

Scottish Countryside Access Network (SCAN)

Conference

April 2000

“Strategies for the future”

Introduction, Overview and Themes for the Day

Tim Edwards - Loch Lomond and the Trossachs Interim Committee

Notes not available.

Strategies – a Scottish Overview, Julie Proctor – *Paths for All Partnership*

Or, as I've chosen to subtitle it: *'Getting on the Right Bus!'*

If you don't know where you're going you can jump on any bus that comes along. It doesn't really matter. If on the other hand you do know where you're headed, you'll know that only a No 24B will get you there. And that's really what strategies are about – planning a journey. Plotting the route to move from where you are now to where you want to be.

So there are 3 basic **components** to a strategy:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be?
- How do we get there?

In my brief slot this morning I've been charged with providing a national overview on Access Strategies. I plan to touch briefly on the background context, move on to look at the different ways strategies are being developed and finish off with a brief look at the benefits of the strategic approach.

Back in 1997 **SNH** published guidance to local authorities on strategy development. This has been widely promoted by the Paths for all Partnership.

The process outlined has formed the starting point for most strategies – it provides a broad guiding framework:

- review and analysis
audits: policy/demand/supply/resources bus analogy:
d = where do people want to go, type of buses; s = bus routes; r = no of buses, drivers, money
- strategy workshop
where do we want to be
developing shared vision – stakeholders, strategy for area not just local authority
- synthesis
providing, improving and managing
promoting, responsible use, enjoyment
- action plans
implementation

NB: to emphasise the process is as important as the product (if the strategy isn't just to sit on the shelf – you need buy-in and ownership)

So, it is about involving and engaging with stakeholders to develop a shared vision:

a collective vision for the area not just the local authority

& ownership, so that responsibility for implementation doesn't just rest with local authority

the guidance is not a 'blue print'- step 1 do this, step 2, 3 and so on, it provides a framework which can be tailored to different needs.

So, how is it being used to develop strategies? Broadly in three different ways:

officer

access fora

consultant

... there is considerable overlap

Officer led strategies

This is not one officer sitting at a desk writing their own vision – ‘the strategy according to me’, my dept or my organisation; it’s not the vision of a single officer, rather one individual is charged with taking the lead in developing the strategy.

This might be an existing officer within the Council as in, for example, the Aberdeenshire and Dundee strategies, working with a cross-departmental steering group, bringing together planning, leisure, roads – getting people out of their boxes and working together - because paths sit within all of their remits

It might be the first task of a newly appointed access officer, for example, Falkirk, Stirling, Midlothian.

Or an officer might be appointed on a short-term contract to develop the strategy, as in: Dumfries and Galloway, Solway Heritage employed a Strategy Development Officer on a nine month contract.

....there is an overlap – the officer will frequently be setting up and working with an Access Forum as part of this process.

Consultant-led strategies

This approach is often used where there is no individual officer to take the lead. It maybe that staff resources are so limited, no officer is available, a time issue.

Or, it may be seen as the best way of taking things forward with other departments, so that no-one is too much in the driving seat.

Or it might be seen as a positive way of bringing in other partners – getting the LEC or the Health Board to buy-in to the strategy process.

And I can think of one example that followed this route because elected members were thought to take more note of what consultants say than their own officers!

We’ll hear more about the process of consultant-led strategies from Cathy later when she talks about the North Lanarkshire experience. I will emphasise that it isn’t opting out. It doesn’t mean you can take the back seat. There will be an ongoing need for clear briefs for consultants and regular steering group meetings

Consultant-led strategies can have real benefits of bringing in other partners, e.g. the East Lothian Study was jointly funded by the Council, SNH, LEEL and the PFAP, and bringing together departments – in West Dunbartonshire, the Council’s share of the cost is split between planning and roads.

To go back briefly to my **bus analogy**: All of the partners are coming from different starting points, travelling on different routes towards the access strategy. They might be coming from a transport, health, tourism or economy perspective. It is important to remember that access and paths is about more than just a nice walk or ride.

The process of developing the strategy allows them all to buy-in to the overall vision presented by the strategy, knowing it will meet both collective objectives and those of individual partners.

The strategy is a way of **co-ordinating our travel plans** (for those who travel by public transport you’ll know that there are often special benefits for group travel - special packages, deals and discounts).

Anyway, continuing on the theme of working together, I’d like to look at one example of an **Access Forum led strategy**

I touched on officers working with Fora. There is one particular example I would like to highlight, the, I think, unique case of West Lothian where the strategy was led by the Forum – they received 100% grant-aid from SNH to appoint consultants (I'm never sure if SNH really wants this broadcast widely!) - Strategy now out to public consultation

So, a **lot of Councils are doing it**, as my map of Scotland shows - but why are they all doing it?

What you get in your strategy

It sets out a **shared vision**, with **guiding principles** - a framework for how to get there. It may contain **policies and procedures** for agreeing access, planning and development – community consultation, maintenance and management, funding, promotion and, very importantly, it sets out **priorities**. In the real world with limited resources you can't do everything at once. The strategy can identify how you will prioritise. Some strategies identify priority action areas; others identify criteria to use to prioritise e.g. population size, supply, and social exclusion factors. And your strategy can say what you are **not** going to do. It protects you from the over-enthusiastic elected members and lets you resign from the fire service – you can leave behind the days of fire fighting!

