

MORAY LOCAL ACCESS STRATEGY - FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT

Forward

This Access Strategy sets the framework for a process to achieve a network of access routes through **partnership** across Moray with Moray Council in a lead role. It is a response to impending new legislation which will place additional duties on local authorities in terms of planning for and providing access. Developed under the auspices of the Highlands and Islands Countryside Access Strategy and the Moray Interim Local Transportation Strategy, this is a local approach to achieve in a comprehensive way the multiple benefits of access.

The Strategy builds on the success of access work already carried out in Moray, particularly the Moray Access Network Initiative (MANI) pilot projects launched in 1999 by the Moray Council in partnership with 4 Community Access Groups and development of the National Cycle Network and the Speyside Way.

The document has been derived from an extensive consultation exercise involving input from Communities, interest groups, organisations and individuals all with an interest in the field of access. It is a sound base from which improvement and development of access can now take place across Moray.

Councillor E Aldridge
Convener of The Moray Council
January 2002

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1. Introduction

a. What is access?

Access is defined as the means of approaching or entering ground or property. This strategy is concerned with all forms of *non vehicular* access across land for cycling, walking, horse riding accommodating where possible for all abilities. Access networks provide the opportunity to provide recreational access for Moray residents and visitors and can provide off road alternatives for people to get to work, community facilities and services on foot or cycle.

b. Why is this strategy needed?

There is growing demand for access to the countryside and opportunities for path networks to meet recreational and transport functions.

However access has traditionally had a low priority and limited resources within local authorities which is changing with the growing demand from the public and new priorities from Government.

To enable Moray Council to deliver access which meets people's needs, representing best value and attracting resources from external partners, it is essential that it is achieved in a strategic and co-ordinated manner.

This framework document will establish the general principles and process. Details of how this framework will be implemented will be covered in a Strategy Programming Document yet to be produced.

c. What is the strategy trying to achieve?

The principle aim of this strategy is *to satisfy the public's needs for access and to maximise the social, economic and environmental benefits to the Moray area within the limited resources available.* The benefits of access are detailed on background paper number 1. As well as providing a framework for the activity of Moray Council it will also provide a clear view for potential funding partners and will act as a tool for drawing in external funding.

In delivering this aim we will:

- Embrace the views of residents, user groups and landowners/managers to achieve agreement on priorities for access development.
- Follow a presumption of delivering on behalf of all members of the community regardless of age or ability.
- Work with and support communities who wish to take the lead on developing their local access opportunities.
- Deliver a resource which will be valued by local people and which will encourage visitors to enjoy the high quality countryside for which Moray is renowned.

d. Programme of Consultation

A draft strategy framework document was produced for consultation with a variety of partners, organisations and communities through the following process:

- i) The Document was distributed to a wide range of relevant interest groups, organisations, community councils and other community groups for comment with a 6 week response deadline. Over 100 responses were received.
- ii) Responses were reported together with recommended document changes to the Moray Council Environmental Services Committee on 25th April 2001..
- iii) Partner Organisations signed up to the strategy framework document ie Forest Enterprise, The Forestry Commission, Moray, Badenoch and Strathspey Enterprise, Paths for All Partnership, Scottish Natural Heritage, Aberdeen and Grampian Tourist Board. (The roles of each partner is given in background paper number 2.
- (iv) This final version of the Strategy is the end result of the consultation process and is now the agreed policy approach of the Moray Council and its partners.

2. Executive Summary

During 2000 and 2001, Moray Council assisted pilot Local Access Networks in 4 communities in Moray; they have helped to inform the requirements of this strategy.

Substantial external funding is needed to enable the Council to deliver access for people across Moray, and a condition of much of this potential funding relies upon having a clear strategy for delivery of a Moray Access Network (MAN).

This Strategy will be led by the Moray Council but will be dependent on external partners for much of the resources required for delivery. The aim is for this strategy to form the basis of an agreement which external partners have now signed up to. A *Partnership Management Group* (PMG) will thereafter develop a programme of action.

The strategy identifies the priorities with an overall focus on meeting the access needs of residents and visitors through achieving a network of strategic and local paths close to where people live in Moray and where there is tourist demand from walkers, horse riders and cyclists. Achieving this in the towns and the more rural communities will require different approaches. In the more rural areas it is proposed to assist communities who are willing to take the lead themselves. However in the larger towns where demand is more complex, an approach led by the Council and the Partnership Management Group (PMG), is proposed.

The development of a Moray Access Network (MAN) will be through the following process:

- **A Consultation exercise** to establish community priorities and needs at the strategic and local levels, take on board land managers wishes/concerns and views of other interest groups. The resultant output once the results have been processed and analysed will be a Moray Access Network (MAN) Map.
- **A development plan**, derived from the MAN Map, to cost and prioritise action, identify who will be responsible, and timescales for delivery.
- **A Management Plan** detailing responsibilities and planned resources for maintenance. In most cases agreements will be drawn up between the Council and the communities to clarify community and Council responsibilities.

