

Core Paths Plan Review – Caithness and Sutherland

Consultative Report - Caithness

Introduction

The development of the existing core paths plan was part of The Highland Councils duties given in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 (LR(S)A 2003). The existing plan was adopted by the full council in September 2011 after the plan had been through the statutory consultation process and also a Public Local Inquiry (PLI).

This Consultative Report review is for the area of Caithness in the Highland Council Core Paths Plan. The review will take place alongside the consultation process for the new Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan. A single plan, Caithness and Sutherland Core Paths Plan will be produced and where appropriate the Core Paths will be shown on the Local Development Plan.

This Consultative Report has been produced as part of a review process, it is not a DRAFT Core Paths Plan as set out in Section 17 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. Correspondingly the promotion of this Consultative Report is not the public notice of a Core Paths Plan as set out in Section 18 of the same act.

Public comments are welcome but the council is not seeking formal objections to the proposals at this stage. Any objections will be treated the same as other comments and should any proposal be put forward in a Draft Core Paths Plans the council will give notice, as set out in section 18, at a future date.

Aims

The review aims to;

1. Improve connectivity of the current plan by utilising existing routes.
2. Ensure current routes can be used, at a minimum standard of pedestrian use without significant impediment, by the general public.
3. Review mapping of existing plan to identify change of line of routes or identify where upgraded/new routes have been constructed or used differently by the public.
4. Work with Local Development Plan team to identify new routes within Settlement Development Areas (SDA), specifically those associated with a specific site in the SDA, these routes could be aspirational.
5. Consider the recommendations of the Public Local Inquiry report on The Highland Councils first core paths plan.

Assessment by Settlement Zone

A desk top survey has been carried out by officers, based on local knowledge and experiences from carrying out core path surveys. The proposed new routes and modifications detailed in this report come from this desk top survey and also suggestions made to The Highland Council since the adoption of the first core path plan. No on the ground survey work has been carried out directly related to this core path plan review.

What is a core path?

There is no strict definition of what a core path should be from the LR(S)A 2003, the act does however define a core path plan as a system of paths sufficient for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout their area. With this in mind it should be understood that the existing plan was designed to fulfil this sufficiency of path network.

Proposed core paths not currently in use by the public, say requiring works or upgrades, should have a reasonable likelihood of being delivered within 3 years of the reviewed plan been adopted. The adoption of a path or route as a core path places no duty on The Highland Council to carry out new path construction, upgrading works or maintenance of the route. The Highland Council does have powers to carry out works on a core path but these are discretionary and are aimed as ensuring routes remain free from obstruction and are not intended to be used for new path construction.

As well as the sufficiency of network the council shall have a statutory regard to the following points when reviewing the core path plan.

- the likelihood that persons exercising rights of way and access rights will do so by using core paths;
- the desirability of encouraging such persons to use core paths; and
- the need to balance the exercise of those rights and the interests of the owner of the land in respect of which those rights are exercisable.

Inclusion of minor public roads, footways, Long Distance Routes (LDRs), other long distance trails and public rights of way (PRoW).

The lack of inclusion of minor roads in the core path plan was something that raised objections in the consultation stage of the existing core path plan. The objections were not resolved and the matter was taken up at the Public Local Inquiry (PLI). The reporter for the PLI did not propose the objected to routes to be included in the core path plan but did recommend that the council establish if there was a justification for inclusion of minor roads when the plan is reviewed.

Another objection raised during the consultations for the existing core path was the lack of routes and connectivity of proposed routes within the wider area. This objection was again not resolved and the matter was addressed during the PLI by the reporter. The reporter recommended the council considers a range of strategic routes in the review of the core path plan.

The Highland Council considers the inclusion of more routes, as described above, to be a benefit but with the concern that the inclusion of too many routes would render the path plan meaningless in terms of its statutory objective to provide a “basic” network. Also it should be considered that roads are already managed on a statutory

basis under numerous road acts. The council, indeed any person, can promote the use of a road as parts of a path network without the requirement for the road to be a core path. Within an urban or large village settlement the council considers the public are reasonably expected to be aware of the extent of the public road network for them to exercise their right of access along the road without a requirement for the road or footway to be adopted as a core path.

In light of the reporter recommendations the council has produced a detailed table listing the route types, as mentioned above, that should be considered within the core path plan review that were not generally included in existing core path plans.

The table is shown in Appendix 1.

Proposals In This Consultative Report

There are two levels of proposals set out in this Consultative Report.

Firstly there are proposals which clearly meet the aims of the core paths plan review set out above. Typically these will be routes that are known to the council through previous visits or past community involvement etc. These are the routes intended to be proposed as core paths.

- Proposals that clearly meet the aims of the core path plan review are highlighted in a purple hue text box.

Secondly there are proposals that may meet the aims of the review but either further onsite investigation is required and/or public feedback is welcome on the use of the route for recreational purposes, link path or of amenity value. This Consultative Report seeks to assess public comment on these routes as potential core paths but the council is not proposing them at the present time.

- Proposals to further investigate a route and/or, seek public feedback on their use for recreational purposes, are highlighted in an orange hue text box.

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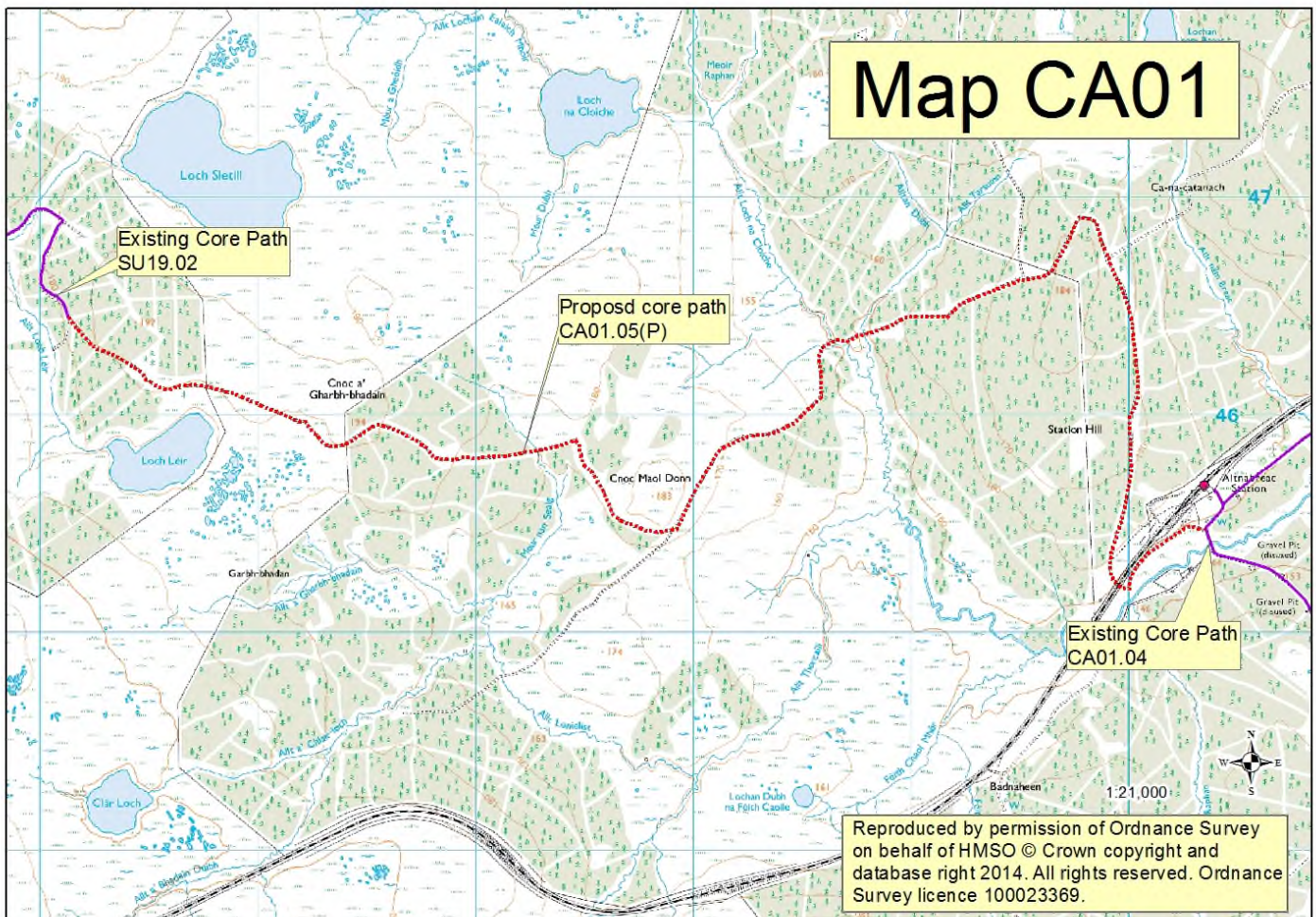
Caithness

Altnabreac (settlement ref - CA01)

Altnabreac is a remote settlement zone with few habited dwellings. The main land uses are commercial forestry and peat land. The settlement is also characterised by the passage of the Far North Railway line through the area and the request halt at Altnabreac. Recreational access in the area is provided by constructed tracks which currently offer approx. 28km of core paths.

During the development of the first core path plan for Caithness the track from Altnabreac to Forsinain was identified as a core path. However, due to an objection from Network Rail regarding use of a private level crossing, Scottish Ministers removed this route from the core path plan. The Public Local Inquiry into the objection reported that the rail crossing should be a core path. Further to the PLI and the core path plan been adopted a Scottish Law Commission review has been published with regards level crossings. It makes clear that access rights exist over a private level crossing should it be identified as a core path. The proposal in this review is to reassert the track from Altnabreac to Forsinain as a proposed core path. The section of this route in Sutherland is currently an adopted core path, SU19.02.

- Propose that the track from Altnabreac to Forsinain be identified as a core path, CA01.05(P), for that section in Caithness, meets "Aims 1 & 5". Map CA01.



Bowermadden (CA02)

Bowermadden is a rural settlement zone comprising of agriculture and rough hill type grazing. It is set in the locality by the passage of the B876, Wick (Reiss) to Castletown road, which passes through the hamlet of Bower and Hastigrow, where part of the Subsea 7 pipe fabrication works is based. The only core path in this settlement is a road side footway at Bower.

There are few routes mapped in the settlement. In order to improve the network of core path in the area there would be a requirement to look at routes where no or little public demand has been shown. From a desk top point of view there is a track to Scoolary (past the Hill of Slickly) in the north of the settlement and there is a series of farm tracks linking Bower to Reaster (via Murza). Also to consider could be the use of the public road network, though this should be to meet a public demand or link up existing core paths. None of the routes in the settlement appear to be meet a wider public demand but the council will respond to any such demand or requests as received during this review process.

- There are no proposed additional core paths, or alterations, for the Bowermadden settlement.

Castletown (CA03)

Castletown is a moderate size coastal village, 8km (5miles) east of Thurso, situated on the south west side of Dunnet Bay. The village developed alongside the quarry industry which is long since closed but evidence remains and is seen on some of the existing core path routes. There are over 4km of core paths in and around Castletown with the interior of the settlement zone providing limited recreational access opportunities, the land here is primarily agricultural.

One of the key core paths in this settlement is the link to Dunnet Bay, CA03.02, Jessans Path. To access the majority of the bay a watercourse, the Burn of Garth, must be crossed. The current core path crosses the burn on the beach, except during very dry weather, this crossing requires very waterproof footwear/wellingtons. A bridge upstream of the beach was washed away in 2006. There is community demand to improve access to the bay and the crossing the Burn Of Garth. The Highland Council recognises this demand and will assist where practical. It is not considered appropriate to alter the core path until a replacement bridge or alternative route is at a more advanced stage of being implemented.