This alone might be enough to convince you that you need a strategy, but if not we'll just have a quick look at other **BENEFITS**:

- **co-ordinated action and joint working** (thinking back to my picture of buses travelling on different routes):
The strategy facilitates inter-departmental and partnership working. Different departments and agencies can unite behind widely agreed strategic objectives. This is important because paths are part transport, part health, part leisure.
- **sharing implementation**: e.g. the Action Plan developed for the Stirling Access Strategy identifies many projects, the Council isn't the lead player for all of them.
- **a focus on priorities**: a framework for decision making and when necessary saying 'no'.
- **links to statutory plans** and other agencies policies and priorities.
- assist with **sourcing funds**: in D&G the Council, SNH, D&G Enterprise, Health Promotion Unit, Tourist Board are all sitting round the table and chipping into a common funding 'pot'.
In Aberdeenshire, they have moved to a block-grant arrangement with SNH and GEL, this does away with the need for individual grant applications and makes it easier to attract external match funding

In summary, there are many benefits to developing an Access Strategy – and remember, the process is every bit as important as the product.

So if you don't have a strategy -

The time is right –jump on board the bus - everyone else is doing it

This also means that there is a lot of help out there for whatever stage you are at in developing a strategy – there are a lot of learning points ready to be shared. Hopefully today will help that process as throughout the day we will hear real-life experiences of strategy development.

	<i>Officer</i>	Forum	Consultant
Aberdeenshire			
Dundee			
Dumfries & Galloway			
Falkirk			
Midlothian			
Moray			
Perth & Kinross			
Stirling			
East Lothian			
Fife			
Highlands & Islands			
North Lanarkshire			
Renfrewshire			
Scottish Borders			
West Lothian			

Proposed and new Duties and Powers

Duties

- Facilitate and plan for access
- Identify a Core Path Network (CPN)
- Ensure the CPN is well defined, accessible, protected and managed
- Establish at least one local access forum

Power

- Maintain and promote paths
- Remove restrictions and obstructions
- Provide practical support to land managers and the public

Tackling the issues

New Framework

- Rights and responsibilities
- New duties and powers
- Core path networks
- Scottish outdoor access code

Some underpinning issues

- Partnership working
- Funding and staffing
- Information and training
- Planning, design and management

National Baseline Inventory of Paths

- Database of all paths and tracks
- Accurate and current data
- Consistent approach
- Planning and management tool
 - Widening scope of path selection
 - Developing better solutions
- Monitoring the impact of the legislation
- Technical feasibility work
 - Proposals, costing, guidance for national implementation

Local authority pilot projects

Purpose

- Preparing pilot local authorities for new legislation
- Developing procedures, costings, guidance for implementation in all local authorities

Tasks

- Route recording
- Land manager and community consultations in trial areas
- Indicative core path networks
- Key recreation sites and management needs
- Access planning
- Development planning system
- Local access forums
- Corporate frameworks
- Costs, timescales, procedures, guidance

Implications for land managers

- General issues and concerns
- Land uses and management needs
- Land not affected by the right
- Paths and tracks with curtilages
- Scope for different modes of use
- Potential for CPN paths
- Paths with poor accessibility
- Land of interest to outdoor companies
- Land with hazards for recreational use

Planning for access

- Review existing access strategies
- Review SNH strategy guidance
- New legal and policy framework
- Status of access strategies
- Relation to development plan
- Role of development plan for access:
 - Local plan, or
 - Subject local plan
 - Added protection, or
 - Statutory consultation

Encouraging responsible behaviour

New Code

- Long and the short of it
- Key issues for maximum impact
- Ways of implementing the Code

Current Programmes

- Literature review
- Code mapping
- Baseline behaviour
- Pilot training courses
- Angling and canoeing video

Development of a three year action plan

Matters arising

Getting the message across

- Explain the rationale
- The right and the voluntary principle
- Better dialogue, building trust
- Managed access is better

Farming

- Crime and policing
- Disputes and mediation

Access to water

- The rationale for the right
- Land and water use interaction
- A role for local authorities

Strategy issues

Consultation

- Scale of consultation
- Local people and stakeholder reps
- Landowners and tenants
- Interaction with local access forums

Local Access Forums

- New remits
- Capacity
- Advisory
- Mediation
- Level of support

Staffing

- Access officers and rangers
- Overlaps and distinctions
- Careers and continuity in the access industry
- Building experience, confidence and trust

Core Path Networks

- Shape, size and cost
- Demand and land management
- Maximising benefits to many
- Targeting the resource
- Aspirations, standards, variety
- Maintenance
- SNH policy and grant-aid
- Local paths networks

A joint approach to strategy development *Ian Findlay, HIE*

No notes available

Plenary 1

questions / answers

- Alistair Lawson* The term 'core path network' isn't correct for purpose – would suggest a 'national', 'regional', 'local' paths hierarchy.
- Ron McCraw May be a need to prioritise paths but there is an issue regarding funding and needs of different groups. Priorities and funding need to be considered together. Hierarchy could be useful but look at Long Distance Routes: they are very effective; on West Highland Way e.g. some parts could be incorporated into a core path network.
- Ian Findlay HIE audit compares systems used for roads (A, B, C roads) –should look at process for funding roads being applied to path network, but would need revenue funding!
- Alastair Hackston* 1. S Lanarkshire should be coloured in on Julie's map. 2. Core path network: need to define maintenance / care priority being placed on CPN. Local access paths around settlements could be linked to long distance routes, and some may be very usable in core path network. The Clyde Walkway has national status but could also be considered a local resource. I'm asking the panel for clarification on what is meant by 'Core Network'?
- Ron McCraw* Do you think the Clyde Walkway should be in the core network?
- Alastair Hackston Yes. For tourism potential there is a need to link strategic "high profile" routes to local network as part of any CPN.
- Ron McCraw Keen to see this happen but need to strike a balance so that LDR's do not overpower other routes
- Brian Thomson* It's too easy to have a hierarchy of national, regional and local. For children and prams LDR's are not important – more effort should go into local CPN's graded by accessibility to local users of all abilities.
- Ron McCraw Access Forum proposed that the ingredients are ALL types of routes: long distance, local routes, RoW's, and local authorities should come up with a network that meets the public needs.
- Julie Proctor We're in danger of getting too hung up on what is meant by CPN. Needs to be practical at all levels: formal paths in urban areas, informal further out. Decisions will be made on where resources are going to be directed and this may be about prioritising within local paths.
- Ian Findlay Need to assess the needs and optimise choice.
- Bridget Dales* SNH Guidance to Countryside Recreation and Access: Have SNH actually produced strategies guidance which has influenced management strategies? Has the document done its job effectively and has it been used? Does it need reviewed/ adapted?
- Ian Findlay HIE used document in general terms. Also used consultants and workshops.
- Julie Proctor People have used the document as a starting point but not as a blueprint. Need guidance on practical core studies. Needs to be developed to take on board new legislation. Suggest people talk to Bridget directly.
- Bridget Dales* Guidance not meant as a blueprint and there are new stocks now available.

