

## ABERDEENSHIRE LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

### MINUTES OF MEETING 27, Monday 16 March 2009 BARN & BUSHEL, THAINSTONE CENTRE, INVERURIE

**Present:** Ken Thomson (Chair), Gordon McKilligan (Vice-Chair), Bill Ashcroft, Neil Buchanan, Dan Cadle, Peter Dawes, Bill Dow, Drew Elphinstone, Alison Espie, Robin Maitland, Brian Martin, Paul Timms, Owen Vaughan.

**Deputising:** Alison Mitchell (for Molly Atkinson).

**Invited Observer:** Lorna Paterson (Regional Manager, NFU Scotland).

**Council Officers Present:** Linda Mathieson, Colin Miller.

**1 Apologies:** Molly Atkinson, David Finlay, Cllr Michael Watt (as Council Reserve – Council rep position being vacant), Eileen Oliver (Min Sec).

**Introductions:** Drew Elphinstone, succeeding Tom Johnston as NFUS Rep.; Lorna Paterson, Regional Manager, NFUS, as invited observer.

**Closed Session:** The Chair advised that Item 9(5) would be considered in closed session.

**2 Minutes of Meeting 26** Approved.

**3 Matters arising** None.

#### **4 ALOAF update**

(1) **Membership:** Chair to write to Tom Johnston thanking him for his service to ALOAF as NFUS Rep. Chair acknowledged Cllr Debra Storr's positive contribution to ALOAF as Council Rep., which had been terminated by the Council's Admin. Group [*Note: not by ISC as previously reported by CM*]. Council Rep. position is currently vacant, awaiting a new appointee.

(2) **Rotation of Chair:** Chair stepping down at 27/7/09 meeting [*note: meeting is 27/7, not 13/7*] at end of 2<sup>nd</sup> term of office; nomination forms to be available at 18/5/09 ALOAF meeting (**Action: CM**); closing date for nominations 13/7/09.

(3) **Annual Report:** Approved. **CM** to arrange for cover for paper edition; also to put on website.

(4) **Letter to ISC Chair:** No response has been received.

(5) **ALOAF Leaflet:** CM reported that the leaflet is at advanced stage of preparation; will be available for May ALOAF meeting and June Annual Gathering.

(6) **Communication & promotion:** Chair observed that ALOAF seems to be a little better known now. Annual Gathering will be the next major awareness-raising event.

(7) **Other – Role of NAF:** In response to a request from NAF, ALOAF discussed the role of NAF. Three strands were voiced:

- NAF, partly because it represents a wide range of organisations, has a valuable role in addressing big or generic issues, despite these taking a long time to work through the system.
- There is still felt to be a lack of communication (both ways) between the LAF level and NAF. Perhaps way could be found to brief NAF on the various tasks tackled by LAFs.
- Irrespective of NAF's role, regional meetings of several neighbouring LAFs were seen to be valuable. An NAF presence at such meetings might be beneficial.

#### **5 Aberdeenshire Council Update**

(1) **2009/10 access budget:** Reference was made to Linda Mathieson's paper on this item. The Deeside Way figure had not yet been finalised (LM to clarify at next meeting). Overall, the access budget is c.£200,000, with hopes to increase this in future years. A growth bid is planned for 2010/11. No costing available yet for the proposed core paths, but this will be a key figure in the budget process. In answer to a question from GMcK about the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT), LM reported that discussions were underway regarding other local authorities contributing to its funding. In addition to its work within the National Park, COAT does do work in contiguous areas. On the budget in general, the Chair asked for a global figure, i.e. a standard set of statistical headings for each year for comparability. LM said that this was difficult to achieve due to there being no standard statistical framework.

(2) **Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan:** The Forum considered the ALDP programme, and asked that ALOAF be included in the list of community consultees (**Action: CM**). ALOAF may have to consider its response at the May or the July meeting.

(3) **Other – Walking and Cycling Strategy:** The WCS team had asked if ALOAF would like to fulfil a cycle-forum role by, for example, hosting an annual meeting for cycling interests. It was agreed that the forthcoming Annual Gathering would have a cycling element. The Chair noted that ALOAF would be seeking a cycling representative in the future. NB observed that this was essentially a transport-planning matter, and it was agreed that in principle the main player should be NESTRANS.

## 6 Core Paths Plan

(1) **Update:** Linda Mathieson reported that the proposed revisions are to be considered by the Council's Area Committees this month. If approved, the Final Draft CPP documents can be prepared for public consultation (the latter being provisionally scheduled for this summer).

(2) **Specific advice:** No advice required at present on issues affecting specific proposed core paths. At May ALOAF meeting, Council can start briefing ALOAF on probable issues. In answer to a question from the Chair, LM said that any business on this at the May meeting would be "briefing and discussion" rather than expecting formal advice from the Forum.

