

**ABERDEENSHIRE LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM****NOTE OF 12<sup>th</sup> MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 18<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2006  
AT THE BARN AND BUSHEL, THAINSTONE CENTRE, INVERURIE****Present:**

Ken Thomson (Chair)  
Neil McLean  
Tom Johnston  
John Brownlee  
Brian Martin  
Owen Vaughan  
Alison Mitchell  
Peter Dawes  
Iain Taylor  
Alan Harper  
David Finlay  
Robin Maitland  
David Fyffe  
Bill Dow

**Council officers also present:**

Colin Miller  
Alastair Fullwood  
Keith Jones  
Jamie Hunter

**1. Apologies and Introductions**

Apologies were noted from Linda Mathieson, Molly Atkinson, Kelley Miller and Councillor Jenny Watson. The Chair introduced Neil McLean who was present to speak to item 8(4) on the Agenda.

**2. Minute of Meeting of 24th July 2006**

A correction to this minute of was required in that Allan Harper was in fact present.

**3. Matters Arising**

Owen Vaughan raised concerns over reports in the press of Aberdeenshire Council's projected budget deficit and the potential impact of this on the Council's access budget. Alastair Fullwood said that there was little detail at that time about the potential impact on the access budget.

**4. Membership**

Having been the only individual to stand for the post, John Brownlee was duly elected as Vice Chairman of ALOAF.

The Chair requested that the contacts list and the website be updated.

The Chair notified the group that Colin Miller intended to write to Ron Macdonald regarding low attendance rate at ALOAF formal meetings, in accordance with the Operating Principles.

#### Item 8(3) (out of sequence): Privacy Group

Discussion took place at this point over the work of the Privacy Group in order that Neil McLean could leave early due to another pressing commitment.

An update document was circulated to members during the meeting.

Alastair Fullwood presented the latest findings of the group. No firm conclusion had been reached by the sub-group but a clearer system was emerging. It was felt that ALOAF a set of guidelines should be drawn up and that a 'scoring' system be introduced which took into account the various circumstances and gave each a weighting. The group felt that ultimately the decision on each specific access case was always going to be based on the officer's subjective opinion.

In relation to a specific case it was suggested that an ALOAF site visit could take place with the group subdivided into 3 sub-groups to review it independently.

A finalised document on recommended practice would be completed in time for the November meeting of ALOAF. Alastair Fullwood suggested that any new system would need to be 'field-tested'. The group was in general agreement. David Fyffe suggested that the system be tested on the next site visit.

John Brownlee stated that Linda Mathieson was to present the system to colleagues within Aberdeenshire Council and in other authorities in order to gain the benefit of their opinions. Robin Maitland said that it would be useful if there was a standard approach across Scotland. Keith Jones requested that any system developed be scrutinised by the Law and Administration Service of Aberdeenshire Council before it was implemented.

## 5. Communications

### Leaflets

The Chair invited comments on the leaflets that were now being shown to the group for the first time. Alison Mitchell felt that the photographs did not reflect the diversity of potential users and suggested that images featuring females and minority groups be used as well as those currently on the publicity materials. Brian Martin said that 12pt font size should be tried. It was also suggested that Aberdeen City Local Outdoor Access Forum's contact number was inserted along with that of CLOAF which was already there. The phrase "also available in other formats" should be added to the back page.

Alison also raised the possibility of SNH funding the materials. Colin Miller informed the Forum that at this point SNH had not been approached regarding funding the publicity.

At the suggestion of the Chair the Forum agreed to the revised leaflet being approved by e-mail for the sake of saving time.

### Badges

A template was then circulated to members showing a series of format and content options for badges to be issued to ALOAF members. The Chairman asked for opinions as to which was the best to use with the intention that these be issued no later than November.

At Robin Maitland's suggestion it was agreed that the Forum's name should be enlarged and printed in "upper and lower case". Also, persons' full names should be used rather than the first initial and surname. Bill Dow's suggestion that the persons' names should be in black, for legibility, was also agreed.

It was decided that template number four was the most appropriate design, but moving the Forum's name to the bottom edge and incorporating the changes agreed as above.

