

# Open Outdoors

The Dumfries & Galloway Outdoor Access Strategy

2012 - 2017





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## Foreword

**I**t gives me great pleasure to write this foreword to **Open Outdoors: The Dumfries & Galloway Outdoor Access Strategy (2012-2017)**.

**I feel privileged to have lived and worked in Dumfries and Galloway for the last 42 years. During that time, my family and I have enjoyed exploring the region's beautiful and varied countryside.**

Outdoor access and recreation is something that's close to all our hearts. Many of us manage to get outdoors at some point during the day. That could simply be taking the dog for a walk, going to the shops, cycling to school, horse riding, hill walking or taking part in water sports. Access also plays a vital role in maintaining and developing a vibrant rural economy, as a wide variety of outdoor activities attracts tourists and draws them back again. It also supports the health and social well-being of residents through increased physical activity.

Open Outdoors has been written at a time of economic uncertainty. However, Dumfries & Galloway Council fully recognises that enhanced outdoor access and recreation provision is important to the future prosperity and health of the region.

The three strategic programmes outlined within Open Outdoors; Tourism & Economy; Community & Health; Access Management, clearly demonstrates the broad and integrated benefits of outdoor access to residents and visitors alike.

In addition to the Council's statutory outdoor access management duties, the strategy has been aligned to the Council's six priorities, which determine the allocation of available resources. Not only does this provide a clear policy framework but also helps deliver the Council's commitments made under the Scottish Government's Single Outcome Agreement (2012-2015).

Your Council is working together with its partners to create an ambitious, prosperous and confident Dumfries and Galloway where people achieve their potential. I welcome the commitments made by the Countryside Service to enhance outdoor access and look forward to enjoying the benefits it will bring to all our lives.

I would also like to thank all individuals, communities and stakeholders who contributed to the development of the strategy.



**Peter Ross**  
**Chairman, Dumfries & Galloway Outdoor Access Forum**

# 1. Introduction

Open Outdoors: The Dumfries & Galloway Outdoor Access Strategy provides a vision for outdoor access and the strategic framework for planning, managing and developing access in Dumfries & Galloway.

## OPEN OUTDOORS VISION

In Dumfries and Galloway within the next five years:

- barriers to access will be reduced following the enhancement and promotion of core paths;
- communities will have developed a sense of responsibility for local paths;
- residents will be leading more active lifestyles;
- the countryside will be used to support and promote local enterprise;
- developers will be contributing to enhancing and developing access; and
- public bodies will be working in partnership to support communities, reduce health inequalities, promote the region and protect the environment.

The Scottish Parliament passed landmark legislation in the form of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 (LRA). The Act came in to force in 2005 and gives everyone statutory rights of responsible access to most land and inland water in Scotland. Since this legislation a wider understanding of access issues has evolved. Outdoor access is no longer solely focused on rural recreation but is recognised as a key driver for delivering a range of outcomes for residents and visitors, from improved health to economic growth.

Outdoor recreation and tourism contributes £269 million (Scottish Tourism Economic Activity Monitor, 2009) to the Dumfries and Galloway economy and plays a vital role in the physical and mental health and well-being of its residents.

The focus of Open Outdoors is on increasing the economic benefits of outdoor access; increasing tourist numbers and spend; promoting outdoor recreation and active lifestyles; delivering a safe and healthy environment; enhancing countryside assets;

asserting and protecting access rights and empowering communities to take an active lead in monitoring and maintaining their path networks.

Open Outdoors will be implemented at a time of economic uncertainty, thus emphasising the requirement for central and local government to be focused on delivering outcomes. This strategy has been designed to contribute to Dumfries & Galloway Council (DGC) Priorities and the Scottish Government's Single Outcome Agreement (SOA).

A high standard of access to the outdoors, appropriate to its location and level of use, will help Dumfries & Galloway Council achieve its corporate objectives and vision of making Dumfries and Galloway the best place in Scotland to live, work, visit and grow.

