

West Dunbartonshire Council Core Paths Plan



West
Dunbartonshire
Council

April 2009

Introduction

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 came into effect in February 2005 and provides everyone with statutory access rights to most land and inland water for recreation and passage as well as for educational and some commercial purposes. These access rights are only available if they are exercised responsibly by respecting people's privacy, safety and livelihoods, and the environment.

Land managers must also manage their land responsibly in relation to access rights by facilitating public access in return for the right to expect responsible behaviour from the public.

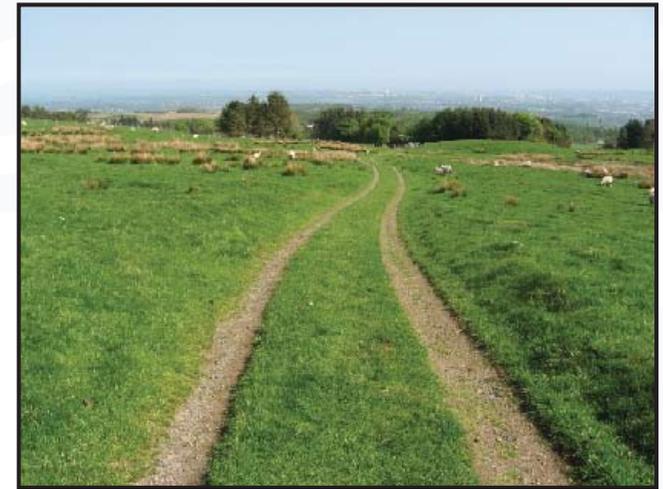
One of the duties placed on Local Authorities by the Act is the preparation of a Core Paths Plan. This Plan provides a system of paths in an area which, as a whole, will give the public reasonable access throughout the area. Although the Act provides a right of responsible access to the countryside, both on and off paths, it is recognised that most people like to use paths.

It should be noted that the West Dunbartonshire Core Paths Plan does not include the part of the Council area within the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park. Access matters within the National Park area are the responsibility of the National Park Authority.

Outdoor Access In West Dunbartonshire

West Dunbartonshire has an extensive network of paths in the urban and rural areas. The National Cycle Route 7 following the Forth & Clyde Canal and River Leven provides a strategic link from Glasgow through the area towards Loch Lomond. There are many popular paths leading into the Kilpatrick Hills and to the west of the Vale of Leven. These upland areas also provide excellent opportunities for off-path access.

In the urban areas many paths provide links within and between communities for routes to and from schools, local shops, transport centres and work places. Good links also exist to provide access from the urban areas to the countryside.



West Dunbartonshire Local Access Forum

The West Dunbartonshire Access Forum was created as a requirement of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and provides independent advice to anybody wishing to use their access rights, land owners and managers, and West Dunbartonshire Council. The Forum also provided assistance and advice at all stages of the formation of the Core Paths Plan.

The Forum has members representing the interests of those taking access to the countryside as well as land owners and managers, to ensure that all aspects of access issues can be helpfully addressed. While not public meetings, the meetings are open for members of the public to attend. Anybody who wishes to have an issue raised for discussion, or who wishes to address the Forum should contact the Secretary via the Council Access Officer. The Forum will also make site visits when necessary to understand an issue that has been brought to it.

General access problems such as locked gates and blocked paths should normally be referred to the Council Access Officer who will conduct the initial investigation and may refer some issues to the Forum if necessary.



The Core Path Network in West Dunbartonshire

What are Core Paths?

The Core Paths Network in West Dunbartonshire provides a basic system of paths throughout the area which will link to the wider path network. Core Paths can take any form - from grassy country paths to urban tarmac paths. Not every path needs to be suitable for every type of user or ability.

It is the intention that all Core Paths will be fit for the purposes to which they are likely to be put to and appropriate for the environment in which they are located. The Scottish Government guidance on Core Paths states that only routes which already exist, or can be brought into use within two years of the adoption of the Plan, can be designated as Core Paths

Core Paths will be promoted through sign posting, leaflets and the Council web site. They will also be shown on all Ordnance Survey maps in Scotland.