Peter Scott *Clarify what is meant by “Countryside Access Strategy” – HIE strategy seem to be more a ‘strategic framework’ than a strategy which is making choices on practical action.*

Ron McCraw I agree. These frameworks are brilliant but then need to be drawn up into practical action plans further down the line. Land Use Consultants are looking into this for SNH.

Ian Findlay I agree with the definition of our strategy – it is seen as a starting point only. Need definition of terms.

Julie Proctor There is confusion on terms. Strategies (guidance setting priorities) into Framework with Action Plans and feasibility studies. Need to know priorities before you can develop routes.

Mrs Mylius *Do strategies take into consideration what is wanted by farmers and landowners?*

Julie Proctor The strategic framework has been welcomed by landowners on the whole.

Ron McCraw Local consultation is the next stage following on from strategy frameworks.

From the beginning – a new strategy in the urban fringe
Cathy Johnston, North Lanarkshire Council

See attached power point slides

Talking and doing – the Local Access Forum approach
Tim Edwards, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs Interim Committee

Notes not available.

Plenary 2

questions / answers

Kenny Steele

Two presentations focus on strategic framework. Easy to get agreement on this but resources when it comes to Action Plan is a different matter. How did you get resources together?

Ian Findlay

Stirling Council Action Plan is a work programme but doesn't do more than an audit of what is happening.

Cathy Johnson

North Lanarkshire's Access Officer's role will be to work out the practicalities of the strategy. Strategy development is the best way forward.

Alistair Hackston

At strategy development stage there is the issue of engaging landowners/ managers. Whom do we target: NFU/ SLF/ FWAG? How do we get through to those that are going to be involved, those who feel threatened?

Tim Edwards

All these were invited to the Forum and local reps were targeted. Not all in NFU/ SLF – may not represent all farmers. Same for community councils. At individual path level hold open meeting at community level, invite wider audience and local landowners. Be specific about particular network. Stirling Council had a good response when it was taken to local level.

Cathy Johnston

Hope to learn from national programme of pilot area consultations. At local level involve local landowners in launch event for example. Depends on your area e.g. N Lanarkshire has many disparate communities and different issues.

Julie Proctor

Representation on local Access Fora from SLF etc – look at these umbrella organisations to take information back to their members. Need representation from community and user level. Every land manager has the opportunity to have input at workshops. Most land managers wanted to be involved when issues directly affected their areas.

Ian McCall

Balance of interests on the Access Fora is important, particularly when a mediating role is required. This needs to be specified in the new legislation.

Ron McCraw

Have run some focus groups in some areas – there is still an issue of Who is representing – do they have the right knowledge e.g. covering cyclists, horse riders and landowners? Prevarication prevails over active commitment.

Guiding signs – path sign guidance *Kenny Steele, PfAP*

Thank you for this opportunity to launch the publication of the Paths for all Partnership's latest publication – "*Signpost Guidance*".

I want to give you a brief account of the rationale for producing these guidelines, how we envisage them being used and a quick run through the contents.

Signposting and waymarking of paths is fundamental to the promotion of paths and for making paths welcoming and enjoyable to use. They are also key tools in the management of access and reducing potential conflict with other land uses.

There are relatively few paths in Scotland which are signposted and those that are vary greatly in quality and type of information provided.

The staff in the Paths for all Partnership were aware of the many discussions around the country from the local authority strategy level down to the community level, of groups designing signposts for path networks. Not only was this taking up considerable time as each group debated design for their area but was also resulting in a wide variation of quality and type of information provided.

We were aware that there was a lack of any clear information on the design and provision of signposting in the Scottish context and we were continually being asked for such guidance which would allow groups to come to easy decisions and prevent "redesigning of the wheel" and so the decision to produce this publication.

It was clear to us that people were looking for guidance on how to produce signposting which would be of good quality and provide consistent messages to the user. However it was also clear that people were not looking for the evolution of a prescriptive national standard.

Although we provide detailed technical specifications in the publication for signposting and waymarking the emphasis of the document is guidance on good design principles and consistency of messages whilst allowing for use of different materials and maintaining local identity.

Contents

The publication begins with guidance on the planning and location of signposts and waymarkers as the foundation for making path networks usable.

Information and wording is the next section which provides guidance on the type of information which is most useful to include and suggests the use of standard symbols.

The design section deals with appropriate font style and size and issues such as contrast between lettering and background colour to make the sign clear and readable.

There is then a comparison of the use of different materials for the construction of signs and waymarkers.

