

Core Paths Plan – Interim Draft

Report on Stage 2 Consultation

Introduction

This report details the process and findings of the second round of consultation and engagement on the Cairngorms National Park Core Paths Plan which took place from 1st April to 30th June 2007. The first stage of the Core Paths Plan process (September to November 2006) engaged with a wide range of people to raise awareness of core paths planning, to find out which paths in the National Park are important to them and why. The information obtained was used to develop an Interim Draft Core Paths Plan identifying a network of core paths. The consultation sought people's views on these proposals.

The Process

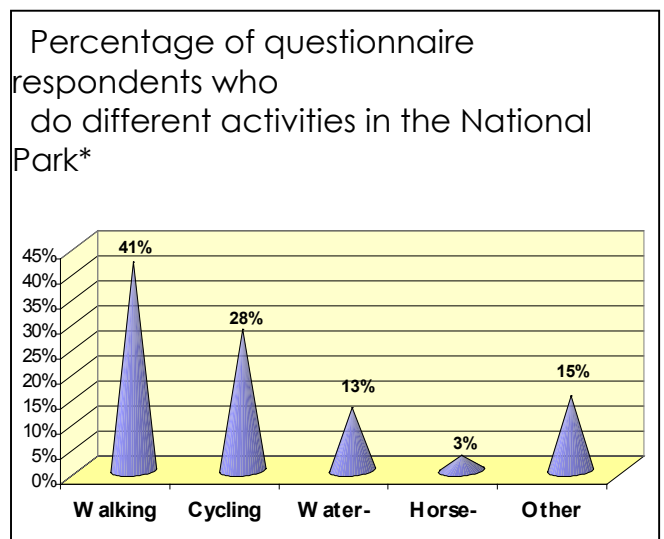
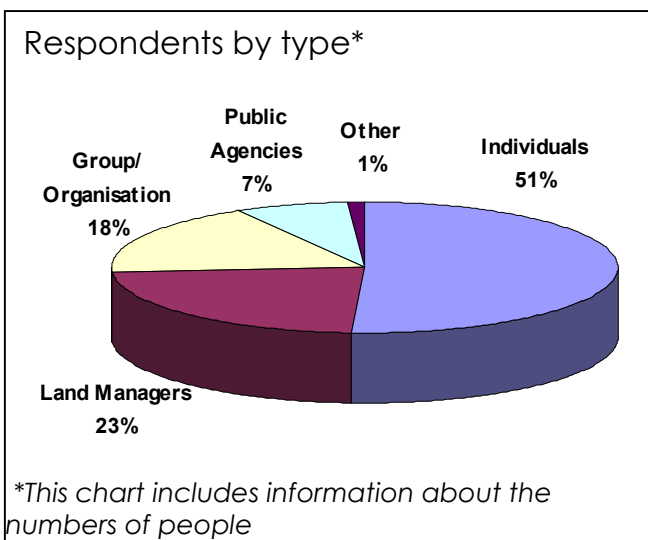
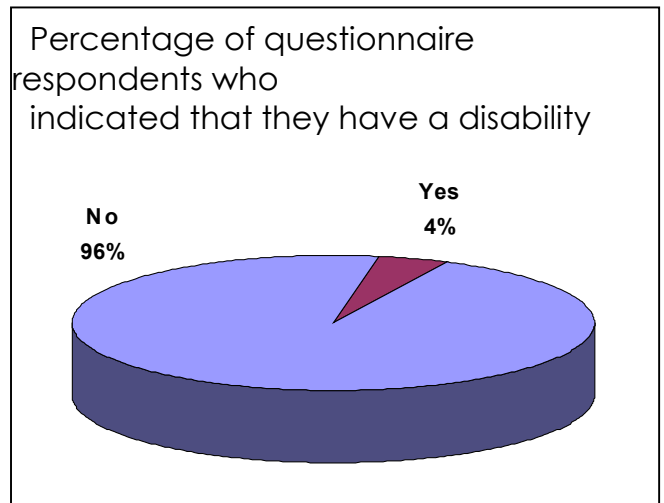
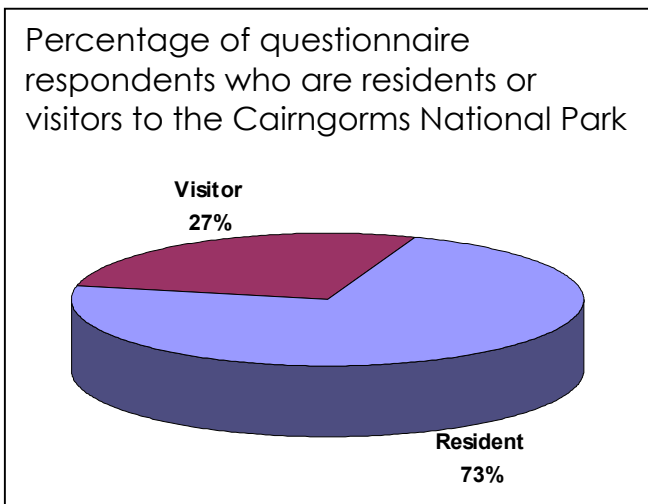
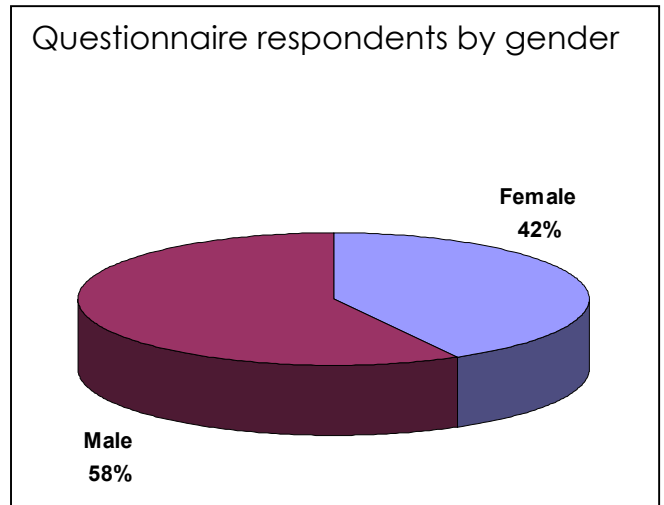
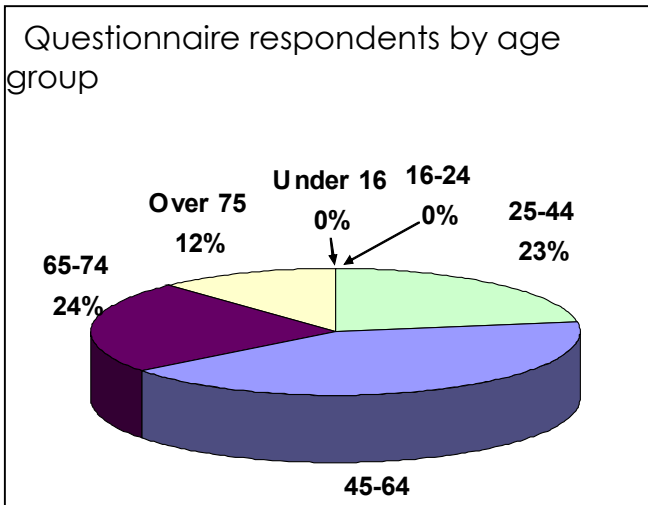
The Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) contacted all those who got involved in the first round of consultation to provide them with feedback and to advise them that the Interim Draft Core Paths Plan was available for comment. The CNPA ran 12 public meetings and attended 22 other meetings and events to discuss and gather views on the Interim Draft Core Paths Plan. The consultation was advertised in the press, on the CNPA website, in local newsletters, via posters and by letter. Emails and letters were also sent out to a wide range of interest groups and different clubs such as land managers, community groups, walking, cycling, horse-riding and canoe clubs. All land owners/managers in the Park with a core path proposed on their land were sent a copy of the Interim Draft Core Paths Plan two weeks in advance of the document being made public. A comments form was made available to assist people in responding on the Plan. The Plan and comments form were made available on request or at meetings, at various post offices and libraries throughout the Park and also on the Park Authority's website.

