

EA Environmental Report – Cover Note – Section 1

To: SEA.gateway@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

SEA Environmental Report – Cover Note – Section 2

An environmental report is attached for the South Ayrshire Core PathsPlan

The Responsible Authority is: South Ayrshire Council

SEA Environmental Report – Cover Note – Section 3

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SEA Environmental Report – Cover Note – Section

Signature

Date

Environmental Report – Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan

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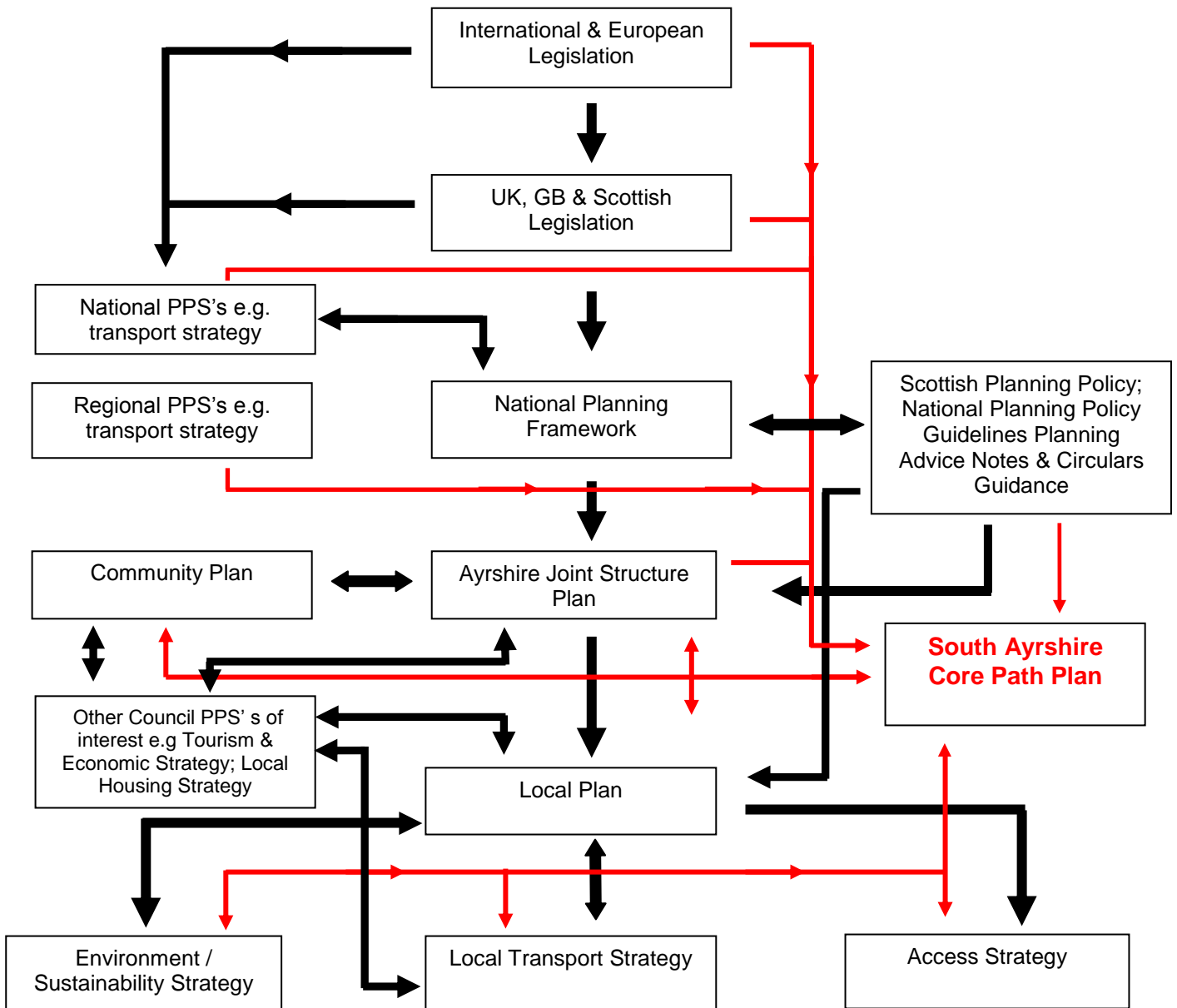
1. NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

1.1 Background

1.1.1 In 2003 the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 came into force, a key component of the Act is that a legal duty has been placed on Local Authorities to develop and adopt a Core Paths Plan. The Act further describes what a Core Path Network should provide, “provide the basic framework of routes sufficient for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout their area. This basic framework of routes will link into, and support, wider networks of other paths”.

1.1.2 As such, in 2006, South Ayrshire Council commenced the first in a number of processes in the development of this Plan, which would pertain to the whole of South Ayrshire, in accordance with, Core Paths Plan – a guide to good practice which was produced by Scottish Natural Heritage and Paths for All Partnership.

1.1.3 Below is a flow diagram which illustrates the relationship that the Core Path Plan has with other Policy Plans and Strategies (PPS's) as well as any relevant legislation. More details are available within 3.2 of the main report.



1.1.4 In Feb 2006 the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 came into force. This Act requires that all public plans, programmes or strategies, as detailed in 4 & 5 of the Act, require to be strategic environmentally assessed (SEA). The four main criteria when considering if an SEA is required are:-

- Is the PPS subject to preparation or adoption (or both) at national regional or local level?
- Is the PPS prepared for adoption through a legislative procedure?
- Is the PPS prepared for agricultural, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, waste management, water management, tourism, telecommunications, town & country planning or land use and sets the framework for future development consent of projects?
- Is the PPS likely to have a significant effect on the environment?

The aim of an SEA is to protect the environment by assessing PPS's environmental impact and developing methods to avoid and or mitigate any negative effects that the PPS may have and to consult i.e. NGO's, special interest groups and the general public. There are five key aspects to the SEA process:-

- Screening Determining whether the plan / programme is likely to have significant environmental effect
- Scoping Deciding on the scope & level of detail of the environmental report, and the consultation period for the report – this is done in consultation with Scottish Natural Heritage the Scottish Ministers (Historic Scotland) and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency
- Environmental Report Publishing an environmental report on the plan or programme and its environmental effects, and consulting on that report.
- Adoption Providing information on:- the adoption plan/programme; how consultation comments have been taken into account and; methods for monitoring the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan/ programme
- Monitoring Monitoring significant environmental effects and taking appropriate remedial action for any unforeseen significant environmental effects.

After reading section 4 & 5 of the Act and undertaking the Screening process of the SEA it was determined that the Core Paths Plan would require to undergo a full assessment. As such this document is the Environmental Report on the Core Paths Plan and has examined the Plan objectives, the path criteria and each individual nominated path in relation to those environmental issues that are thought to be significantly affected.

1.2 Report

1.2.1 The purpose of the SEA Environmental Report is to assess the South Ayrshire Finalised Draft Core Paths Plan in respect of SEA environmental issues which are likely to be significantly affected by the implementation of this plan; to consider alternatives, mitigation and the methodology for future monitoring.

1.2.2 Initially, via the Scoping process, it was felt that the plan had the potential to cause direct significant environmental effect to the following SEA topics:- Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna; Water; Human Health; Material Assets and Cultural Heritage. However through the development of the plan it became clear that Water could be scoped out. 3.3.2 of this report provides more detailed information on the reasons for scoping out.