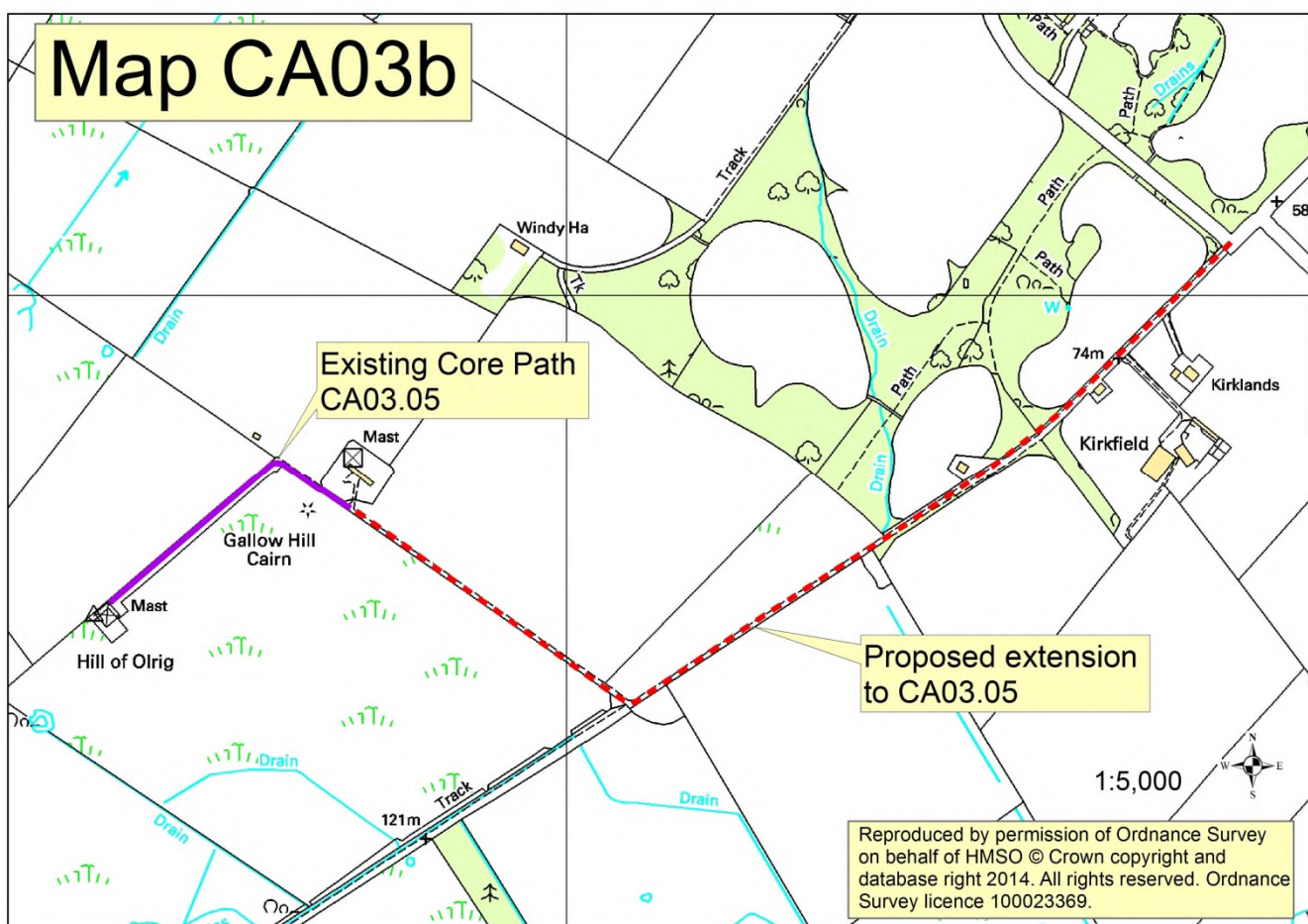
There is a coastal route from Castletown, CA03.01, which passes old war time battery sites. It heads back inland but there is an opportunity to extend this core path to meet with the coastal path at Murkle Bay, CA13.24. This route passes along the coast on the sea side of the field fencing, however the space for the route is narrow and it may become overgrown during late summer if not used frequently enough.

The existing core path to the Hill of Orlig, CA03.05, currently starts some 1.2km from the public road. The OS 25k and 50k mapping shows the track from the Orlig Mains adopted road as a “yellow C-class or Un-classified road”, which would imply it is adopted but it is not. It is proposed to link the existing core path to the public road.

There several track and paths in the area of the Hill of Orlig, between Windy and Kirkfield which are reported to be well used for local recreational access. It is proposed to investigate these routes as potential core paths.

- Proposed to extend the existing core path CA03.05 to link it with the Orlig Mains public road, meets “Aim 1 and 3”. See Map CA03b.

- Proposed that the coastal route from CA03.01 to CA13.24 is investigated for inclusion as a core path, meets “Aim 1”.
- Propose that routes between Windy Ha and Kirkfield by the Hill of Orlig are investigated as potential core paths.



Dunbeath (CA04)

Dunbeath is a small coastal village on the east side of the county, the settlement zone is characterised by the passage of the A9 trunk road along the east coast with only a few minor roads and private tracks venturing into the interior. The land use on the coast is mainly crofting with larger traditional land holdings over the remainder. The settlement contains the hills of Morven, Maiden Pap and Scaraben. At over 30km of core paths the settlement is second only to Thurso for the extent of core path distance and has a good range of path types & settings. Given this scope of path network at present there is not expected to be significant changes to the core path plan in the Dunbeath settlement.

A minor change is proposed to core path CA04.08 (Balchadich and the sandy pools) which heads along the coast south of the village of Dunbeath. At present it finishes at a small boardwalk/bridge over a small burn. The path continues on the ground, though is not marked on OS mapping, towards a place marked as The Cove – a set of caves and geos. This makes a more natural finish to the core path than that adopted at present which was mapped as OS mapping, not as seen on the ground.

One route suggested by the community council is the path known as the Camels Hump, which leads from the hairpin bend on the old A9 down to Balchaldich. It is well used by locals. During the previous core path planning exercise there was concern over this route due to land slips. This route is maintained by the community council and they acknowledge that inclusion in the core path plan does not then place any duty of The Highland Council to maintain the route.

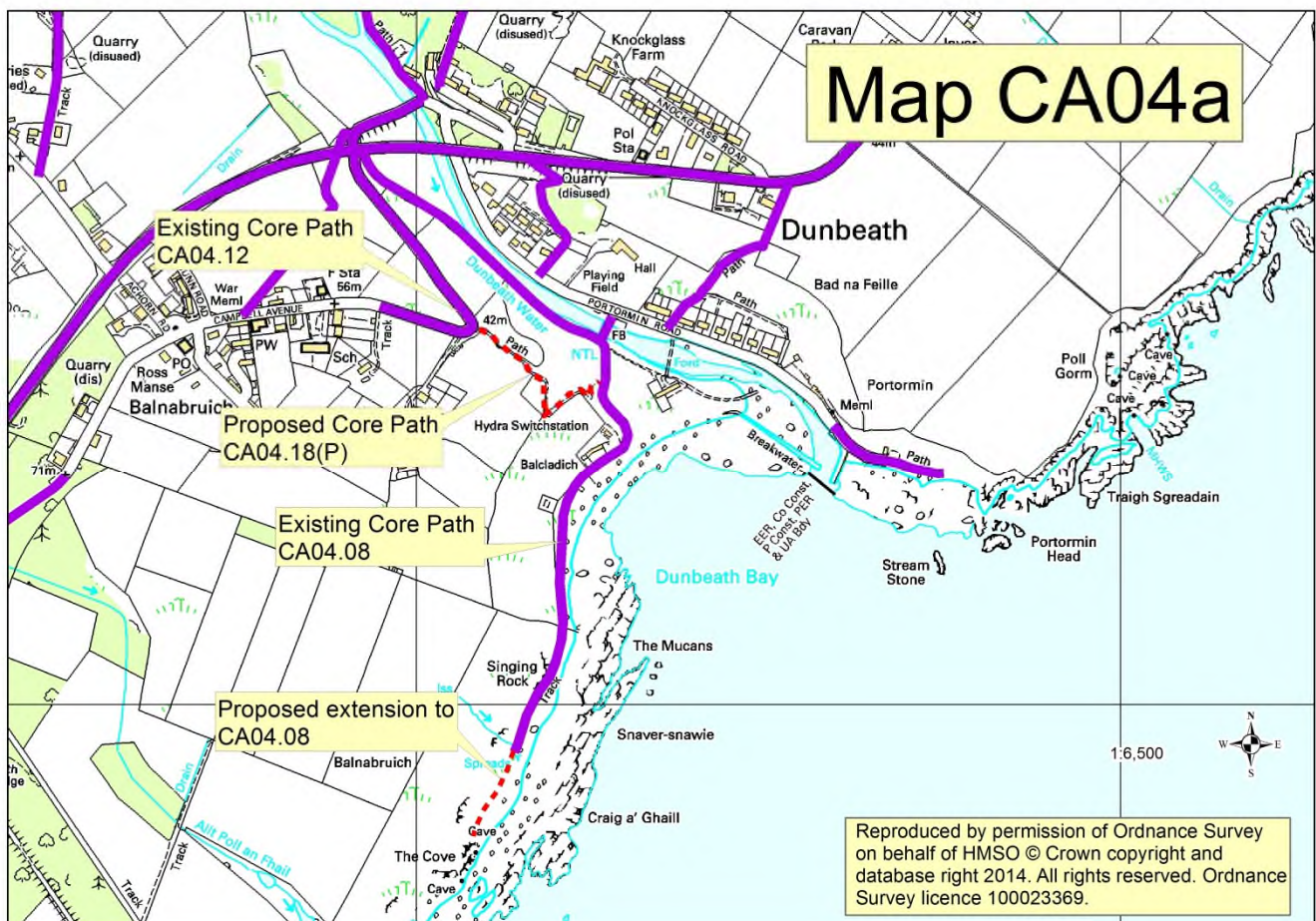
The core path CA04.01, Dunbeath Strath, passes the Dun Beath broch and then it is mapped as heading back down towards the river. This exact route is not feasible as there is no path or obvious route; there is a path along the river bank which is used, though this does not head up hill towards the broch. The core paths here should be modified to that as seen on the ground, with the Dunbeath Strath route taking a line along the main river side path and the broch path becoming a side branch.

There are several footbridges over the Dunbeath Water by the Dunbeath Strath core path. One of the bridges leads to core path CA04.10, another upstream of this leads to a path leading through a wooded area, Coille Bail an t-Sratha, to the public road by Achorn. It is well used by locals and is proposed as core path. At this point the core path CA04.01 heads towards CA04.04, this section of the core path is vague on the ground. It is proposed to investigate the route at this point with a view to ensuring the mapped core path is accessible for pedestrian use. The section of route will be modified or removed as appropriate.

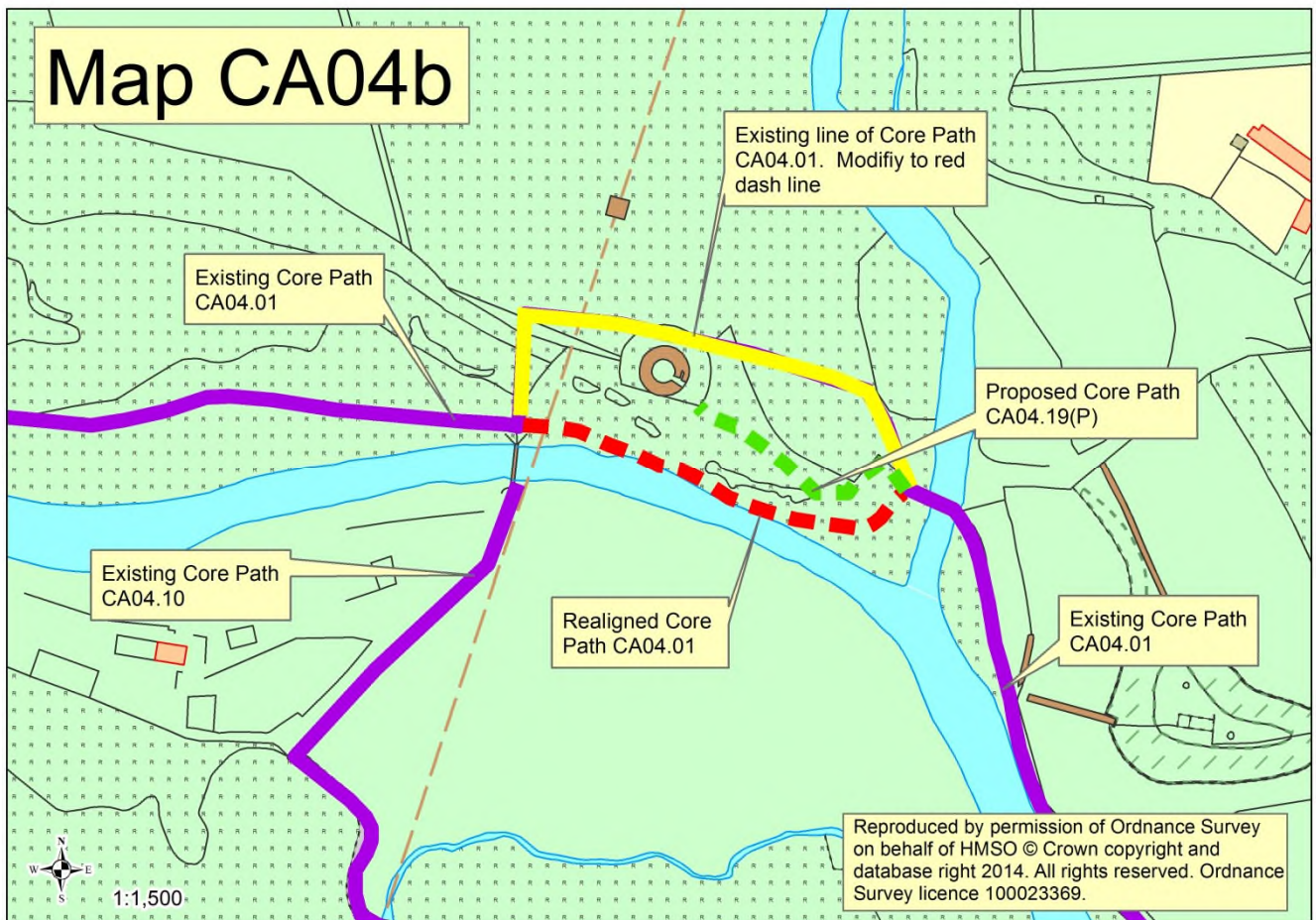
A site managed by The Highland Council and promoted from the A9 is the Badbea Clearance Village, the existing core path, CA04.03, leads to the memorial. Whilst the memorial is an obvious finish point there are further paths, made through use, to sites within the clearance village. It is proposed to investigate including these routes or part of them into the core path CA04.03.