Action: CM to arrange revision and distribution.

### Website

Alastair Fullwood advised the group on the statistics of the ALOAF website. Twelve thousand 'hits' were recorded in total, made by 1366 different people. The front page was the most frequently 'hit' with the minutes being the least frequently 'hit'. There was an ongoing dialogue with the Council's IT service looking at how the website could be enhanced.

### Annual Gathering

This is to be held on 5th March 2007 The Chair asked the Forum if the Ring (at Thainstone, as used in 2006) was a suitable venue. After discussion, this was agreed. The Chair suggested that the programme be focussed on conservation issues and be based around an 'Any Questions' style format.

Brian Martin suggested that SNH might be willing to give a presentation.

Peter Dawes suggested that the Cairngorms National Park Authority be involved as, although it is not an area ALOAF has a technical interest in it is nevertheless an area of importance for many people that live in and enjoy outdoor access in the ALOAF area. However, later discussion raised concerns arising from the fact that the CNPA covered a wider area than Aberdeenshire.

Bill Dow asked how many people were likely to attend. The Chair thought that an attendance of around 100 was a reasonable estimate.

There was a general discussion on the content and format of the Gathering. KT suggested that it should focus on nature conservation in relation to access. DF felt that the SNH education programme should be featured. The

possibility of specialist input from the Cairngorms National Park Authority was raised. OV suggested a presentation on the theme from each of the 3 sectors. It was agreed to discuss the matter with SNH in November. The panel discussion would require careful management to achieve a balanced representation of interests. D Fyffe reported that the "chat stations" at the 2005 event worked well.

The Chairman suggested that an agenda be drawn up by the November meeting of ALOAF and asked members to put forward suggestions for content and for speakers, before the next ALOAF meeting. JB suggested that if a working group is set up, it could have one exploratory meeting, with subsequent work being carried out by written communication.

#### 6) Council Outdoor Access Strategy Review

Colin Miller suggested that a group should be set up to examine this issue. It would consist of three members and would meet perhaps four to six times over the coming months.

On the suggestion of Peter Dawes, Colin Miller agreed that the number of meetings could be reviewed if this was appropriate.

Peter Dawes and John Brownlee volunteered to sit on this group and the Chairman would ask Cameron Ewen, as a land manager to join.

The Chair and Colin Miller stressed the importance of this document.

Peter Dawes suggested that it might be better to wait until the Core Paths Plan is finalised.

David Finlay raised concerns over the funding that was in place for the strategy. Colin Miller said that the existence of a strategic plan would demonstrate commitment to the principles and therefore allow a greater case to be made for funding. He also made the point that the strategy would be vital in fostering inter-service consultations within Aberdeenshire Council and will be seen as an important issue generally.

#### 7) Core Paths Plan

Alastair Fullwood talked through the timeline and issues to be addressed.

The Chair questioned the position on the timeline of the initial CPP proposals which were scheduled for late January/early February. Alastair Fullwood confirmed that this was correct and that informal consultations with the public would commence around May/June, with ALOAF and Community Councils being involved earlier. There was then a discussion between the Chair and Alastair Fullwood concerning the dates, and the Chairman requested the process be well publicised. John Brownlee requested that ALOAF be allowed a greater contribution in the process.

Robin Maitland requested that consultation take place with land managers before broader consultation. David Finlay suggested that the period for consultation was too short. On John Brownlee's suggestion, it was agreed

that the timetable be altered to reflect the ongoing nature of consultations with land managers.

Alastair Fullwood responded to these points by confirming the suggestion from John Brownlee that contact with land managers on the proposals would be ongoing as the “sifting” process was a rolling programme and did not finish until February. Therefore some land managers could be contacted earlier on in the process although he agreed that time was constrained. Land managers had also had the same opportunities to contribute to the first round of consultations as other groups and individuals.

Alison Mitchell said that an improved method of consulting with Aberdeen city residents should be sought.

### CPP Workshop

Colin Miller reported to the group that attendance at the Woodhill House workshop had been poor with only nine people giving meaningful consultation responses.

Alison Mitchell suggested that Aberdeen City LOAF would be carrying out its own workshops and Owen Vaughan proposed that the two groups combine for the purposes of consultations within Aberdeen City.

