

**DORENELL WIND FARM FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE MORAY COUNCIL FOR USE ON MORAY'S CORE PATHS. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT 2020**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

In 2016 an Access Management Strategy was prepared for the Dorenell Wind Farm as a result of a condition applied to the planning consent. The Strategy was produced by developer EDF in consultation with the Moray Council Access Manager and The Moray Local Outdoor Access Forum. A major output of this Strategy is a commitment by EDF to an annual contribution to the Moray Council of £50000 per annum totalling £1250000 for the 25 year life span of the wind farm. **This funding is to be used by the Council solely for the development and management of the Moray Core Paths network.**

This equates to a sizable sum of money and it is important to carefully plan how this resource should be used in a prioritised way rather than just being reactive to immediate demands and desires arising at any given time.

This Strategic Framework Document sets the scene for the full range of outputs and activities on which the Dorenell Fund can be spent related to the Moray Core Paths Network. It clarifies for the long term as to how the Dorenell contribution should be used; how to respond to identified priorities and make the best use of scarce resources. This Framework also looks to ensure that opportunities are explored to use the funding to secure added value where possible for example by providing seed money to secure external funding for specific Path Projects. The Dorenell fund should where possible be matched against Developer Contributions set aside to pay for mitigation measures to ameliorate any negative impacts from new developments on paths and public access. This pooling of financial resources will result in more being able to be done to make a more meaningful difference on the ground.

The Document has been developed under the umbrella of the Moray Core Paths Plan (CPP) and will focus on the following objectives contained in the CPP:

- a) *To provide a basic framework of Core paths sufficient for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout the Moray area.*
- b) *To facilitate a co-ordinated and planned approach to the development, management and promotion of the whole Moray paths network including identified Moray Core Paths.*
- c) *To maximise the social, health, economic and environmental benefits to the Moray Area consolidating the limited resources available.(See **APPENDIX 1** of this document)*
- d) *To minimise any impact on the environment that may result from improvements to Moray's paths infrastructure reducing motorised journeys, creating and maintaining an active travel infrastructure network and raising awareness of active travel.*

**Further to the CPP objectives this Strategic Framework Document has the specific aim of ensuring that all activities and work relating to Core Paths be focussed on maximising accessibility along the routes and providing for multi-use within the context of the natural limitations and physical constraints of the path terrain. Inherent in this approach will be to remove physical barriers to access to make paths available to as wide a range of users as possible.**

## 2. EXPECTED PAYMENT TIMESCALE

The first £50000 receipt to the Moray Council from EDF was in March 2019 when the wind farm became fully operational. A suspense account has been set up to receive this money over the 25 year period to 2044 which will allow funds to be carried over from year to year as required.

## 3. RELATIONSHIP TO THE MORAY CORE PATHS PLAN

The Moray Core Paths Plan (CPP) was adopted in 2011 produced by the Moray Council as a statutory requirement of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. A review of this is currently taking place which proposes some additional Core paths and amendment of existing routes. This will result in a revised Plan being adopted sometime in 2020. There is no duty placed on the Council to develop or manage the Core Paths network and consequently this has not been a priority for the Council particularly in light of the financial austerity of recent years.

As a responsible access authority the Moray Core Paths Plan does however aspire to improve and manage and promote the existing Core Paths network to make it as much as possible fit for multi-use reflected in policies 1,3,4 and 6 of the CPP (See **APPENDIX 2**). Policy 2 is also relevant with its aim of expanding the network through development of Aspirational Core Paths. These CPP policies have however been implemented up to now on an ad hoc basis responding sporadically to resource opportunities as they arise to develop, manage and promote the Core Paths Network. This 'make and mend' approach has predominated given the low priority given to the Core Paths Network by the Council.

The Dorenell Wind Farm financial contribution gives a real opportunity for the first time to be proactive in implementing the CPP policies. This Strategic Framework Document will therefore focus on how to realise the aspirations of these policies in a practical and meaningful way.