## 2. Open Outdoors: Strategic Structure

Vision	In Dumfries and Galloway within the next five years:					
	Barriers to access will be reduced following the enhancement and promotion of core paths; communities will have developed a sense of responsibility for local paths; residents will be leading more active lifestyles; the countryside will be used to promote local enterprise; developers will be contributing to enhancing and developing access; and public bodies will be working in partnership to support communities, reduce health inequalities, promote the region and protect the environment.					
Principles	Outdoor Access will be managed in a way that:					
	Empowers communities to develop a sense of responsibility for local paths.					
	Promotes healthy lifestyles, reduces health inequalities and increases opportunities for outdoor recreation.					
	Protects and enhances the environment.					
	Promotes opportunities for local enterprise.					
	Engages with and respects access takers, land managers and stakeholders.					
Outcomes	Management of Outdoor Access will contribute to DGC Priorities:					
	We will provide a good start in life for all our children.	We will prepare our young people for adulthood and employment.	We will care for our older and vulnerable adults.	We will support and stimulate our economy.	We will maintain the safety and security of our region.	We will protect and sustain our environment.
Objectives	Promote Scottish Outdoor Access Code to all residents.			Increase tourist numbers and spend and increase the economic benefits of access.	Countryside facilities are maintained and communities develop a sense of responsibility for local paths.	Assert and protect access rights and ensure land and water is managed responsibly for access.
	Residents lead more active lifestyles with increased opportunities for outdoor recreation and sustainable travel.					

### 3. Achieving the Vision: Open Outdoors Objectives



Objective 1	Objective 2
<p>Promote Scottish Outdoor Access Code to all residents.</p>	<p>Residents lead more active lifestyles with increased opportunities for outdoor recreation and sustainable travel.</p>
<p>Work in partnership with land managers, access takers, recreational user groups and agencies to promote responsible access.</p>	<p>Promote healthy lifestyles and encourage investment in the maintenance, development and promotion of outdoor recreational opportunities and sustainable travel initiatives.</p>
	<p>Promote outdoor access as a means of sustainable travel - linking paths to the public road network and other modes of sustainable travel.</p>

Objective 3	Objective 4	Objective 5
Increase tourist numbers and spend and increase the economic benefits of access.	Countryside facilities are maintained and communities develop a sense of responsibility for local paths.	Assert and protect access rights and ensure land and water is managed responsibly for access.
Ensure the wider community benefits from expenditure on outdoor access.	Communities are empowered to develop a sense of responsibility for local paths and contribute to path development, maintenance, monitoring and promotion.	Dumfries & Galloway Council will fulfil its duties under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967.
Promote local enterprise, enhance skills and encourage developers to invest in access infrastructure.	Ensure core paths are of a reasonable standard, appropriate to location and usage potential.	Ensure path development or maintenance does not have an adverse impact on the environment.
Support delivery of the Dumfries & Galloway Tourism Strategy (2011 -2016): Extend dwell time, increase spend opportunities and ensure quality of visitor experience reflects/exceeds market expectations.	Implement a core paths maintenance and monitoring plan.	Utilise sustainable path development and maintenance practices to protect the region's biodiversity and natural assets.
	Develop path design standards.	
	Publicise path information such as distance, condition and barriers to access to allow users to make informed decisions.	

## 4. Open Outdoors Programmes

Open Outdoors has three strategic programmes reflecting the broad economic, social and logistical importance of outdoor access at a national, regional and local level. The programmes are:

1. **Tourism & Economy**
2. **Community & Health**
3. **Access Management**

To achieve the objectives a number of key actions have been identified within each programme. These actions are set out for 2012-2017 and we will work with partners to develop further actions that contribute to the objectives (indicative action list and delivery timeline is available on request).



# 5. Programme 1: Tourism & Economy

## Summary of project areas:

- 5.1 Economic Development
- 5.2 Tourism
- 5.3 Marketing
- 5.4 Walking
- 5.5 Cycling / Mountain Biking
- 5.6 Horse Riding
- 5.7 Water Activities
- 5.8 Forestry & Woodlands

### 5.1 Economic Development

The natural environment is one of Dumfries and Galloway's most important economic assets. Tourism is already the second largest contributor to the region's economy and has great potential for growth. The ease with which people can access the natural landscape, enjoy recreational activities and view wildlife directly contributes to the overall enjoyment of their visit, and plays a key role in return visits and recommendations to friends. As access provision is free at the point of use on most land, the market alone is unlikely to improve provision. There is, therefore, a rationale for public sector intervention beyond statutory duties.

