

**August 2016**

## **Core Paths and the Ordnance Survey: the business case**

### **Background**

At the National Access Forum meeting in September 2015, a representative from Ordnance Survey (OS) presented a paper which set out the organisation's position with regard to including core paths on forthcoming Scottish OS maps. The cover paper from the NAF secretariat for that meeting outlined the legal framework for core paths and the long-standing expectation of access professionals in Scotland that, once each core paths plan was adopted, the process would automatically start of updating OS maps to include core paths.

Subsequently in May 2016 the NAF was informed that OS had decided against including core paths on their maps as it was felt that the technical, operational and management costs of integrating the core path data were too high to offset any potential market value or benefit for end users.

The technical issues are dealt with elsewhere, but this paper aims to set out the business case for including core paths on OS maps, and the benefits for users in Scotland of having mapped core paths.

### **The value to the recreation user of having core paths on maps**

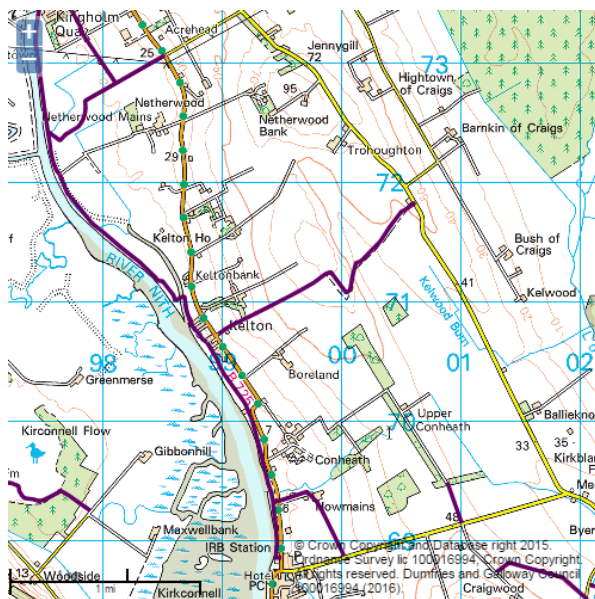
In England and Wales rights of way are protected through depiction on "definitive maps" held by each surveying authority (county or unitary authority, with the exception of the inner London boroughs) under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. These definitive maps are the basis for the mapping of paths on OS maps, and the depiction of rights of way on OS maps therefore gives members of the public considerable assurance about their statutory rights. That assurance can never be absolute because rights of way can be legally closed and diverted and there will always be a lag between such legal changes and the production of a new edition of the relevant OS map.). Definitive mapping also helps to ensure that these paths are protected. This part of the 1949 legislation did not apply to Scotland and over the years, without formal protection, many paths in Scotland have been lost to agriculture, forestry or development although some do still appear on maps as geographical features. This has resulted in a real lack of paths (both on the ground and on maps) to give safe, pleasant routes around and between our communities as there are very few rights of way which are legally protected, and also a lack of knowledge of where paths still exist. Scottish users, whether residents or visitors, have therefore been disadvantaged in terms of mapped paths, especially in comparison with people in England and Wales who have for decades been able to plan routes and trips using paths shown on their maps.

In recent years, core paths adopted by access authorities as a duty under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 have become the principal legally-definitive and designated system of paths in Scotland. Therefore, despite the different legal status, core paths can be seen as equivalent to rights of way, giving certainty for both recreation users in Scotland as well as land managers. Although statutory rights of access apply to most land (and inland water), paths are important for enabling and encouraging more people to take access and enjoy active lifestyles. Paths also give a measure of certainty to land managers who can expect to

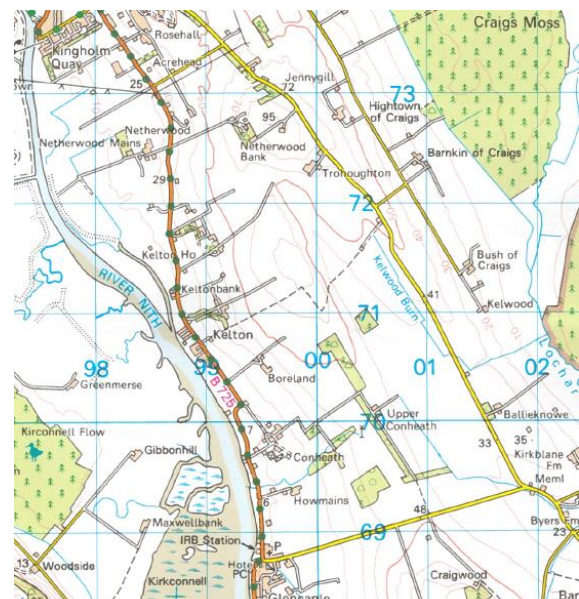
find most people using paths where they exist on their land and therefore it helps them to manage their own operations accordingly.

The core paths network is legally available to all types of users (eg, walkers, cyclists, equestrians), and includes inland water core paths for paddlers and other water users. In principle, core paths plans are all publicly available through access authority websites. However, they are not in a user-friendly format and involve a lot of searching for individual maps which are often large to download and not well presented for the general public. Paths which were identified through a process of public consultation as being of local importance for recreation and for active travel are hidden away for use mainly by the access authority.

Even though it is accepted that more paths exist on the ground than are shown in a core paths plan, the two map extracts below give an example of how a core paths plan can give many more options to users of paths in this area near Dumfries. While some paths are shown on the OS map, many of the core paths do not appear and therefore anyone unfamiliar with the area would not be aware of the opportunities for recreation or active travel provided by these paths. The National Walking Strategy<sup>1</sup> has shown that 'knowledge barriers', including lack of information, signage, websites, are one of the barriers which discourage more people from walking, and are particularly linked to socio-cultural factors.



