
CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

Title: Active Travel

Prepared by: Colin Simpson, Head of Visitor Services & Active Travel

Purpose: To update members

Advice sought:

How can the LOAF get the most out of the active travel consultations and be involved in the future?

Background and Strategic Context

1. The climate and nature crisis is the single biggest challenge that we face and it is critical that the Cairngorms National Park – as the largest protected area in the UK – is an exemplar in achieving net zero, developing nature-based solutions and helping Scotland as a whole meet its targets as part of a just transition. This is a major commitment made in the National Park Partnership Plan.
2. The Cairngorms National Park also has a significant role to play in delivering the policy ambitions of Scottish Government. This is focused on Scotland being a place to innovate, trial new ways of thinking and show ambition to tackle the key challenges of our time. An example of this is the Scottish Government’s ambition to increase active travel and in particular deliver world-class infrastructure for walking, wheeling and cycling. The Scottish Government also proposes implementing concepts such as 20 minute neighbourhoods across our cities, towns, and rural areas so that people can access the vast majority of the facilities and services they need daily within a walk or cycle of around 20 minutes.
3. How this might be delivered is a major part of the Heritage Horizons: Cairngorms 2030 programme which puts active and sustainable travel at the heart of a greener future for the National Park. This involves working with communities and partners to improve public transport and active travel connections across the National Park. This will also involve further consideration of the concept of 20-minute neighbourhoods and how it might apply in a rural context, where services and people are more dispersed.
4. The Cairngorms 2030 programme includes a series of 24 projects of which 8 directly relate to changing how people get around the National Park. Of these two projects cover the whole of the National Park while the remainder relate to an individual area or areas. These are described in turn below.

Park-wide projects

1. Cairngorms active travel plan
We are developing a Park-wide active travel network plan as the first step in creating a Parkwide network of safe routes connecting communities and suitable for everyone. This will make it easier to get around the Park without a vehicle and use public transport. The plan will explain what is required to create the network in the medium (to 2030) and longer term (to 2045), including ways to help and encourage people to make best use of the network.

2. Cairngorms e-bike project

The aim of the e-bike project is to support a reduction in personal car use by visitors and residents moving around the Park through engaging and inspiring people to use e-bikes as a mode of transport. The project will create a network of e-bikes that residents and visitors can access for hire or loan for simple journeys such as shopping trips, taking the kids to school or reaching visitor attractions.

Location specific projects

1. Active communities: Aviemore

This project aims to make it easy and safe for residents and visitors to get around Aviemore without a vehicle. By improving active travel infrastructure and public spaces, we want to make it more enjoyable for everyone to walk, cycle or get around using a wheelchair.

2. Active communities: Badenoch and Strathspey

With involvement from local communities, we will improve infrastructure and public spaces in towns and villages across the Park. This will make walking, cycling and using a wheelchair in these places easier, safer and more enjoyable. In Badenoch & Strathspey this will cover Newtonmore, Carrbridge, Dulnain Bridge, Boat of Garten, Nethy Bridge.

3. Upper Deeside Active and Sustainable Travel

This project involves the development of an Active and Sustainable Travel Plan for Ballater, Braemar and area. As with the communities listed above, we will also work with these two communities to improve infrastructure and public spaces to make walking, cycling and using a wheelchair easier, safer and more enjoyable.

4. Active communities: Blair Atholl and Killiecrankie

As above we will work with these two communities to improve infrastructure and public spaces to make walking, cycling and using a wheelchair easier, safer and more enjoyable.

5. Glenmore transport plan

Currently almost all visitors arrive by private car at destinations such as Loch Morlich and Cairngorm Mountain. In collaboration with local stakeholders, we will rethink the way people travel in this area so they are no longer dependent on using their own private car to get to places. It will see a future-proofed public transport service and make it easier for people to walk, cycle and use a wheelchair between Aviemore and Cairngorm Mountain.

6. Sustainable transport in the Park

This project will initially focus on areas outside Badenoch & Strathspey - Deeside, Angus and Highland Perthshire first. We will work with partners to improve sustainable transport options in the National Park to make it easier to get around without a private car.

7. In addition to those new projects, we will also support communities who have existing active travel developments underway with Places for Everyone funding from Sustrans Scotland. These community led projects are already under way in Laggan, Kingussie & Grantown on Spey. Because Tomintoul was already the subject of a Heritage Lottery Funded Landscape partnership project at the time of the Heritage Horizons bid it was not identified for a separate project but will be included as part of the Park-wide active travel plan.

Activity to date / Current situation

1. Work on the Cairngorms Active Travel plan is being undertaken by a Sustrans seconded officer based within the National Park Authority developing strategic partnerships and a subsequent active travel strategy for the whole of the National Park.
2. The first stage of development of the e-bike project is being undertaken internally by officers with activity to date focussed on one to one engagement with key stakeholders - initially bike shops.
3. For the location specific projects, officer activity to date has mainly been focussed on preparing briefs and procuring the services of specialist consultants to undertake the initial stages of the above projects – which primarily involve undertaking public consultation to identify each community’s needs. Contracts for all projects have been let with the exception of the Upper Deeside Active and Sustainable Travel one which has been tendered with a closing date for responses of 9th September.
4. Public engagement is now under way with the first few public sessions having been held in the last fortnight. As well as a dedicated session to gather the specific thoughts and needs of more elderly users and those with mobility difficulties, a series of more general local events are being held. Dates for the first events were as below: -
 - Boat of Garten Community Hall – 18th August 4:30-8:00pm
 - Aviemore Community Hall – 23 August 4:30-8:00pm
 - Carrbridge Village Hall – 23rd August 4:30-8:00pm
 - Newtonmore Village Hall – 24th August 4:30-8:00pm
 - Dulnain Bridge Community Hall – 1st September 4:30-8:00pm
 - Nethy Bridge Community Centre – 6th September 4:30-8:00pmMore locations/dates (including Deeside and Highland Perthshire) are to follow.
5. In addition to the face to face options, people also have to opportunity to take part in the consultation and give their views online through the Commonplace platform - <https://cairngorms2030.commonplace.is/>

LOAF Role /involvement

1. While the above projects are described as “Active Travel” projects the rural nature of the National Park and small communities inevitably mean there will be quite significant crossover between potential new developments and the existing access network of core paths, long distance routes and any new paths or routes may also become well used for leisure purposes as well as more utility-based travel.
2. In view of this crossover and the depth of knowledge and experience amongst the members of the LOAF it is recommended that the LOAF play a part in the consultation – and in particular that members of the LOAF take part in the consultation events in their local area(s) where possible.

How can the LOAF get the most out of the active travel consultations and be involved in the future?

**Colin Simpson
Cairngorms National Park Authority
August 2022**