3. Background to the Strategy and Policy Context

The background to this Strategy comes from two courses of government direction. One is to enable more public access to land generally including inland water (responding to National initiatives such as the New Land Reform bill, Scottish Outdoor Access code and The Paths for All Initiative). The other is to encourage more people to walk or cycle and use their cars less in the interest of the environment and public safety being pursued through such measures as Travel Choices for Scotland, The National Cycling Strategy, and Safe Routes to Schools

The Moray Council has already committed to the principle of improved access through its *Moray Local Agenda 21 Strategy* and its *Environmental Charter*. The Strategy will be developed within the framework of the *Highlands and Islands Countryside Access Strategy* and the Council's *Interim Local Transport Strategy* (finalised early 2001 setting out the plans and priorities for the development of an integrated transport approach in response to government guidelines.)

This Local Access Strategy will consolidate the policies of the *Moray Development Plan 2000* (see background paper number 3) to focus development on settlements giving the best chance to optimise multiple benefits of access.

Developments already undertaken to provide footpath and cycle links within and between local communities and to the surrounding countryside include the ***Aberdeen to Inverness National Cycle Network (NCN Route 1 as part of the North Sea Cycle Route), Lossiemouth to Elgin Cycle Link, Moray Cycle Rides, Speyside Way Extension and the Moray Coastal Footpath***. These routes have not yet been developed as an integrated network to provide access throughout Moray from the strategic to the local level. Current provision is fragmented and has been reactionary and there is a need to facilitate a 'joined up' approach.

4. The 4 pilot Local Access Networks

The Moray Access Network Initiative (MANI) was launched in January 2000. This involved the employment of an Access Officer until December 2001 which combined with an 'Access Development Fund' offered assistance to 4 'pilot' Local Access Groups (LAGs) to develop and manage Local Access Networks. LAN groups have been established for Burghead, Drummuir, Mid Speyside and Forres.

Planning of the 4 Local Access Networks is complete. All groups have now signed up to taking an active role in organising route maintenance. The groups are now actively seeking additional funding sources to extend their networks. Group training needs are being sourced through the Paths for All Partnership and the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV).

The 'pilot' initiatives demonstrate that Local Access Groups are an effective way to consolidate community efforts particularly for rural parts of Moray where routes are primarily for leisure and tourism. The pilots have shown that LAG's can:

- Determine the areas they want to (usually guided by Community Council areas, political wards or specific physical features valleys, woodland parks etc).
- Incorporate the views of **all** interested parties including less vociferous individuals within the communities.
- Encompass a wide variety of skills through training opportunities.
- Encourage a joint approach to wider issues and affiliation with national organisations able to provide support, advice and training.
- Be constituted to manage funds, pay bills, commission contractors and manage route promotion, marketing and maintenance.
Develop routes which specifically address their local access needs but are also complementary to the Moray Local Access Strategy principles.

The 'pilot' exercise has demonstrated how 'self help' community initiatives can be rolled out to cover other parts of Moray particularly in rural areas. The 'pilots' have helped to inform how other groups can be set up and how they might address:

- community ownership of the project.
- the importance of defining targets and criteria for groups at the initial stages.
- the scale of areas to be covered by local groups avoiding being overly ambitious.
- the need to be focused in order to cater for the wide variety of involvement and expectations of group members.
- providing a focus for motivation and enthusiasm not just for route planning and development, but also for ongoing maintenance.

TABLE 1-DEFINITION OF A MORAY ACCESS NETWORK

A. Criteria

Path Level		Location	Style	Implementation- Likely Lead
Local Access Networks (LANs)	a. Settlement	Within settlements, on and off road for cycling and walking	Predominantly more formal in the 5 large towns. In other settlements likely to be less formal subject to purpose.	Led by Council in 5 larger towns. Likely to be led by Local Access Groups in other settlements in 'rural' Moray.
	b. Countryside Links	Routes into countryside from settlements, including 'Access for All' where terrain allows.	Predominantly informal around settlements, some routes around larger settlements maybe more formal due to level of usage and purpose.	Lead may be taken by Council particularly where transportation may be a main function. In other cases communities likely to take the lead where there is a community/recreational focus.
Network Linkages		Commuter routes and intermediate recreational links between settlements. End points tied to (a) and may coincide with (b) in some places.	Formal/Informal appropriate to function, usage etc.	Likely due to more strategic nature to be led by the Council. May sometimes become part of community initiatives where there is particular interest.
Strategic Routes		Long Distance Routes/ National Cycle Routes etc	As above	Led by Council or other statutory body due to Strategic Nature. The Speyside Way is currently managed by a multi-agency partnership.

