

**CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM**

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- Title:** Monitoring the condition of Core Paths
- Prepared by:** Adam Streeter Smith, Outdoor Access Officer
- Purpose:** To inform and ask advice of the LOAF on the development of a monitoring methodology for core paths

**Advice Sought**

1. The Forum are asked to consider whether the use of the draft criteria for monitoring the condition of core paths, as outlined in the table below, sets an appropriate bench mark for core paths in the Park?

**Background**

2. The Cairngorms National Park Authority, along with other Access Authorities has been preparing a Core Paths Plan. If the current draft plan proceeds unchallenged to adoption, it will designate a total of 885Km of paths in the Park, 25km of which will be new construction.
3. Having designated the core paths, work will begin to make sure that the paths are easy to find and to follow, well sign-posted and, as far as possible, free from barriers and obstructions. The paths do not have to be of a specific type or quality.
4. In order to implement the Core Paths Plan we need to establish the condition of paths in the network. This will help set annual targets and direct resources. At present the CNPA does not have a monitoring system in place to plan this work and report on progress back to the LOAF, CNPA Board or the Scottish Government. However in Scotland work has already been started by the Paths for All Partnership, this forms the basis of the table below.
5. It is important to remember that this process is not about setting a minimum construction standard for core paths, but about being able

to ensure that, as a whole, all paths in the Core Paths Plan meet the objectives<sup>1</sup> of the path network, whilst preserving the individual aspects that make them attractive to users

6. To help the CNPA develop its thinking further on what "favourable condition" of paths looks like and design a survey we will be hosting a workshop on the 4<sup>th</sup> September at 1:30pm in Talla Nan Ross in Kingussie.

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<sup>1</sup> The core paths network will:

- Help to conserve the Parks' natural and cultural heritage and encourage people to enjoy it in a responsible way
- Help those living and working on the land
- Help to deliver the priorities for each area identified in the Outdoor Access Strategy
- Provide for a wide range of activities
- Provide for a wide range of abilities
- Include a wide range of popular routes; and
- Include paths within, around and between communities and to public transport connections and places of local importance

**Condition Standards for Core Paths – as developed by Paths for all Partnership**

<b>Feature</b>	<b>'Satisfactory' criteria</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Surface	Firm, dry, free of mud, holes, ruts, significant loose material	Natural surfaces can fulfil this criterion. Some puddling acceptable if surveyed in extreme wet weather / snow melt.
Path Corridor	Free of obstructions, overhanging branches to 3.5m tall, encroaching vegetation. Minimum clear width typically 2.5m.	Short 'pinch points' of less than 2.5m width acceptable (for example around a building, large tree etc.) This section would also note landslips blocking path
Drainage	Culverts, ditches or other drains free of blockages, erosion, collapse of headwalls or ditch sides	This refers to existing drainage features, not problems due to a lack of drainage - these would be covered under surface.
Bridges and boardwalks	No detectable movement of deck or handrail, no splinters on handrail, no broken members, deck has good slip resistance, no trip hazards	Bridges should be catalogued and assessed for suitability for different users and a formal inspection regime instigated for spans greater than 1.5m
Other structures	Revetments stable and erosion free, no bulges, sagging or loose material. Timberwork solid and free of broken or cracked members, gabions even and wires in tact.	
Gates and access controls	If no stock proofing required, control to be gap of 1.5m width (1.2m absolute minimum). If stock proofing required 2-way opening self-closing gate capable of being opened with one hand. Any structures to be solid, free of splinters, cracks or broken members, latches to be functional, hinges to be free	Other gates non SOAC or DDA compliant. Surface defects through gates to be noted under 'surface' section

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	moving.	
Signs	Clearly readable, enables users to follow route, uses 'path' in wording. No wording or symbols which discourage non-motorised use	Other features may allow users to follow route e.g. clear path line, gates in fence lines visible. 'Footpath', 'bridle path', or 'cycle path' not required.
Seating	Solid and stable, clean, accessible, free of splinters	Could include minimum distance criteria as per Fieldfare Trust standards