

ABERDEENSHIRE LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF MEETING 29, Monday 27 July 2009 BARN & BUSHEL, THAINSTONE CENTRE, INVERURIE

Present: Dan Cadle, Cllr Isobel Davidson, Peter Dawes, Bill Dow, David Finlay, David Fyffe, Gordon McKilligan, Alison Mitchell, Ken Thomson (Chair), Paul Timms.

Council Officers present: Colin Miller.

Guest speakers/Adviser: Fiona McNally, Paths For All Partnership; Tom Johnston, NFUS.

1 Apologies and Deputisings: Molly Atkinson (Alison Mitchell deputising); Drew Elphinstone; Alison Espie; Robin Maitland (David Fyffe deputising); Andrew Robertson; and Linda Mathieson.

Introductions: Cllr Isobel Davidson, recently appointed Aberdeenshire Council representative on ALOAF; Tom Johnston, NFUS; Fiona McNally, Development Officer, Paths For All Partnership.

2 Minutes of Meeting 28: Approved.

3 Matters arising: *Item 3* – CM reported that he had checked the Section 75 Agreement, but had found no new information.

5 [brought forward] Paths For All Partnership – Fiona McNally, Development Officer

Fiona described the new 2-strand structure comprising

- “Walking for Health” (funding from NHS and Scottish Government): training local walk leaders; promoting walking at the workplace; health walks; GP referrals. Officer for Aberdeenshire is Frances Bain.
- Outdoor Access: supporting LAFs, CPP work, technical paths development advice. Fiona focussing on community path development; tasked with updating database of community paths groups, with a view to networking action in early 2010; emphasis on Core Paths provision where funding is limited.

Discussion:

- Paths for Health in Aberdeenshire is going well.
- *Cllr Davidson (ID):* Re CPP, some community councils expect the local authority to maintain the paths.
FM: L/A is not obliged to maintain. PFA can advise on funding for community-led work (q.v. PFA website [www.pathsforall.org.uk]).
- *ID:* Is PFA more about technical advice and encouraging use of paths? And on-line community toolkit. *KT:* Help with form completion?
FM: Yes – advice and support.
KT: The money goes for walking, technical advice and promotional materials.
FM: New signage guidance to be published imminently (paper and on-line).
- *KT:* Are the proposed outcomes quantifiable?
FM: Yes – see PFA Business Plan.
KT: Re GP referrals?
FM: A number of GPs are referring patients.
- *David Finlay:* How much does PFA work with schools?

FM: Programme with 14-16 year-olds in Alloa to increase activity levels. PFA's health-walking team is developing advice for that sector.
DF: Do you encourage schools to do "walking classes"?
FM: Not targeted [by PFA] so far.
DF: Effective to start early rather than halfway through life.
FM: Sustrans and Cycling Scotland are encouraging active travel in schools. Not one of PFA's allotted tasks.

4 ALOAF Administration

(1) Selection of Chair: Gordon McKilligan was selected as Chair unopposed. **KT** accepted the suggested role of support until November 2009.

Selection of Vice Chair: In the absence of any nominations, **PT** suggested that nomination forms be mailed to Representatives in mid-September.

Action: CM. Selection to be at 2/11/09 meeting.

(2) Membership

P Dawes and **K Thomson** stated their intention to stand down from ALOAF with effect from the 2/11/09 meeting. With the pre-existing vacancy due to **Owen Vaughan** standing down, there will be 3 vacancies for Access User Representatives. **KT** observed that the Forum's collective experience currently has gaps in the contexts of cycling and water access. Recruitment process to be implemented in September/October, with a view to selection at 2/11/09 meeting. **Any potential names to Colin Miller. CM to arrange mailing and announcement on website.**

KT also asked if any other members were thinking of standing down by mid-September, and if so, to advise **CM**.

(3) Other

"Out and about" site visit: Floated by **KT** for September 2009, but deferred at **PT**'s suggestion to March 2010 when new Representatives will have been appointed.

ALOAF First Report: At **PD**'s request, **CM** to check that it has been posted on the website. [*It had.cm*].

6 Aberdeenshire Council Update

Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (ALDP): **CM** reported that although the ALDP team had been notified in April 2009 of ALOAF's wish to be included on the consultation mailing list, this had not been done. The Main Issues Report (MIR) consultation had started on 18/5/09 and closed earlier in July. However, **CM** had arranged for the ALDP team to rectify the omission, and the team had now offered ALOAF time to comment. He had suggested that ALOAF could comment within one week. **Cllr ID** explained that the MIR resulted from a request to developers to indicate sites representing their maximum land requirements, which it was recognised would be well in excess of what would actually be developed. Therefore, at this stage, ALOAF should focus their response on the policies. In discussion, **KT** noted that the right time for comments on the sites themselves would be in the consultation in February 2010. **David Finlay** said that it should be pointed out now that there should be master planning of the sites, and this should include access. **KT** suggested stating 2-3 principles which ALOAF would like to see observed in the site master planning. **CM** described the proposal for an Access Plan condition. **DF** asked if the developer should be liaising with the Forum or the local authority. **KT** recalled that the Forum

had expressed a wish to be involved [*i.e. consulted by the planning authority on relevant major applications.CM*]. KT offered to draft comments to start off with; **KT, Bill Dow and David Finlay to be subgroup to complete and submit response. CM to supply documents.** [*Comments submitted within timescale. CM*].