Installation and maintenance of signs are then dealt with which may not be the most interesting sections but none the less crucial to the long term success of a signposting system.

And finally

Detailed specifications for three types of sign which reflects the requirements of urban and more sensitive countryside locations:

- Wood
- Metal

- Wood/plastic/metal

And detailed specifications for waymarking.

You can view examples of these specifications in the Battleby display outside.

Copies of the publication are free of charge and we have reference copies for you to view today.

Anyone wishing a copy can order one free of charge from The Paths for all Partnership.

Plenary 3 (Signs) *questions / answers*

- Theresa Constable* *Clip on metal sign, jubilee clip affair – why not a very elegant sign. Good puzzle for teenagers – how vandal resistant is it? Colour arrows and chevrons – acrylic? Will it weather?*
- Kenny Steele* Bracket is standard used by roads. Metal Paint on stove enamel is pretty weather resistant. Acrylic paint on wooden posts.
Anywhere you use paint you would need to repaint every 2-5 years
- Jim Strachan* *Are the colours representing national bridleway/ path signs.*
- Kenny Steele* They are not suggesting a nationally recognised colour system, but it may be useful to have a colour code.
May be confusion: blue routes could be interpreted as bridleways; red could be interpreted as motorised vehicles, as in England.
- Kenny Steele* They recommended white as the standard. Needs to be looked at further.
Signs/ colours are enshrined in the Scotland LDR document.
- Emma Birtles* *Need for community involvement in sign design – likes/ dislikes.*
- Kenny Steele* Aesthetics and design are important. Yes, the community needs to be involved as they need to accept the signs. They could already be using routes, don't want others to use them and see no need for signs. Their views on wood or metal signs are important.
- Mike Dales* *Pleased to see guidance but would like to see advice on link between sign and the countryside it is in, e.g. wild areas – no signs. Only the right sign in the right place is okay.*
- Kenny Steele* Guidance does not say which signs should go where but it does ask the right questions which will lead people to choose the right option, e.g. visibility in different settings, while not being prescriptive. Sign specifications are on the back of each design sheet. In some areas, signs would have economic benefits; in other areas, it would be best to have no signs.
- Alistair Lawson* *Standardised green/ white signs can be 'localised'. At Kelty the 'Kelty Wheel' was added, Dundee added a 'Do-nut'. Need to do appropriate thing in different locations. A standard pole shortened was used at Glenlivet to match dyke height. There is a need to lay parameters to allow appropriate choices to be made. There is no point in allowing communities to make suggestions that cannot be delivered/ reneged on. Hopefully, you will find that standard signs can be adapted.*

The practicalities of implementation *Pam Taylor, Dumfries & Galloway Council*

I've been asked to speak this afternoon about the practicalities of implementing an Access Strategy but before we move onto that I want to set the scene by giving you a very brief introduction to Dumfries & Galloway.

First of all, to give some idea of size, if you drove from Langholm in the East to Stranraer in the West you would cover about 150 miles and the journey would take you about 2 and a half hours. The population of Dumfries & Galloway is about 147,000 with about 40,000 people in and around Dumfries and the remainder scattered across the region, which includes approximately a further 150 small towns and villages.

The countryside is very diverse with the uplands of the Galloway Hills in the west and the Moffat Hills in the east. There are ancient woodlands, fertile river valleys and 240 miles of coast. Farming and forestry are the regions two major land uses. Practically all farming in Dumfries & Galloway is based on livestock which means lots of these, even more of these and a few of these. Commercial forestry, controversially, covers 30% of the region. Tourism is an increasingly important industry with hundreds of thousands of visitors to the region each year, most of whom come for quiet countryside recreation.

As a result of all the major local players, including the Council, SNH, the Enterprise Company and the Tourist Board, recognising the need for better access provision, the Dumfries & Galloway Access Strategy was developed. There are copies here today which you are welcome to take away. The Strategy was the subject of widespread consultation with hundreds of people participating in workshops across the region. Late last year, my colleague Mike Scott and I were appointed to take the Strategy forward.

The first job was to arrange a public launch. We were fortunate to have Magnus Magnusson, Chairman of the Paths for All Partnership, visit the region for a day to promote the Strategy, which attracted excellent local press coverage. The series of outdoor activities which were organised as part of the launch across the region were rather less successful. I would advise you not to launch your strategy in December.

The regional Strategy provides broad guidelines and principles for access development but in an area the size of Dumfries and Galloway there is still a need to apply these at a local level by developing Local Access Plans for main towns, larger villages, groups of small villages and key tourist sites. To this end we are fortunate to have received Paths for All funding, which has enabled us to employ consultants to develop Local Access Plans for Dumfries and Stranraer. These detailed plans will be based on further public consultation and will identify key existing routes and desire routes, assess landowner views and provide specifications and costs for work which can be implemented. This is a process which will need to be repeated across the region and will eventually identify and provide the Core Path Network.

I will move on now to look at a range of path projects which have been developed in Galloway in the past couple of years and which are typical of the work which will be needed to implement the Strategy.

Kilsture Forest is in the Machars in the west of Dumfries & Galloway. It is an attractive mixed woodland, mainly oak, in a relatively treeless surrounding area. It was identified as a site with a lot of unrealised recreational potential during local access consultations. While there were some existing forest tracks these ran in strips across the woodland and to walk or ride around the wood was virtually impossible.

Discussions with Forest Enterprise who own the site got underway and resulted in plans for the creation of 3 and a half miles of trail for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders.

