



**The Highland Council  
Access Strategy**

**Strategic Environmental  
Assessment**

**Environmental Report  
(Final Version)**

**November 2008**

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Purpose of this Environmental Report and key facts about The Highland Council Access Strategy.**

As part of the preparation of The Highland Council Access Strategy. The Highland Council is carrying out a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). SEA is a systematic method for considering the likely environmental effects of certain PPS. SEA aims to:

- integrate environmental factors into the Access Strategy preparation and decision-making;
- improve the Access Strategy and enhance environmental protection;
- increase public participation in decision making; and
- facilitate openness and transparency of decision-making.

SEA is required by the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005. The key SEA stages are:

<b>Screening</b>	determining whether the PPS is likely to have significant environmental effects and whether an SEA is required
<b>Scoping</b>	deciding on the scope and level of detail of the Environmental Report, and the consultation period for the report – this is done in consultation with Scottish Natural Heritage, The Scottish Ministers (Historic Scotland) and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency
<b>Environmental Report</b>	publishing an Environmental Report on the PPS and its environmental effects, and consulting on that report
<b>Adoption</b>	providing information on: the adopted PPS; how consultation comments have been taken into account; and methods for monitoring the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the PPS
<b>Monitoring</b>	monitoring significant environmental effects in such a manner so as to also enable the Responsible Authority to identify any unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage and undertake appropriate remedial action.

The purpose of this Environmental Report is to:

- provide information on the Access Strategy;
- identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects of the Access Strategy and its reasonable alternatives;
- provide an early and effective opportunity for the Consultation Authorities and the public to offer views on any aspect of this Environmental Report.

**Table 1.** Key facts relating to The Highland Council Access Strategy

Key facts relating to The Highland Council Access Strategy	
Responsible Authority	The Highland Council
Title of Plan/Programme	The Highland Council Access Strategy
Plan Purpose	To offer a vision for improved, promoted and integrated countryside access provision within The Highland Council area.
What prompted the plan	To replace an out of date strategy (Highlands and Islands Access Strategy 2000) with particular regard to the new duties given in the enacted Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.
Plan subject	Public access to land.
Period covered by plan	Up to 2013
Frequency of plan updates	5 years
Plan Area (e.g. km <sup>2</sup> )	The Highland Council area, 24476 km <sup>2</sup> Appendix B Map A - The Highland Council Access Strategy Areas
Summary of nature/ content of plan	The strategy takes the keys themes of the Highland Community Plan 2004-2007, and provides aims and objectives for how the access resource can be used to support these themes. Integral to the strategy will be the production of the Core Path Plan, as this will be at the heart of many of the aims and objectives, and an overview of how this process will be taken forward is given in the strategy.
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**See Appendix A for information about the SEA activities to date**

## **OUTLINE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ACCESS STRATEGY**

### Vision Statement

The Strategy is based on the following vision:

- To develop a comprehensive access network for a wider range of abilities and interests;
- To encourage local communities and user groups to work with land managers in the development of better facilities and to support rural communities
- To provide access opportunities which conserve and enhance local character, and provide clear economic, environmental and social benefits compatible with the themes of the Community Plan;
- To remove barriers and build links so that everyone is able to enjoy and explore the Highlands to the best of their ability;

### Aims and Objectives

The strategic direction of the document has followed the model of the second Community Plan for Highland 2004-2007. The Community Plan, drawn together by the Highland Wellbeing Alliance, is based on a wide range of public opinions which have identified important community issues on which the Access Strategy will focus.

The objectives used for the access strategy are given in Appendix C.

### Access Audit

Will provide an overview and key facts of the access resource and land characteristics in the plan area. The plan area will also be broken down into regions to provide more localised information on the differing access resources.

A policy audit will also be shown to highlight relationships of the Access Strategy to other PPS's and environmental objectives. A brief audit of finance and staffing will also be described.

### Outdoor Access and the Community Plan

The aims and objectives of the community plan, and their importance and influence on outdoor recreational access, will be developed in the strategy and this will form the main part of the document.

The theme of the community plan will be developed to produce possible goals and tasks relating to access and linking back to the theme of the community plan. A potential milestone and successful outcome will be put forward.

Partners to help deliver the goals or tasks will also be suggested at this stage.

It will be seen that many of the goals may meet more than one of the themes of the plan and the potential partners are likely to be involved or be stakeholders in a broad range of themes and goals.

### The Highland Council Core Paths Plan

The Highland Council has prepared six Core Path Plans for the areas of Caithness, Sutherland, Ross and Cromarty, Skye & Lochalsh, Lochaber (including western parts of the Badenoch & Strathspey area not in the Cairngorms National Park) and Inverness & Nairn (including northern parts of Badenoch & Strathspey area not in the Cairngorms National Park). The level of detail with regards specific projects will be greater with these plans and this is considered in this Environmental Report.

The Highland Council Access Strategy can be seen at area offices and on the web at the address below:

<http://www.highland.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/what-to-see/countrysideaccess/>

## Relationship with other PPS and environmental protection objectives

Schedule 3 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 requires that the Environmental Report includes an outline of the Access Strategy's relationship with other relevant PPS, and how environmental protection objectives have been taken into account in the Access Strategy preparation. This section covers these issues and describes the policy context within which the Access Strategy operates, and the constraints and targets that this context imposes on the Access Strategy.

**Table 2.** Relevant plans, programmes and strategies (PPS) and environmental protection objectives, and their relationship with the Access Strategy

Name of PPS / Environmental protection objective. - Ownership	How it affects, or is affected by SEA issues* at Schedule 3 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005	How it will affect or be affected by the Access Strategy
<b>International</b> Kyoto Protocol (1997) - United Nations (UN)	<b>Air, climatic factors</b> Sets CO2 reduction targets that PPS need to take into account.	Increased use of non-motorised transport, promoted by the Access Strategy, will have positive environmental effects on this PPS.
Agenda 21 (1992) - UN	<b>All</b> A comprehensive blueprint of action to be taken globally, nationally and locally by organisations of the UN, governments, and major groups in every area in which humans impact on the environment.	The Access Strategy will reflect the principles of sustainable development, through increased use, and understanding, of the local environment for recreation and transport.
EC Habitats Directive (1992) - European Commission (EC)	<b>Biodiversity, flora &amp; fauna</b> Is a European Community initiative to implementing the Biodiversity Convention agreed by more than 150 countries at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. As well as establishing Natura 2000 areas, the Directive has a number of wider implications, such as those relating to European Protected Species. The Birds Directive also makes certain provisions for protection of wild birds in the wider countryside outwith protected areas.	Wider promotion and upgrade of access opportunities may have negative effects on designated sites and designated species on other non-designated areas.
<b>National</b> Walking Strategy for Scotland – Consultation (2003) – Scottish Executive (SE)	<b>Human health, cultural heritage, landscape</b> A comprehensive document citing the various benefits of walking.	Increased use of non-motorised transport and local recreation opportunities etc, promoted by the Access Strategy, will have positive environmental effects on this PPS.

Name of PPS / Environmental protection objective. - Ownership	How it affects, or is affected by SEA issues* at Schedule 3 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005	How it will affect or be affected by the Access Strategy
National Programme for Improving Mental Health and Well-Being Action Plan 2003-2006 (2003) - SE	<b>Human health</b> Supports action in mental health improvement (promotion and prevention), to address mental ill-health problems and to prevent suicide in Scotland.	Increased awareness and promotion of suitable recreation opportunities will have positive environmental effects on this PPS.
Let's Make Scotland More Active: Physical Activity Strategy (2003) - SE	<b>Human health</b> A national Strategy to provide leadership, co-ordination and resources for a strategic approach to physical activity	Increased awareness and promotion of suitable recreation opportunities will have positive environmental effects on this PPS.
SPPG11: Sport, Physical recreation and open space - SE	<b>Air, human health, landscape, biodiversity</b> Meets the recreational needs of the community, maintaining comprehensive access networks and considering how they might be augmented.	Increased awareness and promotion of suitable recreation opportunities will have positive environmental effects on this PPS.
Road Traffic Reduction Act 1997 Ro - SE	<b>Air, human health, climatic factors</b> Requires local authorities to prepare reports on levels of road traffic in their areas with a further act to make provision for road traffic reduction targets.	Increased levels of pedestrian, and other non-motorised traffic, on public highways could have a negative effect on this PPS. However this effect is likely to not be significant in relation to the other positive effects. Baseline data will be monitored and where appropriate safety improvements should be made. Currently non-motorised fatalities and seriously injured are decreasing year on year.
Scottish Planning Policy 17 - SE	<b>Air, human health, climatic factors</b> Transport and Planning incorporating provision for non-motorised travel, the disabled, safe cycling and cycle networks in rural areas and supported by PANs 46, 51 and 57.	The Access Strategy will reflect the principles of sustainable development of the local environment for recreation and transport during development control and planning.
National Air Quality Strategy, Scottish Executive - SE	<b>Air, human health, climatic factors</b> A strategy to improve and protect ambient air quality, protect health and the environment without imposing unacceptable economic or social costs.	Increased use of non-motorised transport, promoted by the Access Strategy, will have positive environmental effects on this PPS.

