

## **ABERDEENSHIRE LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM**

### **NOTE OF 15<sup>th</sup> MEETING: 19 MARCH 2007, BARN AND BUSHEL, THAINSTONE CENTRE, INVERURIE**

#### **Present**

Ken Thomson (Chair)  
Cllr Jim Anderson  
Molly Atkinson  
John Brownlee  
Neil Buchanan  
Bill Dow  
David Fyffe

Alan Harper  
Tom Johnston  
Brian Martin  
Alison Mitchell (deputising for Peter Dawes)  
Iain Taylor (part of meeting)  
Owen Vaughan

#### **Council officers present**

Linda Mathieson  
Colin Miller

### **1 Introductions, Apologies**

The Chair welcomed Neil Buchanan, Physical Activities Coordinator, NHS Grampian, as newly appointed Health representative on the Forum.

Apologies received from Jamie Hunter, the Council's Law and Admin adviser to ALOAF; and Cath Clark, Paths For All – the latter being stormbound; thus Item 5 would be deferred until the next meeting.

The Chair noted that Cllr Jim Anderson was standing down as Councillor with effect from the May 2007 elections, and thanked him for his service as Council representative on the Forum.

### **2 Minutes of Meeting 15**

Approved subject to inclusion of names of Council officers present.

### **3 Matters arising**

None.

### **4 Annual Gathering 2007 -- review**

The Chair noted CM's transcript of the Question and Answer session, and will summarise the evaluations at the next ALOAF meeting. OV asked if the right kind of venue was chosen – need to get people more involved, e.g. at a Show; possibly Treefest. AM found the 2007 AG too impersonal – discouraging to those with specific issues. Other criticisms: space too big – discouraging; people wanted to get home instead of networking. TJ thought the venue to be a good one for the speakers, but the question and answers session needed more stimulating questions. OV suggested a different approach next time. Other suggestions for linked event: SNH-event; Core

Paths Plan (deemed too narrow). Event could take a lot of ALOAF time. It was suggested that Cath Clark could advise on experiences of other LAFs. General agreement that the Gathering had attracted a good turnout from a range of backgrounds.

## **5 NE LAFs: Cath Clark, Paths For All**

(Deferred to next meeting).

## **6 Communications and Membership**

KT had given a talk on ALOAF to AbOAF; he'd also attended the recent NAF meeting.

Work Programme: view that the website could be used to get ALOAF more widely known – now a “latest news” section – ALOAF's responsibility to put items to editor; likewise re articles for publications; talks for organisations – ALOAF can promote availability for this. Copies of ALOAF leaflet supplied to all present for distribution to their “constituencies”. CM said that the balance of the stock would be circulated to Libraries. Discussion on possible ALOAF involvement with schools – noted that Council Rangers liaise with SNH on SOAC education matters in schools; Ranger Service willing to give presentation at future ALOAF meeting and this would be an opportunity to suggest ideas for next academic year. TJ keen for ALOAF to be involved with SNH and Rangers in this regard – farmers already doing schools work. It was agreed to clarify the position over the next month, to avoid duplication of effort. NB suggested any ALOAF education input could be promulgated over the website.

Skills database: LM reported that half the ALOAF membership had responded. Still some gaps. LM to pursue with the individuals concerned as needs to be moved forward.

Options for future discussion briefings at ALOAF meetings:

- Special interest groups
- Bob Reid, Chair, NAF
- Council's Ranger Service

Time would be allocated at the 21 May meeting for Cath Clark to do her briefing postponed from the present meeting.

Agreed that it would be unrealistic to schedule briefings earlier than 6pm.

New (post-election) Council: ALOAF happy to invite ISC Chair and Vice-Chairs designate (if known by then) to observe 21 May meeting to familiarise themselves with ALOAF.

SRPBA representation: due to intimation that Tom Stewart was stepping down from his position as SRPBA Reserve on ALOAF, it was agreed that CM could contact SRPBA seeking a new appointee.

## **7 Core Paths Plan**

LM asked for comments on the “traffic-light” maps viewed 19/2/07; data from the

c. 60 comments forms returned is being transferred to these maps; officers identifying any other gaps. Forum's comments are sought on the 2<sup>nd</sup>-sift criteria paper supplied in the meeting papers. CPP timetable has been reviewed; 2<sup>nd</sup> consultation to start 9/07, with more information and reflecting land managers' input. The meeting then reviewed the criteria paper, as follows:

*Tourism:* KT noted absence of tourism from the objectives, mitigating against the coastal path. LM said there was not necessarily a focus on tourism in the LRSA, but open to views expressed. The Forum agreed that tourism was a broad subject, covering local paths, as well as long distance paths and connections to such paths. LM's view was that it would be difficult to justify the CPP including the more remote parts of popular long distance paths. (*also see below*)

*Use of cars:* KT queried "reduce need to use cars", i.e. favouring public transport or walking from home, but the principle found favour on "access for all" and health grounds.

*Gaps:* KT noted large gaps on [1<sup>st</sup>-sift] maps. ALOAF has opportunity to suggest links where gaps on map. Council to contact community councils and key landowners for communities with no obvious provision. KT suggested advising these communities that lack of information jeopardises their chances of getting core paths.

*Roads, and Circularity:* LM said that long road lengths are to be avoided. KT commented that a tarmac link may be necessary to complete a circular route. LM confirmed that core paths will be numbered for reference; also to be categorised by surface type; and relevant road links to be indicated. OV said road use should depend on safety. KT commented that circularity is important.

