefore not required.
The Eastern Cairngorms	No	SNH's advice is that the proposals in the Draft Core Paths Plan for this area are not likely to have a significant effect on the qualifying interests of any of the Natura

Table 5.1 – potential Impact of Action Area Networks/River Spey		
Action Area	Appropriate Assessment Required?	Reason
		sites. An appropriate assessment is therefore not required.
Upper Deeside	No	SNH's advice is that the proposals in the Draft Core Paths Plan for this area are not likely to have a significant effect on the qualifying interests of any of the Natura sites. An appropriate assessment is therefore not required.
Upper Donside	No	There are no Natura 2000 sites within this Action Area that have proposed core paths on or adjacent to them.
Glenlivet and Tomintoul	No	SNH's advice is that the proposals in the Draft Core Paths Plan for this area are not likely to have a significant effect on the qualifying interests of any of the Natura sites. An appropriate assessment is therefore not required.
Lower Badenoch and Strathspey	No	SNH's advice is that the proposals in the Draft Core Paths Plan for this area are not likely to have a significant effect on the qualifying interests of any of the Natura sites. An appropriate assessment is therefore not required.
Upper Badenoch and Strathspey	No	SNH's advice is that the proposals in the Draft Core Paths Plan for this area are not likely to have a significant effect on the qualifying interests of any of the Natura sites. An appropriate assessment is therefore not required.
Glenmore and Rothiemurchus	No	SNH's advice is that the proposals in the Draft Core Paths Plan for this area are not likely to have a significant effect on the qualifying interests of any of the Natura sites. An appropriate assessment is therefore not required.
The River Spey	Yes	SNH's advice is that the proposal to designate the River Spey as a core path is likely to have a significant effect on the qualifying interests of the sites.

6. Assessment of likely significant effects on Natura sites

- 6.1** Table 6.1 below sets out the assessment for each proposed area network, and the River Spey, requiring further consideration. The table highlights those proposed area networks which are likely to have a significant effect on the qualifying interest.
- 6.2** Where it has been highlighted that there will be a significant effect then the proposed area network has been examined in further detail against the conservation objectives of the site and the sensitivities of the relevant species and habitats.

Table 6.1 – Significant effects to Natura sites

Key:		Significant effect identified				No significant effect identified				
Natura Sites		Area Networks								
Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)		Central Cairngorms	Eastern Cairngorms	Upper Deeside	Upper Donside	Glenlivet and Tomintoul	Lower Badenoch and Strathspey	Upper Badenoch and Strathspey	Glenmore and Rothiemurchus	River Spey
Ballochbuie										
Cairngorms										
Coyles of Muick										
Creag nan Gamhainn										
Dinnet Oakwood										
Glen Tanar										
Green Hill of Strathdon										
Ladder Hills										
Morrone Birkwood										
Morven and Mullachdubh										
River Dee										
Muir of Dinnet										
River Spey – Insh Marshes										
River Spey										
River South Esk										
Kinveachy Forest										
Dinnet Oakwood										
Special Protection Areas (SPAs)										
Ballochbuie										
Caenlochan										
Cairngorms										
Glen Tanar										
Lochnagar										
Muir of Dinnet										
River Spey – Insh Marshes										
Abernethy Forest										
Anagach Woods										
Craigmore Wood										
Kinveachy Forest										

7. Natura Sites

Insh Marshes – SAC

7.1 Qualifying Interests:

A. ANNEX I HABITATS

European priority interest:

- Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion alvae*)

European non-priority interests:

- Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the *Littorelletea uniflorae* and/or of the *Isoëto-Nanojuncetea*
- Transition mires and quaking bogs

B. ANNEX II SPECIES

European non-priority interest:

- *Lutra lutra* (Otter)

7.2 Conservation Objectives:

A. ANNEX I HABITATS

To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for the qualifying features.

To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Extent of the habitats on site
- Distribution of the habitats within site
- Structure and function of the habitats
- Processes supporting the habitats
- Distribution of typical species of the habitats
- Viability of typical species as components of the habitats
- No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitats

B. ANNEX II SPECIES

To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for the qualifying feature.

To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Population of the species as a viable component of the site
- Distribution of the species within site
- Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
- Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species
- No significant disturbance of the species

7.3 The Area Networks shown in Table 7.1 below were assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Insh Marshes SAC.

Table 7.1 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Insh Marshes SAC	
Area Networks	Reason
Lower Badenoch and Strathspey	<p>There are six existing paths within, or partly within, this site that are being proposed as core paths.</p> <p>Two are very short paths providing access from roads to Loch Insh (LBS50 & LBS125). They are popular with canoeists and are already promoted in the Spey River Guide. No further promotion is planned as part of core path status, but there will be greater efforts at promoting responsible use at the access points, and more chance of positive management. There are therefore no likely significant effects on the sites' qualifying features, and some positive effects are possible.</p> <p>LBS141 and LBS83 are promoted and managed by RSPB, who also promote messages of responsible access, with particular emphasis on the close control of dogs during the breeding season. No changes to these paths are proposed as a result of core path status, and there are no likely significant effects on the sites' qualifying features.</p> <p>LBS72 and LBS46 already exist, and LBS72 is already promoted as part of the Badenoch Way. Both are already well-used. Improved promotion for both is proposed if they gain core path status. This may result in increased recreational use of these paths. Increased use of existing paths is not likely to result in damage to habitats in this site. It is also unlikely to result in significant disturbance to species, as they will already be used to human activity on these paths. There are therefore no likely significant effects on the sites' qualifying features.</p>
Upper Badenoch and Strathspey	<p>There is only one proposed core path – the Wildcat Trail – that passes through this site. This path is already well promoted, signposted, and maintained. No changes are proposed to accompany core path status. There are therefore no likely significant effects on the qualifying interests of this site.</p>
The River Spey	<p>It is considered very unlikely that the designation of the River Spey as a core path would have a significant effect on the following habitats because they would not be physically or chemically altered by recreational use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion alvae</i>) • Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the

Table 7.1 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Insh Marshes SAC	
Area Networks	Reason
	<i>Littorelletea uniflorae</i> and/or of the <i>Isoëto-Nanojuncetea</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition mires and quaking bogs

River Spey – Insh Marshes SPA

7.4 Qualifying Interests:

European non-priority interests:

- Osprey
- Spotted Crake
- Wood Sandpiper
- Hen Harrier
- Whooper Swan
- Wigeon

7.5 Conservation Objectives:

To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained.