From 2004-2011 DGC invested £1.84 million developing and promoting access. This level of expenditure combined with external funding has a direct economic impact on the region by enhancing the tourism product, supporting a wide range of local businesses and labour markets.

- We will increase the range of economic benefits derived from council access expenditure which promotes opportunities for enterprise and increases tourist numbers and spend.
- We will invest in the potential of our people by launching a Countryside Apprenticeship and Volunteer Training Scheme.
- We will work with developers to ensure access management plans are included in all medium to large scale developments.



## 5.2 Tourism

In 2009 tourism was worth more than £269 million to the region's economy, an increase of 19% cent since 2006. The Dumfries & Galloway Regional Tourism Strategy 2011-2016 aims to increase this contribution to £340 million by 2015.

Dumfries and Galloway's biggest asset is its natural environment and wildlife. It combines diverse and high quality walking outdoor experiences, from the Galloway Forest Park to the Moffat Hills, coastal and inland water activities, horse riding and world class mountain biking provision at the 7 Stanes Trail Centres and Drumlanrig Castle. Wildlife tourism initiatives such as the Galloway Kite Trail which has had a net economic impact of £21 million since 2004, have potential for significant development. Our nationally outstanding landscapes are within two hours travelling time of Glasgow and Edinburgh, the north of England and Northern Ireland.

- We will support the implementation of the Dumfries & Galloway Regional Tourism Strategy (2011-2016) by launching visitor monitoring projects and providing high quality paths and infrastructure on key core path routes.
- We will aim to increase the number of wildlife tourists to Dumfries & Galloway, support walking and cycling events and increase overnight stays through partnership and promotion projects with Destination Dumfries & Galloway and VisitScotland.
- We will support the implementation of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Reserve and the enhancement of our National Scenic Areas.

### 5.3 Marketing

Dumfries & Galloway Council is working with its key strategic partners, Destination Dumfries & Galloway, VisitScotland and other bodies to actively market the region. We will work with organisations to ensure they have the correct information to inform their marketing campaigns. While walking activities are currently well documented on tourism websites, other aspects of recreational access, such as horse riding and some aspects of cycling are not so well covered. In order to fully understand the economic impact of outdoor access in Dumfries and Galloway evidence needs to be collected and evaluated on an annual basis. DGC has 19 automatic people counters deployed on a number of paths in the region. Early results give a flavour of the numbers involved but a more rigorous site selection and monitoring programme needs to be in place to provide useful baseline data.

- We will launch a robust path visitor monitoring system.
- We will increase the effectiveness and range of outdoor access marketing tools.

### 5.4 Walking

Walking tourism contributes £85 million to the economy of South Scotland (UKTS: Scotland South (D&G & Borders), 2009).

One of the key functions of Open Outdoors is to increase the opportunities for recreational walking in Dumfries and Galloway. Walking is the most sustainable means of transport available. It delivers social, environmental and health benefits, and when successfully promoted can have significant economic benefits. It is also the most accessible and popular form of exercise. The Scottish Recreation Survey indicates walking is easily the most popular outdoor pastime enjoyed by Scottish adults and is the main activity of 75% of visits to the outdoors. In Dumfries and Galloway 88% of those answering the 2010 D&G Outdoor Access Strategy public surveys named walking as their most frequent physical activity.

- We will enhance the quality and diversity of walking experiences across Dumfries and Galloway.
- We will enhance links to sustainable travel from core paths.
- We will publish core path routes on Ordnance Survey maps when the network is adopted and enhanced.



## 5.5 Cycling/Mountain Biking

Dumfries and Galloway is the birthplace of the bicycle and plays host to a number of national and international cycling and mountain biking events. There is an active youth coaching programme led by Stepping Stanes with the Support of Cycling Scotland.