- 1.2.3 In order to accurately assess the potential impact of the plan an environmental baseline of the local was required, see appendix 1 for detail. This would provide the basis from which any significant change, due to the implementation of the plan, to the SEA issues that have been scoped in can be measured. The development of the environmental baseline helped to identify areas of concern, highlight areas where there is insufficient data, data that it is out of date or in incompatible format. The baseline audit centred on 4 SEA issues that remain scoped in – Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna; Human Health, Cultural Heritage and Material Assets. The following data related problems were emphasised:-
- Phase 1 habitat plans which date back to 1994
 - Lack of a Biological Records Centre
 - Soil data was considered to be the weakest e.g. Macauley Land Use Research Institute records some 20yrs old ; changes in the soil due to intensive farming and or forestry do not appear to be well recorded.
- 1.2.4 South Ayrshire's current environmental problems, as they relate to the topic of this plan are as follows (full details are provided in 3.4.)
- Ad-hoc development of access routes
 - Land management & maintenance issues
 - Biodiversity, flora & fauna
 - Greater demand for managed outdoor access
 - Increasing housing
 - Conflict between users
- 1.2.5 Consideration has been given to the evolution of the environment if the Core Paths Plan were not to be developed. It is judged that should a plan of this nature not be implemented then it is likely to result in the continuation of the above environmental problems, where as the instigation of the Plan would produce a potential network of routes, linking with the wider path network ; it would identify opportunities for walking, cycling and horse riding including access for all abilities; identify routes close to where people live, particularly around urban areas and, meet the needs of the residents of, and visitors to the area.
- 1.2.6 A function of this report is to develop SEA objectives from which the environmental performance of the Finalised Draft Core Path Plan can be measured. Their development relates to the information previously gathered from the consideration of the environmental issues, the environmental baseline & the current environmental problems. Each objective has set criteria and most importantly, indicators through which the effect of the implementation of the plan upon the environment can be measured. Details of which can be read in 4.2.3
- 1.2.7 A range of assessments have been undertaken to evaluate the environmental impact of the implementation of the Core Path Plan:-
- Core Paths Plan objectives measured against the SEA objectives, see appendix 5 for details.
 - Core Paths Plan selection criteria measured against SEA objectives, see appendix 6 for details
 - Each Core Paths Plan route measured against SEA objectives, incl. cumulative effect, see appendix 7 for details
- 1.2.8 In summary, the results of the above assessments showed that the development and implementation of this plan would not result in any significant environmental impact and had in fact the potential to result in environmental enhancement. See table below

SEA Issue	Likely Environmental Effect
Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna	The development of the Core Paths Plan is highly unlikely to have a negative impact on this SEA Issue as all nominated routes are already in existence. In fact there is potential to improve problems associated with this SEA topic as the Core Paths Plan will promote specific routes and assist to manage access thereby reducing the potential to damage the flora and fauna of the area.
Cultural Heritage	As above
Human Health	The development and promotion of this Plan has the potential to improve human health by making people aware of routes available to them, providing them with the confidence to use them by ensuring they are adequately way marked and working with other organisations to encourage their use.
Material Assets	The production of the Core Paths Plan will increase peoples awareness of their rights to public access and assist in the continued use of rights of way.

1.2.9 The final component of the SEA process is to monitor the effect of the implementation of the proposed plan on the environment, spotting any positive & / or negative effects early and undertaking appropriate action. However as previously mentioned the execution of this plan is not likely to cause a significant environmental impact and as such there is no need for future monitoring. In addition South Ayrshire Council currently does not have the recourses to monitor the nominated network though there is the intention, in the future, to establish an inspection and maintenance programme which would involve the community.

1.2.10 In order to be as inclusive as possible and to comply with the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 a period of consultation is required now that both the Finalised Draft Core Paths Plan and the associated SEA environmental report have been produced. Consultation will be with the Consultation Authorities (SNH, SEPA, Historic Scotland), interested groups and the general public via a range of media. This consultation period will be from the 16th February 2009 to 11th May 2009 with the aim to publish and launch the Finalised Core Paths Plan by October 2009.

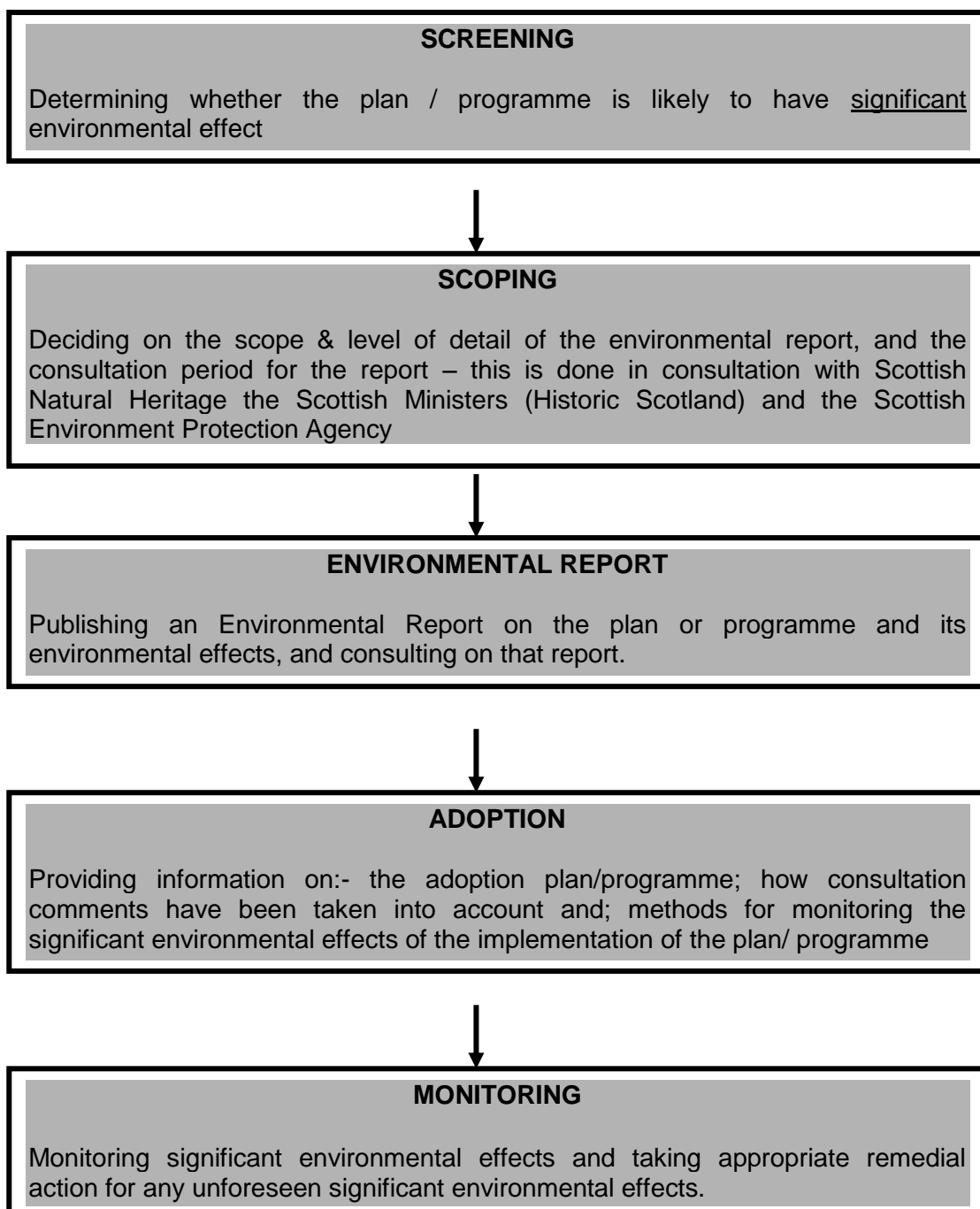
2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Purpose of this Environmental Report & Key Facts

2.1.1 As part of the preparation of the South Ayrshire Core Paths Plan South Ayrshire Council is carrying out a strategic environmental assessment of the plan. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a systematic method for considering the likely environmental effects of certain plans and programmes. SEA aims to:-

- Integrate environmental decision making into plan / programme preparation and decision making;
- Improve plans and programmes and enhance environmental protection; and
- Increase public participation in environmental decision making

2.1.2 SEA is required under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005, the key stages of which are:-



- 2.1.3 The purpose of this environmental report is to:-
- Provide information on the South Ayrshire Finalised Draft Core Paths Plan
 - Identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects of the plan or programme and reasonable alternatives
 - Provide an early and effective opportunity for the Consultation Authorities and the public to offer views on any aspect of this environmental report.
- 2.1.4 The key facts relating to the Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan are set out in the table below.