B. Guiding Principles and Key Features

<i>Guiding Principles</i>	
1.	The Moray Access Network (MAN) will be developed as a series in inter-connecting routes, to provide a variety of opportunities for the residents and visitors to Moray. Access to the countryside will be provided, as appropriate, to enable people to participate in quiet informal recreation and gain safe passage across land. Within settlements networks will be developed to improve recreational and transportation opportunities for residents and visitors. Where technically possible, due consideration will be given to the provision of access for all abilities.
2.	All developments will be designed for sustainability, in keeping with the local environment and will be sympathetic to the needs of wildlife, communities and land managers. Associated infrastructure such as gates, stiles or bridges will provide for easy passage whilst minimising land management problems.
3.	Provision of access will be designed to reduce pressure on sensitive sites and routes should be developed to reduce potential conflict between land managers and users. New developments and upgrading of existing routes will provide robust access ‘fit for purpose’ and long-term maintenance requirements considered in the planning and implementation of the network. Access will be secured by formal and informal agreements between land managers, community groups and the Moray Council.
4.	Paths will be promoted, waymarked and interpreted appropriate to their setting using a coherent style. Opportunities will be sought for increasing awareness and understanding of the countryside and its management.
<i>Key Features</i>	
a.	The network should provide for a range of recreational experiences including short circular walks; long walks from place to place; access to features of visitor interest and should give opportunities in a variety of physical settings.
b.	Paths should be developed on the basis of established demand, both from communities and visitors. Future and latent demand should be investigated as part of the planning phase of the network to take advantage of potential benefits of access such as alternative transport options, traffic reduction and health benefits.
c.	Routes should include, where possible, multi-user potential for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Separate provision for specific user groups should be made if appropriate to ensure user safety and enjoyment.
d.	Where feasible, routes should provide for all abilities including wheelchair access.
e.	Routes should ideally be accessible from settlements without the use of a car and should, where possible, be serviced by public transport.
f.	Paths should provide high quality recreation and transportation opportunities within and between settlements, and access to the countryside as appropriate.
g.	Paths may be included in the network as ‘safe routes to schools’ and commuter routes both on and off road.
h.	Paths will be maintained to a standard appropriate to their use and setting.

5. The Strategy Framework

a. Guiding Principles and Criteria of a Moray Access Network (MAN)

It is important before embarking upon the process of establishing what the needs of users are, to determine some basic principles and criteria to establish what is likely to qualify as a route as part of the network (see table 1, A and B). This does not preclude but advises the process of planning for a network in consultation with the Moray Community.

b. Detailed Development Planning

This will involve the following stages:

(i) Detailed Needs Analysis

This is basically a **consultation** led process involving all access stakeholders including landowners, communities, relevant organisations and interest groups to establish supply and demand, both actual and potential. The results of this will be analysed and will advise the formulation of a plan for the development of the Moray Access Network (MAN).

It is appropriate at this stage for a shadow Moray Access Forum to be set up as experience has shown from other areas that involving a locally based Access Forum at an early stage can reduce conflicts between interests later. The Forum will be an integral part of the consultation process.

The Detailed Needs Analysis will be established on the basis on the following general principles:

- (i) focus on community needs – “grass roots” approach
- (ii) location – resources to primarily be channelled to routes in and around settlements particularly the 5 main towns
- (iii) Optimisation of multiple benefits of access i.e. Tourism, Health, Transport, Leisure
- (iv) Fit with definition of Moray Access Network (see table 1)
- (v) Take account of expected usage
- (vi) Potential to maximise latent demand

Strategic Needs will be derived from discussions involving principle partners, main user groups and interest groups.

Local Needs will be derived from a series of 'outreach' techniques and community workshops throughout Moray to identify and prioritise the type of access that local people wish to see in their area. It is essential that landowners and land managers feed into this process. Workshops will be organised around recognised Community boundaries and will:

- identify what priority local access needs and benefits are.
- identify current access provision.
- identify 'gaps' in access provision and possible new/upgraded routes.
- apply all of the above to map a potential local network, outlining main functions of each route (i.e. leisure and tourism, safe routes to schools/shops/community centres etc, alternative transport).

(ii) Identifying the Moray Access Network (MAN)

This will be a GIS derived database and map which will apply baseline information on existing access in Moray and the results of the Detailed Needs Analysis. (See Map 1 for existing access and Map 2 for a notional Moray Access Network). The Moray Access Network (MAN) map will present a range of routes from the Strategic to Local levels. (See table 1 for route definitions). The Moray Access Network map and subsequent

Development Plan will not be static but will be a continually dynamic and developing piece of work.

NB Once the new legislation is in place it is likely that Moray Council will have a duty to record a Core Paths Network (CPN). This can be derived from the emerging Moray Access Network.

(iii) Network Implementation

Implementation of the mapped Moray Access Network will be guided through a **MAN Development Plan** which will outline the following

- 1) Devise a development schedule for each route identified as part of the network based on survey observations. This will include cost estimates for path types identified in table 1. It is important to note that all survey work need not be completed for the whole network before work can commence on the ground.
- 2) Produce prioritised works programme. This will be based upon criteria to establish priorities given that resources are limited and not all routes can be implemented at once. Such criteria will be established collectively by the Strategy Partners. Responsibilities for implementation will be specified.

c. Maintaining the Network

General guidelines for network maintenance are given in background paper number 4 designed to minimise maintenance obligations and to reduce detrimental impacts. A 'Partnership Management Group' (PMG) will seek to secure adequate resources for maintenance of the MAN. The options for delivery mechanisms are diverse due to the difficulty in achieving a single source for carrying out comprehensive maintenance. In view of the wide variety of maintenance sources central co-ordination of the overall effort through the PMG is crucial. This will be achieved through formalisation of a **MAN Management Plan**.