Cycling tourism contributes £14 million to the economy of South Scotland (UKTS: Scotland South (D&G & Borders), 2009). The 7 Stanes mountain bike network alone has generated £9 million and attracts 400,000 visitors a year making it one of the top 20 visitor attractions in Scotland (2007).

Since 2009 cycle related retail and hire has been a growth area in the local economy.

Cycling provision in Dumfries and Galloway is good and improving, with National Routes 7 and 74, the National Byways and the world class 7 Stanes mountain biking trail centres at Mabie, Ae, Dalbeattie, Glentroll and Newton Stewart. Drumlanrig Castle also offers a number of high quality mountain bike trails. In addition, DGC publishes three cycling leaflets and promotes a signed network of recreational

routes in the Machars and SWestrans publish a 'Green Travel Map'. Cycle mapping of Dumfries Town is also provided as part of the 'Go-smart' Dumfries Sustainable Travel Demonstration Town Project in partnership with SWestrans, as part of the Scottish Government's Smarter Choices, Smarter Places Initiative. The project included a number of pioneering initiatives to promote cycling as a means of sustainable travel in Dumfries.

- We will encourage sustainable journeys and reduce car use by promoting cycling provision.
- We will support the Cycle Action Plan for Scotland (CAPS) and work in partnership with land managers, Sustrans, CTC and IMBA to remove barriers to access and promote off road riding routes.
- We will add value to mountain bike tourism by promoting nearby family friendly road cycling and walking routes and improving active travel links to cycling centres. We will also support improved signing to these sites from town centres.

## 5.6 Horse Riding

Equine tourism contributes £2 million to the economy of South Scotland (UKTS: Scotland South (D&G & Borders), 2009).

Horse ownership is growing in Scotland and is particularly popular amongst some hard to reach groups such as teenage girls, who consistently score low on levels of physical activity. Demand is not solely within rural areas - there are many equestrian centres in our towns and villages and the region has a culture of equine summer festivals such as Riding of Marches. The implementation of the core path network offers an opportunity to increase the available network of accessible routes for equestrians. Linking routes and publicising this information in partnership with the British Horse Society and other local equestrian groups will provide UK wide promotion for Dumfries and Galloway.

- We will work in partnership with land managers, the British Horse Society and other local groups to remove barriers to equine access and promote off road riding routes.

## 5.7 Water Activities

Dumfries and Galloway has a stunning coastline and an abundance of fresh water lochs and rivers that are used for recreational activities. These include the River Nith, Annan, Dee and Cree. The largest loch, Loch Ken, is frequently used for all kinds of recreational water activities, such as sailing, canoeing, water skiing and fishing. Use of inland water in Dumfries and Galloway is relatively low in comparison with other recreational activities which take place on land. Results from the 2010 access survey demonstrated that only 11.3% of those questioned regularly took part in canoeing or other water sports.

- We will work with partners to identify and enhance appropriate inland water access points including access by sustainable means.
- We will work with riparian owners and access takers to ensure water sports co-exist with fishing interests.
- We will develop water routes and promote the region's waterways to a wider audience.



## 5.8 Forestry & Woodlands

Dumfries and Galloway's forestry and woodland represents 26.5% of the land area with 48% of this land owned by or leased to Forestry Commission Scotland. This is well ahead of the national average and the Scottish Government's target to increase total forest cover in Scotland from 17% to 25% by 2020. This valuable resource not only plays an important economic role but evidence also shows that having access to woodland is beneficial for our mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Forestry has the unique ability to absorb multi use activities and trails for walking, cycling, mountain biking and horse riding. With core paths proposed within most woodland close to towns and villages they are highly valued as stock free routes in a livestock intensive region and offer significant opportunities to promote active lifestyles in these areas. Innovative projects such as 7 Stanes and Galloway Forest Park Dark Skies highlight the growing demand from a diverse range of groups to take part in woodland leisure activities. With growing demand comes the potential for conflict with forestry operations. Enhanced access education and management will ensure access rights and commercial forestry operations can safely co-exist.

