

Cairngorms National Park Core Paths Plan

Consultation and Engagement Process - Stage 1

Community Engagement & Results – Upper Deeside

Introduction

The core paths plan process targeted four main interest groups to engage with, these included; communities, land managers, people who recreate in the National Park (visitors and residents including businesses, national organisations and clubs e.g. Ramblers, Scottish Canoe Association, Cairngorm Club etc.) and visitors to the National Park (those who may not specifically come to the Park to recreate but may do so whilst they are here). The following report details how the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) engaged with the public for the Upper Deeside area, the people who participated in the engagement process and the feedback and results that they provided.

Engaging with the public for the Upper Deeside area

The engagement period ran from 1st September to 30th November 2006. Questionnaires for the Upper Deeside area were made available on the CNPA website, through contacting the CNPA directly and at drop-in events across the National Park. In Upper Deeside, community drop-in events were run in Ballater, Braemar and Dinnet to enable people to find out more about core paths planning and to advise the CNPA of the routes, paths and areas that are important to them and why. Feedback reports for these settlements are also available. Questionnaires were also made available for settlements within Upper Deeside, including Ballater, Braemar, Crathie and Dinnet & Ordie.

Participants in the Engagement Process

Throughout the 3 month period a total of 24 questionnaires were completed for the Upper Deeside area. Within the area, a total of 98 questionnaires were completed for the settlements of Ballater, Braemar, Crathie and Dinnet & Ordie. To help the CNPA gauge whether or not the process successfully engaged with a wide enough cross section of people, the questionnaires asked people to provide information on their gender, age group and where they live. The results are shown below.

Participants by Gender

Male	59%	Female	41%
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Participants by Age Group

Under 16	0%	16 - 24	0%	25 - 44	18%	45 - 64	59%	65 - 74	18%	Over 75	5%
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Where people came from

% of people from each place who completed questionnaires			
Upper Deeside	73%	Elsewhere	27%

Results of the Engagement Process

Map Results

People were given the opportunity to provide their views on the Upper Deeside area via questionnaires and at events. People were asked to identify the paths that are important to them on a map in the questionnaire, they were also asked to identify any new routes or areas that they would like to have easier access to and were encouraged to make comments. Participants at events throughout the National Park were asked to annotate large maps highlighting their popular routes in detail and also adding comments. Where someone made a comment on the maps this has been listed in a table shown in Annex 1. The routes identified by people for the Upper Deeside area are shown in Annex 2. Each comment has a number attributed to it to enable cross-referencing with the map in Annex 2 (only where the comment is specific to a geographic area). The routes shown in a solid line are those which people identified as being important to them. The dashed lines are proposed routes that people identified.

Questionnaire Results

A total of 24 questionnaires were received for the Upper Deeside area. The responses to each of the questions are outlined below.

What outdoor activities do you currently do in and around Upper Deeside?

Activity	% of respondents who undertake the activity
Low level walking	73%
Dog walking	45%
Hill walking	77%
Running	9%
Getting about in a wheelchair	5%
Walking with a pushchair	18%
Cycling on-road	36%
Cycling off-road	41%
Horse-riding	23%
Watersports	14%
Winter sports	27%
None	0%
Other*	18%

*Other activities identified were 'Feeding & caring for our 3 highland ponies & P/B Horse on 17 acres 3 miles west of Ballater Bridge', 'Nordic Skiing', 'orienteering' and 'Paragliding'.

Why do you do these activities?

Reason	% of respondents who identified the reason
To keep fit/healthy	91%
Enjoying the Countryside	95%
Travel to work/school	18%
Getting about	41%

Other*	18%
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*Other reasons identified were 'running a stud', 'Quality of Life', 'Long distance riding holiday business', and 'enjoy these activities'.

What activities would you like to see better opportunities for in and around the area?

Activity	% of respondents who identified the activity
Low level walking	50%
Dog walking	27%
Hill walking	32%
Running	9%
Getting about in a wheelchair	9%
Walking with a pushchair	27%
Cycling on-road	14%
Cycling off-road	18%
Horse-riding	23%
Watersports	9%
Winter sports	14%
None	5%
Other	14%

*Other activities identified were, 'Ample opportunities exist - access is the key with track/path improvements' and, 'Organised competitive off road cycling as at Fort William'.