Core path CA04.15 currently ends on a ridge of land just south of the ruined Berriedale Castle. It is not possible to access the castle due to a sharp cleft in the ridge, however there is a desire line formed to the lower of the beacon towers above Berriedale. The lower of these towers, aka “The Dukes Candlesticks”, is within the rough coastal land and not enclosed in the managed field and provides a more obvious finish to CA04.15.

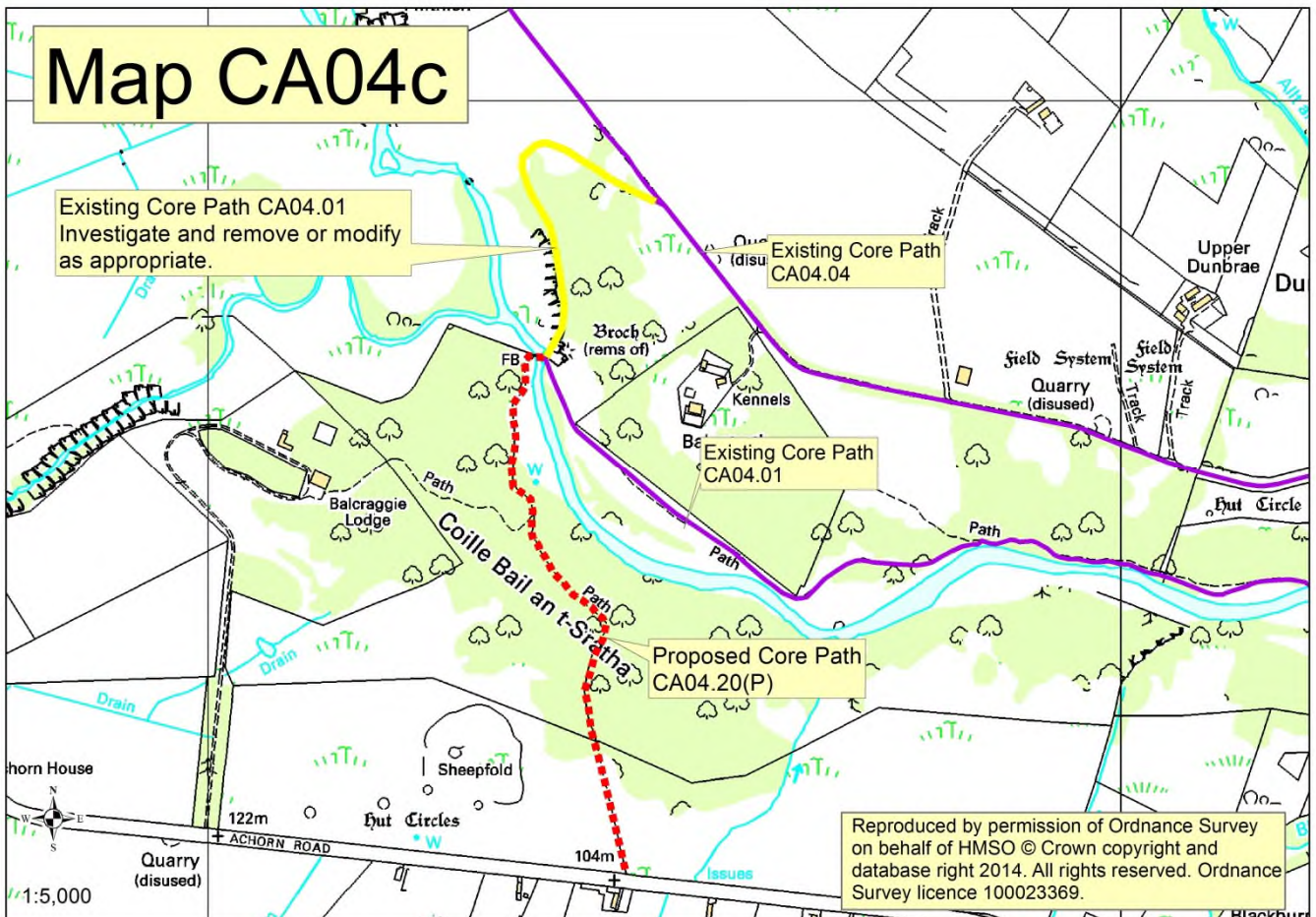
- Propose to extend CA04.08 towards “The Cove”, a distance of approx. 135m, meets “Aim 3”. See Map CA04a.
- Propose the route Camels Hump as a core path CA04.18(P), meets “Aim 1”, see map CA04a.
- Realign core path CA04.01 at Dun Beath broch to match the route as seen on the ground and propose new core path to broch CA04.19(P). Meets “Aims 2 and 3”, see map CA04b
- Propose the route through Coille Bail an t-Sratha as a core path CA04.20(P), meets “Aim 1”. See map CA04c.
- Investigate section of core path CA04.01, as shown on map CA04c, to ensure route is accessible to pedestrian use as expected for a core path. Meets “Aim 2”.
- Investigate further paths within the Badbea clearance village to extend core path CA04.03.
- Extend existing core path CA04.14 to the beacon tower at grid ref ND 1197 2233, meets “Aim 3”, see map CA04d.



Map CA04b



Map CA04c



Map CA04d Portland Terrace

Existing Core Path
CA04.14

Proposed Extension to
Core Path CA04.14

Tower

Path

Path

FB

Berriedale
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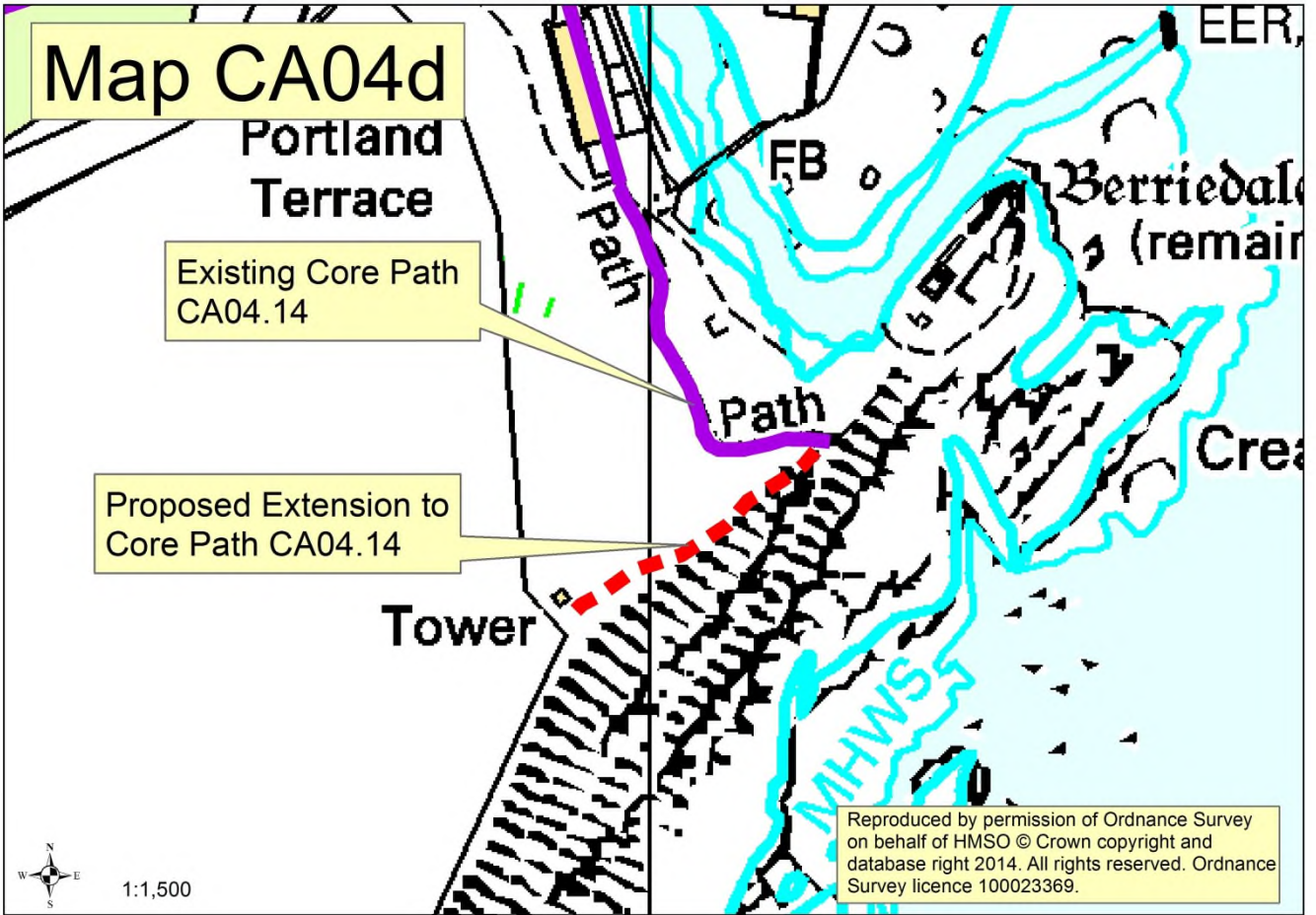
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Dunnet (CA05)

