

ABERDEENSHIRE LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

**NOTE OF MEETING 6 HELD ON MONDAY, 3RD OCTOBER 2005
AT THE PEATYARDS, HADDO HOUSE**

Present:

John Brownlee
Peter Dawes
Bill Dow
Cameron Ewen
David Fyffe
Alan Harper
Pauline Jewett
Ron Macdonald
Robin Maitland, SRPBA
Brian Martin
John Miskelly (deputising for Tom Johnston)
Alison Mitchell (deputising for Molly Atkinson)
Iain Taylor
Ken Thomson (Chair)
Owen Vaughan

Council officers also present:-

Advisory role: Colin Miller, Countryside Access Officer
Linda Mathieson, Environment Planner (Strategic)
John Latham, Senior Countryside Ranger
Keith Jones, Head of Law & Administration
Alastair Fullwood, Access Officer

1. Apologies and Introductions

Apologies noted from Councillors Jim Anderson and Jenny Watson, Tom Johnston and Molly Atkinson. The meeting welcomed Pauline Jewett, as a co-opted member and John Miskelly as the nominated NFUS reserve.

2. Minutes of Meeting of 22nd August 2005

These were approved, subject to it being noted that, with regard to Item 12, the meeting of 3rd October 2005 was being held at the Peatyards, Haddo House.

3. Matters Arising

The following points with regard to the previous minute were noted:

Item 4: The scene setting paper had not yet been progressed on behalf of the Council.
Item 4(b): Copies of the signed Operating Principles had now been distributed.
Item 8: Work priorities: The meeting accepted that monitoring of the work programme be undertaken by the Chair, Vice-Chair and the Countryside Access Officer with matters being reported to the Forum as appropriate.

4. Procedures

(a) Insurance

Linda Mathieson reported that members were substantially covered under the Council's own insurance policies. The one area that required to be clarified was liability to third parties, e.g. in respect of indemnity re. advice that may be given. The issue would require to be considered at national level and Linda or Colin would take the matter forward.

(b) Membership Changes

It was noted that an approach to Ian Dunlop of Visit Scotland had met with a favourable response. It was likely therefore that tourism interests would be represented on the Forum. In the meantime, Pauline Jewett had accepted co-option to join the Forum. John Miskelly had been nominated as NFUS reserve. The Council still required to hear from Scottish Natural Heritage and SRPBA regarding nominations for replacement reserves. It was reported to the meeting that Kelley Birnie would be the SNH reserve. Colin Miller reminded the meeting that all new reserve appointments required to be ratified by the Council's ISC and therefore it would be useful to be able to include all changes in the one report, along with additional community sector reserve nominations, e.g. from Community Council Forums. This would probably take place in the New Year. It was agreed that the ISC would be requested to delegate future approval of changes to membership to the Forum itself.

5. Events, Training and Information

(a) Colin Miller reported on the Forum's stand at Woodhill House during the "Doors Open Day" on 10th September 2005. He had been present along with Bill Dow, Alastair Fullwood and Helen Young. There had been approximately 150 visitors during the day and it was considered that the exercise had been useful.

(b) NAF Local Access Forums Event – 21st September 2005

Peter Dawes reported on discussions at this event. Closure of level crossings by Network Rail had been discussed. Nationally this had been a difficulty but not it appeared to the same extent locally. Also discussed was dialogue between Local Access Forums and the National Access Forum. This would be the subject of a future paper. There were now 29 Local Access Forums, although some areas such as Highland had several. With regard to Core Paths Planning, Falkirk had finished the first round of consultation, although this had started in 1998. Bob Reid was to be chasing up the Core Paths Plans from LAFs. Dave Morris, of the Ramblers Association, had suggested that Local Access Forums should be wary of dispute resolution. Perth and Kinross, one of the earlier Local Access Forums, was only now in a position to follow through this part of the remit.

There was also discussion over advice given to parties of youngsters over access to land. It was pointed out that schoolchildren should, according to Education guidelines, seek permission from landowners before entering their property. There did, however, appear to be some conflict between advice to schoolchildren and the spirit of the legislation. It was agreed that the correct message should go to schools to avoid conflict and it was understood that SNH would be reviewing guidance given to schools. It was agreed that the Forum would wish to comment on any advice Aberdeenshire Council would give to schools over access by pupils. The issue was one of raising awareness and the Forum would have input into the Council's procedures. This would not negate the Education Authority's own procedures with regard to risk assessment and Health and Safety.

