



# North Ayrshire Core Paths Plan

Adopted January 2009  
Legal and Protective Services



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# Enjoy Scotland's outdoors responsibly

Everyone has the right to be on most land and inland water for recreation, education and for going from place to place providing they act responsibly. These access rights and responsibilities are explained in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. The key things are:

When you're in the outdoors:

- take personal responsibility for your own actions and act safely
- respect people's privacy and peace of mind
- help land managers and others to work safely and effectively
- care for your environment and take your litter home
- keep your dog under proper control
- take extra care if you're organising an event or running a business.

If you're managing the outdoors:

- respect access rights
- act reasonably when asking people to avoid land management operations
- work with your local authority and other bodies to help integrate access and land management
- respect rights of way and customary access.

Visit [outdooraccess-scotland.com](http://outdooraccess-scotland.com) or contact your local Scottish Natural Heritage office.



**KNOW THE CODE  
BEFORE YOU GO**

SCOTTISH  
OUTDOOR ACCESS CODE

[outdooraccess-scotland.com](http://outdooraccess-scotland.com)

## FOREWORD

Come let us stray our gladsome way,  
And view the charms of Nature;  
The rustling corn, the fruited thorn,  
And ilka happy creature.

Extract from Now Westlin Winds by Robert Burns

In this the year of Homecoming Scotland, celebrating the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of our national Bard and Ayrshire man, Robert Burns, it is only fitting to begin the North Ayrshire Core Paths Plan with a quote from a man truly inspired by Ayrshire's countryside, nature and people. We hope that this inspires you to follow in his footsteps and embrace the diverse landscapes of North Ayrshire.

The Core Paths Plan is the culmination of three and a half years of partnership working between North Ayrshire Council and the North Ayrshire Outdoor Access Forum. The routes identified as Core Paths have been selected through extensive public consultation and aim to meet the needs of communities and visitors for recreation and everyday journeys. It is important to note that this is the first Core Paths Plan for North Ayrshire and that it will be reviewed periodically to ensure that the Core Paths network is still meeting communities' needs and aspirations.

The core path planning process has provided a valuable opportunity to consult with local communities, access users and landowners and managers to obtain a better understanding of their needs in relation to outdoor access and current outdoor access behaviour. This will be used to inform future reviews of outdoor access policy and strategy within North Ayrshire and has been a valuable learning experience. The benefits of partnership working have been apparent to all involved and have been recognised through the national awards received for the Outdoor Access Toolkits in partnership with East Ayrshire Council and East Ayrshire Outdoor Access Forum.

The preparation of the Plan has been a challenging task, which has been relished by the Council, Forum and partners. The next challenge is to ensure that the network is accessible and promoted and continues to meet the needs of communities and visitors. We truly believe that this will make North Ayrshire a more attractive place to live, work and visit through the opportunities that Core Paths will provide for more physical activity and improved quality of life.

The Council and Outdoor Access Forum would like to take this opportunity to thank all who contributed throughout the development of the Plan and participated at the various stages of public consultation. The Forum would like to dedicate the Plan to Mr Jimmy Muir who sadly passed away in 2008. Jimmy was a committed representative and worked tirelessly for the Forum and a number of other local groups and organisations.

Luke Borwick  
Chair  
North Ayrshire Outdoor Access Forum

Councillor Jean Highgate  
Vice Chair  
North Ayrshire Outdoor Access Forum

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 provides everyone with statutory access rights to most land and inland water for walking, cycling, horse-riding and non-motorised water based activities. These rights are only available if they are exercised responsibly: by respecting people's privacy, safety, livelihoods and the environment. Equally land managers are also required to manage their land and in-land water responsibly in relation to access rights. These access rights and responsibilities are explained in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC).

The Act also places a number of duties on Local Authorities and National Park Authorities including the development of a Core Path Plan to "provide the basic framework of routes sufficient for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout the area." Core Paths are a key part of outdoor access provision that aim to promote access and reduce the potential for conflict between the needs of land managers and those of access users. The development of a Core Paths Plan by each Local Authority and National Park Authority will ensure that each town and village has a basic framework of paths available for recreation and everyday journeys by local people and visitors.

The Core Paths have been selected and the Plan prepared through extensive public consultation with access users, agencies, communities and land owners/managers to ensure that they meet the needs and aspirations of all concerned. Although this is a new approach, many Core Paths were already in use and the development of the Core Paths Plan builds on the work already undertaken in relation to the development of the Outdoor Access Strategy and other related projects.

The Core Paths identified within this Plan range from grass tracks to high specification constructed paths to ensure that the network meets the requirements of all users. All of these will be accessible, sign posted and promoted within two years of the adoption of the Plan. Whilst a number of the paths exist and can be used straight away, not all will be immediately fit for the full level of use intended on the adoption of the Plan and improvements may be required to ensure that they are fully usable within the two-year period. Improvements will require to be identified and assessed on an individual path basis and will require to be undertaken on a phased approach as resources become available.

Promotional materials such as leaflets, maps and web-based information will be produced to provide more detailed information on routes within the network. In a similar manner to the path improvements, this will require to be undertaken in a phased approach and require the development of new media or the review of existing materials, as resources become available.

It is envisaged that North Ayrshire will be a healthier and more attractive place to live, work and visit through the opportunities that Core Paths will provide for more physical activity and improved quality of life. They will make a significant difference to the way in which people enjoy the countryside and to how it is managed for recreation and access. This will in turn assist in achieving the objectives of a wide range of local, regional and national Plans and Strategies.

## INTRODUCTION

Part One of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 provides everyone with statutory access rights to most land and inland water for walking, cycling, horse-riding and non-motorised water based activities. The Act also places a number of duties on Local Authorities and National Park Authorities including the development of a Core Path Plan to provide the basic framework of routes sufficient for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout the area.

### **Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003**

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 provides everyone with statutory access rights to most land and inland water for walking, cycling, horse-riding and non-motorised water based activities. The rights came into effect on 9 February 2005 and are only available if they are exercised responsibly: by respecting people's privacy, safety, livelihoods and the environment. Equally land managers are also required to manage their land and in-land water responsibly in relation to access rights.

You can exercise these rights, provided you do so responsibly, over most land and inland water in Scotland, including:

- Mountains
- Moorland
- Woods and forests
- Grassland
- Margins of fields in which crops are growing
- Paths and tracks
- Rivers and lochs
- The coast
- Most parks and open spaces.

Access rights can be exercised at any time of the day or night. You can exercise access rights for:

- Recreational purposes including family and social activities and more active pursuits like horse riding, walking and cycling
- Educational purposes which are concerned with furthering a person's understanding of the natural and cultural heritage
- Some commercial purposes where the activities are the same as those done by the general public
- Crossing over land or water

Access rights do not extend to:

- Being on or crossing land for the purpose of doing anything which is an offence, such as theft, breach of the peace, nuisance, poaching, allowing a dog to worry livestock, dropping litter, polluting water or disturbing certain wild birds, animals and plants
- Hunting, shooting or fishing
- Any form of motorised recreation or passage (except by people with a disability using a vehicle or vessel adapted for their use)
- Anyone responsible for a dog, which is not under proper control
- Anyone taking away anything from the land for a commercial purpose

There are a number of specific places identified within the legislation where access rights do not apply. These main places are:

- Houses and gardens, and non-residential buildings and associated land
- Land on which crops are growing
- Land next to a school and used by the school
- Sports or playing fields when these are in use and where the exercise of access rights would interfere with such use
- Land developed and in use for recreation and where the exercise of access rights would interfere with such use
- Golf courses however you can cross a golf course provided you don't interfere with any games of golf
- Places like airfields, railways, telecommunication sites, military bases and installations, working quarries and construction sites
- Visitor attractions or other places, which charge for entry

Statutory access rights do not extend to some places or to some activities that the public has enjoyed on a customary basis, often over a long period of time. Such access is not affected by the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and will continue. Existing rights, including public rights of way and navigation, and existing rights on the foreshore, also continue.