Name of PPS / Environmental protection objective. - Ownership	How it affects, or is affected by SEA issues* at Schedule 3 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005	How it will affect or be affected by the Access Strategy
Water Framework Directive. - EC but passed down to SE via Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act and Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2005	<b>Air, human health</b> Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a framework for the Community action in the field of water policy	The Access Strategy will not identify sites suitable for the development, or promotion, of public access therefore this PPS will not be affected.
National Planning Policy Guidelines 14 (Natural Heritage) and 18 (Planning and the Historic Environment) - SE	<b>Air, Biodiversity, flora &amp; fauna, cultural heritage, landscape</b> Gives guidance on how the Government's policies for the conservation and enhancement of Scotland's natural and historic heritage should be reflected in land use planning.	The Access Strategy will reflect the principles of sustainable development of the local environment for recreation and transport during development control and planning.
Scottish Biodiversity List (Section 2(4) of the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004) - SE	<b>Biodiversity, flora &amp; fauna</b> Statutory duty on all public bodies to further the conservation of biodiversity which can be enhanced through encouraging access opportunities that also raise enjoyment, awareness and understanding of the area's biodiversity.	While not identifying specific sites, the Access Strategy will promote the benefits of the promotion of the environment which in turn may increase opportunities for the enjoyment of the area's biodiversity.
<b>Regional</b> Local Transport Strategy 2000 - Highland Council (HC)	<b>Air, human health, climatic factors</b> In response to the Road Traffic Reduction Acts it identifies walking and cycling as areas for improvement, in particular sections 14, 15 and 16.	Increased use of non-motorised transport, promoted by the Access Strategy, will have positive environmental effects on this PPS.
Highland Sport Strategy 2000 - HC	<b>Human health</b> Provides the focus to accelerate future development by linking the objectives of Sport 21 (the national strategy) with Highland priorities. It reflects education and health objectives and encompasses participation for an active lifestyle	Increased awareness and promotion of suitable recreation opportunities will have positive environmental effects on this PPS.

Name of PPS / Environmental protection objective. - Ownership	How it affects, or is affected by SEA issues* at Schedule 3 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005	How it will affect or be affected by the Access Strategy
Wellbeing Alliance Highland Community Plan 2004-2007 - HC/SNH/NHS Highland/HIE/Northern Constabulary/ Highland & Islands Fire Brigade/ Communities Scotland/ Voluntary Action Highland	<b>Human health, material assets</b> A strategy that identifies the ways that, by working in partnership with communities, we can tackle demographic change, geographic and personal disadvantage as well as upgrading infrastructure.	The Access Strategy will reflect the principles of sustainable development, through increased use, and understanding, of the local environment for recreation and transport.
Wellbeing Alliance Joint Health Improvement Plan 2004-2007 - As above	<b>Human health</b> The Community Plan is the key strategic framework for delivery of services in Highland. It sets out an agreed framework for improving health, provides a snapshot of current health improvement work and identifies the additional work needed to achieve agreed objectives and outcomes.	Increased awareness and promotion of suitable recreation opportunities will have positive environmental effects on this PPS.
Wellbeing Alliance Highland Community Safety Strategy - As above	<b>Human health</b> Improving community safety is about 'creating safer places for people to live, work and visit, without fear or risk of harm'. The Highland Community Safety Strategy identifies the main objectives for community safety as well as problems, their causes and actions required to resolve them.	Increased use of non-motorised transport and awareness of suitable recreation opportunities, promoted by the Access Strategy, will have positive environmental effects on this PPS.
Highland Council Corporate Plan 2004-2007 - HC	<b>All</b> Describes what the Council would like to achieve. The plan makes specific references to investment in paths as well as safe walking and cycling routes.	Increased use of non-motorised transport, promoted by the Access Strategy, will have positive environmental effects on this PPS
Highland Cycling Strategy - HC	<b>Air, climatic factors, human health</b> Aims to promote and encourage an increase in journeys taken by cycle, and to deliver economic, health, social and environmental benefits within the Council area. Assists with the achievement of the UK National Cycling Strategy targets which aim to double the number of cycle trips by 2002 and double those again by 2012.	Increased use of non-motorised transport, promoted by the Access Strategy, will have positive environmental effects on this PPS

Name of PPS / Environmental protection objective. - Ownership	How it affects, or is affected by SEA issues* at Schedule 3 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005	How it will affect or be affected by the Access Strategy
Highland Forest and Woodland Strategy [draft] 2005 - HC	<b>Human health, landscape, biodiversity</b> Recreation is identified as a key role for forests and woodlands in Highland.	Increased awareness and promotion of suitable recreation opportunities will have positive environmental effects on this PPS.
Highland Council Structure Plan, 2001 - HC	<b>All</b> A broad planning statement with the aim of charting a course to promote and enhance the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the people of Highland. Policies SR2, SR5, SR6 and SR7.	The Access Strategy will reflect the principles of sustainable development, through increased use, and understanding, of the local environment for recreation and transport.
<b>Local</b> Healthy Living for the Over 45s [Black Isle] - HC	<b>Human health</b> Initiative aimed at providing diverse opportunities for improving health.	Increased awareness and promotion of suitable recreation opportunities will have positive environmental effects on this PPS.
Highland Council Biodiversity Action Plans - HC	<b>Biodiversity</b> A Plan which highlights habitats and species, suggesting objectives and opportunities to encourage biodiversity over a 5 – 10 year span.	While not identifying specific sites, the Access Strategy will promote the benefits of the promotion of the environment which in turn may increase opportunities for the enjoyment of the area's biodiversity.
Local Plans - HC	<b>All</b> Used to guide decisions on planning issues, help develop integrated management and protect natural and man-made features; formulated through the community planning processes and in conjunction with the Structure Plan makes up the statutory Development Plan for the Highlands. They incorporate general policies as well as specific statements of intent applicable to each study area. These are at varying stages of review.	The Access Strategy will reflect the principles of sustainable development of the local environment for recreation and transport during development control and planning.
Healthy Routes to School, Work and for Leisure - HC	<b>Human Health, air</b> Aims to increase physical activity, physical and mental well being, and stimulate interest and support for adults and children to take up walking and cycling.	Increased use of non-motorised transport, promoted by the Access Strategy, will have positive environmental effects on this PPS

\* Biodiversity/flora, fauna/population, human health/soil/water/air/climatic factors/material assets/cultural heritage (including architectural and archaeological heritage), landscape, inter-relationship between these issues; secondary and cumulative effects

Key points arising from this analysis are that the Access Strategy should;

- Improve health of the population through access taking as part of regular daily activity as well as for recreational purposes.
- Promote open space while protecting and enhancing, cultural & natural heritage, biodiversity, species and habitats.
- Improve non-motorised links to allow communities to be less car dependent, improve air quality and reduce CO2 emissions.
- Provide access to and increase the enjoyment/understanding of the landscape, including character of the built, natural and historical environments.
- Enhance access opportunities to increase awareness and understanding of the area's biodiversity.
- Promote infrastructure development that reduces road casualties.

## Relevant aspects of the current state of the environment

This section aims to describe the environmental context within which the Access Strategy operates and show sources of baseline environmental data that can and will be monitored to show any changes through the life span of the Access Strategy. Baseline data will be monitored on a yearly basis through the life of the Strategy.

As discussed in the scoping report, generic Planning and Development Service SEA Objectives will be used to highlight key information.

Table 3 below highlights SEA Objectives relevant to this plan. Please see Appendix E for presented data.

