

Cairngorms National Park Core Paths Plan

Consultation and Engagement Process - Stage 1

Community Engagement & Results – Boat of Garten

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

Engaging with the Boat of Garten 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 Boat of Garten 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 was held at the Village Hall in Boat of Garten on Monday 23rd October from 2:30pm to 6:30pm. CNPA staff member Sandra Middleton and Community Liaison Officer Anna Barton ran the event.

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 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 21 questionnaires were completed at the event and a further 22 were returned by post or via the CNPA website. Participants were asked to complete an evaluation sheet of the Boat of Garten event, the results recorded are as follows:

	% of Participants Responding			
	Very Useful	Useful	Not Useful	Waste of Time
Location	75%	25%	0%	0%
Venue	79%	21%	0%	0%
Timing	77%	15%	8%*	0%
Questionnaires	57%	43%	0%	0%
Information Available	71%	29%	0%	0%
Opportunity to speak to staff	87%	13%	0%	0%

*Comment, 'could go on later in pm'

Comments on the Boat of Garten 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"> • Mud • Motorbikes in woods (3 notes of agreement) • Tendency to overmanage and 'manicure' paths (1 note of agreement) • Overgrown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive network • Nice wide and tidy paths • Variety of types of path • It avoids some of the wild places • As a visitor I found the paths great • Good for family bike rides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut the grass and tidy up the path at the dump • Access to Tom Pitlac (2 notes of agreement) • Complete path between Milton & Drumuillie (3 notes of agreement) • Better cycle networks between villages • Finish off Speyside Way path between junction with B970 & the bridge over the Spey (1 note of agreement) • Path round dump needs seen to. Grass etc. to be cut & tidy up round about – agree, needs tlc • Footpath around south side of Loch Vaa to link forest track (1 note of agreement) • More wheelchair accessible paths

In general discussion with participants at the drop-in event, people were happy with the existing path network although the need to complete a small link of the Speyside Way was raised often. There was strong support from the community to lobby the Trunk Roads department to include a cycle lane when upgrading the A95.

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 43 questionnaires were received for the Boat of Garten area. The responses to each of the questions are outlined below.

What outdoor activities do you currently do in and around Boat of Garten?

Activity	% of respondents who undertake the activity
Low level walking	95%
Dog walking	34%
Hill walking	41%
Running	15%
Getting about in a wheelchair	0%
Walking with a pushchair	10%
Cycling on-road	44%
Cycling off-road	46%
Horse-riding	0%
Watersports	5%
Winter sports	22%
None	2%
Other*	22%

*Other activities identified were, 'Golf', 'fishing', 'farming', 'shooting, farming', 'drawing & recording in notebook photograph for reference in architectural & teaching work' and 'cross country skiing'.

Why do you do these activities?

Reason	% of respondents who identified the reason
To keep fit/healthy	93%
Enjoying the Countryside	90%
Travel to work/school	10%

Getting about	24%
Other*	15%

*Other reasons identified were 'dog walking', 'exercising fit dog, earning a living', 'holiday pursuits', 'social', 'get away from people and to absorb nature' and 'to off-set stresses of professional duties'.

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	41%
Dog walking	12%
Hill walking	10%
Running*	7%
Getting about in a wheelchair	7%
Walking with a pushchair	5%
Cycling on-road	20%
Cycling off-road	39%
Horse-riding	5%
Watersports	2%
Winter sports**	15%
None	12%
Other***	10%

*Comment: 'improved links between woodland + hilly areas - more options'.

**Comment: 'Cross Country'.

*** Other activities identified were, 'Perfectly adequate at present', 'good access for canoeing', 'Concentrated opportunities encourage group visits & socially very valuable' and, 'cross country skiing'.

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	5%
Try new activities	10%
Get fit	24%
Get outdoors more	44%
Other*	10%

*Other reasons identified were, 'Observe wildlife', 'more holidays in area', 'avoid driving in the area' and, 'move around safely'.

Summary

During the public engagement process it was found that after low-level walking, off-road cycling is the most popular activity and there is demand for improved opportunities, particularly linking communities and enabling people to cycle safely. There is a need to complete a small section of the Speyside Way which links the village to the RSPB Loch Garten Reserve across the Bridge over the Spey. There is some support from the community for development of a path to the Motte at 'Tom Pitlac'.

The most popular paths identified were the woodland walks to the south west of the village, closely followed by the paths in the Loch Garten RSPB reserve (both identified by over 50% of respondents) and the Riverside walk beside the golf course (identified by over 40% of respondents). The path to Drumillie was also very popular.

All activities were reasonable popular in the area except for horse-riding - low-level walking was by far the most popular activity followed by cycling both on and off-road. Most people doing activities did so to keep fit and healthy and equally to enjoy the countryside. There was a reasonably high demand for better opportunities for low level walking and for off-road cycling.

Reflections

The drop-in was very well attended and the response rate on questionnaires was very high and there was positive feedback from those attended the event. There was a good response from people living in Boat of Garten and the surrounding area, as well as from visitors. There was a good level of response from a variety of age groups although it failed to capture any information from the under 16's.