## 4. CORE PATHS NEEDS AND DEMANDS

The Moray Core Paths network exists as a variety of paths which collectively meet the legislative need of, *"providing a basic framework of Core Paths sufficient for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout the Local authority area."* This effectively means that the Moray Core Paths network as a whole provides for the needs of all access users.

On an individual basis each Core Path is however not the same. Some are in excellent condition existing as part of the road network and are well maintained for multi-use. Many of the off road paths are however deteriorating over time due to lack of capital investment and poor or non-existent maintenance. Many of the paths originally created for multi-use are now failing due to lack of adequate maintenance. It is true to say that the rough nature of some of the paths is acceptable given the environmental sensitivity of the location or the physical landform constraints. Other Core Paths however would benefit from investment to institute improvements that would make these paths more accessible to a much wider range of users. This is particularly true for the paths within or near to settlements.

The Moray Way is Moray's premier promoted path incorporating The Dava Way and parts of the Speyside Way and the Moray Coast Trail, all designated Core Paths and three of Scotland's nationally recognised 'Scotland's great Trails'. This route is currently underutilised and has great potential to realise multiple benefits to Moray such as health, tourism, social inclusion and active travel. A feasibility study was undertaken in 2018 which highlights a range of measures and projects to

develop the route to maximise its use for a wide range of users and thereby realise the multiple benefits.

Whilst some Core Paths are signed, many are not and often have a confusing variety of signage formats. There is a need to develop a comprehensive scheme to ensure all the Core Paths are signed in a consistent manner in line with the stated government objective. Much of the promotional infrastructure on the Core Paths is degrading and is not being upgraded or replaced. This includes a range of map boards and interpretation panels which are important to raise public awareness of the network and communicate messages to encourage use of the paths. Additionally 21<sup>st</sup> Century information technology now provides a much wider range of ways to source information about the paths network thereby encouraging greater interest and usage. So far such innovative measures have scarcely been developed along Moray's Core Paths.

## 5. SETTING A BLUEPRINT

The aim of this Strategic Framework Document is to lay down the blueprint for a programmed approach to maximise the added value to be derived from the Dorenell Core Paths financial contribution. The main components of this document are shown in **TABLE 1** along with indicative timescales. These components are grouped into **essential base outputs** to be achieved before rolling out a **range of implementation activities**. It is worth noting that in the first few years opportunities for 'quick spend' may materialise and these should be pursued even although the base outputs have not been completed. This will ensure that such opportunities when they arise are not lost. It is important to make the money work hard to release other resources both within the Council and externally. This will be achieved through setting priorities for the development, management and promotion of the Core Paths network with the aim of maximising accessibility to all users within the given practical constraints.

**TABLE 1. Dorenell Core Paths Financial contribution – Strategic Framework Document. Main Components and indicative timescales.**

<b>ESSENTIAL BASE OUTPUTS</b>	<b>Indicative timescale</b>
Core Path Baseline Survey	by 2022
Development and Management Plan	By 2023
Prioritised Action Plan	By 2023
<b>RANGE OF GENERAL IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES</b>	
Physical Improvements to the Core Paths Network	ongoing
Maintenance of the Core paths Network	ongoing
Core Paths Volunteer Maintenance Scheme	from 2021
Core Paths Signage Programme	ongoing
Interpretation Infrastructure Programme	from 2021
Community Paths – seed funding	ongoing
Innovative Soft Promotion Measures	from 2021
The Moray Way	from 2021
Monitoring Measures	From 2021

## 6. ESSENTIAL BASE OUTPUTS

A complete picture is needed of the state of the Core Paths network to ensure informed choices are made about what needs to be done. Before moving forward, site surveys of the paths are needed to collect information to devise a comprehensive baseline on the condition of each path and related infrastructure, the intended users, the required work that would be needed to maximise the accessibility of each path and what would be needed on an ongoing basis to always keep each path as accessible as possible. Information is also required on existing signage and promotional infrastructure and what is still required. From this information, targeted prioritisation can thereafter be formulated; devising criteria to target the areas of greatest need and where efforts would bring the greatest benefits. Any development and subsequent maintenance should cater for the identified intended users reflecting that not all paths due to physical constraints will ever be suitable for multi-use.

