National Access Forum Sub-Group : Core Paths and OS mapping

Minutes from the 3rd meeting – Tues 6th June 2017 Silvan House, Edinburgh

Attendance -
David Henderson Howat - Chair
Rob Garner
Helen Todd
George Menzies
Simon Pilpel
Gareth Heavisides
Janice Winning (future Secretary for NAF)

Apologies - Angus Duncan, Bridget Jones, Shona Nicol (SG)

Item 1: Note of previous meeting, **28 Feb 2017 and Action points** –

George Menzies reported back to the group on his discussion with Northumberland Council explaining the process they use to inform Ordnance Survey (OS) - ie that any changes to path routes or new paths are simply sent to OS on paper copy and are immediately digitised. This applies to RoW and Permitted paths, in total 8 different types of paths are distinguished using two colours on OS maps for England and Wales. This would indicate that the process in England is indeed simple for OS updating any changes that may occur to existing paths or adding new routes.

Discussion followed reiterating that we want to see Core Paths mapped at 1:25,000 or 1:50,000 on OS maps and that this should not be an onerous task.

As highlighted at the NAF meeting on the 17th May, Rob Garner updated the sub group on the work that had been completed by the Improvement Service with all 34 Scottish Local Authority Core path data sets now combined on the unified mapping on the Spatial Hub. It was recognised that this was a substantial task that would facilitate the transfer of the Core path data to OS.

Item 2: Ramblers Scotland meeting with OS:
Helen Todd emphasised the support for Core Paths to be included on OS maps that had arisen from the recent successful members' campaign. She provided an update on her meeting with David Henderson of OS (Director of Products and Innovation). Frustratingly there have been several changes in staff, and those who were aware of the issues have now left.
From OS point of view there is a reluctance to pay for the work as leisure maps only account for 8% of their market, although digital maps are widely used. There also appears to be a misunderstanding of the legal framework for Core paths and concerns about the quality of the Core paths mapping. On a positive point the OS are keen to promote routes and to get more people in to the outdoors. They have also successfully mapped Greenspace across the UK, in Scotland utilising the mapping work done by SNH, and the Core Path mapping would be a useful addition to this. They are interested to hear more about the South Lanarkshire trial.

There were questions raised about how else the Core paths could be made publically available perhaps through the Improvement Service or the SE WEB. However it was felt that on balance although these other avenues could be explored, it is still the OS that is the first port of call that the public would go to for finding out about path networks including Core paths.

It would appear that there is still a need to get the principle of getting core paths on OS maps accepted by key Scottish Government and OS staff. Further meetings with both groups are required to iron out some of the misunderstandings and bring new OS staff up to date with the work that has been carried out to date in Scotland and how to get maximum value from this investment.

AP1: a note of the background to Core Paths and the Scottish Parliament's legislative intentions for their promotion to be prepared as a background note for subsequent meetings.

Item 3: Report on the Core Paths analysis: South Lanarkshire Case Study from SG Digital
Directorate

There was discussion of the conclusions that had arisen from the South Lanarkshire Case study. In summary 90 % of the paths which have been designated core paths are already included on the OS MasterMap (as roads, tracks, paths, disused railways, etc), confirming that again the task is not great to show these as Core paths, as for instance this avoids issues over accuracy of digitisation. Many of the other issues that arose from this study were felt to be of a technical nature and that many were not relevant to mapping core paths at the 1:25,000 or 1:50,000 scale. Many of the errors mentioned were errors for example in the background meta-data, rather than in actual line data, which is therefore of less effect on the OS mapping process. Simon confirmed that the local authorities were busy working through the minor errors in the meta-data and making minor changes in the mapping especially at any cross-boundary locations.

Whilst these technical difficulties were not thought to be major obstacles in taking the work forward with OS, there was a general agreement that further discussion with technical GIS officers within the Council to gain a greater understanding of the issues was required. However, it was recognised that it should not be for our group to resolve those technical points

AP2: Gareth Heavisides to arrange a meeting to review the Case study and the technical points identified.

Item 4: Discussion over next steps

There was agreement that a further meeting of the sub group should be held quickly (perhaps at VQ) and should include Shona Nicol as the government officer responsible within the Digital Directorate.

This meeting should
1) set out why core paths should be included on OS maps based on the principles from the existing legislation
2) report back on the technical lessons learnt from the S Lanarkshire trial
3) try to identify the costs
4) look at other ways forward eg through the Improvement Service and investigate how their data could be made publically available.
5) Outline a way forward with OS and a timeframe for this work.

An offer to view GIS capabilities and look at google tracker within the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park was welcomed and would be followed up for a future sub group meeting.

DONM to be confirmed – unfortunately a new date could not be arranged before Rob Garner left SNH but another representative from SNH would be sought.