



Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum

Paper 3 - Update and forward look

Prepared by: Adam Streeter-Smith, Recreation and Access Manager

Purpose

This paper provides an update on the main areas of work both undertaken and planned.

1. Statutory Duties

Core Paths Plan review

- Informal consultation complete – 208 responses received (see Paper 1).
- Currently working through responses, assessing suggestions and producing the draft Core Paths Plan. Aim to have draft Plan by January, ahead of February LOAF meeting.
- Prep work underway regarding the assessments necessary on the draft Plan – Strategic Environmental Assessment, Habitats Regulation Assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment.
- Aim to have draft Plan signed off by March and put out to 12-week formal consultation around April 2026.

Promotion of Scottish Outdoor Access Code

Discussions and meetings around wildlife disturbance and plans made to standardise Caper messaging signage. New 'Lek it Be' signage being developed and Caper map signs to accompany recent signage.

Outdoor Access Events Guidance

Following discussions at last LOAF meeting and feedback from other consultees, the events guidance has been updated with more emphasis placed on impacts of events and consideration of environmental designations and protected species.

2. Fire byelaw

A Decision to investigate the possibility of a fire byelaw was first taken by the Park Authority Board in summer 2023 and following a significant public consultation in early 2024 and a further consultation on the wording in late 2024 a proposal for the byelaw



was submitted to the Scottish Government in spring 2025. Scottish ministers subsequently gave approval for the byelaw which will be introduced in 2026.

From 1 April to 30 September every year, recreational fires and barbecues will therefore be banned in the Cairngorms National Park - a landmark step forward in reducing the growing risk of wildfires in the face of climate change but also a step that has implications in terms of people's right of responsible access as it overrides the right to light fires where done responsibly that is incorporated in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. The byelaw does however contain some exemptions: -

- Land management such as Muirburn will not be included in the byelaw as this will be covered by new national legislation and a licensing scheme.
- The byelaw will not apply within the curtilage of dwelling houses (including those used as holiday homes) and other properties such as hotels and campsites where fires or barbecues will be permitted.
- Organised groups such as scouts, bushcraft courses and events incorporating fire will still be permissible as long as written landowner permission is given.

From a Park Authority perspective, work is now under way to develop a communications approach to messaging and signage which will inform things such as site based and road signs, revised "Tread Lightly" and fire leaflets and communications activities such as social media posts. A session was held with Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park to learn more about enforcement and further work is underway to develop a Cairngorms specific process for engagement and enforcement as well as building relationships with organisations such as Police Scotland and the Procurator Fiscal's office.

While still a very useful tool, it is still acknowledged that a byelaw won't eliminate all fires, but the expectation is that it will help significantly reduce the number of fires and with that in mind we propose measuring success through measuring the number of fires rather than the level of enforcement. Any enforcement will however still be recorded and reported on.

Promotion of Fire Byelaw

Comms campaign being developed by consultants "Bright Signals"



3. Development and Management of core paths

Speyside Way

Works to upgrade the section behind Insh to Inveruglass are currently being carried out by ACT Heritage. This section suffers from poor drainage and as a result the path is extremely muddy especially in the winter months, so this upgrade is welcomed by the local community as well as long distance users. If the weather stays settled, they estimate the works will be complete in 6 weeks and the path will remain open throughout.

Carrbridge Path to School

We are working with Carrbridge Community Council to finalise the last details on this path and once it has planning permission, we will be able to get it out to tender. The path will link the new housing development on Carr Road along the edge of the field which terminates at the playing field. It will provide an off-road route to school for the children as well as a pleasant local walk.

Glen Tanar Footbridge

The bridge is currently open, and temporary repairs have been carried out by Aberdeenshire Council to protect the abutments. Further hydrological surveys are being undertaken to model if the green engineering options will work.

Path Promotion

Accessible Paths - Three paths (in Nethy Bridge, Boat of Garten and Kingussie) have been surveyed against the accessible path standard. These will be promoted on the Accessibility page of the Park website, and the individual path pages will provide more detailed information about the routes.

This work will be rolled out to community path groups and land managers with the aim of identifying further accessible routes and encouraging bringing more paths up to accessible standard.

Path leaflets – Ranger team has been trained in ‘path grading’ and the rangers have re-surveyed and graded all the paths in Tomintoul, Nethy bridge, Ballater and Braemar ahead of updating the ‘Paths around Communities’ leaflets. This year aiming to update the Tomintoul leaflet.



4. Wider visitor infrastructure

Visitor Infrastructure Improvement Programme

Approximately £210,000 has been allocated and grants offer from the VIIP funds held by The Park Authority. They include projects such as paths works at Loch an Eilean and improvements to the Cairns on Balmoral Estate.