To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Population of the species as a viable component of the site
- Distribution of the species within site
- Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
- Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species
- No significant disturbance of the species

7.6 The Area Networks shown in Table 7.2 below were assessed as having no likely significant effect on the River Spey - Insh Marshes SPA.

Table 7.2 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the River Spey - Insh Marshes SPA	
Area Networks	Reason
Lower Badenoch and Strathspey	<p>There are six existing paths within, or partly within, these sites that are being proposed as core paths.</p> <p>Two are very short paths providing access from roads to Loch Insh (LBS50 & LBS125). They are popular with canoeists and are already promoted in the Spey River Guide. No further promotion is planned as part of core path status, but there will be greater efforts at</p>

Table 7.2 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the River Spey - Insh Marshes SPA

Area Networks	Reason
	<p>promoting responsible use at the access points, and more chance of positive management. There are therefore no likely significant effects on the sites' qualifying features, and some positive effects are possible.</p> <p>LBS141 and LBS83 are promoted and managed by RSPB, who also promote messages of responsible access, with particular emphasis on the close control of dogs during the breeding season. No changes to these paths are proposed as a result of core path status, and there are no likely significant effects on the sites' qualifying features.</p> <p>LBS72 and LBS46 already exist, and LBS72 is already promoted as part of the Badenoch Way. Both are already well-used. Improved promotion for both is proposed if they gain core path status. This may result in increased recreational use of these paths. Increased use of existing paths is not likely to result in damage to habitats in these sites. It is also unlikely to result in significant disturbance to species, as they will already be used to human activity on these paths. There are therefore no likely significant effects on the sites' qualifying features.</p>
Upper Badenoch and Strathspey	<p>There is only one proposed core path – the Wildcat Trail – that passes through these sites. This path is already well promoted, signposted, and maintained. No changes are proposed to accompany core path status. There are therefore no likely significant effects on the qualifying interests of these sites.</p>

7.7 The Area Network shown in Table 7.3 below was assessed as having a likely significant effect on the River Spey - Insh Marshes SPA.

Table 7.3 – Area Network assessed as having a likely significant effect on the River Spey - Insh Marshes SPA

Area Networks	Reason
River Spey	<p>The interests of the River Spey – Insh Marshes site are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spotted Crake • Wood Sandpiper • Hen Harrier • Whooper Swan • Wigeon • Osprey <p>Wintering hen harrier are unlikely to be disturbed by people on the river because the roost sites are set away from the riverbank and the birds largely arrive to roost near dusk when there are likely to be few canoeists on the river. Wintering whooper swans could be disturbed by canoeists on the flooded marsh/farmland, but it is unlikely that canoeists would start to use these in significant numbers because the farmland has fences and ditches, making it dangerous to canoe over, and the flood banks are high and canoes would need to be carried</p>

Table 7.3 – Area Network assessed as having a likely significant effect on the River Spey - Insh Marshes SPA

Area Networks	Reason
	<p>over, except in the highest floods. During low water periods in the winter whooper swans feeding on the marshes/farmland could be disturbed if canoeists regularly get out of the river and go up on to picnic on the river banks, however, this is not considered likely to become an issue during the winter months.</p> <p>The spotted crane’s breeding habitat is on marshland which is unlikely to be disturbed by canoeists during the summer. Wood sandpiper are currently very rare at Insh Marshes and their likely feeding habitat is not on the river or the river bank. Most of the wigeon breed on the marshes and not the main stem of the river, and they feed on farmland, so canoeists are unlikely to cause a significant problem during the summer months. Ospreys nest on an island on Insh Marshes close to an access point for the river and people can cause disturbance to them. It is concluded that there is a possibility of a likely significant effect for osprey.</p>

7.8 The Assessment has shown that without further safeguarding or mitigation the proposal to designate the River Spey as a core path will have a significant effect on the conservation objectives of the River Spey Insh Marshes SPA. Table 7.4 below assesses proposed safeguarding and mitigation measures for the River Spey Insh Marshes SPA.

Table 7.4 – Assessment of proposed Safeguarding and Mitigation measures for the River Spey - Insh Marshes SPA

Qualifying Interest	Potential Issue	Safeguarding	Mitigation	Qualifying interest conclusion
Osprey	Loch Insh already has a high level of use by canoeists and others. The ospreys which nest on Loch Insh are fairly tolerant, but still vulnerable to disturbance from craft going too close to the nest, or people causing too much noise. If disturbance is very prolonged or repeated, there is a possibility of the birds abandoning the nest.	Some existing users are aware of the nest and take special care to avoid it. Others are not aware of its existence. If signage were to be installed at the parking place, this could raise awareness amongst visitors and may lead to an improvement on the existing situation.	New signage to encourage responsible behaviour	New signage would not affect the integrity of the site and could lead to an improvement in the current situation.

River Spey – SAC

7.9 Qualifying interests:

European non-priority species:

- *Margaritifera margaritifera* (Freshwater pearl mussel)
- *Petromyzon marinus* (Sea lamprey)
- *Salmo salar* (Atlantic salmon)
- *Lutra lutra* (Otter)

7.10 Conservation objectives:

To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for the qualifying features.