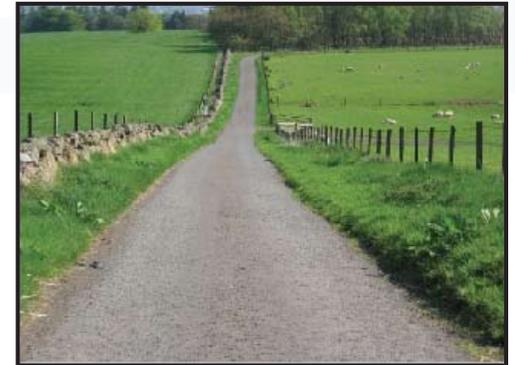
Evidence has shown that people are more likely to use the outdoors for recreation when there are clearly signed paths available. People want to know where they can go safely and avoid farming and forestry operations. Well-signed paths also assist land managers and farmers manage people exercising their access rights in the countryside.

The general right of responsible access to the countryside is not affected by the Core Paths network. For further information on your access rights under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 see www.outdooraccess-scotland.com

The Core Paths network will contribute to the vision for access in West Dunbartonshire as set out in the Access Strategy. That is

“The consolidation, development and management of a sustainable access network in West Dunbartonshire, in balance with the needs of sustainable land management and the needs of communities.”

The Core Paths network will also contribute significantly to a number of other Council policies and strategies such as health, sustainable transport, social inclusion and stronger communities.



Development of the West Dunbartonshire Core Paths Plan

West Dunbartonshire Council and the Local Access Forum have used the guidance within the Paths for All Partnership / Scottish Natural Heritage publication 'Core Paths Plans - A Guide to Good Practice' to produce the West Dunbartonshire Core Paths Plan.

West Dunbartonshire Council in conjunction with the Local Access Forum undertook a series of community consultations as a first stage of consultation on the plan. The comments from this exercise were used along with the 3 local access strategies for the area and a set of criteria the Local Access Forum had developed to assess paths, to compile a list of Proposed Draft Core Paths for the second round of the informal public consultation process.



The Proposed Draft Core Paths Plan was widely publicised by advertising in local newspapers, notices in all libraries and community centres in the area, and by posting notices throughout West Dunbartonshire in places frequented by access-takers. 400 copies of the Proposed Draft Core Paths

Plan were distributed to all interested parties, a series of 6 public drop-in sessions throughout the area were organised, copies of the plan were made available at all libraries in the area, and the Plan was available on the West Dunbartonshire Council web site. The consultation period for the second round of informal public consultations ran from the 1st to the 31st March 2008.

There were 64 responses to the Proposed Draft Plan which were considered by the Local Access Forum, and as a result of some of the responses the 3 local area access strategies were re-visited by the Forum and more links across the major barriers to access in the area (the A82 dual carriageway, railways, the River Leven and the Forth & Clyde Canal) were identified and assessed for inclusion. The responses allowed the Local Access Forum to add, remove and amend various paths included in the Proposed Draft to produce the Draft Core Paths Plan.



The formal 12 week consultation for the Draft Core Paths Plan ran from 23rd June to 15th September 2008. The Plan was widely publicised by adverts in local papers and copies were sent to all individuals and organisations who had responded to the Proposed Draft Core Paths Plan. Copies were also sent to all farmers in the area and made available in all public libraries and the main Council Offices in Clydebank and Dumbarton.

The formal consultation exercise generated 3 Representations and 2 Formal Objections. These have been taken into account and amendments made to the Plan, enabling the Plan to be finalised for adoption.

Core Paths - Frequently asked questions

How were the Core Paths chosen?

The Local Access Forum in partnership with the Council developed the following criteria to decide which paths and routes should be chosen as Core Paths. The Forum then used the criteria to assess each path and ensure it met the majority of them.