### **Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC)**

These access rights and responsibilities are explained in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC), which is based on three key principles, applicable equally to the public and to land managers:

**Respect the interests of other people:** Acting with courtesy, consideration and awareness is very important. If you are exercising access rights, make sure that you respect the privacy, safety and livelihoods of those living or working in the outdoors, and the needs of other people enjoying the outdoors. If you are a land manager, respect people's use of the outdoors and their need for a safe and enjoyable visit.

**Care for the environment:** If you are exercising access rights, look after the places you visit and enjoy, and leave the land as you find it. If you are a land manager, help maintain the natural and cultural features, which make the outdoors attractive to visit and enjoy.

**Take responsibility for your own actions:** If you are exercising access rights, remember that the outdoors cannot be made risk-free and act with care at all times for your own safety and that of others. If you are a land manager, act with care at all times for people's safety.

### **Local Authority Functions**

The Land Reform Act also places a number of functions including statutory duties, powers and obligations on Local Authorities. These include the:

- Duty to uphold access rights (Section 13)
- Duty to prepare a Core Paths Plan (Section 17)
- Duty to formally consult on Core Paths Plan (Section 18)
- Power to maintain Core Paths (Section 19)
- Power to appoint Rangers (Section 24)
- Duty to establish at least one Local Access Forum (Section 25)
- Power of Entry to land for purposes in relation to the Act (Section 26)

The development of a Core Path Plan is a key stage in the implementation of the Land Reform legislation. The purpose of the Plan is to “provide the basic framework of routes sufficient for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout the area.” Core Paths are a key part of outdoor access provision that aim to promote access and reduce the potential for conflict between the needs of land managers and those of access users. The development of a Core Paths Plan by each Local Authority and National Park Authority will ensure that each town and village has a basic framework of paths available for recreation and everyday journeys by local people and visitors.

### **Core Paths and Access Rights**

The designation of a route as a Core Path does not provide enhanced access rights. Generally, people have the same access rights and responsibilities on Core Paths as they do on any other routes or off path, as the majority of Core Paths are on land where access rights can be exercised anyway. The exception to this is when a Core Path is established on land where access rights are not otherwise exercisable.

Access users should note that some Core Paths cross agricultural land and therefore acting with courtesy, consideration and awareness is very important to make sure that you respect the privacy, safety and livelihood of those living in or working on the land. For further information on the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 or SOAC please visit:

[www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/outdooraccess](http://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/outdooraccess) or [www.outdooraccess-scotland.com](http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com)

Further guidance on this is also provided within the following Council leaflets:

- Access and the Natural Heritage
- Access and the Cultural Heritage
- Paws for Thought responsible dog walking and ownership guide
- From the Horse's Mouth responsible riding guide

## CORE PATHS

Core Paths are a key part of outdoor access provision that promote access and reduce the potential for conflict between the needs of land managers and those of access users. Although this is a new approach, many Core Paths were already in use and the development of the Core Paths Plan builds on the work already undertaken.

### **What are Core Paths?**

Core Paths are paths or routes, including waterways that facilitate the exercise of the access rights under the Act. Only those paths that are identified within the Core Paths Plan form the system of Core Paths. This basic framework of routes links into and supports the wider networks of other paths. To achieve this framework, the Core Paths network consists of some existing and some new paths that together bring cohesion to the overall path network. This includes:

- Rights of way by foot, horse, bicycle or any combination of those regardless of their status
- Paths, footways, footpaths, cycle tracks, canals, rivers, other inland water or other means of access
- Paths that are delineated by a Path Agreement
- Adopted minor public roads or footways

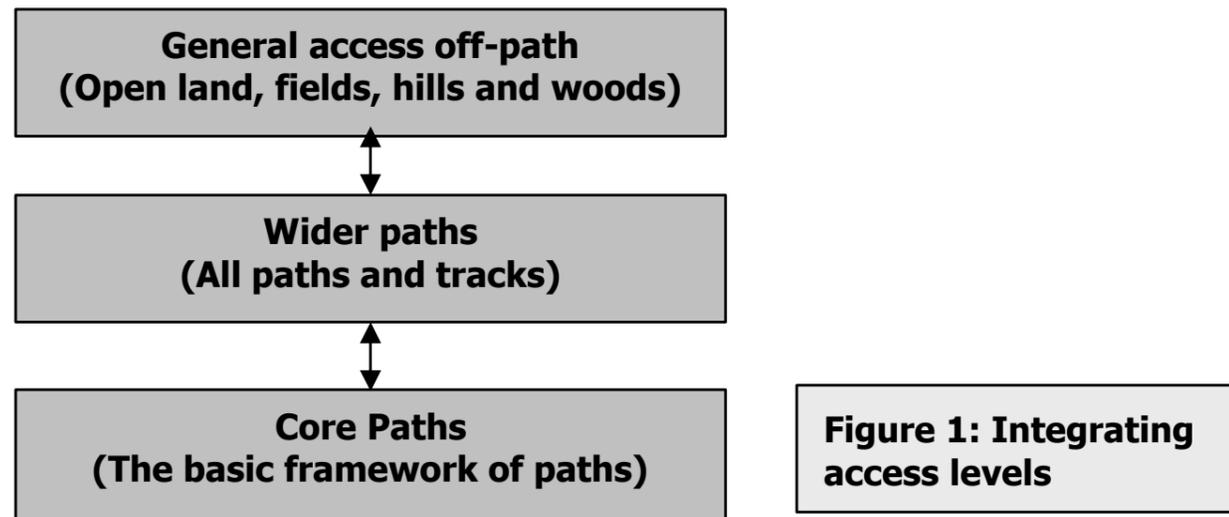
### **How will Core Paths benefit the communities of and visitors to North Ayrshire?**

The overall vision is that the Core Paths Plan provides each town and village with a basic framework of paths available for recreation and everyday journeys by local people and visitors. These Core Paths provide opportunities for walking, cycling, riding and other activities for people of all ages and abilities. The Core Paths will improve communities' quality of life by contributing to:

- Health improvement by providing increased opportunities for physical activity
- Social inclusion by providing opportunities close to where people live for all ages, ethnic backgrounds and abilities
- Sustainable transport by providing links between communities
- Tourism by providing access to natural attractions for example parks, woodlands and historic sites
- Sustainable development by improving the methods by which the outdoors are managed for recreation and access

### **Core Paths and the wider paths network**

The routes identified within the Core Paths Plan become Core Paths on the Council's formal adoption of the Plan. The Core Path network acts as a core to the broader spectrum of paths, access provision and activity in North Ayrshire. Outdoor access can therefore be considered as three integrating levels:



Existing routes that were not selected as Core Paths continue to be available on the ground and provide opportunities for access as part of the wider path network. The Core Paths Plan therefore does not affect the status of any other routes. Rights of Way continue to exist in their current form and be protected by the Section 46 (1) of the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967. Adopted minor public roads or footways have also been designated as Core Paths where they meet particular needs and are of a suitable condition but will continue to be covered by the appropriate roads legislation. In some cases the Minor roads may have been designated as an interim measure to provide a particular link until a segregated path can be provided in due course.

