



Strategic Environmental Assessment for the West Lothian Draft Core Paths Plan

March 2008


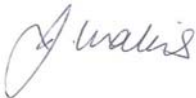
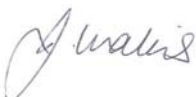
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List of Abbreviations

CA	Conservation Area
CDA	Comprehensive Development Area
CPP	Core Paths Plan
ER	Environmental Report
HGDL	Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes
HS	Historic Scotland
LB	Listed Building
LBAP	Local Biodiversity Action Plan
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
NCN	National Cycle Network
NMRS	National Monuments Register for Scotland
NNR	National Nature Reserve
RIGS	Regionally Important Geological Sites
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SAM	Scheduled Ancient Monument
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SEPA	Scottish Environment Protection Agency
SMR	Sites and Monuments Register
SPA	Special Protection Area
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
TPO	Tree Preservation Order
WLC	West Lothian Council

Non Technical Summary

Introduction

This document is the Non Technical Summary of the Environmental Report which has been prepared by West Lothian Council following the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the draft West Lothian Core Paths Plan (CPP).

West Lothian Council determined that an SEA of the draft CPP was required by the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 and therefore undertook to complete an SEA in parallel with drafting the CPP to assess and seek to minimise significant environmental effects.

Background to the Draft CPP

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 requires all Local Authorities in Scotland to identify and map a system of routes to provide reasonable access for walking, cycling, horse riding and access to inland water. This is referred to as a Core Paths Plan (CPP). West Lothian Council (WLC) has prepared a draft CPP for the West Lothian area, which has followed an extensive process of consultation in order to explore the options for a network of paths covering rural and urban areas.

Approach to the SEA

A structured approach to the SEA has been adopted based on all relevant best practice guidance including the recently published Scottish Executive SEA Toolkit.

The environmental baseline for the assessment was established drawing on relevant published information and consultation for a series of environmental topics which have been used to structure the assessment. Current environmental issues and problems were also drawn from the analysis of the baseline and with reference to other plans and programmes.

Based on a review of other relevant plans, policies and strategies, the review of baseline environmental data and consultation feedback, a series of environmental objectives and sub-objectives were then determined for each relevant environmental topic in the SEA. The high level objectives are presented in the table below.


Table 1 SEA Objectives

SEA Topic	SEA Objective
Ecology and Nature Conservation	To protect, maintain and promote understanding of the natural heritage of West Lothian.
Aquatic Environment	To protect and promote the aquatic environment of West Lothian.
Cultural Heritage	To protect and promote the historic environment and cultural heritage of West Lothian.
Population and Human Health	To contribute to improving the health and wellbeing of the people of West Lothian.

A set of more detailed sub objectives was then defined by the SEA team for use in the appraisal. These objectives and sub-objectives were presented as part of a Scoping Report, which was submitted to the SEA Consultation Authorities in March 2007, and the finalised list of objectives was prepared taking account of comments made by the Authorities in their formal response to the Scoping Report.

A framework approach has been used to evaluate the environmental effects of the draft CPP and this evolved from the set of objectives and supporting appraisal criteria. The SEA framework was then used to appraise each of the proposed objectives and policies, and the five “clusters” of paths that are proposed for designation as core paths within the draft CPP.

The appraisal of each cluster has been based on a geographical information system (GIS) enabling identification of areas where the proposed network interacts with sites and features of interest. This is a mainly qualitative appraisal, drawing on the assessment team’s knowledge of the likely effects of increased path usage and potential



upgrading/signage works and an understanding of the baseline environment. The level of appraisal undertaken is a reflection of the fact that no new routes are proposed, and that in the majority of cases impacts are unlikely to be significant given current levels of use.

Mitigation measures in the form of, for example, commitments from WLC to adopt best practice and adhere to an environmental management plan have been identified. Again, this is commensurate with the scope of the Draft Strategy itself and related directly to the significant environmental effects predicted to arise.

Findings of the Environmental Assessment

The findings of the SEA are summarised in this section firstly for each objective and then for each cluster of paths.

Objective 1: Define a Core Path Network that meets the spirit of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and guidance provided by the Scottish Executive.

This overarching objective provides the impetus for implementation of the plan overall. It will not, in itself, result in significant environmental effects. It will be important to ensure that monitoring complies with the requirements arising from the SEA Directive, i.e. monitoring for unforeseen adverse environmental effects.

Objective 2: The Core Paths Plan will provide a basis for expansion of the Core Path Network through future reviews.

Overall, the expansion of the Core Path Network (CPN) has the potential to result in further impacts to the environment, which must be identified, monitored and addressed if and when they arise. Integrating the CPP process with the local plan will provide a mechanism to enable this to take place and also for developer contributions to add to enhancement of the network in a co-ordinated and effective manner.

Objective 3: Ensure that the Plan, where possible, assists in delivering the biodiversity, heritage, health and regeneration policies of the Council and does not conflict with them.

The overall purpose of this policy is to introduce a monitoring regime that will help protect biodiversity, heritage and human health from the potential adverse effects of implementing the CPP. The monitoring regime identified here will also require to be broadened to encapsulate all aspects of the environment (as identified in the SEA Directive). It is considered that this can be best achieved through integration with the local plan process.

Objective 4: Work with land managers to create a positive response to access to the outdoors and promote core paths as a means of managing access.

Co-operation with land-owners and other organisations provides the opportunity to manage access to the CPN in a co-ordinated manner. This will help avoid potential effects, e.g. through a joint approach to informing users of the network about how their behaviour might impact on the network and a co-ordinated approach to the location and improvement of facilities so as to avoid negative effects on the environment.

Objective 5: Address future management, maintenance and monitoring needs.

Active management of the core path network will assist in identifying potential issues in relation to cultural heritage sites and features early and preventing or addressing these proactively.

Objective 6: Promote the Core Paths Plan and develop community and volunteer involvement in the Core Path Network.


Publicising and promotion of the network has the potential to increase use, with the associated negative and positive benefits identified through this SEA process. The focus should be on promotion of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code in the early stages of implementation to ensure that individuals are aware of their roles and responsibilities in taking reasonable access.

Objective 7: Identify consultation and communication needs in order to assist future reviews.

The policies provide the basis for reviewing the CPN in a co-ordinated manner. This will provide the basis for protecting environmental features when the CPN is reviewed, e.g. when expansion of the network is considered.

Cluster 1 – National Cycle Network 75

Overall, it is considered that the designation of Cluster 1 will have no significant adverse effects upon the environmental topics scoped into the assessment. There are a range of measures identified above whose specific goal is to prevent significant adverse effects of path works and increased usage. Furthermore, the legislative provisions protecting the environment are assumed to be complied with at all times. There are likely to be direct positive benefits to human health through increased awareness and use of paths, and educational benefits from interpretative materials and promotion of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. This will also have indirect secondary effects for ecology and cultural heritage through increasing understanding.



As a National Cycle Network (NCN) route, the future alignment of Cluster 1 may be influenced by projects such as the Bathgate-Airdrie rail link that are largely outside of the influence of the CPP. Any significant change in alignment will be reviewed for significant environmental effects in future reviews of the CPP.

Cluster 2 – Union Canal

Overall, it is considered that the designation of Cluster 2 will have no significant adverse effects upon the environmental topics scoped into the assessment. There are a range of measures identified above whose specific goal is to prevent significant adverse effects of path works and increased usage. Increased usage brings a slightly elevated risk of unforeseen pollution incidents as a result of spillages from motorised vessels on the waterway, however the legislative provisions protecting the environment are assumed to be complied with at all times and will limit any resultant impact of this potentially increased risk. In addition, it is assumed that British Waterways will continue to exercise management responsibilities in areas of its jurisdiction.

There are likely to be direct positive benefits to the cultural heritage interest of the route as the canal setting could be enhanced by increased usage. Population and human health can also be expected to benefit through increased awareness and use of paths, and educational benefits from interpretative materials and promotion of the Waterways Code and Scottish Outdoor Access Code. This will also have indirect secondary effects for ecology and cultural heritage through increasing understanding.

Cluster 3 – West Lothian North

Overall, it is considered that the designation of Cluster 3 will have no significant adverse effects upon the environmental topics scoped into the assessment. There are a range of measures identified above whose specific goal is to prevent significant adverse effects of path works and increased usage. Furthermore, the legislative provisions protecting the environment are assumed to be complied with at all times. There are likely to be direct positive benefits to human health through increased awareness and use of paths, and educational benefits from interpretative materials and promotion of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. This will also have indirect secondary effects for ecology and cultural heritage through increasing understanding.

Upgrading of NCN 76 has the potential to affect the Firth of Forth SSSI/SPA/Ramsar site. Such impacts are being considered at the regional level in relation to the requirement for Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA).

Cluster 4 – West Lothian South and West

Overall, it is considered that the designation of Cluster 3 will have no significant adverse effects upon the environmental topics scoped into the assessment. There are a range of measures identified above whose specific goal is to prevent significant adverse effects of path works and increased usage. Furthermore, the legislative provisions protecting the environment are assumed to be complied with at all times. There are likely to be direct positive benefits to human health through increased awareness and use of paths, and educational benefits from interpretative materials and promotion of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. This will also have indirect secondary effects for ecology and cultural heritage through increasing understanding.


A number of SSSIs are either traversed or located within proximity to proposed core paths in this cluster, and these sites must be appropriately protected to ensure that, if increased usage does occur it does not result in detrimental effects. This should be achievable through appropriate visitor management and signage.