DGC will consider the need to strengthen and develop existing woodlands and green space networks as part of our Dumfries & Galloway Open Space Audit and Forestry & Woodlands Strategy due to be launched 2012.

Heathhall Forest exemplifies many of our multi use access aspirations by hosting walking, cycling, mountain bike training and racing all within easy access from the local cycle network.

- We will work in partnership to promote and improve links to main forestry and woodland destinations and empower communities to become more involved with local paths.
- We will assert and protect access rights in public and private woods and forestry.

## 6. Programme 2: Community & Health

### Summary of project areas:

- 6.1 Health & Wellbeing
- 6.2 Social Inclusion
- 6.3 Community Engagement
- 6.4 Access for All
- 6.5 Education





## 6.1 Health and Wellbeing

Two thirds of Scottish adults are putting their health at risk by being physically inactive. The health effects of an inactive life are serious – inactivity is the most common risk factor for coronary heart disease in Scotland today. The Scottish Government has set targets to achieve 50% of all adults and 80% of all children meeting the minimum recommended levels of physical activity by 2022. As well as health benefits, physical activity also has social, environmental and mental health and wellbeing benefits. Well designed, attractive open-space environments and paths help tackle health inequalities by encouraging physical activity, community interaction and discouraging anti-social behaviour. Outdoor physical activity is an extremely cost effective intervention. It is estimated that if just 1 in a 100 inactive people took adequate exercise it would save the NHS in Scotland £85 million a year.

Outdoor activities such as walking and cycling have an important role. Walking is free at the point of use, and requires little in the way of special clothing or equipment, therefore is particularly important for disadvantaged communities. It also offers the chance for social interaction and enjoyment of nature. Cycling initiatives also offer a low cost and effective way to improve health and active travel. Cycling is an activity that most children undertake that can be continued through adult life providing transport to work without the need to set aside additional time for exercise.

- We will work in partnership with the Joint Health and Wellbeing Unit, Localilty Health and Wellbeing Partnerships, the DGC Sustainable Travel Team and any other organisation actively promoting outdoor physical activity, to deliver a co-ordinated approach to increasing physical activity and tackling health and wellbeing inequalities.
- We will ensure appropriate countryside furniture is in place to help people access their local environment and establish path design standards and local knowledge of where paths are.
- We will help communities and land managers to develop stock and barrier free routes around settlements.

## 6.2 Social Inclusion

There is a strong correlation between social exclusion and ill health. The proportion of inactive adults (doing 30 minutes or less of physical activity on one day a week or not at all) within the lowest socio-economic groups is double that among those from the highest socio-economic groups. There is also evidence that the greatest health benefits happen when the least active people become moderately active.

Social inclusion from an access perspective involves providing paths that can be easily accessed by all. In urban areas this is provided by other DGC departments, however, there is a role to play for access staff in identifying areas of poor health, social exclusion and reviewing access provision in these areas. In rural areas access is facilitated by the provision of paths around settlements, or access which can be reached by public transport. In urban disadvantaged areas access is more likely to be functional rather than recreational so it is important that routes connect residential areas to places of employment, community facilities and shops. Nevertheless it is important that such paths are developed in a way that makes them attractive and thus encourages active travel such as walking and cycling.

- We will identify areas of poor health and social exclusion and review access provision in these areas in partnership with development planners and other relevant bodies.
- We will work with neighbourhood renewal teams and planning officers to ensure new housing projects consider 'walk ability' and access to paths within and from new residential areas within scheme design.

## 6.3 Community Engagement

There is growing recognition that, at a time of reduced public spending, the maintenance, improvement and promotion of outdoor access will require much more volunteer involvement and participation. Indeed, one key conclusion from the 2010 Open Outdoors stakeholder meetings was the necessity for communities to become more involved in the management of local paths.

- We will empower communities to monitor, maintain and develop paths.



## 6.4 Access for All

When undertaking core path improvement works all reasonable effort will be made to maximise accessibility for a range of users, from those with serious mobility issues to parents with prams. Where possible and appropriate, access barriers will be reduced (e.g. by replacing stiles with gates and steps with ramps).