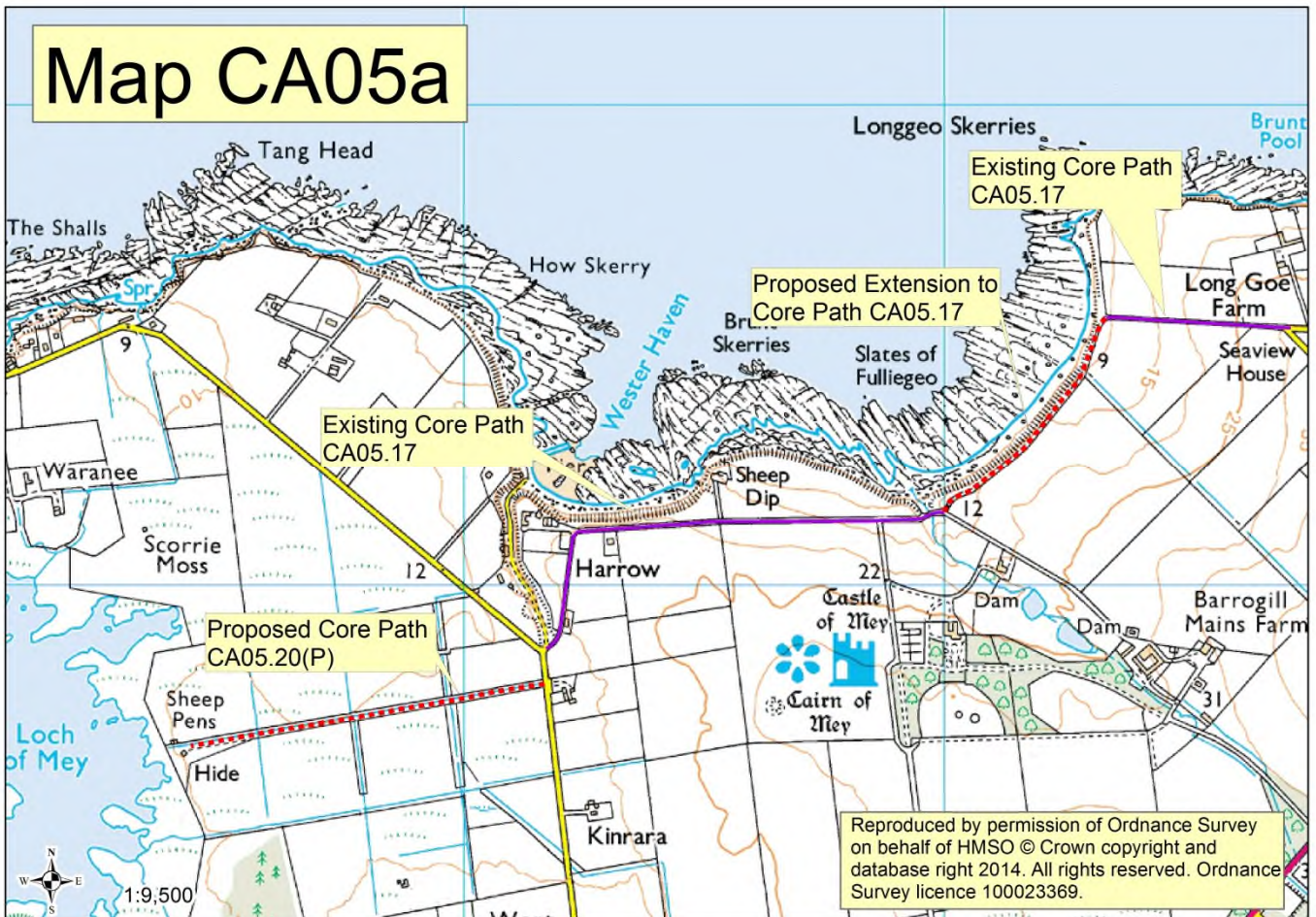
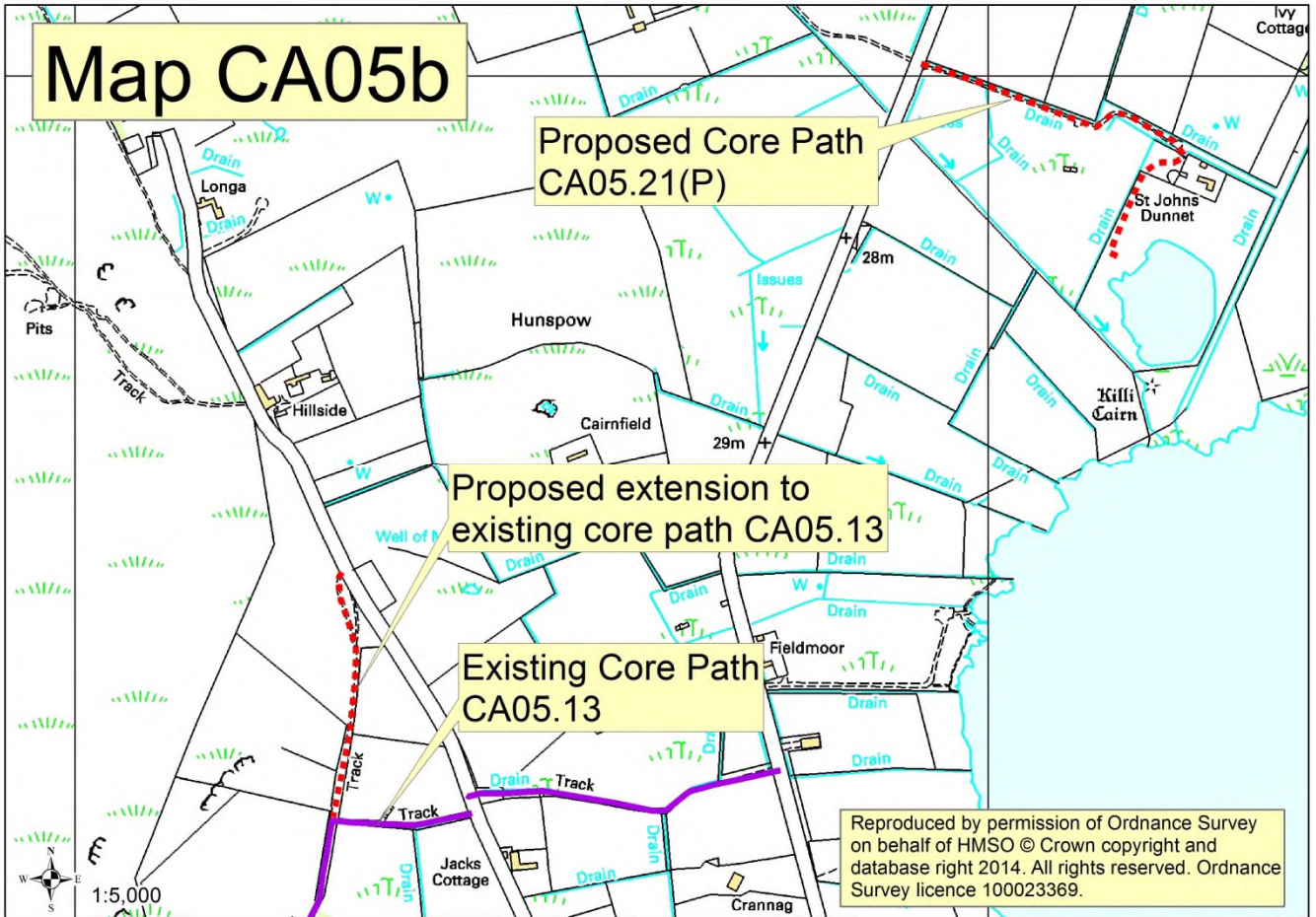
Dunnet settlement zone covers an area along the north coast of Caithness from Dunnet Bay to East Mey. The area is predominantly crofted with spread out hamlets and villages, the main one being Dunnet. Apart from the agricultural use of the land, tourism features prominently with Dunnet Bay, Dunnet Community Forest, Dunnet Head and the Castle of Mey in the settlement zone.

Two new routes are proposed to bird hides, at the Loch of Mey and also at St Johns Loch. The St John Loch hide route are on land that access rights may not be exercisable, this proposal will be subject to discussion with the owner of the land.

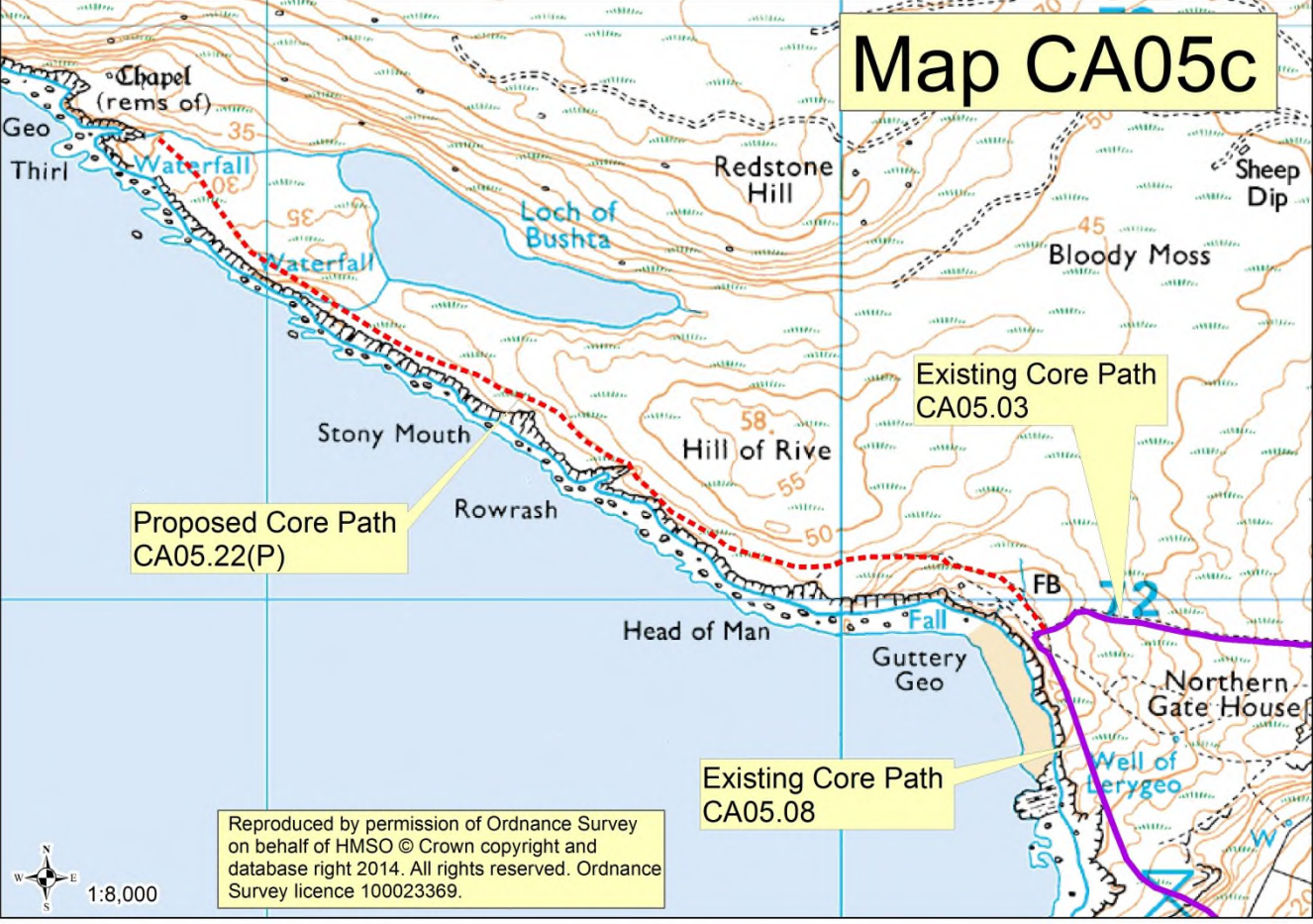
There are two sections of core path by the Castle of Mey, both named as CA05.17, it is proposed to connect these section of core path to create a continuous route from East to West Mey.

An extension to Core Path CA05.13, West Dunnet Link paths is proposed. A section has been cleared of gorse since the last plan adopted and is usable by the public. A further extension of the route to Peedie Sands, CA05.08, is also proposed to be investigated. An informal desire line exists to Chapel Geo along the cliff top from Peedie Sands.

- Propose a new core path CA05.20(P) to Loch of Mey, meets "Aim 1", see map CA05a.
- Propose a new core path to St Johns Loch CA05.21(P) subject to discussion with owner, meets "Aim 1", see map CA05b
- Propose to connect sections of core path CA05.17 to form one link from East to West Mey, meets "Aim 1". See map CA05a.
- Propose an extension/side branch to existing core path CA05.13, meets "Aim 1", see map CA05b
- Propose a new core path CA05.22(P)/side branch to existing core path CA05.08, meets "Aim 1", see map CA05c



Map CA05c



Proposed Core Path CA05.22(P)

Existing Core Path CA05.03

Existing Core Path CA05.08

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Halkirk (CA06)

Halkirk is a large village/small town in the interior of the county, it is a planned town and is situated on the banks on the River Thurso. The north east of the settlement zone is defined by the A9 trunk road and the railway station at Georgemas Junction, the NE area is primarily agricultural. The South West of the area is predominately peat land with few roads or habited dwellings. Loch More in the SW corner of the area is the start point for the longer distance core paths to Altnabreac, Dalnawillan and The Glutt. Causeymire, by the A9, contains a cluster of operational/proposed wind farms which provide access opportunities.