Cluster 5 – West Lothian South and East

Overall, it is considered that the designation of Cluster 5 will have no significant adverse effects upon the environmental topics scoped into the assessment. There are a range of measures identified above whose specific goal is to prevent significant adverse effects of path works and increased usage. Furthermore, the legislative provisions protecting the environment are assumed to be complied with at all times. Designation/Improvement of these paths including lighting for increased safety can be expected to bring about a positive benefit to population health by encouraging these forms of commuter transport. In addition the opportunity exists for educational benefits from interpretative materials and promotion of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. This will also have indirect secondary effects for ecology and cultural heritage through increasing understanding.

Overall

Overall, the clusters in combination will result in broadly similar effects, and it is considered that the draft CPP in its totality will have no significant adverse effects upon the environmental topics scoped into the assessment. There are a range of measures identified whose specific goal is to prevent significant adverse effects of path works and



increased usage. Furthermore, the legislative provisions protecting the environment are assumed to be complied with at all times. There are likely to be direct positive benefits to human health through increased awareness and use of paths, and educational benefits from interpretative materials and promotion of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. This will also have indirect secondary effects for ecology and cultural heritage through increasing understanding.

Mitigation and Monitoring

Mitigation is an essential component of the SEA process. The SEA findings are based on assumptions that certain minimum mitigation and best practices would be adopted and adhered to in implementing the plan, and in particular in relation to any physical path and signage works. These relate particularly to the various in-built legal mechanisms in place to protect the environment, including European, UK and Scottish legislation (such as the Water Framework Directive, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservations Areas (Scotland) Act 1997). In addition, a number of specific measures are identified in the appraisal along with information on those who have a responsibility to ensure it takes place.

Whilst a number of the objectives and policies in the draft CPP identify that monitoring will be undertaken, the precise mechanisms through which this will take place, and the indicators to be used, are not yet known. However, there are a wide range of organisations and stakeholders who currently undertake monitoring in West Lothian, and who will be engaged through the access forum and the local plan process in order to identify and coordinate relevant monitoring activities and data to inform future revisions of the plan and ensure that unforeseen environmental effects are identified if they arise.

In relation to the potential environmental effects of the plan (including all of the SEA topics listed above), WLC will act in a coordinating role, principally through the Access Forum, to collate all of the relevant monitoring data. WLC will work in collaboration with other agencies, stakeholders and landowners in this regard. This will include access and countryside rangers, other departments of WLC, the Woodland Trust and Central Scotland Forest Trust, British Waterways, SNH, Historic Scotland, SEPA , etc.

Next Steps

This document has been prepared to support the draft CPP which will be published for consultation in April 2008. The Environmental Report will be issued to the SEA Consultation Authorities for comment. The responses provided by the Consultation Authorities, and any others, will then be taken into account in finalising the CPP and in the future reviews of it.

Comments on the Environmental Report may be addressed to:

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1 Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND

1.1.1 The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 requires all Local Authorities in Scotland to identify and map a system of routes to provide reasonable access for walking, cycling, horse riding and access to inland water. The resultant document is referred to as a Core Paths Plan (CPP). Powers are also conferred upon Local Authorities to maintain, signpost and keep core paths free from barriers to movement.

1.1.2 West Lothian Council (WLC) has prepared a draft CPP for the West Lothian area, which has followed an extensive process of consultation in order to explore the options for a network of paths covering rural and town centre areas. A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was also deemed to be required for the plan, and WSP Environmental Ltd (WSPE) was appointed by WLC to undertake this.

1.2 STATUTORY CONTEXT FOR THE SEA

1.2.1 As Responsible Authority, WLC is required to follow the provisions of SEA under the terms of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 (the Act). As the Plan does not set the framework for development consent, WLC undertook a pre-screening exercise in accordance with Section 7 of the Act, and formed the view that the Plan is of a description set out in Section 5(4) of the Act, which is not exempt from SEA by virtue of Section 7(1).

1.2.2 WLC therefore screened the plan in accordance with Section 9 of the Act and the criteria in Schedule 2. A Screening Report was prepared and submitted to the Consultation Authorities via the SEA Gateway in August 2006, which confirmed WLC's view that, under Section 8(1) of the Act, the Plan may have significant environmental effects and therefore that SEA of the CPP is required. The Screening Report was reviewed by the Consultation Authorities (Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and Historic Scotland (HS)), and it was the opinion of both SNH and HS that there was a likelihood of significant environmental effects.

1.2.3 WLC therefore determined that SEA of the Core Paths Plan was required by the Act, and progressed to SEA Scoping in conjunction with the development of the draft CPP. Further information on the scoping process undertaken, and the way in which it has influenced the final form of the draft CPP and the SEA, is presented in Section 1.7 of this report.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THIS ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

1.3.1 The purpose of this Environmental Report (ER) is to set out the findings of the SEA of the draft CPP. The ER predicts and evaluates the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the draft CPP.

1.3.2 The ES is intended to provide this information for the Consultation Authorities and other organisations and the general public, during the public consultation on the draft CPP. Further information on the approach to consultation activities in relation to the CPP and the SEA is presented in Section 1.6 of this report.

1.4 GUIDANCE

1.4.1 This ER has been prepared with reference to the following SEA guidance and best practice:

- Scottish Executive (2006) Strategic Environmental Assessment Toolkit, Version 1 (Sep 2006).
- European Commission DG Environment (2004) Implementation of Directive 2001/42 on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment;
- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005) A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive;
- Scottish Executive (2003) Environmental Assessment of Development Plans, Interim Planning Advice;
- Scottish Executive Circular 2004/2 (2004) Strategic Environmental Assessment for Development Planning; the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (Scotland) Regulations 2004.

1.5 KEY FACTS ABOUT THE CORE PATHS PLAN

1.5.1 Key facts relating to the CPP are presented below.

Responsible Authority	West Lothian Council.
Title of Plan	West Lothian Core Paths Plan.
Plan Purpose	To provide a basic framework of routes (core paths) within West Lothian for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout their area, with supporting policies to manage, promote, monitor and sustain the network and develop it through successive reviews.
What Prompted the Plan	Under the terms of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, Section 17, local authorities must draw up a plan for a system of paths which will be known as 'core paths' and will be sufficient for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout their area.
Plan subject	Public access and recreation, and transport by non-motorised modes (ie walking, cycling, horse riding and water activities).
Period covered by Plan	Anticipated to be 5 years subject to the timing of the next review of the West Lothian Local Plan into which it is to be integrated in due course. Following a Public Inquiry the Local Plan is expected to be adopted in 2008.
Frequency of Plan updates	The CPP is a new Plan, due to be adopted by 2008. Future updates will be timed with subsequent reviews of the Local Plan.
Plan area	The CPP covers the West Lothian administrative area – 42,504 hectares in total.
Summary of Nature/Content of Plan	<p>The CPP sets out a series of objectives and policies for access and related recreational opportunities for core paths in West Lothian. The Plan also addresses issues of maintenance, publicity and measures to safeguard the network of core paths from development and the environment in which they are set. The Plan includes details of the proposed core path network. The Act requires the following as a minimum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Map or maps of the core path system■ List of designated core paths■ Supporting text
Are there any proposed Plan objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ To define a Core Path Network that meets the spirit of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and guidance provided by the Scottish Executive and can be delivered before the next review.■ To confirm a strategic Core Paths Plan that will provide a basis for expansion of the Core Path Network through future reviews.■ To ensure that the Plan, where possible, assists in delivering the biodiversity, heritage, health and deprivation policies of the council and does not conflict with them.■ To work with land managers to create a positive response to access to the outdoors.■ To address future management, maintenance and monitoring needs.■ To develop community and volunteer involvement in the Core Path Network.■ To identify consultation and communication needs to assist future reviews.



Contact Points

- Queries on the Core Paths Plan document should be addressed to:
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- Queries on the SEA of the draft CPP should be addressed to:
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1.6 CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES

1.6.1 In addition to formal consultation with the Consultation Authorities through the SEA process, West Lothian Council has specifically consulted with the community, interested parties, and organisations with an interest in the content of the CPP.

1.6.2 Prior to preparation of the draft CPP there had not been a local authority wide consultation relating to outdoor access in West Lothian, other than that which informed the Access Strategy adopted in 2000. WLC recognised the importance of stimulating debate in order to assist the public in forming a view, and the need for an Initial Draft CPP prior to the first consultation activities taking place. This initial draft was drawn up in early 2005 and made public in May 2005 at the start of a phased Stage 1 consultation across the district that ran until March 2006. The consultation was organised in three phases - Central, South and North. Each began with the household distribution of a leaflet/questionnaire. Material was sent to councillors, Community Council, Residents Associations and interested bodies representing land managers and users. A total of 37 drop-ins and presentations were held at 35 venues.

1.6.3 In total over 1,000 responses were received and these were analysed by appointed consultants who had assisted WLC to design and deliver of the consultation. The council then considered the independent report and in November 2006 prepared a Proposed Draft CPP. A number of the suggested paths were included in this, with some deferred for future review. Paths were deferred for a variety of reasons, primarily associated with deliverability in relation to their present state, cost and strategic network priorities in relation to providing maximum benefits to the West Lothian community as a whole.

1.6.4 A second round of public consultation ran for six weeks between January 2007 and March 2007. Packs of leaflets and reference material were made available at 37 venues. All WLC Customer Information Service (CIS) offices, libraries and West Lothian Leisure Sports Centres across the district had leaflets and reference material available, as well as a website with online questionnaire. Consultation materials were also sent to Community Councils, Residents Associations, land manager groups and interest groups for people involved in walking, cycling, horse riding and canoeing, and other groups.