**Table 3.** Environmental Baseline Data

<b>SEA Objectives</b>	<b>Key Information</b>
<b>Population and Human Health</b>	
1. Protect and enhance human health.	Mortality by cause – Percentage recorded deaths by heart disease and other preventable diseases at Highland level  Number of transport accidents – total numbers as recorded by Northern Constabulary at Highland level (in particular those involving persons not in a motor vehicle)
2. Minimise exposure to noise and vibration.	Number of noise complaints received by Area (in the context of this plan this is concerned with complaints relating to noise from public places e.g. paths within housing, woodland, park areas)
3. Reduce and prevent crime and the fear of crime	Fear of crime surveys - % of population which think there is a serious crime problem at Scotland-wide level
4. Improve social inclusion.	Number of walking groups set up in Highland, such as those by Step It Up Highland.  Numbers of people undertaking recreational activities.
<b>Cultural Heritage and landscape and material assets</b>	
5. Protect and where appropriate enhance the historic environment.	Number of sites/designated areas under pressure from visitor and/or tourist development
6. Value and protect diversity and local distinctiveness.	Availability of Gaelic version leaflets and other interpretation.

7. Retain and improve quality and quantity of publicly accessible open space.	Proportion of population within 200m of a core path.
<b>Air, water, soil and climatic factors</b>	
8. Reduce vulnerability to effects of climate change.	Number of core paths and other access/recreation sites in flood risk areas as identified in SEPA flood risk maps.
9. Reduce need for energy.	Proportion of population commuting to work via public or non-motorised transport.
10. Reduce air pollution to levels that do not damage natural systems, including contribution to climate change.	Air quality monitoring at three sites in Highland (Inverness/Strath Vaich/Fort William)
11. Reduce the need to travel.	Access to key services at settlement zone level - % of households that are less than 30mins average walking time from a doctor, a shop, primary school, petrol filling station (or less than 10 mins cycling time)
12. Increase potential use of public transport.	Information on public transport availability using Highland Council data  % of visitor attractions accessible by public transport
13. Avoid impact to and where possible enhance the water environment.	Visitor numbers using inland water for recreation.
14. Reduce contamination, safeguard soil quantity and quality.	Distance and number of paths where erosion or poor path construction has or is reducing soil quality and quantity
<b>Biodiversity, flora and fauna</b>	
15. Protect, enhance and where necessary restore designated wildlife sites and protected species.	Number and type of designated sites in the area.
16. Improve biodiversity, avoiding irreversible losses.	Reported condition of locally important wildlife sites using information from LBAP groups where available.  Achievement of Local Biodiversity Action Plan targets where appropriate.

	<p>Total area of protected peatlands.</p> <p>Total area of wild land as recognised by SNH.</p> <p>Number of developments approved within wildland as recognised by SNH.</p> <p>Proportion of ancient and semi-natural woodland of total land area of the plan area.</p> <p>Number/area of local nature reserves and designated sites.</p>
<p>17. Provide appropriate opportunities for people to come into contact with and appreciate wild life and wild places.</p>	<p>Kilometres of Core Paths and other wider network paths.</p> <p>Number of people taking access in the Highlands.</p>

**Table 4.** Environmental problems relevant to the Access Strategy

Problem	Supporting Data	Implications
Negative impact of access development and promotion on natural and cultural heritage features	These are localised problems and little data is available, see baseline data in Appendix E where limited data is recorded.	For any proposed development or promotion of access provision (upgrade of existing routes, new path construction, installation of interpretation facilities etc) the Access Strategy will seek to maintain and enhance the high quality natural heritage and take into account cultural heritage sites
Change in land use reducing key features of biodiversity, leading to loss of habitat for species	In 2002 27% of BAP species were rated as stable, along side 29% of habitats. However in the same period 18% of species were declining. <i>SNH</i>	The Access Strategy will seek to ensure a balance between the demand for managed access provision does not adversely impact upon the need to protect and enhance the quality and character of the environment, including designated sites.
Use of access resource leading to secondary environmental issues, e.g. litter, dog fouling and anti social behaviour.	An estimated £70m was spent on litter collection in 2006. (Keep Scotland Beautiful/BBC)	The Access Strategy will seek to ensure that access provision is developed in close consultation/working with other council services and public bodies to minimise potential secondary environmental impacts.
Use of access resource leading to pressure on existing services or creating environmental impact through lack of such services e.g. public toilets, car parking.	These are localised problems and little data is available.	The Access Strategy will seek to ensure that access provision is developed in close consultation/working with other council services and public bodies to minimise potential environmental impacts through lack of services.
Increase in travel use via use of private transport	78% of Highland household have access to one or more cars. ( <i>SHS Transport Across Scotland 2005 – 2006.</i> )	The Access Strategy will seek to reduce the need to travel by promoting access within existing settlements, most importantly via the development of Core Path Plans, and by providing links to these resources from settlements or via public transport.
Potential safety issues for the public exercising their access rights e.g. car parking/pedestrians on the road network without segregated footways	Highland wide in 2006 22 pedestrians and 5 cyclists were killed or seriously injured in road accidents. 1994-98 yearly averages are 38 pedestrian and 16 cyclist. <a href="http://www.scotland.gov.uk">www.scotland.gov.uk</a>	The Access Strategy will seek to ensure that access provision is developed in close consultation/working with other council services and public bodies to minimise potential safety issues arising through implementation of the objectives of the strategy.

Problem	Supporting Data	Implications
Increasing obesity levels and lack of minimum exercise levels taken by the public.	32% of all adults in Highland do less than 30 minutes of vigorous exercise per week. 64% of all adult considered overweight in Highland with 25% considered obese. <i>SHS - 2003.</i>	The Access Strategy will seek to improve access opportunity for functional and recreational needs, most importantly via the development of Core Path Plans, to involve the whole community in basic levels of physical activity within their local areas.

### **Likely evolution of the environment without the Access Strategy**

Without a new Access Strategy it is likely the environmental problems in Table 4 will continue to develop. The Highland Council will still be developing a core paths plan and working with communities to improve access provision and promotion.

Whilst many other plans and programs within the authority will have some scope to include access or sustainable transport, no one document (or council department) will have the remit to cover the whole range of council services. Hence without an Access Strategy the implementation of access, and associated themes, will vary across the council and best practice may therefore not always be followed or understood.

The Access Strategy is a tool for influencing access, transport and recreation trends in the council and other agencies. In particular the Access Strategy will be used to development Core Path Plans for the region. The Core Path network is about mapping a system of routes throughout an area that will meet more than just recreational needs and should help the public take non-motorised access to work, school and play, with the aim to tackle falling activity levels and increasing health problems due to lack of daily exercise. The Access Strategy is an opportunity to consider the aims and objectives of access provision/core paths in the region without the clutter of considering actual projects, problems or situations. Without the plan there is unlikely to be consistency in policy or delivery across the council or region.

## **ASSESSMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS AND MEASURES ENVISAGED FOR THE PREVENTIONS, REDUCTION AND OFFSETTING OF SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE EFFECTS.**

### **Alternative Considered**

The following alternatives were considered as part of the development of the Access Strategy and the Strategic Environmental Assessment process. The following were considered reasonable because they either adopted a do nothing approach or could be developed without the development of a policy, programme or strategy. Any PPS to develop recreational and functional access opportunities for the general public would

- **Continued use of existing access strategy**

The Highlands and Islands Access Strategy (H&IAS) was publicised jointly by the member authorities in 2000. It established access provision as an important community benefit for both tourism and the healthy well being of settlement. This document did help to place access on the local political agenda and project work was developed from it (Highland Access Project 2001-2004).

Foot and Mouth and the Land Reform Act, have both impacted on recreational access since the publication of the H&IAS. Land Reform, influenced by F&M, provides many new rights to the public and also to The Highland Council and as such the strategy cannot fully tackle these new duties and roles. Health of the general population, the importance of regular exercise to tackle obesity and other health problems, and climate change have markedly more prominence and again the H&IAS does not tackle these matters.

It is not considered appropriate to continue using this existing strategy in light of the above events and changes in council duties. The H&IAS could not envisage the final outcome of the Land Reform Act and an updated access strategy should be considered.

- **Internal communication to highlight aspects of recreational access development and environmental effects.**

The Highland Council is made up of a group of elected members and staff. Committees of elected members and staff are divided into a number of services which deliver separate and specific statutory and non-statutory functions.