To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Population of the species (including range of genetic types for *Salmo salar* only) as a viable component of the site
- Distribution of the species within site
- Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
- Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species
- No significant disturbance of the species
- Distribution and viability of the species' host species (for *Margaritifera margaritifera* and *Petromyzon marinus*)
- Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species'

7.11 The Area Networks shown in Table 7.5 below were assessed as having no likely significant effect on the River Spey SAC.

Table 7.5 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the River Spey SAC	
Area Networks	Reason
Glenlivet and Tomintoul	A number of the proposed core paths, which are already promoted and managed, cross the River Spey SAC on existing bridges or fords, and some are paths that run alongside the river. Because core path status will result in minimal changes to the paths or to their use, there are no likely significant effects on the site's qualifying features.
Lower Badenoch and Strathspey	Within this area there are a total of 28 existing routes being proposed as core paths alongside, close to, or leading to, the River Spey SAC. This excludes the River Spey itself – the effects of designating the river as a core path on the SAC have already been assessed elsewhere. These 28 routes can be categorised as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On 15 existing routes, no change in management or promotion is proposed. Designation of these paths is not likely to have a significant effect on the qualifying features.

Table 7.5 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the River Spey SAC

Area Networks	Reason
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 existing paths have been identified as needing improved promotion if they become core paths. Most of these are already popular routes, and 5 of them already have some promotion. There are also proposals to extend two of these existing routes to create new path links close to the River Spey SAC. One of these is to complete the Aviemore Orbital path (LBS30), and the other is a short path link adjacent to a road at Cromdale (LBS115). <p>It is likely that recreational use of all these existing and new sections of paths would increase following designation as core paths, as a result of the additional promotion. It is not likely that increased numbers of people on paths close to the river would affect or disturb Atlantic salmon, freshwater pearl mussel or sea lamprey, which all live in the river.</p> <p>Otter range more widely away from the river. The otter population on the River Spey is in favourable condition at existing levels of recreation and there is no evidence that recreation is having adverse effects on the species. The key issue in relation to otter is disturbance, especially to holts by people and dogs. In general, otter select holts and resting places away from areas of human activity such as paths, roads and villages. All the 13 paths proposed for improved promotion are either existing paths and/or close to roads or villages. Considered together, these paths only affect a very small proportion of the total length of the river and thus the area available to otter. Overall, therefore, increased levels of recreation on existing paths and on a new path link close to Aviemore, and/or on a new path link adjacent to a road at Cromdale, are unlikely to have a significant effect on otter.</p>
Upper Badenoch and Strathspey	<p>Within this area there are a total of 9 proposed paths that either cross the River Spey SAC, lie partly within it, or pass close to it. These can be categorised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 paths already exist, and no changes to existing types and levels of promotion are proposed to accompany core path status. Levels and patterns of recreational use on these paths are therefore not predicted to change significantly as a result of core path status. • 2 paths already exist, and are not currently promoted. Increased promotion is proposed to accompany core path status. One of these is a short path lying within the village of Laggan, which is already popular with locals (UBS17). The other path is a vehicle track for most of its length and crosses the River Spey on an existing bridge (UBS30). Improved promotion may result in increased use of these paths. It is not likely that increased numbers of people on existing paths close to the river would affect or disturb Atlantic salmon, freshwater pearl mussel or sea lamprey, which all live in the river. Otter range more widely away from the river. The otter population on the River Spey is in favourable condition at existing levels of recreation and there is no evidence that recreation is having adverse effects on the species. The key issue in relation to otter is disturbance, especially to holts by people and dogs. In general, otter select holts and resting places away from areas of human activity

Table 7.5 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the River Spey SAC

Area Networks	Reason
	<p>such as paths, tracks and villages. In view of the location of these two paths – on a track and within a village respectively – any increased levels of recreation are unlikely to have a significant effect on otter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 path does not already exist (UBS30) – the off-road route parallel to the A86 around Laggan. Plans for constructing this route are currently in preparation, and any requirement for appropriate assessment of effects on the River Spey SAC will be dealt with through the Roads Order or planning permission processes. <p>The changes that will accompany core path status for the existing paths are hence minimal in scope and not likely to have a significant effect on the qualifying species of the River Spey SAC. Any likely significant effects arising from construction of UBS30 will be considered separately prior to any grant of planning permission or a Roads Order.</p>
Glenmore and Rothiemurchus	<p>Given the limited changes that will arise from core path status the only conservation objectives that could be affected by this proposal are those concerned with the extent of habitats, or disturbance to species. These are considered in turn below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of habitats - As almost all the paths proposed to be core paths are already signed, waymarked and promoted, there is limited potential for increases in recreational use as a result of core path status. Even if levels of use on less well-promoted paths such as GR7 were to increase as a result of increased promotion, the paths concerned are robust constructed paths with management and maintenance regimes in place. It is therefore not likely that any significant off-path trampling damage would result from core path status. A decrease in the extent of habitats alongside the paths is hence unlikely. • Disturbance to species - As almost all the paths proposed to be core paths are already signed, waymarked and promoted, there is limited potential for increases in recreational use as a result of core path status. Even if levels of use of paths were to increase, the paths concerned are well-established, and species will be used to the presence of people and pet dogs. Core path status will be accompanied by increased promotion of responsible behaviour, and this would be likely to reduce recreational disturbance to species. It is therefore not likely that there would be any additional disturbance to species in the areas around paths as a result of core path status – if anything, disturbance should decrease as a result of more responsible behaviour.
The River Spey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freshwater pearl mussel - The key issue is physical damage of the river bank or bed. There is no known evidence of problems caused by canoeists etc to freshwater pearl mussel (fwpm) populations. Most people launch canoes etc in recognised sites that are regularly used and therefore unlikely to be home to freshwater pearl mussel. If people start to use new launch / exit sites, fwpm beds could be damaged, however, there does not appear to be any reason why