The site provided an interesting range of challenges. It was already used in an informal way for dog walking, orienteering, cycling and horse-riding, alongside commercial pheasant rearing and shooting. Consequently the siting of the new trails was planned in consultation with the shoot manager and agreement was reached about which areas of the wood could safely be used for shooting. We have also agreed that one of the two trails will be closed for 12 days during the winter when large pheasant shoots are in progress.

The site also posed an intriguing range of drainage challenges, being gently undulating and, in places, waterlogged.

Most of the wood was in desperate need of thinning and so before new paths could go in, timber had to come out. Thinning, in the end took almost a year to complete and resulted in the path work being carried out in the wet of winter spurred by impending grant deadlines.

Signing has still to go into the site but the finished path is made of compacted crushed stone and is 1.2 metre wide with a 2m wide cleared, drained and rolled strip to the side. The rationale behind this is that walking and cycling are expected to be the main uses with fairly limited local horse-riding use.

Through on site information, horses will be encouraged to use the unsurfaced part of the path, although the path has been robustly built and should withstand horse use in which case the extra width is still useful in allowing different users to pass one another easily.

A landscape architect helped draw up the specifications for this work, provided detailed drawings, prepared a bill of Quantities and advised on contract management. The project cost about £40,000 altogether and Forest Enterprise have taken on long term maintenance of the trails. All the practical work was carried out by contractors and the paths open officially next month.

Moving on to another project, Galloway House Gardens are part of an old estate which sits on the coast and on the edge of a village. The wooded grounds, the garden and the coast are regularly used by local people as well as being popular with tourists. The estate encourages public access which, through a donations box and sales of fruit, helps to bring in much needed income.

Unfortunately some of the estate tracks were not quite in the condition they might have been. Consequently work was carried out by Community Service to clear away surface mud on existing routes and cut out a tray for new ones. The key paths around the grounds were then resurfaced by the Environment Task Force keeping true to the old original paths by using red whinstone. The main paths were also designed to be suitable for all abilities.

In a more informal part of the estate a new woodland walk was created which required the clearing of a large area of rhododendron which was carried out by the Scottish Wildlife Trust Ranger Training Team.

The route required the building of a bridge across a small stream and telegraph poles made ideal runners. A mobile sawmill was brought in to process trees which had come down on site in recent storms and this was used for the rest of the structure.

A brief word on voluntary groups and training teams, they can do excellent work, but a lot depends on the Supervisor. Don't expect too much until you get to know what they are capable of.

The woodland path was finished with wood chips, about matchbox size, to provide a slightly better surface immediately although deep drainage ditches which were dug out did dry up the path in time.

The estate, who work regularly with Community Service have taken on basic long term maintenance Castle Douglas sits immediately beside Carlingwark Loch. The Loch is a SSSI for breeding and wintering waterfowl and for the quality of the surrounding marshland, although the opportunity to

feed the swans is probably its most important attribute for many locals. The people in Castle Douglas had long been asking for a walk around the Loch and this idea was progressed about 2 years ago by the local Dumfries & Galloway Council Ranger. The route involved crossing 2 farms with a wetland in between.

Some of the path is less than ideal, but as far as the farmer was concerned it was this or nothing. To leave the path, which would certainly be well used by dog walkers, open to livestock was unacceptable to the farmer, and to many of the public being in a field of marauding Galloway cattle was equally unacceptable. Some of the problems of fencing off a strip like this are obvious, it's boring. Maybe equally obviously, grass grows. Without cattle to graze it, this fertile ground needs strimmed at least once a month in the summer. Also cattle, in a closely cropped field find the lush growth in the path area a great attraction and with a herd of cattle leaning on your new fence, the chances are it's not going to last long.

The path follows the line of a burn for some of the way. The problem here was that the cattle needed access to the burn to drink. Therefore kissing gates had to be put in at either end of fenced path strips to leave a gap for a drinking hole. Within a short time this was the result. However deep, compressed hardcore paths in areas such as drinking openings and gate openings have pretty well solved the problem. These parts will always be subject to heavy use though and as a result will always be a maintenance liability.

Wetland areas pose another set of challenges. The path needed to cross a one and a half metre wide burn. Because the site is SSSI, concrete couldn't be used to set in posts either side. To get solid fixings, posts had to be set well back from the burn sides, resulting in a fairly substantial bridge of about 5metres wide, with associated costs, being built.

About 500m of boardwalk was needed. This is actually one of the most attractive parts of the route with dragonflies and lizards basking on the decking in summer. However, again because the site is SSSI, treated timber couldn't be used. The supports are oak. 500metres of boardwalk, £5,000, less than 10 years expected life span. An expensive path.

Safety is another issue here, particularly for children. The reed has now grown back all around the walkway and it isn't always obvious that it's wet underneath. At times you could step down and just get your feet wet but at other times you could step off into a metre of water.

Moving to the sea and providing coastal access which poses its own range of issues. As well as the saltmarshes which the Solway is famous for, Galloway has a great deal of rugged rocky coastline which is perfect for walking.

Again the major issue is livestock and to fence or not to fence. The path at Burrowhead, the very southern tip of the Machars peninsula has been left open to livestock. I know that this prevents some people from using this path – quite simply some people are scared of cattle and with some justification. Young stock are curious, are quite likely to crowd around you particularly if you have a dog. To have a herd of cattle on one side and a cliff on the other can be unnerving for anyone. So what's the alternative?

Existing fence lines are usually as close to the edge of the cliff as the farmer could manage. Christian Aid come to Whithorn on a pilgrimage every year and walk between key Christian heritage sites in the area. There were around 200 people on this walk and much of the route was on the very brink of sheer drops of about 100 feet. Subsequently agreement has been reached with many of the landowners in this area to move fences back from cliff edges, leaving a safe margin for walkers. A new fence for the farmer, an extra 5 to 10 metres for the walker.

