CAIRNGORMS
NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
ÙGHDARRAS PÀIRC NÀISEANTA A' MHONAIDH RUAIDH

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK
Core Paths Plan Interim Draft

Core Paths Plan **Interim Draft**
- How to Comment

This document is published for use during a public consultation period which runs for three months to 30 June 2007.

Comments are requested at any time before 30 June 2007 and should be sent to:

Core Paths Plan Consultation
The Cairngorms National Park Authority
14 The Square
Grantown-on-Spey
Moray PH26 3HG

Tel: 01479 873535
Fax: 01479 873527
Email: corepathsplan@cairngorms.co.uk

The document is available to view at the National Park Authority offices in Grantown-on-Spey and Ballater – Albert Memorial Hall, Station Square – or at local libraries within the National Park. Further copies can also be obtained by contacting the National Park Authority office in Grantown-on-Spey.

Alternatively the consultation document can be downloaded from the Cairngorms National Park Authority website: **www.cairngorms.co.uk**

For a large print version of this publication, please contact the Cairngorms National Park Authority on tel: **01479 873535**.

PHOTOS: Jimmy Mitchell, David Gowans, Paul Tomkins/VisitScotland/Scottish Viewpoint, Lorne Gill/SNH, Stewart Grant, CNPA
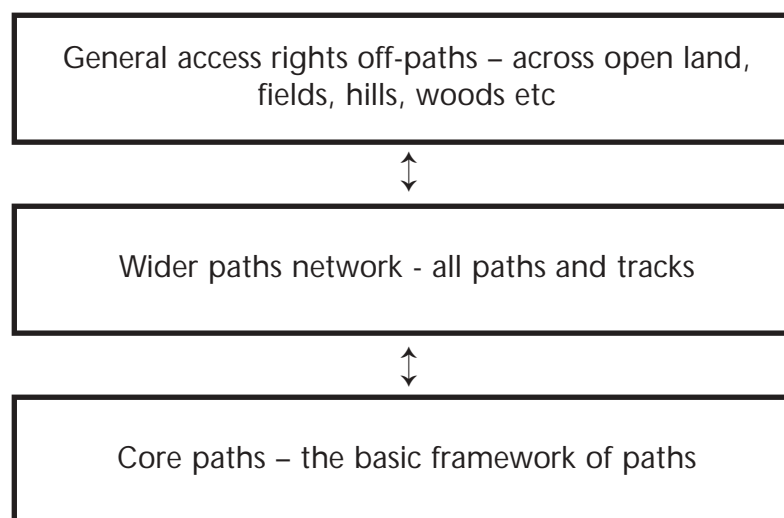
contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Across Scotland, all of the local authorities and national park authorities are working to identify and designate networks of core paths, which will make it easier for everyone to enjoy the outdoors responsibly. This document sets out the proposed core paths network for the Cairngorms National Park and seeks people's views. The specific questions that we would like people to address are set out in Section 3.

1.2 The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 provides everyone with non-motorised access rights[1] to almost all land and inland water in Scotland, as long as they are exercised 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." (Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, Section 17.1).

1.3 The network of core paths will provide the basic framework of paths that give people access throughout the National Park. These paths will satisfy the needs of both visitors and local people for getting about and will link into a much wider path network. To achieve this, the development of the Core Paths Plan is likely to comprise a mixture of existing paths and some new paths, which collectively will provide an effective network. It is important to note that core paths are not intended to limit people's access rights but to support them. Access rights can be thought of as operating across three overlapping levels as shown in the diagram below.

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   General access rights off-paths – across       │
│   open land, fields, hills, woods etc             │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                        ↕
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Wider paths network - all paths and tracks      │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                        ↕
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Core paths – the basic framework of paths       │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

[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.

1.4 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.

1.5 The long term aspiration is that the process will lead to a widespread and well promoted network of paths across Scotland that are easy and attractive to use. The benefits of this new network will contribute very positively to improving people's health, stimulating more physical activity, social inclusion and minimisation of carbon emissions to help address climate change. The network is also intended to help reduce the potential conflict between the needs of people managing the land and those taking access. Core paths will also have a very important role to play in ensuring that people can easily experience the special qualities of the National Park in a way that minimises the potential for conflict with people who manage the land.