An initial **Core Paths Baseline Survey** and subsequent production of a **Development and Management Plan** is a crucial first stage to allow a **Prioritised Action Plan** to emerge to take the Moray Core Paths Plan objectives forward. This work would be a considerable time consuming task beyond the scope of current available Council staff resources. It is suggested that the services of additional personnel would be required to carry out the site survey work and to prepare the Plans. Costs for this could be paid from the first tranches of windfarm funding.

Costs for this work could be minimised through exploring the use of volunteer help and use of students particularly for the initial path survey work. It may be necessary to procure specific external professional expertise to assist in the preparation of the Plans.

The information gathering process outlined above should assist in providing some of the 'evidence base' needed to justify securing Developer Contributions helping to quantify what the impacts would be on the Core paths network from new developments. This should be a main consideration as to how the information is gathered and presented.

## 7. RANGE OF GENERAL IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES

The **Prioritised Action Plan** operating on a 3 year rolling programme will detail and prioritise the specific path development, management and promotion projects to be rolled out over the 25 year period of the Dorenell financial contribution. The Prioritised Action Plan will also outline the financial allocations to be given to each project from the Dorenell fund. The specific projects will ultimately be derived from the range of general implementation activities outlined in this Strategy Framework Document. These constitute the total range of activities on which the money can be spent on as listed in Table 1 and are explored in more detail below. Individual projects will be highlighted in the **Prioritised Action Plan** under these headings.

All projects identified will require to be measured against criteria derived from the potential Core Paths Plan benefits outlined in **APPENDIX 1**. A scoring matrix will be used to determine which of the projects should be taken forward. Projects will include hard and soft measures related to the Core Paths network. Assessment criteria to be applied will include the following:

- Identified demand and need
- Linkage-physical and strategic
- Value for money
- Active travel potential
- Multi use and accessibility
- Economic benefits
- Health benefits
- Level of social inclusion derived
- Longevity and sustainability
- Positive and negative environmental impacts

More details on the Range of Implementation Activities listed in Table 1 are given below:

**a) Physical Improvements to the Core Paths Network**

The Core Paths Network functions collectively to meet the needs of all users but this does not mean that all Core Paths have to be to a specific technical standard. Core paths come in all 'shapes and sizes' from trodden earth routes right up to tarmac roads. The objective here is to develop the network to make each path as accessible as possible to a wide range of users within the given environmental constraints presented. The **Development and Management Plan** will have information on required development, management and promotion to make each path as accessible as possible. Which paths have priority for allocation of funds will be detailed in the **Prioritised Action Plan**. It is essential that all improvement work includes adequate consideration of drainage which is the key to the long term sustainability of any path.

**b) Maintenance of the Core Paths Network**

Poor maintenance on many of Moray's Core Paths has resulted in a network which is sub optimal in terms of accessibility and usage. A more structured and targeted approach which will be accommodated by the **Development and Management Plan**. This will detail what maintenance is required for each path to sustain usage and accessibility to as wide a range of user as environmental and physical constraints allow.

The limitations of the fund will mean that in reality not all paths maintenance identified can be paid from the Dorenell windfall monies. The **Prioritised Action Plan** will highlight which specific Core paths will be prioritised for maintenance from the fund. Maintenance can be carried out through a number of measures including Moray Council Grounds Maintenance Team, Moray Council Ranger Service, Community Services Criminal Justice, private contractors and a Volunteer Maintenance Scheme (discussed below). Consideration will also be given to employment of a part or full time maintenance officer to manage the prioritised Core Paths although this will need to be carefully considered given that this would seriously reduce the amount of Dorenell Funds available for projects.