It should be noted that the designation of a route as a Core Path does not provide enhanced access rights. Generally, people have the same access rights and responsibilities on Core Paths as they do on any other routes or off path, as the majority of Core Paths are on land where access rights can be exercised anyway. The exception to this is when a Core Path is established on land where access rights are not otherwise exercisable.

### **A vision for outdoor access in North Ayrshire**

The Core Paths identified in this plan:

- Provide a basic framework to meet the communities' requirements
- Provide opportunities for walking, cycling, horse riding and other recreation
- Have been selected in an equitable way
- Provide good information for example signage and waymarking
- Will be well maintained

This will assist in realising the vision for North Ayrshire's Outdoor Access Strategy:

"To ensure that an integrated and co-ordinated network of access opportunities whether by tracks, on open land or by in-land water, is either created or facilitated to promote economic prosperity, improve the quality of life and regenerate the environment."

## DEVELOPING THE CORE PATHS PLAN

A summary of the overall Core Paths planning process is provided below. This was based on Core Paths Plans: A Guide to Good Practice produced by the Paths for All Partnership and Scottish Natural Heritage Natural Heritage:

<p><b>Timetable Work Programme</b> Obtained Committee approval to commence process</p>	<p><b>August 2005</b></p>
<p><b>Establish a consultation Diary</b> Developed in partnership by NAC and the Outdoor Access FD</p>	<p><b>September to December 2005</b></p>
<p><b>Design a consultation Strategy</b> Developing the Ayrshire Outdoor Access Toolkits including securing funding from the Paths for All Partnership and Scottish Natural Heritage</p>	<p><b>December 2005 to May 2006</b></p>
<p><b>First Round of Informal Consultation</b> Audit of existing access opportunities using the Ayrshire Outdoor Access Toolkits</p>	<p><b>May 2006 to December 2006</b></p>
<p><b>Preliminary assessment of access needs</b> Developing selection criteria and scoring system to assess the paths</p>	<p><b>December 2006 to September 2007</b></p>
<p><b>Second Round of Informal Consultation</b> 10 week consultation on the North Ayrshire Interim Draft Core Paths Plan</p>	<p><b>September 2007 to November 2007</b></p>
<p><b>Draft Plan Developed</b> Consultation Report prepared to inform the development of the Draft Plan</p>	<p><b>December 2007 to February 2008</b></p>
<p><b>Publish the Draft Plan</b></p>	<p><b>March 2008</b></p>
<p><b>Carry out the Formal Consultation</b> 12 week consultation on Draft Core Paths Plan</p>	<p><b>March to June 2008</b></p>
<p><b>Consider and resolve Formal Objections</b></p>	<p><b>July to October 2008</b></p>
<p><b>Prepare final Plan for adoption</b> Considered by Planning Committee and Full Council in January 2009</p>	<p><b>November 2008 to January 2009</b></p>

**Figure 2: Core Path Planning Process**

## **A partnership approach**

The North Ayrshire Outdoor Access Forum has been instrumental in the development of the Core Path Plan from its inception in line with the good practice guidance. A wide range of stakeholders have also been involved in the development of the Plan and will continue to be involved throughout the monitoring and review processes. These include access users, agencies, community groups, individuals, landowners/managers and neighbouring local Authorities.

The aim of the partnership approach is to ensure that the process is balanced and inclusive. To achieve this, the Forum has been actively involved in the audit, assessment and identification of potential Core Paths and the preparation of the Interim Draft Plan, Draft Plan and final Plan. The Forum will continue to be actively involved throughout the monitoring and review processes.

The Forum was established in 2003 and its membership and activities were reviewed in 2006/07 in light of the revised good practice guidance. The Forum aims to be balanced and representative of the interest groups involved in outdoor access and is comprised of:

Access Users	4 representatives
Agencies	3 representatives
Communities	3 representatives
Land owners / managers	4 representatives
North Ayrshire Council (NAC)	1 representative

Further information on the Forum and copies of the Notes from the Forum meetings are available from: [www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/outdooraccess](http://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/outdooraccess)

The Council shares its administrative boundary with a number of other local Authorities, each of which is preparing its own Core Paths Plan. The neighbouring Authorities are East Ayrshire Council, East Renfrewshire Council, Inverclyde Council, Renfrewshire Council and South Ayrshire Council. Regular liaison has been undertaken with these Authorities to ensure that cross boundary issues have been examined throughout the development of the Plans. This is to ensure that each Authority's Plan provides sufficient linkages to the Core Paths identified within the neighbouring Authorities' Plans.

## **Relationship with other Plans, Programmes and Strategies**

To ensure that the Core Paths Plan met the requirements of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, a wide range of factors were taken into consideration in its preparation. These included the current national guidance on Core Paths planning provided by the:

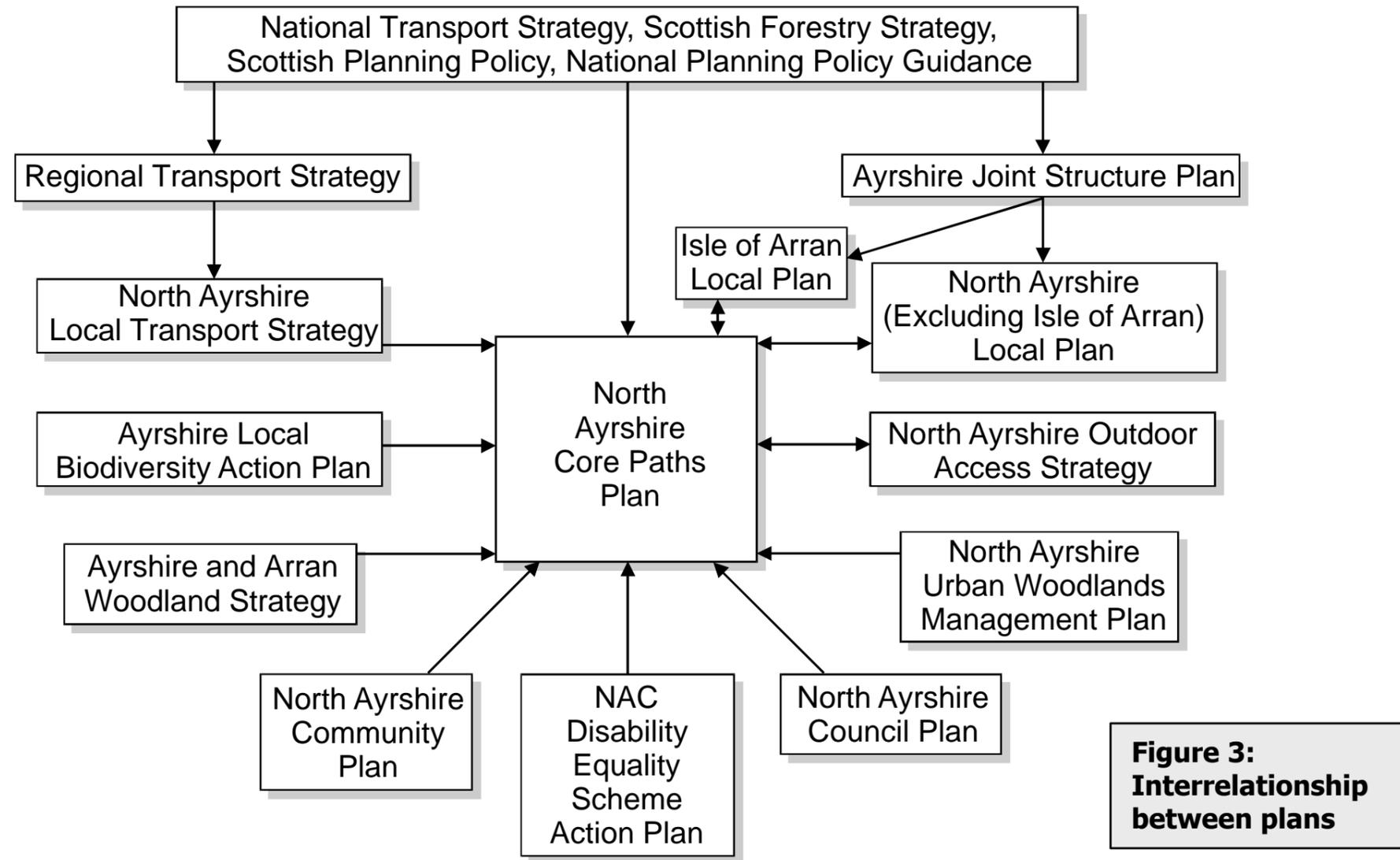
- Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003
- Part 1 Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 Guidance for Local Authorities and National Park Authorities produced by the Scottish Government
- Core Paths Plans A Guide to Good Practice produced by the Paths for All Partnership and Scottish Natural Heritage

