



# Cairngorms National Park Core Paths Plan

March 2010



# Cairngorms National Park

## Core Paths Plan

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Cover photograph:  
Winter walking in Anagach Woods, Grantown-on-Spey © David Gowans

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## Foreword

Enjoying the outdoors is something that we all do and we are very lucky to have the Cairngorms National Park as a fantastic backdrop for walking, cycling, canoeing and horse riding.

The Cairngorms National Park Authority, along with all the other Access Authorities in Scotland have been asking communities about the important paths in their area. This has allowed us draw up a Core Paths Plan which will provide the basic network of paths in the National Park.

Most of these paths will be located on lower ground close to communities, but a small number will provide links through the mountains and one river is included. The benefits of this new network will contribute positively to improving people's health, stimulating more physical activity, social inclusion and the minimisation of carbon emissions to help address climate change. Core paths will also play an important role in helping to reduce potential conflicts with those who manage the land.

The network of paths identified in this document provide this basic framework for the Cairngorms National Park, but much work still remains to be done to improve the condition of these paths and to ensure they are well promoted and waymarked. We will be working with partners to deliver this important piece of work over the next few years.

## Facal-toisich

Tha e a' còrdadh rinn uile a bhith a-muigh agus tha sinn gu math fortanach gu bheil Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh againn mar àite air leth math airson a bhith a' coiseachd, a' falbh le baidhsagal, a' canùadh agus a' marcachd each.

Tha Ùghdarras Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh, còmhla ri na h-Ùghdarrasan Ruigsinneachd eile ann an Alba air a bhith a' sireadh fiosrachaidh bho choimhearsnachdan mu na slighean a tha cudromach san sgìre aca. Tha seo air cothrom a thoirt dhuinn Plana Prìomh Shlighean a dhealbhadh a bheir dhuinn bun-lìonra de shlighean sa Phàirc Nàiseanta.

Tha a' mhòr-chuid de na slighean seo rin lorg air talamh ìosal faisg air coimhearsnachdan, ach bidh cuid dhiubh nan slighean tro na beanntan agus tha aon abhainn nam measg. Bidh sochairean an lùib an lìonra ùir seo a bhios a' cur ri leasachadh slàinte dhaoine, a' brosnachadh tuilleadh eacarsaich chorporra, in-ghabhail sòisealta agus lùghdachadh gualan gus buaidh a thoirt air atharrachadh na sìde. Bidh Prìomh Shlighean cuideachd cudromach ann a bhith a' lùghdachadh bhùairidhean a dh'fhaodadh a bhith ann le daoine a tha an urra ris an fhearann.

Tha an lìonra shlighean a tha air an comharrachadh san sgrìobhainn seo a' tabhann fream-obrach shìmplidh do Phàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh, ach tha tòrr obrach fhathast ri dhèanamh gus staid nan slighean seo a leasachadh agus gus dèanamh cinnteach gu bheil iad air an deagh shanasachd agus air an deagh chomharrachadh. Bidh sinn ag obair còmhla ri com-pàirtichean gus an obair chudromach seo a libhrigeadh thar nam bliadhnaichean a tha romhainn.