Table 7.5 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the River Spey SAC

Area Networks	Reason
	<p>core path status would encourage people to use new sites. People will avoid grounding their canoes etc in shallow water because this may damage their canoes. There may be instances where rafting groups jump out of the rafts into the river, however, this is unusual and people more often jump into deeper water where they do not trample the river bed. There are many more anglers than paddlers who walk on the river bed, and there is no evidence of trampling by anglers being a problem for fwpm. It is therefore considered that trampling by canoeists or rafters does not cause any significant disturbance to fwpm, and it is concluded that there is no likely significant effect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Otter - The key issue is disturbance, especially to holts by people and dogs. The River Spey was included in a Site Condition Monitoring otter survey. It found that there was a high level of otter activity in the 56 ten kilometre squares that were surveyed. The survey particularly mentions the importance of inaccessible islands in the lower Spey for providing secure holt sites. In general, otters will select holts and resting places away from areas of human activity such as access and egress points. Breeding holts may be more likely to be some distance from the river banks to avoid flooding and erosion. If paddlers continue to use established access and egress points, there should be no increased impact at this crucial time for otters. No new launch sites are proposed in the Draft Core Paths Plan. If new access points are proposed using any public funding, the Cairngorms National Park Authority and SNH would subject the proposal to the usual assessment process for Natura sites. Otters are mainly nocturnal in Moray, which means that they are not likely to be affected by passing paddler activity. It is unknown whether this is the case for otters in the Park, but in any case, the passage up and down the river of non-motorised craft is likely to cause only transient disturbance to otters foraging or travelling in the water. It is concluded that there is no likely significant effect on otters. • Sea lamprey - Sea lamprey in the larval stage are found in muddy banks and backwaters. Canoeists/rafters would only affect the banks when they get into and out of the water. Established launch and exit points are not likely to be used by larvae. Canoeists using new launch / exit points are likely to avoid muddy banks, but it is not predicted that there will be an increase in use of new sites as a result of core path status. Adult sea lamprey concentrate so much on spawning that they do not notice what is going on around them and so they are not vulnerable to disturbance. It is concluded that there is no likely significant effect on sea lamprey.

7.12 The Area Network shown in Table 7.6 on the following page was assessed as having a likely significant effect on the River Spey SAC.

Table 7.6 – Area Network assessed as having a likely significant effect on the River Spey SAC

Area Networks	Reason
River Spey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Atlantic Salmon - For salmon, the key issue is disturbance to the fish population. Research of expert's opinions conducted by the Environment Agency south of the border concluded that canoeing does not impact on salmonid fish populations. SNH are not aware of any empirical research on the impact of canoes or rafts on salmon. In the absence of evidence, the possible impacts are considered from a theoretical perspective. Generally, adult salmon would be expected to move or scatter when they are disturbed. It is unknown what impact this may have on them. Breeding adult salmon will stay in the vicinity of redds if undisturbed and repeated disturbance may cause them to lose energy and hence lay fewer or lower quality eggs. Salmon parr are territorial and will fight for territories. If they scatter, they may have to re-establish their territories which would take energy. However, parr tend to live in shallow water rather than pools, which presumably would be less attractive to canoeists and rafters, so they would perhaps be disturbed less often than adult fish. Salmon redds should not be damaged unless people get off the rafts or canoes and walk, or drag craft, on the river bed. Canoeists etc usually move quietly through any one area. People splashing in one pool for a length of time may drive the fish to the edges or away, but this behaviour is unusual. This would cause a temporary impact and the long term impact is unknown. It is concluded that there could be a significant effect, because there may be a modest increase in numbers of paddlers as a result of core path status and a corresponding modest increase in disturbance. The long-term impacts of this disturbance are uncertain.

7.13 The Assessment has shown that without further safeguarding or mitigation the proposal to designate the River Spey as a core path will have a significant effect on the conservation objectives of the River Spey SAC. Table 7.7 below assesses proposed safeguarding measures for the River Spey SAC. No mitigation measures were identified.

Table 7.7 – Assessment of proposed Safeguarding measures for the River Spey SAC

Qualifying Interest	Potential Issue	Safeguarding	Qualifying interest conclusion
Atlantic Salmon	<p>The proposal to designate the River Spey as a core path will not affect the population of Atlantic salmon, its distribution within the site, the distribution of its habitats, or the structure, function or supporting processes of habitats. The only likely effect is disturbance. There are a number of key uncertainties in predicting the effect of core path status on levels of disturbance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> whether or not designation will result in a 	<p>The Cairngorms National Park Authority will develop proposals to raise awareness of the Spey's natural</p>	<p>It is concluded that there is no adverse effect on site integrity of the River Spey SAC.</p>

Table 7.7 – Assessment of proposed Safeguarding measures for the River Spey SAC

Qualifying Interest	Potential Issue	Safeguarding	Qualifying interest conclusion
	<p>modest increase in the number of paddlers / rafters;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what proposals there are to advise on, and promote, responsible behaviour and how effective they will be; • whether any modest increase in paddler / rafter numbers will result in additional disturbance to Atlantic salmon, and whether this disturbance will be significant at the population level. <p>These uncertainties are now considered in turn. The assessment of effects on site integrity are based on the assumption of a modest increase in paddler / rafter numbers.</p> <p>As indicated above, whilst it is a theoretical possibility, there is no firm evidence available to support the proposition that a modest increase in paddler numbers will result in a damaging level of disturbance to the populations of Atlantic salmon in the Spey. This becomes a matter of judgement because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • of the minor predicted impacts of the Core Paths Plan on the level of use by paddlers, and; • there is no evidence of damaging disturbance being caused by paddlers on rivers elsewhere in the United Kingdom, and; • there are steps that can be taken to raise awareness amongst paddlers, should unpredicted problems arise in the future. 	<p>heritage and to effectively advise on, and promote, responsible behaviour amongst paddlers and rafters. SNH welcome the opportunity to discuss and contribute towards any such awareness raising initiatives. The effect of these proposals can then be considered alongside other factors in the appropriate assessment.</p>	

Cairngorms – SAC

7.14 Qualifying Interests:

- 6 Priority Habitats
- 14 Non-priority habitats
- 1 plant species (*Buxbaumia viridis*)
- 1 animal species (Otter)

7.15 Conservation Objectives:

To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for the qualifying features. To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Extent of the habitats on site
- Distribution of the habitats within site
- Structure and function of the habitats
- Processes supporting the habitats
- Distribution of typical species of the habitats
- Viability of typical species as components of the habitats
- No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitats

7.16 The Area Networks shown in Table 7.8 below were assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Cairngorms SAC.