However there are drawbacks to fencing off new bits of coastline. For one it probably doesn't look quite as nice with a fence as without. Two, many plants and animals will have been thriving on a

regime of summer grazing for many years. Remove the grazing animals and much of the coastal strip will turn to gorse within a few years.

There is also the question of disturbance to wildlife. I tend to feel that the benefits of encouraging people to experience the countryside outweigh the disadvantages. How will people ever appreciate the countryside and its wildlife if they can't get out and see it?

A barrier of old metal gates was electrified through the mains – not what you would call welcoming access. This is now part of a 5 and a half mile coastal path. It has taken over 2 years to negotiate this route. All the farmers, tenants and owners were reasonably amenable to the idea of a path. But there are three absentee owners of an estate which formed part of the route and one of the owners actually lives in Canada. Developing a Public Path Creation Agreement was a slow process.

In terms of recent path work in Dumfries & Galloway, formal Agreements have only been sought where there has been significant expenditure and a value judgement has just been made about the length of the route and the cost of providing a suitable path.

Most landowners have been reasonable and where there have been concerns about access, mutually agreeable solutions have usually been found. However a minority of landowners have been un-co-operative, and in areas where there is a clear public demand for access, Local Authorities need to be able to act effectively.

But to be fair to landowners, Local Authorities need to provide suitable paths in the first place, and need to have a serious long term commitment to management and maintenance. The proposed new legislation needs to be backed up by enough new money

One more project very briefly just to round off The Newton Stewart Riverside Path which was developed by the Newton Stewart Initiative, a group of local volunteers, with help from Council staff and Solway Heritage staff.

The path was entirely funded by the Lottery and included the building of a new footbridge across the river. The bridge was built by the Army who take on civil engineering projects if it suits their training needs. The advantage of this method is that the bridge is relatively cheap, however it would have to be said that it is not the most beautiful structure ever.

One of the interesting things about this path are the objects which are at regular intervals along the way. Local writer Liz Niven was commissioned to write a series of poems which relate to the town and its immediate countryside and which will be published in a book about the town. Craftspeople made the various pieces using local materials such as granite, sandstone and oak.

Some of the pieces, such as a carved bench showing salmon, geese and otters, were made on site and the making of them became local news in itself.

I drive past this path every morning and every morning I see people using it. The practicalities of getting paths on the ground are not always easy, but the final result is usually rewarding.

Upland strategy development *Margaret Thomas– Consultant*

Access 'away' from settlements – the needs and issues

My 'qualification' for presenting this subject is the work that I have recently undertaken for SNH - in moving forward the issues that arose during their 1998 review of upland path management – and specifically to produce a framework for a 'future' strategy. It was suggested to me that I might outline this strategy –from its inception through to implementation. Well, as many of you will know there has been a particularly long gestation period - and the delivery date is still uncertain!

So instead this presentation covers:

- an update of development so far on these issues
- a comment on SNH's "Upland Path Management in Scotland" workshop, held last week
- a summary of the Upland Path Management Strategy
- and a look at the evolving issues that now need to be considered - in the light of access legislation proposals.

In doing this I am not attempting to clarify or answer questions on SNH commitments - as ever prevarication tends to prevail over proactive commitment! The following may consequently raise more frustration than hope - not at the lack of development, but at the rather slow pace and the need to catch up with evolving issues.

You will gather that this Upland Strategy is not about *developing* access (is *development* relevant in a natural mountain resource?), but rather a management strategy - specifically of the historically 'developed' recreational paths, many of which are suffering from decades of neglect - and also taking on board some of the wider management issues involved.

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Firstly, a brief update on developments and work that has taken place since the 1998 review. The key issues that were raised, and subsequently highlighted for addressing within an 'Upland Path Management Strategy' included:

- **Lack of information for forward planning** - without a comprehensive resource appraisal, overall needs and priorities aren't assessed - funding is uncertain, untargeted, and remains focused on capital works
 - **Path management delivery skills, and resources** are still limited and not best placed to meet geographical demand
 - **Inconsistency in management procedures** for achieving high quality work – particularly in commissioning work, and in securing resources for, and implementing, maintenance
 - **Lack of integration** with wider countryside management
- Work has progressed on these issues - albeit not within an overall strategy - but in a less adhoc manner than previously - notably:
- development of standardised condition and specification survey methods
 - development of a national inventory of upland paths, including survey and management information
 - commissioning of 'mountain region' path surveys to appraise the resource, scale of repair, costs and priorities
 - development of the SVQ for path workers, and, recently, for path management skills
 - production of the Upland Pathwork Construction Standards Manual – with detail to achieve high quality work
 - production of several 'think-piece' papers on the way forward for: targeted and prioritised funding; integration of path management with wider countryside management; standardising of contract documentation; and the Best Value approach to commissioning, and managing pathwork
 - AND - a paper on proposals for long-term maintenance, which will shortly be released by SNH for consultation.

Much of this has been through the efforts of the Path Industry Skills Group - and The Footpath Trust, with support and guidance from SNH.

Development of a 'Framework'

As part of the strategy development, and in order to take forward further action, a strategic framework has been produced for partnership discussion, largely with a view, to promoting the potential for an Upland Path Advisory Group, involving key partners. Such a group might set and guide national policy, procedures and guidelines - facilitating the work of PISG and guiding regional and local strategies for upland path management, with potential for integration with 'lowland' path development.