(c) Site Visit to Haddo – 3rd October 2005

The Chair asked members to express their views on the visit and the examples of issues which had been incorporated into the afternoon's activities. The general view was that this had been more useful than a paper exercise. The format could be repeated with

perhaps the members splitting into smaller groups to look at issues and thereafter discuss at a plenary session.

(d) **SNH Public Access with Land Management Seminars**

Colin reminded members that these seminars were to take place on 18th October and 30th November 2005. It would be up to members if they wished to attend and to make their own arrangements.

6. Core Paths Planning

(a) **Guide to Good Practice**

This had been issued to all members. The Chair drew attention to references to the role of Local Access Forums.

(b) **Criteria for Core Path Selection**

Following an overview of relevant information on the timeline chart the Forum divided into three sub-groups, led by Alastair Fullwood, Colin Miller and Linda Mathieson to look at possible criteria in respect of Core Paths Planning. Each sub-group identified what they considered to be the three top priority criteria. Views represented were diverse. It was agreed that the criteria would vary area to area, in particular as between rural areas and the fringes of towns. Items for inclusion as part of the criteria included –

- Provision of safe routes avoiding the use of cars, e.g. from settlement centres to schools, churches, shops, etc.
- Links to places of local interest of both natural heritage and built heritage.
- Link to the wider path networks, both local and strategic.
- Provision of paths to meet all abilities.
- Creation of circular routes.
- Level of demand identified in the community.
- Possibility of avoiding or mitigating land management conflicts.
- Opportunities for multi-use.
- Opportunities for community regeneration and social inclusion.
- Protection of the natural environment, e.g. safeguarding biodiversity.
- Meeting the requirements of the tourism sector.
- Providing cost benefit or value for money.
- Becoming part of a strategic path network.
- Making use of the existing path network or of those in the planning stage.
- Ensuring a wide distribution of paths.
- Reflecting the willingness to be co-operative on behalf of landowners and land managers.

- (c) The meeting then considered consultation issues with regard to Core Paths Planning. It had been recommended to hold meetings at a number of locations within each of the Aberdeenshire Council's areas. Alison Mitchell suggested on-line consultation be available, e.g. for organisations. It would also be appropriate to move towards the setting up of area-based supporting groups. Colin recommended the use of existing area partnerships, as the area groups would have a major role within the Core Paths process. Other organisations would be invited to participate, such as Community Councils and community groups. Each partnership would have some form of secretariat and members of the Forum itself would probably wish to sit in on discussions in order to identify targeted interest groups. The first stage would be for Colin to liaise with Area Managers. The groups would be less formal at local level but would require some form of secretariat.

7. Communications Strategy

(a) **Press Release**

The Chair spoke as to the press release which had been issued. He had been interviewed subsequently by local radio.

(b) **Web-Site Development**

The Chair reported that the sub-group had not yet made a lot of progress but this was to be pushed forward. There was a need to resolve procedures for getting routine documents onto the web site, to identify which document this would apply to and who was to be involved in the process. The site needed to be easy to access.

(c) **Annual Gathering**

This would take place early next year and a paper would be submitted to the 21st November 2005 meeting of the Forum for consideration.

(d) **Members' Skills Register**

A pro forma was handed out to members which would enable them to record special skills and interests which would be of use to the Forum.

(e) **Record of ALOAF Promotional Work**

The Chair spoke as to the need to keep a record of promotional work undertaken on behalf of the Forum and that articles, external meetings attended on behalf of the Forum and other relevant information be retained. He undertook to maintain a simple record. He also suggested that any articles submitted for publication on behalf of the Forum should be checked by either himself or the Vice-Chairman plus Colin Miller. It was also agreed that future meetings of the Forum would be open to the public to attend. It was agreed that high-quality ALOAF badges be supplied by the Council for ALOAF members to wear at meetings and promotional events.

8. Agenda Suggestions for Next Meeting

Among items for discussion would be the Annual Gathering, the update from the web-site sub-group and the programme of Core Paths Planning consultation meetings. This would entail discussion of format, scheduling in calendar, materials to be used, etc. The Chair or Colin would collate any other items submitted by members for circulation.

9. Date of Next Meeting

This was confirmed as 21st November 2005 at the Barn and Bushel, Thainstone.