Recreational outdoor access provision for the general public is almost exclusively overseen by one service, Planning and Development. While Education, Culture and Sport do host events and help the public to partake in sports and activities, the service does not uphold access rights as given in the Land Reform Act and many of the events and activities are centred on council property or school/sport centre bases.

Given this structure, expertise and knowledge of recreational access matters is not spread throughout the council, and internal communication would have little impact. A policy, approved by committee would have a higher profile within all the services compared to “notes” issued by officers from a single service.

More over there would be no or very little strategic overview. Public consultation and/or involvement in decision making processes would be extremely limited.

- **Form a working group to advise on aspects of delivery of council services throughout the region.**

The six Access Officers for The Highland Council already meet on a regular basis to discuss delivery of access provision, both statutory and non-statutory functions. The six officers are based in the county boundaries of the region and so cover a vast and wide ranging area. While this can be seen to already be a functioning working group, a background policy is not in place to guide the group. A host of Scottish Wide guidance exists for the group to take advice from but this is not always applicable to the Highland region and therefore a modern and up to date strategy is needed.

Again there would be no or very little strategic overview is the group continued with a policy back ground. Public consultation and/or involvement in decision making processes would be extremely limited.

## Assessment of Alternatives to a new Access Strategy

The following assessment compares the benefits and impacts of the alternatives when compared to the development of a new Access Strategy/.

**Table 5. Assessment of Alternatives to a New Access Strategy**

SEA Topic	Benefits and impacts of the alternatives when compared to the development of a new Access Strategy.		
	Continued use of H&IAS	Internal Communication	Working Group
Biodiversity	-	-	0
Population and Human Health	0	0	0
Soil	-	-	-
Water	-	-	-
Air	-	-	-
Climatic Factors	-	-	-
Material Assets	0	-	-
Cultural Heritage	-	-	-
Landscape	0	-	0

Key;

- 0 no difference in impact when compared to developing a new Access Strategy
- + Increased benefits when compared to developing a new Access Strategy
- Decreased benefits when compared to developing a new Access Strategy

The alternatives to developing a new access strategy all have a negative effect or no change when measured against the SEA topics. Therefore the production of a new access strategy is the best policy to develop with regards environmental impacts and benefits.

## **Assessment Methods of the Access Strategy**

An assessment pro-forma has been used to assess the Access Strategy's aims and objectives against the SEA regulatory categories. A number of actions are highlighted to develop/achieve each of the aims and objectives. The environmental impacts of the actions will be considered within each of the assessment pro-forma of the aims and objectives but not as separate assessments.

It is not known if all of the action points will be addressed or completed during the life of the Access Strategy. Also some of the action point will be aimed at small geographical locations and not practical to assess as part of an over arching document such as the Strategy.

The pro-forma are provided in full in appendix D, each SEA Objective has been assessed against the Plan Objectives with an overall impact for the SEA Regulatory Category given. Table 6 below summarises the overall assessments of the plan objectives against the Regulatory Categories.

**Table 6. Summary of the assessment of the plan objectives against SEA Regulatory Categories**

See appendix D for the full assessments.

Plan Objective	SEA Regulatory Category			
	Population and Human Health	Cultural heritage, material assets and landscape	Air, water soil and climatic factors	Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna
1) Developing a strong, sustainable and competitive economy.	+	+	0	++
2) Improving health and wellbeing.	++	+	+	+
3) Developing safe, strong and attractive communities.	+	+	0	0
4) Improving transport.	0	0	+	+
5) Encouraging lifelong learning and developing community capacity.	0	+	0	+
6) Enhancing cultures, heritage, the Gaelic language and the natural environment.	0	++	0	++
7) Invest in housing and its infrastructure.	+	+	+	0

Where;

- +/- Positive/negative impacts
- ++/-- Significant positive/negative impacts
- 0 Neutral or no effect
- ? Uncertain impact

It can be seen from Table 6 that the summarised impacts are positive or neutral.

## **Measures envisaged for the prevention, reduction and offsetting of significant adverse effects.**

The Access Strategy will have a positive environmental effect on many of the problems highlighted in Table 3. The adverse effects that may occur are principally those associated with impact on designated sites, species and habitats. No significant adverse effects were highlighted in the assessment proforma.

However it is accepted that some of the actions when developed could have negative impacts locally and to mitigate these impacts a process of managing the action points as projects is being put forward. The Highland Council has managed projects for a number of years with a view to ensuring a high standard of work and financial accountability. These project management goals can be seen as helping to meet the SEA topics of Human Health and Material Assets.

The starting point for good project management is project planning and a template is used for all staff for this purpose. This has been modified to include any impacts, from the development of the action points, upon all the SEA regulatory categories. Should any action/project impact negatively it will be for the project manager to ensure this impact is reduced or project scope changed to remove the impact. Similarly where project can enhance environmental impact (say by promoting responsible access to designated sites) the project planning template should highlight how these impacts can be maximised, for example the internal/external consultation may yield contacts with other project with similar aims and benefit of audience/public support can be shared.

The project management templates are shown in Appendix F.

Much of the plan region is covered by a nature designation (24% by land area) with open and free access occurring over most if not all of this ground at present. It is also acknowledged that much of the Highlands outwith designated sites is still of outstanding importance.

Some of the nationally important historic sites (SAMs) are well visited attractions in themselves like Smoo Cave and the Caledonian Canal. Generally where user numbers are high for these locations the resource is managed locally such as through Great Glen Way Rangers or via visitor centres like those at Forsinard or Beinn Eighe. While generally these sites will have good management of visitors, to stop, minimise and repair significant impacts, adverse effects may still occur and the over promotion of these locations may be taking place. If adverse impacts cannot be managed then active promotion of alternative sites to relieve numbers should be considered.

Significant impact is also a potential issue at sites or habitats where visitor numbers are historically low and any increased promotion/development may have an adverse effect. For this effect to be prevented the individuals involved in the development must be aware of the important sites both to allow project consultation with the relevant groups and ascertain whether better alternative locations are available.

The public also has a role in their exercising of access rights as given in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and the accompanying Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC). Care for the Environment is one of the three key principles of the code and more information is prescribed in sections 3.43 -3.52, to inform the public on how responsible access can limit damage and care for the environment.

- Education of the importance, type and locations of designated important natural/cultural heritage sites and protected species.
- Promote understanding of responsible access right to help care for the environment, SOAC.
- Moving access development away from such sites where practical alternatives exist locally
- Consulting with relevant agency to minimise effects of development and help manage the access resource.

## **Monitoring of the impact on the environment of the Access Strategy**

The Access Strategy will be monitored every other month to assess the progress, or otherwise, of any of the action points being developed to implement it within the region. This will be overseen by the Environment and Development section of the Planning and Development Service of The Highland Council, in which the councils Access Officers are based.