1.6 The development of high quality opportunities for outdoor access is identified in the National Park Plan as a priority for action over the next five years. A Core Paths Plan will help greatly in achieving this aim.

Aim of the Core Paths Plan

The Core Paths Plan will identify a network of paths in the National Park. This network will be sufficient to meet the needs of residents and visitors by providing a range of high quality outdoor access opportunities and which help people to enjoy and understand the Park's special qualities. Core paths will be clearly promoted and provide for a wide range of activities and users, connecting them to local services, public transport links and to a wider network of paths in the Park. The Plan will assist the National Park Authority, working with partners, in the effective overall management of the network.

2. Developing the Core Paths Plan

How you helped to develop this Interim Draft Plan

2.1 Between September and November 2006 the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) held 25 events aimed at engaging four main interest groups in the core paths planning process:

- land managers;
- communities of place;
- people who recreate in the Park (both visitors and residents, including businesses, national organisations and clubs); and
- visitors to the Park.

2.2 The aim of this first phase of work was to find out what paths people value and why, what they use the network for and what are their concerns. Questionnaires, maps and diagrams were used to record information about different areas in the National Park and were made available to participants at the events. The information was also available to download from the CNPA website.

2.3 More than 560 people were directly involved and submitted completed questionnaires to us. Feedback reports detailing the way in which each interest group was involved in the process, and the views they expressed, are available on the CNPA website. A summary of what was said for each settlement and area is also shown in this Plan opposite the map of that community. The information that was gathered and the issues raised throughout the three month period have been used to inform the development of selection criteria for core paths.

Selecting Core Paths

2.4 Criteria have been developed to help select a core paths network for the National Park. The selection criteria reflect the aim of the Core Paths Plan as detailed in Section 1 and also what people told us was important to them during the public engagement process. The core paths network should be sufficient to give reasonable access throughout the National Park and as such the selection criteria have been applied at an area level across the National Park. The areas used are the Central Cairngorms, Eastern Cairngorms, Upper Deeside, Upper Donside, Glenlivet & Tomintoul, Lower Badenoch & Strathspey, Upper Badenoch & Strathspey and Glenmore & Rothiemurchus. In each area the core paths network should meet the selection criteria.

Selection Criteria

The core paths network in each area should:

a) **Contribute to the positive management and stewardship of the sensitive natural and cultural heritage of the National Park and promote its understanding and enjoyment;**

b) **Provide, or provide access to, a range of activities which will support stakeholder needs;**

c) **Provide, or provide access to, paths for a range of abilities;**

d) **Provide, or provide access to, links between communities; and**

e) **Provide links within communities and to key public transport connections and places of local importance.**

2.5 In addition to this, the CNPA has included in the proposed core paths network all existing low ground promoted paths in the National Park (i.e. those paths which are signposted and way-marked throughout their length and promoted in associated visitor information). These paths have been included as there is an assumption that they have been developed due to demand and necessity and, as such, make ideal candidates for core paths.

2.6 The core paths network will be well promoted, signposted and way-marked and it will also appear on Ordnance Survey Maps. As such we need to ensure that any path included in the core paths network is fit for use 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, finance and works can be achieved in a two year time frame. If a path has been identified as part of the core paths network but it cannot be made ready within two years of the Plan being adopted, then it will be developed as part of the wider network and may be considered as a core path in a subsequent review of the Core Paths Plan.

2.7 Roads and pavements have been excluded from the draft Core Paths Plan. Many pavements and roads provide valuable links to path networks and many are included in promotional material on path networks. It is, however, important to understand that the Core Paths Plan is not itself a promotional document – rather it demonstrates that each access authority has fulfilled the legal obligations described in Section 1 of this report. The main means of promoting core paths will be through leaflets, websites and way-marking.

2.8 The Speyside Way has been excluded from the Interim Draft Core Paths Plan. This in no way undermines its importance as a key recreational route throughout Badenoch and Strathspey. Rather it reflects the fact that this route is already established through legislation along with the three other official long distance routes in Scotland. Whilst it is not shown as a draft core path, it is highlighted on the relevant maps as it provides a very important link between communities and to other paths within the area.