**c) Core Paths Volunteer Maintenance Scheme**

The Council currently has a volunteering policy which encourages the development of volunteers in all areas of the Council. Where volunteers are used they should be properly integrated into the Council's structure and appropriate mechanisms should be in place for them to effectively contribute to the work of the Council. The policy requires that volunteers are properly supported and co-ordinated through officials with specific management responsibilities with training and

supervision being provided. Volunteers are treated like employees covered by the Council's public liability insurance and eligible to have expenses reimbursed.

As has been discussed in (b) above current maintenance of Core Paths falls way short of requirements. This deficit is likely to increase due to continuing pressures on reducing Council budgets. Part of the Dorenell fund could be used to fund a Volunteer Maintenance Scheme in line with the Council's volunteering policy. This would be an efficient and prudent use of the fund which is a limited resource and would encourage 'hands on' public involvement in and ownership of the Core Paths Network.

The Dava Way Association already operates a squad of volunteers who regularly maintain the route and this could be used as a model which could be rolled out across the Core Paths network.

Additionally East Lothian Council operate a Volunteer Path Warden Scheme mostly concentrating on Core Paths. Volunteers go out once or twice a month, both individually and as a team, to check on paths and tackle issues such as overgrown verges and drainage problems. As a team each month they do something more major, like repairing steps and tackling path surfacing.

The key to any volunteer scheme is that it is properly resourced with a scheme co-ordinator to allocate work, order materials, organise training and required equipment/tools and to ensure that volunteers are continually supported and feel valued. The scheme co-ordinator could be voluntary or might be a paid position funded all or in part through the Dorenell Fund. This would seriously impact on available funds for projects so would need to be carefully considered in light of this.

#### **d) Core Paths Signage Programme**

Just over half of Moray's Core paths are signed. Most of these exist as metal units on poles in urban areas and wooden fingerpost signs elsewhere. Much of this signage infrastructure is ageing and in need of replacement particularly the wooden units which are deteriorating through rot. To date some of these signs have been replaced using recycled brown coloured plastic units which are long lasting, require minimal maintenance and fit well into natural surroundings. The programme will continue to replace the existing signs as they deteriorate and will roll out new signs on currently unsigned paths. Signage of paths at main access points and at intersections will be prioritised to increase awareness of the paths and encourage use. Signs format will be in accordance with Scottish Government guidance on signage of Core Paths to ensure a uniform and consistent approach.

#### **e) Interpretation infrastructure Programme**

Moray's Core Paths network contains a range of interpretation formats including map boards, information boards, plinths, sculptures and artwork. These are varied in form and function and do not accord to an overall interpretation strategy but have developed organically over time through numerous local initiatives. Much of this infrastructure is now ageing showing signs of deterioration often with information that requires updating. One example of this is along the Speyside Way where all the map boards now need replacing to show the new extension to the route from Aviemore to Newtonmore.

The **Development and Management Plan** will determine the requirement for replacement and new interpretation infrastructure focussing on development of a more consistent and uniform product that reflect a brand for the Moray Core Paths network. Opportunities for use of new Information Technology should be fully explored to develop a varied, modern and sophisticated approach to provision of interpretation infrastructure along the paths.

#### **f) Community Paths – seed funding**

A number of community path projects have emerged that if implemented would be considered for future Core Path designation. Such projects include The Isla Way Extension, Rothes to Craigellachie Railway Path and the Hopeman to Lossiemouth Cycle Path. The Access Management Strategy (AMS), required as a condition of planning consent for the Dorenell windfarm, advocates working in partnership to roll out a Dorenell and Cabrach Paths Network. There is an expectation that some of the Dorenell fund is allocated to development of this network. This would be appropriate under the community paths heading as a Dorenell AMS Community Liaison Group has now been set up to take this network forward spearheaded by the windfarm operator EDF

All community path routes to be supported require to be recorded as Aspirational Core Paths as per Policy 2 of the current Moray Core Paths Plan or are should be designated Core Paths. Specific allocations from the Dorenell windfarm fund could be released as **seed** funding to assist communities to secure the necessary external monies to allow such projects to proceed. In this way the windfarm funding would enable communities to achieve their goals and would draw down additional monies for paths projects presenting prudent and effective use of the fund as a limited resource.

