

ABERDEENSHIRE LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF MEETING 28, Monday 18 May 2009 BARN & BUSHEL, THAINSTONE CENTRE, INVERURIE

Present: Ken Thomson (Chair), Gordon McKilligan (Vice-Chair), Bill Ashcroft, Neil Buchanan, Peter Dawes, Bill Dow, Drew Elphinstone, David Finlay, Robin Maitland, Brian Martin, Owen Vaughan

Council Officers Present: Linda Mathieson, Colin Miller.

1 Apologies: Molly Atkinson, Paul Timms; Neil Buchanan to arrive c.6.30pm.

Introductions: Vicky Thomson: LEADER Coordinator for Aberdeenshire Council.

2(1) Minutes of Meeting 27 – open session: Approved.

2(2) Minutes of Meeting 27 – closed session: Approved.

3 Matters arising: In response to query from Owen Vaughan, **CM** to check s75 agreement for Daviot developments.

4 LEADER – Presentation by Vicky Thomson: Rural Aberdeenshire LEADER funding is £3.36m (awarded June 2008), of which £1m was committed within the first 9 months. The £3.36m can amount to £9m with leverage. LEADER delivers to settlements with a population of 5,000 or less. Priorities relevant to access are Sustainable Communities and Sustainable Tourism. Applicants have to be bona fide organisations, or collaborations including same. (In response to a query, VT acknowledged that RNAS and RNCI would be eligible organisations). Maximum LEADER share is 50%, minimum applicant's share is 5%; in-kind contributions can be considered. Examples of access-related projects include Scolty Trails Enhancement, all-ability path at Tarland, assistance to COAT, the Tarland-Aboyne path, and Health Walks. Website: www.aberdeenshireleader.org In discussion, KT observed that some 7-10% of the funding was on paths. It was also noted that the £3.36m funding was to cover the period to 2013. **Chair** to send note of thanks to VT for her presentation.

5 ALOAF update

(1) Membership:

- Vacancy arising for Access User Rep with Owen Vaughan standing down after 18/5/09 meeting.
- Nomination forms for position of Chair distributed. Nomination closing date 13 July 2009.
- Paths For All Representative for the North is Fiona McNally.

- No official word yet on appointment of new Council ALOAF Rep [*note from CM: subsequent notification received that Cllr Isobel Davidson has been appointed*].

(2) ALOAF Leaflet: Now available. CM distributed additional copies to all present.

6 Aberdeenshire Council Update

(1) The Forum considered LM's paper on the Council's 2009/10 access budget, which showed a headline figure of £370,000 (including £3000-4000 budget figure for ALOAF) excluding match-funding and staff costs. The paper was welcomed as a useful overview.

7 Core Paths Plan:

(1) Update: hope to start 12-week consultation in early June. Changes since the last version are mostly additional routes; a few have been dropped.

(2) Issues briefing: the Forum considered Linda Mathieson's paper on potential issues which might lead to formal objections. Gordon McKilligan asked if the criticism that there were not enough paths could be met by the list of aspirational routes. LM said it could not, because people wanted the additional paths now.

Respondents had to be clear whether they were commenting or objecting. Where in due course an objection cannot be resolved, the Council will prepare a statement for the Scottish Government. It will then be up to the SG Reporter. Any Public Inquiry is likely to be by written submissions, with site visits if required, rather than held in open forum. The Reporter will liaise direct with the objector. KT observed that this could be a year away. LM thought that elsewhere in Scotland two access authorities thus far had submitted information to the Reporter, with more nearing the Public Inquiry stage. LM offered to circulate the Paths For All Core Paths Plan progress chart (**Action: LM**). Robin Maitland observed that foregoing Public Inquiries could help by resolving points of principle before any Aberdeenshire one.

8 – Annual Gathering

The programme was reviewed in general. CM invited displays. The Chair emphasised that the site visits would focus on relevant issues affecting the chosen environment, but there were also issues common to all three sites, namely access availability, information, multi-use. Various relevant interests would be represented, coordinated by a Council officer. ALOAF members would lead the group on-site and report back to the plenary session. The Chair called for and allocated volunteers to the above roles. **Chair** to contact Alison Espie and Molly Atkinson. CM asked for volunteers to help in preparation and clean-up. G McK volunteered for the latter. Press release had been issued, but not known if it has appeared. The Council will do a mailing to those on its list. **Chair** to liaise with Richard Cooke.

9 Access Consultations, Issues etc

- (1) **Menie**: no new information.
- (2) **AWPR**: no new information.
- (3) **Privacy signage – request for advice**: An estate owner has approached the Council for advice on signage to indicate privacy/curtilage areas and has asked if ALOAF could endorse the proposed wording. Concern was raised that signage endorsed by ALOAF might thereafter be re-sited elsewhere (i.e. without ALOAF approval). It was agreed after discussion that in principle ALOAF could endorse signage, including that proposed here, perhaps with the strapline “ALOAF – promoting responsible access” – **Action: Linda Mathieson** to bring draft signage to future ALOAF meeting.
- (4) **Other**: none.

10 Events, Training, Information

- (1) **National Bike week –June**. Not discussed.
- (2) **Launch of walk Homecoming Scotland 2009** Not discussed.
- (3) **Scottish Rural Development Programme update**: Was on hold but has now reached a clearer direction. **Linda Mathieson** will circulate a presentation given at the recent SCAN Conference.
- (4) **SCAN Conference 8/5/09**: Gordon McKilligan reported on the proceedings.
- (5) **Other**:
 - NAF papers on Roads and Access and on SNH’s Review of Responsible Access will be distributed (**Action: CM**).
 - In response to a query regarding a dispute being dealt with by the Council, CM explained the situation in general terms. It involved access on farmland. This stimulated discussion on dog issues and it was observed that there is an issue with “professional dog walkers”.

11 AOB: Tuley case: Robin Maitland asked CM for an update. CM stated that the judgement focussed on two main points (1) there was reasonable expectation of potential damage by horses; (2) the landowner had demonstrated favourable attitude towards (responsible) access. KT and RM felt that point (2) was (in principle) not very sound. KT thought that the costs of the case might deter Councils from taking legal action. RM and David Finlay felt that the outcome showed common sense.

12 Items for next meeting’s agenda:

- Election of Chair
- Dogs.
- Proposed privacy signs for comment.

13 Date of next meeting 27 July 2009.