2.9 All plans such as the Core Paths Plan are assessed to ensure that they do not have a negative impact on the environment. A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is being carried out on the Core Paths Plan to help ensure that the network will contribute to the management of pressures on sensitive natural and cultural heritage and land management operations (e.g. by encouraging access away from sensitive areas or managing access in a sensitive area in such a way as to make a positive contribution). Special consideration will need to be given to proposed core paths that cross or enter a designated site.

3. Have Your Say

3.1 This document is an interim draft version of the Core Paths Plan and has been written to prompt discussion and generate feedback. It summarises the work that has been undertaken to date and sets out a network of proposed core paths in the National Park. We now want to hear what people think. Fundamentally we want to know if the network is sufficient to give you reasonable access throughout the area.

3.2 We have developed the interim draft Core Paths Plan using selection criteria and these are explained in Section 2. These selection criteria should ensure that the proposed core paths network in the Park has been developed consistently and that the rationale for designating some paths but not others is clear. The proposed core paths network comprises many existing paths as well as some proposals for new paths.

> **We would like people to address the following questions now:**
>
> - **Is the proposed core paths network sufficient to give people reasonable access throughout the National Park?**
>
> - **Have we got the selection criteria right? Why?**
>
> - **Have we selected the right paths using the selection criteria or are there gaps, omissions or inconsistencies in our approach?**

3.3 On the maps, each proposed core path has a unique reference number shown next to it. Please use this reference number when commenting on a particular path.

3.4 The public consultation on the interim draft Core Paths Plan will also provide the opportunity for the public to assist the CNPA in identifying any inaccuracies in the mapping of the network. It has not been possible to fully survey the proposed core paths network at this time and as such there may be some errors on the maps in relation to alignment or exact location of a proposed core path. Any inaccuracies in Ordnance Survey mapping are outwith the control of the CNPA.

3.5 When implemented the core paths network will cater for all types of users including walkers, cyclists, horse-riders, people with disabilities, and canoeists. But not all individual paths will need to be designed or managed for every type of user. When selecting core paths to make up the network, the CNPA has made a judgement as to how well each area network caters for each user. This judgement has been based on identification of those paths which are currently promoted for a particular activity and not on a survey of the proposed core paths network.

3.6 To make it easy for you to comment, and to ensure that we can deal with comments as quickly and efficiently as possible, we have developed a standard form. If you have a paper copy of the Plan you will find this form slipped inside the back cover.

Alternatively, we have made the form available on our website at **http://www.cairngorms.co.uk/access/corepaths/haveyoursay**. You can submit the form to us via the website, by post or at the two CNPA offices.

A number of events and meetings will also be organised around the National Park and will be publicised nearer the time. Should you wish to discuss the draft Core Paths Plan, a helpdesk will be operating throughout the consultation period. The telephone number is 01479 870521.

3.7 If you would like to know more about the core paths planning process, there is a useful free guide to good practice that is published by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and the Paths for All Partnership. It can be viewed using the following web link; **http://www.outdooraccessscotland.com/upload/Core_Paths_Plans.pdf**.

Printed copies should be available from the SNH offices at Battleby (publications section, contact 01738 444177).

3.8 We would like to hear from people by **30 June 2007**. All of the comments received will be read, analysed and considered as the Plan is revised accordingly. The next steps are described in Section 6 (see page 41).

4. Frequently Asked Questions

What is a core paths network?

The core paths network will provide the, '...basic framework of routes sufficient for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout their area.' (Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003). The network will help meet the needs of local people and visitors by providing a range of high quality outdoor access opportunities and which help people to enjoy and understand the Park's special qualities.

What is a Core Paths Plan?

A Core Paths Plan is a plan containing lists and maps showing the network of core paths, their relationships to other paths and information on how the core paths were selected.

Why do we need a Core Paths Plan?

The duty to prepare a Core Paths Plan is one of the key innovations arising from the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. The network of managed and promoted paths that will emerge will provide a basis for delivering wide social, economic and environmental benefits for the National Park. Core paths will also have a very important role to play in ensuring that people can easily experience the special qualities of the National Park in a way that minimises the potential for conflict with people who manage the land.

What will core paths be like?