7 Core Paths Plan

CM reported that the final consultation started in June and will run to 14th September 2009. He updated the meeting on the number and character of responses so far. ALOAF to comment (by 14 September 2009). Subgroup appointed: **GMcK, PD, and a Land Management Rep.** Consensus that the CPP is now adequate for purpose.

8 Annual Gathering

The meeting reviewed the 2009 event (13th June). Discussion included:

- slightly disappointing numbers; pros and cons of weekend events.
- re site visits -- possible improvements to group discussion dynamics and reporting.
- missed opportunity to discuss mountain-biking.

KT suggested that next time there could be a tighter focus, e.g. 1 or 2 key issues.

9 Dogs

At the request of NFUS, Tom Johnston (Regional Chair, NFUS) attended since both the NFUS Representative and Reserve were unable to attend. Inviting TJ to speak, KT called for a focussed discussion and guidance on actions for ALOAF. TJ drew the Forum's attention to serious concern among Scottish farmers regarding recent fatalities in England where walkers and their dogs had been in fields with cattle. One incident had resulted in a major compensation claim (although this was not the main concern). He called for more guidance for the public. Gordon McKilligan suggested that the matter be put on the agenda for the forthcoming NAF/LAF Joint Meeting. PT noted that the SNH leaflet for dog owners made the necessary points, but there was an issue in delivering the message effectively. TJ's perception was that few dog walkers were aware of the information. Fiona McNally reminded the group of the land management signs which can be downloaded from the website [www.outdooraccess-scotland.com]. Topics raised in discussion included:

Access rights, SOAC, signage, safety and liability: It was suggested that limiting signage to farm access points would avoid the difficulty of signing every field. David Finlay stated that it was irresponsible to go into fields with livestock, and that people (with or without dogs) should keep to paths, with core paths being fenced. KT observed that this would exclude access from a large proportion of land, and questioned whether this was in the spirit of the access legislation. He favoured education as an alternative to blanket signage or other conditions. D Finlay said it should be made clear that access was at people's own risk.

SNH "Dog owners" leaflet: Cllr Isobel Davidson observed that the SNH leaflet does not show dogs on lead. CM reported that the Council's Ranger Service had informed SNH that, although fully endorsing responsible behaviour by dog owners, they could not support the current leaflet because its portrayal of dogs as daft offended dog owners. It was observed that SNH staff themselves were not unanimously in favour of the leaflet in its current form. Consultation with NFUS was considered essential for any such leaflet.

Discussion also touched briefly on livestock at risk from dogs, and on a report (at the Annual Gathering) from a cyclist who had been regularly harassed by dogs on the Old Deeside Line in Aberdeen.

Action: Chair to contact NAF Convenor noting that the issue had been raised, and suggesting the topic as an item for the NAF/LAF Joint Meeting.

10 Access Consultations, Issues etc

- (1) *Menie*: no news.
- (2) *AWPR*: no news.
- (3) *Privacy signage – request for advice*: Deferred to 2/11/09 (Action: **Linda Mathieson**).
- (4) *Cycling Action Plan Scotland (CAPS)*: consultation closing date 19/8/09. This topic prompted discussion on costs of safe provision for cyclists on estate tracks, and impacts of cycling on path surfaces. In view of other workload, consensus for no response on CAPS from ALOAF.
Action: CM to send link to GMcK.
- (5) *Other*: no other topics.

11 Events, Training, Information

- (1) *SRDP update*: Any project over £250,000 will be subject to scrutiny.
- (2) *Angus LAF Open Meeting 16/6/09*: Police had been included.
- (3) *Equestrian leaflet (national)*: due 9/09.
- (4) *SCAN Conference “Sport and the Outdoors” 20/11/09*: **CM to distribute more information in October mailing.**
- (5) *NAF papers (included in meeting papers)*: Roads and Access; SNH SOAC-related promotion campaigns report.
- (Other) *Paths to Health conference – Glasgow, September 2009*.
- (Other) *SNH Outdoor Access Festival*: took place in July 2009.
- (Other) *Aberdeen Core Paths Plan Launch*: by Aberdeen Outdoor Access Forum 31/7/09.

12 AOB

Ticks: Discussion on human health implications (Lyme Disease). PT said research is underway on ticks. Possible role for NAF in education for walkers in general (hillwalkers reasonably aware). Richard Cooke had said ALOAF could draw it to NAF's attention. **Action: Chair.**

RNCl -- Countryside Health and Safety: Consider specific agenda item for future meeting. ALOAF to consider topic(s). **Action: Chair.**

13 Items for next meeting's agenda: no specific suggestions made.

14 Date of next meeting: 2 November 2009.

15 Chair handover: In accepting the role of Chair and moving a vote of thanks to Ken Thomson, Gordon McKilligan thanked Ken for his dedicated service to the Forum over his 4 years in office, and for his attention to detail in what was a totally new organisation.