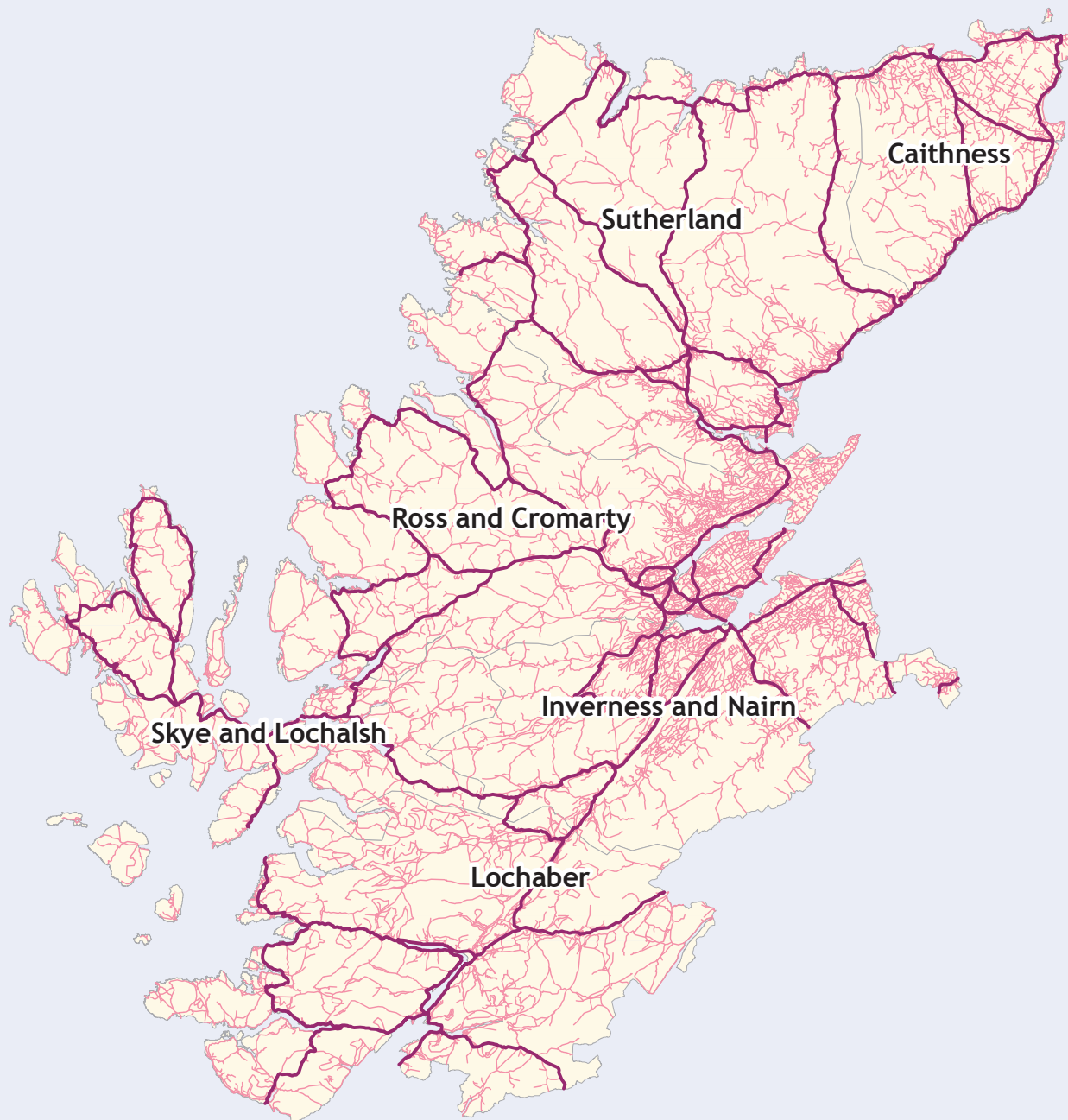
The delivery of these action points may be by many different means but it will be up to project manager, chair of the steering group or similar to ensure the project management templates are used and kept up to date. The Environment and Development section will receive regular reports from project managers etc. Any negative impact will be raised and discussed at the bi-monthly monitoring meeting and action taken as appropriate within the scope of the project.

The environmental baseline data will be updated yearly during the plans expected life span. Trends, positive or negative, will be discussed along the Strategy monitoring and action taken as appropriate. Baseline data is taken from information already available in the public domain, improved measures and data sources will be considered at each annual review with a view to these forming the baseline data for the next Access Strategy.

## Appendix A – SEA Activities to date

SEA Action/Activity	When carried out	Notes (e.g. comment on data availability, particular issues or any advice from the Consultation Authorities that has now been taken into account)
screening to determine whether the PPS is likely to have significant environmental effects	July 2006	Comments received back from CA's via Gateway on 1 <sup>st</sup> August 2006
scoping the consultation periods and the level of detail to be included in the Environmental Report	13 <sup>th</sup> March 2007	Comments received back from CA's via Gateway on 17 <sup>th</sup> April 2007
Outline and objectives of the PPS	May 2006	See Appendix C and within ER
relationship with other PPS and environmental objectives	May 2006	See Screening Report May 2006
environmental baseline established	December 07	See appendix F
environmental problems identified	May 2006	See Screening Report May 2006
assessment of future of area without the PPS	December 07	
alternatives considered	December 07	
environmental assessment methods established	February 2008	
identification of environmental problems that may persist after implementation and measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and offset any significant adverse effects	February 2008	
consultation timescales <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timescale for Consultation Authorities</li> <li>• Timescale for public</li> </ul>	August 2008	
notification/publicity action	12 <sup>th</sup> October 2006	<u>Screening Stage</u> Press and Journal Public Notice Viewing on web for public
Consultation of draft access strategy and SEA environmental report	Summer 2008	Viewing on web, press notice and sent to consultees.
Publication of Access Strategy and SEA Environment Report	Nov/Dec 2008	

## Appendix B: Map A Highland Council Access Strategy Areas



### Land Characteristics

	km <sup>2</sup>	%
Land >500m	3658	15
Inland Water	775	3
Woodland	3469	14
Settlements	422	2
Remainder	16152	66
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24476</b>	<b>100</b>

### Access Infrastructure

	km	%
Rights of Way	3362	11.6
Promoted	3959	13.6
Other Paths	8331	28.7
Roads	13401	46.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29053</b>	<b>100.0</b>

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The access infrastructure and paths map data is extracted from the Scottish Paths Record with the permission of copyright holders. This record is still under development and is not a definitive or legal record. The inclusion of any particular route does not necessarily indicate that there is any public access along that route.

Scale:  
1:1,400,000



### Legend

- Main roads
- Paths

## **Appendix C – Aims and Objectives of The Highland Council Access Strategy 2006-2011 (based from the Community Plan for Highland 2004-2007)**

### **1) Developing a strong, sustainable, and competitive economy**

The access network that best serves a community will also better serve the visitor. A community rich in access resources can become a more attractive place for both its residents and visitors. Investment in paths and signposts can be significantly less and offer better value than that necessary for indoor sports centres and swimming pools.

It is arguable that the physical and economic value of walking, cycling, inland water-based recreation or horse riding out of doors is equal to or even greater than that generated by expensive leisure facilities. However, there is also potential for the operation and management of outdoor and indoor resources to complement each other.

The pursuit of open air recreation makes a huge economic contribution to the Highland economy, particularly in fragile rural areas where it can bring in money and support jobs and local services. A community with a good access network can help attract more visitors to an area with opportunities for a more varied and rewarding experience. This can also help increase their length of stay and ultimately the amount of money they spend.

### **2) Improving health and wellbeing**

Better access to the outdoors is a vital component in the fight for improved health and wellbeing.

The percentages of cardiovascular disease, obesity, poor lifestyles and mental ill-health contribute to the Scottish reputation as the “sick man of Europe”. This places a strain on the health service, makes people less economically productive and reduces the quality of life that could be enjoyed by the population.

In an effort to fight the causes of ill health several initiatives such as “Step It Up Highland” have been launched in order to increase levels of physical activity and improve lifestyle, reduce stress and the incidence of cardiovascular disease.

### **3) Developing safe, strong and attractive communities**

Better signs, better leaflets, better paths, better promotion of the code so responsible people use the path network and people using them can deter vandalism and build confidence in small and large communities.

#### **4) Improving transport**

It is now widely recognised that it is necessary to reduce private car dependency and Government policy seeks to develop substantial transport solutions. Rail travel and its compliance with D.D.A. regulations plays an important part here.

#### **5) Encouraging lifelong learning and developing community capacity**

A good path network can be a community learning resource and a useful transport system. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code is a blueprint for responsible behaviour in the countryside and may also be an aid to the development of citizenship in the classroom.

#### **6) Enhancing cultures, heritage, the Gaelic language and the natural environment**

A large part of the Highland identity is based on culture, heritage and environment.

#### **7) Investing in housing and its infrastructure**

Both new and established housing areas should be served by good integrated access networks at the planning stage. Planning conditions and planning gain can benefit outdoor access.

## Appendix D Assessment of the plan objectives against SEA Regulatory Categories and SEA Objectives.

+/-	Positive/negative impacts	0	Neutral or no effect
++/--	Significant positive/negative impacts	?	Uncertain impact

### Plan Objective 1. *Developing a strong, sustainable, and competitive economy*

For commentary of the plan objectives please see Appendix C. The action points associated with this plan objective (as set out in the Strategy document) have been considered while assessing the impact of the plan objective against the regulatory categories.