Core paths will be easy to find and to follow. They will be welcoming, well sign-posted, appropriately maintained and, as far as possible, free from barriers or obstructions. The paths do not have to be of a specific type or quality – they can range from a simple trail through the grass, to a formal path with a tarmac surface. Rivers too can be designated as core paths.

Which paths will be designated as core paths?

Core Paths will be identified in consultation with the public using selection criteria that are applied consistently across the National Park. They will include paths to allow people to move in, around and between communities as part of their daily lives (e.g. to shops and schools) and also recreational paths. The proposed core paths network includes many existing paths as well as some proposals for new paths.

How will the core paths be promoted?

Clear sign-posting will be required and information will be provided using leaflets, map-boards and websites. This information should encourage the use of the paths by a wide range of people and create confidence in their use. The core paths network will also be shown on Ordnance Survey maps.

How will the core paths network be managed?

The Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) will be responsible for the overall management of the core paths network. The specific management functions include keeping accurate records on core paths, their installations and infrastructure; ensuring core paths mapping is kept up to date and available for all to see; monitoring requirements for removal of obstructions from core paths, reinstatement after ploughing, and dealing with any complaints; ensuring information on the core paths network is accurate for reporting purposes and answering enquiries; and storing and referencing path inspection records.

How will the core paths be maintained?

It will be important that the core paths are well maintained and easy to use. A partnership will be required between whoever owns the land and public bodies. The CNPA will be the lead public body in making sure this work takes place but are unlikely to be able to fund all necessary maintenance on every path. It is therefore likely that a range of imaginative solutions will need to be found, which will depend on local circumstances but could include such things as path sponsorship, Land Management Contracts, European partnership funding etc.. Where necessary the CNPA will be able to enter into path agreements to delineate, create or maintain paths.

Who will use core paths?

Core paths will be used by a wide range of local people and visitors. Taken as a whole the core paths network will cater for all types of users including walkers, cyclists, horse-riders, people with disabilities, and canoeists. But not all individual paths will need to be designed or managed for every type of user.

What about paths that are not designated as core paths?

The National Park Outdoor Access Strategy provides a framework for the management of outdoor access across the whole of the Park over the next five years. In particular many of the upland paths, which are generally not designated as core paths, will need to be looked after. The Strategy has specific policies and actions that will help maintain and improve path provision and quality.
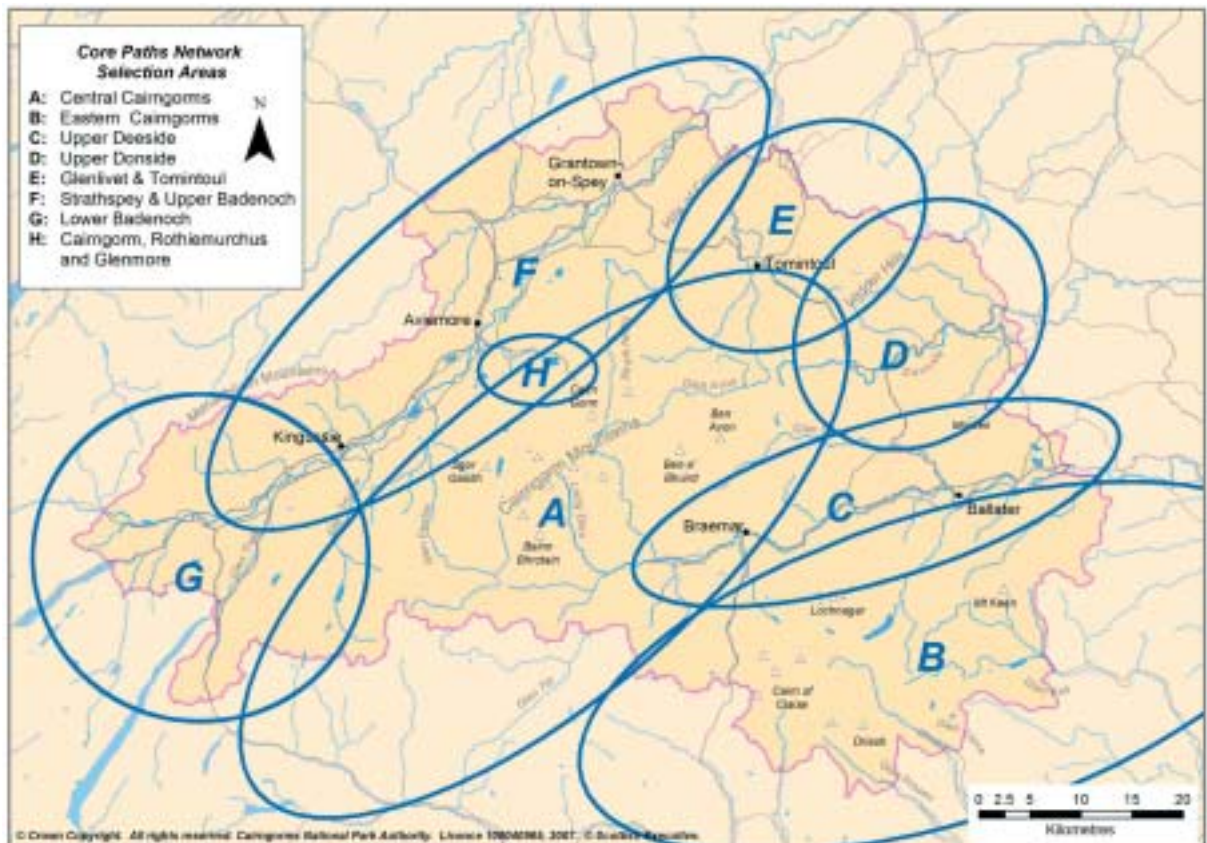
When will the Core Paths Plan be reviewed?