The framework sets out the identified key issues for further development, under the strategic headings of Forward Planning, Management Delivery, Co-ordinated Planning, Contracting Procedures and, inevitably, Maintenance. Under these it outlines 'Further Actions Needed', and also SNH's potential role in achieving these. It was distributed, to focus discussion, at SNH's Upland Path Management workshop, and accompanied by an introductory paper which further summarised SNH's future role as:

- providing a lead to address issues within a cohesive partnership approach but, crucially, only with broad national and local support
- working with others to provide co-ordination and a national overview to the more integral role of Local Authorities in upland path management
- initiating a national Upland Path Advisory Group to develop and improve path management and advice, to support national projects with local delivery - critically with Local Authority involvement
- providing a facilitating, advisory and support function, and continue to promote development of procedures and standards for an effective and efficient industry, while moving towards a strategic and prioritised approach to supporting programmed path management projects.

COMMENT ON THE 'UPLAND PATH MANAGEMENT IN SCOTLAND' WORKSHOP

After an update on progress, and work, since the 1998 review, including the implications of access legislation, group discussions revolved around some of the evolving needs and issues, including:

- the relevant issues arising from access legislation, particularly the future availability of resources and management delivery, and integration with lowland resources
 - the arrangements for continuing nationally integrated training opportunities, for all 'levels' of pathwork - essentially maintaining the impetus provided by The Footpath Trust, and the potential for including low level work
 - at what geographical or administrative level should pathwork programmes and funding packages be prepared - e.g. National Park, Local Authority, Regional, National - or 'cohesive mountain areas'
 - whether programmes for upland path management should be integral with lowland access development and management strategies
 - whether upland path management should be guided through a national framework - or be integrated at a local level with wider recreation and countryside management
 - if an Upland Path Advisory Group is considered to be needed to co-ordinate path management within a national overview, what should the remit, and membership, be.
- In summing up the workshop discussions, John Thomson endorsed the strong messages that had arisen. These included:
- a firm belief that SNH must provide leadership, within a 'partnership' approach
 - the support for a national advisory group to support the 'industry' - and SNH
 - a 'national' and integral training facility must be maintained - serviced nationally and operating locally

- strong lobbying is needed for more money from government to support greater involvement by Local Authorities in upland path management
 - strategic and integrated approaches must be adopted at local levels
 - there is scope for a national framework through which to target potential HLF funds.
- These messages are to be taken back to SNH Management Team. Hopefully a report on the outcome of the workshop discussions will be produced, as it is not possible to go into greater detail here.

SUMMARY OF THE UPLAND PATH MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

SNH is still ‘producing’, or ‘directing’, the strategy - and developing work within it - with firmer pointers to the current, and evolving issues. It has become evident that there is a need to move forward rapidly, with renewed impetus, rather than rehearsing past, and current, issues.

In Bob Aitken’s words we are “on the ‘cusp of change”, and there are obviously a number of uncertainties at present. Nonetheless, there is a majority voice urging SNH to firmly fill the leadership gap. This requires serious consideration - potentially further increasing their human, and financial, resources to guide upland path management - accompanied by integration with wider access and countryside management issues in their own organisation. Extra provision of resources is particularly important with the demise of The Footpath Trust’s supporting role.

The profile of upland access management must be raised - and remain high on the agenda - with no side stepping of the evolving issues. Hopefully the upland strategy development won’t slip back on the shelf, with the concentration on pending access legislation provisions, particularly lowland path development.

Despite continuing frustration, amongst those who are largely concerned with upland access management, perhaps we need to keep things in perspective. The natural resource for upland recreation has existed for aeons - it isn’t going to disappear, or wear away - despite our worst fears. In contrast, the strategy development (and this has been over the last 20 years) is a mere split second in history. However, SNH must certainly be rapidly proactive, particularly to stop running in order to catch up with evolving issues.

SOME EVOLVING ISSUES

And finally, some questions about these evolving, and old, needs and issues, arising from access legislation, particularly in the context of managing upland access.

- Will access legislation nurture a latent demand – and, before we cater for it, do we fully understand the nature and size of the current demand for upland, or lowland, access?
- How will the Upland Path Management Strategy integrate with local Access Strategies - do we recognise all the issues for integrated management?
- Can, or indeed should, integrated strategies be used to attract walkers away from upland ‘honey pots’, with development of lowland path networks easing the pressure on the hills, pre-empting further environmental degradation?
- Is there, after all these years, a long term vision for the upland resource – what of the management ‘needs’ of paths, or areas, excluded from core path networks?
- Is it viable, to be investing, or transferring, money into developing lowland path networks - potentially for a minority of users - when it has been acknowledged for decades that our mountain environment has needed attention?
- Is there a need to remove the inherent polarisation between upland and lowland access and develop truly integrated resource and management strategies?
- Will such integration highlight, and justify, the need for application of management through a ‘Recreational Opportunity Spectrum’ for all access throughout Scotland – from essential urban path development through to informal ‘development’ in the extremities of the upland resource -or from the enclosed, through unenclosed, to mountain top?

And a final reminder – although the opportunities for developing lowland recreational opportunities are exciting, we shouldn't forget that the largest body of 'users' recreate in the uplands - and will continue to do so. Ultimately the upland environment is a vast and inestimable asset, which requires sensitive, and well resourced, strategic management.