- We will survey core paths for accessibility with topographic and infrastructural data published to allow users to identify routes suitable for their needs.
- We will work in partnership with organisations for the disabled in Dumfries and Galloway to identify, enhance and promote accessible routes throughout the region.

## 6.5 Education

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) surveyed land-managers, recreation users and countryside rangers to establish awareness of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and gauge levels of responsible access behaviour. Levels of awareness are high and increasing, with 70% of land-managers being aware of the code in 2007. While land-managers are largely aware of their obligations not to obstruct or deter people from taking access there is less awareness of the need to inform the public of the extent and duration of land-management operations.

Rights of access come with responsibilities. DGC will continue to work with access takers and recreational user groups to improve access education by focusing on personal responsibilities; respecting people's privacy and peace of mind and helping land managers work safely and effectively.

- We will increase awareness of access rights and responsibilities for land managers, access takers and children.

## 7. Programme 3: Access Management

### Summary of project areas:

- 7.1 Planning
- 7.2 Technology
- 7.3 Financial Management
- 7.4 Core Paths
- 7.5 Route Development
- 7.6 Path Maintenance
- 7.7 Transport
- 7.8 Outdoor Access Forum
- 7.9 Compliance
- 7.10 Strategy implementation



## 7.1 Planning

The role of access in development planning is defined in the Scottish Planning Policy (SPP), 2010. The SPP states that the planning authority will take into consideration access issues and the protection of core paths and other important routes and access rights when preparing development plans and making decisions on planning applications. The SPP also states that the planning authority will identify, safeguard, and promote green networks in and around settlements, working with landowners and communities to provide opportunities for physical activity and outdoor access, increasing the accessibility and connectivity of open space and habitats.

- We will assert, protect and keep open and free from obstruction any route, waterway or other means by which access rights may reasonably be exercised. Access rights will be material considerations in considering planning applications.
- We will encourage new development to incorporate new and enhanced access opportunities, linked to wider access networks, in both rural and urban settings.
- We will direct developers to submit detailed access management plans with all medium to large scale development plans.

## 7.2 Technology

DGC has invested heavily in Geographical Information Systems technology, primarily in an electronic map and information storage system known as MapInfo and path management software called Countryside Access Management System (CAMS). The software encompasses a broad range of business functions including a number of core capabilities that have a particular importance in the current economic climate:

- Issue management: ensuring that all access issues are accurately logged, mapped, prioritised, acted upon and tracked through to resolution.
- Asset management: creating, analysing and maintaining a record of network infrastructure allows CAMS to generate detailed and evidence-based annual costs for maintaining and upgrading path networks. CAMS provides concise and accurate data on works outstanding, works completed, performance measures (such as average times to resolution, rates of new issues compared to resolved issues) and prioritised budgetary requirements.

- New technology as a promotional tool: research undertaken by DGC staff in developing this strategy showed that although paper-based information was the primary source for people planning days out in the countryside, the internet is also a significant resource.

- We will maximise efficiency of new technology and promote opportunities to take access through the use of technology.

### 7.3 Financial Management

Open Outdoors is being written at time of economic uncertainty for public sector funding. In addition to its statutory duties to assert a general right of access, DGC is under a statutory obligation to produce a Core Paths Plan. Scottish Government guidance states that: "The core paths system will need to be achievable and sustainable at suitable standards in the long term. Consequently the resource base which will be needed to establish, manage and maintain the system will be a consideration in shaping the network. Authorities should make provision to carry out the core paths planning and adoption process and to help as appropriate in the support of any initial accommodation works on candidate core paths".

Community engagement with path projects is absolutely vital, not only because continued use and care of paths will be ensured, but also because communities have access to funding opportunities which are not available to local authorities.

- We will fulfil statutory obligations under Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and prioritise expenditure on implementation and maintenance of core paths.
- We will engage with local communities to raise external funds to enhance paths in their areas.



### 7.4 Core Paths

Under the Land Reform Act (Scotland) Act 2003, all access authorities have a statutory duty to produce a core paths plan, 'sufficient for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout their area.' The Dumfries & Galloway Council Core Paths Plan is due to be adopted Summer 2012.