The Core Paths Plan will be reviewed in conjunction with the Cairngorms Local Plan in 2011.

5. The Proposed Core Paths Network

Overview

5.1 The proposed Core Paths Network is displayed on maps on the following pages. For the purposes of applying the selection criteria the National Park has been divided into areas (see Section 2.4). An overview map of the Cairngorms National Park is shown below to show the location of the areas. A map is then provided for each of the areas, each area map is then directly followed by more detailed maps of the settlements within that area. Opposite each map is a summary of the findings of the public engagement process for that area and a table displaying a list of the proposed core paths and their reference numbers. Full feedback reports for the public engagement process in each area are available on the Cairngorms National Park Authority website. www.cairngorms.co.uk/access/corepaths/haveyoursay.

Overview Map of the Cairngorms National Park

Maps

6. Next Steps

6.1 This round of public consultation will come to an end on 30 June 2007. Staff from the National Park Authority will read, record and analyse all of the comments received and revise the Interim Draft Core Paths Plan accordingly.

6.2 We will then seek the advice of the Local Outdoor Access Forum (www.cairngorms.co.uk/access/LOAF) and work with different interest groups to try and finalise our proposals for a core paths network to submit to Scottish Ministers. A formal paper will be presented to the Board of the National Park Authority in December 2007 and then a finalised Draft Core Paths Plan will be drawn up and submitted to Scottish Ministers in February 2008.

6.3 The Draft Core Paths Plan will then be subject to a formal public consultation exercise. Once this consultation is complete, and if there are no outstanding objections to the Plan, the CNPA will move to adopt the Core Paths Plan and will then begin to implement it. If, however, there are any unresolved objections to the Plan at the end of the consultation period then the Plan may be subject to a Public Local Inquiry by the Scottish Executive Inquiry Reporters Unit. If this is the case then Scottish Ministers will give direction to the CNPA as to whether or not to adopt the Core Paths Plan and about any modifications that need to be made.

6.4 Once the Plan is adopted there will be a significant amount of work to be done on the ground, to develop partnerships, obtain funding and ensure that all of the paths are way-marked, promoted and are in appropriate condition. Some new paths will also probably have to be built.

Use of Ordnance Survey Mapping

This interim Draft Core Paths Plan is illustrated with maps to clearly show the geographic location of proposed core paths for the purposes of consultation. This document contains mapping data which is the property of Ordnance Survey and any unlawful use or copying other than for the purpose of viewing and printing is prohibited. The document is for Reference purposes only. No further copies may be made. The representation of features or boundaries in which Cairngorms National Park Authority or others have an interest does not necessarily imply their true positions. For further information please contact the appropriate authority.