Table 7.8 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Cairngorms SAC	
Area Networks	Reason
Central Cairngorms	The proposals, including the fact that no further promotion would take place, in the Draft Core Paths Plan for this area could result in modest positive effects on some qualifying habitats within the Cairngorms SAC as a result of the greater likelihood of path repairs and maintenance on sections of these paths where management regimes are not already in place. Repairs and maintenance are likely to have a positive effect on qualifying habitats adjacent to paths, as a result of a more attractive and well-drained path surface resulting in reduced off-path trampling and water erosion.
Upper Deeside	One existing promoted route in Cairngorms SAC is being proposed as a core path. This path is already promoted and maintained by the National Trust for Scotland. No changes are proposed as a result of core path status, and therefore there are no likely significant effects on the sites' qualifying features.
Lower Badenoch and Strathspey	There are six proposed core paths in this site, all of which are actively managed, and already well promoted and well-used. There are no plans for additional promotion following core path status. Core path status is therefore not likely to significantly change existing patterns of recreational use. No significant effect on the sites' qualifying features is likely.
Glenmore and Rothiemurchus	Given the limited changes that will arise from core path designation the only conservation objectives that could be affected by the proposed network in this area are those concerned with the extent of habitats, or disturbance to species. These are considered in turn below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent of habitats - As almost all the paths proposed to be core paths are already signed, waymarked and promoted, there is limited potential for increases in recreational use as a result of core path status. Even if levels of use on less well-promoted paths such as GR7 were to increase as a result of increased promotion, the paths

Table 7.8 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Cairngorms SAC

Area Networks	Reason
	<p>concerned are robust constructed paths with management and maintenance regimes in place. It is therefore not likely that any significant off-path trampling damage would result from core path status. A decrease in the extent of habitats alongside the paths is hence unlikely.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disturbance to species - As almost all the paths proposed to be core paths are already signed, waymarked and promoted, there is limited potential for increases in recreational use as a result of core path status. Even if levels of use of paths were to increase, the paths concerned are well-established, and species will be used to the presence of people and pet dogs. Core path designation will be accompanied by increased promotion of responsible behaviour, and this would be likely to reduce recreational disturbance to species. It is therefore not likely that there would be any additional disturbance to species in the areas around paths as a result of core path designation – if anything, disturbance should decrease as a result of more responsible behaviour.

Cairngorms - SPA

7.17 Qualifying Interests:

- Capercaillie
- Dotterel
- Golden Eagle
- Merlin
- Osprey
- Peregrine
- Scottish Crossbill

7.18 Conservation Objectives:

To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained. To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Population of the species as a viable component of the site
- Distribution of the species within site
- Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
- Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species
- No significant disturbance of the species

7.19 The Area Networks shown in Table 7.9 on the following page were assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Cairngorms SPA.

Table 7.9 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Cairngorms SPA

Area Networks	Reason
Central Cairngorms	The proposals in the Draft Core Paths Plan for this area could result in modest positive effects on some qualifying habitats within the Cairngorms SPA as a result of the greater likelihood of path repairs and maintenance on sections of these paths where management regimes are not already in place. Repairs and maintenance are likely to have a positive effect on qualifying habitats adjacent to paths, as a result of a more attractive and well-drained path surface resulting in reduced off-path trampling and water erosion.
Upper Deeside	Two existing promoted routes in the Cairngorms SPA, one of which is also in Cairngorms SAC, are being proposed as core paths (at Linn of Dee and at Linn of Quoich). These paths are already promoted and maintained by the National Trust for Scotland. No changes are proposed as a result of core path status, and therefore there are no likely significant effects on the sites' qualifying features.
Glenmore and Rothiemurchus	<p>Given the limited changes that will arise from core path designation the only conservation objectives that could be affected by this proposal are those concerned with the disturbance to species. These are considered in turn below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disturbance to species - As almost all the paths proposed to be core paths are already signed, waymarked and promoted, there is limited potential for increases in recreational use as a result of core path designation. Even if levels of use of paths were to increase, the paths concerned are well-established, and species will be used to the presence of people and pet dogs. Core path designation will be accompanied by increased promotion of responsible behaviour, and this would be likely to reduce recreational disturbance to species. It is therefore not likely that there would be any additional disturbance to species in the areas around paths as a result of core path status – if anything, disturbance should decrease as a result of more responsible behaviour.

Abernethy Forest – SPA

7.20 Qualifying Interests:

- Capercaillie
- Osprey
- Scottish Crossbill

7.21 Conservation Objectives:

To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained. To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Population of the species as a viable component of the site ·
- Distribution of the species within site ·

- Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
- Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species
- No significant disturbance of the species

7.22 The Area Network shown in Table 7.10 below was assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Abernethy Forest SPA.

Table 7.10 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Abernethy Forest SPA	
Area Networks	Reason
Lower Badenoch and Strathspey	There are six proposed core paths in this site, all of which are actively managed, and already well promoted and well-used. There are no plans for additional promotion following core path designation. Core path designation is therefore not likely to significantly change existing patterns of recreational use. No significant effect on the sites' qualifying features is likely.