Who Got Involved?

A total of 565 people engaged in the process at meetings and events run or attended by the CNPA. 87 written submissions (consultation responses in letter/email form) and 116 questionnaire responses were received (26% of these electronically via the CNPA website). The questionnaire asked respondents to

provide information about their age, gender, where they live, whether or not they have a disability, who they were responding on behalf of and what kind of activities they undertake in the National Park. This information was obtained to enable the CNPA to assess how effectively the consultation had engaged with different groups of people. The results are shown on page 2 of this report.

Information about the people who completed Questionnaires



The consultation process failed to engage with the under 25 age group although numbers of males and females responding was similar and there was a

good response from visitors to the National Park. The results show that there was a good response from a variety of interest groups

The Feedback

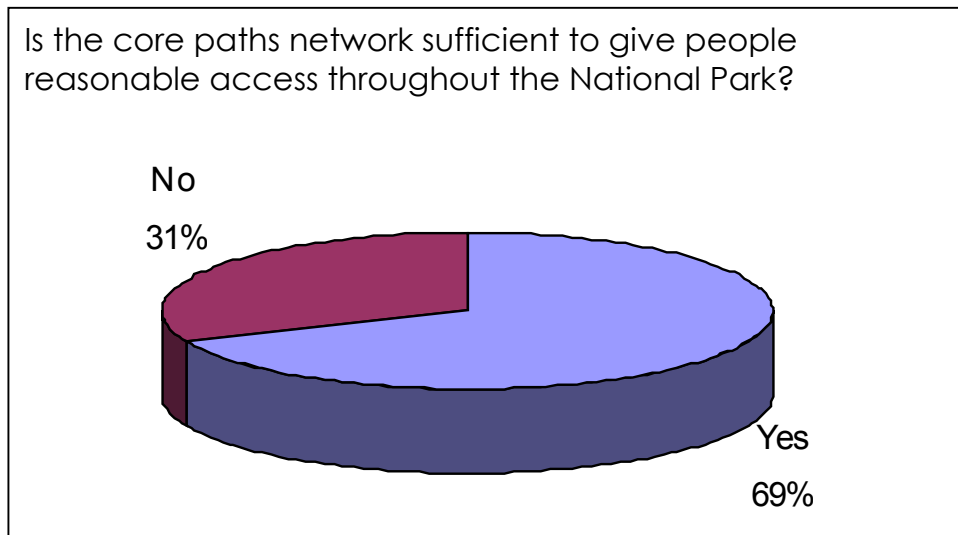
The Interim Draft Core Paths Plan consultation document asked people to respond on three specific questions:

1. Is the core paths network sufficient to give people reasonable access throughout the National Park?
2. Have we got the selection criteria right? Why?
3. Have we selected the right paths using the selection criteria or are there gaps, omissions or inconsistencies in our approach?

The feedback received on each of these questions is detailed below.

Is the core paths network sufficient to give people reasonable access throughout the National Park?

The questionnaire asked people to respond either yes or no to this question, the results are as follows:

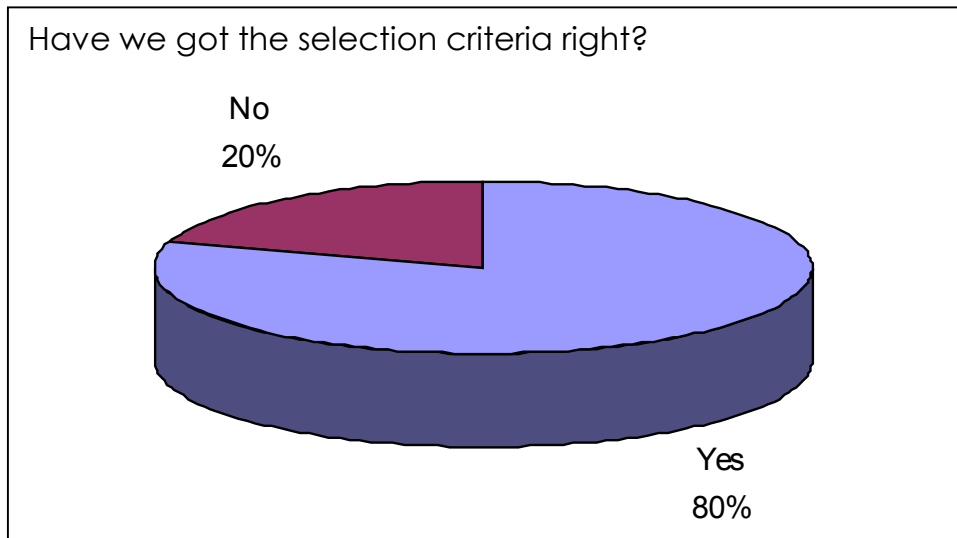


The majority of people indicated that they felt the proposed network to be sufficient. Comments contained in the questionnaire and in other written responses indicated that the proposed network is inconsistent across the National Park. It was noted that some areas (e.g. Upper Donside, Eastern Cairngorms, Cromdale, Dalwhinnie and popular locations such as the Linn of Dee) do not have a sufficient network. It was also noted that including all existing low ground promoted paths within the network has led to an uneven

spread of paths across the area. For example, those communities and areas which are already well served by paths (such as Glenlivet) have the higher proportion of the proposed network and those currently poorly served (such as Cromdale) have a lesser network. It was also observed that the proposed network is inconsistent across the entire area due to the exclusion of mountain and upland paths. Some respondents indicated that they felt the proposed network is over sufficient.