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	Foot bridge has been removed
2	The path from Drumuille to the village needs to be sorted
3	We need to make Tom Pitlac an important tourist attraction with proper access and interpretation
4	Link up new section of path to pavements from village
5	Link across moor to cross road and into Dochan and Deshar forest
6	Link between school path and edge of wood/field
7	Link up Loch Vaa boat house with orbital – narrow path around Loch Vaa?
8	Walking or cycling (for children and adults) is very difficult on the A95 between Drummulle and cycle path by Deshar school which links to Carrbridge
9	Continuation to Nethy/GOS would be good!
10	Better/more signposting needed in this area- there are more tracks marked on the OS map than actually exist " on the ground"
11	Speyside Way into Aviemore important
12	Road-side cycle track very important (part of off road route to Carrbridge)
13	Continuation over hills to Carrbridge important Note: Off road cycle tracks between villages very important
14	Would like a walk signposted around this historic area "Tom Pitlac". It would be a useful addition for visitors interested in the area as well as local history groups etc
15	A right of way/path running from the rear of the church to the rear of the hall and then down to the old smiddy buildings has been lost with the development of Birch Grove. We should ensure other paths are not lost in the same way.
16	A new track linking the bridge back to the RSPB car park at B970 junction as the road is dangerous and unpleasant to walk on. A lot of people walk this.

17	The path shown in green is a path along the east side of the River Spey; it has been well used by locals for many years, and forms the only footpath or route for bikes, between Boat of Garten and Sluggan bridge to Glenmore which is on the B970
18	Paths and tracks marked in red form a valuable network available to walkers and cyclists and should be part of the core path network.
19	The hatched line marks out an excellent link for cross country ski route connecting Glenmore via the Slugan pass to Boat of Garten and with Abernethy back to Glenmore.
20	Finish off Speyside Way properly from where exists onto road to Boat Bridge
21	Drumuillie – Boat link otherwise village pretty well served
22	Old paths from Street of Kincardine to Abernethy forest/Tulloch Moor not maintained and impassable due to increased bog. Footbridge marked on map does not exist.
23	Estate owner (Kincardine Estate) apparently hostile to access. Riverside path used historically by residents of Street of Kincardine and others. We would like to be able to use it again, for recreation and to attend Kincardine Church.
24	“Core Paths” – Sustrans cycle route Plesher to Carr Farm, Carrbridge. Speyside Way – Nethy to Aviemore from Boat. Wades Military Road Kinveachy to Slochd over Sluggan Bridge. Milton to Glenmore. Milton Farm to Drumuillie to be completed. Speyside Way from Bridge to Garten reserve. Route past Milton Loch saw mill to A96(t) <i>(not numbered on map in Annex 2)</i>
25	We are very lucky to have so many good paths already. Some RSPB paths in the Loch Mallachie are muddy in need of maintenance must bikes have access to all paths? They cause mess at times of the year in parts of the Speyside Way too. <i>(not numbered on map in Annex 2)</i>
26	Boat of Garten have plenty of paths and do not need anymore. They are not needing anew bridge over the path from Milton to Drumuillie as it has two sleeper across the burn, and I don't want a path up the side of the field to Tom Pitlac as animals graze there it has crops of hay etc. Also they are needing badly to clean up the path and cut trees etc around the Dlerap or Milton wood as they call it because it has weeds nettles etc on the path. Like to see the paths keep tidy, also tidy up Milton Loch of its weeds. <i>(not numbered on map in Annex 2)</i>

27	<p>Walking holidays – walks from a cottage without car travel are ideal. Flexibility to plan day long walks for say a week, or of a circular type with wildlife, landscape & social points of interest, has wide appeal & has lead our group to return again & again to some areas. Tomintoul, Strathdon & Applecross Peninsula are all examples where walking can be managed from a cottage & daily car journeys are not needed <i>(not numbered on map in Annex 2)</i></p>
28	<p>Boat of Garten – this our first visit to Cairngorms National Park & it has quickly become apparent that a lot of work has been done on access for walkers & that the unique character & fantastic landscape are a superb setting for walkers. Loch Mallachie for example is a short walk away through native woodland teaming with wildlife: visually the loch is a gem. <i>(not numbered on map in Annex 2)</i></p>
29	<p>Core Paths & Visitor Access – Boat of Garten is bounded by the A9 & 2 railway lines and the Spey traverses the area to south & north. The Speyside Way Long Distance walk links Aviemore & Boat of Garten to the west of the River Spey. Planning of walks has required some walking on say B970, retracing of outward journeys & some diversion to achieve crossing between areas. <i>(not numbered on map in Annex 2)</i></p>
30	<p>S.W. of village is mature woodland with extensive habitat & enjoyable walking separate from conflicting uses. <i>(not numbered on map in Annex 2)</i></p>
31	<p>E. of village across Garten BR, is a far larger woodland area with exceptional wildlife present some of which is now very rare. Again access is extensive & there are destinations such as the Auchgourish Gardens & the RSPB centre at Loch Garten. However, a variety of routes for a good days walk for a range of abilities, is constrained by the limits which exist on linkage between S.W & E of village. Ideally then these areas would be linked by footpaths access from the Speyside Way access under Strathspey rail spur, via a gated footbridge over the Spey at Pityoulish thus linking with extensive hill & woodland walks to the east & south of the village. In this way Boat of Garten would become an exceptional walking centre, with many circular & figure of 8 routes & little need to walk on road or re-trace steps. <i>(not numbered on map in Annex 2)</i></p>

32	<p>A footbridge is proposed as a response to requests from CNP staff for ideas from our group, visiting the Park area with a special interest in certain types of walking. However, it is self evident that community benefits could be even more significant than those for visitors. It is equally clear that such an initiative would be of equal benefit to visitors & community interests of Aviemore as Boat of Garten as it would diversify access equally because its position is equally convenient to both. A footbridge is a bold step which would involve fund raising & major planning However, there is a long tradition of footbridges in Scotland & the exceptional qualities of the landscape strengthen the case, while increasing the need for this & any intervention to be done simply & well. It may be possible to set up a feasibility report with advice from the R.I.A.S & to fund the research by grant. <i>(not numbered on map in Annex 2)</i></p>
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