Caenlochan - SAC

7.23 Qualifying Interests:

- 3 Priority Habitats
- 11 Non-priority habitats

7.24 Conservation Objectives

To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for the qualifying features. To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Extent of the habitats on site
- Distribution of the habitats within site
- Structure and function of the habitats
- Processes supporting the habitats
- Distribution of typical species of the habitats
- Viability of typical species as components of the habitats
- No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitats

7.25 The Area Network shown in Table 7.11 below was assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Caenlochan SAC.

Table 7.11 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Caenlochan SAC	
Area Networks	Reason
Eastern Cairngorms	Promotion of EC9 in Glen Isla could lead to increased recreational use within this part of the SAC. In the light of the relatively remote and unvisited nature of Glen Isla, compared to other parts of the

Table 7.11 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Caenlochan SAC	
Area Networks	Reason
	Cairngorms National Park, any increase in recreational use is expected to be modest in scale. Any increase in use is likely to be focussed on the network of traditional paths in upper Glen Isla, but the Angus Glens Ranger Service advise that Bessie's Cairn is a natural end point for walks, so the numbers of people likely to walk further into the SAC are predicted to be low. Overall, any increase in use of existing paths arising from increased promotion is not likely to be of a scale that will result in any significant damage to qualifying habitats in the SAC.

Caenlochan - SPA

7.26 Qualifying Interests:

- Dotterel
- Golden Eagle

7.27 Conservation Objectives:

To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained. To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Population of the species as a viable component of the site
- Distribution of the species within site
- Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
- Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species
- No significant disturbance of the species

7.28 The Area Network shown in Table 7.12 below was assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Caenlochan SPA.

Table 7.12 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Caenlochan SPA	
Area Networks	Reason
Eastern Cairngorms	Promotion of EC9 in Glen Isla could lead to increased recreational use within this part of the SPA. In the light of the relatively remote and unvisited nature of Glen Isla, compared to other parts of the Cairngorms National Park, any increase in recreational use is expected to be modest in scale. Any increase in use is likely to be focussed on the network of traditional paths in upper Glen Isla, but the Angus Glens Ranger Service advise that Bessie's Cairn is a natural end point for walks, so the numbers of people likely to walk further into the SPA are predicted to be low. Golden Eagles are present in this part of the SPA, and the nearest eyries are in Canness Glen. There would only be

Table 7.12 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Caenlochan SPA	
Area Networks	Reason
	likely to be any disturbance if significant numbers of people went beyond the ruin which lies 1km NNE of Bessie’s Cairn, and this is predicted to be unlikely for the reasons already given. Overall, any increase in use of existing paths arising from increased promotion is not likely to be of a scale that will result in any significant increase in disturbance to the qualifying species of the SPA.

River South Esk - SAC

7.29 Qualifying Interests:

- Freshwater pearl mussel
- Atlantic salmon

7.30 Conservation Objectives:

To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for the qualifying features. To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Population of the species, including range of genetic types for salmon, as a viable component of the site
- Distribution of the species within site
- Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
- Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species
- No significant disturbance of the species
- Distribution and viability of freshwater pearl mussel host species
- Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting freshwater pearl mussel host species

7.31 The Area Network shown in Table 7.13 below was assessed as having no likely significant effect on the River South Esk SAC.

Table 7.13 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the River South Esk SAC	
Area Networks	Reason
Eastern Cairngorms	Five of the proposed core paths cross the River South Esk SAC on existing bridges, and one of these is a recently constructed path that also runs alongside the river bank for 1km. All of these paths are already promoted, and no further promotion is proposed as a result of core path status. No significant changes in recreational use are therefore expected, and there are no likely significant effects on the qualifying features of the River South Esk SAC.

Table 7.13 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the River South Esk SAC	
Area Networks	Reason
	More generally, the increased likelihood of securing funds for path management and maintenance, where such regimes are not already in place, and for promoting responsible behaviour, may result in reduced recreational damage and disturbance to habitats.

River Dee - SAC

7.32 Qualifying Interests:

- Otter
- Freshwater pearl mussel
- Atlantic salmon

7.33 Conservation Objectives:

To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for the qualifying features. To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Population of the species, including range of genetic types for salmon, as a viable component of the site
- Distribution of the species within site
- Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
- Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species
- No significant disturbance of the species
- Distribution and viability of freshwater pearl mussel host species
- Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting freshwater pearl mussel host species

7.34 The Area Networks shown in Table 7.14 below were assessed as having no likely significant effect on the River Dee SAC.

Table 7.14 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the River Dee SAC	
Area Networks	Reason
Eastern Cairngorms	Two paths within this area cross the River Dee SAC on existing bridges. Both of these paths are already promoted, and no further promotion is proposed as a result of core path status. No significant changes in recreational use are therefore expected, and there are no likely significant effects on the qualifying features of the River Dee SAC.

Table 7.14 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the River Dee SAC

