

# **Cairngorms National Park Core Paths Plan**

## **Consultation and Engagement Process - Stage 1**

### **Community Engagement & Results – Laggan**

#### **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 Laggan community, the people who participated in the engagement process and the feedback and results that they provided.

#### **Engaging with the Laggan Community**

The engagement period ran from 1<sup>st</sup> September to 30<sup>th</sup> 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 both communities 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.

An event was held at the Laggan Village Hall on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> of November from 7pm to 9pm. CNPA staff Adam Streeter Smith and Pete Crane ran the event and John Hutchison of The Highland Council was also in attendance.

An additional opportunity also arose for the CNPA to work with children at the Gergask Primary School for a short session at the end of the school day. Based on the pilot project carried out at Braemar Primary School it was decided that the CNPA could use this exercise to get the children involved in the core paths planning process finding in directly to the consultation for the Laggan and Dalwhinnie. The visit was arranged by Adam Streeter Smith with the Head Teacher Roisin Dickson.

Initial discussion was had between Adam Streeter Smith and Roisin Dickson and it was agreed that Adam and Anna Barton, Community Liaison Officer would visit the school on the afternoon of Wednesday the 29<sup>th</sup> of November between 2:30pm and 3:30pm to speak to 16 pupils in Mrs Dickson's class.

### **Drop-in Event Promotion**

The event was advertised in the Badenoch & Strathspey 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 19 people attended the event and a total of 4 questionnaires were completed at the event and a number of people took questionnaires away to complete in their own time. In total 9 questionnaires were completed for the Laggan 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	100%	0%	0%	0%
Timing	75%	25%	0%	0%
Questionnaires	50%	50%	0%	0%
Information Available	50%	50%	0%	0%
Opportunity to speak to staff	75%	25%	0%	0%

### **Gergask School Visit**

The school visit comprised of the following activities:

#### **Activity 1**

The children were asked to come up with different kinds of activities that they might do when they are outdoors. This was done to get them thinking about all of the different access demands in the area and as a basis for activities 2 and 3. The children were then asked if they knew about Scottish Outdoor Access Code and asked to come up with some examples about how you should behave out of doors.

#### **Activity 2**

Anna introduced to the children the 'H-Diagram' and asked the children to fill in each of the questions using the post-its.

#### **Activity 3**

Adam introduced this session whereby the children were asked to identify on the A0 map where they live and mark it with a green star. They were then asked to identify their favourite places with other stars. Then thinking about walking, cycling and horse riding the children then drew the routes linking these places to where they live.

#### **Activity 4**

The children were given a quick written quiz to complete.

### **Participants in the Engagement Process**

Throughout the 3 month period a total of 9 questionnaires were completed for the Laggan settlement. 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	56%	Female	44%
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#### Participants by Age Group

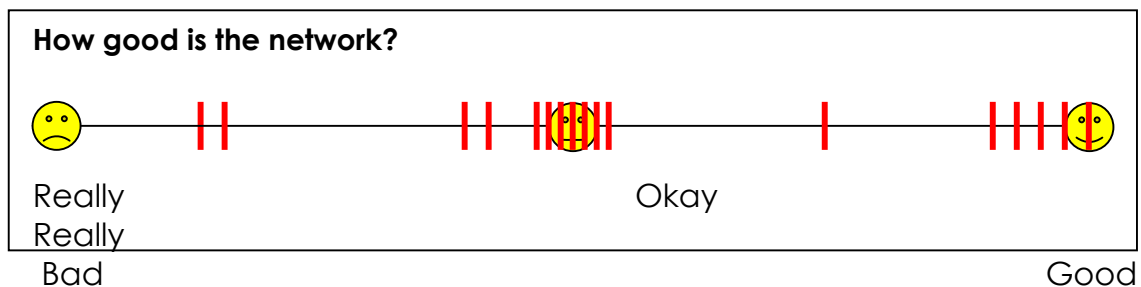
Under 16	0%	16 - 24	0%	25 - 44	33%	45 - 64	44%	65 - 74	22%	Over 75	0%
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#### Where people came from

% of people from each place who completed questionnaires					
Laggan	44%	The Laggan Community Council Area	22%	Elsewhere	44%

## Results of the Engagement Process

At the drop-in event and during the Gergask Primary visit adults and children were asked their views about the path network in and around Laggan. Participants were asked to place a mark on a line to show what they thought of the network. The results shown below are from the school as no lines were recorded during the drop-in.