Elements unique to each of the routes in the MAN will be included in a GIS linked Maintenance Schedule which will contain the following information:

- Risk assessment information/Health and Safety Audit.
- Mechanism for and a record of ongoing route inspection/monitoring and frequency of visits.
- Ongoing maintenance obligations and indication of time programming - short, intermediate and long-term.
- Life term for all structures including recommended replacement dates.
- Who is responsible for maintenance of each route and which group/organisation/contractor is designated to carry out works.
- Status of access agreement - landowner/land manager responsibilities.
- Annual breakdown of works cost per route.
- Management arrangements for use of routes.
- Public Liability Responsibility.
- Levels of footpath usage to assess value particularly for high cost maintenance routes.

(NB The Council currently operate a Maintenance Software Programme ('Southbank') which can be used to interface with GIS to develop a maintenance schedule for the MAN with no major cost being increased.)

e. Who will deliver Access

i) Partnership Management Group (PMG)

This Group representing the "resource providers" will oversee the Strategy and will be responsible for formulation the programme of actions and measures for delivery through a *Strategy Programming Document* (See background paper number 2 for the roles of the partners).

The PMG will be particularly active as a “Steering Group” during the final capital investment phases where physical routes are developed. As funders the PMG’s role will be to ensure funds are properly spent. Once the Moray Access Network is developed the PMG will play a less active role operating a monitoring role once a long-term management regime is determined.

All PMG members will be represented on a wider Moray Access Forum and therefore a clear and direct relationship between the two will exist. The PMG could therefore be seen as a core strategy delivery group within the wider forum which will have an advisory function.

ii) Moray Access Forum (MAF)

Likely to be required by new legislation, the forum will contain representation from wider interest groups and land owners. It will act in an advisory capacity to achieve consensus in Strategy Implementation (see background paper number 5 for details of the format and membership of the forum).

NB The forum could consider establishing trust status and operate independently allowing it to secure funding opportunities not currently available to the Council (eg funding trusts, corporate sponsorship, landfill tax credits etc. The forum could operate as a grant giving body for projects which meet the objectives of the Moray Local Access Strategy).

iii) The Moray Council

The Moray Council will take a lead role as members of the partnership (ie PMG), in accordance with the likely statutory responsibilities to be placed on Councils in respect of access planning and delivery. Accordingly the Council will be responsible for producing the MAN Development and Management Plans.

Strategic Routes and Network Linkages together with *Local Access Networks* (LANs) in the 5 main towns (ie Elgin, Buckie, Forres, Keith and Lossiemouth) will be developed through the Partnership led by the Moray Council in consultation with communities reflecting the priority given to achieving multiple benefits of these routes including transport.

The Moray Access staff will be required to implement the development of the Moray Access Network and to provide technical and co-ordinating support to voluntary Local Access Groups. Other council departments will be involved in the development and management of the Moray Access Resource and their respective roles require to be established (eg Ranger Services, DLO, Roads Service, Community and Leisure Services). Moray Access staff will operate as a “Link” between the various council operational units to achieve a corporate approach.

iv) Local Access Group (LAG's)

Local Access Group (LAG's) will be encouraged to set up particularly in more rural parts of Moray where possible to take the lead role in planning, developing promoting and maintaining *Local Access Networks* (LANs) which will have a recreational focus. They will be supported by Access staff through provision of expertise and support. An association of Local Access Groups called '*Moray Abounds*' has been set up to develop a collective community approach particularly in terms of marketing path networks in a Moray context. This association will be represented on the Partnership Management Group and on the Moray Access Forum

v) Other Community Initiatives

These initiatives (including *Safe Routes to Schools*) are being considered by Moray Council through the *Moray Interim Transportation Strategy* and the *Moray Road Safety Plan*. It should be realised that the development of integrated access routes and,

facilities as part of this strategy will maximise the opportunities to develop *Safer Routes to Schools* and other initiatives in partnership with Schools and Communities.

f. Other Access Principles/Themes

It is important that certain themes and principles are constant throughout the Strategy process to achieve the vision and key aims and to sustain the access networks. Policies and actions in the *Detailed Programming Document* will therefore include: -

- Provision of supporting access facilities (eg lockers, showers, changing facilities, car parks, toilets etc)
- Access for all and multi use
- Health and Safety
- Public Liability and responsibility
- Improving awareness, education, training and promotion of access.
- Information and research
- Access agreements and rights of way
- Monitoring
- Ongoing community involvement and consultation.

g. Resources

The Strategy and the Partnership will bring about more efficient use of existing effort and resources for access. Where new money is required there is a wide variety of options for the funding of non-vehicular access from statutory bodies, EC structural funds, Lottery grants and other sources specifically open to community groups (eg landfill tax credits, grant giving trusts). On production of the *Moray Network Map* it will be possible to negotiate 'developer contributions' from new commercial/residential developments to implement sections of network, justified as a way of mitigating the transport impacts of new developments and providing for appropriate levels of amenity and recreation.

The PMG have now successfully secured a Strategic-funding package (£355k) to accommodate Detailed Development Planning, a first phase of access development in Moray and the employment of 2 Access Officers (2002-2004). This bid has successfully drawn down EC Objective 1 and Objective 2 Structural Funds.

The PMG will collectively work on an ongoing basis towards achieving adequate resources for delivering the strategy. This will focus on planning and development of the MAN *Strategic Routes, Network Linkages and LAN's* settlements and operating a support structure to assist communities develop *LAN's* in rural Moray.