Would better opportunities for these activities encourage you to;

Reason	% of respondents who identified each activity
Walk to work/school	18%
Cycle to work/school	9%
Try new activities	18%
Get fit	23%
Get outdoors more	50%

Other*	23%
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*Other reasons/comments identified were 'what about path maintenance', 'Ride more safely & more enjoyably - be able to vary place more' and 'Explore 'new' areas'.

Summary

During the public engagement process it was found that there is a need for multi-use circuits around Ballater and in particular Loch Muick for cycling. There is some demand around Braemar for better opportunities for wheelchairs and electric scooters. It was noted that when popular horse-riding routes are 'upgraded' there is a need to consider the materials used and their suitability for horses. There is demand for off-road link routes between communities and popular path networks such as Ballater to Glen Muick and the 7 Bridges circuit, and Braemar with Ballochbuie and Invercauld.

The most popular areas were Lary to Glen Fenzie via Strathdon, Loch Builg & Glen Avon, Glen Muick, Glen Gairn and Glen Quoich. Glen Lui and the Mounth road were also popular.

All activities proved popular in the area although hill-walking is the most popular, closely followed by low-level walking and then cycling off-road with most people doing activities to keep fit and healthy and to enjoy the countryside and very few for getting to work or to school. There was some demand for better low-level walking routes and a comparatively high demand for better opportunities for pushchair users.

Reflections

There was a good response for the Upper Deeside area although it came from a fairly limited age group. A lot of information was compiled on maps at many of the events both in Upper Deeside and at events throughout the National Park. In particular there was a good response from people who attended the outdoor activities workshops that were held in Ballater and Aviemore.

Next Steps

The issues raised and the information gathered throughout the process will be used to inform the development of selection criteria for core paths. The selection criteria will then be used to select core paths for the Cairngorms National Park. The selection criteria and maps of the selected paths will be drawn up into an Interim Draft Core Paths Plan

which will be completed by the end of March 2007. This Plan will then be made available for the public to make comment.

Cairngorms National Park Authority

1 March 2007

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Annex 1 - Comments received on maps at events and in the questionnaires

Where the comment relates to a geographic area on the map the number of the comment has been written on to the map in Annex 2.	
No.	Comment (as written by respondent)
1	Balmoral – more complicated access issues here
2	Abergeldie – Well known access issues here
3	Scale does not allow marking of numerous tracks
4	Dinnet – Well known access issues here
5	Cambus O'May walks
6	Loch Muick for Mountain bikes
7	Permission needs to be granted by the landowner Glen Tanar Estate to use the path along the river bank to create the loop from Ballater – Railway line – Cambus O'May Bridge – South side of River path – return to Ballater via Pannanich.
8	Typical estate track – lots of stones making trotting hazardous
9	Difficult section – no clear paths for horses ground v soft. Small section has been improved.
10	Excellent upgrade of path here – drainage points present a challenge to horses! – but easily passable.
11	Section of path before & after Corndavan Lodge has been "upgraded" by covering small intermittent section with small stones – presumably strengthening damaged parts of what was a lovely sandy track. Horses now have to progress slowly and carefully over stony sections – untouched sections in between are too short to be able to alter pace.
13	The River Dee. As one of the 4 major rivers of Scotland and with its 'National park' roots it should be a core path/route. The Dee from Linn of Dee to Aberdeen could be a core path/route.
14	All of Glen Tanar is important but the paths shown are not quite correct. I suppose that's O.S. fault.
15	The Groddie "path" should be <u>closed</u> it is atrocious and has no merit.
16	The <u>best</u> footpath up Morven starts at Ladieswell – not really a new path since mostly exists already.
17	Locked gate
18	Bridge over the Dee
19	Encourage circular routes around areas Ghiubais

20	Loch Muick should be a multi-use circuit
21	7 Bridges circular should be a true off-road multi-use circuit
22	Link routes between Braemar/Crathie/Ballater for electric powered scooter users.
23	Braemar could do with more wheelchair accessible routes.
24	Some 'wild camping sites' away from roads would be excellent for canoeists
25	The River Dee should be a core paths from Linn to Aberdeen.
26	Canoe Access/egress points should be developed.
27	The deer fence here is hazardous for canoeists
28	Paths very faint and hard to follow approaching Corriemulzie area
29	Continue path from Lion's Face – Brig O'Dee. Consider if it should be adequate for bikes to link to Queen's Drive. A93 dangerous for bikes, especially round the bends.