1.6.5 To feedback the Council's response to the Stage 1 consultation, a plan was included which made clear which paths were being included in the plan and which were being deferred for future consideration. A CPP Key Diagram 2030 was also included to capture these other paths to provide a longer-term vision as to how the network should develop.

1.6.6 The West Lothian Access Forum was involved in the design of both the Stage 1 and Stage 2 consultations.

1.6.7 A third and final round of public consultation on the draft written statement only was undertaken over a six week period in October/November 2007 to identify any final issues or comments prior to finalisation of the draft plan and the ER.

1.6.8 Specific to the SEA, a workshop was also held in March 2007 with a number of key stakeholders, with the specific purpose of discussing and agreeing the SEA objectives in relation to each of the topics scoped into the assessment. A summary note of the key points raised at this workshop has been provided in the following section. The issues raised were subsequently taken into account in developing the appraisal framework, and have influenced the methodology adopted and the issues considered in this ER.

1.7 SCOPE OF LIKELY SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Overview

1.7.1 Due to the nature and subject of the strategy, there are a number of SEA topics that, in the opinion of the Responsible Authority, do not require to be assessed in detail in the SEA. The scoping process was therefore used to focus the assessment on the most relevant aspects of the environment upon which the potential for significant effects exists.

1.7.2 A Scoping Report was prepared in accordance with Section 15 of the Act, and submitted to the Consultation Authorities in March 2007. The responses to this Scoping Report were considered in detail in undertaking the SEA and drafting the CPP. Responses received from the Consultation Authorities are presented in Appendix F of this ER, along with a comment on how each has been addressed within the SEA.

1.7.3 The scoping process involved identification of a number of environmental topics and issues that have been used to structure the SEA appraisal framework (discussed further in Chapter 3).

Requirements of the Act

1.7.4 The scope and content of the SEA was guided by the information requirements in Schedule 3 of the Act as identified in Table 1.1 (identified as SEA Issues). The table also presents a justification for the view of the Responsible Authority as to which topic areas should be scoped out of this assessment.

Table 1.1: Scoping of Likely Significant Environmental Effects

SEA Issues	Scoped In	Scoped Out	Justification
Biodiversity, fauna, flora	Yes		There is the potential for designated Core Paths in the vicinity of habitats or sites (designated or otherwise) of importance to ecology and nature conservation interest. It is therefore possible for significant direct or indirect effects upon biodiversity, flora or fauna to arise. At the Screening stage, SNH was of the view that the designation of Core Paths “...could cause conflict with habitats or species at particular locations.” This topic area has therefore been considered in detail in the SEA.
Population	Yes		The potential exists for significant positive impacts related to social inclusion and access to recreational opportunities, and reducing levels of isolation through increased access to Core Paths. This topic area has therefore been considered further in the SEA.
Human health	Yes		The potential exists for significant positive impacts relating to human health through increased opportunity for, and access to, recreation and physical activity. This topic area has therefore been considered further in the SEA.
Soil		Yes	It is not predicted that any elements of the plan will result in significant effects on soils. It is possible that works to upgrade paths as a result of their designation could introduce potential impacts; however it is considered that any such impacts would not be significant due to the scale and nature of the paths being designated. At the Screening stage, SEPA was of the view that the CPP is “unlikely to have significant environmental effects” in relation to soils.



SEA Issues	Scoped In	Scoped Out	Justification
			This topic area has not therefore been considered in detail in the SEA.
Water	Yes		<p>It is possible that increased access to inland waterways, as well as their potential designation in West Lothian as a Core Path, could result in increased pressure on the water environment. At the Screening stage, SEPA was of the opinion that the CPP is <i>"unlikely to have significant environmental effects"</i> in relation to water. WLC is in agreement with this view, and this topic area is considered to be marginal in relation to the scope of the SEA, but has remained within it at this stage due to a level of uncertainty. This reflects the need for a precautionary approach to the scoping of environmental topics.</p> <p>This topic area has therefore been considered further in the SEA.</p>
Air		Yes	<p>It is not predicted that any elements of the strategy will result in significant effects upon air. Whilst the potential exists for improvements to local air quality as a result of modal shift from motorised transport to walking and cycling, it is unlikely that any such effect would be significant or measurable in relation to implementation of the CPP. At the Screening stage, SEPA was of the view that the CPP is <i>"unlikely to have significant environmental effects"</i> in relation to air.</p> <p>This topic area has not therefore been considered in detail in the SEA.</p>
Climatic factors		Yes	<p>Whilst the potential exists for a reduction in carbon emissions as a result of modal shift from motorised transport to walking and cycling, it is unlikely that any such effect would be significant or measurable. At the Screening stage, SEPA was of the view that the CPP is <i>"unlikely to have significant environmental effects"</i> in relation to climatic factors.</p> <p>This topic area has not therefore been considered in detail in the SEA.</p>
Material assets		Yes	<p>It is unlikely that the designation of Core Paths would result in any significant environmental impacts to material assets.</p> <p>This topic area has not therefore been considered in detail in the SEA.</p>
Cultural heritage	Yes		<p>The potential exists for core paths to be identified in the vicinity of cultural heritage features and designated areas of importance, and it is therefore possible for significant effects, both positive and negative, upon the cultural heritage to result. At the Screening stage, Historic Scotland was of the view that <i>"...the designation of core paths has the potential to affect the historic environment."</i></p>



SEA Issues	Scoped In	Scoped Out	Justification
			This topic area has therefore been considered further in the SEA.
Landscape		Yes	<p>The designation of core paths in West Lothian will not introduce any significant new features into the landscape that do not currently exist. Nor will it impact significantly on important or sensitive landscapes. At the Screening stage, SNH was of the view that “...effects on landscape could be negative or positive”. The view of WLC is therefore not in accordance with that of SNH.</p> <p>However, given the potential evolution of the CPP over a number of years, it is acknowledged that visual effects may arise from, for example, the introduction of signage and from path erosion from increased future use. However, this is proposed to be addressed within the mitigation measures presented in the ER.</p> <p>This topic area has not been considered in detail in the SEA, other than in relation to the points noted above.</p>

Proposed Scope

1.7.5 Based on the environmental topics defined for this SEA, and recognising the nature, level and scope of the plan and likelihood of significant environmental effects, the Scoping Report concluded that the SEA should be structured around four key environmental topics:

- Ecology and Nature Conservation
- The Aquatic Environment
- Cultural Heritage
- Population and Human Health¹

1.7.6 Broad agreement to the above proposed scope of the SEA was expressed by each of the Consultation Authorities, with the exception of Landscape and Visual Impacts, which should, in the view of SNH, be scoped into the assessment. However, the Responsible Authority has determined that, in SEA terms, the potential for significant environmental effects on landscape and visual is not significant for the reasons identified above. SNH has acknowledged this view in their scoping response (refer to Appendix F), noting a recommendation that “...positive/negative landscape impacts be given consideration when path works are being conducted in open/upland settings and Historic Garden and Designed Landscapes (HGDL)”. Landscape and visual issues have been considered in relation to potential future impacts of future iterations of the CPP, further path development, signage, etc and particular mitigation and monitoring is identified to address this (refer to Chapter 4).

The relationship between the topics included within the assessment and the criteria identified in Schedule 3 of the Act, along with consideration of the key environmental issues for each, is presented in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Relationship between Proposed SEA Topics and Schedule 3 Criteria

Proposed Environmental Topic	Relevant Schedule 3 topics	Key Environmental Issues
Ecology and Nature Conservation	Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Managing increased access to prevent adverse effects on the nature conservation value of designated sites and features. ■ Enhancing understanding of the natural heritage through better

¹ In accordance with guidance in the SEA Toolkit, population and human health will be considered as a combined topic.



Proposed Environmental Topic	Relevant Schedule 3 topics	Key Environmental Issues
		<p>public access and interpretation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To restore and enhance biodiversity through better planning, design and practice. ■ Developing an effective management framework that ensures biodiversity is taken into account in all decision making.
The Aquatic Environment	Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Managing increased access to water to prevent adverse effects upon its quality. ■ Enhancement and where appropriate the development of new core paths should be carried out without jeopardising the local water environment.
Cultural Heritage	Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Managing increased access to prevent adverse effects on the cultural heritage and value of designated sites and features. ■ Enhancing understanding of the cultural heritage through better public access and interpretation. ■ Due care taken to protect the cultural heritage during development and enhancement of core paths.
Population and Human Health	Population, Human health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Social inclusion and improved accessibility for pedestrians. ■ Relevant key health indicators. ■ Relationship between physical and mental health and the accessibility to open space, physical activity and recreation.

1.7.7 In line with the other requirements of Schedule 3 of the Act, the consideration of likely significant environmental effects has included:

- Short, medium and long-term effects;
- Permanent and temporary effects;
- Positive and negative effects; and
- Secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects.

1.7.8 The approach to assessing cumulative and synergistic effects, as well as the results of this assessment, are presented in Chapter 3 of this ER.

1.8 STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

1.8.1 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 sets the context for the plan;
- Chapter 3 present an assessment of the likely significant environmental effects;
- Chapter 4 discusses the proposals for mitigation and monitoring; and
- Chapter 5 identifies the next steps in the CPP and SEA processes.
- Appendices provide supporting information.

2 Context of the Plan

2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.1.1 This section provides the context for the SEA, which was determined through a review of other strategies, plans and programmes to identify relevant issues, collation of baseline information and objectives which are linked in some way with the Plan and/or with the environmental appraisal of it. This section also presents an overview of the relevant environmental baseline conditions, highlighting in particular issues and problems identified therein.