It is likely that a funding deficit will exist in the East of Moray particularly for Elgin due to the limitations of EC Objective 2 programme. This requires addressing due to the strategic importance of Elgin as the main population centre. An *Elgin Access Study* has been completed, which will inform as to how "Detailed Development Planning" can ultimately be tackled across Moray. The study incorporates an Elgin Paths Network Map that can now be used to secure project funding.

6. Targets

Target	Lead Agency	Input required from
<i>a.. Now Completed- up to 31 December 2001</i>		
Development of 4 MANI Local Access Networks	Local Access Groups	Moray Access Officer/TMC Staff
Consultation for Moray Access Strategy Framework Document	Partners, TMC	Local communities, interest groups and relevant organisations
Formalisation of Partnership Management Group (PMG)	TMC	All prospective partners
Securing Strategic Funding Bid	TMC	Partnership Management Group
Setting up of shadow Moray Access Forum (MAF)	TMC	Partnership Management Group
Complete Elgin Access Study	Paths for All Partnership/TMC	Partnership Management Group
<i>b. Timescale - 2002 to 2005</i>		
Prepare Strategy Programming Document	PMG	All partners
Complete baseline database of existing access	TMC	Moray Access Officer, PMG
Prepare MAN Management Plan	PMG, Moray Access Officers	All partners
Employment of 2 Moray Access Officers (3 years)	TMC	Partnership Management Group
Formalise Moray Access Forum	TMC	Partnership Management Group
Initial development phase of priority MAN routes identified in Strategic Funding bid	PMG, Moray Access Officers	All partners Local Access Groups (LAGs)
Set up new Local Access Groups	PMG, Moray Access Officers	Communities
<i>c. Timescale - Long Term</i>		
Continuing role for Moray Access Forum (MAF)	TMC	Partnership Management Group
Complete development of identified Moray Access Network (MAN)	PMG, Moray Access Officers	All partners Local Access Group (LAGs)
Ongoing operation of MAN Management Plan	PMG, Moray Access Officers	All partners
Continued employment of Moray Access Officers	TMC	Partnership Management Group
Continue support to existing Local Access Groups and setting up of new groups as required in rural Moray	PMG, Moray Access Officers	All partners
Continued operation of principles, policies and actions identified in Moray Access Strategy Programming Document	PMG	All partners

**Moray Local Access Strategy - Framework Document
Background Papers**

1. Benefits of Access Improvements
2. Roles of the partners in the Moray Local Access Strategy
3. Moray Development Plan 2000, relevant policies
4. General Maintenance Guidelines for the MAN
5. Format and suggested membership of the Moray Access Forum

BENEFITS OF ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS

The following benefits have the potential to result from developing access routes and facilities. The benefits can be applied as project 'targets'.

1. Community Benefits

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

2. Health and Fitness Benefits

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

3. Economic Development Benefits

- Provision of 'green' tourism infrastructure in the form of integrated access routes.
- Increased number of visitors to Moray and resultant injection 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 e.g. Landfill Tax credits, Rural Development Fund, ERDF.
- Opportunity for private sector sponsorship.
- Support to existing tourist enterprises.
- Low cost leisure provision relative to benefits.

4. Comprehensive Route Development Benefits

- Facilitate integrated and consistent approach.
- Financial savings and lower unit costs.
- Increases opportunity for effective promotion of 'Moray'.
- Value for money – low cost per head of population in relation to other forms of transport and leisure.
- Prioritise limited funds.

5. Environmental Benefits

- Reduced pollution with reduction in car usage- commuting in towns and for trips to leisure.
- Facilitates better understanding and appreciation of the countryside.
- Opportunity for environmental education.
- Reduced traffic congestion and parking problems in towns.

**Joint Written Statement - Moray Local Access Strategy Partners
(Derived from Highlands and Islands Countryside Access Strategy)**

(A.1) Statement of Collective Purpose

This written statement represents the collective commitment of all partners to collaborate for the purpose of promoting responsible non-vehicular access in Moray. That well managed access should be provided which encourages responsible use. Specifically the partners collectively subscribe to the following core principles -

- (i) That recreational access provision should be inclusive and designed to meet the needs of all members of the community including visitors to the area.
- (ii) That investment in access should focus on the management and development of a Moray Access Network (MAN) on the basis of Detailed Development Planning involving both local and other interests.
- (iii) That the management and development of the MAN should be based on the advice of both a well balanced Moray Access Forum (MAF) and the wider community.
- (iv) That investment decision making relating to access provision by the partners should be transparent and based on clear public benefit related criteria and to meet statutory requirements.

(A.2) Statement of Individual Roles

The following statements are intended to define and clarify the main role(s) that each partner intends to contribute to the collective purpose of promoting responsible recreational access usage in Moray.

The Moray Council

Moray Council has the lead role in access management and provision, and will have further enhanced duties and responsibilities under the new legislation. Specifically the role includes -

- (i) A likely statutory duty under the new Land Reform Bill to record a Core Paths Network (CPN), this will be derived from the Moray Access Network (MAN).
- (ii) Establishing a MAF with an advisory remit.
- (iii) Making full and responsible use of new duties and powers by forthcoming Access Legislation.
- (iv) Providing advice and assistance to prevent significant problems from arising as a result of people exercising their new right of responsible access.

