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Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Draft Orkney Core Paths Plan. It is welcome that there is opportunity for informal consultation and that the council has a clear commitment to encouraging access throughout the islands.

As a walker and supporter of the St Magnus Way, it is disappointing, however, that in both the Orkney Outdoor Access Strategy and the Orkney Core Path Plan there is no mention made of the St Magnus Way. The St Magnus Way utilises the core paths network as much as possible throughout the West Mainland and Kirkwall and has the potential to make a major contribution to the Council's Access Strategy, in particular in promoting and encouraging access to the outdoors for both locals and visitors alike.

It is of particular concern that the plan considers removing the section of core path WM22 that goes from Canada West to Greeny. This is part of the St Magnus Way, launched in May 2017, and it is discouraging that it is to be removed from the network so soon after efforts have been made to ensure it is walkable.

It is also disappointing that path K13 around Scapa Beach terminates at Red Craig rather than Foveran and that the aspiration to link Costa Hill (WM25) with Whitaloo (WM26), is no longer proposed. Furthermore the St Magnus Way has made concerted efforts to link paths WM8, WM7 and WM3 together, from Finstown to Orphir, and this gives a coherence to these paths that should also be recognised.

Other long distance walks, for example the West Highland Way, are part of the core path network in the relevant local authorities and consideration should be given to incorporating the St Magnus Way into the core path network for Orkney. As you are aware, being a core path does not commit the local authority to maintenance or promotion of those paths. It does however signal an importance attributed to the routes.

A partnership approach, in which the efforts of the volunteers who have established the St Magnus Way, is recognised would be very much welcome. Budgets are tight, and will remain tight, but by working in partnership with volunteers the council has the opportunity to apportion funds in ways which ensure the maximum value for money. We feel this should be reflected in both the core paths and the access strategy and would welcome further consideration of this approach.