2.2 RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER PLANS, PROGRAMMES AND ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES

2.2.1 An appreciation of the relevance of other legislation, policy and plans to the CPP is an essential step in understanding its context, the relationship with other strategies and in deriving the necessary environmental baseline for the assessment.

2.2.2 A number of plans, programmes and environmental strategies/objectives were reviewed during the scoping stage of the SEA. The full list of these documents is included in Appendix A of this report.

2.2.3 In order to ensure a consistent and rigorous approach to the review process, a proforma table was developed so that the necessary environmental information, objectives and issues could be identified from each strategy and plan reviewed by the SEA team. This table was derived from various sources of current SEA guidance (including tables presented in the SEA Toolkit) in order to make it relevant to the SEA of the Plan.

2.2.4 Completed proformas for each strategy and plan reviewed are included in Appendix B. A summary of the key information identified from this process, including the relationship between the CPP and the most relevant plans reviewed is presented in Table 2.1. The table includes a range of national, regional and local level plans and programmes, and it has been assumed that relevant international legislation and policy has been incorporated at the national level.

Table 2.1: Review of Plans and Programmes and Linkages with the Plan

Name of Plan	Main Requirements of Plan	How it affects or is affected by the Plan
National Cycle Strategy, Department of Transport, October 2004.	Sets out the cycling strategy for the UK with objectives and targets.	The establishment and enhancement of core paths will improve the conditions for current cyclists, and further increase cycling as a sustainable form of transport and as a recreational activity.
Scotland's Biodiversity: It's In Your Hands, Scottish Executive, 2004.	The strategy focuses on the development and enhancement of biodiversity in Scotland making reference to various biodiversity and environmental regulation.	The intensity of core path use will increase with the implementation of the CPP, with the potential to impact on the local biodiversity of the area. An increase in path use could also make a positive contribution to the biodiversity strategy by the use of the resource for people's health, enjoyment and well being and to increase awareness and understanding.
Delivering a Healthy Scotland: Meeting the Challenge	Working across Scottish Executive Departments and other delivery partners to improve the health of everyone in Scotland and reduce the health gap between people living in the most affluent and most deprived communities.	The CPP will help to deliver the Scottish healthy living aims especially in terms of physical activity. The CPP will encourage people to get out and utilise the local town and countryside environment which will also promote the general wellbeing of the region.

Name of Plan	Main Requirements of Plan	How it affects or is affected by the Plan
Scotland's Historic Environment Policy (SHEP 1): Scotland's Historic Environment March 2006.	SHEP 1 is the overarching policy statement for the historic environment providing a framework for more detailed strategic policies and operational policies to inform the day-to-day work of a range of organisations.	There will be instances where the proposed core paths are existing routes that are proximate to areas of West Lothian that are important Historic Environments. No new routes are proposed.
Finalise West Lothian Local Plan, West Lothian Council, 2005	Sets out the local planning framework West Lothian	As a result of good planning the review and enhancements of core paths will enable for increased accessibility to local transport networks, thus encouraging the alternative forms of transport and a shift away from the single occupancy car, particularly in areas of future housing development (CDAs).
A Countryside Access Strategy for West Lothian, December 2000.	Sets out the countryside access issues and policies, aims and objectives.	The promotion of the CPP seeks to increase the number of countryside users which may have implications for the local environment. Increase in use cannot be predicted but use levels will be monitored to inform future reviews of the plan.
Planning for Biodiversity Action: 2005 – 2009, West Lothian Council, 2005	Follows the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.	The intensity of core path use may increase with the implementation of the CPP. This could impact on the local biodiversity of the area.
Joint Health Improvement Plan 2005 – 2006, <i>Health is Everyone's Business</i> , West Lothian Council.	Sets out health improvement aims, objectives and vision - To promote the health and wellbeing of West Lothian Citizens and to reduce inequalities of health across the communities within West Lothian.	The enhancement of the CPP will have positive benefits for the regions health both physically and mentally as there will be more opportunities to physical activity and open recreational space. The link with Community Health Care Partnerships and promotion of health-giving physical activities such as walking and cycling will be an interrelated strategy.
West Lothian Local Transport Strategy 2006 – 2009, Consultation Paper – Draft Issues and Objectives	Sets out the local transport strategy for the region.	The transport strategy will include issues including accessibility to transport which core paths will inevitably improve. Core paths will also enhance cycle routes encouraging an alternative more sustainable mode of transport.
West Lothian on the Move, West Lothian Council, 2003	Strategy for promoting physical activity in West Lothian.	The provision of core paths will improve access to opportunities for recreation and physical activity.
River Almond Catchment Plan	Catchment Management Planning	A section of the proposed Core Paths Plan follows a short length of the River Almond on existing well used routes.

2.2.5 From the review of other plans and programmes, and in particular those listed in the table above, a series of objectives were identified and taken forward for further consideration in deriving a complete set of proposed objectives for the SEA. Relevant objectives identified from the plans and programmes analysed are listed in the review proforma tables in Appendix B. Following the review of plans and programmes, the objectives identified were allocated according to their relevant SEA topic and augmented with other potential SEA objectives identified from relevant guidance documents and those drafted by the SEA team from a number of sources. The resulting list of objectives and sub-objectives is presented in Appendix C of this Scoping Report.

2.2.6 The process of refining and identifying objectives, developing sub-objectives, and their role in the appraisal framework for the SEA is discussed further in Chapter 3.

2.3 ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE

2.3.1 This section identifies the structure of the environmental baseline for the SEA of the CPP and summarises the key environmental issues and problems identified from the review of plans and programmes and the analysis of the baseline environmental conditions undertaken. It provides a summary of the environmental baseline data gathered for West Lothian relevant to the SEA topics identified above. Further details of the environmental baseline which has been gathered for the appraisal are presented within Appendix D.

2.3.2 The collation and analysis of the environmental baseline has been undertaken to a level of detail appropriate to the SEA of the plan. Information has been collated for West Lothian, to reflect the geographical scope of the plan, and its proposed form and content. In addition, specialist baseline studies were commissioned by WLC to report on the natural and cultural heritage of West Lothian. These reports have been used to inform the baseline presented in Appendix D and summarised in Table 2.2.

2.3.3 A summary of the key issues and status of the environmental baseline is presented in Table 2.2. Further analysis of relevant environmental problems in Scotland is presented in Section 2.4 of this report.

Table 2.2: Summary of Environmental Baseline

Environmental Topics	Key Indicators/Issues	Baseline – Key Points	Predicted Future Baseline
Ecology and Nature Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Designated sites: European, National, Regional, Local. ■ Priority habitats and species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Variety of biodiversity in West Lothian. ■ Five habitats with Strategic Action Plans. ■ 84 species have been identified as Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) 'key species'. ■ European Protection Species (EPS), including bats and otter, have a different legal status to national and local BAP species. ■ Indicator species list in LBAP, indicating diversity of habitat quality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No locally-specific data on biodiversity trends are available. ■ Increased awareness and management of biodiversity resources by public, private and voluntary sectors. ■ Development pressure on protected sites and species, although established policy will continue to provide an appropriate level of protection.
Aquatic Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Quality of surface and groundwater ■ Flood risk ■ Numbers of water-based recreational users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ West Lothian aquatic environments include: rivers, burns, canal, ponds, reservoirs and bog/marshes. ■ Two main watercourses: River Almond at Livingston – Class B (fair) and River Avon at Linlithgow – Class B (fair). ■ Union Canal at Broxburn – Class B (fair) ■ Also Water of Leith at 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Water quality within West Lothian is improving. ■ Development activity increasing pressure on the aquatic environment, particularly where it is in proximity to watercourses or involves changes to the drainage and hydrological regime. ■ It is assumed that efforts will continue to be made to protect and improve water quality in line with the



Environmental Topics	Key Indicators/Issues	Baseline – Key Points	Predicted Future Baseline
		<p>Harperrig – Class A1 (Excellent), subject to a Flood Control Scheme in Edinburgh.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Linlithgow Loch – mesotrophic loch but degraded by nutrient inputs. ■ Broxburn and Bathgate at risk of fluvial flooding. ■ Bathgate Hills have drainage and flooding problems. 	<p>requirements of the Water Framework Directive through policy, partnership initiation and retrofitting treatment.</p>
Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Designated sites ■ Non-statutorily protected sites and features 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A wide range of cultural heritage sites ranging from pre-historic remains through to industrial heritage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Continued change as new developments encounter and appropriately deal with previously unknown archaeological and cultural heritage remains ■ As with other components, the impacts associated with development are likely to be greater in areas such as the Core Development Areas (CDAs) where there is a greater focus of proposed development but established policy will continue to provide protection to heritage features and, where relevant, their setting.
Population and Human Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Demographic profile ■ General health (census, Chief Medical Officer's annual report data, etc) ■ Key health indicators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The 2001 census data shows the resident population of West Lothian is 158,714. ■ Population has increased by 10% since the last census in 1991. ■ Figures indicate that the health of the West Lothian population is generally better than the Scottish average. ■ 69.1% of the population are in good health. ■ From the Scottish Household Survey 2006, 53% of people had walked more than ¼ mile in the previous 7 days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The population of West Lothian is increasing, and will do so even more as a result of proposed housing growth identified in the Structure Plan, reflected in the Core Development Areas (CDA) proposed in the local plan. ■ It has been assumed that the rate of physical exercise, e.g. walking and cycling will remain constant.



Environmental Topics	Key Indicators/Issues	Baseline – Key Points	Predicted Future Baseline
		and 3% had cycled the same.	