A wide range of local policies and plans were also taken into account including the:

- North Ayrshire Outdoor Access Strategy
- North Ayrshire (Excluding the Isle of Arran) Local Plan and Isle of Arran Local Plan
- North Ayrshire A Better Life - North Ayrshire Community Plan 2006 -2016
- Building A Better North Ayrshire - North Ayrshire Council Plan 2006 –2009
- North Ayrshire Council Equal Opportunities Policy

- North Ayrshire Local Transport Strategy
- Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan
- Ayrshire Biodiversity Action Plan

The Core Path Plan does not currently fit into a national framework but is influenced by a number of strategies and plans as demonstrated in the figure below:



This relationship is examined in detail within the Outdoor Access Strategy, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Scoping Report and Environmental Report. Copies of these reports are available from [www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/corepathsplan](http://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/corepathsplan). Please note that from April 2009 the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) will replace the Community Plan and the North Ayrshire Council Plan. The SOA between North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership and the Scottish Government will outline how the shared Vision of 'North Ayrshire – A Better Life' will be achieved. The interrelationship from that point between the Core Paths Plan, Community Plan and Council Plan will be replaced with that between the Core Paths Plan and SOA.

## **Strategic Environmental Assessment**

The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 requires all plans and programmes to undergo Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). This applies to plans and programmes in certain sectors (e.g. forestry and town and country planning) which are determined to have significant environmental effects. SEA provides a systematic process for identifying, predicting, reporting and mitigating the environmental impacts of proposed plans and programmes.

The first stage of the SEA process is screening, which determines the potential for significant effects on the environment. Screening was carried out by the Responsible Authority namely North Ayrshire Council. Responses were received from the three Consultation Authorities namely, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and Historic Scotland (HS). As a result of this, the Council has determined that the Core Paths Plan has the potential to have significant environmental effects and Environmental Assessment will be carried out to determine the level of significance.

The second stage of the process is scoping, which requires the Responsible Authority to consider in conjunction with the Consultation Authorities, the scope and level of detail of the environmental assessment. The purpose of the Scoping Report was to set out sufficient information on the Plan and its environmental effects to enable the Consultation Authorities to form a view on the scope and level of detail that would be appropriate for the Environmental Report and the proposed consultation periods. The responses have been received from the Consultation Authorities, who indicated that they were generally satisfied with the scope and level of detail proposed. Minor modifications were proposed and these have been taken into account.

The third stage of the process is the preparation of a Draft Environmental Report. The preparation of the Report was formed by the comments received from the Consultation Authorities on the Scoping Report. The Draft Environmental Report was subject to a 12-week period of public consultation alongside the Draft Core Paths Plan. The purpose of the Draft Environmental Report was to:

- Provide information on the Draft Core Paths Plan
- Identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant impacts on the environment of implementing the Core Paths Plan and the reasonable alternatives taking account of the objectives and geographical scope of the plan
- Provide further opportunities for consultation with the Consultation Authorities, other key stakeholders and the wider public

The responses were received from the Consultation Authorities in June 2008 at the end of the formal consultation process. The Consultation Authorities indicated that they were satisfied with the Environmental Report. Minor modifications were proposed and these have been taken into account in the production of the final Report. Further information on the SEA of the Core Paths Plan and the Consultation Authorities' responses are available from [www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/corepathsplan](http://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/corepathsplan).

## **First round of Informal Consultation**

The aim of the first round of informal consultation was to undertake an audit of all routes currently used in the area. This was a key stage in the production of the Draft Core Paths Plan and was carried out using the Outdoor Access Toolkit developed in partnership with East Ayrshire Councils and the East and North Ayrshire Outdoor Access Forums. The Toolkits were developed to provide local groups and organisations with all of the information and resources needed to identify the routes available for outdoor access in their local area and any ideas for linkage or extension of these networks.

One hundred toolkits were produced for North Ayrshire and distributed to a wide range of organisations, agencies and individuals. Two Training Sessions were organised for groups and individuals utilising the Toolkits to ensure that they were able to use them effectively with their interest groups. The Toolkits were used at three staff sessions within the Council and two sessions involving National Health Service (NHS) staff, patients and visitors at Crosshouse and Ayrshire Central Hospitals. Outdoor Access Forum representatives also used the Toolkits with their interest groups to enable them to contribute to the process. A significant level of response was received

from the Toolkits within North Ayrshire including one hundred and fifty seven completed Access Survey Forms and three hundred and fourteen completed Path Survey Forms

This project recently received a Bronze Award in the category of One to Watch from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities' (CoSLA) as part of their annual Excellence Awards. It also received a Scottish Award for Quality in Planning by the Scottish Government and Royal Town Planners Institute (RTPI) for the Community Involvement category. Further information on the Outdoor Access Toolkits is available from [www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/corepathsplan](http://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/corepathsplan).

### **Preliminary assessment of access needs**

The first stage of this process was to digitise the map-based information obtained from the Toolkits using the Council's Geographic Information Systems (GIS). This information was then combined with the Catalogue of Rights of Way (CROW), Scottish Paths Register (SPR), Land Management Contracts (LMC) path maps and digitised path information already held by the Council, other organisations and landowners. The information obtained from the Path Survey Forms was used to prepare databases that will eventually link into the GIS information. The responses obtained from Outdoor Access Survey forms were analysed and will be used to identify future priorities and to support funding applications.

It was agreed with the Outdoor Access Forum that selection criteria should be developed to provide an equitable method to identify the paths that met Core Path objectives and therefore would be suitable for consideration for Core Paths. The selection criteria were developed by the Outdoor Access Forum from the key aims of the North Ayrshire Outdoor Access Strategy and matched against the general objectives and functions of Core Paths. A scoring system was then devised based on the priorities for each of the 5 geographical Action Areas as described in the North Ayrshire Outdoor Access Strategy.

