

Annual Outdoor Access Event – September 27th 2008, Braemar

Key Issues from the Day

Thank you to those who attended the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Annual Event in Braemar which we hope you found both interesting and stimulating. During the course of the day a number of points and issues were raised. We are keen to ensure that the issues raised are not lost and to use some of the discussion points as a focus for our future work. As a first step in this process we have listed below the key points that came out of the day and have given an indication of how the Park Authority, together with partners, would hope to take them forward. If you think we have missed any salient point please do not hesitate to get in touch by dropping an e-mail to franpothecary@cairngorms.co.uk in the first instance.

Topic	How to take forward
1. COMMUNICATION AND UNDERSTANDING	
There is a need for better communication and understanding, particularly relating to knowledge about land management practices and the interaction between different recreational groups.	<p>The Scottish Outdoor Access Code provides information at a Scottish-wide level but perhaps there is a need for more locally focussed information. Encouraging estates to join the Hillphones Scheme can help but understanding the economic value of stalking to estates and rural communities is equally important. The Park Authority has been working collaboratively with the Deer Commission Scotland and a local estate by taking primary schoolchildren on to an estate to learn at first hand the importance of deer management.</p> <p>The knowledge of the impact of cyclists on ridden horses would appear to be quite low. More work is required to raise knowledge and appreciation of impacts. This should be tackled through respective governing bodies who could help by providing information about their activity directed specifically at other user groups.</p>
2. MAINTENANCE	

<p>Maintenance funding remains a problem and needs to be addressed to avoid the previous norm of capital repair with no maintenance which results in failing paths.</p>	<p>The Park Authority recognises the need to find income streams to ensure capital repair work is maintained. The Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust can assist in this regard and the Outdoor Access Strategy for the National Park encourage the use of income derived from facilities such as car parks to be re-invested in path repairs and other types of countryside furniture.</p>
<p>3. PATH CONSTRUCTION FOR MULTI-USE</p>	
<p>Path construction style needs to consider all potential users and, in particular, the use of paths by bikes.</p>	<p>This point is well made and existing path construction techniques have not addressed cycling particularly well. To encourage this, guidance can be updated and grant-giving organisations should use conditions to ensure multi-use is the norm rather than the exception.</p>
<p>4. PATH SIGNAGE</p>	
<p>Way-marking and signage produced conflicting views on whether there should be some generic style or not.</p>	<p>There are huge variations in way-marking with some paths using distance in miles, others in kilometres and others in time. It is a confusing picture and the Park Authority has already undertaken widespread consultation and recently concluded Guidance on Path Signs. This has now been agreed by the Park Authority Board and all parties involved in promoting, and waymarking paths will be encouraged to follow the guidance.</p>
<p>5. UPLAND AREAS – WHO FOR?</p>	
<p>Is there an aspiration to see more people in the upland areas through promotion, or to keep the upland areas exclusive?</p>	<p>The Park Authority is not directly marketing the upland areas but the more people who can appreciate the mountains first-hand, the greater chance of them understanding their importance and a love and respect of such places that can last a lifetime. Using initiatives such as the John Muir Award can provide a structured means of learning about these special places.</p>

6. ROADSIDE CAMPING	
<p>There is a need to explore potential solutions for the issue of “heavyweight or roadside” camping.</p>	<p>There are a number of solutions to this problem: some of which are already being adopted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing low key and informal camp sites may displace some of the activity; • Ranger services can assist in tackling the issue by discussing the impacts with those who undertake this form of camping. Engaging directly with campers can also help to understand what experience they are seeking and assist in determining whether it can be obtained nearby ; • Identifying potential camping sites in the Local Plan should be considered; • Blocking access for vehicles can inhibit some elements of the camping
7. WALKING POLES	
<p>Does the Park Authority need to tackle potential damage caused by walking poles?</p>	<p>We are not aware of any studies to indicate that poles cause any appreciable damage to paths or surrounding vegetation, although there is an increasing amount of hearsay supporting this. The Park Authority will bear this in mind</p>
8. SYMPATHETIC PATH DESIGN	
<p>There is a need to ensure that paths are designed to be sympathetic to the landscape – avoiding “pink ribbons” in the uplands and ensuring natural, not over-engineered lines through</p>	<p>The existing guidance for the construction of upland paths emphasises the need for such a sympathetic approach to the landscape. New paths can however appear “raw” and do require some time to weather to a less stark intrusion. Works commissioned by the Park Authority and the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust will stipulate that current guidance should be followed.</p>