Name of Responsible Authorities	South Ayrshire Council
Title of plan / programme	South Ayrshire Core Paths Plan
What prompted the plan	The development and adoption of the Core Path Plan is a requirement of the Land Reform(Scotland) Act 2003
Plan subject	Access
Frequency of updates	10 years approx., unless changes to circumstances require an earlier review
Plan area	1222 Km sq
Plan purpose and / or objective	<p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a framework of routes sufficient for the purposes of giving the public reasonable access throughout South Ayrshire • To identify links with, and support other wider networks e.g. Sustrans, National Cycle Network, neighbouring authorities routes • To promote access for all, at the same time promoting the lifestyle and health benefits as well as sustainable and environmental issues • To develop links with landowners & managers to ensure a network of access routes that minimise conflict of interests • To identify potential new routes <p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify paths which will link & support wider path networks • To contribute to achieving key objectives as identified in the South Ayrshire Outdoor Access Strategy • To illustrate a paths system, which will be achievable & sustainable • To identify paths, which will be close to where people live, with particular emphasis around settlements • To identify opportunities for walking, cycling & horse riding incl. Access for all abilities.
Contact point	Fiona Ross

2.2 SEA ACTIVITIES TO DATE

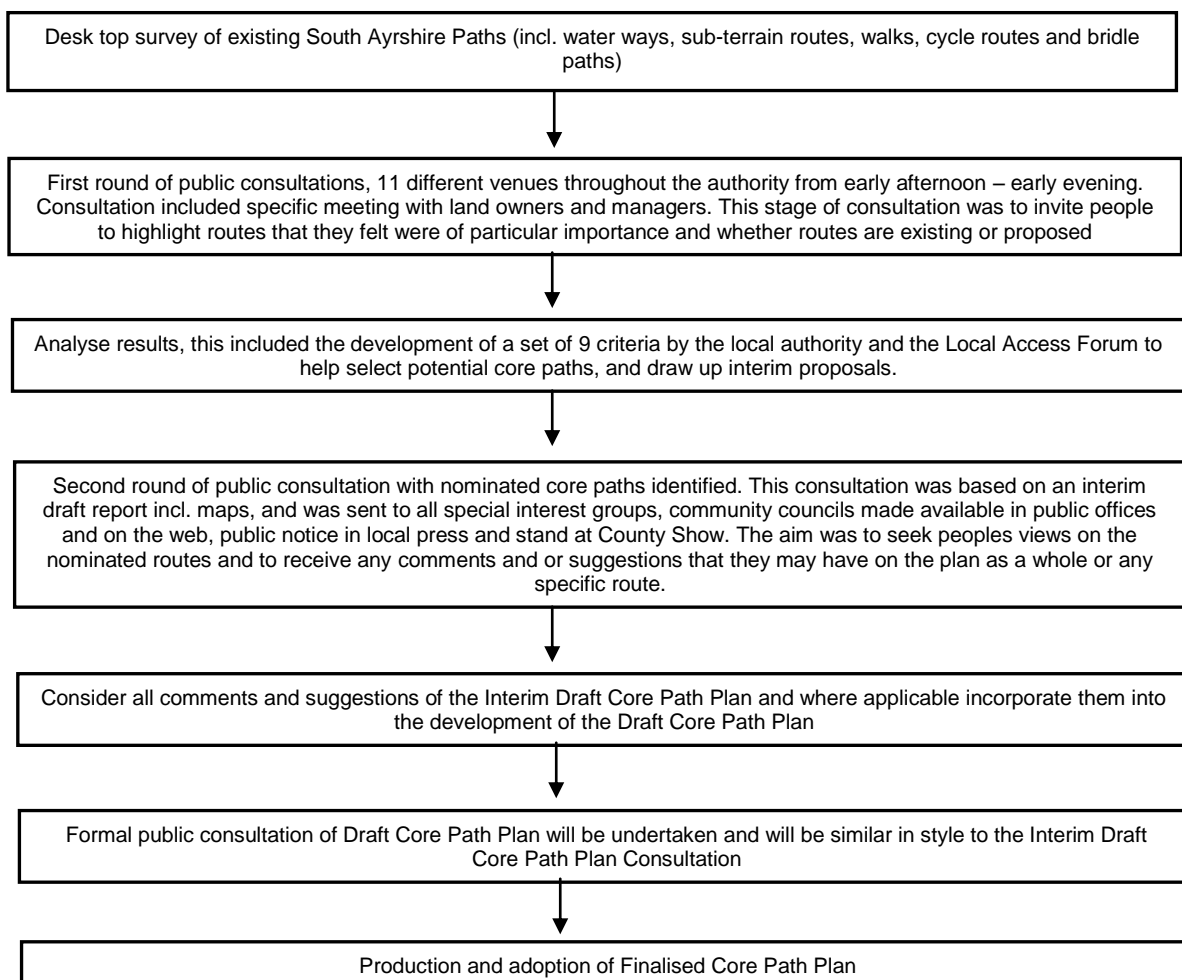
2.2.1 The table below summarises the SEA activities to date in relation to the South Ayrshire Core Path Plan

SEA Action / Activity	When Carried Out	Notes (e.g. comment on data availability, particular issues or any advice from the Consultation Authorities that has now been taken into account)
Screening to determine whether the plan is likely to have significant environmental effects	January 2006	
Scoping the consultation periods and the level of detail to be included in the environmental report	October 2007	
Outline and objectives of the plan	February 2006	
Relationship with other plans, programmes and environmental objectives	September 2007	Formed part of the Scoping Report
Environmental baseline established	September 2007 (in part)	This was first looked at via the Scoping Report and was honed in this report to relate specifically to those environmental areas that are likely to be significantly affected by the development and implementation of this plan
Environmental problems identified	September 2007	Formed part of the Scoping Report
Likely future of the area without the plan assessed	Sep 2007	Formed part of the Scoping Report
Alternatives considered	April 06 – June 07	Alternatives, in terms of pathways, were considered via two separate public consultation periods. From this basis the all routes were then subject to criteria assessment to further consider which paths are best to form part of the Core Path Plan. Comments from CA's also considered
Environmental Assessment methods established	Oct 07 – May 08	
Selection of plan alternatives to be included in the environmental assessment		There is really no plan alternative as the format of the Plan is guided by the Core Paths Plan – A Guide To Good Practice (SNH & Paths for All Partnership)
Identification of environmental problems that may persist after implementation and mitigation methods	November 2008	Form part of this report
Monitoring methods proposed	November 2008	Form part of this report
Consultation timescales <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timescale for Consultation Authorities • Timescale for the General Public 		
Notification / publicity action		

3. SOUTH AYRSHIRE CORE PATHS PLAN

3.1 Outline & Objectives of the South Ayrshire Core Path Plan

- 3.1.1 South Ayrshire Council is required to develop and adopt a Core Paths Plan as per one of the key requirements of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, see section 17-20 of the Act. The guidance states that Core Paths should “*provide the basic framework of routes sufficient for the purpose of giving the public reasonable access throughout their area. This basic framework of routes will link into, and support, wider networks of other paths*”. It should be noted that core paths are not limited to land routes but may also consider and incorporate water routes and or subterranean routes.
- 3.1.2 As such since the spring of 2006 South Ayrshire Council, with the assistance of the South Ayrshire Local Access Forum, has been working toward the production of a Core Paths Plan which will be formally adopted by the local authority. The Plan will relate to the whole of South Ayrshire and will identify paths that meet people’s needs whether that is getting from home to work or school; to enjoy the countryside; to undertake some form of recreational pursuit e.g. cycling, horse riding, canoeing, pot-holing; or to use routes as part of a healthier lifestyle. Therefore paths will not necessarily be constructed in a standard format – they could be paved, loose-fill, grass etc. Paths / routes identified can be either existing or proposed, they do not require to be rights of way, the majority of paths will be those to which the public has the right of responsible access though it is possible that paths may incorporate sections to which the public DO NOT have the right of responsible access e.g. farmyards.
- 3.1.3 The development of the Plan has been in accordance with, Core Paths Plan – a guide to good practice which was produced by Scottish Natural Heritage and Paths for All Partnership and has been guided by the guides 12 step plan to the preparation and adoption of the Plan. The basic stages of the process are detailed below:-



- 3.1.4 Once the Finalised Core Paths Plan has been formally adopted by the Local Authority the routes will be shown as base information in relation to our Local Plan and will become a material consideration in the consideration of any planning application submitted to the Authority.
- 3.1.5 The overall purpose of this Plan is to identifying a network of paths which would act as a skeletal framework throughout South Ayrshire meeting the needs of the residents and visitors to the area. This network will work in conjunction with existing and proposed routes / paths to develop an expanded system of routes which will provide opportunities to people, on a door step basis, to use them on a daily and or recreational basis.
- 3.1.6 To deliver the above aim the Core Paths Plan has set the following objectives:-
- To identify paths which will link & support wider path networks
 - To contribute to achieving key objectives as identified in the South Ayrshire Outdoor Access Strategy
 - To illustrate a paths system, which will be achievable & sustainable
 - To identify paths, which will be close to where people live, with particular emphasis around settlements
 - To identify opportunities for walking, cycling & horse riding incl. Access for all abilities.