Forest Enterprise

Forest Enterprise is a major provider of access opportunities in forests. Specifically its role includes -

- (i) Maintenance and development of a range of paths and tracks suitable for walkers, cyclists and/or horses, with associated car parking, within FE managed properties.
- (ii) Provision of the majority of staff and financial resources required to achieve the above.

Forestry Commission

The Forestry Commission is a major resource provider for both the development and management of access provision through elements of its Woodland Grant Scheme. Specifically its role includes -

- (i) Provision of financial resources for access development and management within a woodland or forest context.
- (ii) Provision of advice to woodland and forest owners and managers about access provision.
- (iii) Operation of the Walkers Welcome initiative which advertises access on foot for the public.

MBSE

MBSE as the Local LEC have a business plan to provide for economic development of the area. MBSE is a resource provider for the development of access provision specifically where this provides tourism opportunities. Specifically its role includes -

- (i) Provision of financial resources for access development.
- (ii) Provision of financial resources for specific access related research activity and promotion.
- (iii) Provision of advice to all partners on marketing and investment decision making in particular.

Paths for All Partnership

PFA is the leading NGO involved in promoting and facilitating access provision close to settlements and is core funded by SNH as part of its wider Paths for All Initiative. PFAP's main role is in providing advice and support to local authorities. Specifically its role includes -

- (i) Promotional work to raise the profile of paths and the benefits that they provide.
- (ii) Provision of advice on planning for access provision, including in relation to CPNs, LAFs and other implications of the new legislation.

- (iii) Fundraising and provision of financial resources to assist with access development.
- (iv) Provision of information and training in relation to access management and development.

SNH

The following is an extract from the informal Recreation and Access Document: 'Enriching People's Lives – Promoting Informal Recreation and Access':

“Scotland's opportunities for outdoor recreation are outstanding. Residents and visitors alike take advantage of them in an ever-increasing variety of ways – to the benefit of their health and general well-being and of the economy. The range of provision must match this diversity of demand. Close to where people live, the need is for improved and more welcoming access opportunities, building on but going beyond the existing regional and country parks. Elsewhere in the countryside, and especially in areas which are inherently fragile, better management and increased investment in basic infrastructure is needed.

The proposed new access legislation will establish a modernised framework for action on all these front. It will also create a better basis for understanding and accommodation between the needs of the visiting public and those who live and work in the countryside.

SNH priorities are:

To assist government in framing and implementing the proposed new general right of responsible access to improve recreational opportunities for all;

To promote the better management of access, especially where this is needed to reconcile informal recreation with other land uses or with the well-being of the Natural Heritage;

To foster greater understanding between users and managers of the countryside, and to encourage responsible behaviour by all, by developing and promoting the Scottish outdoor access code;

To use people's enjoyment of the Scottish countryside to build commitment to the conservation of the Natural Heritage resource, including the qualities particularly valued by recreational users;

To deliver, with partners, better provision for outdoor recreation close to where people live, through the Paths For All Initiative and other programmes;

To secure funding and high standards of maintenance for access”.

ABERDEEN AND GRAMPIAN TOURIST BOARD (AGTB)

AGTB is responsible for local tourism marketing, mainly promotion. Specifically its role includes -

- (i) Generic promotion of access to potential and current visitors.
- (ii) Specific promotion of access opportunities, e.g. through signage.
- (iii) Market research to improve the understanding of tourist needs relating to access.

NB: A number of other organisations are not currently partners, but will have a significant role to play particularly through the MAF. These include -

*Health Boards and related health promotion agency.
Joint Council of Community Councils
Local public transport operators.*

(A.3) Statement of Individual Strategic Priorities and Policies

The following statements are intended to define and clarify the specific priorities and policies that underpin each partner's involvement in the collective purpose of promoting responsible recreational access usage in the Highlands and Islands. In short, the following statements seek to define and clarify "where each partner is coming from".

The Moray Council

The primary priority of TMC is to ensure that its statutory responsibilities with respect to access are fulfilled. Short term priorities must therefore be to establish a MAF that is effective but which involves little additional cost to the authority, and to define a MAN and ultimately a CPN that is affordable given realistic expectations about resource availability. The longer term priority is likely to be the effective development and management of the MAN within a management plan.

In meeting these priorities TMC will work within a policy framework that reflects its broader priorities. This includes -

- (i) An emphasis on access provision for visitors that delivers associated economic benefits.
- (ii) An emphasis on access provision within and adjacent to settlements where opportunities for reduction in car usage and facilitating social inclusion are maximised.
- (iii) Facilitating access at all levels to meet community and strategic needs.

Forest Enterprise

The primary priority of FE is to increase the public value derived from state forests by optimising recreational use therein. This includes both direct value derived from recreation itself (e.g. health and social benefits), and indirect value derived from the fact that people use particular FE properties for this purpose (e.g. local tourism and economic benefits). A secondary but important priority in some areas is to use access provision as a means of increasing public interest and understanding (e.g. of woodland ecology, commercial forestry management, etc).

FE delivers access provision within a policy framework that includes -

- (i) An open access policy in all its forests.
- (ii) A policy of providing for cyclists and horse riders as well as walkers wherever demand justifies it.