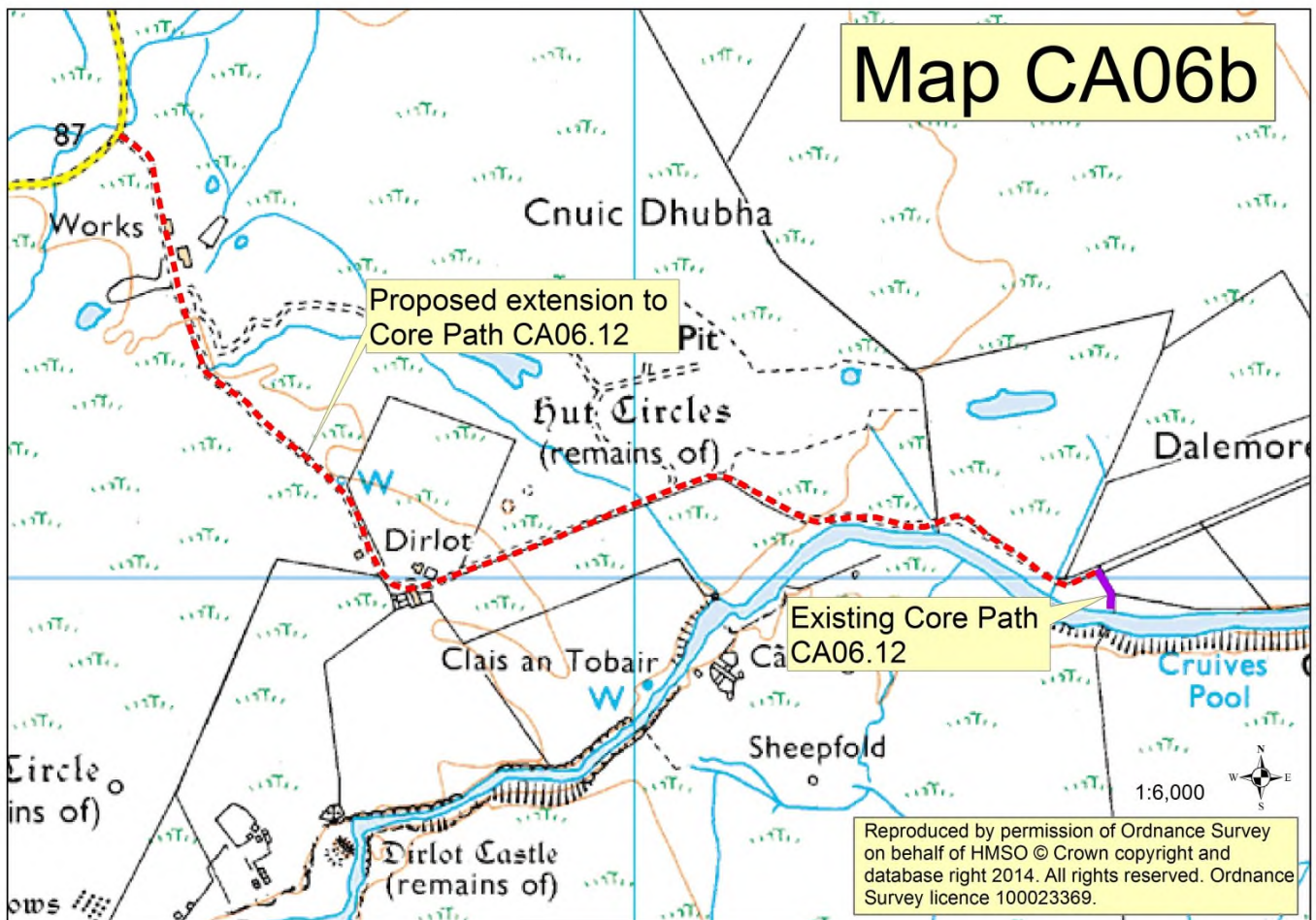
Forestry Commission Scotland has acquired land in the settlement zone at Sibster, by Gerorgemas Junction and has created a new network of constructed paths. It is proposed to include these as core paths in this review

An existing core path, CA06.12, provides access to the River Thurso from a private track. This access is intended for use by water based access takers to retrieve boats from the river after passing through the Dirlot Gorge. It is unknown why this core path does not link to the public road network, so a wider range of the public are not encourage to use the route. It is proposed to link this core path to the public road (U1823 Westerdale – Lochmore). Near to this core path is the ruin of Dirlot Castle and this is a place of local interest. It is proposed to investigate a route to Dirlot Castle as a potential core path.

There has been interest expressed to the council to link the path network at Sibster to Halkirk. This would be a substantial project, at this time it is proposed to investigate the route as a potential core path.

- Propose a new network of core paths CA06.14(P) based on the constructed trails at FCS's site at Sibster, meets "Aim 3".
- Propose to extend existing core path, CA06.12, to connect to public road network, meets "Aim 1". See map CA06b

- Investigate a route to Dirlot Castle as a potential core path.
- Investigate the route Sibster to Halkirk as a potential core path.



John O'Groats (CA07)

John O'Groats settlement zone covers the NE tip of Highland (indeed the NE tip of mainland Scotland), covering land from Gills Bay to Duncansby Head to Freswick Bay. The village of John O'Groats is the areas most well known feature with the remaining settlement crofted or rough hill type grazing. The settlement also includes the uninhabited island of Stroma, there is no scheduled boat service to Stroma but seasonal tourist trips are carried out on an ad-hoc basis.

A new coastal path has been constructed heading west from John O'Groats and it is proposed to include this route as a core path. It is an obvious continuation of core path CA07.11 and it can also use an existing track at Windy Ha to create a circular route.

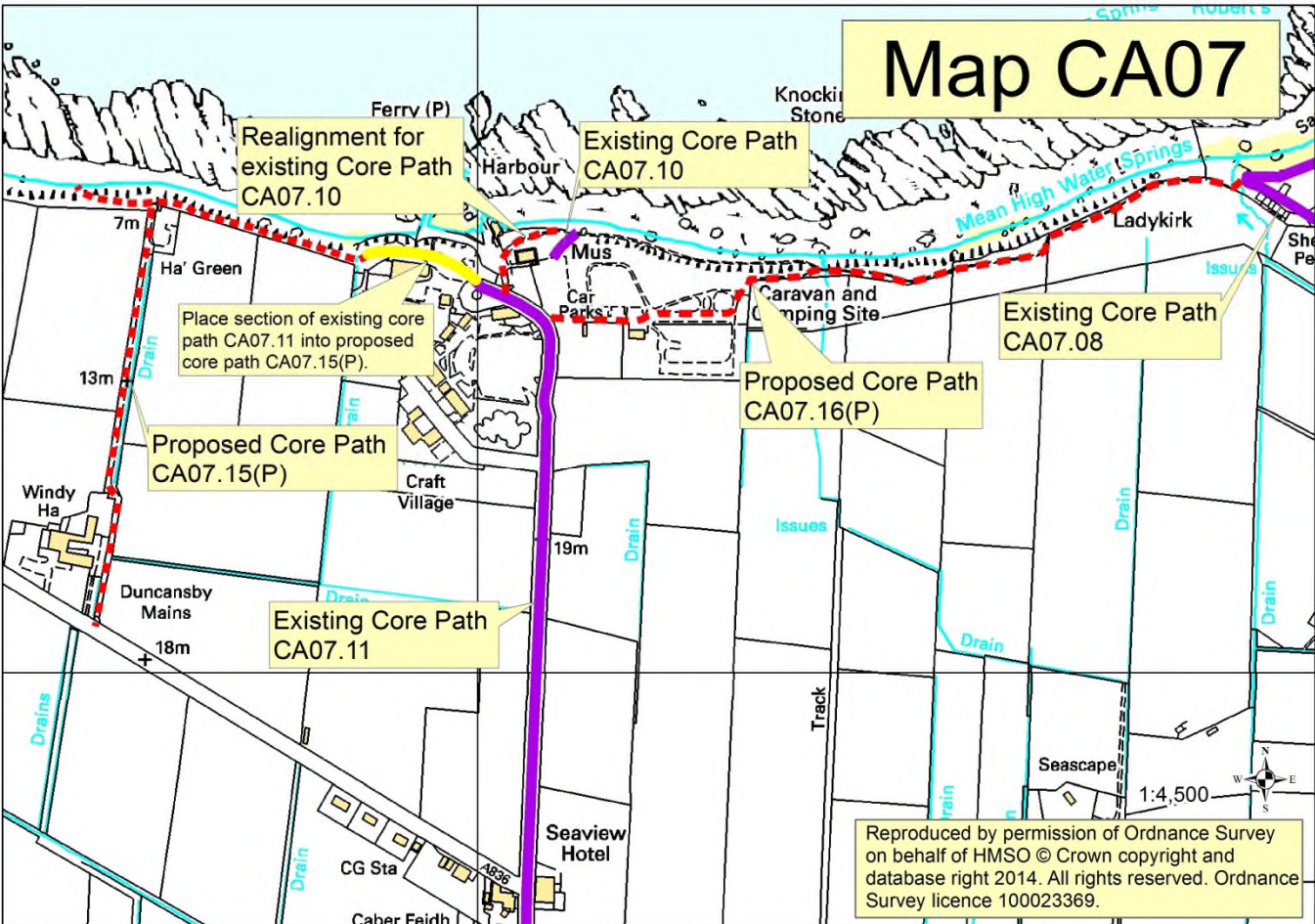
There is a core path, CA07.10, leading to the shore east of John O'Groats. It used to be part of a longer route along the shore towards Duncansby but storms have destroyed this path on more than one occasion. CA07.10 is poorly mapped, it was digitised on a mapped route starting from the private car park adjacent to the Last House as opposed to the starting from the harbour/public space area. The route is proposed to be realigned to that intended.

There is local demand for the reinstatement of the coastal route extending from CA07.10 towards the Ness of Duncansby. The Highland Council has previously funded this route to be reinstated on two occasions and it is not willing to commit to a third path repair without a significant coastal defence programme in place. Such a coastal defence scheme is not expected at this time. An alternative route is possible through the adjacent caravan site, this

is used by locals but it is not promoted for more general public use. The track through the caravan park is land on which the public may reasonably be expected to be able to exercise their access rights. There are core paths through other caravan parks in Highland (at Embo and Fort Augustus). This alternative route offers an immediate option to improve access in the area without any significant investment though it is understood that there may be concerns from the operator of the caravan site.

Core path CA07.11 is named as a road side footway and for the majority of the route it is. However at the road end roundabout the route than follows a constructed path to the frontage of the John O’Groats hotel. This section of path is not adopted nor is it a footway. It is proposed to include this section of path with the proposed route heading west from the settlement, CA07.15(P), assuming this proposed route is adopted as a core path.

- Propose a new core path CA07.15(P) leading from CA07.11 along the shore and then up to Windy Ha, meets “Aim 1”. See map CA07.
- Modify CA07.10 to start at the public space by harbour.
- Propose a new core path CA07.16(P) leading from John O’Groats to the Ness of Duncansby. See map CA07.
- Modify end section of CA07.11 to be part of the proposed new route CA07.15(P). See map CA07. This is a core path numbering tidy up, not directly related to Aims of the review.