3.2 Relationship with Other Plans, Programmes and Environmental Objectives

- 3.2.1 Schedule 3 of the Act requires that the Environmental Report includes an outline of the plan's relationships with other relevant plans and programmes, and how environmental protection objectives have been taken into account in the plan's preparation. This section aims to describe the policy context within which the plan operates, and the constraints and targets that this context imposes on the plan.
- 3.2.2 The table below summarises how the South Ayrshire Core Paths Plan is affected by, other relevant plans, programmes and environmental objectives at a regional and local level. Appendix 2 provides wider analysis of relevant PPSs.

Name of plan/programme/objective	Title of legislation and main requirements of plan/programme/objective	How it affects, or is affected by the Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan in terms of SEA issues at Schedule 3 ,para6(a) of the Act *
INTERNATIONAL		
Convention on Biological Diversity 1992	<p>Article 1. of the Convention states:</p> <p>Objectives</p> <p>The objectives of this Convention, to be pursued in accordance with its relevant provisions, are the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies, taking into account all rights over those resources and to technologies, and by appropriate funding.</p>	<p><u>Biodiversity; Flora & Fauna</u></p> <p>International convention which scene sets for future national, regional and local PPS's .</p> <p>Puts documents in a hierarchical system / relationship</p>

<p>Water Framework Directive 2000 (2000/60/ EC A Framework for the Community Action in the field of Water Policy</p>	<p>This Directive sets a framework for the protection of inland surface waters (rivers and lakes), transitional waters (estuaries), coastal waters and groundwater. It will ensure all aquatic ecosystems meet 'good status' by 2015.</p> <p>Member States will be required to establish river basin districts and for each of these a river basin management plan. The Directive envisages a cyclical process where river basin management plans are prepared, implemented and reviewed every six years. There are four distinct elements to the river basin planning cycle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • characterisation and assessment of impacts on river basin districts; • environmental monitoring; • the setting of environmental objectives; • the design and implementation of the programme of measures needed to achieve them. 	<p><u>Water</u> EU Directive which sets for future national, regional and local PPS's .</p> <p>Puts documents in a hierarchical system / relationship</p> <p>Attention should be given to this document – how it relates to UK law and enforcement and how it may affect the use of water courses</p>
NATIONAL		
<p>The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004</p>	<p>The Act furthers the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.</p> <p>The Act places a duty on local authorities to further the conservation of biodiversity in relation to its role.</p> <p>It provides further detail on the protection of species, and enhanced protection to SSSI's and also facilitates the designation of Land Management Orders and Nature Con. Orders</p>	<p><u>Biodiversity; Flora & Fauna</u></p> <p>The protection and enhancement of biodiversity is a key aspect of this Act and as such has a direct relationship to this plan.</p>
<p>Scottish Biodiversity Strategy – It's in your hands 2004</p>	<p>Sets out a 25 year strategy for the conservation & enhancement of Scotland's biodiversity and has 5 major strategic objectives:</p> <p><u>Species & Habitats</u>: To halt the loss of biodiversity and continue to reverse previous losses through targeted action for species and habitats</p> <p><u>People</u>: To increase awareness, understanding and enjoyment of biodiversity, and engage many more people in conservation and enhancement</p> <p><u>Landscapes & Ecosystems</u>: To restore and enhance biodiversity in all our urban, rural and marine environments through better planning, design and practice</p> <p><u>Integration & Co-ordination</u>: To develop an effective management framework that ensures biodiversity is taken into account in all decision making</p> <p><u>Knowledge</u>: To ensure that the best new and existing knowledge on biodiversity is available to all policy makers and practitioners</p>	<p><u>Biodiversity; Flora & Fauna</u></p> <p>This is the most recent national biodiversity document to be issued by the Scottish Government and links in a hierarchical manner to this plan. The Core Path Plan should take cognisance of the strategy and aim to deliver, at a local level, some or all of the objectives</p>
<p>Water Environment & Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003</p>	<p>This Act makes provision for protection of the water environment, including provision for implementing European Parliament and Council Directive 2000/60/EC; to amend the Sewerage (Scotland) Act 1968 and the Water (Scotland) Act 1980 in relation to the</p>	<p><u>Water; Human Health; Biodiversity Flora & Fauna</u></p> <p>When developing the Core Path Plan, recognition must be made that should any waterway</p>

	<p>provision of water and sewerage services; and for connected purposes.</p> <p>The Act is constructed in 3 parts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection of the water environment (incl. Protecting & enhancing aquatic eco-systems; encouraging sustainable water use and contributing to mitigating the effects of floods and droughts, • Water & Sewerage Services (incl. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems) • General 	<p>be proposed as a Core Path that by so doing it will not contravene any aspect of the Act. Where poss. The Core Path Plan should aim to complement the aims and objectives of the Act.</p>
Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003	<p>This Act establishes statutory public rights of access to land for recreational and other purposes, and to extend some of the provisions for that purpose to rights of way and other rights; to make provision under which bodies representing rural and crafting communities may buy the land with which those communities have a connection; and for connected purposes.</p>	<p><u>Biodiversity Flora & Fauna; Water, Cultural Heritage, Human Health; Material Assets</u></p> <p>This Act is the driver for the creation and development of this plan.</p>
SPP 1 The Planning System	<p>Scottish Executive policy statement relating to the planning system which sets out the key principles and priorities toward the delivery of sustainable development via planning</p>	<p><u>Biodiversity Flora & Fauna;</u></p> <p>The three main objectives of SPP1: To set the land use framework for promoting sustainable economic development; to encourage and support regeneration; to maintain and enhance the quality of the natural heritage and built environment. This SPP will either effect or be affected by the Core Path Plan</p>
National Transport Strategy for Scotland	<p>A National (Scotland) strategy which sets out a long-term vision for transport and has five key objectives for transport (economy, environment, social inclusion, safety and integration); has three strategic outcomes to 1. deliver improved journey times and connections 2. to reduce CO2 emissions and other adverse impacts 3. to improve the quality, accessibility and affordability of transport.</p>	<p><u>Human Health</u></p> <p>One of the Key Challenges recognises the predicted health problems facing Scotland via obesity and poor fitness and the potential effect that sustainable transport could play in reducing the indices of the former and improving the latter</p>
South Ayrshire Council Wildlife Strategy	<p>The purpose of the strategy is to provide the Council with a policy framework for benefiting biodiversity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking to protect & promote the proper management of sites of nature conservation importance • Seeking to provide for the enhancement & creation of habitats for wildlife • Seeking to develop & protect a network of “green corridors” through the Council area. • Seeking to raise awareness of, and provide opportunities for involvement in, biodiversity conservation 	<p><u>Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna</u></p> <p>Cognisance should be taken of this plan to ensure that the core paths do not result in damaging the locals biodiversity, flora & fauna and that the Core Path Plan maximises the opportunities to assist in the delivery of the Wildlife Strategy</p>
Scottish Historic Environment Policy 1	<p>This policy sets out a framework for the day-to-day work for those who have either a role or an interest in managing the historic environment. E.g. Scot Gov., Local Authorities. This document sits alongside SPP's.</p>	<p><u>Cultural Heritage</u></p> <p>Consideration should be taken of this document in relation to any route that leads to, starts from or bypasses any historic features.</p>

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995	This Act makes it unlawful for a service provider to treat a person less favorably than they would treat any other person, for a reason related to their disability, when offering or providing goods, services and facilities. To be clear this means that all countryside services are covered e.g. walks, paths & trails; events; information & interpretation	Consideration should be taken of this document in relation to any route
The Disability Discrimination Act 2005	This Act augments the 1995 Act and provides further strengthens disability rights	Consideration should be taken of this document in relation to any route
REGIONAL		
Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan	Town & Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 required Ayrshire to develop and deliver a joint structure plan. The plan provides a strategic land use framework up to 2025 and sets regional priorities. The anticipated outcomes of which are 1. strong and vibrant communities 2. a sustainable and growing economy 3. a good quality of life and a healthy environment.	<p><u>Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna; Human Health; Material Assets; Cultural Heritage</u></p> <p>Schedule 1 – Guiding Principles for Sustainable Development</p> <p><u>Environmental Quality</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of the natural & built heritage will be conserved and enhanced • Important cultural heritage resources will be safeguarded • Development should not lead to unacceptable damage to priority species & habitats • Proposals that promote the reuse and recycling of resources will be encouraged <p><u>Improving Accessibility</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of economic development will require to be accessible by a range of transport modes • In the selection of locations for future development preference will be given to areas that are, or have the potential to be, well integrated with walking, cycling and public transport networks.
LOCAL		
South Ayrshire Community Plan	Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 required that every local authority initiate and subsequently maintain a Community Plan. South Ayrshire Council's Community Plan has 5 themes – Prosperous; Safe; Clean & Attractive; Healthy & Caring and Learning & Achieving	<p><u>Human Health</u></p> <p><u>Actions from Healthy & Caring:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase the opportunity for children and adults to take part in physical activity, whether sports or simple recreational activities like walking and cycling, especially in more disadvantaged communities 2. Increase the accessibility to sports activity for people with disability, including young people <p><u>Action from Learning & Achieving:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote sports activities as a way of building the self-