- The path provides a strategic link between communities
- The path provides a route to local facilities (shops, schools, etc) and public transport
- The path provides a safe route for commuting
- The path allows access to sites of conservation or historic interest
- The path provides access from the urban area to the countryside
- The path provides opportunities for sustainable economic development, eg tourism
- The path is locally important / well used
- The path links to the wider path network
- The path provides opportunities for recreation and healthy lifestyles
- The path can be used by a variety of users of all ages – eg walkers, horses, cyclists, disabled
- The path integrates access and land management



Routes on roads and pavements

With a few exceptions, the Core Paths do not follow roads or adjacent pavements. The exceptions are where a quiet rural road or pavement is currently well used by the public for non-motorised recreation and the route provides a useful link between Core Paths, or the route is part of the National Cycle Route. All adopted roads and footways within West Dunbartonshire are already available for use by the public.

Maintenance

Although the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 provides the Council with the powers to maintain Core Paths, it does not impose a duty on the Council to do so. The Council will, as a minimum, work to keep the Core Paths open and free from obstruction, and will work to ensure all boundary crossings and signposts are present.

Individual Core Paths may require to be closed occasionally for maintenance or land management operations. These closures will be kept to a minimum and, whenever possible, an alternative route will be provided. All attempts will be made to provide advanced information about temporary Core Path closures on site and on the Council web site.

Water Access

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 also allows responsible access to inland water. The Forth & Clyde Canal and River Leven have both been adopted as Core Paths on water. Anyone wanting to use the Core Paths on water should ensure they have the necessary skills, experience and equipment available before entering the water.



Future Development of the Core Paths

The future development of the Core Paths Network in West Dunbartonshire will involve three separate programmes of work- promotion, signposting and path improvement works.

Promotion: The Core Paths will be promoted via the Council web site and via specially-prepared maps and leaflets.

Signposting: A comprehensive scheme of signposting and route marking will be identified and funding sought to implement the scheme.

Path improvements: Work with partners to identify Core Paths which require upgrading work and secure funding to improve path surfaces and boundary crossings where appropriate.

In order to achieve these aims a comprehensive survey of all Core Paths will be undertaken to establish the extent of the work required to bring the network up to standard.

The Act allows the Council to review the Core Paths Plan at appropriate times, and to remove and amend individual paths to meet local needs such as a new development.



Before



After

How to interpret the maps

The first map on Page 9 is an overview map showing West Dunbartonshire divided into 3km² sections. Use this overview map to go to the individual map/area you are interested in.

The individual map will show you the Core Paths proposed for that area. The Core Paths are shown as dashed purple lines. A green dot is used to show where a path ends at another path and a green line is used to show where a path stops against another path which continues.

Core Paths on water are shown as dashed blue lines.

A list of the proposed core paths is provided with general data on their condition, surface, gradient, length etc on page 33.

Further information and who to contact

For further information on outdoor access and Core Paths visit the following web sites:

Scottish Natural Heritage: www.snh.gov.uk

Outdoor Access Code: www.outdooraccess-scotland.com

Paths for All Partnership: www.pathsforall.org.uk

West Dunbartonshire Local Access Forum:
<http://www.wdcweb.info/building-and-planning/forward-planning-and-regeneration/countryside-access/>

To contact the West Dunbartonshire Council Access Officer;
Tel: 01389 737376 E-mail: access.officer@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Enjoy Scotland's outdoors responsibly

Everyone has the right to be on most land and inland water providing they act responsibly. Your access rights and responsibilities are explained fully in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Whether you're in the outdoors or managing the outdoors, the key things are to:

- **take responsibility for your own actions**
- **respect the interests of other people**
- **care for the environment.**

Visit **outdooraccess-scotland.com** or contact your local Scottish Natural Heritage office.



SCOTTISH
OUTDOOR ACCESS CODE

**KNOW THE CODE
BEFORE YOU GO**

outdooraccess-scotland.com