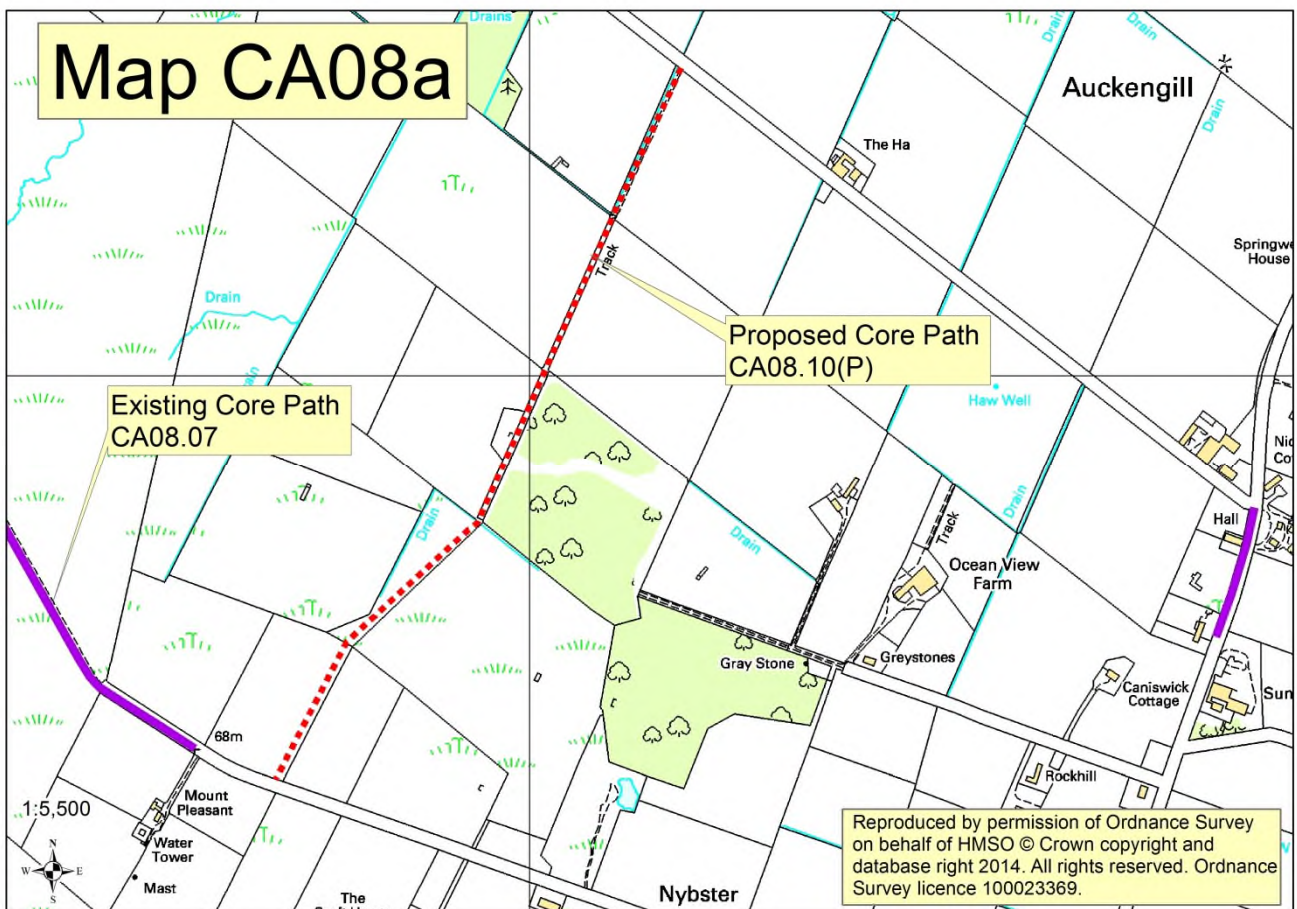
Keiss (CA08)

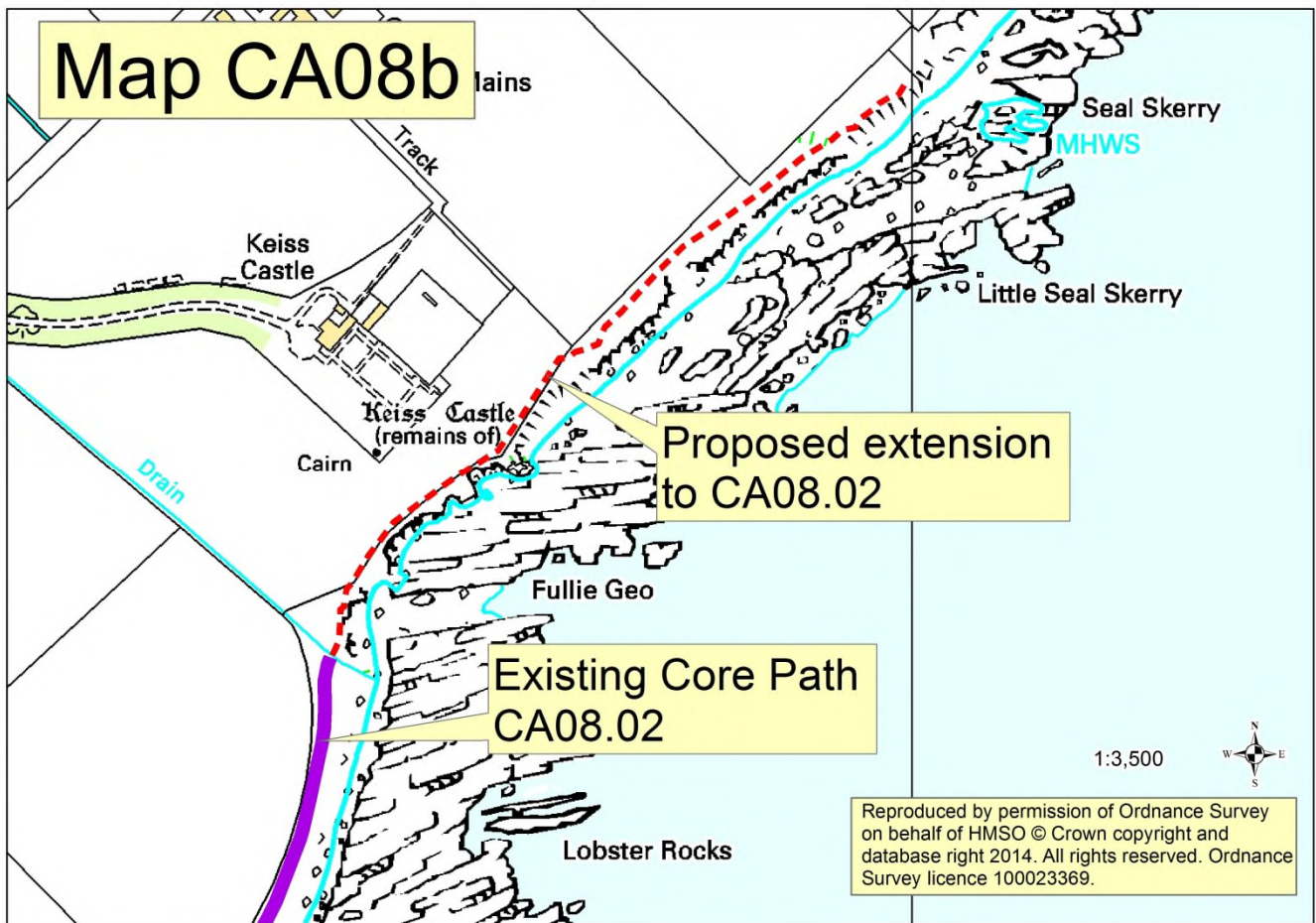
Keiss settlement zone is a small rural area to the north of Wick, it includes the northern section of Sinclair's Bay. The A99 main road runs through the east of the area through the main village of Keiss and also the hamlets of Nysbter and Auckengill. The existing core path network focuses around the village of Keiss with an short route to a broch and Nysbter and a route to the forest at Stroupster which is been developed for a wind farm.

A claimed public right of way from the Auckengill to Stroupster public roads could be a possible new core path, the route is an unmade track and it is heavily rutted and wet in places. It is proposed to investigate this route and if improvements are likely within a 3 year period it may be considered as a new core path.

Existing core path CA08.02 currently ends at an old timber/sleeper bridge over a shallow ditch. This is not an obvious finish point. The route does have a natural progression in to an adjacent managed field, past the old Keiss Castle and then back on the cliff top margin to a point where a stone dyke meets the cliff top. This is by a point just off-shore marked as Seal Skerray. This finish point is more defined as it is to the extent of reasonable accessibility with the dyke and then the cliff top margin becoming much rougher and in cut with geos restricting reasonable pedestrian access.

- Propose to investigate the Auckengill to Stroupster claimed public right of way as a proposed new core path, see map CA08a.
- Propose to extend core path CA08.02, see map CA08b.





Lieuary (CA09)

Lieuary is a small settlement zone in north part of the interior of the county. There are no main areas of habitation with the most concentration of dwellings in the hamlet of Westfield. The area covers the northern half of Loch Calder, there are two core paths in the settlement; one from Westfield to Achnavast and another from Achnavast through the Achscrabster Quarries to the public road by Loch Calder.

- There are no proposed additional core paths for the Lieuary settlement.

Lybster (CA10)

Lybster is a predominately coastal settlement zone with a rural interior focused on crofting and forestry, there is also a large wind farm development under construction. The A9 and A99 pass through the settlement from Latheronwheel to Tacher on the A9 and to Mid Clyth on the A99. The coastline/A99 here runs almost East – West which is counter to what is expected on a mainly north south transport route.

As is typical of the region the existing core paths plan focuses on the coastal fringe but the settlement has a relatively extensive core path network inland with routes at Rumster forest, Achavanich and Camster/Toftgunn forest. There is a short new route at Rumster forest, created by the Forestry Commission Scotland that links sections of forest road which are also core paths, both are CA10.04. It is proposed to include this new route as a proposed core path.

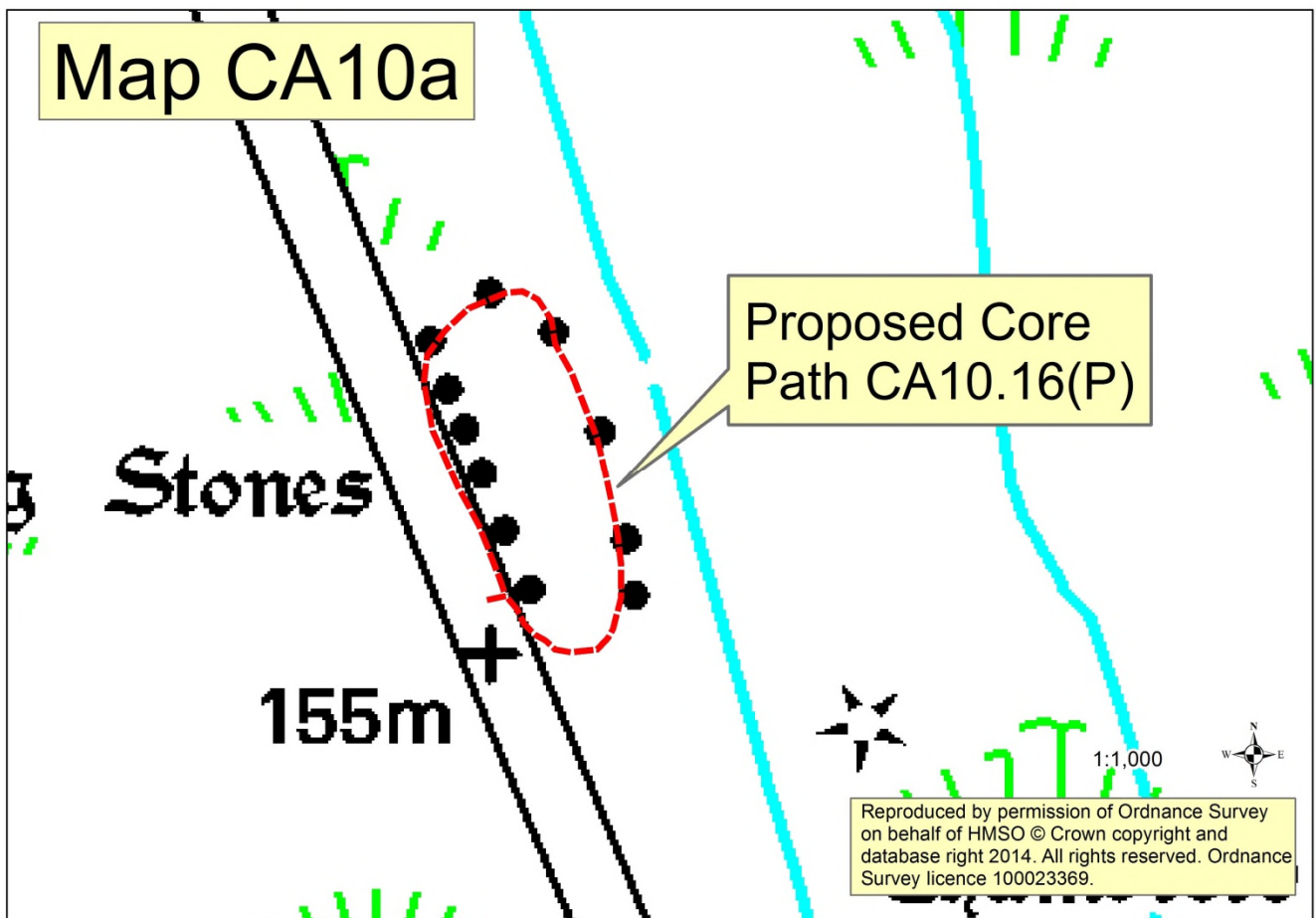
The Achavanich stone setting/circle is a site promoted from the A9 and is managed by The Highland Council, whilst not a substantial route it is proposed to include the route as a core path.