		<p>confidence of young people</p> <p><u>Action from Clean & Attractive</u></p> <p>1. Encourage less polluting forms of transport</p> <p>2. Promote cycling and walking, linked with an improvement in cycle paths and footpaths in both urban and rural areas</p>
South Ayrshire Local Plan	<p>Town & Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 required South Ayrshire to develop and deliver an Ayrshire Local Plan. The plan sets out the policies, proposals and recommendations of the South Ayrshire Council (subsequently referred to as "the Council") as the local planning authority, for the development and other use of land, the protection of environmental resources and for the management of transport and traffic within the administrative area of South Ayrshire Council.</p>	<p><u>Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna; Human Health; Material Assets; Cultural Heritage</u></p> <p>The Local Plan aims to foster increased co-operation and co-ordination with all organisations concerned with the provision, safeguarding and promotion of footpaths and cycleways with links to national networks and also to ensure that any potentially detrimental impacts to the environment are minimised.</p> <p>In recognition of the potential value cycle routes and footpath networks represent in terms of environmental benefits, the Council will seek to prioritise their provision and to ensure that appropriate safe and attractive cycle parking facilities are provided, and that new development for public use offers a safe pedestrian and cycling environment. See Policy Serv. 8 & 9</p>
South Ayrshire Access Strategy	<p>Sets out the local authority's strategic framework for the future development of access in the area.</p>	<p><u>Human Health; Material Assets</u></p> <p>The strategy has 4 main themes: Sustainable Transport; Access & Sustainable Land Management; Tourism and Business Development Health. The main areas of linkage are access & sustainable land management together with tourism.</p>

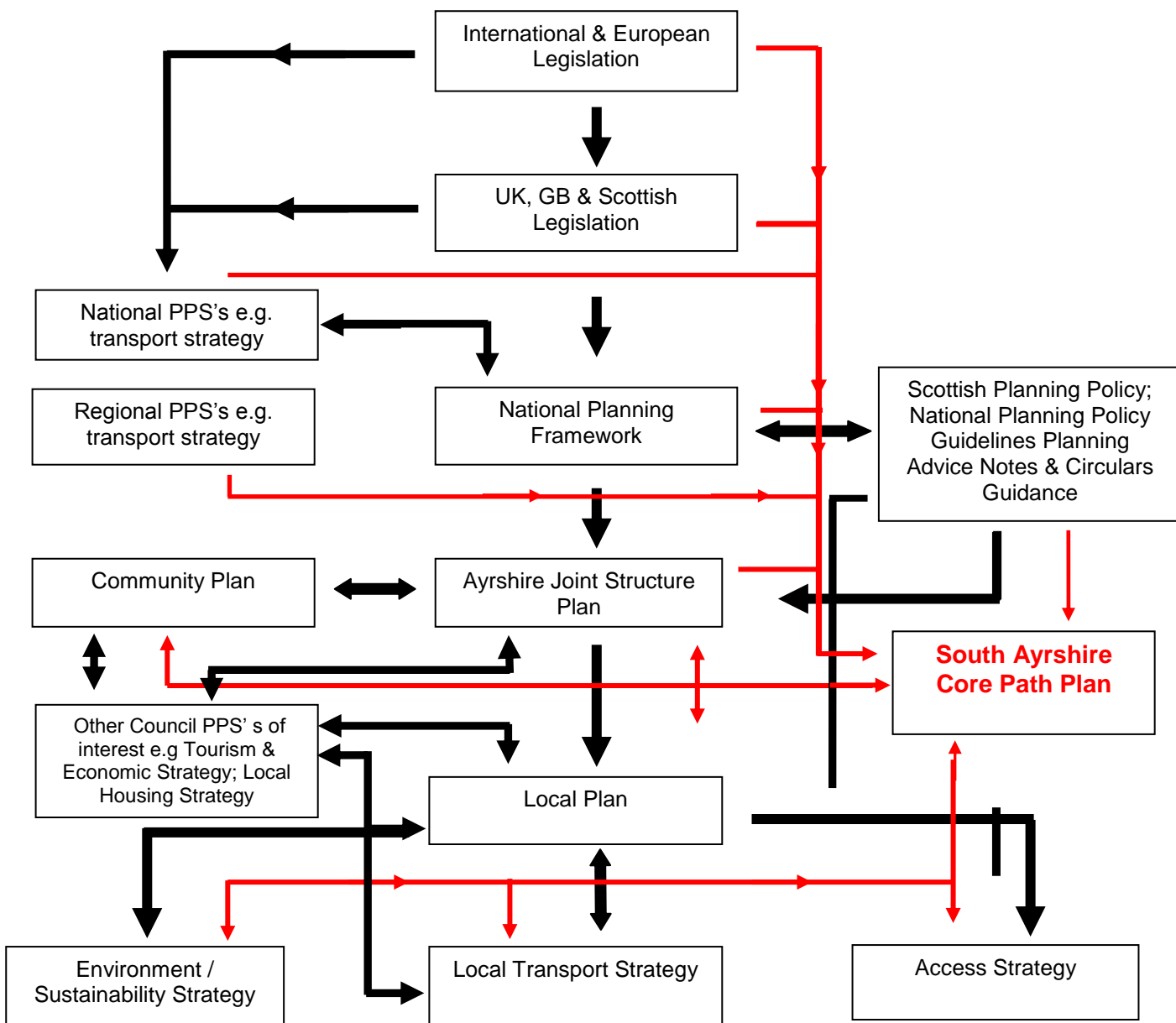
3.2.3 Key points arising from the analysis of the various PPS's is that, from international to local level, there is a strong desire to improve sustainable transport and in so doing provide facilities that people can use to improve their health e.g. of obesity, osteoporosis, mental wellbeing. The PPS's highlight that this Plan affords the opportunity to engage people further in their local environment and to become more aware of the biodiversity and cultural heritage. It also became clear that the development of the Core Paths Plan has a clear interrelationship to a plethora of PPS's and that to strengthen the value of the Plan the opportunities to further deliver the aims and objectives of the PPS's should be exploited and vice versa.

3.2.4 From the data collated in respect of relevant PPS's there were key features which were considered when developing the selection criteria of the Core Paths.

- the routes must meet peoples needs
- the routes should be close to areas of population
- the routes should take cognisance of peoples disabilities
- The routes should maximise the potential to develop peoples awareness of their local biodiversity & cultural heritage in a managed way thereby ensuring no or minimum damage to the environs.

Diagram depicting the relationship of the Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan & other PPSs

The South Ayrshire Core Paths Plan is a material document in relation to planning and planning considerations / applications.



3.3 Environmental Baseline

3.3.1 Schedule 3 of the Act requires that the environmental report include a description of “the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without the implementation of the plan or programme”, and “the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected”. This section aims to describe the environmental context within which the South Ayrshire Core Paths Plan will operate, and the constraints and targets that this context imposes on the plan.

3.3.2 In the initial Scoping Report the following environmental issues, due to the potential to be significantly effected by the implementation of the Core Paths Plan were scoped in and or out.

IN	OUT
Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna	Air
Water	Climatic Factors
Human Health	Soil
Material Assets	Landscape
Cultural Heritage	Population

3.3.3 Once the Scoping Report had been completed it went to the three Consultation Authorities, Scottish Natural Heritage, Historic Scotland and Scottish Environment Protection Agency for comment. Their responses can be viewed on the South Ayrshire Council Web Site at www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/environment/strategicassessment. A summary of their comments together with South Ayrshire Council’s response can be seen in Appendix 3.

3.3.4 However as the draft plan developed it became evident that Water could also be scoped out. The table below provides further information.

