

Promoting the Scottish Outdoor Access Code

Purpose

This paper summarises current and proposed SNH activity to promote the Code, as previously discussed at the Forum, and seeks members' input to this work.

Action

Forum members are asked to:

- **discuss current and future plans for Code promotion;**
- **advise on the scope of the proposals aimed at young people, and;**
- **identify any opportunities to work more closely with us to add value and increase the impact of the proposed promotional work.**

Background

SNH has duties to publicise (in conjunction with access authorities) and promote understanding of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. This requires an ongoing commitment to maintain levels of awareness among the public and land managers, and we have undertaken a series of campaigns since the Code came into force, with considerable input from the Forum.

We have also monitored awareness of the Code throughout this period, and this currently takes place in two annual survey waves through the Scottish Opinion Survey. Awareness among the general public reached a peak of 61% in 2008, linked to a mass media campaign based on TV adverts. Since then, resource constraints have enforced a move away from costly broad brush promotional methods to more targeted approaches, with a greater focus on key audiences identified by the Forum. Code awareness has stabilised at around 39-44% since 2012, standing at 43% in November 2018. Awareness is consistently slightly higher among those who visit the outdoors regularly.

The Forum has considered priorities for Code promotion on a number of occasions, including a detailed discussion at the May 2018 meeting facilitated by SNH's then Head of Communications, Anna Marriott. These discussions have identified a number of key topics and audiences and are guiding SNH's current work in this area. There was particular support from Forum members for new initiatives to engage with young people, and SNH agreed to provide a paper for the present meeting setting out a proposed approach. This paper also provides an update on wider Code promotion activity, in each case seeking further input from Forum members as required.

Promoting the Code to young people

Previous discussion at the Forum has highlighted the possibility of developing new resources to promote the Code to young people in conjunction with Young Scot. SNH and Young Scot have previously collaborated on similar projects, such as the [Freshspace](#)

campaign which encourages young women to enjoy the outdoors, applying the principle of co-design. This approach moves beyond conventional consultation and aims to work closely with the key audience from the outset of the project, helping to ensure that the ultimate outputs are as effective as possible in meeting the needs of the target group.

Initial discussion has now taken place with Young Scot based around an outline project proposal, and the next stage in the process will be to develop this in more detail. It will be necessary to set clear boundaries to guide the project, but also to avoid unduly pre-judging or constraining the potential outcomes, which could undermine the benefits of the co-design approach. Some key decisions include:

- whether this project would target a “naïve” audience (young people with no prior knowledge of access rights) or those who have some initial awareness of the Code;
- the target age group (Young Scot spans ages 11-26, and it may be difficult to design individual resources that work equally well across this wide range), and;
- which messages from the Code should be included. Options include a broad and shallow approach similar to our [existing Code leaflets for a general audience](#), or a stronger focus on a few key topics. Our initial preference would be the former, which could convey Code messages to a greater number of young people in the first instance, with cross-reference to the Code website for further detail on particular topics if needed.

Previous discussion at the Forum has highlighted the need for positive, enabling messages, and this approach has been strongly endorsed in our discussions with Young Scot. The design and targeting of new resources will also need to reflect the ways in which young people use the outdoors, and the barriers which can prevent them from doing so more often. Available information from various sources indicates the range of outdoor activities that young people engage in and key constraints such as school, home and other commitments, providing important background to this work.

We will provide support from staff within SNH’s Placemaking for People & Nature and Communications teams, and the Young Scot Content Team can also help identify preferred approaches from the wide range of potential communication methods, including various social media platforms. The overall timeframe for the project will depend to some extent on the approach that emerges from the co-design process, but we will provide updates and share developments with the Forum at the most appropriate stage for useful input.

Comments from the Forum on the scope of the proposals aimed at young people, including the key options noted above, would be very helpful.

