

# **Cairngorms National Park Core Paths Plan**

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

### **Community Engagement & Results – Braemar**

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

#### **Engaging with the Braemar 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 CNPA also carried out work with Braemar Primary School to find out about the kind of activities the children in the village undertake and where they like to go. The community drop-in event was run to enable people in Braemar 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 Potthecary 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 event, a total of 24 questionnaires were completed at the event and 7 returned by post – in total 31 questionnaires were completed. Participants were asked to complete an evaluation sheet of the joint Braemar/Crathie event; the results are shown below and are replicated in the Crathie 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%

## Participants in the Engagement Process

Throughout the 3 month period a total of 31 questionnaires were completed for the Braemar 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	53%	Female	47%
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### Participants by Age Group

Under 16	7%	16 - 24	0%	25 - 44	23%	45 - 64	63%	65 - 74	7%	Over 75	0%
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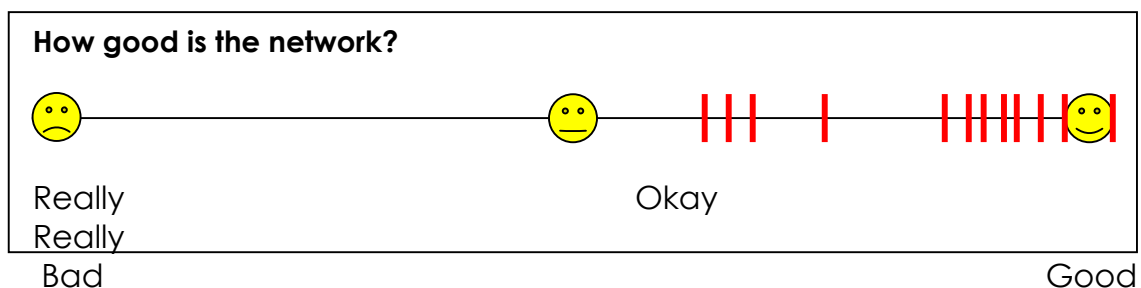
### Where people came from

% of people from each place who completed questionnaires					
Braemar	77%	Braemar Community Council Area	0%	Elsewhere	23%

30 children from Braemar Primary School also got involved in core paths planning as part of a school project.

## Results of the Engagement Process

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



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.

<b>Comments on the Braemar Network</b>		
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>• Lack of adequate signs at start and along routes (Agree)</li> <li>• Basis of time estimates and grade of walks not clear (Agree)</li> <li>• Maintenance of paths</li> <li>• Paths and signage around water works is not the best</li> <li>• Gate at bottom of Cromlins – is it fixed yet? Not safe for children or dogs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A good amount of walks in Braemar</li> <li>• Well signposted</li> <li>• Paths in good condition</li> <li>• Fantastic opportunities</li> <li>• Plenty of good walks for varying abilities</li> <li>• Lucky to have a good network of paths around village.</li> <li>• Plenty of choice for dog walking and children</li> <li>• The local fisherman and by and large estate management are accommodating to canoeists</li> <li>• They are all in good condition (Agree)</li> <li>• Circular walks (Agree)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A bridge over the Dee (agreed by 9 people)</li> <li>• Would be good to have some paths for canoeists from the island</li> <li>• More access for wheelchairs and pushchairs (Agree)</li> <li>• Replace sign at bottom of Chapel Brae giving directions to pond and forest walks</li> <li>• Signage to major car park (Games Park) as base for use of paths, and signs from same</li> <li>• A culture of not putting poachers cleats in the river would be welcome by canoeists</li> <li>• Bridge over the Dee</li> <li>• Off road cycle link between Invercauld Bridge and village completing circular route from north side of Dee</li> <li>• A bridge across inflow stream to Loch Callater to make circular walk around loch without paddling</li> <li>• Extend path beyond Lion's Face</li> <li>• Smoother paths</li> <li>• River Dee as a core path for canoeists</li> <li>• Better signage in centre of village</li> <li>• A path for canoeists to walk up to the village would be a sound idea</li> <li>• Complete Society Bridge</li> </ul>

		<p>paths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better explanation of the SOAC and what it means</li> <li>• Better signs at start and along routes would help visitors (Agree)</li> <li>• Qualify time and grade of walk and rate of climb</li> <li>• The best hill walk is "Coo hill", no signs for this walk</li> <li>• Customers in the shop can't understand instructions on the booklet</li> <li>• Build less slippery paths on the golf course</li> <li>• Protect path routes to and through woods behind bunkhouse when and if housing is built on old steading site (Agree)</li> <li>• Another bridge at the head of the Quoich</li> </ul>
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In general discussion with participants at the drop-in event, people were very positive about the path network around Braemar, and were proud of it.

### 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. Pupils at Braemar Primary School also identified paths in and around Braemar that are important to them and these are also recorded in Annex 2.

### Questionnaire Results

A total of 31 questionnaires were received for the Braemar area. The responses to each of the questions are outlined below.

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

Activity	% of respondents who undertake the activity
Low level walking	97%
Dog walking	42%
Hill walking	71%
Running	19%
Getting about in a wheelchair	0%
Walking with a pushchair	6%
Cycling on-road	48%
Cycling off-road	35%
Horse-riding	3%
Watersports	6%
Winter sports	39%
None	0%
Other*	3%

\* Other activities identified were 'Highland Safaris in a 4x4'.

