

Cairngorms National Park Core Paths Plan

Consultation and Engagement Process - Stage 1

Community Engagement & Results – **Newtonmore**

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 National 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 Newtonmore community, the people who participated in the engagement process and the feedback and results that they provided.

The Newtonmore Community were the subject of a core paths pilot project in September 2005 run by the Newtonmore Community Woodland & Development Trust (NCW&DT). The first stage of the consultation and engagement process built on the results of the pilot project.

Engaging with the Newtonmore Community

The engagement period ran from 1st September to 30th November 2006. Questionnaires for the community were made available on the CNPA website, through contacting the CNPA directly and at a drop-in event. The community drop-in event was run to enable people in Newtonmore and the surrounding area 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. The drop-in event also provided the community with an opportunity to view the results of a core paths pilot exercise that was run in September 2005.

The event was held at the Newtonmore Village Hall on Wednesday 25th September from 2:30pm to 6:30pm. CNPA staff Bob Grant and Sandra Middleton ran the event with assistance from Community Liaison Officer Anna Barton and Janet Davidson of the NCW&DT.

Drop-in Event Promotion

The event was advertised in the Strathspey & Badenoch Herald and was also the subject of a press release. Invitations 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 Park as well as for the wider areas of the 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

Approximately 35 people attended the event, a total of 21 questionnaires were completed at the event and a number of people took questionnaires away to complete in their own time. 20 of the questionnaires completed were for the Newtonmore settlement. Participants were asked to complete an evaluation sheet of the event, the results recorded are as follows;

	% of Participants Responding			
	Very Useful	Useful	Not Useful	Waste of Time
Location	75%	25%	0%	0%
Venue	82%	18%	0%	0%
Timing	64%	27%	9%*	0%
Questionnaires	62%	38%	0%	0%

Information Available	55%	45%	0%	0%
Opportunity to speak to staff	83%	17%	0%	0%

*One comment was made that the event could have gone on later into the evening.

Participants in the Engagement Process

Throughout the 3 month period a total of 33 questionnaires were completed for the Newtonmore settlement, questionnaires were received at events across the Park, by post and from the CNPA website. To help the CNPA gauge whether or not the process successfully engaged with a wide enough cross section of the community, 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	47%	Female	53%
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Participants by Age Group

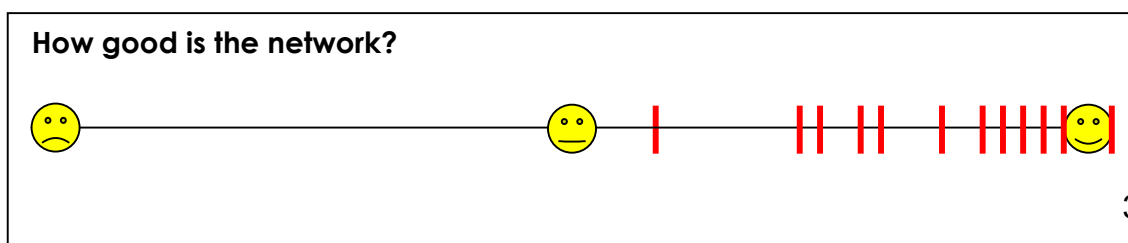
Under 16	15%	16 - 24	3%	25 - 44	15%	45 - 64	39%	65 - 74	21%	Over 75	6%
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Where people came from

% of people from each place who completed questionnaires					
Newtonmore	78%	Newtonmore Community Council Area	0%	Elsewhere	22%

Results of the Engagement Process

At the drop-in event people were asked their views about the path network in and around Newtonmore. Participants were asked to place a mark on a line to show what they thought of the network. The results are shown below.



Really
Really
Bad

Okay

Good

People were also asked what they think is good and bad about the network and what could be improved. The results are shown below, the comments are recorded exactly as written by participants.

Comments on the Newtonmore 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"> • Broken fences let sheep through – not good for walking • Stiles on Wildcat Trail beside river not good for large dogs. Dog gates possible? • What about Tom Pelican? (Lost to Folk park at present) • Wildcat Trail – corner field on River Spey opposite Ralia- possibly dangerous for dog owners when cows & calves in field – path needs fencing off. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good information • Good, clear tracks through wonderful scenery. A great asset to area. • Signage & mapping. • Wildcat Centre • Having the Wildcat Centre for info. • Freedom from hassle when walking – no blocked gates etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better signage – more of them and more obvious. (Agree) • Paths inside the village for access could be made suitable for wheel-chairs, zimmers etc. just widened and flattened a little. • Good path signs for tourists • Information to hotels i.e. maps on where to walk • Local dog owners to use 'poo bags' – roads and paths • Extended network would be nice. (Agree) • There could be more and longer cycle tracks (off-road) (Agree)

In general discussion with participants at the drop-in event, people were very positive about the benefits of the Wildcat Centre and Wildcat Trail. There were a number of comments about the loss of access to the area of land now operating as the Folk Park. However, it was also commented that the benefits that the Folk Park had brought to the village outweighed this.