The aim of this process was to ensure that the paths identified met local needs and aspirations and assisted in addressing the key issues in each action area. The score apportioned to each criterion reflected the priorities apportioned by the Access Strategy to the key issues within the Action Area. The Strategy and Outdoor Access Forum recognise the importance of the local environment and included its safeguarding and enhancement as a criterion. This was apportioned a lower score at this stage as it was recognised that the environmental impact of potential Core Paths would be fully examined through the SEA process. The table provided below highlights the criteria and scores:

<b>Selection Criteria</b>	<b>Action Areas</b>				
	Isle of Arran	Garnock Valley	Irvine & Kilwinning	North Coast & Cumbraes	Three Towns
Routes that:					
Provide opportunities for people to walk or cycle for journeys to school, work, community facilities or between settlements	7	7	7	5	7
Provide opportunities for people of all ages and abilities	6	5	3	3	6
Provide equitably for the requirements of different user groups	3	4	5	4	4
Maximise the potential for access to the coast and open hills	4	3	2	6	2
Provide links to existing networks, local communities and wider networks	5	6	6	7	5
Provide long distance opportunities and assist in developing North Ayrshire as a quality destination for outdoor access	2	1	4	2	3
Safeguard and enhance the natural, built and cultural heritage	1	2	1	1	1

Maps were prepared for the Outdoor Access Forum to examine showing all of the digitised path information. Each path was discussed and scored, given a unique reference number and the outcome recorded on an assessment form. This was carried out at four meetings, two in Brodick, one in Irvine, and one in Saltcoats. It was agreed that paths scoring eighteen and above should be identified as potential Core Paths. The justification for this cut off point was that it ensured that the paths selected fulfilled the majority of the criteria by meeting at least the three main criteria for each action area. If any of these routes could not be made usable within the Plan period of one to two years they were not included in the potential Core Paths list. This is in line with the Guidance produced by the Scottish Government and does not prevent the development of such paths as part of the wider path network and considering their inclusion as a Core Path in a subsequent review of the Plan.

## **Second Round of Informal Consultation**

The information from the preliminary assessment was used to prepare the Interim Draft Core Paths Plan. The routes that were not identified as potential Core Paths were highlighted within the Interim Draft Plan as wider path network routes. This was to provide respondents with a basis to gauge the overall sufficiency and to highlight the routes that had been identified using the Toolkits. These wider path network routes have no status and not all of the routes were formal paths on the ground as a number were informal routes across hills and other open land.

The Interim Draft Plan was subject to a 10-week period of public consultation. A public notice was issued in August 2007 to all local newspapers and letters were sent to a wide range of interested parties to promote the start of the consultation at the Outdoor Access Forum's Annual General Meeting in September. A feedback form was prepared to enable participants to comment on the Plan, which was available:

- In paper format on request from the Access Officer or from consultation sessions
- Electronically from the Council's website via [www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/corepathsplan](http://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/corepathsplan)
- As reference and loan copies within all local libraries

300 copies of the Interim Draft Plan and the Feedback Form were disseminated to a wide range of organisations and individuals. Two public consultation sessions and two Council staff consultation sessions were held to provide additional opportunities to comment on the Plan. Presentations were also provided to a number of organisations including the National Farmers Union of Scotland and North Ayrshire Access Panel to raise awareness and encourage participation in the consultation process.

This process aimed to gauge whether or not the Forum's assessment process met the needs and aspirations of the community, key organisations and other individuals and interested parties and provided an opportunity to comment on the:

- Overall sufficiency of the proposed Core Paths within the Interim Draft Plan
- Criteria and scores used to identify potential Core Paths
- Methods by which potential Core Paths have been identified
- Inclusion or removal of specific paths from the Plan
- Paths in general for example whether or not they follow the correct line on the map

The feedback provided on the Interim Draft Plan was analysed in partnership with the Outdoor Access Forum and a Consultation Report was prepared. Copies of the report are available on request or on-line from [www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/corepathsplan](http://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/corepathsplan).

A wide range of feedback was received from the consultation in relation to the wider path network routes. These comments have been noted and will be used as appropriate in the future. The wider path network routes were not identified in the Draft Core Paths Plan and do not form part of the adopted Core Paths Plan.

## **Developing the Draft Core Paths Plan**

The Consultation Report produced on the Interim Draft Core Paths Plan was used to inform the development of the Draft Core Paths Plan. Where necessary, changes were made to the Interim Draft Plan text and potential Core Paths to reflect the responses to the feedback, agreed between the Forum and the Council. Each potential Core Path was then assessed for its potential effect on the environment. Full details on the assessment process are provided within the Draft Environmental Report.

The Draft Plan was comprised of mainly Council owned and maintained routes on the mainland and Isle of Cumbrae with the remainder being within private or public ownership and maintenance. On the Island of Arran it was comprised of a mixture of routes within Council, public and private ownership and maintenance. This included a number of routes across Forestry Commission Scotland and National Trust for Scotland land. The Draft Plan proposed two new routes at Ardrossan Harbour and Ayrshire Central Hospital sites, it is envisaged that these routes would be secured as developer contributions through the Development Management process.

## **Professional Judgement**

An element of professional judgement was required both from the Council and the Forum to clarify a number of issues during the assessment process and in the development of the Draft Plan. This included:

- Identifying the correct line of paths
- Clarifying whether or not it would be feasible to create a route within the Plan period
- Examining the overall connectivity of the network
- Examining integration with other networks

## **Formal Consultation Process**

The Draft Core Paths Plan was subject to a 12-week period of consultation. This was the formal consultation on the Draft Core Paths Plan as required by Section 18 (1) of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. A public notice was issued in March 2008 to all local newspapers and letters were sent to a wide range of interested parties to promote the consultation. A feedback form was prepared to enable participants to either make a formal objection or comment on the Plan, which was available:

- In paper format on request from the Access Officer
- Electronically from the Council's website via [www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/corepathsplan](http://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/corepathsplan)
- As reference and loan copies within all local libraries

The overall aim of this consultation was to ensure that Core Paths are selected in an equitable manner, that the Core Paths Plan meets the basic access needs of the communities of and visitors to North Ayrshire and assists with the management of access and land. 300 copies of the Draft Core Paths Plan and the Feedback Form and 175 copies of the Draft Environmental Report were disseminated to a wide range of organisations and individuals.

A total of 31 responses were received comprising of 26 completed Feedback Forms and 5 written submissions. It should be noted that a number of these responses were submitted on behalf of an agency or organisation and therefore represent the opinions of a number of individuals. A number of responses were received after the consultation process had closed however it was agreed that these would be accepted and considered alongside those received within the consultation period. Letters were sent to all respondents advising them that their responses had been received and were being considered as part of the consultation. Wherever possible, the comments received through the consultation process have been incorporated into the final Plan, with the exception of the inclusion of routes, which had already been assessed through the preliminary assessment of access needs. This is due to the fact that the paths did not meet the prerequisite score for inclusion as a Core Path.

5 formal objections were received to the Draft Core Paths Plan of which 4 were deemed to be valid objections. The Forum worked in partnership with the Council to identify solutions and resolve the objections. The objections were all subsequently withdrawn by early November 2008. Further information on the consultation is available in the Consultation Report, which is available from [www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/corepathsplan](http://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/corepathsplan).