Wider promotional activity

Scottish Outdoor Access Code website

The Code website has now been completely redeveloped in line with previous discussion at the Forum, and went live shortly before Xmas at <https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/>. The site is now integrated with the SNH website, but has been designed to maintain an entirely independent identity as favoured by the Forum, with SOAC rather than SNH branding. The layout and visual style of the new site have been updated to provide a better experience for users, and some familiar links will have moved, but the overall structure is similar to that of the previous site. This refreshed website provides a foundation for wider

promotional activity aimed at young people (as above) and other groups (as below). Feedback on the site would be very helpful as members have the opportunity to use it over the coming months.

Dogs and livestock

We are currently preparing to repeat the seasonal campaign to promote responsible access with dogs, based on resources that we have previously developed in conjunction with key Forum member bodies. This campaign is scheduled for March 2019 and is currently planned to include:

- Radio adverts, which are essentially as used in the spring 2018 campaign, consisting of a 30sec message about responsible behaviour and three 40sec audio segments in which land managers talk about sheep worrying and provide advice to dog owners. These use *Jess the Dog* branding and include the “jessthedog” URL to link to the SOAC website.
- Social media activity, including themed days and blog posts. We are also exploring the scope to use online influencers (popular dog-related bloggers) to reach a greater proportion of the key dog owner audience. We can provide further information about planned social media activity as this is clarified nearer the time.
- These activities will be supported by the key pages on the new SOAC website, which provide the full guidance from the Code and supporting resources such as the SOAC leaflet for dog owners. These pages will also include new dog training modules with embedded videos, which provide more detailed guidance and should create a more engaging resource for users.

We are supporting the wider [campaign led by Police Scotland](#) on behalf of the Scottish Partnership Against Rural Crime, and we will take opportunities to link to other campaigns undertaken by partner bodies. We have also been approached by the Dogs Trust and have agreed to share campaign materials for promotion as appropriate through their own communication channels.

We would of course welcome input from key partners who are well placed to support and add value to this campaign.

Other Code promotion activity

A number of other promotional activities have taken place or are anticipated in the near future, reflecting previous discussion at the Forum and/or feedback received from other stakeholders. These include:

- providing communications support for the launch of the Forum’s guidance on unauthorised MTB trails, which took place in November 2018;
- exploring ways to develop stronger links between Code promotion and formal education, as discussed at the last Forum meeting. This is likely to be most effective if linked to the requirement for teachers to undertake outdoor learning under the Curriculum for Excellence, rather than trying to promote the Code independently;
- planned activity to highlight responsible behaviour in relation to fires, following last year’s dry summer. There is some anecdotal evidence to suggest that visitors to Scotland may be a key target group, which will probably require links to the Code

website from other sites (for example maintained by VisitScotland) that provide a first port of call for this audience;

- action to promote appropriate behaviour linked to campervans, which reflects an increase in this activity in some areas, in particular along the strongly promoted North Coast 500 route. The key task is anticipated to be the development and promotion of concise guidance, in conjunction with appropriate stakeholders, for addition to the Code website, bearing in mind that access in motor vehicles is outside access rights. This work will be informed by previous discussion of parking issues at the Forum in September 2017, although this focused primarily on the provision of parking facilities rather than advice to the public;
- the development of very brief guidance on the use of drones for addition to the Code website. This can likewise be informed by previous discussion at the Forum (in February 2016), which noted that the status of drones within access rights is unclear, and that this activity is controlled under other regulatory regimes, in particular through the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). Based on this discussion, a suggested approach would be to make general reference to SOAC when users are accessing land, and defer to the CAA regulatory framework (including the Drone Code) when drones are being flown. The case for this approach is heightened by current moves to strengthen the CAA regulatory framework, which have been partly driven by recent high profile examples of inappropriate drone use. As for campervans (above), a key part of this task would be to seek input from relevant stakeholders where contacts can be identified.

Forum members are invited to highlight any other areas of the Code which may require promotional effort, although constraints on the available staff time and budgets mean that significant new activities would need to be accommodated by corresponding reductions in other campaign/promotional activities as noted above. In line with discussion at the May 2018 Forum meeting, there may be scope to base new initiatives around existing Code resources, perhaps with relatively minor updating as required.

As above, we would welcome input from partners who are able to help with particular areas of Code promotion activity.

SNH
January 2019