

## 9. Assessment of Area Network Proposals

### How environmental issues were considered in developing the Area Network Proposals

- 9.1** The aim and objectives of the Draft Core Paths Plan were used to identify the core paths network on an area by area basis. The areas identified are based on the eight 'Action Areas' identified within the Outdoor Access Strategy<sup>10</sup>. The Outdoor Access Strategy identifies priorities for action within each of the areas and the objectives of the Core Paths Plan reflect the need to incorporate these priorities into the selection of core paths for each area. The first and second objectives used to select the core paths for each area identify the need to consider the Park's natural and cultural heritage whilst encouraging responsible behaviour and helping those working on the land.

### The significant environmental effects of the Area Network Proposals

- 9.2** The following section describes the predicted environmental effects of the Area Network Proposals. Each Area Network Proposal has an overall strongly positive effect on the SEA objectives. This is largely due to the way in which the Draft Core Path Plan has been developed taking into account the policies in the Outdoor Access Strategy and the Park Plan. The full assessment record for each Area Network Proposal is shown in Annex 4 (available on request).

### Judgements of the significance of environmental effects

- 9.3** It became apparent during the assessment that all of the Area Network Proposals are likely to have some effect on the environment. Nearly all of the area networks have strongly positive effects for SEA objectives 7 and 11, the criteria for both of which relate to outdoor access. None of the area networks were considered to have an overall strongly positive or strongly negative environmental effect. Smaller positive or negative impacts are an important consideration in developing the Draft Core Paths Plan, which seeks to maximise environmental enhancement. However, they have been considered as unlikely to be significant in the assessment. The score given for each area network in relation to each SEA objective is shown in Figure 9.1 overleaf.

<sup>10</sup> Enjoying the Cairngorms: Cairngorms National Park Outdoor Access Strategy 2007-2012 (CNPA 2007), is available on the CNPA website or on request.

Figure 9.1 – SEA assessment summary														
Outdoor Access Strategy Action Area Proposals	SEA Objectives													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Action Area A	=	=	=	=	=	=	++	=	=	=	+	=	=	=
Action Area B	?	?	=	=	=	=	++	?	=	=	+	?	?	=
Action Area C	+	+	=	+	+	+	++	++	++	+	++	++	++	+
Action Area D	=	=	=	?	?	+	++	++	+	=	++	++	+	+
Action Area E	+	+	+	=	=	=	++	+	+	=	++	+	++	+
Action Area F	+	+	=	=	=	+	++	++	+	=	++	+	+	+
Action Area G	+	+	+	+	+	+	++	++	++	=	++	++	++	+
Action Area H	+	+	=	=	=	+	++	++	++	+	++	++	++	+
Cumulative Score*	5	5	2	2	2	5	16	11	9	2	14	10	10	6
* Cumulative score calculated on basis of 2 points for each ++ and 1 point for each + score. See Paragraph 9.14 for further information.														
<b>Scoring Codes</b> <b>++ Strongly positive effects      + Positive effect      - - Strongly negative effect</b> <b>= Neutral or no effect      - Negative effect      ? uncertain effects      / not applicable</b>														

Commentary on likely significant effects

9.4 Overall, the effects identified are positive. This is largely due to the way in which the Area Network Proposals have been developed by the application of the Core Paths Plan objectives and the influence of the Outdoor Access Strategy and Park Plan, all of which take their starting point as the four aims of the Park. A commentary on the likely significant effect on the environment follows for each of the area network proposals in the Draft Core Paths Plan.

## Action Area A – Central Cairngorms

- 9.5** The proposed core paths network in this area will have positive effects on ensuring responsible access for all and maintaining a sustainable population. It is not proposed to develop recreation infrastructure in the area or increase/change promotion or signage and as such the network should have a neutral or no effect on the SEA objectives and criteria. Where works are required they will be done in line with policies in the Outdoor Access Strategy which itself was subject to the SEA process. Whilst it is not proposed to further promote the existing paths, all core paths will be displayed on the 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey Maps. It is unlikely, however, that this will result in increased use of the paths as the majority of people who might buy a map of that area will already have some idea of their right of access and the access opportunities that exist. The proposed paths are also already clearly marked on Ordnance Survey maps at present and have existing Right of Way signage at either end.