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 Laggan Network		
What is bad about the network?	How the network could be improved?	What is good about the network??
School responses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sometimes it can</li> </ul>	School responses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Could make a</li> </ul>	School responses

<p>get messy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There's not many river walks</li> <li>• Bad quite a lot of litter</li> <li>• I think its bad because there is no path to cycle to school</li> <li>• Chewing gum on paths</li> <li>• Full of dog dirt</li> <li>• A lot of rocks and a lot on people on their bikes</li> <li>• Paths are boring</li> <li>• Bugs will die more</li> <li>• Too rocky</li> <li>• Not enough bins</li> <li>• Some are a bit lumpy you cant cycle on some of them</li> <li>• Rubbish people being silly</li> <li>• More exciting views (tourist attractions)</li> <li>• You wont be able to get to forest</li> <li>• Pylons, steep, large fences, poisoning fungi</li> <li>• People should not kill wild life</li> <li>• No pheasants owned by land keepers so we cant walk our dogs</li> <li>• There is pylons on the walk</li> </ul> <p>Public responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Path network is inadequately marked and</li> </ul>	<p>path made for cyclists only</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Info panels</li> <li>• On some paths there is rubbish and I think we should get bins</li> <li>• It would be better if there was more information boards</li> <li>• Some more bins on the paths please</li> <li>• They are not long</li> <li>• Not dropping litter</li> <li>• Bins</li> <li>• Some bins please</li> <li>• To much dog dirt we should get more dog fowling bins</li> <li>• We should improve it by removing some pebbles that are on the track</li> <li>• That can be improved bit more litter bins</li> <li>• People not dropping litter</li> <li>• Some more cycle paths please</li> <li>• More bins(3)</li> <li>• More bins around the paths</li> <li>• More walks that lead to main places</li> <li>• No bad people</li> <li>• Make them from Strathmashie to Laggan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relaxing and peaceful varied lengths for different abilities</li> <li>• It great to look at the view</li> <li>• See your friends keeps people safe</li> <li>• Helps people do their sports</li> <li>• Paths are great</li> <li>• You can see friends and family</li> <li>• Its long, no rubbish, great views when you get to the top</li> <li>• The scenery is nice</li> <li>• You can pick if you want small or long walk</li> <li>• Keeps you safe</li> <li>• You can go for walks in the countryside</li> <li>• Quite tidy looked after properly</li> <li>• There is less rubbish</li> <li>• Don't have to cross busy road</li> <li>• Nice views, nice flowers and trees</li> <li>• I like the paths because I go biking</li> <li>• It branches off in many directions</li> <li>• Well used (popular)</li> <li>• Beautiful views and tasty raspberries for pleasant walks</li> <li>• You can have water gun fights</li> <li>• Walking dogs, running, walking, jogging, biking</li> <li>• They are clean</li> <li>• Play sport walk your dogs</li> <li>• Less well used</li> <li>• A lot of wild life birds</li> <li>• Visiting friends and family</li> </ul>
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<p>maintained. Many old paths are unknown to the general public</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nightmare we need paths beside the main roads into/out of Laggan. They are a nightmare for anyone walking</li> <li>• “Paths around Laggan” leaflet is scandalous and not at all compliant with the disability discrimination act in terms of readability the old leaflets were much clearer.</li> </ul>	<p>Public responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It would be easy to make a lovely river walk from Laggan to Spey Dam</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeps everyone happy and safe</li> <li>• Not much rubbish</li> <li>• There is no rubbish</li> <li>• No rubbish not a lot of noise</li> <li>• Great for mountain biking, lots of raspberries and blaeberrys</li> <li>• You can see a lot of deer</li> <li>• Good views</li> <li>• Its clean and quite</li> <li>• Keeps people safe, stops people getting muddy</li> <li>• There is less fuel used could save animals lives</li> </ul> <p>Public responses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lots of lovely places to go</li> </ul>
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In general discussion with participants at the drop-in event, people were very positive about the benefits of local facilities such as Laggan Wolfrax but had major concerns about the lack of access along the A road.

