

# SEA Screening Report

## Details of the Plan

Responsible Authority:	Orkney Islands Council.			
Title of the plan:	Draft Orkney Core Paths Plan (2018).			
Purpose of the plan:	This is a review and update of the original Orkney Core Paths Plan.			
What prompted the plan (e.g. a legislative, regulatory or administrative provision)?	The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 requires local authorities to draw up a plan for a network of core paths, sufficient for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout their area.			
Screening is required by the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005				
<b>Based on the findings of the screening assessment our view is that SEA is <u>not</u> required, as the environmental effects are unlikely to be significant.</b>				
Please indicate which section of the Act the plan falls within:	Section 5(3)	√	Section 5(4)	
Contact details:	Eileen Summers.			
Date:	9 January 2018.			

## Context and description of the Plan

Context of the Plan:	<p>The vision for outdoor access in Orkney, as identified in Orkney's Outdoor Access Strategy is: <i>'To promote enjoyment of the outdoors by providing high quality, sustainable access provision, which satisfies the needs and aspirations of the local community and visitors to the islands.'</i></p> <p>The aim of the Core Paths Plan is to work towards this vision by helping fulfil the following key objectives for outdoor access in Orkney:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to provide a co-ordinated, actively promoted and well maintained network of paths;</li> <li>• to provide a range of opportunities suitable for</li> </ul>
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	<p>different user groups and people of all abilities which are safe, welcoming and enjoyable;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to work with land managers to achieve a balance between the needs of access users and the needs of those living and working on the land; and</li> <li>• to promote sustainable access which safeguards the natural, built and cultural heritage.</li> </ul>
Description of the Plan:	<p>The Core Paths Network aims to satisfy the basic path needs of local people and visitors, for recreation and for everyday journeys.</p> <p>Each island and parish within Orkney has a basic framework of Core Paths which links into, and supports the wider networks of other paths.</p> <p>The Core Paths system includes a mixture of existing paths and some new paths.</p> <p>Core Paths cater for multiple types of users – walkers, cyclists, horse riders, and disabled people, as well as allowing access for activities such as canoeing and rock climbing. However, not all paths are available for all types of users.</p> <p>The Core Paths system does not include access for motorised vehicles, other than motorised wheelchairs.</p>
Key components of the Plan:	<p>The Plan includes maps of all proposed Core Paths in each area or island with all changes to the original Plan highlighted.</p> <p>Paths proposed for removal from the Plan are highlighted in red.</p> <p>Paths recommended for addition to the Plan are highlighted in orange.</p>
Have any of the components of the Plan been considered in previous SEA work?	<p>The original Core Paths Plan underwent a full SEA. The Plan and associated Environmental Report were published for public consultation during April 2008.</p>
Components of the Plan that are likely to require screening:	<p>Screening has been undertaken of the paths which are proposed for removal from the Plan, as well as the paths which are proposed for addition to the Plan.</p>

**Identifying interactions of the Plan with the environment and considering the likely significance of any interactions**

Plan component.	SEA receptor.	Assessment.	Potential Environmental Effects	Significance of Environmental Effects
<p>Modifications to the existing Core path network.</p> <p>These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>removal of paths</li> <li>removal of path sections and their replacement with new sections</li> <li>the addition of new paths.</li> </ul>	Climatic factors:	Neutral.		N/A
	Local air quality:	Neutral.		N/A
	Biodiversity and Soil:	Positive.	Removal of certain paths or sections of paths may protect vulnerable habitats and species from trampling, erosion and disturbance. The relevant paths are: PW2 (Papa Westray) A former path at Shingly Hill (Rousay) .	Minor.
	Water:	Neutral.		N/A
	Geology:	Neutral.		N/A
	Landscape:	Neutral.		N/A
	Cultural heritage and Soil:	Positive.	Realignment of path Wm17 may protect the Knowes of Troty, a Scheduled Monument, from erosion.	Minor.
	Population & Human health:	Positive.	Removal of certain paths or sections of paths may help avoid accidental injury due to falls or collisions with farm machinery. The relevant paths are: SA11 (Doun Helzie, Sanday)	Minor.