Copyright Dumfries & Galloway Council core paths plan



Copyright 2006 Ordnance Survey Landranger 84

### Lack of paths on maps – the impact on visitors

Ramblers Scotland is regularly contacted by English or Welsh members of the organisation who are coming to Scotland on holiday and are unsure of how they can find out where to go for a walk. We have over 107,000 members across GB and these members are used to identifying routes on OS maps and so are struck by the lack of any equivalent walking opportunities in Scotland.

Likewise, some members have over the years contacted the office to complain that having had a holiday in Scotland, they had been limited in where they could go for a walk. They

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0045/00452622.pdf>

had expected to find paths and trails shown on their map, but the lack of any waymarked paths in the area where they were staying discouraged exploration. They have been mystified as to why this should be the case compared to England and Wales. One member commented that in Mull they felt they had had to stick to the road, not understanding that access rights apply to the land and they had the right to walk on ground which was not set out as a path.

It's possible that many potential visitors from the UK and elsewhere are being discouraged from coming to Scotland due to this apparent lack of paths offering recreation opportunities.

### **Economic value of outdoor recreation to Scotland**

Scotland attracted 14.6 million visitors from both the UK and abroad in 2015<sup>2</sup>. Outdoor recreation is a hugely significant sector of Scotland's tourist industry and therefore makes a major contribution to the economy, mainly in rural areas. Overall it has been estimated that total visitor spending attributable to nature-based tourism per year is £1.4 billion with 39,000 associated full-time (or equivalent) jobs. Within this, walking tourism in Scotland alone brings in £533 million per year and provides 15,231 jobs, which equates to 40% of all nature-based tourism spending in Scotland<sup>3</sup>. Cycle tourism, both for residents and visitors, touring and leisure cycling, is estimated to be worth £239 million per year.<sup>4</sup>

In terms of domestic outdoor recreation, in 2012, 79% of Scottish adults made at least one visit to the outdoors for leisure or recreation in the previous twelve months, and the total value of expenditure during these visits was estimated at around £2.6 billion<sup>5</sup>. Amongst those visiting the outdoors, walking has consistently been recorded as the main activity undertaken on the majority of visits, rising from 69% of visits in 2004 to 73% in 2012.

Scotland is a particularly attractive destination for UK residents enjoying a staycation, due to its breath-taking scenery and unspoilt nature. For this group of visitors, walking is by far the most popular nature-based activity. VisitScotland has estimated<sup>6</sup> that 55% of visitors undertook a short walk or stroll in 2015, while 39% enjoyed a longer walk or stroll and 43% came for a centre-based walking holiday. Many of these visitors will have used map products during their visits, as well as those taking part in other activities, such as visiting woodlands (35%) or wildlife/bird watching (25%). The popularity of websites such as [Walkhighlands](#), with around 2,000 mapped routes across Scotland, shows there is an appetite for delineated routes. While leaflets of walking routes are often available locally or online, it is important to offer visitors the opportunity to use OS maps to build their navigation skills and awareness of other options for their trip activities.

Scottish coastal environments are also a significant draw. The Scottish Marine Recreation and Tourism Survey<sup>7</sup> was designed to gather information for 23 different recreation and tourism activities undertaken at sea or around the Scottish coastline. Overall, the value of

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Tourism>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/B720765.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://transformscotland.org.uk/what-we-do/research/the-value-of-cycle-tourism/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.snh.gov.uk/docs/A1020956.pdf>

<sup>6</sup>

[http://www.visitscotland.org/pdf/Final%20\(external%20use\)%20Scotland%20Visitor%20Survey%202015%20updated%208%20March%202016.pdf](http://www.visitscotland.org/pdf/Final%20(external%20use)%20Scotland%20Visitor%20Survey%202015%20updated%208%20March%202016.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/marine/seamanagement/national/RecandTourism>

coastal of marine recreation and tourism activities is estimated to be worth up to £3.7 billion to the Scottish economy. Of this, around £2.4 billion is associated with general marine recreation and tourism while £1.3 billion relates to more specialist activities including wildlife watching, sailing, kayaking, surfing and angling. Again, maps are likely to be crucial aids to many of these activities.

From the coast to the Highlands the benefit to rural economies of outdoor recreation through tourism is substantial. According to the Cairngorms Visitor Survey<sup>8</sup>, 44% of visitors had undertaken low-level walking, 14% had been high-level walking, 13% cycling or mountain biking, and 2% climbing with another 2% enjoying watersports. Data on visitor spending within the Cairngorms area indicates that per person in the 24 hour period prior to interview, the total average spend was almost £90 per person.

The above figures show clearly how important and valuable tourism relating to outdoor recreation is for the Scottish economy, and the significant impact it makes. It goes without saying that a large proportion of these people will be making use of various mapped resources during their visits and it therefore seems likely that there would continue to be a high demand for maps in future.

**Lack of paths on maps – one impact on the economy**

A large, UK-based walking holiday provider recently explained to staff at Ramblers Scotland that the reason why only a very small proportion of their UK holidays were based in Scotland (4 destinations out of a total of 23) was partly because of the lack of knowledge about the availability of low level paths. While Scotland's mountains offer an unparalleled experience, if the weather is unsuitable to go up high their tour guides often found it very difficult to identify alternative lower level routes. Core paths on maps would be a useful tool to help this process and could therefore potentially bring more UK holiday providers north of the border.

*Helen Todd, Ramblers Scotland 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2016.*

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<sup>8</sup> <http://cairngorms.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/150831CairngormsVisitorSurveyPresentationv1.01.pdf>