

# Loch Lomond & The Trossachs

## Local Access Forum

Agenda Item 9

### Core Paths Plan Review



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#### *Paper for information and discussion.*

1. Purpose

This paper provides an update on the Park Authority's plans to review its Core Paths Plan; and also to undertake a "refresh" of the Outdoor Recreation Plan.

2. Introduction

The Park Authority adopted its first Core Paths Plan in June 2010 fulfilling its duty, under section 17 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, "to draw up a plan for a system of paths ("core paths") sufficient for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout their area."

The Core Paths Plan was prepared using specially designed and agreed selection criteria, informed by the Local Access Forum. It involved an extensive period of public consultation, community and partner engagement, mapping and assessment of paths and concluded with a reporters unit hearing on the unwithdrawn objections.

There are 732 kms of core paths consisting of cycle tracks, hill paths, historic routes, footways (pavements), forest tracks, short sections of quiet minor road and off-road paths in towns, villages and the wider countryside across the National Park.

The core path provision is largely centred around settlements where people live or places people visit and with connecting paths both in and outside the National Park. Importance is placed on both the functional aspects associated with active travel and healthy choices; and recreational aspects that form an important part of our visitor experience, and promotion of the Park's special qualities.

3. The review process

The Park Authority had intended to review its Plan alongside the Local Development Plan, however this changed due to a review of and improvement to the statutory processes for reviewing and amending the Core Paths Plan. These have been addressed in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 and new guidance is expected from Scottish Government in due course.

The purpose of the review is to ensure that the plan continues to recognise the essential "core paths" that provide sufficient access throughout the National Park area. In order to ascertain whether or not the Plan meets this requirement an "informal" review is undertaken to scope out any issues and gather evidence to inform the appropriate next steps:

1. No changes required = no action
2. One path change = single amendment procedure
3. Several changes = full formal review

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The scoping of issues and evidence gathering stage will inform the extent of any potential changes required to the plan either as new core paths, removal of core paths or amendments to alignments.

We anticipate a full review process will be required, as the Forum have already highlighted at the last meeting, there is the potential addition to the plan of paths such as the Great Trossachs Path and the St Fillans to Lochearnhead path and the Access Team are aware of others.

#### 5. Timeline

The timing for the review takes into account the NPPP consultation April to July, whilst also recognising that the NPA Tourism Strategy is also approaching time for review and all have policy links with the Core Paths Plan and will involve stakeholder engagement.

We plan to start the process in August 2017, in order to allow enough time to update the current core paths dataset and get web-mapping in place.

Timeline and main tasks:

#### **2017**

- August – October      scoping for issues/evidence gathering: targeted engagement including Access Forum and NGOs
- Nov – December      core path selection and mapping: GIS and Access Team

#### **2018**

- Jan - February      in-house prep and design of amended core paths plan
- March      NP Board consider/approve amended core paths plan for consultation
- April – June      Public consultation (12 weeks)
- July – August      Resolve objections (to proposed amendments only)
- Sept onwards      Adopt Plan (subject to status of any objections e.g. local inquiry).

#### 6. Stakeholder engagement and consultation

The Local Access Forum has a key role to play in the review process, as it had with the development of the existing plan and specifically the core paths selection criteria. We plan to involve the Forum in advising on our proposed approach, helping with the assessment of the adequacy of the current plan and support during the full formal review.

A programme of engagement particularly during the scoping phase will be developed targeting communities of interest such as the access and recreation NGO's, local interest

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groups and clubs, local path groups, community development trusts, outdoor activity providers as well as organisations such as SNH, FCS, Sportscotland, Sustrans, TransportScotland and neighbouring access authorities. This would take the form of bespoke workshops to maximise input; as well as exploring digitally based options and some targeted self-led input utilising community hubs.

#### 7. Outdoor Recreation Plan refresh

Whilst reviewing the core paths it also presents an ideal opportunity to refresh the ORP. The ORP is a rolling programme of actions which requires updating by 2018. This will be incorporated into the core paths stakeholder engagement elements, which will largely involve the same audiences though noting that an additional session for “non- path” related activities such as motor-boating, water-skiing and fishing would be required.

#### 8. Conclusion

The informal consultations on the Core Paths Plan are planned to start in August 2017, completing an amended Core Paths Plan by February 2018 and then progressing the formal public consultation in April 2018.

The next steps are to prepare the detailed project plan.

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