Area Networks	Reason
	<p>More generally, the increased likelihood of securing funds for path management and maintenance, where such regimes are not already in place, and for promoting responsible behaviour, may result in reduced recreational damage and disturbance to habitats and species.</p>
Upper Deeside	<p>Within this area there are seventeen paths proposed as core paths which are either partly within, or pass close to, the River Dee SAC.</p> <p>Twelve of these paths already exist, and are already promoted. No changes are proposed as a result of core path designation, and therefore there are no likely significant effects on the site's qualifying features.</p> <p>Three more of these paths already exist, but are not currently promoted. Promotion is planned to accompany core path designation. Two of these paths simply cross the SAC on existing bridges, and the third is a popular short access path from the road to an existing promoted riverside path at Braemar. Promotion might increase recreational use of these routes, but given the existing infrastructure and human activity in these areas, this is not likely to cause any significant disturbance to the site's qualifying features. Therefore there are no likely significant effects.</p> <p>Two new paths are proposed close to the River Dee SAC. UDE9 crosses an existing bridge over the Clunie Water and then would run alongside the SAC for about 500m, and UDE14 is new short-cut across fields between two points on an existing riverside path along the River Dee and the Clunie Water. Construction of these two paths could have a significant effect on the qualifying species. It is likely to be possible to avoid such significant effects by building the following features into detailed proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Otter surveys of the areas around the paths, and use of the findings to locate the routes and associated construction works away from breeding and resting places. • Selection of construction materials that will not release physical or chemical contaminants into the rivers. • Construction and method statements that ensure that, during construction, there will be no additional sediment load or pollution entering the river; and that there is no potential for otter to become entangled in construction materials (eg overnight). <p>In any case detailed plans for constructing these paths will need to be assessed for effects on the River Dee SAC through the planning permission process.</p>

Ladder Hills – SAC

7.35 Qualifying Interests:

- Priority qualifying habitat

- Non-priority qualifying habitats

7.36 Conservation Objectives

To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for the qualifying features. To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Extent of the habitats on site
- Distribution of the habitats within site
- Structure and function of the habitats
- Processes supporting the habitats
- Distribution of typical species of the habitats
- Viability of typical species as components of the habitats
- No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitats

7.37 The Area Network shown in Table 7.15 below was assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Ladder Hills SAC.

Table 7.15 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Ladder Hills SAC	
Area Networks	Reason
Glenlivet and Tomintoul	Just one proposed core path passes through this site. This path already exists, and is already promoted, signposted and maintained. Because the addition of core path designation will result in minimal changes to this path or to its use, there are no likely significant effects on the site's qualifying features.

Anagach Woods – SPA

7.38 Qualifying Interest:

- Capercaillie

7.39 Conservation Objectives:

To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained. To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Population of the species as a viable component of the site
- Distribution of the species within site
- Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
- Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species
- No significant disturbance of the species

7.40 The Area Network shown in Table 7.16 below was assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Anagach Woods SPA.

Table 7.16 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Anagach Woods SPA	
Area Networks	Reason
Lower Badenoch and Strathspey	The proposed core paths within and around Anagach Woods are already managed, promoted (or in the case of the new all-abilities path, will be imminently) and /or well-used. Core path designation is not likely to increase or change existing patterns of recreational use. No significant effect on the site’s qualifying feature is likely.

Craigmore Wood - SPA

7.41 Qualifying Interest:

- Capercaillie

7.42 Conservation Objectives:

To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained. To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Population of the species as a viable component of the site
- Distribution of the species within site
- Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
- Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species
- No significant disturbance of the species

7.43 The Area Network shown in Table 7.17 below was assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Craigmore Wood SPA.

Table 7.17 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Craigmore Wood SPA	
Area Networks	Reason
Lower Badenoch and Strathspey	There is one proposed core path close to this site, which is already managed, well promoted and well-used. There are no plans for additional promotion following core path designation. Core path designation is therefore not likely to significantly change existing patterns of recreational use. No significant effect on the site’s qualifying feature is likely.

Kinveachy Forest – SPA

7.44 Qualifying Interests:

- Capercaillie
- Osprey

- Scottish Crossbill

7.45 Conservation Objectives:

To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained. To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Population of the species as a viable component of the site
- Distribution of the species within site
- Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
- Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species
- No significant disturbance of the species

7.46 The Area Network shown in Table 7.18 below was assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Kinveachy Forest SPA.

Table 7.18 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Kinveachy Forest SPA	
Area Networks	Reason
Lower Badenoch and Strathspey	There is one proposed core path in this site, which is wide, robust, well promoted and well-used. There are no plans for additional promotion following core path designation. Core path designation is therefore not likely to significantly change existing patterns of recreational use. No significant effect on the sites' qualifying features is likely.

Kinveachy Forest – SAC

7.47 Qualifying Interest:

- 2 Priority Habitats (Bog Woodland; Caledonian forest)

7.48 Conservation Objectives:

To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for the qualifying features. To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Extent of the habitats on site
- Distribution of the habitats within site
- Structure and function of the habitats
- Processes supporting the habitats
- Distribution of typical species of the habitats
- Viability of typical species as components of the habitats
- No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitats

7.49 The Area Network shown in Table 7.19 below was assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Kinveachy Forest SAC.

Table 7.19 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Kinveachy Forest SAC

Area Networks	Reason
Lower Badenoch and Strathspey	There is one proposed core path in this site, National Cycle Network route 7, which is wide, robust, well promoted and well-used. There are no plans for additional promotion following core path designation. Core path designation is therefore not likely to significantly change existing patterns of recreational use. No significant effect on the sites' qualifying features is likely.

Muir of Dinnet – SAC

7.50 Qualifying Interests:

- 4 Non-priority habitats (Dry Heaths; Degraded raised bogs; Clear-water lakes or lochs with aquatic vegetation and poor to moderate nutrient levels; Very wet mires often identified by an unstable `quaking` surface)
- 1 animal species (Otter)

7.51 Conservation Objectives:

To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for the qualifying features. To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Extent of the habitats on site
- Distribution of the habitats within site
- Structure and function of the habitats
- Processes supporting the habitats
- Distribution of typical species of the habitats
- Viability of typical species as components of the habitats
- No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitats

To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for the qualifying features. To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Population of the species as a viable component of the site
- Distribution of the species within site
- Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
- Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species
- No significant disturbance of the species

7.52 The Area Network shown in Table 7.20 below was assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Muir of Dinnet SAC.

Table 7.20 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Muir of Dinnet SAC	
Area Networks	Reason
Upper Deeside	Only one route (UDE44) within this site is proposed as a core path. This path is already promoted and managed. No changes are proposed as a result of core path designation, and therefore there are no likely significant effects on the sites' qualifying features.