**David Green**, Convener, Cairngorms National Park Authority

**Daibhidh Green**, Neach-gairm, Ùghdarras Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh

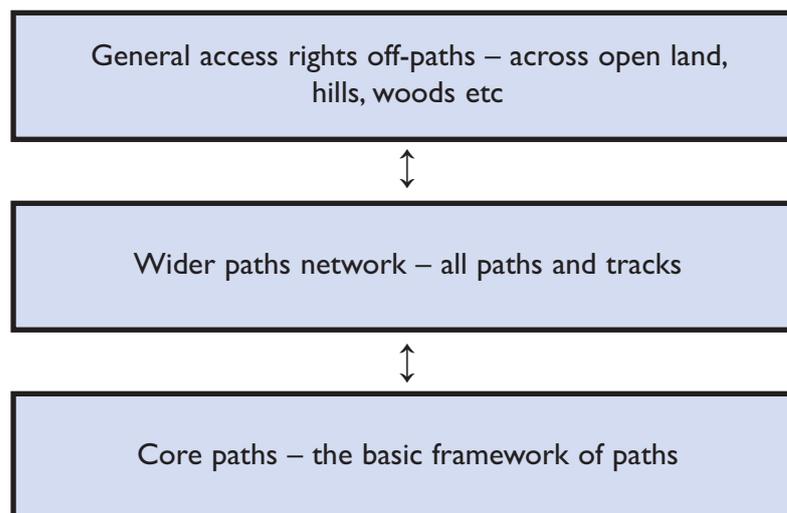
# I. Introduction

- I.1** This document sets out the core paths network for the Cairngorms National Park. The Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) has worked to identify and designate a network of core paths, which will make it easier for everyone to enjoy the outdoors responsibly. These core paths will provide opportunities for everyone, including walkers, cyclists, horse-riders and canoeists. The core paths network will enable people of all ages and abilities to move around their area whether it is for getting to the shops, walking the dog or enjoying the outdoors. The real difference will be around communities where there will be a more visible network of paths for everyone to enjoy.
  
- I.2** The Cairngorms National Park is one of the best places in Scotland to enjoy the outdoors. The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 ('the Act') provides everyone with non-motorised access rights to almost all land and inland water in Scotland, as long as they are used responsibly. In doing so the public, communities, landowners and businesses can reap the benefits of access, from improved health and wellbeing to helping safeguard our most valuable birds and habitats.

## 2. Purpose of the Core Paths Network

### Context

**2.1** The Cairngorms National Park Authority has a duty under the Act to prepare a Core Paths Plan and to keep it under review. Section 17(1) of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 states that the core paths network should be, ‘...sufficient for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout their area’. This is further defined in guidance which was produced by the Scottish Government for Local Authorities and National Park Authorities. The guidance states that, the ‘sufficiency’ of the proposed core paths network to give reasonable access throughout the area may be assessed by the extent to which it demonstrates reasonable responsiveness to local consultations, key public policy objectives and the Outdoor Access Strategy in relation to and at the scale of the authority’s area. It is important to note that core paths are not intended to limit people’s access rights but to complement them; this is best illustrated below.



**2.2** The network of core paths in the Cairngorms National Park will satisfy the needs of both visitors and local people for getting about and linking into a much wider path network and beyond. To achieve this, the core paths network is a mixture of existing paths and a small number of new paths, which together provide a cohesive system. The Cairngorms National Park core paths network includes:

1. existing paths and tracks
2. paths that need to be built
3. quiet roads
4. pavements
5. the River Spey

**2.3** The vision and objectives were identified for the Core Paths Plan during the consultation process and with the advice of the Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum. The vision and objectives for the Plan also reflect key public policy objectives including those contained in the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Strategy. The core paths network will deliver two of the Cairngorms National Park Plan outcomes, which are:

*'A wider range of people will have the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors; and*

*There will be a more extensive, high quality, well maintained and clearly promoted path network so that everyone can enjoy the outdoors and move around the Park in a way that minimises reliance on motor vehicles.'*

## Vision

The Core Paths Plan will help people to enjoy and understand the special qualities of the Cairngorms National Park by identifying a network of paths which offer a wide range of high quality outdoor access opportunities.

## Objectives

The core paths network will:

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

**2.4** The Cairngorms National Park Outdoor Access Strategy 2007-2012 identifies both policies and areas within the Park which have similar characteristics for outdoor access. These policies and area priorities have been used in the development of the Core Paths Plan and, as a consequence, will enable the CNPA to direct resources for further improvement and development to these priority paths.

### 3. Developing the Core Paths Plan

A three-stage process

A three-stage process was used to ensure full public engagement and consultation took place in developing the Core Paths Plan. The process is shown in Figure 1.

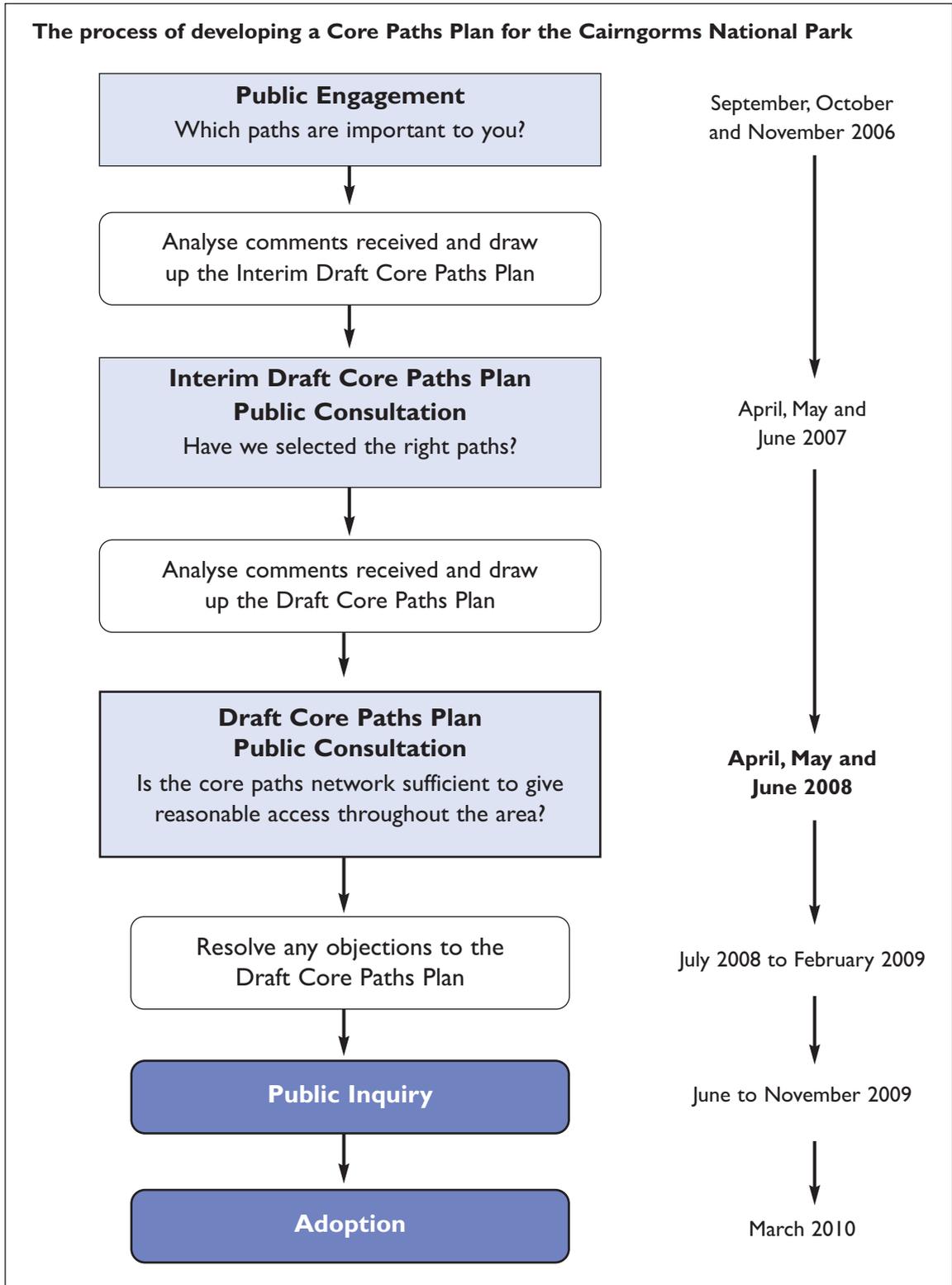


Figure 1 - Developing the Core Paths Plan

## Stage one

- 3.1** The first stage began in September 2006. The Cairngorms National Park Authority encouraged people representing a wide range of interest groups, to tell us which paths they value and why, what they use the paths for and what concerns they might have over particular paths. The information obtained at that time was then used to draw up the Interim Draft Core Paths Plan.

## Stage two

- 3.2** The Interim Draft Core Paths Plan was made available for public consultation during April to June of 2007. Over 550 people got involved in the consultation and provided comments on the Plan. The main issues arising from the consultation related to the aim and criteria used to select paths and the inclusion in the network of: waterways, paths in upland areas, all promoted paths, rights of way, the Speyside Way, and quiet roads and pavements. There was also a large number of comments received relating to specific paths. All of the comments received during the consultation were used to help draw up the Draft Core Paths Plan.

## Stage three

- 3.3** The consultation on the Draft Core Paths Plan was completed in June 2008. A total of 82 written objections to the Draft Core Paths Plan were received, with objections raised on the River Spey, specific paths and on issues such as safety in the mountains. The CNPA sought to resolve those objections but 23 outstanding objections went to Public Inquiry. A Public Inquiry was held in June 2009 through to November, including an informal hearing on the River Spey objections. The ensuing report was submitted to Ministers in December 2009.
- 3.4** The Reporter recommended rejection of the objections and the exclusion of one small section of road. The recommendation was endorsed by Scottish Ministers in January 2010 who directed the CNPA to adopt the Plan. This was formally done on 19 March 2010.

## 4. Implementing the Core Paths Plan

- 4.1** The core paths network will provide people with high quality outdoor access opportunities. This does not mean that all paths must be of a specific standard or highly engineered surface. The high quality will come from the experience itself. This means that a path surface should be appropriate to its surroundings and terrain and the surface, whatever it is, kept in good condition. In more remote and upland areas this may involve keeping erosion in check or repairing the path surface if necessary. It would not involve making it easier to access. On a cycle path with a tarmac surface it may involve ensuring potholes are filled in and vegetation kept off the path.
- 4.2** Where appropriate, the core paths network will be well promoted, signposted and waymarked and the paths will also be marked on Ordnance Survey and other maps. The CNPA along with partners will work towards the target of ensuring that any path included in the core paths network is fit for purpose or can be made fit for purpose within a relatively short time period after the Plan is adopted. This may mean that a path has to be built or an existing path improved.
- 4.3** Some public roads and pavements are core paths as they provide important links in the network. Roads have only been included in the network if they are already well used by people for accessing the wider network and where no suitable off-road alternative could be identified. Guidance from national agencies is that designation of roads as part the network should be accompanied by relevant safety measures. The CNPA will work with Local Authority Roads Departments and the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust to identify and implement appropriate measures such as reduced speed limits, traffic calming, cycle lanes and signage etc, as is the case with the existing National Cycle Network. The CNPA will work towards the development of off-road alternatives for a future review of the Core Paths Plan.

## 5. Strategic Environmental Assessment and Natura

- 5.1** A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) has been used to help develop the Core Paths Plan. The Core Paths Plan has a strong positive effect in relation to responsible access for all, improving air quality and maintaining a healthy population. It also has a positive effect on improving energy efficiency and reducing waste and pollution.
- 5.2** The Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Core Paths Plan included an assessment of potential impacts of the network on the sense of wildness that people might experience in the area. A number of core paths have been identified in remote and upland areas, particularly in the Central and Eastern Cairngorms. These paths will not be subject to further promotion or waymarking and any path works will strive to retain the wild qualities of the area. This is in line with policies one and eleven of the Outdoor Access Strategy for the Cairngorms National Park. All of the paths in the Central Cairngorms area (as noted in the Plan with a CC reference) fall into this category.
- 5.3** In addition to the SEA, the CNPA worked with Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) to carry out Appropriate Assessments to relevant designated sites. These assessments ensured that any core paths which pass through or near to a Natura 2000 designated site, are assessed for their potential impact.

