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**CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM**

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**Title:** Promoting “Tread Lightly” in the National Park

**Prepared by:** Adam Streeter-Smith, Outdoor Access Officer

**Purpose:** To update members on the work undertaken to date towards promoting responsible access in the Park and seek views on priority messages going forward

**Advice Sought**

**Do LOAF members agree that the two main themes should be dogs and fires? If “tread lightly” was to focus on a third theme what should this be?**

**What hashtags and linking text should be use to promote “tread lightly” messages online?**

**Background**

Tread Lightly

1. The Park Authority has a duty to promote the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. “Tread Lightly” is the main campaign by which the Park Authority and its partners, Ranger Services, Visit Cairngorms and land managers, promote key messages on what the exercise of responsible access looks like in the Park. Developed in 2011 through consultation with the LOAF, Ranger Services and other partners (see annex 1), it seeks to set a welcoming and informative approach to encouraging responsible access. The key messages in “tread lightly” are (see annex 2):

- Responsible dog walking:
- Camping and litter:
- Outdoor cooking:
- Fires and
- Toileting.

2. To promote these messages the Park Authority developed a concertina leaflet, posters, banners to promote “tread lightly” and more recently utilised social media at key times of year to promote relevant messages e.g, dogs on leads on sensitive ground nesting bird sites from March through to mid-August.
3. It is important to stress that unlike Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park the messaging in “tread lightly” is designed to be welcoming and engaging rather than forceful and authoritative. To illustrate the emphasis in “tread lightly” is *make it yours* and using positive words and phrases and focus on the good and positive rather than negative phrases like “respect” or “don’t”.
4. The summer of 2018 was an exceptional one with an extensive period of dry weather resulting in a lengthy period of high fire risk. Lucky there were no major fire instances and it is important that we acknowledge hard work of rangers and site managers to prevent this. Collectively a lot was done to raise awareness of the high fire risk, for example over 57,246 accounts – shared by 373 times by individuals, organisations and businesses- were reached on social media highlighting the fire risks. That said feedback from site managers and land owners has highlighted the need to consider if the messaging is right, understandable and relevant.

#### Promoting key messages

5. As highlighted earlier “tread lightly” focuses on 5 key messages, albeit there is great deal of cross over between some of them, which broadly fall within two themes – responsible dog walking and wild camping (or back country access)- identified previously as being the main issues in the Park.
6. There are of course other issues of irresponsible behaviour in the Park- livestock worrying, ant-social behaviour, guerrilla mountain bike trail building and safety around forestry to name but a few- but there are other agencies that are the lead on promoting awareness of these issues and we support them where we can.
7. Discussions with Ranger Services across the Park has highlighted that the current key messages are a bit confusing and could be simpler and more direct. This is best illustrated with the fire message whereby it is not clear where it would be safe to have a fire, what we mean by woodland and nor does it set the expectation well enough that there may be times of year when a fire isn’t responsible anywhere.
8. In revising the key messages the Park Authority would like to set expectations about what is responsible or not for visitors before they decide where to go, to be absolutely

clear about what is and isn't responsible behaviour and to make the messages adaptable to modern forms of communication.

9. Protecting the Parks special qualities is the most important outcome for any "tread lightly" promotion so they messages have to be relevant to protecting ground nesting birds such as capercaillie and dotterel and protecting the nationally important native forests of the Park.

10. Consultation with colleagues and Ranger Services has highlighted that the key themes for "tread lightly" should ideally be as a minimum:

- Dogs and ground nesting birds:
- Fires:

11. There is scope within the key messages to cover other issues with irresponsible access and advice is sought on this matter.

**Do LOAF members agree that the two main themes should be dogs and fires? If "tread lightly" was to focus on a third theme what should this be?**

"Tread lightly" as a headline message

12. With the continuing growth of social media platforms as a means to communicate with the public it is opportune to consider if "tread lightly" as a headline is fit for purpose, works well as hashtag and is memorable and readily shared by social media influencers.

13. A cursory search through social media platforms for hashtags and linking text highlights such phrases as:

- #Leavenotrace:
- #SOAC
- #Dogwalking
- #OutdoorAccess

14. The list of course is endless and it is proposed that rather than rebrand "tread lightly" a list of ideal hashtags and linking text are drawn up to use in communications for example #leavenotrace, #makeityours, #Scotlandoutdoors to name but few.

**What hashtags and linking text should be use to promote "tread lightly" messages online?**

Next steps

15. Further consultation on the revised text for the main messages is planned with Ranger Services, the LOAF and key partners.

16. Key activities for the revised “tread lightly” campaign in 2019 will focus on:

- Maintaining awareness of “tread lightly” through social media, publications and press including text on the welcome leaflet:
- Joint media campaigns with key partners such as Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland and the Cairngorms Business Partnership:
- “Point of sale” promotion using posters, banners and leaflet holders for example in garages, outdoor shops and ranger bases:
- Continued support for events such as “top dogs day out”:
- Training for visitor facing staff through “tread lightly” being featured in the “make it yours” training programme:
- Awareness raising with key stakeholders on the ground i.e. local dog trainers, commercial dog walkers and others such as Duke of Edinburgh Award groups and Junior Rangers:
- Face to face contact with the public through the Ranger Services.

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Annex 1

LOAF Paper on “tread lightly” -

<http://cairngorms.co.uk/resource/docs/boardpapers/08112011/CNPA.Paper.4668.Local%20Outdoor%20Access%20Forum%20Working%20Group.Paper.3.Tread.L.pdf>

Annex 2

# Tread Lightly in the Park

**Cairngorms NATIONAL PARK**  
Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhònaidh Ruaidh

## Dogs

From April to August, keep your dog on a short lead or close to heel in areas of ground nesting birds. Avoid fields with livestock – particularly young animals. Clean up after your dog. Put any waste in a bin, or take it away. In more remote areas, remove it off the path.

## Camping and litter

Pitch your tent well away from cars, roads or buildings. Keep the numbers of your group small. Move on after a couple of nights. Remove traces of your camping site and any litter. Carry out what you carry in.

## Outdoor cooking

Use a stove rather than an open fire. Place foil barbeque trays on a solid, fire-resistant surface such as stones, sand or shingle.

## Fires

Never light a fire during prolonged dry periods or in woodlands or on peaty soils. Never cut down or damage trees. Keep fires small, under control and supervised at all times. Ensure a fire is completely out and remove all traces of it.

## Toilets

Use a public toilet if there is one. If not, dig a hole and bury waste well away from buildings or well-used areas. Urinate at least 30 paces from lochs, rivers and streams.

**When you are enjoying the outdoors the key things to remember are:**

- Take responsibility for your own actions
- Respect the interests of other people
- Care for the environment

**A quarter of Scotland's native forest**

**Scotland's wild heart: an accessible wilderness**

**A stronghold for Britain's rare and endangered species**

**The UK's highest and most massive mountains**

**KNOW THE CODE BEFORE YOU GO**  
SCOTTISH OUTDOOR ACCESS CODE outdooraccess-scotland.com

*Make it Yours*

[www.cairngorms.co.uk](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk)