

Cairngorms National Park Core Paths Plan

Consultation and Engagement Process - Stage 1

Community Engagement & Results – Eastern Cairngorms

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 Eastern Cairngorms area, the people who participated in the engagement process and the feedback and results that they provided.

Engaging with the public for the Eastern Cairngorms area

The engagement period ran from 1st September to 30th November 2006. Questionnaires for the Eastern Cairngorms area were made available on the CNPA website, through contacting the CNPA directly and at drop-in events across the National Park. In the Eastern Cairngorms area community drop-in events were run in Ballater, Braemar and Clova 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.

A drop-in event specifically targeted at gaining information about the Eastern Cairngorms and in particular the Angus Glens, was held in the Glen Clova Hotel on Thursday 23 November from 6:00 to 8:00pm. CNPA staff Pete Crane and Fran Potheary ran the event.

Drop-in Event Promotion

Invitations to the event were sent out to all local land owners/tenants and the community council. An email invitation was sent out to a wide range of local activity providers, businesses and individuals. Posters were displayed around the village a week in advance of the event and fresh posters were put up on the day of the meeting including a large board outside the event.

Drop-in Event Format

Participants were provided with a core paths planning leaflet which included details of the core paths plan process in the Cairngorms National Park and Frequently Asked Questions. The leaflet was made available to participants along with questionnaires and maps to record their views. A questionnaire containing a map was available for each settlement in the National Park as well as for the wider areas of the National Park. Large maps of the wider area were also available to help people identify routes outwith settlements. There was also an opportunity for people to record their views on the path network in the area in relation to what they thought was good or bad about it or what could be improved, this was recorded in an 'H-Diagram' format.

Drop-in Event Feedback

The drop-in was attended by approximately 15 people who were almost exclusively "professional" in nature ranging from path contractors to employees of Angus Council. There was also representation from land owners and land managers in the Angus Glens area. Very few people who lived locally attended but this may be due to the small population numbers in the Angus Glens. The event provided a useful opportunity for networking and discussion on path networks, projects and core paths planning in the area.

Participants in the Engagement Process

Throughout the 3 month period a total of 17 questionnaires were completed for the Eastern Cairngorms area, 10 of these were completed at different events and 7 were received by post and via

the CNPA website. 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	69%	Female	31%
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Participants by Age Group

Under 16	13%	16 - 24	0%	25 - 44	25%	45 - 64	56%	65 - 74	6%	Over 75	0%
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Where people came from

% of people from each place who completed questionnaires			
Eastern Cairngorms	53%	Elsewhere	47%

Results of the Engagement Process

At the drop-in event people were asked their views about the path network in the Eastern Cairngorms and the Angus Glens. The results are shown below and the comments are recorded exactly as written by participants.

Comments on the Eastern Cairngorms Network		
What is bad about the network?	What is good about the network?	How the network could be improved?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some paths not in good condition e.g. the Kilbo path onto Dreish and Mayar Routes into and out of glen doll car park are not well-signposted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ECAP has done some good work and good quality paths exist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We don't need more paths in the area –just better sign-posting of those that exist

Map Results

People were given the opportunity to provide their views on the Eastern Cairngorms 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 Eastern Cairngorms 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 17 questionnaires were received for the Eastern Cairngorms area. The responses to each of the questions are outlined below.

What outdoor activities do you currently do in and the Eastern Cairngorms?

Activity	% of respondents who undertake the activity
Low level walking	81%
Dog walking	31%
Hill walking	94%
Running	31%
Getting about in a wheelchair	0%
Walking with a pushchair	0%
Cycling off-road	44%
Climbing	13%
Horse-riding	6%
Watersports	13%

Winter sports	25%
None	0%
Other	0%

Why do you do these activities?

Reason	% of respondents who identified the reason
To keep fit/healthy	81%
Enjoying the Countryside	88%
For the Challenge	50%
For Fun	56%
Other*	13%

*Other reasons identified were 'Quality of Life'.

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	31%
Dog walking	0%
Hill walking	31%
Running	19%
Getting about in a wheelchair	6%
Walking with a pushchair	13%
Cycling off-road	38%
Climbing	25%
Horse-riding	25%
Watersports	19%
Winter sports	25%
None	0%
Other	25%

*Other activities identified were, 'Nordic walking trails', 'Tourist walk from Aberdeen to Braemar', 'Circular Routes (& village to village routes for tourists)' and 'low level circular routes'.

Would better opportunities for these activities encourage you to;

Reason	% of respondents who identified each activity
Visit new places	38%
Get fit	38%
Try new activities	50%
Get outdoors more	69%
Other*	6%

*Other reasons identified were 'Take visitors out'.

Summary

During the public engagement process it was found that people are generally happy with the existing network although the promotion and maintenance of it could be improved. Public transport access to the Glens was noted as an issue although it was noted that the 'Heather Hopper' was a good service but finishes too early in the season.

The most popular paths identified were the track up Glen Callater to the loch and the Mounth Road (both identified by 52% of respondents). Jock's Road and Loch Muick were also very popular.

Most activities proved popular in the area with the exception of wheelchair and pushchair access. Hill-walking is by far the most popular activity in the area, followed by low-level walking and then cycling off-road with most people doing activities primarily to enjoy the countryside and to keep fit and healthy, many people also said they undertook activities in the area for the challenge and for fun. Cycling off-road had the highest demand for better opportunities with comparatively high demand for horse-riding also.

Reflections

There was a reasonable response for the Eastern Cairngorms area with fairly even levels of response from both residents and visitors which reflects the low population levels in the area and also its popularity as a visitor destination. The event held in Clova failed to attract many local people and no one from the 16 to 24 or over 75 age groups got

involved. There was much support in the area for the work of the Eastern Cairngorms Access Project. It was suggested at the event in Clova that the next consultation was held at a weekend to attract and get the views of walkers in the area.

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

franpothecary@cairngorms.co.uk

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	<i>Rottal Estate</i> –stalking concerns
2	Post bus along Tarfside?
3	<i>Capel Mounth route</i> – poor low down
4	Glen Doll – popular forest walks
5	<i>Kilbo Path</i> –poor in places
6	The 'Heather Hopper' finished too early but a good service
7	<i>Jock's Road to the Lairig Ghru</i> – very popular with DofE groups and "Walk Cairngorms"
8	<i>Bachnagairn path</i> – access to Munros
9	Concerns about hill tracks adversely affecting landscape on high ground. Potential to reduce paths?
10	Camping sites – head of Allt an Dubh Loch and Loch Esk
11	<i>11 Jock's Road from Tolmount to Glen Callater</i> – improve drop down to Callater from the col
12	<i>The Mounth Road</i> – redesign path over Mount Keen
13	Tourist walking route from Braemar to Ballater off road
14	All low lying paths are important
15	These are routes I have enjoyed or still enjoy!
16	<i>Lochnagar to head of the Dubh Loch</i> - this rough stretch spoils an otherwise circular route

A member of the public contacted the CNPA to note support for the promotion of the Minister's Path and its link between the Eastern Cairngorms Access Project and the Catearan Trail.