Map Results

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 the event were given

the opportunity 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 can be viewed on a map 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 33 questionnaires were received for the Newtonmore area. The responses to each of the questions are outlined below.

What outdoor activities do you currently do in and around Newtonmore?

Activity	% of respondents who undertake the activity
Low level walking*	94%
Dog walking	56%
Hillwalking	66%
Running	22%
Getting about in a wheelchair**	6%
Walking with a pushchair	19%
Cycling on-road	72%
Cycling off-road	41%
Horse-riding	6%
Watersports***	6%
Wintersports	28%
None	0%
Other****	16%

*Comment: 'includes: sketching, bird-watching, botanising'.

** Comment: 'Pushing'.

*** Comment: 'Cross Country'.

**** Other activities identified were 'Playing outside' and 'Photography'.

Why do you do these activities?

Reason	% of respondents who identified the reason
To keep fit/healthy	97%
Enjoying the Countryside	94%
Travel to work/school	28%
Getting about	66%
Other*	9%

*Other reasons identified were 'Fun'

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*	40%
Dog walking	16%
Hillwalking	24%
Running	8%
Getting about in a wheelchair	24%
Walking with a pushchair	20%
Cycling on-road	20%
Cycling off-road**	48%
Horse-riding	0%
Watersports	4%
Wintersports***	16%
None	0%
Other****	12%

* Comment: 'To Kingussie'

** Comment: 'Not mountain biking particularly, just able to cycle safely away from the main road through Newtonmore'

***Curling

**** Other activities identified were 'Paths such as behind Craigmhor made suitable for zimmers, push chairs etc.' 'More Pavements'. 'Have Fun'

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	18%
Try new activities	59%
Get fit	71%
Get outdoors more	94%
Other*	6%

*Other reasons identified were 'to see more of the area'.

Summary

During the public engagement process it was found that the Wildcat Centre and Wildcat Trail are a fantastic asset although some work needs to be done to make the network more accessible for a wider range of people. The most popular paths identified were the Wildcat Trail (identified by 57% of respondents) and the road up Glen Banchor (identified by 33% of respondents). Creag Dubh and Loch Imrich were also popular areas.

All activities were reasonably popular in the area, low-level walking was by far the most popular activity followed by cycling on-road. Most people doing activities did so to keep fit and healthy and equally to enjoy the countryside and a reasonable number did so to get to work or school. There was a reasonably high demand for better opportunities for off-road cycling and a comparatively high demand for better opportunities for wheelchairs and pushchairs.

Reflections

The drop-in was generally well attended with positive feedback and a number of people have returned questionnaires since. The results of the community engagement process reflect well the results of the NCW&DT pilot project, which received responses from over 100 households and from all age ranges, the results of which will be incorporated into the results of this engagement process.

Next Steps

The issues raised and the information gathered throughout the process and through the pilot project 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 the 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	Cluny/To Laggan
2	Erosion on path
3	People getting lost at this point – needs clearer signage
4	To Kingussie via Loch Gynack
5	Stepping stones would be okay as an interim measure
6	Bridge required if promoted – ‘Great idea, much needed’.
7	Blocked access through Folk Park ‘Tom Pelican’
8	Difficult to find footpath
9	Cycling off-track
10	All wildcat trail is important to me
11	New walks – walk up Creag Dubh from Newtonmore
12	Impressed by the variety of walks – for all abilities and various lengths (<i>not numbered on map in Annex 2</i>)
13	New to the area – have not had chance to try many walks (<i>not numbered on map in Annex 2</i>)
14	Important – Strone – up to mountain
15	Important – Golf Course
16	The Landowners are not welcoming, frequently asking you not to walk there because they’re game shooting – no longer go there.
17	All Wildcat trail
18	Area now used as Folk Park. Wood through to Tom Pelican. C ? originally gifted by the land owner for use by the public.
19	Paths joining Strone Road or back of Ridewood Grove to Craggan.
20	Path by river to Kingussie
21	Was a path where Loch Na Leoba Rd is now Croft Laggan Rd. where new house was built what has happened to it?
22	Link to Pitmain/Newtonmore path via Loch Gynack
23	Walk to Dell – River Spey to Newtonmore walk.
24	To Kingussie
25	Kingussie (x2)

26	Kingussie (x2)
27	Sustrans to Kingussie
28	Access to focal point known as 'Tom Pelican'
29	Sustrans Trail South