Scottish Government guidance suggests that core paths should be in reasonable condition and adequately signed within two years of the plan being adopted. As there is an expectation that this will be achieved, along with a possibility that the local authority may incur some contributory level of liability by publishing the core paths plans, resources will be prioritised to this end.

- We will fulfil statutory obligations under Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.
- We will encourage owners and managers (public and private) to maintain, monitor and promote core paths through advice, use of volunteers, council funding support where appropriate and affordable, and help in sourcing external funding.

## 7.5 Route Development

As Dumfries & Galloway Council is under a statutory obligation to produce a Core Paths Plan, funding priority will be given to its enhancement and maintenance. Additional path development proposals will rely on securing external funding either as council-led projects or working with community groups or other partners.

The 2010 D&G Outdoor Access Strategy public survey was launched to find out what kind of routes residents and visitors felt should be developed over the next five years. Potential projects were classified under one of five headings; local paths, coastal paths, long distance routes, routes connecting towns and other routes. The results demonstrate that there is significant support for developing links between communities and short stock/barrier-free surfaced paths adjacent to villages and small settlements. These routes will allow users to take short daily exercise without having to drive, walk for long distances on the road or through livestock.

- We will improve core paths and prioritise the development of stock and barrier free routes and town to town trails with links to other modes of sustainable travel.

## 7.6 Path Maintenance

Local Authorities in Scotland have long had a duty to keep open and free from obstruction any Right of Way; however there has been no duty to maintain paths. Under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 local authorities now have a duty to assert, protect and keep open and free from obstruction or encroachment any route, waterway and all access land in general. As access authorities may have contributory liability for routes which are designated as core paths, a well funded path maintenance plan is required.

Results from the 2010 Dumfries and Galloway Outdoor Access Strategy public surveys showed that almost three quarters of respondents felt that the path network was maintained well or to an average level, while 17% felt the paths were poorly maintained and 10% felt that maintenance varied from place to place.

- We will prioritise path maintenance for core paths and deliver a paths maintenance plan utilising council and community resources.
- We will protect the region's biodiversity and natural landscapes by utilising sustainable development and maintenance practices in accordance with the Strategic Environmental Assessment Report which accompanies this strategy.
- We will continue to support two long distance routes: The Southern Upland Way and The Annandale Way.

## 7.7 Sustainable Transport

The South of Scotland Regional Transport Strategy sets out a vision for a transport system for the South West of Scotland that delivers the internal and external connectivity required to sustain and enhance the region's economy and communities whilst minimising the impact of transport on the environment.

Walking and cycling are also important leisure pursuits, and Dumfries and Galloway has a significant network of local cycle routes, local walks and forest paths. Development of the Dumfries and Galloway Core Paths Plan will lead to improvements in walking and cycling infrastructure. The Core Paths Plan identifies over 1800km of paths and tracks that will be developed to a usable standard over the next 5 years. Results from the 2010 Dumfries and Galloway Outdoor Access Strategy public survey demonstrate that walking and cycling are the most popular activities by people visiting the countryside or open space. 87.9% of respondents indicated that they walked regularly while 57.8% said they cycled regularly. Results from the survey also suggested that 92% used their car to access the countryside.

- We will assist with the review of the Regional Transport Strategy and projects that support sustainable transport initiatives and improve public transport links to main recreational destinations.

## 7.8 Outdoor Access Forum (OAF)

Dumfries & Galloway Council has a duty under Section 25 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 to establish a local access forum. The DGC Outdoor Access Forum was formed in 2005 and meets quarterly at locations throughout the region. The OAF consists of 15 members representing the interests of land managers, recreation groups and public bodies. The forum's role is to advise DGC on the exercise of access rights, adoption of core paths, resolution of disputes and exemptions of land.

- We will raise the public profile and broaden the remit of the Dumfries & Galloway Outdoor Access Forum.



