

Orkney Core Path Plan Review 2018

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 new 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.

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Determination

In accordance with Section 8(1) of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 the Council has formally determined, in consultation with Historic Environment Scotland, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage that the proposed amendments to the Orkney Core Paths Plan are unlikely to lead to significant environmental effects. Therefore, no environmental report will be prepared alongside the revised Plan.

Statement of Reasons

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.