#### **g) Innovative soft promotion measures**

Soft promotional measures include the more traditional local path network leaflets but with big leaps forward in information technology there are a wide range of ‘virtual’ tools by which the Core Paths Network can be promoted to raise awareness and encourage greater usage. Moray’s paths are promoted on the Moray Ways website which contains much useful information but needs considerable updating in terms of software formats and layouts to maximise functionality and make it fully compatible with the latest technology. Opportunities are presented to link the website to mobile phone based systems which will enable users to get the latest information directly out in the field. Mobile information accessibility could be enhanced through using on site systems such as QR codes erected on signage and interpretation infrastructure out on the paths. The website is also incomplete with much more information on many of the paths needed to populate the site to make it a much more effective and useful resource.

The Dorenell fund could therefore be used to develop the raft of IT promotional measures mentioned above as well as for updated versions of the local paths network leaflets. Such promotional measures should not be developed in isolation but should be co-ordinated and where possible integrated with other innovative IT based promotional initiatives such as being considered by the Cairngorms National Park Authority for the Speyside Way and the Moray Way Association for the Moray Way.

#### **h) The Moray Way**

Incorporating the Dava Way and parts of the Speyside Way and the Moray Coast Trail, this is Moray’s premier promoted path which has the greatest potential to unlock the full range of multiple benefits. The Moray Way Feasibility Study was produced in April 2018 which outlines a range of projects and measures to work towards making the 95 mile route multi use. In some sections this will involve ‘braiding’ (separating) users along parallel routes.

The Moray Way Association is considering taking forward the recommendations of the 2018 Feasibility Study with the Moray Council operating an enabling and supporting role. The entirety of the route has Core Path status and as Moray’s most strategic path to unlock multiple benefits

including tourism, it is appropriate to prioritise resources including from the Dorenell fund. This importance should be reflected in the **Prioritised Action Plan**.

#### **i) Monitoring Measures**

Monitoring currently takes place through a limited number of user counters installed on some of the Core Paths. The Dorenell windfarm funding could be used to purchase additional user counters to give a more complete picture of overall usage of the Core Paths Network. Such information would be useful to establish where usage is greatest in the network to help determine where resources should best be channelled in the future. This information can also be used to establish user demands to help build a case when applying for external funding for path development projects. The task of continually reading the counters is considerable and can be time consuming. This task is currently assisted by local community volunteers and opportunities should be explored to expand this scheme.

### **8. THE WAY FORWARD - MAKING BEST USE OF SCARCE RESOURCES**

Whilst the establishment of the windfarm fund is most welcome, it is a finite resource which should be used in the most efficient and prudent way to unlock as many other available resources as possible. It is clear that there are not sufficient resources to do everything we would like to do on or for every Core Path. The **Prioritised Action Plan** will outline the most important things that need to be done on which the fund would best be spent to address the most pressing demands and unlock the widest range of benefits.

It is clear that outputs identified in the Prioritised Action Plan should not be developed in isolation but would be easier to achieve and be more effective through partnership. The **Prioritised Action Plan** will identify the key partners to work with to take projects forward.

The Plan will identify a spend programme for the identified outputs. Some outputs such as selected maintenance tasks will be 100% funded from the windfarm fund whilst other outputs will be on a contributory basis. Overall lead management of the spend programme and implementation of the outputs will be the responsibility of the Moray Council Countryside Section.

Existing staff resources will be required to ensure delivery of the outputs. This needs to be carefully considered and planned for as sometimes required tasks will be time consuming. Such tasks relate largely to project management including tendering, preparing briefs, preparing reports, managing site surveys, procurement, and community liaison. It is crucial at an early stage that such tasks are included in overall staff work plans to ensure unrealistic expectations are not placed on existing staff. Where necessary and where affordable, the Dorenell fund should be used to buy in additional help to carry out tasks although where possible volunteers should be used to increase capacity.