*Why do you do these activities?*

Reason	% of respondents who identified the reason
To keep fit/healthy	100%
Enjoying the Countryside	97%
Travel to work/school*	0%
Getting about	17%
Other**	13%

\*80% of the children at Braemar Primary School indicated that they walk to school.

\*\*Other reasons identified were 'enjoy these activities', 'attract tourists', 'work-skiing', 'Wildlife watching' and '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	60%
Dog walking	3%
Hill walking	37%
Running	7%
Getting about in a wheelchair	17%
Walking with a pushchair	13%
Cycling on-road	30%
Cycling off-road	60%
Horse-riding	17%
Watersports	10%
Winter sports	20%
None	1%
Other*	10%

\*Other activities identified were 'Nordic Walking trails', 'more access to local estates' and, 'organised as tourist attraction'.

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

Reason	% of respondents who identified each activity
Walk to work/school	0%



Cycle to work/school	12%
Try new activities	40%
Get fit	64%
Get outdoors more	64%
Other*	12%

\*Other reasons identified were 'Greater diversity' and 'promote tourism'.

## Summary

During the public engagement process it was found that there is widespread support for a bridge over the Dee near Braemar and also for an off road link between the Brig O'Dee and Braemar as well as a small section of route to link the Society Bridge over the Clunie with the Queen's Drive. There was a high demand for linking routes which are suitable for cycling and the current lack of all-abilities routes was also identified. Information and signage need to be improved to make it easier for visitors to find and use the network. A number of hazards for water users were also identified.

By far the most popular route in the area is The Queen's Drive (identified by 84% of respondents). Other very popular paths were the path up to the viewpoint below Morrone, the Cromlins and the Birkwoods (all identified by over 65% of respondents). There was also a high demand (48% of respondents) for a new bridge over the River Dee to enable people to access the hills and glens to the north of the river.

Most activities proved popular in the area although low-level walking was by far the most popular, followed by hill-walking and then cycling on road. Most people doing activities did so to primarily enjoy the countryside but also to keep fit and healthy. None of the respondents identified walking to work although 80% of the children at Braemar Primary School walk to school. There was equally high demand for better low-level walking and off-road cycling routes and some demand for better opportunities for wheelchair users and pushchairs.

## Reflections

The 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 the under 24 age group and the over 75. The project run with the primary school, however, engaged with 30 children aged

from 5 years to 11 years. The Braemar residents are generally happy with the existing network but are keen to see the completion of some strategic links in and around the community.

## **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 (as written by respondent)
1	Need a cycle-able route (off road) between Invercauld Bridge and Braemar village – this idea should be classed as a must!(4 notes of agreement)
2	All the Clunie deer fences* ( <i>*fences strung over the water</i> ) are extremely hazardous to canoeists (1 strong agreement)
3	River Dee deer fence below Inverchandlick Cottage especially hazardous to canoeists
4	Bridge needed in vicinity of Inverchandlick Cottage for access to the other side of the Dee (3 strong agreements)
5	Connection needed from Society Bridge to the Caravan Park to Queen's park drive (2 agreements)
6	Great cycling (on tracks to west of Braemar on south side of the Inverey road)
7	Improve path and signposting from island to the lay-by on Inverey road
8	Route on south bank of river between Braemar and Inverey – some of this route in place? Needs reviewing and some upgrading?
9	Existing footbridge over Allt a'Chlair? – <i>this was posed as a question and no comment was given as to the actual existence or state of the bridge</i>
Q6	Proposed link to Ballochbuie
Q7	I don't think all the UDAT path are marked on here
Q9	Cycle-able route up Ballochbuie would be invaluable – this section of roads is very dangerous for cyclists.
Q9	Cycle-able route across the Dee would be very useful ( <i>using proposed bridge</i> )
Q15	Good to have a path that joins up with Ballochbuie
Q15	Bridge over Dee
Q16	New bridge ( <i>over Dee</i> )
Q25	Wheelchair link ( <i>indicated from Kindrochit Lodge and Youth hostel crossing over to north of Caravan Park</i> )
Q28	Walk down to Dee from Braemar Castle

Q28	Visual impact of hill tracks especially on high ground
Q28	Footpath/cycle path from Braemar to Linn of Dee
Q28	Heavy erosion on Morrone path
Q30	Bridge access over Dee
Q30	Link to Invercauld Bridge (off road)
Q30	Link from Society Bridge to campsites
Q31	Link with Ballochbuie
Q31	Route to link with Queens Drive
Q31	Link to Fraser's Bridge for bike route
Q31	Tracks through Morrone Birkwood NNR – great for cycling
Q31	Bridge across Dee
Q31	Linn of Dee loop – great bike loop
Q31	Route past Manse to Chapel brae –a popular night time route – could be improved by lighting

Summary of above points:

- Bridge over Dee – indicated by 10 people
- Off road route to Ballochbuie and Invercauld – indicated by 5 people
- Link between Society Bridge and Queens Drive – indicated by 8 people
- Link along south Dee to lay-by on Inverey road – indicated by 3 people