Forestry Commission

The primary priority of FC is not dissimilar to that of FE, but differs in that it relates to privately owned forests and woodland, including woodland which is not managed for

commercial purposes at all. Fundamentally though the aim is to diversify the value derived from private forests and woodland, and to add public recreational value (direct and indirect) to whatever other private or public values the resource delivers.

FC delivers access provision within a slightly different policy framework to that of FE that includes -

- (i) A policy that encourages, and indeed favours, direct and indirect community involvement in access provision and forest/woodland management.
- (ii) A policy that encourages open access.

MBSE

NB: LECs have to assess most investments primarily on socio-economic rather than environmental renewal criteria. For the purposes of this document a socio-economic focus has been assumed.

MBSE has a degree of discretion over the priorities and policies that it adopts. Overall, however, the primary priority of the HIE and SE Network applies which is to use access investment to deliver economic benefits, and associated with this to strengthen fragile communities and promote social inclusion.

The policy framework that underpins this work varies from LEC to LEC, but tends to include -

- (i) A policy that favours community involvement in the planning of access related investments.
- (ii) A policy that favours access investments likely to displace visitors into economically fragile areas from more popular "honeypots".
- (iii) A policy that favours access investments that demonstrably enhance the quality of tourist product that the area offers.
- (iv) A policy that encourages the linking of access development with development of associated commercial services aimed at access users.

Paths for All Partnership

The primary priority for Paths for All is to raise the profile of paths as a valuable resource for everyone, and through this to increase support for, and investment in, well managed networks of paths suitable for all needs.

Paths for all delivers this within a policy framework that includes -

- (i) An emphasis on co-ordinating and facilitating measures that add value to existing structures.
- (ii) A focus on areas close to where people live and/or where tourists visit.

SNH

As the government's main adviser on access matters, SNH's priorities reflect the current public policy agenda in five main ways -

- (i) Land reform and an emphasis on access provision as part of responsible land stewardship aimed at meeting the broad needs of society as a whole.

- (ii) Rural development, and an emphasis on access as a component of sustainable rural development.
- (iii) Transport, and an emphasis on non motorised transport within a more sustainable transport system.
- (iv) Health, and an emphasis on preventative measures designed to improve Scotland's poor health record.
- (v) Social inclusion, and an emphasis on enabling all members of society regardless of circumstances to enjoy recreational access to the countryside.

Within this agenda SNH works to a policy framework that includes the following -

- (i) A policy that favours investments that facilitate better understanding and appreciation of the countryside.
- (ii) A policy that favours investments that contribute to preventing or restoring environmental damage arising from access usage.

AGTB

The primary priority of AGTB is to encourage tourism based on recreational access that will increase visitor numbers outwith the main tourism areas.

Within this AGTB works to a policy framework that includes the following -

- (i) A policy that favours developments likely to increase Grampian's relative competitive position and increase market share.
- (ii) A policy that seeks to increase short break and activity holidays outwith the main summer months.
- (iii) A policy that aims to comprehensively promote access across Moray to maximise the potential of the network as a tourist resource.

(A.4) Additional Partnership Relationships

Moray Abounds

An association of Local Access Groups, 'Moray Abounds' has been formed on an informal basis without a specific role or policy statement. It has representation on the Moray Access Strategy Partnership Management Group. Whilst this is not a statutory organisation or agency it does represent an important community voice with the following purpose

- Collective community representation on Access issues
- Exchange of practical ideas and experience
- Preparation of joint Training and Marketing Initiatives
- Identification and development of a 'Moray Access product'
- Consolidation of funding opportunities

MORAY DEVELOPMENT PLAN – 2000 – RELEVANT ACCESS POLICIES

Moray Structure Plan

Transportation - Policy S/T1 - Approach to Transportation

The approach to transportation is to enhance accessibility by improving transport links and services, and to promote sustainability by advancing traffic management, cycling and walking.

Transportation - Policy S/T9 - Cycling Strategy

The Moray Council will promote a Cycling Strategy incorporating:

- (i) support of network and facilities development including the proposed Aberdeen to Inverness National Cycle Route, other local routes and initiatives.
- (ii) greater integration between development, and cycling and walking routes.

Community Facilities, Sport and Recreation - Policy S/CF3 - Recreational Use of the Countryside

The Council will seek to establish management agreements in relation to access to, and recreational use of, countryside areas. Where such areas are environmentally sensitive (and are designated as such in the Local Plan) a formal Management Plan, involving monitoring of impact, will be required.

Moray Local Plan

Transportation - Policy L/T10 - Cycle Tracks and Footpaths

As part of the implementation of the Cycling Strategy new development on designated and windfall sites will require to provide cycle tracks and footpath connection to the existing network; these may be required as part of a developer contribution (L/F1) if outwith an application site.

Community Facilities, Sport and Recreation - Policy L/CF4 - Countryside Recreation: Access and Trails

Development proposals will not be permitted to prejudice established routes for walking, cycling, trails and cross-country skiing for which access arrangements have been agreed.

Retailing - Policy L/R3 - Pedestrianisation

The Council supports the principle of pedestrianisation as a means of improving a shopping environment and as a means of implementing town centre management plans.

