

Appendix 6 - Cairngorm Ski Area - Footpath Network

6.1 Based on existing evidence of path use and the anticipated changes in footpath use detailed in Section 5, this appendix provides details of the proposed footpath network to be developed at Coire Cas car park. The development of this network will be phased with the objective of ensuring all the proposed paths identified in the ski area network be available for public use by the summer of 2002, subject to planning approval for the new routes and funding availability. All the footpaths listed below, with the exception of the Glen More Link footpath, are above 600m.

6.2 Planned Footpath Development on Existing Routes Within the Ski Area

6.2.1 Coire Cas Loop. (Footpath Map Ref E3)

This path will become the primary footpath within the ski area that will accommodate those wishing to undertake a walk of between 1 hour and 1½ hours. The route uses existing paths within the Ski Area but is developed as a loop walk with potential for portable and static interpretation. Starting from the new Base Station it follows the existing hill road up to the Shieling and follows the zig zags up the Coire Cas tow track to the top of the tow, traversing across the upper reaches of Coire Cas to join the Fiacail a' Choire Chais Ridge path back down to the mid station.

Length: 4km, all existing path, (open for summer 2002)

Character: A fairly steep walk in places, this path reaches the upper area of Coire Cas close to the headwall. At the upper end of this path climbing to the snow patch on the head wall will need to be discouraged.

Construction: This path will need clear signing from the Base Station, Middle station and the foot of Fiacail a' Choire Chais Ridge path.

Suitability: Graded moderate, this path is suitable for 7 year-olds and above, it can be walked in training shoes, but boots are recommended.

Potential for interpretation: There are many possibilities for interpretation including: Ski Area, phases of development, equipment used; land forms, coire, boulder field, solifluction lobes, and avalanche track; vegetation and wildlife. It may be possible to hear singing snow buntings and ptarmigan, and see flowering heath plants. Printed interpretation will be developed in collaboration with SNH and THC for this route aimed at education groups, families and sightseers.

6.3 Proposed New Path Development (Lower Ground)

6.3.1 Glen More Link (Footpath Map Ref P1)

Length: 4km (one way), nearly all new build.

Character: A steady climb through forest, across a mountain river and heath, with steadily expanding views, but no hint of the other infrastructure (roads, etc) nearby.

Construction: This is a project owned by Forest Enterprise and work is in progress to define the route and agree the plan with the statutory agencies. It is hoped that construction will begin in 2001 with a view to public use by the summer of 2002. Construction will be carried out by machine for the most part, with one small footbridge in the forest, and possibly some boardwalk if required near the Allt Mor. Steps or steeper path works will be required to gain access to the lower Coire

Cas car park. Waymarking will be required at the North end, at the junctions with the Sugar Bowl trail and at the South End.

Suitability: Graded moderate, a steady climb that should be manageable by 7 year-olds or over. Depending on the final surfacing, it may be suitable for training shoes, but boots would be recommended. The route is spectacular without being exposed or risky, and would be popular with families and educational groups. It could be walked end-to-end as a means of accessing Coire Cas or walking down after a visit to Coire Cas, or it could be used both ways. Public transport is available at both ends.

Potential for Interpretation: Strong forest and land form themes, wilderness feel, landscape themes. Vegetation is interesting as it includes a transition between forest and heath up to high hills.

6.3.2 An t-Aonach All Abilities Trail (Footpath Map Ref P4)

~~6.3.2.1.1~~ Linear Length: 330m, all new build (anticipated opening summer 2002 subject to planning permission and funding)

Character: The all abilities footpath will provide a linear route (which could be walked as a loop) from the south side of the new Base Station to the entrance at the bottom end of the Upper Coire Cas car park. The gentle gradient will permit access suitable for wheel chair users providing a trail for all abilities. The path will pass under the funicular railway at column 1 and continues round the Base Station to the bottom of the Day Lodge Poma. From this point the all abilities trail follows a route which runs parallel with the upper Coire Cas car park and by the main drainage channel for the car park. Four picnic/interpretation areas are incorporated along the length of the route and two access points back to the car park have been identified, one at the mid point of the trail and one at the entrance to the car park.