## Action Area B - Eastern Cairngorms

- 9.6** The proposed core paths network in this area will have positive effects on ensuring responsible access for all and positive effects for maintaining a sustainable population. The network in the area is already well promoted and well used but is generally accessed by private car. As such it is unknown as to whether or not use of private cars will increase due to designation. The network does cater for people living locally, however, who may access parts of it on foot or bicycle. The path up Glen Isla leads people towards the SAC and SPA at Caenlochan, the path is already in existence and provides people with access to a point of interest, it is unknown as to whether or not this would increase people's desire to carry on into the Caenlochan area.

## Action Area C - Upper Deeside

- 9.7** The proposed network should have strongly positive effects on ensuring responsible access for all, improving air quality, using natural resources in a sustainable way, maintaining a sustainable and healthy population, improving energy efficiency and reducing waste and pollution. No negative effects have been identified.

## Action Area D - Upper Donside

- 9.8** The proposed core paths network in this area will have strongly positive effects on ensuring responsible access for all, maintaining a sustainable and healthy population and improving sustainable energy efficiency.
- 9.9** There are some unknown effects in relation to the potential impact of the construction of a Bridge over the River Don. This proposal would only be implemented subject to planning permission and consultation with SNH, SEPA and other bodies. As such the proposal would not be implemented should it be found that it would have significant negative effects that could not be mitigated.

## Action Area E - Glenlivet and Tomintoul

**9.10** The proposed core paths network in this area will have strongly positive effects on ensuring responsible access for all, maintaining a sustainable population and reducing waste and pollution. There will also be positive effects for a number of other objectives. No negative effects have been identified.

## Action Area F - Lower Badenoch and Strathspey

**9.11** The proposed core paths network for this area will have strongly positive effects on ensuring responsible access for all, maintaining a sustainable and healthy population and improving sustainable energy efficiency.

## Action Area G - Upper Badenoch and Strathspey

**9.12** The proposed network should have strongly positive effects on ensuring responsible access for all, improving air quality, using natural resources in a sustainable way, maintaining a sustainable and healthy population, improving energy efficiency and reducing waste and pollution. No negative effects have been identified.

## Action Area H - Glenmore and Rothiemurchus

**9.13** The proposed network should have strongly positive effects on ensuring responsible access for all, improving air quality, using natural resources in a sustainable way, maintaining a sustainable and healthy population, improving energy efficiency and reducing waste and pollution. The only infrastructure development in the area will be the proposed off-road route which is already under construction having been granted planning permission. The route has been subject to appropriate assessment and consultation with Scottish Natural Heritage, as such there should be no negative effects arising from this development.

## Cumulative effects

**9.14** None of the area networks were identified as having an overall significant effect. Where several Area Network proposals have a small, but not individually significant effect on one of the SEA objectives, they may cumulatively add up to a significant effect. The method used in the summary Figure 9.1 on page 43 applies a point score to each positive (+) and strongly positive (++) result so that the cumulative effects can be identified.

**9.15** From this analysis, all SEA objectives show a degree of positive score when their results are aggregated. The strongest cumulative positive effects are recorded against SEA objectives 7 (responsible access for all) and 11 (maintaining a sustainable and healthy population).

## Proposed mitigation

- 9.16** Development of all new recreation infrastructures will be done in line with the policies in the Outdoor Access Strategy which encourage high quality specification and design, using local materials where appropriate, and striving to retain wild qualities in upland areas.

## Uncertainties and risks

- 9.17** There is some level of uncertainty in the assessment of the Draft Core Paths Plan as we can only predict the effect of the Area Network proposals based on our own judgments rather than on past evidence. This uncertainty carries a level of risk. This risk, however, will be managed through monitoring of the Core Paths Plan and accompanying Environmental Report.

## 10. Future Development of the Core Paths Plan and SEA

### Timetable

**10.1** The Draft Core Paths Plan together with this Environmental Report is open to public consultation until 30 June 2008. On completion of the consultation, the Park Authority will work to finalise the Core Paths Plan. The estimated timetable is:

- Draft Core Paths Plan and Environmental Report out to formal public consultation – 1 April to 30 June 2008;
- Working to resolve objections to Draft Core Paths Plan – 1 July to 30 September 2008;
- If all objections resolved move to adopt Core Paths Plan and update Environmental Report – October 2008;
- If there are outstanding objections to the Core Paths Plan CNPA submit these to Scottish Ministers, there may then be a Public Local Inquiry – estimated as October 2008;
- Prepare a Post-adoption Statement – timetable dependent on Scottish Ministers.