2.3.4 In assessing the likely significant environmental impacts of the CPP, it is also necessary to consider how the environmental baseline is likely to evolve over time in order to determine whether or not implementation of the Plan has resulted in a change to the environmental baseline over and above that which would have occurred in any event, Table 2.2 summarises evolution of the baseline for key environmental topics. If possible, trend data can be used to project possible future baseline evolution, and where this is available a brief commentary on future baseline conditions has been provided in Appendix D.

2.4 ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

2.4.1 An analysis of environmental problems has been undertaken with reference to the environmental baseline data and the review of strategies, plans and policies undertaken.

2.4.2 The key relevant environmental problems identified from the review of plans and programmes and the baseline data have been summarised in Table 2.3, demonstrating their relevance to or synergy with the plan and its level of scope and influence.

Table 2.3: Environmental Problems Relevant to the Plan

Problem/Issue	Supporting Information (Refer to Appendix D)	Implications for Plan
<i>Ecology and Nature Conservation</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential pressure on the biodiversity of West Lothian as a result of increasing development activity. Importance of protecting locally-specific and other unique habitats such as the oil shale bings. Protection and management of peatlands. Maintenance and protection of river channel and riparian flora and fauna. Unauthorised or illegal access, such as use of motorised forms of recreation, damaging sites and features. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estuaries, peatlands, uplands, ancient woodlands, wetlands, old grasslands and heather moorland are habitats of international significance and are irreplaceable. West Lothian has excellent examples of all of these habitats. The LBAP identifies eight strategic habitats (five of which have Strategic Action Plans). Planning for Biodiversity Action 2005-2009, West Lothian Council – aspiration for no further reduction in area of raised bog in West Lothian. Protection of riparian and river channel ecology. WLC commissioned report - Biodiversity Assessment of the 'Virtual' Core Path Network of West Lothian, March 2005, Lothian Wildlife Information Centre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities to use the CPP process to improve interpretation and managed access to sites of biodiversity and ecological importance across West Lothian. Consideration of the location of peatlands in the vicinity of designated core paths. Path signage and promotion to encourage path users towards the most suitable paths for their journey and prevent degradation of the local environment through inappropriate use. Particular consideration of riparian habitats in designation of core paths near inland water. Monitoring and, if necessary, active management of water-based core paths. Discouraging direct access into the most sensitive areas and habitats. Need to consider mitigation through discouraging unauthorised/illegal activity.
<i>Population and Human Health</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower than average health in West 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health in Scotland (CMO Fifth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximise positive health effects

Problem/Issue	Supporting Information (Refer to Appendix D)	Implications for Plan
<p>Lothian compared to the wider Lothian Region.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increasing obesity and declining levels of physical activity across Scotland. ■ Comparative poor health of people in Scotland compared to other parts of the UK (known as the "Scottish Effect"). 	<p>Annual Report).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ West Lothian Council Corporate Plan 2003-2007 	<p>(both physical and mental) of increasing access to recreational opportunities, and promoting walking and cycling as sustainable forms of transport.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Active promotion of core paths to increase knowledge and understanding of opportunities to walk and cycle.
<i>Aquatic Environment</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Water quality of rivers in West Lothian ■ Aspiration for new cycleway and one continuous footpath along the River Almond, identified from the Catchment Management Plan. ■ Use and protection of canals and towpaths. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ River Almond Catchment Management Plan ■ Planning for Biodiversity Action 2005-2009, West Lothian Council – Protection of river channels supporting semi-natural assemblages of flora and fauna. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The CPP will consider implications of, for example, upgrading path surfacing on increasing surface water runoff and will incorporate measures to protect water quality across West Lothian. ■ Monitoring and, if necessary, active management of water-based core paths.
<i>Cultural Heritage</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Vulnerability of historic properties to vandalism and break-in. ■ Protecting the historic interest of canal towpaths. ■ Unauthorised or illegal access, such as use of motorised forms of recreation, damaging sites and features. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ WLC commissioned report – West Lothian Core Path Network, Listed Buildings and Designed Landscapes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Opportunities to use the CPP process to improve interpretation and managed access to cultural heritage sites across West Lothian. ■ Careful consideration of the effects of core path designation on the vulnerability of historic sites, properties and features. ■ Careful consideration of the canal towpath in any resurfacing proposals. Unlikely that canal towpaths will ever be suitable for all-user access. ■ Need to consider mitigation through discouraging unauthorised/illegal activity.

2.4.3 The environmental problems identified in Table 2.3 were fed back into the CPP process to inform its development in accordance with the environmental problems identified. Similarly, relevant information and issues highlighted in the review of other strategies, plans and policies (and summarised in Table 2.1) were used in the development of the plan to ensure consistency with other established legislation, plans and policy affecting the environment of West Lothian.

2.5 THE ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF AREAS LIKELY TO BE SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTED

2.5.1 The SEA Directive requires consideration of the environmental characteristics of the areas likely to be significantly affected" (Annex I (c)).

2.5.2 Guidance on SEA from the EU states (paragraph 5.23):

“In (c) the focus is on the areas that are of special interest for the assessment, namely the areas likely to be significantly affected by the plan or programme. A description of the environmental characteristics of these areas is to be given in the report”.

2.5.3 Based on the work undertaken at the Scoping Stage for this SEA, areas within the plan area that are likely to be significantly affected have been identified. It should be noted that in identifying these areas we are not concluding that effects will occur. The purpose of the SEA is to highlight potential effects so that appropriate amendments to the Plan and mitigation measures can be suggested. The areas that could be significantly affected are as follows:

- Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar Site (Firth of Forth only)
- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- National Nature Reserves (NNR)
- Local Nature Reserves (LNR)
- Wildlife Sites and Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS)
- Country Parks
- Tree Preservation Orders (TPO)
- Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland Inventory Sites
- Raised Bog Inventory Sites
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM)
- Listed Buildings (LB)
- Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes (HGDL)
- Conservation Areas (CA)



3 Assessment of Environmental Effects

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 This section presents the scope, approach and findings of the SEA of the draft CPP. It starts with a discussion of the approach to alternatives, followed by the appraisal framework that has been used to appraise the environmental effects of the draft CPP. The assessment has been undertaken using the SEA objectives and framework developed during the scoping stage of the SEA and refined to reflect the consultation responses received.

3.2 ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Overall Approach

3.2.1 The CPP comprises two main components that have the potential to result in significant environmental effects, namely the individual paths identified (i.e. the network itself) and the policies which sit behind the network in relation to its ongoing management, maintenance and monitoring. As a result, the SEA has undertaken to assess the environmental effects of both paths and policies within specific and bespoke appraisal matrices enabling the assessment to explicitly identify where assumed mitigation has been included within the appraisal, what the likely significance of environmental effects is predicted to be for each topic area in relation to the SEA objectives, and a comment where particular issues, designations, or sensitivities etc warrant specific identification. Opportunities for additional mitigation and enhancement have also been identified.

Framework for Environmental Assessment

3.2.2 The SEA was undertaken using a set of objectives that cover each of the environmental topics scoped into the assessment. A framework for the environmental appraisal was presented in the Scoping Report, which set out the proposed SEA topics, objectives and indicators to guide and structure the appraisal of the draft CPP. This framework is represented below in Table 3.1.

3.2.3 The appraisal objectives were derived and presented at two levels: firstly a high level or strategic objective setting out the overall intention and direction for each environmental topic, and secondly a set of sub-objectives which provide more specific appraisal intentions. The synthesis of these objectives and sub-objectives drew on:

- objectives of relevance to the assessment identified in the review of relevant strategies, plans and programmes (see Appendices A to C for details of the strategies, plans and policies reviewed and the objectives identified);
- the environmental baseline including trends, issues and areas of specific environmental problems; and
- a review of appropriate “generic” objectives from relevant Scottish and UK guidance documents on SEA.

3.2.4 The objectives were selected and drafted by the Responsible Authority and its SEA team through an internal workshop process. These were then refined through a stakeholder meeting held in March 2007, the purpose of which was to discuss the SEA of the CPP and in particular its objectives and sub-objectives. The process of objective setting has been guided by the need to maintain the relevance of the objectives to the specific scope and influence of the CPP. The objectives and indicators were further refined to reflect the responses received to the Scoping Report.