Have we got the selection criteria right? Why?

People responded as follows:



The results and comments contained in the questionnaire and in other written responses indicated that the majority of people felt that the selection criteria identified were about right. A few people noted that the criteria are fairly vague and all encompassing, it was suggested that a system which provided a score for each path may be more robust. A number of people commented that the first criterion ("Contribute to the positive management and stewardship of the sensitive natural and cultural heritage of the National Park and promote its understanding and enjoyment.") is too complicated and needs to be clearer in its intent to contribute to positive land management as well as natural and cultural heritage. There was a suggestion that negative criteria could be used i.e. a criterion which states what a core path should not be (e.g. it should not be dangerous, environmentally damaging etc.). It was also suggested that the criteria should more closely reflect the aims and priorities of the Park Plan and Outdoor Access Strategy and that there should be criteria relating to the protection of key routes, the popularity of routes and the suitability of routes to be core paths.

Have we selected the right paths using the selection criteria or are there gaps, omissions or inconsistencies in our approach?

The questionnaire asked people to respond on this question and identify any specific routes that they thought should/should not be included in the network. People were also given the opportunity to comment on this at public meetings by adding comments to maps of the area which showed the proposed core paths network. People were also asked at these meetings to identify any inaccuracies in the mapping of the proposed network. A summary of the common issues arising for each area and community are given in the table on the following page. Details of all comments made for each area/community can be made available on request.

Community/ Area	Summary of common issues arising
Aviemore (Map 18)	Issues with access at the Aviemore Highland Resort and Spey Valley golf course were raised. There was support for the completion of the Orbital path (LBS30) using the woods to the west of the A9, providing a link from the new housing development to the Craigellachie Nature Reserve.
Ballater (Map 6)	There was concern that the section of the 7 bridges walk (UDE28) on the South Deeside Road is unsafe and traffic calming or a traffic free route should be investigated. There was also some demand for links to the Deeside Way (UDE3) to enable circular routes.
Boat-of-Garten (Map 17)	There was strong support for the completion of the Speyside Way, off-road across the bridge to the village (LBS64). There was also some concern about the feasibility of designating a core path on the east bank of the river (LBS65).
Braemar (Map 3)	There were a lot of safety concerns over the proposed route over the golf course (UDE7) and support for the re-routing of the proposed link between the Society Bridge and Glenshee Road (UDE9) south along the river and alongside the golf course.
Carr-Bridge (Map 15)	There were a number of inaccuracies in the mapping of the proposed core path network, particularly in relation to the paths around the golf course and Carr plantation. Potential for disturbance to wildlife was also highlighted in some areas.
Central Cairngorms (No Map)	There was some support for inclusion of old drove roads and Rights of Way such as Glen Tilt, the Lairig Ghru, Glen Feshie etc. with links into neighbouring Perth & Kinross. It was also requested that a map of the area be included in the Plan.
Crathie (Map 4)	There was some concern over the proposal to designate the path between the Old Brig O'Dee and Crathie (UDE1) in relation to areas that are excluded from access rights and natural heritage issues.
Cromdale (Map 12)	The proposed core paths network in Cromdale is too limited and needs to be expanded.
Dalwhinnie (Map 25)	The proposed core paths network in Dalwhinnie is too limited and needs to be expanded by working with the Highland Council on cross-border links.
Dinnet & Ordie (Map 7)	There was concern over the suitability of some of the routes to be core paths due to current and future forestry operations and also potential wildlife disturbance.
Dulnain Bridge & Skye of Curr (Map 14)	There were a number of inaccuracies in the mapping of the proposed core path network, particularly in relation to the paths in Curr Wood. Future forestry operations and potential disturbance to capercaillie and twinflower were also noted.