### **Preparation of the final Core Paths Plan**

The final Core Paths Plan was prepared in partnership by the Forum and the Council and was informed by the comments received on the Draft Core Paths Plan. The aim of the Plan is to provide basic and useful information for access users and landowners/managers. The Council's Planning Committee approved the adoption of the final Core Paths Plan on 13 January 2009. This decision was subsequently ratified by the Full Council on 14 January 2009. The Plan was launched at the Outdoor Access Forum's Annual General Meeting on 1 April 2009.

The Plan is available in the following formats:

- Electronically from [www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/corepathsplan](http://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/corepathsplan)
- As loan and reference copies in all local Libraries
- As reference copies at Cunninghame House, Perceton House, Lamplash Local Office, Garrison House and the Visitor Centre at Eglinton Country Park
- As a CD Rom free of charge on request from the Access Officer
- Paper copies at a charge on request from the Access Officer. Please contact the Access Officer for more details.

Each representative on the Outdoor Access Forum also has a copy of the Plan, which can be viewed by prior arrangement if required. More detailed information on the individual routes will be provided within local path network leaflets, as this has been agreed as the most appropriate and effective method of raising awareness of the path networks. It should be noted that these leaflets will be available free of charge from local Libraries, electronically from the Council's website and on request from the Access Officer.

## IMPLEMENTING THE CORE PATHS PLAN

### Developing the Core Paths network

Paths and routes immediately became Core Paths on adoption of the Core Paths Plan. The Council has a duty to ensure that Core Paths are accessible, sign posted and promoted within two years of the adoption of the Plan. Therefore, whilst a number of the proposed Core Paths exist and can be used straight away, it is recognised that not all of the proposed paths may be immediately fit for the full level of use intended on the adoption of the Plan. Improvements may be required to a number of the Core Paths to ensure that they are usable within the two-year period.

At this stage, the adoption of the Plan does not necessitate any physical improvements to these routes other than improving the signage. During the Plan period additional improvements may be identified and at present the extent of these cannot be quantified. Potential improvements will be assessed at a project level at which stage a more detailed assessment of the potential issues raised by specific works on individual paths will be undertaken. At this stage an assessment will be made of the potential for disturbance and/or other environmental effects prior to implementation of any specific proposals, taking appropriate mitigative or avoidance action as required. Further consultation will be undertaken throughout the production of the Action Plan with the relevant organisations e.g. Historic Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and West of Scotland Archaeological Service and local interest groups to ensure that these works do not adversely impact on the environment.

It is envisaged that in time promotional materials such as leaflets, maps and web-based information will provide more detailed information on routes within the Core Paths network. In a similar manner to the path improvements, this will require to be undertaken in a phased approach and require the development of new media or the review of existing materials, as resources become available.

### Core Paths Logo Competition

A Schools Competition was organised to design the logo for the Core Paths in partnership with the Council's Educational Services. Pupils from Primary 6 and 7 in each Primary School and Years 1 and 2 in each Secondary School were invited to participate in the competition for the chance of having their logo included into the Core Paths Plan and used on signage throughout North Ayrshire. Entries could either be produced digitally or by hand using any media e.g. pencil, watercolour or acrylics.

A number of local Primary and Secondary Schools submitted entries to the competition and the overall standard of the artwork was very high. The Vice Chair and a representative from the North Ayrshire Outdoor Access Forum judged the Competition in December 2008. The prizes on offer were MP3 players and gift vouchers and were issued to the winners in January 2009. Copies of the winning entries are provided below. The winning logo is shown on the cover of this Plan and will be used on the signage throughout North Ayrshire.

#### First Prize



#### Second Prize



#### Third Prize



## **Maintaining the Core Paths network**

Where a path is adopted as a Core Path it does not necessarily mean that the Council will or does maintain it. Core Path status does not alter the existing management arrangements or ownership of the routes. The Core Paths Plan is comprised of mainly Council owned and maintained routes on the mainland and Isle of Cumbrae with the remainder being within private or public ownership and maintenance. On the Island of Arran it is comprised of a mixture of routes within Council, public and private ownership and maintenance. This includes a number of routes across Forestry Commission Scotland and National Trust for Scotland land. The Draft Plan proposes two new routes at Ardrossan Harbour and Ayrshire Central Hospital. It is envisaged that these routes will be secured as developer contributions through the Development Management process.

As the Council currently maintains a large proportion of the routes identified in the Plan, a wide range of Council Services play and will continue to play a key role in maintaining and promoting Core Paths. The services involved include:

- Cleansing, Grounds Maintenance and Transport Services
- North Ayrshire Council Ranger Service
- Planning Services
- Roads and Transportation Services

The other Core Paths will continue to be maintained through a variety of approaches and using a mixture of powers and resources including:

- Agri-environment schemes
- Maintenance agreements between the landowner and a third party
- Maintenance by the landowner for example Forestry Commission Scotland or National Trust for Scotland

## **Reviewing the Core Paths Plan**

Periodic review of the Core Paths Plan is required under the Act and it is envisaged that the Plan will be reviewed on a five-year cycle or as required. Removals or diversions of Core Paths can be carried out relatively simply, for example, in response to new development. The inclusion of additional paths is however a more complicated process as it requires the full adoption procedure to be undertaken.

A number of the comments received during the second round of informal consultation and formal consultation processes will be taken into account in any full review of the Plan. The review will also be conducted in partnership with the North Ayrshire Outdoor Access Forum and subject to extensive public consultation. If you require any further information on the review, please contact the Access Officer using the details provided at the end of the Plan.



# Core Paths Maps

## CORE PATH MAPS

### How to use the Maps

In line with the Outdoor Access Strategy and assessment process, the Core Paths have been divided into five geographical action areas as follows. Each path has also been given a unique reference number based on its geographical action area for example AR1, AR2 and so on. Please note that longer distance paths such as the National Cycle Network (NCN) have been split into sections and given a reference based on the location of the section.

The existing Core Paths are illustrated on the following maps as broken purple lines. This is the standardised national symbol for Core Paths and will be used to illustrate Core Paths on Ordnance Survey mapping in due course. Please note that at this stage, proposed Core Paths that have not yet been constructed are highlighted as broken purple and yellow lines to enable users to differentiate between the two types of Core Paths. The crosses on the lines identify the start and end point of each route or each section of a longer route. Please note that these are not intended as start and end points for routes or as locations for parking.

A key for the maps is provided at the rear of this document and can be opened out for use with the full series of maps. Where there are adjacent map(s) these are indicated on the relevant edge of the map by an orange and blue indicator symbol which includes the number of the relevant map. Please refer to the key for more information on the symbols used on the maps.

### Action Area Summaries

The following provides a summary of the individual Action Areas, types of Core Paths and potential future outdoor access developments for the area. Please note that whilst map numbers are provided for each Action Area there may be some overlap between action areas on the maps. Please check the overview maps to confirm which map covers the area or routes you are interested in.

- Isle of Arran (AR) – Maps 1 to 7

Situated 15 miles west of the mainland in the Firth of Clyde, the Island of Arran has a rich mixture of highland and lowland culture and geography and has a unique claim of being 'Scotland in Miniature'. The north of the island has breathtaking scenery akin to the highlands of the Scottish mainland; with the mountain of Goat Fell (2866ft) dominating the skyline. To the south, the island has a gentler, rolling landscape that is a reminder of the Scottish Lowlands.

