

## Core Paths & Core Path Planning



# Core Paths

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 establishes a statutory right of responsible access to much of Scotland's countryside. In practice most people want to take their access along well made, clearly defined paths so the council have to prepare a Core Path Plan. This is an opportunity to identify paths that people want to use and which fit in well with farming and other land management operations.

Whilst that Act requires us to prepare a plan and then consult, we believe Core Path Planning works best when there is a group of local people to lead the process with support and guidance from us.



The duty to prepare a Core Path Plan is outlined in The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, Part One, Chapter 5, Section 17 (1).

*"It is the duty of the local authority, not later than 3 years after the coming into force of this section, 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."*



# Core Path Planning

This leaflet provides an introduction to Core Paths & Core Path Planning and outlines a step by step guide for individuals and groups.

## How To Get Started

1

You will need a core group of interested people to get the process started. This group should be as broadly based as possible with walkers, riders, cyclists, dog walkers, farmers and landowners represented.

A link with your community council and/or ward councillor can lend legitimacy and help raise awareness for the project.

## Agree Your Outcomes First

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A typical example might be...

*To identify a network of core paths in your area which gives people reasonable access throughout. These will be routes we believe will be used most and which minimise damage and disturbance to other interests. We will seek to identify routes for the benefit of all users.*

You will need to set clear boundaries for the area you are interested in and beware of biting off more than you can chew. At a practical level the area will need to fit on an A4 or A3 map at a scale that shows paths (1:25,000 - 1:50,000) for the consultation exercise.

Agree who is going to do what and set out a broad timetable for action.

## Consultation with the Landowners & Land Managers

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It is important to speak to the landowners and land managers at an early stage. Landowners and managers may be concerned about the implications of public access, but they have a wealth of knowledge about the land and the problems and opportunities for developing a path network.

It should be a relatively straightforward task to map out who they are, and to phone around and fill in the gaps. The landowners and managers on your core

group will be especially useful here since farmers know other farmers and an approach through them will be more likely to succeed. At a later stage, when you have a clearer idea of where core paths should go, you can contact the relevant ones again to talk about the details.

Council involvement is important here as we can explain the new legal arrangements and seek to allay concerns about costs, liabilities etc.

## Local Consultation

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Local people know their area better than anyone else does. They know the best routes and together have a good idea of which paths should be developed and/or promoted as core paths and those which should not.

We have developed a map-based consultation to harness this local knowledge. It asks where people go now and where they would like to go. It also asks people to say what they like and dislike and to suggest ideas for the path network.

Members of the group can undertake the interviews themselves after some basic

training. This is done to ensure that everybody is confident in what they're doing and does it in the same way as everybody else!

Local circumstances may change exactly how the exercise is carried out and we can help you decide which approach is best for your group and your area.

Maps are very useful for recording information and presenting results, but the Council's licence agreement with the Ordnance Survey means we have to be careful how we use them. The Access Officers can advise you on this.

## As a Council We Will Support the Process By

- providing administrative support such as sending out letters
- facilitating meetings with landowners etc.
- providing training, maps and other materials for consultation
- assisting in drafting a report



## The Report

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We may be able to help collate and analyse the information gathered in the consultation exercise and prepare a report.

It may well be that whilst some of the routes identified for inclusion in the Core Path Network are well defined, others are little more than an expression of interest in a path going to a particular place. There may be several options to explore at this stage. The group should discuss the draft findings before the report is presented at one or more public meetings. This provides an opportunity to keep people informed, gauge opinion on the draft findings, add members to the group and finalise the report.

## Wider Consultation

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The exercise outlined above harnesses local knowledge to identify paths for inclusion in the Core Path Network. Visitors to the area may have an interest in your paths too and this is a good time to ask for their input. We can send copies of the report to individuals, clubs, societies and interest groups outwith the area for their comments.

## Prioritising Routes

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The next steps should be:

- *to identify a list of candidate core paths*
- *to contact landowners/managers over whose land these paths go and enter into initial discussions about them*
- *to explore all the candidate core paths to identify which ones should be taken forward subject to the agreement of landowners/managers*
- *to identify which paths should be developed and promoted for multi-use (cyclists, horses, wheelchairs and walkers)*
- *to incorporate input from those outwith the area*
- *to agree a working Core Path Plan for the area with the Council and Access Forum*

### Contact the Access Officers on

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If you require this document in any other format please contact Dave Stubbs on 01738 475347

An introduction to Core Paths & Core Path Planning for individuals & groups in Perth & Kinross

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