SEA Issues	Scoped In	Scoped Out	If Scoped Out Why
Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna	X		
Population		X	The development of the Core Path Plan is not likely to have any significant effect on the population of South Ayrshire, one of the main reasons for this is that all routes are paths that already exist and as such the paths will not significantly affect the manner in which the population is distributed throughout the district and will be unlikely to significantly alter the number of visitors to the area.
Soil		X	The nominated Core Paths are already in existence and to which there is no plan to upgrade therefore there will be no significant effect on soil.
Water		X	Water was scoped in the Scoping Report however as the plan has developed it has become clear that none of the nominated Core Paths include water courses and as such water has now been scoped out.
Landscape		X	As the nominated routes are ones that are already in existence it is unlikely that the Core Path Plan will significantly affect the Landscape.
C. Heritage	X		
Human Health	X		
Air & Climatic Factors		X	While the Core Path Plan is set to be the corner stone of a future network of routes which will provide the facilities to both resident and visitor alike to get from point A to B using sustainable transport e.g. walking, cycling, horse riding. The number of people making use of the routes, the frequency of use and the distance travelled will not significantly reduce Carbon Dioxide or the other basket of Green House Gases(GHG's) in South Ayrshire when taking into account the number of private cars, local industry and Glasgow Prestwick International Airport The air quality within South Ayrshire meets all national air quality parameters and is considered to be good. To significantly improve on this measure will rest with Regional and Local Transport Strategies for which the Core Path Plan may well act as one small delivery mechanism.
M. Assets	X		

3.3.5 The table below provides environmental baseline information in relation to each of the environmental issues that are considered to have the potential to be significantly affected by the implementation of the Core Paths Plan. This data will assist summarises the data collected and the source.

Environmental Issue	Baseline Information	Data	Source
Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna	Tree Preservation Orders	48	Local Authority
	SSSI Sites	42	Local Authority ; SNH
	Ornithological Sites	56	Local Authority ; RSPB
	Wildlife Sites	4	Local Authority SWT
	Provisional Wildlife Sites	109	Local Authority SWT
	Special Protection Areas	2	Local Authority ; SNH
	Special Area of Conservation	2	Local Authority ; SNH
	Woodland (2002 data)	33980 Ha incl:1570 Ha broadleaf 14770 Ha coniferous	East Ayrshire Woodlands ; SNH
	Forest Park	1	Local Authority ; Forestry Commission
	Country Park	1	Local Authority National Trust for Scotland
Cultural Heritage	Archaeological Recorded Sites	2653	Local Authority & West of Scotland Archaeological Service
	Archaeological Trigger Zones	1291	Local Authority & West of Scotland Archaeological Service
	Scheduled Ancient Monuments	94	Local Authority & West of Scotland Archaeological Service
	Conservation Areas	21 (5 designated as outstanding)	Local Authority
	Listed Buildings	913 (68 = A)	Local Authority
	Gardens & Designed Landscapes	8	Local Authority & Historic Scotland
	Human Health	General Health	Good = 68.33%
		Fairly Good = 21.89%	As above
		Not Good = 9.78%	As above
Limiting Long Term Illness		% residents having a limiting long term illness = 21.19	General Register Office for Scotland SCROL
		% residents not having a limiting long term illness = 78.81	As above
Material Assets		Cycle Routes	4
	National Cycle Route	1 (route 7)	Local Authority ; SUSTRANS
	Km of National Cycle Route	60	Local Authority ; SUSTRANS
	Km of cycle track	148	Local Authority
	Rights of Way (claimed)	51	Local Authority
	Km of managed path network	239 Km	Local Authority

- 3.3.6 A more detailed report on the current state of the South Ayrshire environment as it relates to the Core Paths Plan can be found in Appendix 1
- 3.3.7 The following paragraphs provide a short description of the area in which the plan will operate.
- 3.3.8 Located (see location plan, Appendix 4) in the south-west of Scotland, South Ayrshire comprises some 1222Km sq., the landscape of which can be divided into two distinct forms. To the south the Carrick hills and valleys, whose formation has been strongly influenced by the Southern Upland Fault, and to the north the Ayrshire basin. Along the western boundary of the district is 55miles of coastline.
- 3.3.9 In terms of land use, farming predominates with dairy farming in the Ayrshire basin while in the south, Carrick hills and valleys beef and sheep production prevails. However along the coastline arable and potato production can be found.
- 3.3.10 Other than farming, employment in south Ayrshire has centred on traditional manufacturing however in recent times this declined while retail and public sector employment has increased as has tourism which provides 10-11% of jobs in South Ayrshire.
- 3.3.11 South Ayrshire has a population of 112,097 the majority of which are located in five main towns; Ayr, Prestwick, Troon, Girvan and Maybole (listed in order of population density). South Ayrshire's % of unemployed is 3.3% in2006 which is slightly higher than the Scottish average however the South Ayrshire average income is one of the highest in Scotland in 2005.
- 3.3.12 Transportation is an important feature of the district, with Glasgow Prestwick International Airport (which is likely to increase in use) ; the west coast rail-line, currently running at capacity ; Troon ferry terminal – linking to N. Ireland and; the A77, the main arterial road from Stranraer & Cairnryan (links to Ireland) to Glasgow and the central belt.
- 3.3.13 Though 90.22% of the population are regarded to be in good or fairly good health. (source: General Register Office for Scotland SCROL, www.scrol.gov.uk) and that the average life expectancy is slightly higher than the Scottish average,74yrs of age for men and 79yrs of age for women; the “healthy” life expectancy (no. Of yrs of good health that people can expect) is not increasing as fast.
- 3.3.14 The following summarises the likely gaps and or unreliability of the SEA baseline data, and how they were minimised.

LANDSCAPE, BIODIVERSITY FLORA & FAUNA	In terms of data relating to habitat ,while we do have a complete set of Phase 1 habitat mapping for Ayrshire in GIS format it is somewhat dated i.e. 1994. As with habitat data, so species data is weak. Unlike many areas Ayrshire does not have an up to date and active Biological Records Centre. Information that has been collated is fragmented. Many groups may hold a small amount of information and recorded using different methods. There is a particular weakness in data relating to terrestrial invertebrates.
HUMAN HEALTH	We do have generally, a good breakdown of statistical data in relation to human health. The one area in which we do have a restricted knowledge is in the area of well – being. Having access to green space and partaking of exercise is “known” to benefit people’s mental health and well - being. However obtaining local quantitative or qualitative data on this area of health is difficult.
CULTURAL HERITAGE	We do have, generally, a good breakdown of statistical data in relation to cultural heritage
MATERIALASSETS	We do have, generally, a good breakdown of statistical data in relation to material assets (rights of way) as it pertains to the Core Path Plan.

3.4 Environmental Problems

3.4.1 Schedule 3 of the Act requires that the environmental report includes a description of existing environmental problems, in particular those relating to any areas of particular environmental importance. The purpose of this section is to explain how existing environmental problems will affect or be affected by the South Ayrshire Core Path Plan, and whether the plan is likely to aggravate, reduce or otherwise impact on existing environmental problems.

3.4.2 The following table lists the problems and issues, through discussions with various council staff and the South Ayrshire local access forum that have been identified which have an effect on the production of the South Ayrshire Core Paths Plan.

Problem	Supporting Data	Implications for plan
Ad-hoc development of access routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the land management contract land owners have been encouraged, through payment(s), to develop and maintain routes on their land. To date approx. 111 paths developed via this system covering approx. 109Km • Currently paths developed do not provide a linking network. • No uniformity re: signage. • No uniformity of maintenance • No uniformity re: construction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assess the routes and attempt to incorporate as many of these routes, that meet the criteria, into the core path plan • To standardise routes
Land management & maintenance issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing access is a major issue. Currently via the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 people have the right of access to the countryside. This can lead to conflict between land managers and those wishing to access the area. e.g fields that hold stock / crops and access. • Disputes between land managers and certain user groups e.g horse riders, mountain bikers • Access paths & alterations (incl. street furniture & signage) to routes have the potential to damage and or interfere with historic and or archaeological sites • Maintenance of routes have the potential to damage and or interfere with historic and or archaeological sites • Increased human access often results in erosion, of monuments and or of vulnerable elements of the historic and natural environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of footpath to minimise damage to crops and ensure safety. • To provide routes that suit both land manager & user • To ensure that routes are constructed in a sympathetic manner to the environment, are for purpose i.e. user types and numbers; maximising user access for all • To ensure that all works (capital & revenue) are in accordance with Historic Scotland and Local Authority requirements
Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The original Local Biodiversity Action Plan together with the soon to be published revision has identified a number of habitats and species that are key to the Ayrshire area. • The development of any path / route must ensure that it does not impact on the biodiversity of the local. Where it does, mitigation plans have been put in place • Through the development of the Core Path Plan there is the potential to increase user 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assess all potential routes re: their impact on the biodiversity, flora and fauna • Consideration must be given to how increased, concentrated numbers of users are likely to affect the surrounding flora and fauna.

