

# **Cairngorms National Park Core Paths Plan**

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

### **Community Engagement & Results – Crathie**

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

#### **Engaging with the Crathie 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 Crathie 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 events for Braemar and Crathie communities were combined and held at the Braemar Village Hall on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> November from 2:30pm to 6:30pm. CNPA staff Sandra Middleton and Fran Potheary ran the event.

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

The event was advertised as part of a wider community event in the Deeside Piper 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 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**

Approximately 50 people attended the joint event and a total of 15 questionnaires were received for Crathie. Two were completed at the joint event and another 13 received by post mainly from the Primary School. Participants were asked to complete an evaluation sheet of the joint Braemar/Crathie event, the results are shown below and are replicated in the Braemar report.

	% of Participants Responding			
	Very Useful	Useful	Not Useful	Waste of Time
Location	88%	12%	0%	0%
Venue	88%	12%	0%	0%
Timing	88%	12%	0%	0%
Questionnaires	73%	17%	0%	0%
Information Available	81%	19%	0%	0%
Opportunity to speak to staff	94%	6%	0%	0%



What is bad about the network?	What is good about the network?	How the network could be improved?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Car park drainage can be a problem</li> <li>• Not many walks</li> <li>• Make Girnock easier to access – high gate/stile</li> <li>• Lack of info about walks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All abilities trail</li> <li>• The Balmoral police situation is much better and tolerate/accommodate passing canoeists – very welcome</li> <li>• Riverside Walk brill (Agree)</li> <li>• The access walk around the river to the car park is good and accessible for all abilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possibly a longer river walk (Agree)</li> <li>• A variety of walks in the area</li> <li>• By establishing the Dee as a core route for canoeists</li> <li>• Better promotion</li> <li>• More joined up walks</li> <li>• Maybe a leaflet of walks in the area could be produced</li> </ul>

In general discussion with participants at the joint Braemar/Crathie event, people were positive about the network around Crathie though there was concern that it was limited. There was support for a circular route utilising the south and north banks of the Dee and for better promotion of the routes that exist.

### **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 15 questionnaires were received for the Crathie area. The responses to each of the questions are outlined below.

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

Activity	% of respondents who undertake the activity
Low level walking	73%
Dog walking	80%
Hill walking	73%
Running	27%
Getting about in a wheelchair	7%
Walking with a pushchair	7%
Cycling on-road	40%
Cycling off-road	27%
Horse-riding	13%
Watersports	13%
Winter sports	40%
None	0%
Other*	7%

Other activities identified were 'roller skating'.

*Why do you do these activities?*

Reason	% of respondents who identified the reason
To keep fit/healthy	93%
Enjoying the Countryside	93%
Travel to work/school	47%
Getting about	33%
Other*	27%

\*Other reasons identified were 'to teach my dog', 'for fun', 'guests from disabled accommodation would use these additional walks' and, 'wildlife watching'.

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

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Activity	% of respondents who identified the activity
Low level walking	64%
Dog walking	57%
Hill walking	43%
Running	21%
Getting about in a wheelchair	43%
Walking with a pushchair	36%
Cycling on-road	36%
Cycling off-road	50%
Horse-riding	29%
Watersports	50%
Winter sports	29%
None	7%
Other	0%

Would better opportunities for these activities encourage you to;

Reason	% of respondents who identified each activity
Walk to work/school	14%
Cycle to work/school	36%
Try new activities	71%
Get fit	50%
Get outdoors more	71%
Other*	7%

\*Other reasons identified were 'walk to friends'.

## Summary

During the public engagement process it was found that the provision of trails for all-abilities access is excellent although better promotion and information of these trails and the wider network is needed. The most popular path identified was the track between Crathie down to the river and across the footbridge to Easter Balmoral. The all-abilities trail and the paths around the Cairns at Balmoral were also popular.

Most activities proved popular in the area although dog-level walking was the most popular, followed by low-level walking. Most people doing activities did so to enjoy the countryside and also to keep fit and healthy but a high proportion of residents do so to get to work or school which may reflect the high response rate from the school pupils. There were similar and quite high levels of demand for better low-level and dog-walking routes, cycling off-road, watersports and hill-walking. There was a comparatively very high demand for better wheelchair and pushchair access. A large proportion of respondents indicated that better opportunities for different activities would encourage them to try new activities.

## Reflections

The joint Braemar/Crathie drop-in was very well attended with a constant flow through of people and positive feedback regarding the event and core path planning process itself. The questionnaires failed to capture much information from people aged between 16 and 24 and those over 75. The under 16 age group was well represented

thanks to strong contributions from the primary school. Crathie Opportunity Holidays is a charity based in Crathie which provides holiday accommodation for people with disabilities. The charity encouraged many of its clients to get involved in the Core Paths Plan process and the feedback reflects this. People seem generally happy with the network although a wider range of opportunities is needed and better information about the existing ones.