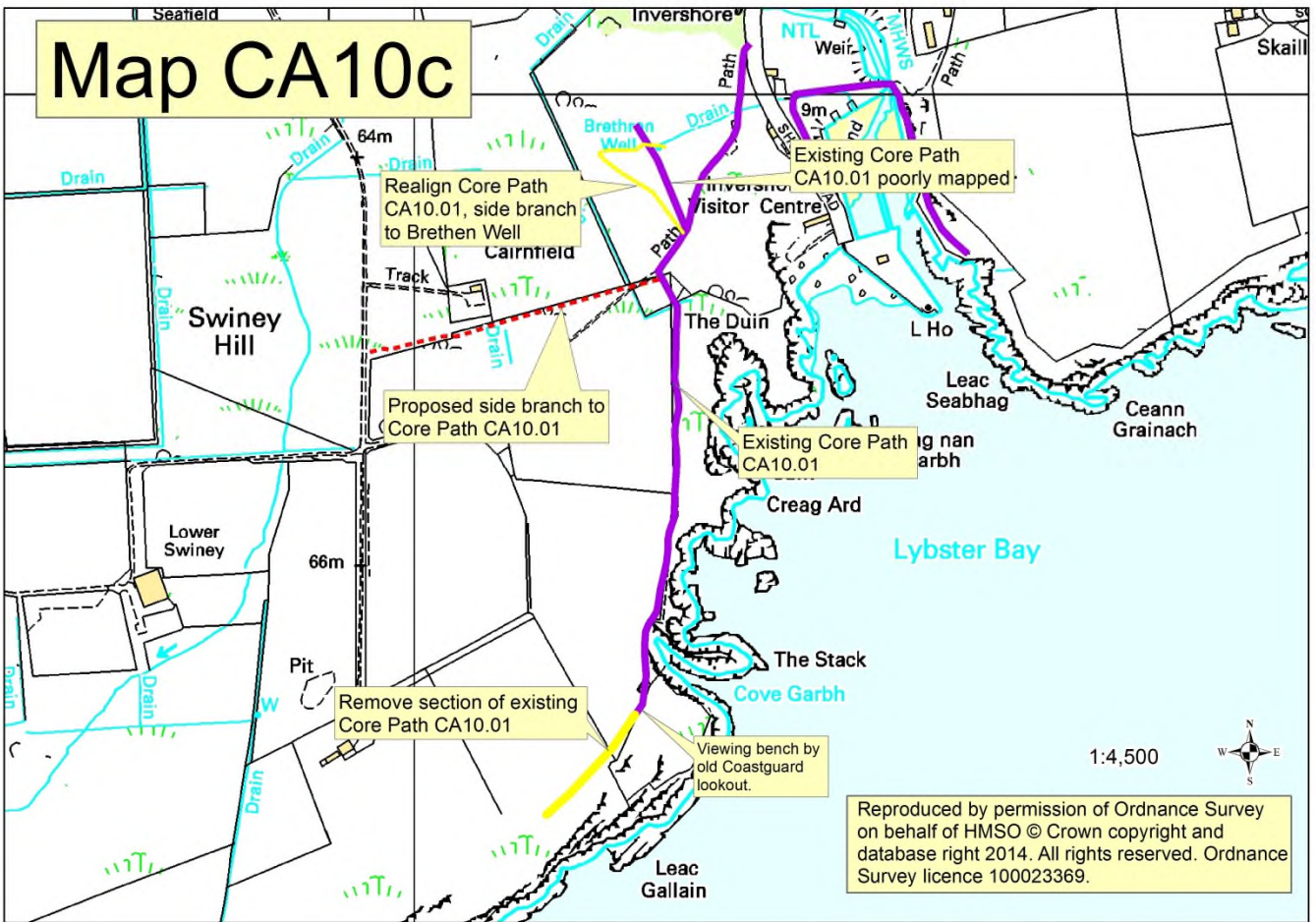
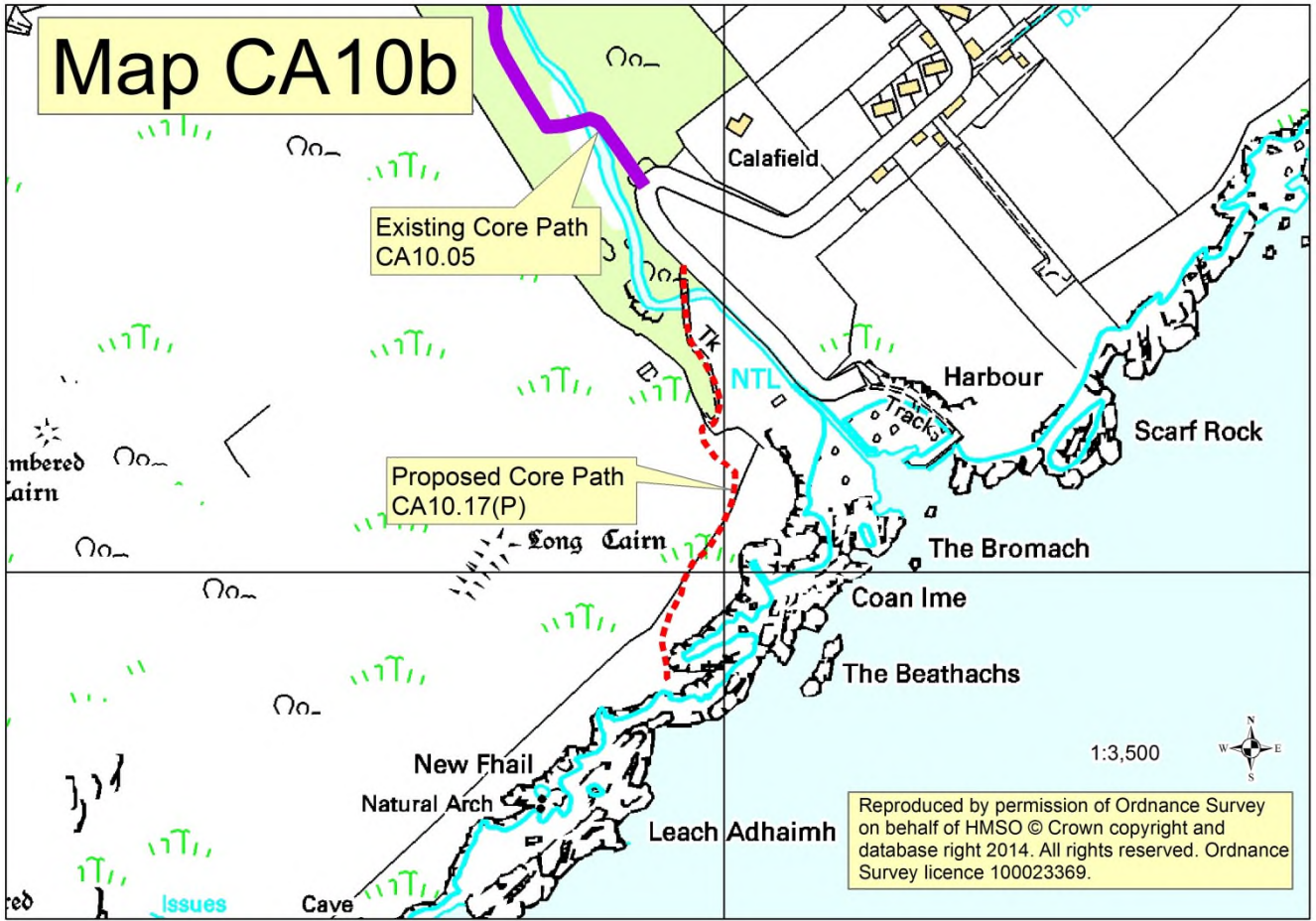
By Latheronwheel harbour there is a popular path over an old bridge to the cliff top below an area known as Shore Park. Shore Park is used for deer rearing but the route to the shore is still open for public use. There is a blow hole known locally as the Cloopie and the cliffs are regular used for rock climbing. The route to the proximity of the Gloupie is proposed as a core path.

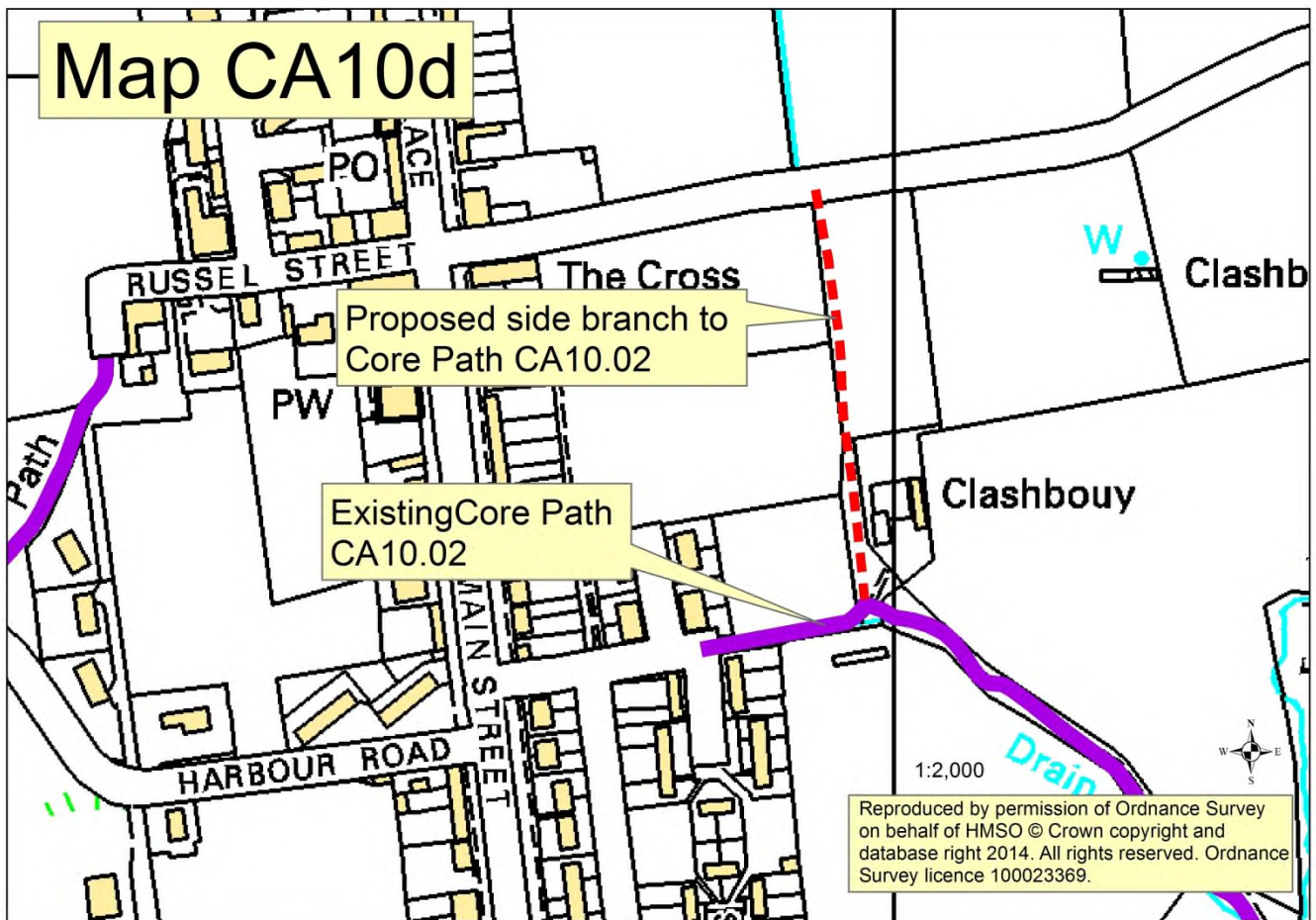
In Lybster there is a recently improved path to Swiney Hill from the Coastguard look out core path CA10.01. There is also some mapping to tidy up – at the Brethren Well and also as the current core path continues past the old lookout but there is no desire line or path on the ground.

A side branch to the Shelligoe Core Path CA10.02, is also proposed as a core path and this provides the option of a circular route close to Lybster village.