## 7.9 Compliance

It is encouraging that, in a region which combines a great deal of livestock farming with a significant tourism industry, there are few incidents of access being deliberately obstructed. In Dumfries and Galloway around 50 incidents of obstructed access were reported in the year April 2009 to March 2010. These are primarily incidents of gates being locked, signs which deter access, and occasional hostile behaviour. Paths are also sometimes inadvertently obstructed by overgrown vegetation and fallen trees.

It is an important statutory duty of DGC as the access authority to 'assert, protect and keep open and free from obstruction or encroachment any route, waterway or other means by which access rights may reasonably be exercised' (LRA). Where there is a deliberate attempt to deter access in contravention with the LRA, we will take action following the procedure recommended by the Scottish Government.

- We will fulfil statutory obligations under Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.
- We will continue to investigate alleged rights of way in association with community councils, landowners and stakeholders.

## 7.10 Strategy Implementation

Open Outdoors can only be implemented and delivered with the support of stakeholders and partners and in accordance with the Strategic Environmental Assessment Report which accompanies this strategy.

- We will report annually on the delivery of Open Outdoors and the access team's work plan to the DGC Planning, Housing & Environment Committee and Outdoor Access Forum.
- We will review this strategy in 2017 as part of a combined Countryside Services Strategy covering Outdoor Access and Countryside Ranger Services.

## 8. Methodology

Open Outdoors was compiled following public and stakeholder consultation with community councils, conservation groups and public agencies. Stakeholder consultation events were held in each district during September 2010 and a public questionnaire was available in all libraries, Customer Service Centres and on-line. 250 on-site visitor surveys were held across the region August 2010. Full details are available on request by contacting [access@dumgal.gov.uk](mailto:access@dumgal.gov.uk).

## 9. Strategic Environmental Assessment Process

In accordance with the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005; Dumfries & Galloway Council has prepared an Environmental Report to accompany this strategy. The Environmental Report identifies, describes and evaluates the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing Open Outdoors and the reasonable alternatives that have been assessed. The report provides this information for the Consultation Authorities (Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, and Historic Scotland) and the general public during public consultation on the strategy. The report can be accessed at <http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/outdooraccess>

## 10. Legislative background

Open Outdoors will be implemented in accordance with the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, The Scottish Outdoor Access Code and the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967. Dumfries & Galloway Council has a legal duty to protect and assert access rights under the LRA and to deliver a core paths plan.

# 11. Project Contribution to Strategic Objectives

Open Outdoors	Objective 1	Objective 2	Objective 3	Objective 4	Objective 5
	Promote Scottish Outdoor Access Code to all residents.	Residents lead more active lifestyles with increased opportunities for outdoor recreation and sustainable travel.	Increase tourist numbers and spend and increase the economic benefits of access.	Countryside facilities are maintained and communities develop a sense of responsibility for local paths.	Assert and protect access rights and ensure land and water is managed responsibly for access.

Tourism & Economy						
5.1	Economic Development		✓	✓	✓	✓
5.2	Tourism	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5.3	Marketing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5.4	Walking	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5.5	Cycling/Mountain Biking	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5.6	Horse Riding	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5.7	Water Activities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5.8	Forestry & Woodlands	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Community & Health						
6.1	Health & Wellbeing	✓	✓		✓	✓
6.2	Social Inclusion	✓	✓		✓	✓
6.3	Community Engagement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.4	Access for All	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.5	Education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Access Management						
7.1	Planning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7.2	Technology	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7.3	Financial Management		✓	✓	✓	✓
7.4	Core Paths	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7.5	Route Development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7.6	Path Maintenance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7.7	Sustainable Transport	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7.8	Outdoor Access Forum	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7.9	Compliance	✓	✓		✓	✓

## Glossary

CAMS	Countryside Asset Management System
CAPS	Cycle Action Plan Scotland
CTC	Cycle Touring Club
D&G	Dumfries & Galloway
DGC	Dumfries & Galloway Council
IMBA	International Mountain Biking Association
LRA	Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003
OAF	Outdoor Access Forum
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
SOA	Single Outcome Agreement
SPP	Scottish Planning Policy
UKTS	United Kingdom Tourism Survey



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