Partners to take the **Prioritised Action Plan** forward may include other Council Departments, Cairngorms National park Authority, The Moray Way Association, The Dava Way Association, The Rothes to Craigellachie Cycle Group, Dorenell AMP Community Liaison Group. This list is not however exhaustive and can be added to.

Pooling resources across the Council is crucial to add value to the overall effort. Using some of the Dorenell fund to match against other Council budgets, Developer Contribution monies and external funding would be an extremely effective use of the fund particularly to unlock larger projects on the Core Paths Network. A topical example of this is using some of the fund to contribute to the project currently being spearheaded by the Moray Council Transportation Section to upgrade the Speyside



Way between Carron and Craigellachie to an active travel path. It is advocated that where such projects arise they can receive a contribution from the fund even before the **Prioritised Action Plan** is complete providing it is clear that they would not go ahead without the funding support.

Throughout the formulating and implementing process outlined in this Strategy Framework Document the Council will work with the **Moray Local Outdoor Access Forum (MLOAF)** as key partners. This is essential given the Forum's statutory role as advisers to the Council in a wide range of outdoor access matters including Core Paths. This will add value to the whole process and ensure that the priorities identified for spending the Dorenell fund are supported by a representation from across the wide range of interests in outdoor access represented on the Forum.

## **APPENDIX 1- Moray CPP : Potential Benefits of Access Improvements**

The following benefits have the potential to result from implementation of the Moray Core Paths Plan.

### **(a) Community Benefits**

- Paths are free and available to all
- Allows people, including the less able to walk, cycle and horse ride with confidence
- Benefits landowners – should help by integrating the public use of land and other land management activities
- Increases leisure opportunities
- Reduces need to travel by car and provides for alternative transportation
- Reinforces community links (physical and cultural)
- Community empowerment and ownership
- Community safety specifically for road accidents. (It is important to ensure that through appropriate layout and design that safety fears on routes are minimised)
- Sustains services within rural communities

### **(b) Health**

- Greater frequency of walking and cycling will increase physical health
- Reduced stress and increased sense of well being

### **(c) Economic Benefits**

- Provision of 'green' tourism infrastructure in the form of integrated access routes

- **Increased number of visitors to Moray and resultant injection of finance into the local economy**
- **Potential for job creation and business growth i.e. tourism, stimulation of local suppliers**
- **Extension of tourist season and increased length of stay**
- **Greater focus on Moray visitor attractions**
- **Consolidation of external grant funding opportunities**
- **Opportunity for private sector sponsorship**
- **Support to existing tourist enterprises**
- **Low cost leisure provision relative to benefits**
- **Financial savings and lower unit costs**
- **Increases opportunity for effective promotion of Moray as an active tourism destination**
- **Value for money – low cost per head of population relative to other forms of transport and leisure**
- **Prioritise limited funds**

#### **(d) Environmental Benefits**

- **Reduced pollution with reduction in car useage – commuting in towns and trips for leisure**
- **Facilitates better understanding and appreciation of the countryside**
- **Opportunities for environmental education**
- **Reduced traffic congestion and parking problems in towns**

## APPENDIX 2 – Policies contained in the Moray Core Paths Plan 2011

### Policy 1 - Network Development

The Council will continue to pursue development opportunities through partnership working to create improved Statutory Moray Core Paths and the wider Moray Paths Network identified on the Moray Core Paths Plan maps. All Core Paths where practical should be fully accessible to walkers, horseriders, cyclists and less able users and a development programme will continue to outline required improvements.

### Policy 2 - Aspirational Core Paths

The Council will continue to support initiatives to develop new paths. These non-statutory Aspirational Core Paths will provide new links with a focus on facilitating active travel and sustainable transport. All routes will be subject to detailed feasibility and landowner agreements prior to any commencement of development.

These aspirational routes are not shown in this plan but are contained in separate documentation held by Moray Council available for public reference on request. Aspirational Core Paths are outlined to target future resources and are indicative only representing broad ideas.