### Proposals for monitoring the environmental effects

**10.2** A framework for monitoring the environmental effects of the Core Paths Plan will be developed with the wider development of monitoring for the Outdoor Access Strategy. It is proposed to develop a set of health indicators, together with more detailed performance monitoring, for the Plan. This process will be informed by the consultation on the Draft Core Paths Plan and this Environmental Report.

### SEA indicators and targets

**10.3** It is proposed to develop the SEA objectives and criteria set out in Section 6 (see page 35) into indicators and targets that can be used to monitor the environmental performance of the Core Paths Plan against the SEA objectives. These are not yet complete, and are expected to be further developed during consultation on the Core Paths Plan.

**10.4** The initial proposals for SEA indicators and targets are shown in Figure 10.1 below.

<b>Figure 10.1 – Proposed SEA indicators and targets</b>		
<b>SEA objectives</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Targets</b>
1. To conserve and enhance the diversity of species	• Loss of priority species or associated habitats	• No loss of priority species • No loss of priority species' habitats
2. To conserve and enhance the diversity of habitats	• Loss of priority habitats	• No loss of priority habitats

<b>Figure 10.1 – Proposed SEA indicators and targets <i>continued</i></b>		
<b>SEA objectives</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Targets</b>
3. To maintain and enhance the integrity of ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuity of priority habitats</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No fragmentation of priority habitats</li> </ul>
4. To protect and where appropriate improve, waterbody status within or related to the Cairngorms National Park area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water quality</li> <li>• Ecological status of water bodies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No deterioration in waterbody status</li> </ul>
5. To maintain catchment processes and hydrological systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Functioning wetland areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No loss of areas managed as functioning wetlands</li> </ul>
6. To maintain and enhance the distinctive landscape and cultural character of the Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes to landscape character</li> <li>• Recreational infrastructure and paths works that complement landscape character</li> <li>• Loss/disturbance to geomorphological/geological features</li> <li>• Sense of wildness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All recreational infrastructure and paths works that are consented are considered to make a positive contribution to landscape character</li> <li>• No loss/disturbance to geological/geomorphological features</li> </ul>
7. To ensure responsible access for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase or decrease in provision of access routes</li> <li>• Increase or decrease in number of access issues reported</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintenance or enhancement of existing access provision</li> <li>• No loss of access to open greenspace</li> <li>• Decrease number of access issues occurring</li> </ul>
8. To maintain and improve air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pollution emissions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decrease emissions</li> </ul>
9. To use natural resources /material assets in a sustainable way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational infrastructure developed using local materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All recreational infrastructure developed using local materials</li> </ul>
10. To conserve and where appropriate enhance the historic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Condition of the site or setting of an archaeological site of interest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No recreational activities or developments having significant adverse effects on site or setting of archaeological site of importance in the National Park</li> </ul>

<b>Figure 10.1 – Proposed SEA indicators and targets <i>continued</i></b>		
<b>SEA objectives</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Targets</b>
10. <i>continued</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Condition of the site or setting of a designed landscape</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No recreational activities or developments having significant adverse effects on site or setting of designed landscape of importance in the National Park</li> </ul>
11. To maintain a sustainable and healthy population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established and functioning core paths network</li> <li>• Increased use of path networks in and around communities</li> <li>• More people walking/ cycling to work/ school/local services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All communities to have a network of core paths to enable them to access services and recreation opportunities</li> <li>• Increased activity levels of residents and visitors</li> </ul>
12. To improve sustainable energy efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New recreation infrastructure developed using sustainable materials</li> <li>• More people walking/ cycling to work/school/ local services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All new recreation infrastructure developed using sustainable materials</li> <li>• Reduced reliance on the private car</li> </ul>
13. To reduce waste and pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ecological status of waterbodies</li> <li>• Increase or decrease in litter at popular countryside sites</li> <li>• More people walking/ cycling to work/school/ local services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No pollution from human waste in the countryside</li> <li>• No litter left in the countryside</li> <li>• Reduced reliance on the private car</li> </ul>
14. To maintain and enhance the quality of the built environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developments that complement the built environment</li> <li>• Condition of Listed Buildings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All recreational infrastructure that are consented are considered to make a positive contribution to the built environment</li> <li>• No recreational activities or developments having significant adverse effects on Listed Buildings</li> </ul>