Table 3.1: SEA Framework

SEA Topic	Headline Objective	Sub Objectives	Environmental Appraisal Indicators (how will the CPP affect...)	Factors influencing SEA framework
Ecology and Nature Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To protect, maintain and promote understanding of the natural heritage of West Lothian. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To safeguard designated sites and features. To protect habitats and species. To promote responsible access to and understanding/interpretation of natural heritage sites and features. To take cognisance of the location of such sites and features in relation to the proposed core path network, and ensure upgrading and maintenance work is undertaken in a way which protects them. To recognise, protect and promote the unique natural heritage features of West Lothian. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designated sites and features. Habitat quality and integrity. Species populations. Priority habitats and species identified in the LBAP. Species and habitats specific or unique to West Lothian, such as peatland and oil shale bings. Provision of interpretative facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location of designated sites and features in relation to the core path network, and the potential for direct effects from path construction. Likelihood of increased path usage having a detrimental effect on designated sites, habitats and species. Particular focus on, and the need to avoid any loss of, peatlands. Sensitive treatment of core paths on or adjacent to designated sites. Potential for cross-promotion/interpretation of the core path network with sites and features of natural heritage interest.
Aquatic Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To protect and promote the aquatic environment of West Lothian. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To protect the water environment from the impacts of increased use. To design and maintain a core path network that respects natural hydrological systems. To ensure development of the core path network does not increase flood risk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surface water quality. Flooding and flood risk. Visitor numbers taking part in water-based recreational activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment and maintenance of core paths in proximity to watercourses. Increased runoff from paths as a result of surface upgrading. Potential for increased recreational use of designated watercourses.
Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To protect and promote the historic environment and cultural heritage of West Lothian. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To safeguard designated sites and features. To promote responsible access to and understanding/interpretation of cultural heritage sites and features. 	Proximity to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scheduled Ancient Monuments. Conservation Areas. Listed Buildings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Location of designated sites and features in relation to the core path network, and the potential for direct effects from path construction. Likelihood of increased path usage



SEA Topic	Headline Objective	Sub Objectives	Environmental Appraisal Indicators (how will the CPP affect...)	Factors influencing SEA framework
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To take cognisance of the location of such sites and features in relation to the proposed core path network, and ensure upgrading and maintenance work is undertaken in a way which protects them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes. ■ Other sites and features of interest (NMRS, SMR sites, etc). ■ Provision of interpretative facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> having a detrimental effect on designated sites and features. ■ Consideration of the treatment of the canal towpath in relation to the potential for buried archaeology, and the industrial character and setting of the canal. ■ Sensitive use of path promotion and signage, on or adjacent to designated sites, listed buildings, etc. ■ Potential for cross-promotion/interpretation of the core path network with sites and features of cultural heritage interest.
Population and Human Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To contribute to improving the health and wellbeing of the people of West Lothian. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To provide access for all to a network of core paths. ■ To increase opportunities for people to undertake physical activity. ■ To maximise the health benefits of and make provision for walking and cycling. ■ To actively manage the interface between core path users and motorised forms of transport. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The number of people using the path network for recreation, accessing services, getting to work, etc. ■ Physical fitness and obesity. ■ General wellbeing. ■ Number of roads crossed by core paths. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Potential to improve the general health of the population through improved facilities and increased promotion and awareness-raising. ■ Building on the exposure gained through the public consultation to maximise awareness of the path network. ■ Improving linkages within and between communities and the wider countryside and towns.

Application of the Framework

3.2.5 The proposed appraisal framework presented in Table 3.1 provides an outline for the SEA. The detailed assessment of the CPP required an assessment of the policies and proposals as they developed for the draft CPP, and of each individual path proposed for designation, in relation to the environmental baseline.

3.2.6 At a high level, the framework was considered in the context of the policies contained in the draft CPP. This process enabled an understanding of the potential significant environmental effects of the policies themselves. In addition to this, an appraisal template was developed for application to each of the clusters of paths to be appraised, to enable identification of the likely physical works being proposed and their relationship with the existing and predicted future environmental baseline.

3.2.7 Environmental impacts were predicted for each topic using the SEA framework to guide the scope of the assessment. In particular, the potential impacts of the draft CPP are predicted in relation to the detailed criteria for each topic (see Table 3.1).

3.2.8 Environmental effects were evaluated taking into account available information on the proposed path network, assumed mitigation measures and the nature and sensitivity of the affected aspects of the predicted environmental baseline. The significance of predicted effects is therefore reported following mitigation where known or assumed (ie the significance of the residual environmental effects).

3.2.9 The framework was used to provide an appraisal of the environmental effects of each cluster of proposed core paths, and then to consider the cumulative and synergistic environmental effects of developing the network as a whole. The plan has been examined to identify:

- The cumulative effects arising from the policies in the CPP affecting a range of environmental media and receptors;
- The cumulative effect on the environment of designating all of the paths in the proposed network; and
- The cumulative effects on one or more environmental resource from adoption of the CPP and any other relevant plan or programme.

Structure of the Appraisal

In order to simplify the assessment process, and to present the results in a manageable and meaningful way, each of the 39 identified core paths within the draft CPP were allocated to one of five path 'clusters', which are generally grouped to reflect their geographic location within West Lothian. Table 3.2 identifies each of these path clusters, and the proposed core paths which fall into each.

Table 3.2: Path Clustering

Path Cluster	Component Paths
Cluster 1 – National Cycle Network 75	1 – National Cycle Network 75
Cluster 2 – Union Canal	2a – Union Canal Water Path 2b – Union Canal Tow Path
Cluster 3 – West Lothian North	3 – Linlithgow Loch Circular 4 – Linlithgow and Beecraigs 5 – Beecraigs East/West Path 6 – River Avon Heritage Trail – Linlithgow Bridge to Union Canal 7 – Fisher's Brae 11 – Winchburgh to Kirkliston Pavement 12 – Threemiletown and Old Philpstoun Path 34 – Round the Forth National Cycle Network 76 35 – Linlithgow Loch to Union Canal Link
Cluster 4 – West Lothian South and West	16 – Polbeth to West Calder Path 19 – Whitburn to Stoneyburn Path 20 – Ballencreif Toll and Balbardie Path



Path Cluster	Component Paths
	21 – Armadale Round Town Path – North and West 22 – Armadale Round Town Path – East 23 – Whitburn Town Path 24 – Fauldhouse Rail Path 25 – Whiterigg Circular 26 – Puir Wife's Brae Path 33 – Almond Valley Path 36 – Dechmont Law Link 37 – River Almond to West Calder 38 – Blaeberry Circular 39 – Stoneyburn to Loganlea
Cluster 5 – West Lothian South and East	8 – Brox Burn Path 9 – Roman Camps Path 10 – Dechmont to Newbridge Cycle Path 13 – Linhouse Circular 14 - Murieston Trail 15 – East Calder, Calderwood and Linhouse Path 17 – Uphall to East Calder Path 18 – Feeder Canal Path 27 – River Almond at Almondvale – water path 28 – Livingston (Nell Burn Path) 29 – Livingston (Railway Path) 30 – Livingston (Harrysmuir Path) 31 – Livingston (Loan Path) 32 – Livingston (Killandean Path)

Prediction and Evaluation of Effects

3.2.10 Application of the detailed appraisal indicators presented in Table 3.1 has reflected the extent to which it is possible to quantify the effects of the draft CPP. Most elements have been assessed qualitatively, drawing on professional judgement. However, wherever possible, the SEA team has sought to quantify the predicted effects of the draft CPP.

Assumptions and Limitations

3.2.11 In order to enable the assessment to be undertaken, a number of assumptions have been made, and these are identified explicitly as follows:

- Any works undertaken by WLC in implementing the draft CPP will be done so within the requirements of all legislation, and in particular those identified in the appraisal tables in Appendix G in relation to protection of the environment.
- In planning and undertaking any works in implementing the draft CPP, WLC will, as far as reasonably practicable, presume against any works that would directly affect designated sites and features.
- All physical path upgrading works and works to install signage and interpretation will be done so within the framework of an environmental management plan with the overriding aim of protecting designated sites and features, protecting all watercourses and preventing impacts to human health. In addition, any such works will be undertaken with a view to maintaining existing access at all times, or providing reasonable temporary alternative routes where this cannot be achieved.



- In order to identify sites and features within the appraisal, a buffer of 500m has been used around all paths. In relation to any Natura 2000 sites, this buffer was extended to 1km.
- Path alignments have been assessed based on the most up to date information on the routes most likely to emerge. However, there are some routes such as the NCN 75, which are likely to change as a result of future work. If these alignments change significantly the Responsible Authority will identify the likelihood of significant environmental effects at the earliest opportunity and determine the need or otherwise for further assessment to be undertaken at that time.

3.3 APPROACH TO ALTERNATIVES

3.3.1 Article 5 of the SEA Directive requires a description and evaluation of *“the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the plan or programme, and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme”*.

3.3.2 As the requirement to produce a CPP is set by the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, there is no alternative to producing the plan per se, so a ‘Business as Usual’ or ‘No Plan’ alternative would not be reasonable and has therefore not been assessed. However, work in developing the plan has been extensive, and consideration of the most appropriate paths to include in the draft CPP has been undertaken in consultation with key organisations, individuals and interested parties (see Section 1.6 in relation to consultation activities undertaken by WLC throughout development of the CPP).

3.3.3 The form and content of the proposed plan has been influenced by the extensive consultation undertaken. However, there are a number of relevant factors in considering whether a proposed path should be included as a core path. These include value for money in terms of gaining the maximum public benefit for the investment required, and environmental considerations. To appraise all possible alternatives of the form and content of the CPP would therefore be an impossible task, and would not in any event provide useful information. The appraisal therefore focuses on the core paths that have remained in the proposed network following consideration of these and other factors, with a view to appraising the environmental effects of the proposed network and seeking to incorporate appropriate mitigation measures.

3.3.4 Key stakeholders, including those with an interest in environmental aspects of the CPP, have been involved throughout the development and refinement of the draft CPP.

3.4 ASSESSMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Assessing Significance

3.4.1 In relation to each relevant aspect of the draft CPP (objectives, policies and paths), the predicted environmental effects were assessed in relation to their nature, magnitude and significance. For each environmental topic area, a conclusion was reached as to the significance of the effects predicted, and additional comments presented where appropriate. All predicted effects (including short term/permanent, direct and indirect) were classified on the following six-point scale, with supporting information and justification also presented in the appraisal matrices:

■ Major Positive	++
■ Minor Positive	+
■ Neutral	0
■ Minor Negative	-
■ Major Negative	--
■ Uncertain	?

Assessment of Objectives and Policies

3.4.2 Each of the Objectives and Policies within the draft CPP was considered in relation to the SEA objectives for each topic, taking into account the environmental legislation within which these objectives and policies will be implemented. This legislation, which is in place in order to protect those aspects of the environment within the scope of this assessment, has therefore been assumed as “built in mitigation”, and the assessment of effects consequently



assumes that implementation of the policies will be undertaken in line with all legislation in place to protect the environment.