David Fyffe suggested that interest needed to be increased generally and Collin Miller agreed, adding that the same people or the same types of people tended to attend the workshops and that it would be beneficial to obtain the views of a wider variety of access users.

The Chair suggested targeting specific interest groups and Alastair Fullwood confirmed that the Council would be considering direct consultation with selected organisations to help fill any gaps identified during the collation process. These groups would be selected from a wide community base including, but not exclusively, recreational groups and would be contacted early in the New Year. Recreational groups had already had the opportunity to input into the consultation process via the mailing list and there had also been considerable input from individual access users.

## 8) Access Advice

### 8 (1) Access Issue near Dyce (HELD IN PRIVATE SESSION)

The Chair stated that the angling association had asked for advice and that ALOAF had agreed to advise. He suggested that a three-person working group be formed and that the landowners must be asked again for their input.

David Finlay asked for clarification as to whether involvement in this type of situation was within the remit of ALOAF. The Chair expressed his understanding from a reading of the Act that ALOAF was indeed entitled to advise, this role being distinct from that of advocacy or arbitration.

A sub-group was then formed to further investigate the matter. It was agreed that Peter Dawes, Brian Martin and Robin Maitland would be its members.

Keith Jones reminded the Forum of position of the Council's Law and Administration Service which was that the angling association did not have access rights under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. This advice would be copied to the subgroup (Action: CM).

#### 8 (2) AWPR

Peter Dawes informed the group that ALOAF had initially been missed in the latest round of consultations and that no more were planned. He had wanted to see separate provision for cyclists and pedestrians at junctions and how these junctions were designed. Generally he felt that the consultations had been one sided

The Chair said that an EIA was being carried out. However, he was unsure as to how it would take into account the effect of AWPR on the amenity of walkers, i.e. visual and noise effects.

#### 8 (3) Privacy Issues

Item considered earlier (see page 2).

#### 8 (4) Haddo Country Park

Bill Dow explained to the group that Aberdeenshire Council owns the country park and that, if funding is forthcoming, it wants to develop an officer position to enhance regeneration. This regeneration would include the development of signage, restoration of paths and the general 'orientation' of the park. ALOAF had not yet been consulted on this matter.

Alan Harper informed the Forum that he is involved as an FCS officer.

The Chair suggested that he would write to Keith Newton expressing the desire of ALOAF to participate in the development more directly and proposing that Neil McLean and Molly Atkinson be the relevant consultees within ALOAF.

#### 8 (5) Access Issue, Johnshaven

Item withdrawn from Agenda as further assessment by Council is necessary.

#### 8 (6) Advice Sought on Access Issue near Ellon

Colin Miller reported that a landowner had agreed to obtaining input from ALOAF in determining whether a right of equestrian access existed over part of his land. After some discussion, the Group resolved to advise. Owen Vaughan, Molly Atkinson and David Finlay were to form the sub-group and investigate the matter more fully.

#### 9) Training/Events

a) Linda Mathieson was to organise the training evening on 6th November. It was agreed that there would be an opportunity for questions after each session.

b) BHS LAF representatives' meeting of 10/9/06 – report deferred as MA not present to report.

c) The Chair reported that he and Peter Dawes were to attend the Joint NAF/LAF meeting in Peebles on 20/9/06.

d) CM distributed copies of the draft NAF Annual Report.

e) Although it happened that ALOAF would not be represented at SNH's Promote, Relate, Reveal event on 17/10/06, the Chair asked all members to promote ALOAF as vigorously as possible at any suitable opportunity.

f) LAF training, Stirling and SCAN conference - the Chair suggested that members might wish to attend if they felt it appropriate.

g) The Chair asked that the information distributed relating to the Outdoor Access Festival be noted by members.

10) AOB

The Chair noted the new 'Blue Book' guidance and suggested that members acquaint themselves with it once available.

Colin Miller distributed the Paths For All report and Scottish Executive Monitoring Form Summary of Results.

The Chair distributed copies of the ALOAF work programme, revised in the light of suggestions from members.

11) Agenda for next meeting

No items raised.