	numbers to these key routes resulting on pressure on land and disturbance to the surrounding flora and fauna	
Greater demand for managed outdoor access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While we in South Ayrshire have no specific data to back up the requirement for more managed paths, the general increase of interest in outdoor pursuits; the NHS encouragement of active exercise; the interest in reducing the carbon footprint; the need via the planning process for new developments to incorporate green travel all indicate and ever increasing demand for managed access routes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide core paths that meet the needs of both residents and visitors of and to South Ayrshire
Increased housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ayrshire Structure Plan indicates that 6800 new houses will be required by 2017 and that 11,300 new houses will be required by 2025. The South Ayrshire Local Plan has identified 3 significant areas of Greenfield to be released for housing. 10 brownfield and 12 greenfield village & town extension have also been identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need to evaluate the potential areas of new housing and assess where potential links can be made to these sites
Conflict between users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently within South Ayrshire we have one existing route where a major conflict has developed between two user groups and has still to be satisfactorily resolved. • There are often differences of opinion between users from time to time which result in the involvement of the authorities Access Officer or the South Ayrshire Local Access Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipate what conflicts may occur through the development of the core paths and plan them out e.g. negotiation prior to development; construction of route to meet users needs • Develop an assessment method for potential core paths that is robust enough to be used by the Local Access Group as a basis for mediation should it be required.

3.5. Likely Evolution of the Environment Without The South Ayrshire Core Paths Plan

3.5.1. At this time in South Ayrshire there is no cohesive approach to the identification and development of access paths within the area. The development of a plan would produce a potential network of routes, including linking with the wider path network, that would provide suitable links e.g. to historic sites, woodland, waterways, the countryside, shops & economic centres; it would identify opportunities for walking, cycling and horse riding including access for all abilities; identify routes close to where people live, particularly around urban areas and importantly, through extensive consultation, meet the needs of the residents of, and visitors to, the area.

3.5.2 Should the Core Paths Plan not be created the current system of ad-hoc path development will continue. This is likely to result in:- paths in inappropriate locations, either not meeting people's needs or in sensitive locations e.g., biodiversity, cultural heritage ; increased potential for inadequate consultation which may increase the probability of conflict e.g. landowners and user groups; conservationists and developers; lack of management either in terms of land management, managing access and people into the countryside and /or management of the facility(s).

3.6 SEA Objectives

3.6.1 The following table provides the SEA Objectives from which the environmental performance of the South Ayrshire Finalised Draft Core Path Plan will be measured.

3.6.2 The SEA objectives developed relate only to the SEA / Environmental issues that have been identified for further assessment due to their potential to be significantly impacted upon by the development and implementation of the Core Path Plan.

Environmental Issue	SEA Objective	SEA Criteria	Indicators
Biodiversity Flora & Fauna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To conserve and where possible enhance biodiversity at all levels. To avoid damage to any protected sites, flora and or fauna. To enhance the scope of environmental education and awareness raising in relation to biodiversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the plan likely to have a significant effect on biodiversity Is the plan likely to have a significant effect on any protected site, flora and or fauna Does the plan have the potential to significantly improve people's knowledge of environmental / biodiversity issues? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of protected sites e.g. SPA, SSSI within Ayrshire through which a core path runs Are any new paths being developed? Is there any remedial work being undertaken affects Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna How many of the core paths have interpretation boards relating to cultural heritage?
Human Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To contribute to the development of a healthy population via the provision of managed access routes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the plan have the potential to significantly improve people's health - mental and or physical.? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no quantifiable indicator that can be used to demonstrate how the Core Path Plan will or may improve people's health - mental and or physical. However it is intuitively accepted that the routes will contribute to the development of a healthy population
Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To conserve and where possible enhance the cultural and historic environment. To avoid damage to any protected sites. To enhance the scope of raising people's awareness of South Ayrshire's historic and cultural heritage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the plan likely to have a significant effect on South Ayrshire's cultural and or historic environment Is the plan likely to have a significant effect on any protected site Does the plan have the potential to significantly improve people's knowledge of South Ayrshire's cultural and or historic environment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No of Core Paths that start, end or by-pass an aspect of South Ayrshire's cultural heritage. How many of the core paths have interpretation boards relating to cultural heritage?
Material Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To protect and enhance public access via rights of way, managed access paths etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will the plan assist in the delivery of a non- vehicular path network, which meets all needs, throughout South Ayrshire Does the plan specify the need to utilise sustainable design and construction techniques whenever possible? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. Of new paths that have been created due to the identification of the core paths No. Of new paths which include use of recycled material or other aspects of sustainability

4. ASSESSMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS & PROPOSED MITIGATION METHODS

4.1 Alternatives to which SEA was applied

4.1.1 The following methods were used to determine the alternatives considered as part of this strategic environmental assessment:

4.1.2 The production of a Core Paths Plan for South Ayrshire is a statutory requirement as explained in 3.1.1. of this report and as such there is no reasonable alternative, However there are alternatives relating in the way the Plan could be developed. The following table details which of the reasonable alternatives was chosen and why the others were not.

Alternative	Rational	Conclusion
1.Utilise existing access routes as core paths	This would mean that no new routes would be developed, that we would be maximising existing assets, that there would be no development so no damage to natural assets e.g. biodiversity, cultural heritage. Minimal financial investment.	Given that South Ayrshire has an extensive number of routes, though at the moment they are not all integrated, it would be logical to make best use of these assets. It would negate the need for development, the use of resources and eliminate potential environmental damage through construction. However there maybe gaps in the network resulting in the Plan not meeting all peoples needs. There would be minimal financial burden.
2. Develop a network of all new routes to form Core Path Network	The development of a whole new network – while attractive in that it would be “purpose built” would require significant financial investment. New routes may very well impact and or impinge on natural assets. The development of new routes would require materials (whether new or recycled) and construction could have the potential to cause pollution.	This option is most likely to cause the most environmental damage though there would be scope for mitigation. However this option does provide the opportunity to be 100% fit for purpose. This would be a costly financial option.
3.A mixture of the two above.	If through consultation the general public and or special interest groups highlighted the need for some new routes that could be developed in a sympathetic manner then this option might be the best. Maximising use of existing assets and where gaps found the creation of new routes. However greater financial investment require to that of option 1 but less than that of option 2.	This particular option brings together the best of option 1 and 2. Maximises the use of existing assets, reduces potential environmental damage and ensure that peoples needs are being met by bridging gaps. However there is still the potential to require financial resources.

4.1.3 From the assessment of the above information South Ayrshire Council’s preferred option of plan development is that of Option 1, however should, through the consultation and assessment phase of the plan, “gap routes” be identified then the routes will be identified as a core path if it can be demonstrated that they can be developed within a reasonable timescale. Potential reasons for the delay in development could be financial or land ownership issues.

- 4.1.4 The development of this Plan South Ayrshire Council followed the guidance of Scottish Natural Heritage and Paths for All who produced “guidance on the development of a Core
- 4.1.5 in respect of the choice of the core paths the following section of this report will explain the selection process, the criteria used for assessment and who undertook evaluation.

4.2 Assessment Methods

- 4.2.1 Within the scoping process, which was undertaken prior to the development of the environmental report, the likelihood for the plan to cause significant environmental effect to specific environmental issues was assessed. Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 provides the criteria for determining likely significance while Schedule 3 of the Act details the environmental issues (6(a)-(e)). Section 3.3.4 of this report provides the determination of this process and indicates which of the environmental issues remain for assessment in relation to the core path plan.
- 4.2.2 In order to facilitate the assessment of the environmental impact that the Core Paths Plan may have on the environment, either beneficially or adversely, the following table details the SEA objectives and associated criteria which have been produced to monitor what if any effects the plan is having on the environment - positive, negative, neutral or unknown.
- 4.2.3 To assess the Core Paths Plan for its potential to cause significant environmental a number of assessments were undertaken
- Core Path Plan objectives measured against the SEA objectives, see appendix 5 for details.
 - Core Path Plan selection criteria measured against SEA objectives, see appendix 6 for details
 - Each Core Path Plan route measured against SEA objectives, incl. cumulative effect, see appendix 7 for details
- 4.2.4 From the assessment of the plans objectives none were found likely to adversely affect the environmental issues under scrutiny. The cumulative effect of the SEA objectives to each of the plan objectives was found to be in the main positive as was the cumulative effect of the plan objectives in relation to the SEA.
- 4.2.5 The next step was to develop a number of criteria from which each of the nominated routes could be assessed. The criteria were developed by the South Ayrshire Access Officer in conjunction with the Local Access Forum. To ensure that the proposed criteria work in harmony with the SEA objectives a matrix assessment was undertaken, see appendix 4 for details, the summery is that 49 aspects of the matrix were compatible, 30 were neutral with 2 being unknown.
- 4.2.6 Using the above criteria all paths as indicated in the Interim Core Path Plan (60) were walked by either the Access Officer or by a member of the Core Path Planning Sub- Group of the Local Access Forum. On walking the route an assessment form was completed using the criteria and a recommendation made as to whether the route should become a core path. After assessment of the original 60 nominated routes, 5 were denominated while a further 9 were nominated. See table below for further details.