### 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 9 questionnaires were received for the Laggan area. The responses to each of the questions are outlined below.

*What outdoor activities do you currently do in and around Laggan?*

Activity	% of respondents who undertake the activity
Low level walking	89%
Dog walking	56%
Hillwalking	56%
Running	22%
Getting about in a wheelchair	0%
Walking with a pushchair	0%
Cycling on-road	44%
Cycling off-road	33%
Horse-riding	11%
Watersports	0%
Wintersports	11%
None	0%
Other*	22%

\*Other activities identified were: 'local history research', and 'winter climbing once on Blargie Craig- exceptionally'.

*Why do you do these activities?*

Reason	% of respondents who identified the reason
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To keep fit/healthy	78%
Enjoying the Countryside	89%
Travel to work/school	0%
Getting about	11%
Other*	11%

\* Other reasons identified were: 'Preparing educational 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	56%
Dog walking	0%
Hillwalking	11%
Running	11%
Getting about in a wheelchair	22%
Walking with a pushchair	22%
Cycling on-road	78%
Cycling off-road**	22%
Horse-riding	0%
Watersports	11%
Wintersports	0%
None	0%
Other*	11%

\* other reasons identified were: 'Parking for access to hills to south'.

*Would better opportunities for these activities encourage you to;*



Reason	% of respondents who identified each activity
Walk to work/school	11%
Cycle to work/school	11%
Try new activities	11%
Get fit	33%
Get outdoors more	67%
Other*	11%

\*Other reasons identified were: 'Activity with Grandchildren'.

### Summary

During the public engagement process it was found that there is strong support for the Wolftrax facility and also an off-road path linking the facility and the communities of Laggan and Balgowan.

The most popular paths identified were two off road routes to Gorstan (66% of respondents) and to Balgowan (44% of respondents). Other popular routes were a route along the levy towards Spey Dam (22% of respondents) and the Wades Road and ford at Dalchully (22% of respondents).

Most activities were reasonably popular in the area, low-level walking was by far the most popular activity followed by dog walking and hill walking. Most people doing activities did so to enjoy the countryside and also to keep fit and healthy no one did so to get to work or school. There was a reasonably high demand for better opportunities for cycling on-road 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 process failed to engage with any 16-24 year olds or over 75s, however, there was a good mix of residents and visitors responding.

### 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 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 ( <i>as written by respondent</i> )
1	Path to hotel for our guests
2	Path around flood bank
3	Climb up to monument
4	To war memorial
5	To Newtonmore via Glen Banchor
6	New path from grave yard entrance round back of dyke to old bridge abutment
7	Shortcut to Gergask Avenue from car park
8	Over bridge and back to village along the road
9	New proposal path at planning stage
10	Existing path –needs to be flagged up along with all other paths recently made in the Strathmashie forest
11	Path to Balgowan to link the two largest communities together and links hotel with path to both villages
12	Path to hotel and pottery linking to community
13	Path extended to Gorsten wood linking community to facilities in forest and link with proposed path in forest
14	River walk from Catlodge or Breakachy
15	School route
16	School route
17	River walk village to Spey Dam
18	Would like tarmac road/path to Strathmashie cottages from glen road. Allows better smooth access for cycle and wheel chair users.
19	Off road walking and cycling route for local school needed useful for educational purposes
20	Path from village centre to hotel and pottery helping to link the community improving economic development and enlarging the village community