3.4.3 Each objective identified in the draft CPP has a set of policies which seek to deliver that objective. As a result, an appraisal matrix was developed for each objective, taking into account the policies which underpin it and consequently the actions likely to be taken by WLC in order to secure the proposed objective. Table 3.3 presents a summary of the predicted significant environmental effects of the objectives and policies in the draft CPP. Full appraisal matrices are presented in Appendix G.

Table 3.3: Summary of Predicted Environmental Effects (Objectives and Policies)

Objective	E&NC	AE	CH	P&HH	Summary
Objective 1: Define a Core Path Network that meets the spirit of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and guidance provided by the Scottish Executive.	0	0	0	0	This overarching objective provides the impetus for implementation of the plan overall. It will not, in itself, result in significant environmental effects. It will be important to ensure that monitoring complies with the requirements arising from the SEA Directive, i.e. monitoring for unforeseen adverse environmental effects.
Objective 2: The Core Paths Plan will provide a basis for expansion of the Core Path Network through future reviews.	+	+	+	+	Overall, the expansion of the Core Path Network (CPN) has the potential to result in further impacts to the environment, which must be identified, monitored and addressed if and when they arise. Integrating the CPP process with the local plan will provide a mechanism to enable this to take place and also for developer contributions to add to enhancement of the network in a co-ordinated and effective manner.
Objective 3: Ensure that the Plan, where possible, assists in delivering the biodiversity, heritage, health and regeneration policies of the Council and does not conflict with them.	+	+	+	+	The overall purpose of this policy is to introduce a monitoring regime that will help protect biodiversity, heritage and human health from the potential adverse effects of implementing the CPP. The monitoring regime identified here will also require to be broadened to encapsulate all aspects of the environment (as identified in the SEA Directive). It is considered that this can be best achieved through integration with the local plan process.
Objective 4: Work with land managers to create a positive response to access to the outdoors and promote core paths as a means of managing access.	+	+	+	+	Co-operation with land-owners and other organisations provides the opportunity to manage access to the CPN in a co-ordinated manner. This will help avoid potential effects, e.g. through a joint approach to informing users of the network about how their behaviour might impact on the network and a co-ordinated approach to the location and improvement of facilities so as to avoid negative effects on the environment.
Objective 5: Address future management, maintenance and monitoring needs.	+	+	0	0	Active management of the core path network will assist in identifying potential issues in relation to cultural heritage sites and features early and preventing or addressing these proactively.
Objective 6: Promote the Core Paths Plan and develop community and volunteer involvement in the Core Path Network.	+	+	+	+	Publicising and promotion of the network has the potential to increase use, with the associated negative and positive benefits identified through this SEA process. The focus should be on promotion of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code in the early stages of implementation to ensure that individuals are aware of their roles and responsibilities in taking reasonable access.
Objective 7: Identify consultation and communication needs in order to assist future reviews.	+	+	+	0	The policies provide the basis for reviewing the CPN in a co-ordinated manner. This will provide the basis for protecting environmental features when the CPN is reviewed, e.g. when expansion of the network is considered.



Assessment of Path Clusters

3.4.4 In order to assess the path clusters identified above, an interactive GIS database was constructed containing all of the environmental baseline information and designations identified through the digital datasets held by each of the Consultation Authorities, and by WLC, as summarised in Appendix D of this ER. The layer identifying each of the proposed paths was overlain onto the constraints information to identify where a proposed Core Path has the potential to interact with a known feature on the ground. From this, it was possible to quantify the number of sites affected by each path cluster, and to take a judgement on the likelihood of significant environmental effects for each topic area based upon the potential for physical works to be undertaken (for example path upgrading, signage etc).

3.4.5 An appraisal matrix, similar in structure to that used to assess the CPP objectives and policies, was constructed for each of the five path clusters. Again, all predicted effects were classified on the above-mentioned six-point scale, with supporting information and justification also presented in the appraisal matrices.

3.4.6 Table 3.4 presents an overall summary of the predicted significance environmental effects of each of the five clusters of paths, as identified in Table 3.2, within the draft CPP. Full appraisal matrices are presented in Appendix G.

3.5 CUMULATIVE AND SYNERGISTIC EFFECTS

3.5.1 The appraisal thus far has considered path clusters, and their individual component paths, to identify areas where there is the potential for environmental effects. However, in order to understand fully the likely significant environmental effects of the draft CPP, the cumulative effects of each of the clusters must be considered in their totality. The final row in Table 3.4 presents a summary of the predicted overall effects of the proposed path network.

3.5.2 Overall, it is considered that the effects of each of the different clusters of paths on the environmental topics assessed will not be altered by considering them in combination. The one exception to this is the potential beneficial population and human health effects from increased physical activity and from improved interpretation and signage. This is due to the synergistic effects of having an overall cohesive network in place, and promoting this through interpretative materials. In addition, the draft CPP overall provides the opportunity for WLC to promote the Scottish Outdoor Access Code to spread as widely as possible an understanding of the principles of responsible and reasonable access.

Table 3.4: Summary of Predicted Environmental Effects

Path Cluster	E&NC	AE	CH	P&HH	Summary
Cluster 1 – National Cycle Network 75	0	0	0	+	<p>Overall, it is considered that the designation of Cluster 1 will have no significant adverse effects upon the environmental topics scoped into the assessment. There are a range of measures identified above whose specific goal is to prevent significant adverse effects of path works and increased usage. Furthermore, the legislative provisions protecting the environment are assumed to be complied with at all times. There are likely to be direct positive benefits to human health through increased awareness and use of paths, and educational benefits from interpretative materials and promotion of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. This will also have indirect secondary effects for ecology and cultural heritage through increasing understanding.</p> <p>As a National Cycle Network (NCN) route, the future alignment of Cluster 1 may be influenced by projects such as the Bathgate-Airdrie rail link that are largely outside of the influence of the CPP. Any significant change in alignment will be reviewed for significant environmental effects in future reviews of the CPP.</p>
Cluster 2 – Union Canal	0	0	+	+	<p>Overall, it is considered that the designation of Cluster 2 will have no significant adverse effects upon the environmental topics scoped into the assessment. There are a range of measures identified above whose specific goal is to prevent significant adverse effects of path works and increased usage. Increased usage brings a slightly elevated risk of unforeseen pollution incidents as a result of spillages from motorised vessels on the waterway, however the legislative provisions protecting the environment are assumed to be complied with at all times and will limit any resultant impact of this potentially increased risk. In addition, it is assumed that British Waterways will continue to exercise management responsibilities in areas of its jurisdiction.</p> <p>There are likely to be direct positive benefits to the cultural heritage interest of the route as the canal setting could be enhanced by increased usage. Population and human health can also be expected to benefit through increased awareness and use of paths, and educational benefits from interpretative materials and promotion of the Waterways Code and Scottish Outdoor Access Code. This will also have indirect secondary effects for ecology and cultural heritage through increasing understanding.</p>
Cluster 3 – West Lothian North	0	0	0	+	<p>Overall, it is considered that the designation of Cluster 3 will have no significant adverse effects upon the environmental topics scoped into the assessment. There are a range of measures identified above whose specific goal is to prevent significant adverse effects of path works and increased usage. Furthermore, the legislative provisions protecting the environment are assumed to be complied with at all times. There are likely to be direct positive benefits to human health through increased awareness and use of paths, and educational benefits from interpretative materials and promotion of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. This will also have indirect secondary effects for ecology and cultural heritage through increasing understanding.</p> <p>Upgrading of NCN 76 has the potential to affect the Firth of Forth SSSI/SPA/Ramsar site. Such impacts are being considered at the regional level in relation to the requirement for Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA).</p>
Cluster 4 – West Lothian South and West	0	0	0	+	<p>Overall, it is considered that the designation of Cluster 3 will have no significant adverse effects upon the environmental topics scoped into the assessment. There are a range of measures identified above whose specific goal is to prevent significant adverse effects of path works and increased usage. Furthermore, the legislative provisions protecting the environment are assumed to be complied with at all</p>



Path Cluster	E&NC	AE	CH	P&HH	Summary
					<p>times. There are likely to be direct positive benefits to human health through increased awareness and use of paths, and educational benefits from interpretative materials and promotion of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. This will also have indirect secondary effects for ecology and cultural heritage through increasing understanding.</p> <p>A number of SSSIs are either traversed or located within proximity to proposed core paths in this cluster, and these sites must be appropriately protected to ensure that, if increased usage does occur it does not result in detrimental effects. This should be achievable through appropriate visitor management and signage.</p>
Cluster 5 – West Lothian South and East	0	0	0	+	<p>Overall, it is considered that the designation of Cluster 5 will have no significant adverse effects upon the environmental topics scoped into the assessment. There are a range of measures identified above whose specific goal is to prevent significant adverse effects of path works and increased usage. Furthermore, the legislative provisions protecting the environment are assumed to be complied with at all times. Designation/Improvement of these paths including lighting for increased safety can be expected to bring about a positive benefit to population health by encouraging these forms of commuter transport. In addition the opportunity exists for educational benefits from interpretative materials and promotion of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. This will also have indirect secondary effects for ecology and cultural heritage through increasing understanding.</p>
Overall	0	0	0	+	<p>Overall, the clusters in combination will result in broadly similar effects, and it is considered that the draft CPP in its totality will have no significant adverse effects upon the environmental topics scoped into the assessment. There are a range of measures identified whose specific goal is to prevent significant adverse effects of path works and increased usage. Furthermore, the legislative provisions protecting the environment are assumed to be complied with at all times. There are likely to be direct positive benefits to human health through increased awareness and use of paths, and educational benefits from interpretative materials and promotion of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. This will also have indirect secondary effects for ecology and cultural heritage through increasing understanding.</p>

4 Mitigation and Monitoring

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 This section presents an overview of the mitigation measures which have been assumed and identified through the appraisal of the environmental effects of the Development Framework. The key mitigation commitments are highlighted in Section 4.2 along with the organisations with a role or responsibility to secure or contribute to implementation. Section 4.3 identifies the relevant indicators which may be used to monitor the effects as the draft CPP is adopted and subsequently implemented.