- Proposed new route at Rumster Forest linking section of existing core path CA10.04.
- Proposed new route at Achavanich Stone Setting, see map CA10a, meets “Aim 1”.
- Proposed new route at Latheronwheel Harbour to the cliffs below Shore Park, see map CA10b
- Proposed changes and new side branch from Coastguard Lookout core path CA10.01, see map CA10c
- Proposed new side branch to core path CA10.02, see map CA10d







Reay (CA11)

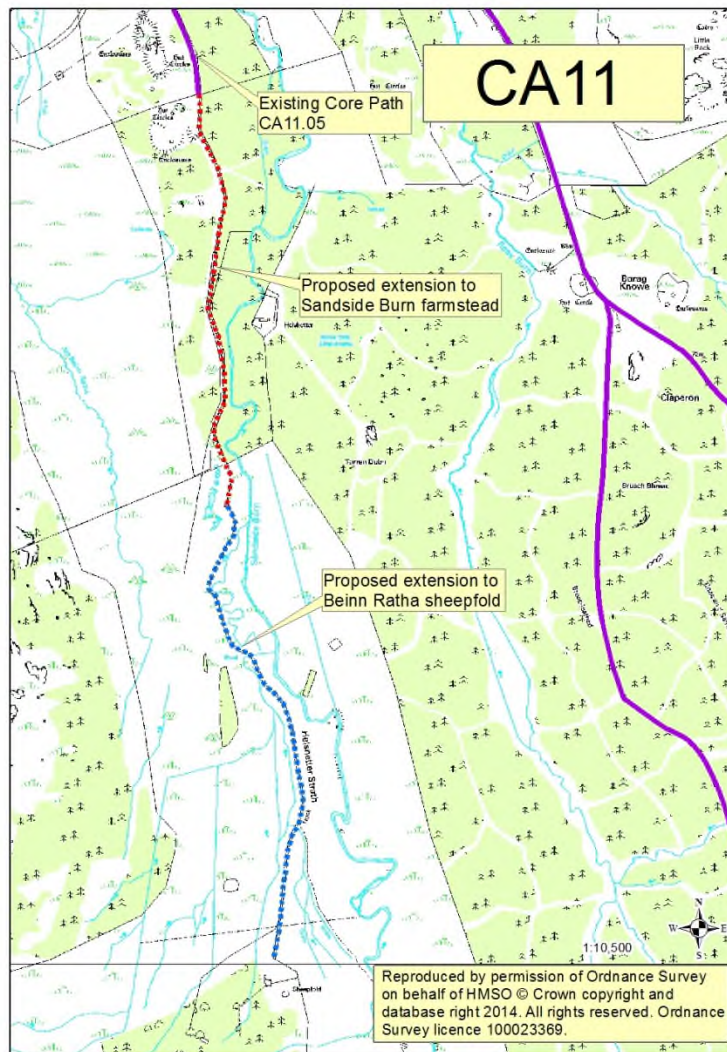
The Reay settlement is on the north Caithness coast and borders Sutherland. The main village is Reay by Sandside Bay with the remainder of the area sparsely populated apart from a collection of dwellings at Shebster. The Dounreay nuclear establishment is within the settlement.

Core paths in the settlement are focussed around the village of Reay but there are extensive forest networks in the Limekilns and Broubster forests. There is a desire to link these core paths (CA11.03 and CA11.01) but the forest blocks are in different ownerships with access to them taken from different points and the Achvarasdal Burn acting as a natural barrier. It is proposed to investigate the linking of these core paths though any proposal to include a route as a core path will be dependent on the route been achievable within a 3 year period.

The Helshetter Strath core path CA11.05 currently ends at a point where an adjacent forest block starts. There is no defining feature on the track and it is not considered an obvious or natural finish point for the core path. The track continues at the same standard until the end of the adjacent forest block, just short of the ruined farmstead named Sandside Burn. The track further continues with a grassed over surface until a sheepfold/ruined building below Beinn Ratha, the track ends at this point. It is proposed to investigate extending core path CA11.05 to one of these points to provide a more natural finish point.

- Propose to extend core path CA11.05 to either Sandside Burn farmstead or Beinn Ratha sheepfold, see map CA11

- Proposed to investigate linking of core paths CA11.03 and CA11.01, Limekiln and Broubster forests.



Thrumster (CA12)

Thrumster is a settlement zone to the south Wick through which the A99 passes. The main village is Thrumster with other minor hamlets at Ulbster, Sarclat and Tannach. Core paths in the settlement are a mix of short routes in and around Thrumster, promoted routes related to archaeological sites and longer distance routes in Blingery and Camster/Toftgunn forests, both of which are being developed for wind farms.

The Yarrows Archaeological Trail core path CA12.05 is a largely unmade route around a number of historical features. There are proposals in hand to provide a new car park and start/finish to the circular route. The core path is proposed to be amended to acknowledge the new car park location and start/finish paths for the trail.

A well known route in this settlement is the path to the Whaligoe steps. These are a popular historic feature which offer a dramatic route down to an old harbour. There is some concern over the maintenance of the steps but the given the aims of this review and the statutory regard the council has to consider it is proposed to include the steps in the core path plan to ensure the core path network reflect the routes that the public use and are likely to use.

- Propose to amend the start and finish paths to the Yarrows Archaeological Trail if/when the new car park, start/finish paths are completed.
- Propose to include the Whaligoe Steps as a core path.

Thurso (CA13)

Thurso is one of the two main towns in Caithness, it is on the north coast and is closely linked with the harbour at Scrabster. The settlement zone covers an area along the coast from Forss in the west to Murkle in the East and inland to Geise in the South. There is an extensive network of routes within the town with the main route focused around the River Thurso on the “The Mall” core path CA13.01.

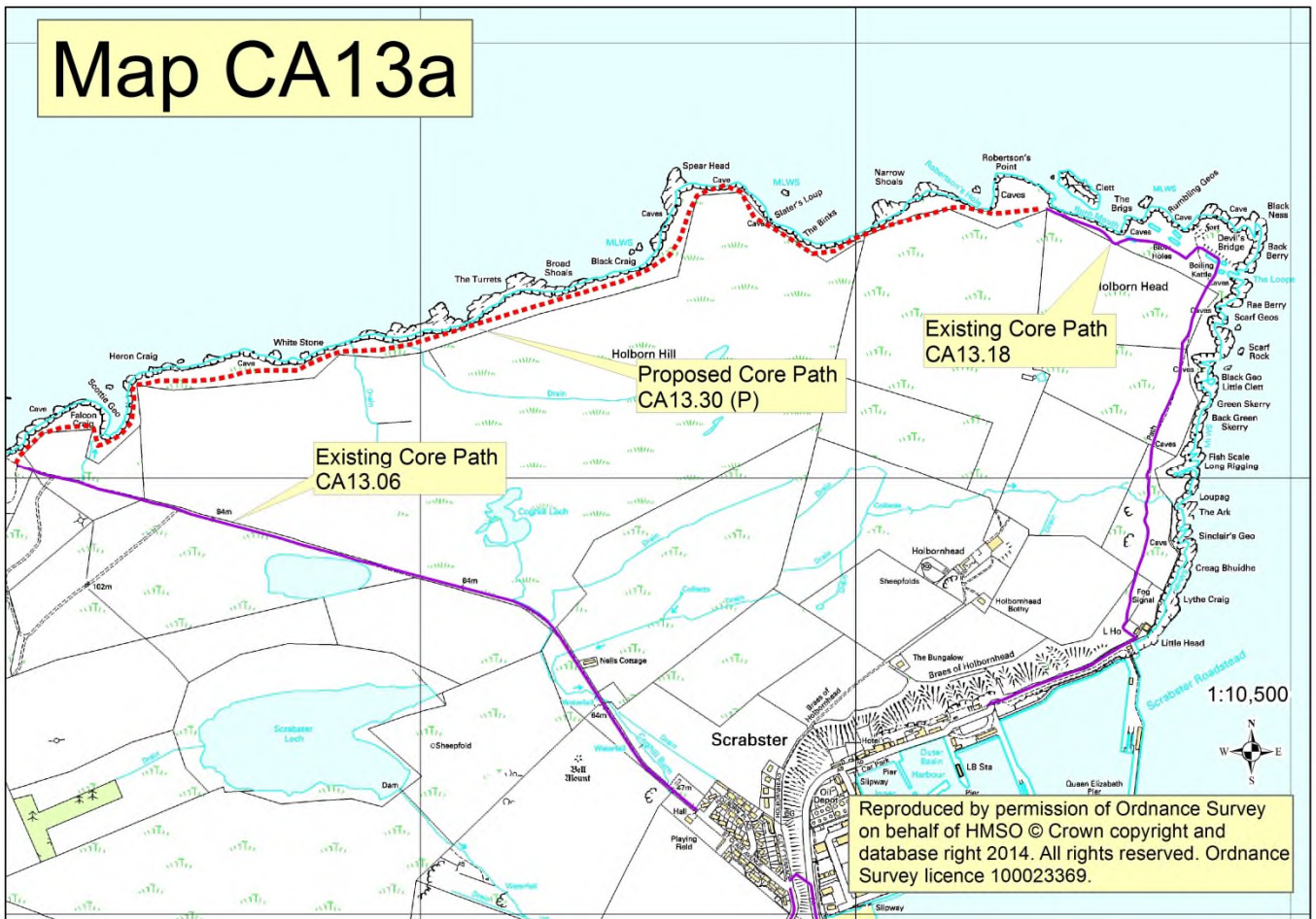
There is currently a core path to Holburn Head (CA13.18) and also a core path to Scrabster Quarries (CA13.06). There is an informal coastal route linking these two core paths, it is used by the councils ranger service, amongst others, for guided walks. The cliffs here are very dramatic but the ground covered is generally accessible to the majority of users with the exposed location limiting vegetation growth and also a thin soil over the smooth bedrock creating a relatively level surface. It is proposed to investigate linking these core paths with a new core path.

Pennyland Moor above Pennyland and Ormlie housing estates is well used for recreational access. The routes used are informal and form a maze of options and shortcuts. It is proposed to investigate identifying a basic network of routes on Pennyland Moor with links to Ormlie. There is an existing core path that gives access to Pennyland Moor which then heads towards the business park, Core Path CA13.08 – Wolf Burn. This core path is not used as mapped and it is proposed to investigate either realigning the core path to provide a route accessible to the public, identify works required to ensure current route can be used or remove the route from the core path plan.

There has been a network of path created at Geise farm just south of Thurso. These routes were created by the land owners as part of an agricultural scheme. The scheme has stopped running but the paths has remained and continue to be used by the public. It is proposed to investigate including the path network at Geise as a core path.

- Proposed to investigate linking core path CA13.18, Holburn Head along the coast to core path CA13.06, Scrabster Quarries. See map CA13a.
- Proposed to investigate including network of paths at Geise as core paths

Map CA13a



Watten (CA14)

Watten is a rural settlement zone in the interior of Caithness, the main village is Watten itself with the remainder of the area rural in nature and sparsely populated. The area has a few core paths around Watten but the wider area does not have any further network of route. The demand for recreational access in the area is low.

- There are no proposed changes or new core paths in the Watten settlement zone.

Wick (CA15)

Wick is one of the two main towns in Caithness and is located on the east coast. As with Thurso the town has an extensive network of core paths centred around the river with a number of routes radiating out from the town along the coast and main roads.

Since the previous core paths planning consultation a new network of paths has been created at Newton Hill Croft, this was in part to replace the recreation site lost at the adjacent Newton Hill Woodland. It is proposed to include the new trails at Newton Hill Croft as core paths.

The existing North Head core path, CA15.01, currently finishes at the eastern terminus by the water treatment works entrance gate. This is approximately 250m short of the Broadhaven public road, it is proposed to extend this core path to meet with the public road.

There are a number of core paths around Sinclair's Bay in the Wick settlement, the main one been the route to along the shore from Wick Golf club toward Keiss with others along the shore east of Ackersgill and also a route to the Castle Sinclair Girnigoe by Noss Head. There are gaps in these separate routes and it has been suggested that they could be linked to provide a continuous route from Keiss to Noss Head. Some of this route would be feasible as a core path but there are areas where the route is not a made track or path and it may be rough or very close to steep drops with tight field fences. It is proposed to investigate the coastal area from Keiss to Noss to provide a continuous core path.

There are two core paths to the south of Wick providing access along the cliff top and the old town March (boundary) Ditch to the Castle of Old Wick. However since the previous plan the housing development at Swanson Drive/Carnaby Road has progress, the existing core paths do not serve these new dwellings very well. It is proposed to investigate providing new core paths to the coast from the March Road past Harden, from Oldwick road to the Trinkie road past Seaview Farm and also to connect Carnaby Road to the March Road.

- Propose a new network of core paths CA015.31(P) based on the constructed trails at FCS's site at Newton Hill Croft, meets "Aim 3".
- Propose to extend core path CA15.01 to meet Broadhaven public road, see Map CA15b.
- Propose new core paths, CA15.32(P), CA15.33(P), CA15.34(P) to the south of Wick as shown in Map CA15c.

- Propose to investigate the coastal area from Keiss to Noss to provide a continuous core path.