## 7 Equestrian access leaflet

Colin Miller briefed the Forum on the joint BHS/SRPBA leaflet initiative on issues involving equestrian access and land management, and was given approval to forward ALOAF's Equestrian Working Group draft text to both organisations in case it would be of assistance. It was felt that, even if the national leaflet superseded the need for an ALOAF/Council leaflet, there might be benefits from distributing a local leaflet in the short term before the national one appeared. **Action: CM to check national timescale.**

## 8 Annual Gathering

The Forum considered the draft programme. Preferred date chosen was 13/6/09 (**Action: CM to check availability and accessibility of Hall**). Site visit time to be increased. Chair hoped that key participants and organisations could be notified within the next month. ALOAF Members to have a role in site visits.

## 9 Access Consultations, Issues etc

(1) **Menie:** No new information.

(2) **AWPR:** No Reporters' decision yet. There was discussion about whether to include reference to the AWPR in the CPP; options discussed included showing the

proposed route; showing a broad corridor; producing a separate AWPR map. LM's view was that a map would be inappropriate, but the existence of the AWPR proposal could be mentioned in the text. **(Action: LM** to advise Chair re whether AWPR can be referred to in some way).

(3) **Beechhill Croft:** In connection with the paper supplied by KT, the Forum gave further consideration to the matter. Aberdeenshire Councillors Alison Grant and Hazel Al Kowarri, acting as liaison with Kemnay Community Council, had met with Ken Thomson. There had also been several e-mails from concerned members of the public. A letter from the owner's solicitors had been referred to in para. 2 of KT's paper. Assisted by powerpoint photos, the Forum gave further consideration to the privacy issue and possible alternative routes bypassing the croft house and/or the storage yard at Whitestones Quarry (it being clear that LRSA access rights do not apply at the latter site). It was observed that on weekdays any diversion involving the public road etc at the fabrication works (at E Leschangie) would be unsuitable due to traffic. It was suggested that the possibility of the disputed route being a public right of way might justify investigation, but LM (for the Council) expressed the view that in this case, because of the geography and the history of routes in the area, such a process appeared likely to be complicated and costly, with only a slim chance of being successful. RM agreed with this opinion. GMcK asked if a diversion near the present route but down beside the east boundary wall would be acceptable. There was discussion regarding whether the terrain would be suitable. KT, seconded by Alison Espie, proposed that his paper be submitted to the Council as ALOAF's advice, and this met with general agreement **(Action: KT)**. LM will keep ALOAF updated in general terms about the issue.

(4) **Ballogie Estate:** The Chair reported that the Forum had been copied into a letter from Ballogie Estate to the Police regarding illegal vehicular use of its woodland. There had been no direct request for Forum involvement, the matter was noted, without further action being deemed appropriate.

(6) **NAF Monitoring of Access Issues:**

NAF is considering whether it should monitor access issues, and if so, how to do this. LT suggested that NAF should simply ask LAFs once a year and LAFs should tell them. PT suggested that ALOAF could produce a spreadsheet. Linda Mathieson queried whether it was the LAF's role to do this. The meeting moved on to the next item.

(7) **Other:**

**Friends of Haddo:** general letter of support to be sent, stating willingness to send letter of support for a further funding bid if requested **(Action: Chair)**.

**Hill of Fare:** KT had been approached by the prospective author of an article describing a walk over the hill. On being consulted by the author, an estate had raised objections due to concerns about pheasant pens, parking, and potential increase in public use. KT asked whether the Forum felt this matter was within its remit and if so, whether the Forum could offer advice. RM declared an interest. PD observed that promoting a route is different from just using a route. AE stated that young pheasants are very sensitive for a 2-month period; therefore any article should strongly emphasise responsibility on the part of the access user. OV, supported by PT, questioned whether the Forum should be commenting on individual articles (as distinct from giving generic advice). On the Council's part, Linda Mathieson was concerned that a response might be seen as an endorsement of the article. OV suggested that the reply could say it's not possible to endorse the article, but could draw the author's attention to the access considerations. NB suggested that ALOAF could recommend full consultation with the land managers, seeking agreement and agreeing to highlight the land manager's concerns in the article. **(Action: KT to write accordingly)**.

## 10 Events, Training, Information

(1),(2) The following forthcoming events were reported:

- National Bike week – 3<sup>rd</sup> week in June.
- Launch of walk Homecoming Scotland 2009 – 6/5/09.

(3) Papers had been distributed on the Scottish Rural Development Programme. It was noted that the application process can now take a year.

(4) Papers had been distributed on “Outdoor Access and the Planning System”; also the latest NAF business papers. The Forum was also informed about the forthcoming KSB National Spring Clean (April) , and Open Farm Sunday (7/6/09).

11 **AOB** None.

## 12 Items for next meeting’s agenda

- LEADER presentation – Vicky Thomson.
- Annual Gathering (**Action: Meantime, CM to e-mail Members once date confirmed**).

13 **Date of next meeting** 18<sup>th</sup> May 2009.

## CLOSED SESSION

**Item 9(5) Access Issue: Formartine:** After briefing and discussion, the Forum expressed the view that public access rights, under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, do apply at the site in question, but advised that the Council should check certain background information. (**Action: Chair to write to Council accordingly**).

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*The meeting closed at 8.15pm.*