GENERAL MAINTENANCE GUIDELINES FOR MORAY ACCESS NETWORK
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FORMAL ROUTES

- Minimise required maintenance through appropriate design regarding level of demand, location, ground conditions and type of user groups.
- Ensure that built paths are allowed to solidify for up to one week at building, prior to use.
- Minimise potential build-up of vegetative matter through initial location and design of route.
- Minimise vegetation invasion through annual application of herbicide swathe along path edges, and/or spot treatments on the path surface.
- Potential problem areas be recognised early and included in maintenance annually in late Autumn and early Spring.
- Minimum of one annual clearance of vegetation build-up and cutting back of branches to at least 2 metres from path edges.
- Twice yearly inspection of all drainage provision along routes and adjacent areas affecting routes. Allow for inspection, clearing and improvement works in Autumn and Spring.
- Allow for improvement works to path surfaces as deemed necessary.
- Encourage feedback from users and locals.
- Encourage responsible use.
- The Speyside Way has its own maintenance standards which promote “green” surfaces and this will be adhered to.

INFORMAL ROUTES

- Minimise potential maintenance through appropriate design regarding level of demand, location, ground conditions and type of user groups.
- Avoiding wherever possible, installing pathways in sensitive locations.
- Where possible, reinforce or protect existing natural path surfaces e.g. Vigorous grass-seed mixes, under-turf foundations and drainage. These treatments will depend on the type of route, location, materials and resources available.
- Ensure a minimum of twice yearly mowing regimes on turf paths.
- Allow for improvement works to surfaces each year at appropriate times dictated by the sensitivity of locations and type of path surface.
- Ensure substantial and appropriate drainage installation at initial stages.
- Twice yearly inspection of all drainage provision along routes and in adjacent areas affecting routes. Allow for inspection, clearing and improvement works in Autumn and Spring.
- Spot herbicide treatments for invasive woody perennials and shrubs as required and at appropriate times according to species.
- Annual cut-back or mowing of adjacent vegetation to approximately 1 metre from path edges, where required.
- Assess effectiveness of informal path surface annually in relation to level of demand and type of user groups.
- Encourage feedback from users and locals.
- Encourage responsible use.
- In circumstances where there is an identified environmental and/or scientific interest (e.g. wild flowers) the application of Herbicide treatments to control plant growth may be relaxed providing minimal maintenance is carried out to permit safe passage across the path.

FORMAT AND SUGGESTED MEMBERSHIP OF THE MORAY ACCESS FORUM

Based on government advice the Moray Access Forum should have the following roles:

- Keeping under review the implementation locally of the new legislation and the new Scottish Countryside Access Code, and reporting on this to both the local authority and the national Access Forum;
- Assisting with any disputes or issues that arise;
- Assisting in the promotion of responsible behaviour by the public, land managers and public bodies through developing local advice for users and land managers on their responsibilities and obligations (i.e. formulating Local Access Codes within Moray based on the principles of the Scottish Countryside Outdoor Access Code);
- Acting as consultee on the local authority's use of powers for path diversion and closure, and for management rules and bylaws; and
- Assisting in the identification of local priorities and establishing mechanisms enabling ease of feedback from and to local groups;
- Assisting the development of the access strategy developing local advice for users and land managers on responsibility and obligations.

Whilst the advice from central government gives a steer on the likely roles of a Local Access Forum it is important that this group is formulated to reflect the access situation in Moray. In this context it is therefore important that the forum is specifically involved with:

- A. Advising the planning, implementation and management of the Moray Access network and engendering joint ownership of the Moray Access Strategy;
- B. An ongoing review and monitoring process for the Moray Local Access Strategy;
- C. A strong community link. The Moray Access Officer should be represented on the group separately as a liaison between the forum and the Local Community Access Groups and other local groups;
- D. Having a balanced membership from across the Moray Community;
- E. A focus on access within and around Moray's 5 main towns as a priority.

The forum as part of the decision making process will require to be adaptable with a core membership established and other affiliated members attending as required.

It is recommended that the core membership of the forum should include the following membership (one person for each organisation):

The Moray Council
Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)
Moray Badenoch & Strathspey Enterprise (MBSE)
Aberdeen and Grampian Tourist Board (AGTB)
Moray Access Officer (as liaison with Local Community Access Group)
Joint Community Council Forum
Forest Enterprise
Moray Health Board/Health Promotions
Moray Access Panel for the Disabled
National Farmers Union (NFU)
Scottish Land Owners Federation (SLF)

Scottish Rights of Way Society (SROWS)
Cyclists Touring Club
British Horse Society
Ramblers Association
Scottish Canoe Association
Anglers Association.
Farming Forestry and Wildlife advisory group (FFWAG)
Scotrail
Bus Operator
Scottish Association for Country Sports
Speyside Way Management Group
Moray Abounds

Affiliated members could include:

Moray Tourism Forum
Moray Voluntary Services Organisation (MVSO)
North of Scotland Water Authority (NOSWA)
Rural Environmental Action Plan (REAP)
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA)
The Cairngorms Partnership
The Speyside Council
Moray Firth Voluntary Ranger Service
Crown Estates (Glenlivet)
Paths for All
Scottish Woodlands
Railtrack
Moray Chamber of Commerce
Landfill Operators
Robertsons
Baxters