There are extensive opportunities for outdoor access on the Isle of Arran including an extensive coastline, formal paths and informal opportunities across mountains, hills and moorland and through woodland. The Arran Coastal Way also offers a long distance walking opportunity around the whole Island. Arran is already a popular location for outdoor access activities and local organisations currently arrange festivals such as the Wildlife Festival and Walking and Outdoor Festival to encourage visitors to enjoy the opportunities that the Island has to offer.

The Core Paths network is comprised of a mixture of types of routes including paths, tracks and minor roads within Council, public and private ownership and maintenance. This includes a number of routes across Forestry Commission Scotland and National Trust for Scotland land. The network aims to provide the basic path framework for the Island and links to a large number of the Island's natural, cultural and tourist attractions. Potential future outdoor access developments on the Isle of Arran include the development of the Brodick to Corrie Cycle Route as a replacement to the existing on road NCN Route 73. This project is currently being developed by the Arran Bike Club and will be subject to successful planning permission and funding applications.

- North Coast and Cumbraes (NC) – Maps 8 to 14

This area is comprised of the settlements of West Kilbride (incorporating Seamill), Largs and Skelmorlie, the smaller satellite villages of Fairlie and Portencross and the Cumbrae Islands. The majority of the North Coast area is designated as Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park with the exception of the settlements. Great Cumbrae, the larger and inhabited of the two islands, is only 10 minutes by ferry from Largs.

Great Cumbrae is a popular destination for walking and cycling, with large numbers of tourists visiting to cycle round the Island. The North Coast is also well provided for in terms of outdoor access with a wide range of path networks, open hill, extensive coastline and parkland. The Core Path network in this area is comprised of a variety of types of routes including off-road paths, tracks and minor roads. Potential future outdoor access developments in the Garnock Valley include the development of an on road cycle route between the Ferry terminal and the village of Millport, which is currently being investigated by the Council.

- Garnock Valley (GV) - Maps 15 to 18

The Garnock Valley lies in the north east of North Ayrshire and is comprised the settlements of Dalry, Kilbirnie and Beith situated along the valley of the River Garnock. There are also two rural satellite villages, situated near Kilbirnie, Longbar and Glengarnock and a further two situated near Beith, Gateside and Barrmill. A significant area of land to the northwest of Dalry and Kilbirnie is designated as Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park. Approximately half of the Regional Park's land area is within North Ayrshire and predominantly within the Garnock Valley and North Coast areas.

The Garnock Valley is less well provided for in terms of outdoor access than the rest of North Ayrshire. The Core Path network is primarily comprised of the NCN Route 7 and minor roads. Investigations are currently underway to improve the provision in this area and include the development of a feasibility study for the NCN Route 7 Kilbirnie to Kilwinning Off-road route as a replacement to the existing on-road route. Other potential developments for outdoor access in the Garnock Valley include the development of an off-road route between Beith and Kilbirnie.

- Three Towns (TT) – Maps 19 and 20

Known locally as "The Three Towns" Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston are set around the sheltered Irvine Bay, making them popular coastal resorts. Stevenston is a historic town with extensive open space and leisure areas including a Beach Park to the west of the town. Stevenston is bound to the north by Saltcoats town centre area, small harbour and seafront promenade help the town to remain a popular day-tripper destination. Ardrossan's beach, historic castle site and promenade provide an attractive locale for visitors. The Three Towns form part of the Irvine Bay for which regeneration proposals are currently being developed by the Irvine Bay Urban Regeneration Company (URC).

The Three Towns is also well provided for in terms of outdoor access with extensive the coastline, path networks, the NCN and urban parks. The Core Path network in this area is comprised of a variety of types of paths including the NCN, off-road paths and minor roads. Potential future outdoor access developments in the Three Towns include the development of a Coastal Park, which is currently being investigated by the Irvine Bay Urban Regeneration Company.

- Irvine and Kilwinning (IK) – Maps 21 to 23

Irvine is the principal town and commercial centre of North Ayrshire. A Royal Burgh since 1372 the town has a rich maritime heritage and for 30 years, until 1997, it was entrusted with 'New Town' status. Kilwinning is situated 3 miles to the north-west of Irvine and is separated from Irvine by Eglinton Country Park, which provides a key outdoor access resource for local people and visitors from further afield. Kilwinning was part of the Irvine New Town and has a long and rich history, with its Abbey being founded in the twelfth century. Irvine and Kilwinning form part of the Irvine Bay for which regeneration proposals are currently being developed by the Irvine Bay URC.

Irvine and Kilwinning are well provided for in terms of outdoor access due to the extensive network of paths created by the Irvine Development Corporation during the New Town period. The Core Paths network in this area is comprised of a large number of off road routes including the New Town Trail and NCN Routes 7 and 73. Potential future outdoor access developments in the Irvine and Kilwinning area include the development of a Coastal Park, which is currently being investigated by the Irvine Bay URC.

### **Other path network information**

Neighbouring Authorities' Core Paths have been highlighted on the Maps where there are cross boundary linkages and the Plans have been formally adopted. These are highlighted on the plan as broken purple lines in accordance with the standardised national symbol for core paths and include the unique references attributed to them within the Authority's Plan. For more information on neighbouring Authorities' Core Paths Plans, please refer to their websites.

A number of leaflets have already been created for path networks in North Ayrshire including the National Cycle Network and New Town Trail. Paper copies of these leaflets are available from local Libraries, Eglinton Country Park and on request from the Access Officer. Alternatively, electronic copies of the leaflets can be downloaded from:

[www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/outdooraccess](http://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/outdooraccess)

Please note that Core Paths leaflets will also be available from this website and the locations detailed above as they are developed.

North Ayrshire benefits from a number of long distance routes, for more information on these routes please visit:

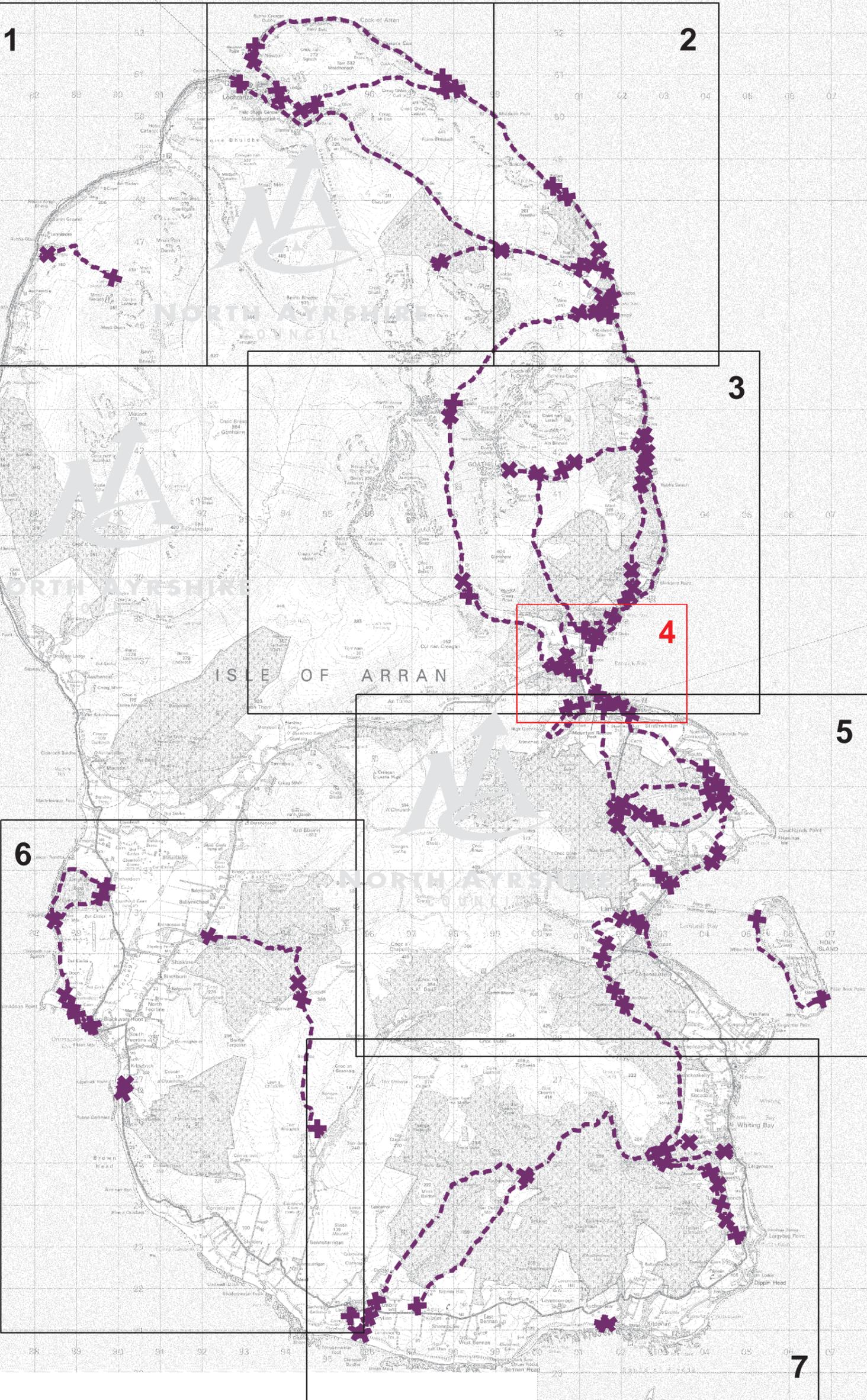
The National Cycle Network website:	<a href="http://www.nationalcyclenetwork.org.uk">www.nationalcyclenetwork.org.uk</a>
The Arran Coastal Way website:	<a href="http://www.arrancoastalway.org.uk">www.arrancoastalway.org.uk</a>
The Ayrshire Coastal Path website:	<a href="http://www.ayrshirecoastalpath.org.uk">www.ayrshirecoastalpath.org.uk</a>

The Ayrshire Paths website also provides valuable information about path networks in East, North and South Ayrshire. Please visit the website for more information:

[www.ayrshirepaths.org.uk](http://www.ayrshirepaths.org.uk)

Argyll and Bute

Argyll and Bute



[CLICK HERE TO VIEW LEGEND](#)



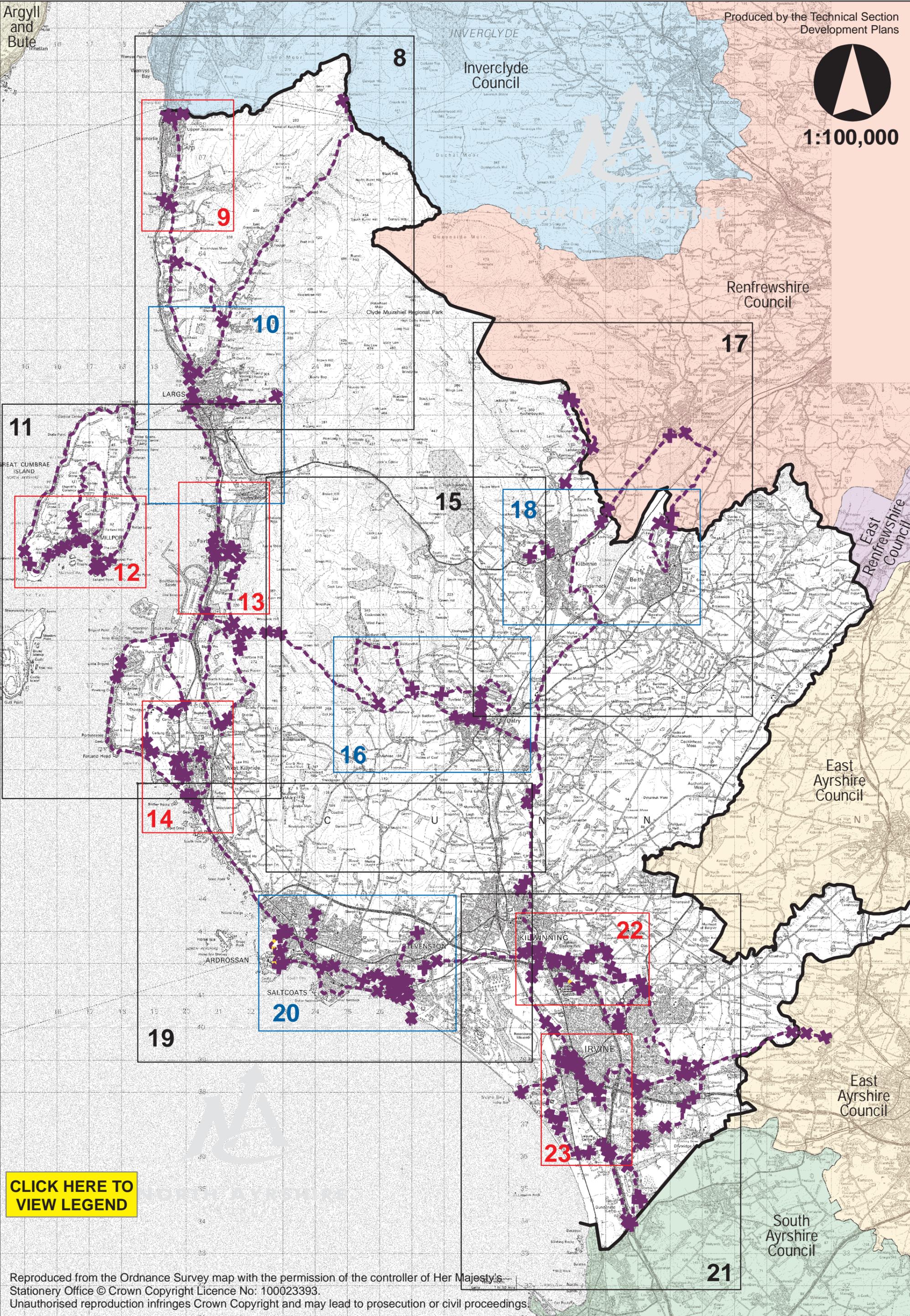
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Council and Outdoor Access Forum would like to acknowledge the input of a wide range of individuals and organisations to the development of this Plan. The following organisations have made specific contributions through the provision of text and/or photographs for inclusion in the Plan:

Arran Coastal Way Support Group  
 British Horse Society  
 Kelburn Country Centre and Ranger Service  
 Paths for All Partnership  
 Sustrans Scotland

Arran Bike Club  
 Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park  
 North Ayrshire Countryside Ranger Service  
 Scottish Natural Heritage

Ayr Rotary Club Coastal Path Group  
 Forestry Commission Scotland  
 National Trust for Scotland  
 Scottish Wildlife Trust





Points of Interest



Railway Station



Car Park



National Trust for Scotland



Adjacent Map Number  
(Click on these symbols to  
access adjacent maps)



Core Path (Existing)



Core Path (Proposed)