## 6. How to use the Core Paths Plan

- 6.1** A Core Paths Plan is a plan containing lists and maps showing the network of core paths; their relationships to other paths and information on how the core paths were selected. It is not a promotional document nor does the CNPA intend to promote the paths as core paths.
- 6.2** Land managers and developers who manage land in the Cairngorms National Park should have careful regard to the Core Paths Plan. Land managers should incorporate measures to protect core paths and ensure that they are free from obstruction. Developers should use the Plan to protect access on a development site and inform how access is incorporated in developments.
- 6.3** Core paths may need to be closed temporarily on occasion, either for path maintenance or repair works, organised events, or for land management operations which may affect them. This is to be expected.
- 6.4** Those interested in promoting outdoor access opportunities, such as communities or guide book writers, can use the Plan to identify the best paths in an area and be confident that they are well signposted and accessible to a variety of users. Those promoting access opportunities are encouraged to follow the guidance produced by the CNPA.
- 6.5** Anyone intending to undertake a management operation or propose a development that might affect a core path should consult with the Cairngorms National Park Authority Outdoor Access Team.

## 7. Monitoring

- 7.1** The Cairngorms National Park Plan priority for action for high quality outdoor access has a target of 90 per cent of the core paths network being 'fit for purpose' by 2012. The Park Authority has developed a set of three indicators to measure 'fit for purpose' based around signage and waymarking, path surface and ease of use. A methodology has been developed to assess these indicators and a monitoring regime has been set in motion to assess the network on an annual cycle.

## 8. Review

- 8.1** The Core Paths Plan will be reviewed in conjunction with the Cairngorms National Park Local Plan, probably around 2013. In some cases, paths that appeared in earlier drafts have not made it into the adopted Plan. Annex I (see p42) details all of the candidate paths that didn't make it into this Plan. In carrying out the review the CNPA will revisit this list as an early priority.
- 8.2** In the interim period, if a land manager needs to permanently divert or realign a core path for long term land management operations or safety issues then this can be done through discussion with the CNPA. In such a case the Core Paths Plan would have to be amended and consideration given to the impact that this may have on the sufficiency of the network as a whole.
- 8.3** If the diversion is only temporary then this can be dealt with as it would be on any other path, in line with the provisions of 4.15 of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. The exception is if the core path is also a Right of Way; in these cases the path cannot be diverted without first going through a formal process.

## 9. The Core Paths Network

- 9.1** Map 1 (see p16) shows the core paths network in its entirety (932 kilometres) across the Cairngorms National Park. The map also shows the Action Areas of the Park which have similar characteristics for outdoor access as identified in the Cairngorms National Park Outdoor Access Strategy 2007-2012. For each Action Area there are a series of priorities which the core paths network is seeking to address. These Action Areas are highlighted in bold in the table on page 15.
- 9.2** On the following pages you will find a map of each area followed by more detailed maps of the settlements within those areas.

## List of Maps

| <b>No</b> | <b>Area/Settlement</b>          | <b>No</b> | <b>Area/Settlement</b>               |
|-----------|---------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b>  | <b>Cairngorms National Park</b> | 15        | Drumin and Tomnavoulin               |
| <b>2</b>  | <b>The Central Cairngorms</b>   | <b>16</b> | <b>Lower Badenoch and Strathspey</b> |
| <b>3</b>  | <b>The Eastern Cairngorms</b>   | 17        | Grantown-on-Spey and Cromdale        |
| <b>4</b>  | <b>Upper Deeside</b>            | 18        | Dalnain Bridge and Nethy Bridge      |
| 5         | Linn of Dee                     | 19        | Carr-Bridge                          |
| 6         | Braemar                         | 20        | Boat of Garten                       |
| 7         | Crathie                         | 21        | Aviemore                             |
| 8         | Glen Tanar                      | 22        | Kincraig and Insh                    |
| 9         | Ballater                        | 23        | Kingussie                            |
| 10        | Dinnet and Cambus O'May         | <b>24</b> | <b>Upper Badenoch and Strathspey</b> |
| <b>11</b> | <b>Upper Donside</b>            | 25        | Newtonmore                           |
| 12        | Strathdon                       | 26        | Laggan                               |
| <b>13</b> | <b>Glenlivet and Tomintoul</b>  | 27        | Dalwhinnie                           |
| 14        | Tomintoul                       | <b>28</b> | <b>Glenmore and Rothiemurchus</b>    |