SEA Regulatory Category and SEA Objectives																
Population and human health				Cultural heritage, material assets and landscape			Air, water, soil and climatic factors							Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna		
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.
++	0	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	0	0	0	-	+	0	++
While the strategy could have a significant effect on the SEA Objective 1, this positive effect is likely to be much less significant for the other objectives in the SEA Regulatory Category. Overall impact of Plan Objective on SEA Regulatory Category will be +ve.				The plan objective will have a positive effect on all of the SEA objectives. Overall impact of Plan Objective on SEA Regulatory Category will be +ve.			Much of the existing access resource is already at risk of flooding (see baseline data) and due to lack of constructed paths any significant increase in visitor numbers may have an impact on erosion, SEA Objective 14. The small positive effects of focussing access promotion and development close to settlements and on existing infrastructure should minimise these impact and mitigation through project planning. Overall impact of Plan Objective on SEA Regulatory Category will be neutral.							Providing opportunities for the public to come into contact with and appreciate wild life and wild places (SEA Objective 17) is fundamental to the authority developing an access strategy. Overall impact significantly +ve.		
<b>Key Success Factors, Mitigation and Monitoring:</b>																
Any promotion or improvement of an access and recreation resource on or close to a site of important (designated and non-designated) natural or cultural heritage should also be developed in consultation with SNH, HS and other bodies as fits the situation. The EC Habitats Directive places a duty of the authority to consider impacts and appropriate assessments to designated sites as well as lists species of plant and animals. The identification of any impacts will be undertaken via the project management templates.																
The project management templates will draw attention to any designated natural or cultural heritage sites. Also where added benefits can be easily gained should be highlighted through effect project management and consultation with the appropriate stakeholders. Development of any new or current access resource should not be taken forward where significant negative effects are likely as a result of this development or until appropriate assessment have been completed.																

**Plan Objective 2. Improving Health and Wellbeing**

For commentary of the plan objectives please see Appendix C. The action points associated with this plan objective (as set out in the Strategy document) have been considered while assessing the impact of the plan objective against the regulatory categories.

SEA Regulatory Category and SEA Objectives																
Population and human health				Cultural heritage, material assets and landscape			Air, water, soil and climatic factors							Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna		
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.
++	0	?	+	0	0	+	0	+	+	+	+	0	0	0	0	+
Increasing active outdoor activity with the aim of improving the health of the population (SEA Objective 1) is a fundamental basic reason for the authority developing an access strategy. Overall impact significantly +ve.				This plan objective does not have significant effects on this SEA regulatory category. Increasing access and promotion to public open space (SEA Objective 7) via Core Path Plans will produce a slight +ve impact overall.			This plan objective has small impact over a number of SEA Objectives, increasing health of the population will allow that group to use public transport more and private cars less. An unhealthy population are more reliant on car ownership. A +ve impact overall.							This plan objective does not have significant effects on this SEA regulatory category. If population health is improved then more wild places will become accessible to that group (SEA Objective 17), slight +ve impact overall.		
<b>Key Success Factors, Mitigation and Monitoring:</b>																
The environmental baseline data for improvements in human health can be monitored and will be a key success factor in this and other PPS's.																

**Plan Objective 3. Developing safe, strong and attractive communities.**

For commentary of the plan objectives please see Appendix C. The action points associated with this plan objective (as set out in the Strategy document) have been considered while assessing the impact of the plan objective against the regulatory categories.

SEA Regulatory Category and Objective																
Population and human health				Cultural heritage, material assets and landscape			Air, water, soil and climatic factors							Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna		
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.
+	+	+	+	0	+	+	0	+	0	+	+	0	0	0	0	0
This plan objective can positively impact on all of the SEA objectives in this category. However this will be dependent on a successful implementation of the strategy. Overall +ve impact.				This plan objective is unlikely to have significant effect on this SEA Regulatory Category, however where local asset exist there will be scope to ensure access to them. Overall small +ve impact.			While access opportunities can be developed from this plan objective (with a view to reducing travel/increase use of public transport), the impact is likely to be quite small. Impacts from other PPS are likely to be more significant, eg the local development plans.  Overall impact is neutral.							This plan objective has little impact on these SEA Objectives.  Overall impact is neutral.		
<p><b>Key Success Factors, Mitigation and Monitoring:</b> Any promotion or improvement of an access and recreation resource on or close to a site of designated natural or cultural heritage should also be developed in consultation with SNH, HS and other bodies as fits the situation.</p> <p>The project management templates will draw attention to any designated natural or cultural heritage sites. Also where added benefits can be easily gained should be highlighted through effect project management and consultation with the appropriate stakeholders. Development of any new or current access resource should not be taken forward where significant negative effects are likely as a result of this development or until appropriate assessment have been completed.</p> <p>Cumulative effects, like the slow build up of information facilities (e.g. fingerpost, notice boards, panels) should be monitored though local and visitor feedback to ensure a “cluttered” effect does not develop, especially in wild or other sensitive areas.</p>																

**Plan Objective 4. Improving Transport.**

For commentary of the plan objectives please see Appendix C. The action points associated with this plan objective (as set out in the Strategy document) have been considered while assessing the impact of the plan objective against the regulatory categories.

SEA Regulatory Category and SEA Objectives																
Population and human health				Cultural heritage, material assets and landscape			Air, water, soil and climatic factors							Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna		
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.
?	0	?	+	0	0	0	+	+	+	+	+	?	0	0	0	+
Improving transport will have little impact, or uncertain impacts, on this regulatory category.  Overall impact is neutral.				There is no relationship between this plan objective and the regulatory category.  Overall impact is neutral.			While this PPS is unlikely to have a major impact on this category there are a number of SEA objective that will benefit from a successful access strategy by increasing non-motorised transport and access to the public transport system. Benefits of increasing access to the inland water resource are not known.  Overall impact is +ve.							Improving transport will have little impact on this regulatory category. Slight positive impact is that by improving transport to the access resource will provide opportunities for those who do not have cars or access resource close by.  Overall impact is slightly +ve.		
<b>Key Success Factors, Mitigation and Monitoring:</b>																
The environmental baseline data for a number of SEA objectives can be monitored and will be a key success factor in this and other PPS's.																

**Plan Objective 5. Encouraging lifelong learning and developing community capacity.**

For commentary of the plan objectives please see Appendix C. The action points associated with this plan objective (as set out in the Strategy document) have been considered while assessing the impact of the plan objective against the regulatory categories.

SEA Regulatory Category and SEA Objectives																
Population and human health				Cultural heritage, material assets and landscape			Air, water, soil and climatic factors							Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna		
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.
0	0	?	+	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	?	0	+	+	0
<p>A community with a strong identity and capacity to develop local ideas is likely to improve social inclusion and reduce fear of crime (SEA Objectives 3 and 4) but this is not a probable significant effect of this PPS.</p> <p>Overall impact is neutral.</p>				<p>As previous commentary but much more probable an outcome based on the themes in this PPS</p> <p>Overall impact is +ve.</p>			<p>There is no relationship between this plan objective and the regulatory category. Possible benefit in community led enhancement of the local water environment (SEA Objective 13), but this is not certain and hard to justify as a positive impact.</p> <p>Overall impact is neutral.</p>							<p>There are possibly small positive impacts on the SEA objectives from this plan objective.</p> <p>Overall impact is +ve.</p>		
<p><b>Key Success Factors, Mitigation and Monitoring</b></p> <p>Incorporating the basics of responsible access rights in to the learning experience at school and via other council services (e.g. guided walks, leaflets, website)</p>																

**Plan Objective 6. Enhancing cultures, heritage, the Gaelic language and the natural environment.**

For commentary of the plan objectives please see Appendix C. The action points associated with this plan objective (as set out in the Strategy document) have been considered while assessing the impact of the plan objective against the regulatory categories.

SEA Regulatory Category and SEA Objectives																
Population and human health				Cultural heritage, material assets and landscape			Air, water, soil and climatic factors							Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna		
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.
0	0	0	+/?	++	++	+	0	0	0	0	0	+	0	++	+	++
<p>This plan objective will have little impact, or uncertain impacts, on this regulatory category.</p> <p>Overall impact is neutral.</p>				<p>Increasing access to, and understanding of, the principles of this plan objective is an essential element of the authority's desire to developing an access strategy.</p> <p>Overall impact is significantly +ve.</p>			<p>There is little relationship between this plan objective and the regulatory category.</p> <p>Overall impact is neutral.</p>							<p>Increasing access to, and understanding of, the principles of this plan objective is an essential element of the authority's desire to developing an access strategy.</p> <p>Overall impact is significantly +ve.</p>		
<p><b>Key Success Factors, Mitigation and Monitoring:</b></p> <p>Monitoring of visitor number, length of stay and availability of Gaelic language materials are key to the success of the plan objective.</p>																

**Plan Objective 7. Investing in housing and its infrastructure..**

For commentary of the plan objectives please see Appendix C. The action points associated with this plan objective (as set out in the Strategy document) have been considered while assessing the impact of the plan objective against the regulatory categories.

