



Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum

Paper 2- Discussion Paper- Reviewing and refreshing the Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum

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Purpose

To review and refresh the format of the Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum, put plans in place to new members and ensure the LOAF is sustainable going forward.

Background

1. Section 25 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 (the Act) requires that the Access Authority set up a local access forum for the purpose of advising the Access Authority and others on matters relating to outdoor access. When making appointments to the forum, regard must be had on reasonable representation in the forum of:
 - a. Bodies representative of persons who have an interest in the exercise of access rights, persons having such an interest:
 - b. Bodies representative of landowners and landowners themselves.
2. The Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum (LOAF) has been operational for more than 21 years on the 31st of March 2026 and has played a crucial role in helping the Park Authority shape and develop policies and plans, address access issues and advise on the sustainable management of outdoor access. Members' time and dedication is highly valued by the Cairngorms National Park Authority and by the Park Authority Board.
3. This paper considers the future structure and membership of the LOAF with the aim of:
 - a) Ensuring the focus of the LOAF is on matters most relevant to the long-term sustainable management of recreation and outdoor access:



- b) Providing interest and opportunity for new members:
 - c) Ensuring there remains representation from both those taking access and landowners or land managers who manage access:
 - d) Supporting members to make valuable contributions to discussions on outdoor access.
4. It is recognised that in the last few years it has been challenging to recruit new members. This is not a unique problem for the Cairngorms LOAF and reflects similar challenges in other Access Authority areas.
5. In 2024/25 the Park Authority took steps to refresh and reinvigorate the LOAF including recruiting new members and a revised meeting format of three evening meetings a year including one in-person session.
6. The Cairngorms LOAF Operating Procedures state there will be a maximum of 15 members including one Park Authority Board member. Currently there are 10 members including a board member and another public sector organisation ordinarily a representative from Forestry and Land Scotland.

Options

7. Table 1 sets out two potential options going forward to maintain the LOAF on a sustainable and relevant footing.

Table 1.

Option	Description	Pros	Cons
Maintain existing forum	Maintain existing format and structure of the LOAF, instigate a membership recruitment drive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintains continuity:• Builds skills and experience within existing members• Ensures an operational LOAF is in place if required	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At risk of dwindling membership and meetings not being representative• Format favours volunteers not professionals as evening meetings



		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evening meetings attractive for volunteer members• Allows individuals to participate	don't suit professionals
Refresh and restructure LOAF membership based on the National Access Forum model	Re-write the operating principles to change the format ie, day time meetings and membership structure including a mix of self selected seats, representative seats drawn from likes of other Park fora	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides an opportunity to restructure membership and create a format that favours representative bodies• Enables testing of newer models of participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Risk of hiatus in LOAF coverage• Risk of existing members leaving• May be more challenging to upskill participants• Risk loss of balanced input• Risk of loss of community representation

LOAF Members are asked to consider and advise which model would be best to develop.