4.2 MITIGATION

4.2.1 Mitigation is an essential component of the SEA process. The appraisal findings, in terms of the significance of the predicted residual environmental effects of the draft CPP, has been based on assumptions made by the SEA team that certain minimum mitigation and best practices would be adopted and adhered to during implementation of the plan, and in particular in relation to any physical path and signage works. These relate particularly to the various in-built legal mechanisms in place to protect the environment, including European, UK and Scottish legislation (such as the Water Framework Directive, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservations Areas (Scotland) Act 1997). All of the assumed (and therefore 'in-built' mitigation measures) are identified in the appraisal tables presented in Appendix G.

4.2.2 A summary of the topic specific mitigation measures identified in the appraisal is presented in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Topic Specific Mitigation Measures

Mitigation Measure	Stakeholder
<i>Ecology and Nature Conservation</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ It will be necessary to both promote the provisions of the SOAC to the widest possible audience, and to effectively manage the behaviour of path users at the point of interaction.■ Any path works within or adjacent to a SSSI should be undertaken in a way which does not detrimentally affect the site, and should be screened for any legislative requirements of the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 or the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and any licensing requirements complied with in full.■ All path works, and particularly in areas such as Country Parks, must be undertaken without inhibiting existing access arrangements as far as reasonably practicable. Where this is not practical, alternative arrangements must be put in place.■ WLC must satisfy itself that consideration of the need for Habitats Regulations Assessment in relation to the Firth of Forth adequately ensures that all legal requirements and duties placed upon it are complied with.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ West Lothian Council■ SNH■ Access Forum
<i>Aquatic Environment</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Any path upgrading works in areas identified as at risk of flooding must be implemented in order to ensure that increased runoff does not increase the risk of flooding.■ Any path works in proximity to watercourses must be implemented in line with an agreed environmental management plan compliant with SEPA Pollution Prevention Guidelines (PPG).■ Towpath information boards along the Union Canal at regular intervals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ West Lothian Council■ British Waterways



Mitigation Measure	Stakeholder
publicising the pollution risks and encouraging responsible behaviour from water uses will further minimise unacceptable impact on water environment.	
<i>Cultural Heritage</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The setting of the SAMs may be affected if any path works are likely to be undertaken in proximity, and it will be necessary to liaise with Historic Scotland in this regard. ■ All path works within Conservation Areas must be implemented to ensure that materials and signage etc are in keeping with the character of the area, and advice sought from the local authority archaeologist and Historic Scotland as appropriate. ■ Any path works or features such as signage and promotion will be undertaken with due cognisance to the setting of listed buildings. ■ The provisions of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code should be promoted and reinforced to ensure that all of society is aware of their rights and responsibilities in order to prevent potential negative effects of increased usage on sites and features. Thereafter, specific interpretative materials may be appropriate to promote understanding of particular sites and features such as SAMs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ West Lothian Council ■ Historic Scotland ■ Access Forum
<i>Population and Human Health</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Any path signage and information on the network, and interpretative materials should be equality-proofed to ensure that no members or groups in society are excluded from making use of, and understanding, signage. ■ No member of society should be excluded, either physically or otherwise, from using the network. Where reasonably practicable, provision for disabled access on all identified paths will be ensured. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ West Lothian Council

4.2.3 There are number of overarching mitigation measures, or measures which relate to landscape and visual effects (which were scoped out of the SEA), that have been identified with a view to addressing the potential for future iterations of the CPP to result in significant environmental effects. The following measures were identified through the workshop held to discuss the SEA objectives:

- The promotion of core paths in the early stages of plan implementation should focus on promotion of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) and how to exercise access rights responsible. This can be followed by more emphasis on promotion of individual sites, for example of cultural heritage or ecological value, once the principles of the code are more widely understood, adopted and enforced.
- Provision and regular emptying of litter and dog foul bins at sites where people may congregate to take access, in order to help prevent secondary human health and visual effects of litter.
- Whilst the CPP cannot and should not seek to prevent access to any path by any mode, promotion of different paths can be targeted to specific user groups to maximise their use by the most appropriate users. Such an approach would reduce the likelihood of interaction problems arising (for example between cyclist using paths that are predominantly bridleways) and prevent degradation of path surfaces caused by inappropriate use (for example by equestrians using paths predominantly suited to walkers).

4.2.4 For each environmental topic within the scope of the assessment, there is a range of assumed (in-built) mitigation identified in the tables in Appendix G. WLC, in implementing the draft CPP, will take ultimate responsibility to ensure that all of the measures identified above and in the appraisal tables are implemented.



4.3 MONITORING

4.3.1 The SEA Directive requires monitoring to identify unforeseen adverse effects and to enable appropriate remedial action to be taken. It is therefore important to ensure that adequate procedures are in place to monitor the effects of the CPP as it is implemented, and to provide a mechanism to respond to unforeseen effects. In general terms, one of the main advantages of identifying a skeletal network in the first instance is to limit the likelihood of unforeseen effects and to enable WLC to monitor the effects of implementation and to adapt and evolve the CPP based on this experience. This will be achieved through two principle mechanisms:

- Maintaining contact and sharing experiences of implementation through the proposed WLC cross-services steering group, and the significant and ongoing role of the Access Forum; and
- Through integration with the Local Plan, in order to understand the contribution of the CPP to changes in the environmental baseline within the context of the overall development strategy for the region.

4.3.2 In implementing the local plan (the process of which will be integrated with the CPP process), WLC is required to prepare an Annual Monitoring Report. When a set of monitoring indicators is developed to enable this to take place, it is recommended that these indicators are also capable of monitoring implementation of the CPP.

4.3.3 In addition to the topics scoped into this assessment, it will be necessary for monitoring indicators to include consideration of all of the topics identified in the SEA Directive. For the avoidance of doubt, these are:

- Biodiversity;
- Population;
- Human health;
- Fauna;
- Flora;
- Soil;
- Water;
- Climatic factors;
- Material assets;
- Cultural heritage; and
- Landscape.

4.3.4 Whilst a number of the objectives and policies in the draft CPP identify that monitoring will be undertaken, the precise mechanisms through which this will take place, and the indicators to be used, are not yet known. However, there are a wide range of organisations and stakeholders who currently undertake monitoring in West Lothian, and who will be engaged through the access forum and the local plan process in order to identify and coordinate relevant monitoring activities and data to inform future revisions of the plan and ensure that unforeseen environmental effects are identified if they arise.

4.3.5 In relation to the potential environmental effects of the plan (including all of the SEA topics listed above), WLC will act in a coordinating role, principally through the Access Forum, to collate all of the relevant monitoring data. WLC will work in collaboration with other agencies, stakeholders and landowners in this regard. This will include access and countryside rangers, other departments of WLC, the Woodland Trust and Central Scotland Forest Trust, British Waterways, SNH, Historic Scotland, SEPA , etc.

4.3.6 The appraisal process did identify one specific monitoring requirement, in relation to the potential impact on raised bogs, of which there are a number identified in West Lothian. It is possible that increased usage of paths across raised bogs may result in a level of compaction that could alter the current drainage regime and consequently affect the integrity of the bog. It will therefore be necessary to monitor to ensure that the drainage provisions are adequate for the level of anticipated use in order to ensure that WLC remains compliant with the Habitats Regulations.



5 Next Steps

5.1 PROPOSED CONSULTATION AND TIMESCALES

5.1.1 In addition to the consultation that has been undertaken in developing the draft CPP and in undertaking the SEA, there is also a formal period of consultation required prior to adoption of the CPP. The Scoping Report identified that the draft CPP and ER will be placed on deposit for a period of 12 weeks.

5.1.2 Following this formal public consultation, the comments received from the SEA Consultation Authorities and other representations from the public will be taken into account in the final drafting of the CPP for adoption, which will be published together with a post adoption SEA Statement.

5.1.3 The draft CPP and this ER are published simultaneously in order to ensure that any comments raised on the SEA and its findings still have the opportunity to influence the final form and content of the adopted CPP.

5.1.4 The CPP will be subject to review in line with the timing of local plan reviews, and this will provide an opportunity to develop the Plan reflecting on the findings of the SEA and environmental monitoring in future iterations. The CPP review process will therefore be an evolving means of implementing the requirements of Core Paths Planning in a manner which will help to address environmental priorities and minimise negative environmental effects. This is the essence of what SEA is intended to achieve.

5.2 ANTICIPATED MILESTONES

5.2.1 The key milestones in the development of the Plan and the SEA are as follows:

- Publication of Draft CPP and ER – April 2008;
- Formal Consultation Period – April 2008 to June 2008;
- Submission of revised Draft CPP and any outstanding objections to Scottish Ministers – July/August 2008;
- Possible Public Inquiry - dependent on outcome of consultation;
- Preparation of the final CPP and Post Adoption SEA Statement – dependent on outcome of consultation;
- Adoption of the CPP - dependent on outcome of consultation.

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