Plan component.	SEA receptor.	Assessment.	Potential Environmental Effects	Significance of Environmental Effects
			Wm26 (Skail, Sandwick) W7 (Westray)	
	Materials assets:	Neutral.		N/A
	Interrelationships:	Neutral.		N/A

### Statement of the findings of the screening

Assessment of the proposed changes to the Orkney Core Path network has found that the environmental effects are likely to be broadly neutral, with potential for minor benefits for biodiversity, soil, cultural heritage and human health. These are outlined below.

#### Biodiversity and Soil

Path PW2 in Papa Westray passes through the Loch of Ness Local Nature Conservation Site (LNCS), across an area of damp, flowery grassland which includes winter flood pools. Some of these dry up in summer but others remain swampy and vulnerable to trampling. Removal of Core Path status may help protect the flower-rich habitat from damage. An alternative coastal route is available nearby.

A path which crosses the Shingly Hill LNCS in Rousay is proposed for removal from the Plan. The lack of any clear path across much of the route increases the risk of people walking over a wide area, with potential for damage to moorland habitats and disturbance to nesting birds. Removal of Core Path status may help protect this area from trampling and erosion. An alternative moorland route, R1, is available nearby.

#### Cultural Heritage and Soil

Core Path Wm17 passes close to the Knowes of Trotty, a Scheduled Monument. The proposal to re-route a section of the path will take it slightly farther from the monument, reducing the risk of erosion and potential damage to its immediate surroundings.

## **Human Health**

Path SA11 in Sanday crosses an area of dunes and sandy links, known as Doun Helzie, where the high dunes result in unsafe access to the beach below, with a risk of falls and injuries. Removal of Core Path status may discourage people from using this route to access the beach below.

Sections of path Wm26 in Sandwick are proposed for removal, part of which crosses a farmyard, where tractors and other farm machinery are routinely operating. Removal of core path status is likely to reduce the risk of accidental collisions, falls and injury. The remainder of path Wm26 follows an extensive scenic route along the west coast of the Orkney mainland.

A section of path W7 in Westray crosses an active farmyard and is recommended for removal. The replacement section follows the shoreline, avoiding the farmyard. This amendment may reduce the risk of accidental collisions, falls and injury.

## **Summary**

As a result of the current review of the Orkney Core Path Plan a number of paths or sections of path are proposed for removal from the Plan, and further paths or sections of path are proposed to be incorporated into the Plan. It is important to note however, that removal of Core Path status does not affect general rights of public access.

**Table 1: Assessment of proposed changes to the Core Path system in Orkney**

<b>Path.</b>	<b>Proposed change to path.</b>	<b>Environmental effects.</b>
North Ronaldsay, path previously listed as NR6.	Path removed.	Neutral.
North Ronaldsay NR10.	New section.	Neutral.
Papa Westray PW2 / 3.	Section removed and replaced by new section.	Minor benefit for Biodiversity.  The existing section passes through Loch of Ness LNCS, an area of damp flowery grassland which includes winter flood pools. Wet ground may be vulnerable to trampling and soil erosion. Removal of Core Path status may help protect this area from trampling and erosion. New section provides linkage with PW1, along an existing track.
Westray W4, Broughton.	Section removed.	Neutral.
Westray W6, Tuquoy and Mae Sands.	Section removed and replaced by new section.	Neutral.
Westray W7.	Section removed and replaced by new section.	Neutral.  Part of the existing section crosses an active farmyard. The replacement section follows the shoreline, avoiding the farmyard. This amendment may reduce the risk of accidental collisions, falls and injury.
Sanday, Doun Helzie SA11.	Removed.	Minor benefit for Human Health.  Eastern part of path crosses Doun Helzie LNCS where high dunes result in unsafe access to the beach below and risk of falls and injury.