## **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.

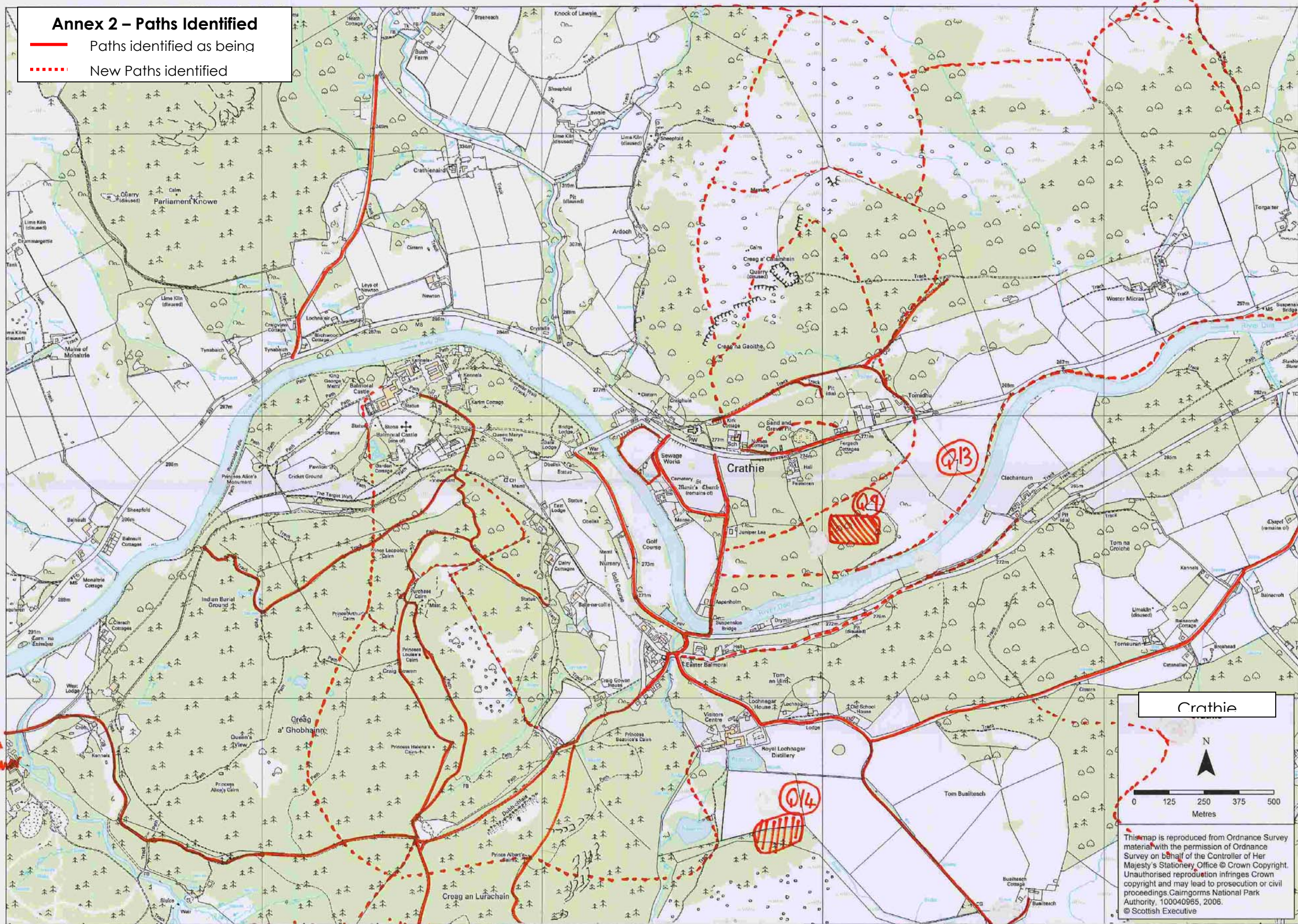
**Cairngorms National Park Authority**  
**1 March 2007**

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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>
Q9	Area which is not easy to access at present
Q13	Existing circular path at Crathie car park (700m) should be extended along north bank of the River Dee in an easterly direction to cross suspension bridge at Abergeldie, returning by Clachinturn, past hall, Souters Cottage to Distillery Brae to return by white bridge at Aspen Holm.
Q13	The path eastwards could be extended all the way to link up with the old line path at bridge end of Gairn providing a walk way/wheelchair accessible route from Crathie to Ballater.
Q14	Area which is not easy to access at present



Local path quality  
6/2/07