Paths Denominated

1.	Route from St Nicholas Church across Prestwick Golf Course. Professional judgement was used to denominate this route as there was no apparent demand and its removal assists the Golf Club manage access.
2.	Route from Crosshill to Kirkmichael. Route would go through cartilage of a farm, would require the installation of a substantial bridge across the River Girvan and so significant financial investment would be needed. Access staff used professional judgement to denominate this route..
3	Route through Mossgennoch Wood near Dailly. To facilitate this route, potentially lengthy land negotiations and would require a substantial bridge across a gorge.
4.	Route between Laigh Dangart in the Stinchar Valley to Reuchal. Withdrawn because of concerns by the landowner on land management issues.
5.	Route between Pinwherry & Barrhill on the east side of the Duisk River. Route goes through the cartilage of a number of farms.

Additions to Routes & New Routes

1.	Proposed core path from Symington extending along the footway adjacent to the A77 and linking with Monkton. Suggested by the Paths for All Partnership to include Monkton into the network.
2.	Connecting the route east of Dundonald to the village and the start of the Smuggler' Trail. Proposed by the PFAP.
3.	Incorporating a link from Fullarton Woods to the footway south of Loans. Proposed by the PFAP to make a more connected network.
4.	Connecting two routes at Sundrum near Coylton. Makes for a more connected network.
5.	Route from the A77 through Dalmilling Golf Course on the north bank of the River Ayr to Craigie Estate. Included due to popularity of route.
6	Extended route on the north side of Heathfield Retail Park to link to residential area. Proposed by Cycling Scotland
7.	Connecting Heronsford along the South Bank of the River Stinchar to Colmonell. Proposed by Pinwherry CC and the Stinchar Walks Group to provide a strategic link.
8.	Include the Ayrshire Coastal Path in its entirety. Access staff used professional judgement to include this strategic long distance route. It was not available for inclusion in previous consultations as it did not exist.
9.	Connecting Colmonell to Lendalfoot and the Coastal Path. Linking communities and existing routes.

4.2.7 Members of the Local Access Forum and South Ayrshire access staff, who have been involved in the core paths planning process throughout, proposed the above alterations. recommendations In the end 67 routes were nominated to be included in the Finalised Draft Core Path Plan. See appendix 6 for an example of the path assessment form

4.2.8 Finally an additional matrix format has been used to assess the SEA Objectives of each of the routes including the cumulative effect (appendix 5). None of the routes were found to be detrimental in respect of the SEA topics, the majority were found to be positive or strongly positive the remainder being found to be neutral. Below is a summery of the likely environmental effect of the implementation of the nominated Core Paths Routes.

SEA Issue	Likely Environmental Effect
Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna	The development of the Core Path Plan is highly unlikely to have a negative impact on this SEA Issue as all nominated routes are already in existence. In fact there is potential to improve problems with this SEA topic as the Core Path Plan will promote specific routes and assist to manage access thereby reducing the potential to damage the flora and fauna of the area.
Cultural Heritage	As above
Human Health	The development and promotion of this Plan has the potential to improve human health by making people aware of routes available to them, providing them with the confidence to use them by ensuring they are adequately way marked and working with other organisations to encourage their use.
Material Assets	The production of the Core Path Plan will increase peoples awareness of their rights to public access and assist in the continued use of rights of way.

4.2.9 It should be noted that one of the main reasons for there being no negative impact is that that all the nominated paths are existing routes e.g. highway, pavement, rights of way, cycle routes or tracks. There are no new or proposed routes, no new works or construction to be undertaken; with the only potential improvement in the short to medium term being the erection of interpretation signage.

4.2.10 In each of the aforementioned assessments professional judgement, experience and where possible expert opinions have been sought to consider the likely environmental impacts, whether positive, negative, neutral or unknown in relation to the current environmental baseline of the Core Paths Plan in relation to each SEA objectives. In some instances it may not be possible to evaluate the effect e.g. due to lack of baseline data or lack of knowledge, when and where this occurs a ? will result in the matrix indicating the uncertainty.

4.3 Proposed Mitigation Measures

4.3.1 Schedule 3 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 requires an explanation of “the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme”. While there were no negative or significantly negative impacts identified during the assessment of the plan objectives, the table below sets out the environmental problems / issues where mitigation measures could be implemented to improve the situation

SEA Issue	Existing Problem	Plan Impact	Proposed Mitigation
Biodiversity Flora & Fauna Cultural Heritage Material Assets	Ad-hoc development of access routes	Largely positive as plan identifies a core network of routes from which a strategic development of access can be built upon.	<u>SEA Issues relating to this problem</u> There is no direct mitigation planned however through the creation of the Core Path Plan it has highlighted the issue of ad-hoc development and has identified a core network which will be used as the base for future development. The result of which is that the existing issue of unplanned routes will be eliminated / minimised so reduce the impact on the related SEA Issues.

Biodiversity Flora & Fauna Cultural Heritage Material Assets	Land management & maintenance issues	Plan recognises that this is a matter which will no doubt arise from time to time. In relation to maintenance this will be the responsibility of the landowner. With regard to land management issues both the Access Officer and the Local Access Forum will be able to assist.	<u>SEA Issues relating to this problem</u> No formal mitigation developed however with the identification and promotion of the core paths this in its self will reduce / eliminate land management issues and to an extent some maintenance issues by encouraging users to make use of the identified routes. Promotion of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code
Biodiversity Flora & Fauna Cultural Heritage Human Health Material Assets	Greater demand for managed outdoor access	One of the main reasons for the development of the Core Path Plan was to address this specific issue. As such the plan, through extensive consultation, has identified routes that will meet peoples needs while aiming to ensure the conservation/ protection of Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna; Cultural Heritage and Material Assets	<u>SEA Issues relating to this problem</u> As with above, no formal mitigation, nevertheless the creation of the plan its self mitigates the potential to these SEA Issues. To increase the influence, and therefore the mitigation, the routes will be actively promoted Promotion of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code
Human Health Material Assets	Increased housing	The Plan aims to connect communities. In addition when considering potential core path routes all identified housing sites in the local plan were reviewed and whenever possible linkages with other communities, services and the countryside were highlighted.	<u>SEA Issues relating to this problem</u> The Core Path Plan, once ratified, will become a material consideration in for future planning applications.
Biodiversity Flora & Fauna Cultural Heritage Material Assets	Conflict between users	The Plan does not formally address this issue. Though during the path selection process multi use potential was one of the criteria used.	<u>SEA Issues relating to this problem</u> Promotion of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code

5. MONITORING

- 5.1.1 Section 19 of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 requires the Responsible Authority to monitor significant environmental effects of the implementation of the South Ayrshire Core Path Plan in order to identify unforeseen adverse effects and to take appropriate remedial action.
- 5.1.2 South Ayrshire Council does not currently have the resources to monitor the nominated Core Path Routes however it is the intention to establish an inspection and maintenance programme which will involve the local community.
- 5.1.3 As has been mentioned previously the implementation of the South Ayrshire Core Paths Plan is not likely to have a significant environmental impact and as such there is no need for future monitoring.

6. NEXT STEPS

- 6.1.1 Below, in table format, are the future development of the South Ayrshire Finalised Draft Core Path Plan, and the dates when these are expected to be completed.

Expected Date	Milestone
16 th of February to 11 th May 2009	Consultation of finalised South Ayrshire Finalised Draft Core Paths Plan & SEA Environmental Report
11 th May to 11 th July 2009	Evaluation of responses received via consultation process incl. CA responses. Incorporate any changes that are considered relevant
October 2009	Proposed Publication & Launch of finalised Ayrshire Local Biodiversity Action Plan