Community/ Area	Summary of common issues arising
Eastern Cairngorms (Map 1)	A number of people expressed concern over the limited number of paths proposed in the area and suggested a variety of paths in other Glens as well as longer routes linking the Angus Glens and into Upper Deeside.
Glenlivet & Tomintoul (Maps 9 & 10)	Most people were generally happy with the proposals for Glenlivet although they did note some issues with path alignment and the need to manage access on paths in the shooting season.
Glenmore & Rothiemurchus (Map 26)	A number of forestry operation and wildlife issues were identified and there was some concern about over provision of core paths in this area. There was also support for a link from Glenmore to Nethy Bridge.
Grantown-on-Spey (Map 13)	There was some concern over the proposal to designate the old railway line as a core path due to plans to re-open the line for use by the steam railway. It was also noted that there is a need to better manage access in Anagach wood to limit disturbance to Capercaillie.
Insh (Map 20)	There was some concern over the inclusion of the path down to the river (LBS103) due to the wet nature of the area and potential disturbance to wildlife. There is a need to better connect the community to the Badenoch Way (LBS72 – incorrectly mapped) and wider network.
Kincraig (Map 19)	A number of issues have arisen in relation to path between Suidhe Crescent and the Brae (LBS52), it was also noted that the Badenoch Way is incorrectly mapped. There is some support for a couple of Rights of Way linking to Feshiebridge to be included in the core paths network.
Kingussie (Map 21)	There is support for the development of a route from Pitmain Township via Loch Gynack through to Newtonmore and also support for the riverside path but concern over potential for flooding. <i>(Similar to responses for Newtonmore)</i>
Laggan (Map 24)	There is support for an off-road route linking Laggan village to the Wolftrax facility. Part of this route is now in place but issues relating to potentially unsafe road crossings and land management have been identified on the remainder of the route.
Lower Badenoch & Strathspey (Map 11)	There have been similar levels of both support and opposition to the proposed designation of the River Spey as a core path and the possible designation of access and egress point to the river. There has also been support for inclusion of the Speyside Way and the Sustrans National Cycle Route throughout its length, rather than just the off-road sections as currently proposed. <i>(Similar to responses for Upper Badenoch & Strathspey)</i>

Community/ Area	Summary of common issues arising
Nethy Bridge (Map 16)	Most people were generally happy with the proposals for Nethy Bridge although there was some concern over disturbance to wildlife and also support for inclusion of an existing route providing access from the Causar Road to the paths in the wood to the primary school.
Newtonmore (Map 23)	Most people were generally happy with the proposed network in the area and in particular the designation of the Wildcat Trail. There is some support for the development of a route from Newtonmore via Loch Gynack through to Kingussie. <i>(Similar to responses for Kingussie)</i>
Upper Badenoch & Strathspey (Map 22)	There were similar levels of both support and objection to the proposed designation of the River Spey as a core path and the possible designation of access and egress point to the river. There has also been support for inclusion of the proposed Speyside Way extension and Sustrans National Cycle Route throughout its length, rather than just the off-road sections as currently proposed. <i>(Similar to responses for Lower Badenoch & Strathspey)</i>
Upper Deeside (Map 2)	There was a lot of support for the completion of the Deeside Way and some demand for an extension of the route by providing off-road links between Ballater, Crathie and Braemar. There was strong representation from a number of people requesting the inclusion of the River Dee as a core path. It was proposed that the link between Dinnet and Glen Tanar (UDE4) be moved to follow the existing Firmounth Right of Way.
Upper Donside & Strathdon (Map 8)	The proposed core paths network in Upper Donside is too limited and needs to be expanded. Some issues were noted with path alignment.

Main Issues Arising From the Consultation

In addition to comments made on the selection criteria and the paths selected, a number of other issues were commonly identified. It was suggested that the Plan should include some quiet roads and pavements and it was questioned why the Speyside Way and some Rights of Way had not been included in the proposed network. A number of comments were received that some upland paths should be included in the network but only with sensitive and appropriate signage and way-marking. It was observed that the inclusion of all existing low-ground promoted paths in the network may have lead to uneven distribution of path provision across the network.

The lack of dedicated funding for core paths and, in particular, maintenance of these paths was raised at many of the meetings and is a major concern, particularly to land managers. The issues of who would be liable if there was to be an accident on core paths was also a common concern. Issues were raised over the proposed designation of core paths in forests both for natural heritage reasons and where timber harvesting and thinning operations are planned within the next few years.

There has been both a high level of support and opposition to the proposal to designate the River Spey as a core path, there has also been strong representation requesting the inclusion of the River Dee in the Plan. It was also noted that neighbouring authorities may or may not propose their sections of these rivers as core paths, this may also be an issue in relation to some longer distance paths which cross over into other authority areas.

Next Steps

The issues identified in this report will be presented to the Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum for discussion and advice. The Plan will then be revised and a Draft Core Paths Plan produced. This draft plan will be presented to the CNPA Board in December 2007 for approval to submit it to Scottish Ministers by February 2008. The Plan will then be the subject of a formal public consultation.

Cairngorms National Park Authority

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