### Policy 3 - Paths Management Plan

A Management Plan will continue to be developed for the Moray Paths Network focussing on Statutory Core Paths. This includes partnership agreements to clarify Moray Council, Land Managers/Landowners, Statutory Agencies and voluntary group responsibilities. The Management Plan will provide for co-ordination by the Council of overall effort including the following:

- Risk assessment//health and safety audits/required measures
- Audit of path assets
- Arrangements for route inspections/condition monitoring and feedback mechanisms
- Life terms for structures and replacement dates
- Ongoing maintenance requirements - short, intermediate, long term Maintenance responsibilities
- Priority focus of resources on off road 'Most accessible Core Paths' Access agreements
- Costings and funding arrangements
- Encouragement of responsible public access and management of user

conflicts

- Public liability
- Monitoring of path usage
- Minimising environmental impacts - methods for minimising adverse impacts on designated Natural Heritage (including Natura) and historic heritage sites.
- Consideration of supporting facilities, e.g. car parks, toilets, etc.

#### **Policy 4 - Paths Signage and Promotion**

The approach to signage for Paths in Moray and other paths in Moray will be based on the following:

- Provision of signage for Paths in Moray including Core Paths which accommodates distinctive identity of each Local Community Area and Forest Enterprise Scotland land. This is inherent in the development programme required under Policy 1.
- Provision of interpretation infrastructure and centrally located map boards to raise public awareness and enhance user experience of paths.
- Continuing development and updating of the Council's website ie. [www.moray.gov.uk](http://www.moray.gov.uk) and site linkages.

#### **Policy 5 Principles for Core Paths to Mitigate Adverse Environmental Impacts**

The following principles shall be applied to minimise the environmental footprint in terms of designation, development, management and promotion of Core Paths across Moray:

- Do 'minimum necessary' works to paths to make them fit for purpose.
- All materials where possible to be natural and sourced locally focussing on best fit with the landscape.
- All signage, mapboard and interpretation infrastructure to be finished in natural low key colours and textures.
- All path treatments to be assessed to minimise pollution of water courses.
- Consideration of measures to manage access along paths which pass through or near designated historic/natural heritage sites. Measures to be devised in consultation with appropriate authorities, i.e. SEPA, SNH and Historic Scotland.
- For any development/management activity on or near a Natura 2000 site, the Moray Council will need to consider what level of mitigation may be necessary to avoid adverse impacts on the qualifying habitats or species of the site(s). Mitigation may include, but is not limited to, the submission of method statements detailing design, precautions and good working practices which will avoid sensitive periods of the year.
- Any activity can only take place if the Moray Council can ascertain that it will not adversely affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 site.
- For any development/management activity on or near to a Site of Special Scientific Interest, the Moray Council will need to consider what mitigation may be necessary to avoid adverse impacts on protected natural features of the site(s). Mitigation measures may be as per Natura 2000 sites above.
- Consideration to be given to protected species which may be affected by development / management works. Surveys should be carried out to establish protected species presence / absence and use of the site the information gathered to be used to determine required mitigation and timing of work.

## **Policy 6 Resources for development, management and promotion of Moray Core Paths and the wider Moray Paths Network**

The Moray Council will continue to explore all opportunities to secure resources for development, management and promotion of Moray Core Paths and the wider Moray Paths Network. This approach will be based on the following measures:

- Securing external grants and funding, including Wind Farm Community Development funds.
- Encouraging and supporting initiatives by landowners, farmers and land managers to develop and manage paths through the Scottish Rural Development Programme and other related schemes.
- Providing ongoing support of the activities of Local Community Access Groups in their continuing efforts.
- Working with local environmental and community support organisations to assist with routine paths maintenance of Moray Core Paths and the wider Moray Paths Network. Organisations include Criminal Justice Community Services.
- Pursuing 'in kind' resources from partner agencies including Scottish Natural Heritage, Historic Scotland and Forest Enterprise Scotland.
- Seeking Developer Contributions through the statutory planning system to finance path improvements where there is a relevant direct impact from development which requires mitigation.