

Cairngorms National Park Core Paths Plan

Consultation and Engagement Process - Stage 1

Community Engagement & Results – Dalwhinnie

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

Engaging with the Dalwhinnie 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. Questionnaires were also distributed to all households in the area through the community newsletter. The community drop-in event was run to enable people in Laggan & Dalwhinnie 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 combined with the Laggan drop-in was held at the Laggan Village Hall on Tuesday 2nd of November from 7pm to 9pm. CNPA staff

Adam Streeter Smith and Pete Crane ran the event, John Hutchison, Access Officer for 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 29th of November between 14:30 and 15:30 to speak to 16 pupils in Mrs Dickson's class.

Drop-in Event Promotion

The drop-in 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, no questionnaires were completed at the event. One questionnaire for the Dalwhinnie settlement was submitted by post. Participants were asked to

complete an evaluation sheet of the combined 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 the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) 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 large 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 only one questionnaire was completed for the Dalwhinnie settlement. Further comments on the Dalwhinnie area were provided at other events including the recreational users workshops.

Results of the Engagement Process

At the drop-in event in Laggan and during the Gergask Primary visit, adults and children were asked their views about the path network in and around Dalwhinnie, unfortunately no comments were recorded. In general discussion with participants at the drop-in event, people were very positive about the benefits of local facilities such as Laggan Wolftrax but had concerns about the lack of facilities locally for visitors.

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 Laggan event were given the opportunity to annotate large maps of Laggan and Dalwhinnie highlighting their popular routes in detail and also adding comments. The only comment made for the Dalwhinnie area was: 'Riverside walk for dog walkers and short walk for tourists stopping at Hotel or distillery'. The routes identified are shown on the map in Annex 1.

Questionnaire Results

The respondent indicated that they currently undertake low-level walking, dog-walking and hill-walking in the area in order to keep fit and healthy and to enjoy the countryside. The respondent indicated that they had no desire to see better access opportunities in the area.

Summary

A number of routes were identified in the Dalwhinnie area but these came from recreational user groups and visitors rather than residents in the area. The most popular routes often fell outwith the boundary of the National Park area.

Reflections

The drop-in was generally well attended, however, Dalwhinnie was poorly represented both at the event and during the process as a whole.

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

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