Plenary 4

questions / answers

- Margaret Thomas We now have tools to manage erosion and need to monitor and do pre-emptive work on paths prior to erosion. As for economic benefit – might count on one hand people who won't go because they think they might cause erosion.
- Mike Newbury *We abuse land because we see it as a commodity. Land is the commodity which should be respected" – pleading for Sand Country Almanac principle to operate in relation to upland paths and we have a duty to maintain; upland paths are sometimes excluded. Will CPN's include Munros?*
- Ron McCraw Still have to see what the new legislation will put to LA's in terms of powers and duties to maintain CPN's though there should be less of an emphasis on other paths but a duty to remove obstructions.
- Ian Findlay Main sources of funding may not be available as soon as it becomes a duty e.g. Heritage Lottery funding is already taking this approach.
- Mike Newbury *There is a problem with Euro funding – only available for capital not maintenance.*
- Ron McCraw This is a policy issue. LA's cannot fund everything and would be looking at partnerships. To what extent can all needs be funded? Should we look at Sustran routes and decide which bits fit with CPN and which bits just have sporadic tourist use? Lanark New Town – urban paths, are they part of CPN? Forestry Commission land – can contribute to CPN in places. Should they be expected to contribute financially to CPN or, vice versa, expect funding to come to them? May need to change emphasis on categories depending on where they are.
- Hearing divisive arguments, uplands Vs lowlands, but we need to shout with a common voice – not got the room for infighting.
- Cllr Lloyd *(To Pam) Thank you for comprehensive view for path development – driving force for 7k path nearby. Looking at maintenance, when you formulate your strategies are the costs of maintenance taken account of?*
- Pam Scott Don't have a universal answer: estate staff/ council staff/ grants/ ranger service/ environment task forces all carry out maintenance works but it is piece meal. Resources are inadequate.
- Cllr Lloyd *Need to get your message into the tiny minds of councillors. LA members of SCAN could help the cause by more effectively spreading the information about/ from these conferences amongst their organisations and the local councillors.*
- Tim Edwards Could do grounds maintenance evaluation through GreenSpace Strategy as in Stirling, to reallocate money to new priorities within the Council.
- Mike Dales *Reason to do upland footpath work is because of the landscape impact. SNH have a duty to do this. MCoFS feel that SNH should be doing more on this. The Highlands & Islands strategy concentrates on lowlands and this is to the detriment of the highlands. SNH should be taking these responsibilities more fully. HIE have lost credibility as the Cairngorms Consultation was not as fully undertaken as it should have been. It should go back to SNH.*
- Ian Findlay The HIE strategy looks at both the lowlands and the uplands together. I apologise if I have given any other view. The consultation has just started and is still a draft. It was felt that major partners needed to work on this first and gain consensus before putting it out to the broader community/ user groups. Can understand resentment if the strategy was thought to be further down the road.

- Mike Dales* *The strategy is economy driven now when for last 25 years it has been landscape driven – this would mean a loss to the environment aspects.*
- Ian Findlay Again I apologise if you have been given that impression. It is economic, social and environment factors taken together.
- Kenny Steele To support Ian, this is not an HIE Strategy – it is a partnership and HIE is a small funder. The path audit has been, up to now, the main focus and it is now out for consultation. There has to be a starting point. Cost benefits for path management have to be introduced because this has been lacking previously. The Strategy has to point this out. We need to rationalise which projects are funded.
- Tim Dixon* *These problems can be rationalised through the counter network to put numbers on a perceived need for maintenance. You can then monitor and put a cost/ benefit to paths and secure funding. Same for upland paths where you can monitor erosion and link to people count. Strategy won't have teeth until it has this.*
- Julie Proctor Important point: PfAP have provided counters so can monitor before/ after usage. Do need to start making the case for funding which can also monitor health and social inclusion benefits. Need to know how many people using paths before developing network.
- Margaret Thomas Don't want to see polarisation of upland and lowland issues. See the usage of lowland path concepts as different from regular usage of upland paths. Can see the lowland path developments drawing away funds.
- Stewart Roberts* *(Angus Council is currently preparing Access Strategy) Local Access Fora have a mediating role in the case of disputes – in this case are they a tribunal? Legislation should be sufficiently clear and balanced that that need should not arise.*
- Ron McCraw We only know what is proposed. Consultants are trying to achieve a balance between advisory roles as now and future with mediation. Mediation role may not be appropriate and would also be more time consuming.
- Ron McCraw* *Is there any experience from the floor?*
- Alistair Clark (Arran Access Trust) My role is to bring parties together in discussion groups to try and settle disputes without the need for mediation.
- Alex Sutherland Distinguish between different types of users.
- Alistair Clark Two levels: Regulations and lay people involved in legislation, difference in interpretation of the legislation and, at a higher level similarly to the land tribunal, the ordinary person cannot deal with these.
- Julie Proctor There are concerns amongst local Access Fora about this possible change in role to mediation. The Fora may end up being split on mediation issues.
- Simon Pilpel Mediation through public enquiry processes to arbitrate in disputes may have some merit for this issue.

SUMMATION 'Cautionary Tale' (Alex Sutherland)

"A young monk applied to become a member of an extremely strict monastery which had been founded in the 13th century. He was duly accepted as a novice monk and on his first day in the new order he was instructed to make his own copy of the brotherhood's "*Strategic Overview and Rules for Conduct and Daily Life within the Monastery Precincts*".

Being an adept calligrapher and as photocopiers had not yet penetrated the simple and austere order he proceeded with his transcription. However, it soon became apparent to him that he was working from a copy of the original document and not a very good one at that. He therefore asked the Abbot if he could possibly examine the original manuscript from which the Order has started its life and, after initial reluctance his boss took himself off into the farthest reaches of the library equipped with a large bunch of keys.

Two hours passed and still the Abbot had not reappeared so the young monk went to check if his elderly mentor was still all right. He found him, on his knees, in the farthest corner of the library, tears streaming down his cheeks and a large, dusty and obviously ancient manuscript spread on the floor before him. "What is the matter, Father?" enquired the young monk. "My son," said the old man, "The word was,

.....Celebrate!"

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