Eday Ed4.	Section removed and replaced with new section.	Neutral.
Stronsay ST1.	Section removed and replaced by new section.	Neutral.
Stronsay ST2.	Section removed and replaced by new section.	Neutral.
Stronsay ST4.	New section.	Neutral.
Rousay (previously R1), Shingly Hill.	Core path removed.	Minor benefit for Biodiversity.  Existing path passes through Shingly Hill LNCS. Lack of a clear path increases risk of people walking over a wide area, with potential for damage and disturbance to habitats and species, e.g. breeding birds. Removal of Core Path status may help protect this area from trampling and erosion.
Rousay R1 (previously R2).	Section removed and replaced by new section.	Neutral.  Both previous and new sections are out-with the boundary of the Rousay SSSI.
West Mainland, Tingwall Wm16.	Path removed from Plan.	Neutral.
West Mainland, Birsay Wm22.  (previously WM21A)	A section of path removed from Plan.  Further section at Greeny Hill removed and replaced by new section.	Neutral.

West Mainland Wm23, Burgar Hill.	Path removed from Plan.	Neutral.
West Mainland Wm17.	Section removed and replaced by new section.	Minor benefit for Cultural Heritage.  New section is slightly farther from the Knowes of Trotty, a Scheduled Monument, reducing the risk of erosion in the vicinity of the Monument.
West Mainland Wm21 Dounby.	Section removed. Alternative route available.	Neutral.
West Mainland Wm26, Skail.	Sections removed.	Minor benefit for Human Health.  Part of the path crosses a farmyard. Removal of core path status is likely to reduce the risk of accidental collisions, falls and injury.
West Mainland, previously Wm28 (links A967 with Hillside road).	Path removed from Plan.	Neutral.
West Mainland Wm28, Copland's Walk. (previously WM30)	Section removed and replaced by new section.	Neutral.
West Mainland Wm30, Brinkie's Brae. Previously Wm32)	Section removed and replaced by new section.	Neutral.
West Mainland Wm31.  Links paths previously listed as Wm26 and	Addition to Core Path network.	Neutral.  Provides a circular route.



Wm33		
Kirkwall, previously K5 linking Sunnybank Road with A965.	Removed.	Neutral.
Kirkwall K6. (Previously K8 at new KGS)	Section of path removed and replaced with new section.	Neutral.
St Ola, previously K11, Head of Work.	Path removed from Plan.	Neutral.
Graemsay G3. Interior core path connections.	Replaced by new circular route which follows the coast.	Neutral.
Hoy H3. Rackwick.	Path upgraded and realigned.	Neutral.
Walls, previously Wa2. Path to Heldale Water.	Removed.	Neutral.
Walls H10, south coast.	New Core Path, previously an aspirational path.	Neutral. Links existing south coast path with the B9047 at The Ayre.
Walls H12, Cantick Head.	New Core Path, Part of which was an aspirational path.	Neutral. Provides a circular route round Cantick Head and links with existing south coast path.

Flotta - Interior core path connections.	Replaced by new circular route which follows the coast.	Neutral.
South Ronaldsay SR1, Hoxa Head. (Previously Sr10).	Section removed and replaced by upgraded section.	Neutral.
South Ronaldsay SR3, St Margaret's Hope. (Previously Sr11)	Path amended to reflect on the ground route.	Neutral.
South Ronaldsay SR6, East coast route. (Previously Sr1).	Section removed and replaced by new section.  A further section is under consideration for removal.	Neutral.  Part of the existing SR6 route passes through the Ward Hill SSSI; however the area where a new section is proposed is located to the north of the SSSI boundary.
South Ronaldsay, SR8.	New Core Path which follows an existing route.	Neutral.  Links with SR6 and route previously listed as Sr5 to create a circular route.
Burray B6 (previously B3, B4 & B5).	Section previously listed as B5 is under consideration for removal.	Neutral.  B6 already provides a circular route in this area.