*Rights of Way:* Not key to the CPP but may be useful.

*Existing promoted routes:* To be assessed as per any other candidate route.

*Water access:* More data needed e.g. on access to/from inland water. IT commented that access to/from coastline is also important, for users of coastal waters.

*Health and well-being:* JA said that this should be the top priority Objective.

*Local links and the wider path network:* Council's emphasis is on routes "close to home" and links, which may be to places of interest or may be more infrastructural. Agreed that cross-border links, e.g. to Aberdeen City, require consideration. This will be added to "Further Considerations". KT sought clarification of "wider path networks". LM said it was a variable concept. DF suggested that the process should not be too inflexible, as people (supported by LRSA) exercise freedom of choice as to where they walk. CPP proposals should respond intelligently to demand.

*Multi-use:* KT commented that the reference to "multi-use" will rule out some routes. LM explained that multi-use will not be possible in some cases.

*Circularity:* OV was concerned that the criteria did not clearly provide for circular routes. LM agreed to revise wording accordingly.

*Aspirational routes:* KT asked about desired routes which do not currently exist. LM accepted that there were a lot of these, including also "missing links" in existing corridors. The key is to assess what is achievable within the 3-5 year time frame of the approved CPP.

*ALOAF input:* Still time for ALOAF comment [on current stage of process] until early April. (also see below)

*Funding:* NB asked how many settlements there were in Aberdeenshire, and what is the budget? LM answered 120-150 settlements; budget limited – Access Strategy has £30k Council + £30k SNH; also £100k Council, for “Rural Paths Maintenance”. Also, £25k Council funding for UDAT area. Projects until now community-led; for next 5 years more Council-driven. KT commented that it was time to be more ambitious with the new Council and the legislation. LM said that clarification is needed on the definition of “path lengths” in the purported new GAE funding formula (reported from NAF). Asked whether it meant “new moneys”, KT thought it was the existing global sum redistributed.

*Tourism:* DF disappointed that ALOAF tourism rep had been withdrawn by VS. Access involves tourism in long-term, and ALOAF needs a voice in this. CPP should target tourism and promotion of paths. KT supported this view. LM felt that LRSA and CPP was directed at people and communities, not tourism *per se*. In particular, long distance paths can attract other sources of funding.

*CPP schedule:* KT queried the use of the 4-month period from April 07. LM replied that this time would be spent on further sifting to compile a first draft of candidate core paths, and on consultation with landowners.

*ALOAF input:* KT noted few 1<sup>st</sup>-sift “green” routes, and suggested that the approach was too reactive. Need to stimulate ideas for Council to react to. KT wished to see draft Minutes at an early stage to ensure inclusion of views expressed re this Agenda item. JB wished to see more hands-on ALOAF involvement in CPP process. LM offered opportunity to review and comment on the completed 2<sup>nd</sup>-sift maps in early April, by Area, as per 19 February 1<sup>st</sup>-sift review. It was agreed to arrange this and likewise all 6 Area maps to be at the 21 May ALOAF meeting. KT said Council should ask organisations. DF said other LAFs could inform Council re priorities for spend within CPP. LM said Aberdeenshire’s approach is similar to CNPA’s “2 options” approach.

*LMCs:* In reply to IT, CM guesstimated that maps of c.60% of the 2006 LMC paths had been received by the Council. IT reported that the remote ones get used by horse riders because of larger distances travelled on horseback.

*All-ability access:* In reply to NB, LM said the objective was to ensure at least one all-ability route for the larger settlements, but it would be difficult to achieve this for all the smaller ones.

*2<sup>nd</sup>-sift criteria:* KT sought the Forum’s approval for him to suggest changes to the criteria document. No objections were raised.

## **8 Access Advice**

- (1) Mains of Inverebrie Woodland: CM reported that the council is investigating further before reaching a view on the matter. To keep ALOAF informed.
- (2) AWPR: ALOAF working group has looked at EIA and responded to consultants; no new developments since last ALOAF meeting.
- (3) Menie Estate: nothing new to report. EIS not arrived at Council yet.
- (4) Ellon: Council pursuing legal aspects.

## **9 Events, Training, Information**

28/4-7/5/07: Outdoor Access Festival.

11/5/07: SCAN Conference.

Briefing/Discussion with Council's Ranger Service: 23 July meeting (tbc), possibly at Bennachie Centre – options for walk and SNH SOAC-games.

Briefing /Discussion with Bob Reid, Chair, NAF: at 17 Sept ALOAF meeting (tbc) thus prior to joint NAF/LAF meeting 31/10/07.

6/10/07 Access Users' Workshop (RAS, McofS et al), Stirling.

## **10 AOB**

Enquiry -- carriage driving: noted -- suggested options – narrow gate (excluding cars); key availability (due to limited number of carriage drivers).

Enquiry – LMC paths: noted – correspondence could be forwarded to SEERAD.

Horses: churning of surface a problem – one option is for horses to use one side of a path only, if width allows. Possible opportunity for education work by ALOAF. Charging for field margin would not comply with LRSA unless met “previous charging” clause, or if charging for extra facilities e.g. parking. MA suggested Pat Somerville (BHS Access Officer) as a source of information. OV suggested ALOAF could arrange input from land management sector on this e.g. during next winter.

## **11 Agenda suggestions for next meeting**

Advance apologies from Bill Dow.

## **12 Date of next meeting.**

21 May 2007.