Muir of Dinnet – SPA

7.53 Qualifying Interests:

- Graylag goose
- Waterfowl assemblage

7.54 Conservation Objectives:

To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained. To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Population of the species as a viable component of the site
- Distribution of the species within site
- Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
- Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species
- No significant disturbance of the species

7.55 The Area Network shown in Table 7.21 below was assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Muir of Dinnet SPA.

Table 7.21 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Muir of Dinnet SPA	
Area Networks	Reason
Upper Deeside	Only one route (UDE44) within this site is proposed as a core path. This path is already promoted and managed. No changes are proposed as a result of core path designation, and therefore there are no likely significant effects on the sites' qualifying features.

Glen Tanar – SAC

7.56 Qualifying Interests:

- 2 Priority Habitats (Blanket bog; Caledonian Forest)
- 2 Non-priority habitats (Dry Heaths; Wet Heaths)
- 1 animal species (Otter)

7.57 Conservation Objectives:

To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for the qualifying features. To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Extent of the habitats on site
- Distribution of the habitats within site
- Structure and function of the habitats
- Processes supporting the habitats
- Distribution of typical species of the habitats
- Viability of typical species as components of the habitats
- No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitats

To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for the qualifying features. To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Population of the species as a viable component of the site
- Distribution of the species within site
- Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
- Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species
- No significant disturbance of the species

7.58 The Area Network shown in Table 7.22 below was assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Glen Tanar SAC.

Table 7.22 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Glen Tanar SAC	
Area Networks	Reason
Upper Deeside	Only one route (UDE47) within this site is proposed as a core path. This path is already promoted and managed. No changes are proposed as a result of core path status, and therefore there are no likely significant effects on the sites' qualifying features.

Glen Tanar - SPA

7.59 Qualifying Interests:

- Capercaillie
- Hen harrier
- Osprey
- Scottish Crossbill

7.60 Conservation Objectives:

To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained. To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Population of the species as a viable component of the site
- Distribution of the species within site
- Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
- Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species
- No significant disturbance of the species

7.61 The Area Network shown in Table 7.23 below was assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Glen Tanar SPA.

Table 7.23 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Glen Tanar SPA	
Area Networks	Reason
Upper Deeside	Only one route (UDE47) within this site is proposed as a core path. This path is already promoted and managed. No changes are proposed as a result of core path status, and therefore there are no likely significant effects on the sites' qualifying features.

Morrone Birkwood – SAC

7.62 Qualifying Interests:

- 2 Priority Habitats
- 4 Non-priority habitats
- 1 animal species (Geyer's whorl snail)

7.63 Conservation Objectives:

To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for the qualifying features. To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Extent of the habitats on site
- Distribution of the habitats within site
- Structure and function of the habitats
- Processes supporting the habitats
- Distribution of typical species of the habitats
- Viability of typical species as components of the habitats
- No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitats

To avoid deterioration of the habitats of the qualifying species or significant disturbance to the qualifying species, thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for the qualifying features. To ensure for the qualifying species that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Population of the species as a viable component of the site
- Distribution of the species within site
- Distribution and extent of habitats supporting the species
- Structure, function and supporting processes of habitats supporting the species
- No significant disturbance of the species

7.64 The Area Network shown in Table 7.24 below was assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Morrone Birkwood SAC.

Table 7.24 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Morrone Birkwood SAC	
Area Networks	Reason
Upper Deeside	Four existing routes in this SAC are being proposed as core paths. Three of these are already promoted and maintained, and no changes are proposed as a result of core path status. One path (UDE51) links Braemar golf course to the viewpoint just inside the SAC, and thus to the network of promoted paths within it. This path already exists, but is not currently promoted, and CNPA propose to promote this route if it becomes a core path. Promotion may increase use of this path, but in the light of the existing path network and levels of human activity in the area, this is not likely to result in any significant damage to qualifying habitats or disturbance to qualifying species in the SAC. Therefore there are no likely significant effects.

Dinnet Oakwood – SAC

7.65 Qualifying Interest:

- Western acidic oak woodland

7.66 Conservation Objectives:

To avoid deterioration of the qualifying habitats thus ensuring that the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes an appropriate contribution to achieving favourable conservation status for the qualifying features. To ensure for the qualifying habitats that the following are maintained in the long term:

- Extent of the habitats on site
- Distribution of the habitats within site
- Structure and function of the habitats
- Processes supporting the habitats
- Distribution of typical species of the habitats
- Viability of typical species as components of the habitats
- No significant disturbance of typical species of the habitats

7.67 The Area Network shown in Table 7.25 below was assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Dinnet Oakwood SAC.

Table 7.25 – Area Networks assessed as having no likely significant effect on the Dinnet Oakwood SAC	
Area Networks	Reason
Upper Deeside	Only one existing route through this site (UDE4) is proposed as a core path. It is not currently promoted, and CNPA propose to promote this route if it becomes a core path. Promotion may increase use of this path, but given that the path already exists, this is not likely to result in any significant damage to qualifying habitats in the SAC. Therefore there are no likely significant effects.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 The Draft Core Paths Plan area network proposals have now been assessed to consider whether they would be likely to have a significant effect on Natura 2000 sites.
- 8.2 The Matrices and tables completed highlight the area networks that have no significant effects and those where there is likely to be a significant effect. Those likely to have a significant effect have been subject to an appropriate assessment that considers in more detail the conservation objectives and qualifying interest of the site against the Draft Core Path Plan proposals.
- 8.3 This assessment concludes that the Core Paths Plan (with mitigation) will not adversely affect the integrity of the Natura sites.
- 8.4 This assessment does recognise, however, that further more detailed assessments will be required for a number of paths specific proposals at the planning and implementation stage and through the Strategic Environmental Assessment process.