SEA Regulatory Category and SEA Objectives																
Population and human health				Cultural heritage, material assets and landscape			Air, water, soil and climatic factors							Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna		
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.
0	0	+	+	0	0	+	0	+	+	+	+	0	0	0	0	0
<p>Effective access planning in new housing development is vital to successfully integrating the new community with the local environment and existing infrastructure. Poor access planning can leave isolated settlements or even isolated developments within exiting communities. This in turn leading to reduced social inclusion and possible fear of crime between adjacent communities.</p> <p>Overall impact is +ve.</p>				<p>New housing should link and provide access to public open space.</p> <p>Overall impact is +ve.</p>			<p>New housing should link and provide access to public transport and local facilities with the need for resident to be reliant of private car use..</p> <p>Overall impact is +ve.</p>							<p>There is little relationship between this plan objective and the regulatory category.</p> <p>Overall impact is neutral.</p>		
<p><b>Key Success Factors, Mitigation and Monitoring:</b>            Any promotion or improvement of an access and recreation resource on or close to a site of designated natural or cultural heritage should also be developed in consultation with SNH, HS and other bodies as fits the situation.</p> <p>The project management templates will draw attention to any designated natural or cultural heritage sites. Also where added benefits can be easily gained should be highlighted through effect project management and consultation with the appropriate stakeholders. Development of any new or current access resource should not be taken forward where significant negative effects are likely as a result of this development or until appropriate assessment have been completed.</p>																

## Appendix E Environmental Baseline Data

Date of data noted where known, otherwise taken as September 2008.

SEA Objectives	Key Information
<b>Population and Human Health</b>	
1. Protect and enhance human health.	<p>Incidence of Coronary Heart Disease in Highland is 304 cases per 100,000 (Scotland – 306) for year ending 31 Dec 2006. 1997 figure was 396. <a href="http://www.isdscotland.org">www.isdscotland.org</a></p> <p>Highland wide in 2006 22 pedestrians and 5 cyclists were killed or seriously injured in road accidents. 1994-98 yearly averages are 38 pedestrian and 16 cyclist. <a href="http://www.scotland.gov.uk">www.scotland.gov.uk</a></p> <p>In 2005 66 fatalities occurred through intentional immersion in inland water in the UK, 31 of these through swimming, the remainder made up of fishing, canoeing etc. No statistics for Scotland or Highland.</p>
2. Minimise exposure to noise and vibration.	82 non-domestic noise complaints received by Highland Council in 2006/7. <a href="http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk">www.audit-scotland.gov.uk</a>
3. Reduce and prevent crime and the fear of crime	<p>Scottish Crime and Victimisation Survey 2006 suggests 56% of respondents thought crime to be a 'big' problem (93% considered a problem overall). Feelings of safety while walking alone after dark is often used as a proxy measure for fear of crime. Overall, just over 3 in 10 respondents (32%) reported that they felt unsafe while walking alone after dark (which was the same as the proportion that reported feeling unsafe in the 2003 survey). Just over one in 10 (12%) reported that they felt 'very unsafe'. <a href="http://www.scotland.gov.uk">www.scotland.gov.uk</a> No regional data.</p>
4. Improve social inclusion.	<p>11 health related walking groups operating in PPS area. <a href="http://www.stepituphighland.org.uk">www.stepituphighland.org.uk</a></p> <p>50% of Highland population walked at least on one day in the past week with the main aim being as a mode of transport (Scotland 53%). 64% walked at least one day in the past week just for pleasure or to keep fit (Scotland 46%). <i>SHS Transport Across Scotland 2005 – 2006.</i></p> <p>54% of surveyed visitors to the Highlands, taking part if recreational activities, did so more than once a week. This is more frequent than the countrywide figure of 44%.</p>

	<p>55% travelled to the activity by car, countrywide figure 50%.</p> <p>Reasons for not visiting were from quite a small base surveyed but 11% did not have access to a car which stopped them and 36% were worried about their safety, countrywide figures 14% and 33% respectively.</p> <p><i>SNH - Scottish Recreation Survey, 2006.</i></p>
<b>Cultural Heritage and landscape and material assets</b>	
5. Protect and where appropriate enhance the historic environment.	<p>Scheduled Monument Survey Data from Historic Scotland does not identify sites where pressure from visitors is damaging the designated areas. Anecdotal evidence suggests general public access to site does not increase visitor numbers to levels that create significant effects. However very active promotion of a site, new car park/leaflets/events etc may increase numbers to a level for which more active management and mitigation (path construction for example) is required. These sites are likely to be in public ownership or control.</p> <p>Scheduled Monument Survey Data from Historic Scotland will be monitored as the plan is reviewed.</p>
6. Value and protect diversity and local distinctiveness.	All promotional material and interpretation produced by The Highland Council will contain some Gaelic.
7. Retain and improve quality and quantity of publicly accessible open space.	<p>610 settlements are defined in the area through the local development plans. 387 (63%) of these settlements have candidate core paths in them or within 250m.</p> <p>In the strategy area there are 108 944 households and business premises, of these 61 376 (56%) has a candidate core path within 250m.</p> <p>Core paths generally give access to open space and recreational land. <i>The Highland Council</i></p>
<b>Air, water, soil and climatic factors</b>	
8. Reduce vulnerability to effects of climate change.	540 (from a total of 1216 as of September 2008) routes in the Draft Core Paths Plans are estimated to be at a 0.05% (1 in 200 years) risk from alluvial and coastal flooding. Flooding data from SEPA, 2007.
9. Reduce need for energy.	45.5% of pupils walked or cycled to school in 2007 (Scotland average is 54%)

<p>10. Reduce air pollution to levels that do not damage natural systems, including contribution to climate change.</p>	<p>Number of times 24 hour mean PM10 emissions exceeded 50 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in Inverness – 2003 (10), 2006 (5).</p> <p>Annual mean NO<sub>2</sub> Concentrations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inverness, 2006 22 µg/m<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Strathvaich, 1997 1 µg/m<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>
<p>11. Reduce the need to travel.</p>	<p>610 settlements are defined in the strategy area through the local development plans. 387 (63%) of these settlements have candidate core paths in them or within 250m.</p> <p>In the strategy area there are 108 944 households and business premises, of these 61 376 (56%) has a candidate core path within 250m.</p> <p>Core paths generally give access to open space, recreational land and opportunities for non motorised transport to services and facilities.</p> <p><i>The Highland Council</i></p>
<p>12. Increase potential use of public transport.</p>	<p>45% of Highland households are within 3 mins walking distance of a bus stop (Scotland 55%) but with 20% having frequency of services of less than 1 bus per hour (Scotland 4%).</p> <p>12% of the population in Highland had used a train in the past month (Scotland 19%).</p> <p><i>SHS Transport Across Scotland 2005 – 2006.</i></p>
<p>13. Avoid impact to and where possible enhance the water environment.</p>	<p>The latest Highlands Visitor Survey 2002-2003 (HIE), recorded no measurable use of inland water by visitors to the region.</p> <p>No measurable use of inland water by visitors to the region was recorded in the Scottish Recreation Survey 2006 (SNH).</p> <p>No measurable data is available to assertion any impact on the aquatic environment since the enactment of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.</p>
<p>14. Reduce contamination, safeguard soil quantity and quality.</p>	<p>Site condition monitoring database being produced by SNH will provide information on the condition of designated sites, 2000-2005, including recreational pressures but this database is not yet operational to provide this data.</p> <p>Anecdotal evidence from the 620 sites monitored in North Highland suggests no (or very few) locations where erosion</p>