Construction: This will be a new build aggregate path with quality compacted quarry dust finish on previously disturbed ground which has successfully revegetated with excellent drainage. Handrails will be provided throughout the length of the path and the detailed plans will be subject to consultation with SNH, THC and the Local Area Access Panel to ensure the route complies with all ability requirements.

Suitability: This route is an easy 330m linear route with very little gradient variation. It is proposed as an all abilities trail suitable for wheelchair access and casual footwear. It meets the demand for an easy but scenically rewarding short walk route within the ski area.

Potential for Interpretation: Excellent views of the funicular line, Northern Corries and Glen More with considerable scope for portable and static interpretation.

6.4 Existing Paths Leading Beyond the Operational Ski Area Boundary

6.4.1 Northern Corries Path (Footpath Map Ref E2)

Length: existing path heading towards the high hills

Character: A flat walk contouring round the hillside, this is one of the main access routes onto higher ground used by climbers undertaking a long walk and heading for the summits of the Cairngorms, and visitors who find the appearance of a “flat” contoured path appealing for a short walk.

Suitability: This path has already had considerable investment and is a route marked on all relevant maps. It is one of the top four most heavily used routes from the Coire Cas car park and will

continue to be the subject of monitoring. There is no intention to promote this route to sightseers. It leads into the Northern Corries SSSI, it is a route that will continue to be used by mountain users. Monitoring of use and impacts will continue. Fallback measures in the event of unacceptable impacts include; creating clear turning point for casual visitors.

Potential for interpretation: not considered appropriate at this stage.

6.4.2 Climbers' Direct access to Northern Corries Path (Footpath Map Ref E5)

Although this path lies within the operational Ski Area it will link directly with the Northern Corries path from the lower car park at Coire Cas. It is a link path that is partially out of sight of visitors arriving in the upper car park.

Length: 300m (upgraded for summer 2002), along the route line already being used by walkers.

Character: A short direct access route from the lower Coire Cas car park across the burn from the base of the lower car park steps, up the left hand side of the snow fences to the Fiacail Poma tow to link directly with the Northern Corries Path.

Construction: Aggregate, large stone slabs, existing bridge requires hand rails and clear marking

Suitability: the route is provided for mountain users heading for higher ground and avoids pedestrian traffic having to cross lift lines (Car Park Ski Tow and Fiacail Ridge Poma) in winter. This arrangement is consistent with the car park management proposal to dedicate the lower car park to mountain users. This path is consistent with the need to maintain footpath access through the Cairngorm Estate for mountain users. There will be no promotion of this route to the general visitor arriving at the upper Coire Cas car park.

Potential for interpretation: Not considered appropriate. Gateway to be established at start point of route from Lower Car park to provide preferred route information for mountain users (by summer 2002).

6.4.3 Fiacail a' Choire Chais Ridge Path (Footpath Map Ref E6)

Length: all existing path leading from Ptarmigan footpath above the Middle Station heading towards the high hills.

Character: A steep walk used mainly by mountain users returning to the car park from the plateau rim.

Suitability: This route is a common descent route for climbers and long walkers, however there will be no active promotion of this route to sightseeing visitors, although part of the route is incorporated in the Coire Cas Loop walk. The use and condition of this path will continue to be monitored along with other routes known and used by mountain users. This path has already had some investment and is a route marked on all relevant maps. Monitoring of use and impacts will continue.

Potential for interpretation: considered only as part of Coire Cas Loop.

6.5 Winter Walking Routes Through the Ski Area

In the winter season the Ski Area is used by a number of different recreation users in different ways. Mountain users are on foot and seek easy routes through the operational Ski Area into adjacent sites. Skiers utilise pistes and lift lines and remain predominantly within the operational

Ski Area boundary. These user groups also share routes with operational vehicles (snow groomers, skidoos and quad bikes).

In order to increase each user groups' awareness of each other, and heighten overall awareness of the winter vehicle operations it is proposed to identify the main winter walking routes through the Ski Area and incorporate them on the Cairngorm piste map. The piste map will be brought to the attention of all winter user groups visiting the Ski Area. Winter communication tools (website, Ski FM) and promotional literature (i.e. piste map) will aim to raise awareness across all winter user groups of walking routes, skiing routes and the operation of vehicles within the ski area. These winter walking routes are to be identified in consultation with the user groups.

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