	has placed a site in an unfavourable condition with regards soil condition.																					
<b>Biodiversity, flora and fauna</b>																						
15. Protect, enhance and where necessary restore designated wildlife sites and protected species.	<p>Number and type of designated sites in the area.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Area in Highland (ha.)</th> <th>% of Highland</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>RAMSAR site</b></td> <td>167,877</td> <td>6.87%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Candidate Special Areas of Conservation</b></td> <td>542,436</td> <td>20.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Special Protection Areas</b></td> <td>310,420</td> <td>11.9%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Sites of Special Scientific Interest</b></td> <td>443,091</td> <td>17%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>National Nature Reserves</b></td> <td>84,792</td> <td>3.3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total designated for nature conservation (*)</b></td> <td>615,958</td> <td>23.6%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>(*) This accounts for overlaps between different designations – SACs and SPAs are also SSSI</p>		Area in Highland (ha.)	% of Highland	<b>RAMSAR site</b>	167,877	6.87%	<b>Candidate Special Areas of Conservation</b>	542,436	20.8%	<b>Special Protection Areas</b>	310,420	11.9%	<b>Sites of Special Scientific Interest</b>	443,091	17%	<b>National Nature Reserves</b>	84,792	3.3%	<b>Total designated for nature conservation (*)</b>	615,958	23.6%
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16. Improve biodiversity, avoiding irreversible losses.	<p>25 community biodiversity projects are being supported by The Highland Council in 2008, possible funding granted £99,000 with £22,400 spent to date, September 2008.</p> <p>17 sites are designated as Special Areas of Conservation due, in part, to their peat and bog marsh habitat. Overall, the 17 sites cover 228,000 Ha. of the Strategy area</p> <p>100 identified sites of wild land covering 2974km<sup>2</sup>. <i>SNH Wildland GIS Shapefile</i></p> <p>In 2007 10 development proposals were received in locations within SNH designated wildland. In 2008 the figure to date is 4 development proposals, these are for two agricultural buildings, one replacement stalkers dwelling and another for the addition of telecoms antennas on an existing mast. <i>The Highland Council</i></p> <p>21 sites are designated as Special Areas of Conservation due, in part to their woodland and ancient forest habitat.</p>																					

	<p>Overall, the 21 sites cover 66,094 Ha. of the Strategy area.</p> <p>19 National Nature Reserve within the Strategy area covering 58 637Ha. There is only one Local Nature Reserve in the plan area, Merkinch covering 54 Ha, a further 29 sites are identified by The Highland Council as having local natural heritage interest.</p>
<p>17. Provide appropriate opportunities for people to come into contact with and appreciate wild life and wild places.</p>	<p>The draft core path plans in Highland cover 2600kms of candidate path, track and other routes. In the draft plans there are also 8200km of marked wider access network, these will not be shown in the published core paths plans. <i>The Highland Council</i></p> <p>63% of visitors to the Highlands considered sporting activity, including low level walking, to be the main activity undertaken during their visit. <i>Highland Visitor Survey 2002/3 HIE.</i></p>

## Appendix F Project Planning Templates

The following template is based on tools already used by staff within the authority to manage projects effectively. While developing this Access Strategy and this SEA the templates have been enhanced to highlight where individual projects, being carried out to deliver the strategy, may have an environmental impact.

**NB All sections must be completed for every project. If any sections are not relevant to your project, (eg the project scope does not require interpretation) make this clear, and do not leave the box blank with no explanation.**

**PROJECT NAME:**

**PROJECT MANAGER:**

<b>CLIENT</b>	<i>Who?</i>	
<b>PROJECT OUTLINE</b> i.e. what and why Must be:  <b>Specific</b>  <b>Measurable</b>  <b>Achievable</b>  <b>Realistic</b>  <b>Time-bound</b>	<i>Aims Broad</i>	
	<i>Objectives inc Deliverables or Key Outcomes - what is to be produced and in what form by what date and at what cost.</i>	
	<i>Scope ie what is included, what is not</i>	
	<i>Constraints specific constraints imposed on the project eg by management/circumstance, target date, maximum budget or environmental/cultural heritage factors.</i>	
	<i>Assumptions made by you in deciding on the approach to be taken</i>	

	<i>Stakeholders- who should be involved consulted and communicated with</i>		
	<i>SWOT analysis (Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats)</i>	S	W
		O	T
	<i>Project method how the project will be approached and why, also an overview of the stages and any resources required eg staff ,equipment</i>		
	<i>Community Consultation – With whom and by which methods</i>		
	<i>Project Risk Management What could go wrong, how can it be avoided? Avoid, Reduce or Transfer the Risk. If this is impossible, then a contingency plan must be produced.</i>		
<b>FUNDING SITUATION</b> How much is available from HC, what other funds might be sourced			
<b>PROJECT FEASIBILITY</b> Is it possible? What feasibility studies have been or need to be undertaken?	<i>Results of any technical studies</i>		
	<i>Other Studies needed</i>		
<b>WORK BREAKDOWN STRUCTURE</b> Divide the project into Tasks. Identify an appropriate member of staff to undertake each task. Agree this with them and their line-managers. Each task must have a time duration assigned to it. A total estimated cost for the project can be	<i>Internal Consultations</i>	All below	Duration <i>Minimum 2 weeks</i>
	<i>Sketch Designs- layouts</i>		Duration
	<i>Produce Project Design</i>		Duration

reached.	<b>Agree Project Design with client</b>			Duration
	<b>Consultation and Detailed Specifications (if required)</b>	<b>Comments (yes or no)</b>	<b>Officer/Section dealing with item (if required)</b>	Duration
	▪ Landscape			
	▪ Archaeology			
	▪ Forestry			
	▪ Access Officer (any multi user problems likely or potential damage to areas caused by exercise of new access rights to land (eg. inland water, horse, cycle))			
	▪ Signs/Gaelic			
	▪ Interpretation			
	▪ Biodiversity			
	▪ Planning Manager			
	▪ Conservation Architect			
	▪ Projects Manager			
	▪ Ranger/LDR Manager (any multi user problems likely or potential damage to areas caused by exercise of new access rights to land (eg. inland water, horse, cycle))			
	▪ Council Service (if site owned by THC)			
	▪ Councillors			
	▪ Ward Manager			
	▪ Engineering (TECS)			
	▪ Roads (TECS)			
	▪ ECS (for promotion of project/increased benefits, not essential)			
	▪ Safer Routes for Schools (for promotion of project/increased benefits, not essential)			
	<b>Sourcing, applying for and claiming Joint Funds</b>			Duration
	<b>Communication how communication within the project team and with stakeholders will be handled – what information, who is</b>			

	<i>providing it, how often and in what form.</i>	
<b>PERMISSIONS, EXTERNAL CONSULTATIONS OR AGREEMENTS REQUIRED</b> What is required to enable the project to happen, and who does it	<i>Landowner</i>	
	<i>Community Council</i>	
	<i>Neighbours</i>	
	<i>Disability Panel/Access Panel re DDA compliance</i>	
	<i>NHS</i>	
	<i>Police</i>	
	<i>HiTrans</i>	
	<i>SNH – especially. any concerns in non-designated sites.</i>	
	<i>SSSI/SAC/SPA/NSA - check Natural Heritage designations with GIS and Rangers</i>	
	<i>Historic Scotland</i>	
	<i>Scottish Water- check with local office</i>	
	<i>HE - check with local office</i>	
	<i>BT</i>	
	<i>Trunk Roads Services</i>	
<i>SEPA (flooding etc)</i>		
	<i>Others</i>	
<b>FUTURE MAINTENANCE</b> Who and what?	<i>Who will carry it out, what will it cost? Have they agreed?</i>	

	<i>Is there a budget?</i>	
<b>H&amp;S RISK IDENTIFICATION</b> What could go wrong? How can we guard against this	<i>Risk Assessment Complete form relative to the undertaking of the work/project?</i>	
	<i>Planning Supervisor Requirements(CDM) More than 30 days on site, 4 or more people at any one time</i>	
<b>CHANGE MANAGEMENT</b>	<i>Who needs to be informed of changes to the Project Outcome (the design 'on the ground'), who needs to authorise them?</i>	
<b>PROJECT SCHEDULE</b> When - the timetable for the works – must include funding and claims schedule	<i>Milestone dates and why</i>	
	<i>Completion date</i>	<b>Normally 1<sup>st</sup> March</b>
<b>PROJECT EXECUTION</b> Procedures required to implement the designs. Must meet Standing Orders	<i>Identify tender or quotation methods</i>	
	<i>Identify contractor/consultants</i>	
	<i>Phasing of site works</i>	
	<i>Acceptance Criteria</i>	
	<i>Quality management what and how controls will be used</i>	
	<i>Publicity, Promotion and marketing what and by whom</i>	

	<i>Review and Assess Quality – does it meet specification? Snagging?</i>	
	<i>Maintenance obligations on contractors</i>	