

ABERDEENSHIRE LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM**MEETING 22****Monday 19 May 2008****BARN & BUSHEL, THAINSTONE CENTRE, INVERURIE**

Present: Neil Buchanan, Peter Dawes, Bill Dow, Alison Espie, David Finlay, Tom Johnston, Gordon McKilligan, Brian Martin, Kelley Miller, John Risby, Ken Thomson (Chair), Owen Vaughan.

Council Officers present: Colin Miller, Alistair Watson.

1 Apologies, Introductions, Deputisings

Apologies: Cllr Debra Storr.

[Note by CM: Apologies received in advance from Bill Ashcroft]

Deputisings: John Risby for Alan Harper. (A get well card was circulated for Alan).

2 Minutes of Meeting 21

Approved, subject to note requested by Cllr Storr that she left meeting at 7pm.

3 Matters arising

Membership: The Chair noted the appointment of an NHS Reserve, Calvin Little. Geordie Burnett-Stuart has accepted position of Land Management Reserve. Alison Mitchell has agreed to be sole Access User Reserve.

Internal Review (Agencies): Owen Vaughan (OV) had not had time to pursue this, but suggested that it might be better if the agencies were approached from the central source of Paths For All instead of being contacted by each of the LAFs.

Operating Principles: formal approval deferred to July to allow time for Colin Miller (CM) to seek Christine Gore's approval.

CPP mapping: Ken Thomson (KT) reported that he had written to the National Access Forum with comments on core paths mapping, in relation to the CNPA paper on this subject.

Access issues: Stock Mounth, and Cushnie: KT has responded.

Haddo Country Park: nothing further heard.

4 WIAT briefing and discussion

John Risby, Forestry Commission Scotland, briefed the Forum on WIAT in the north-east – covering funding, engagement of the public, and FCS's site management in a context of increasing pressure of public use. Copies of the WIAT booklet were distributed. Discussion topics included new forms of outdoor recreation; accessibility of woodlands; fly-tipping; land purchase by FCS; community engagement (Active Woods); disabled access and sensory trails; budget.

CM had forgotten projector, so presentation delivered as an informal talk. Action: CM to circulate powerpoint.

5 SRDP Update

Kelley Miller (KM), SNH, briefed the Forum on the Scottish Rural Development Programme rural Development Contracts (for which she will be processing access-related applications in the ALOAF area) and distributed a paper on the subject. Discussion topics included opportunities for community applications; relevance to FCS and/or WIAT land; complexity (or otherwise) of the process for community groups; relevance to Core Paths resourcing; future relevance of LMCs/LMOs to access; need

for an introductory leaflet; LEADER programme.

6 Membership

- **(S)election of Vice Chair:** A nomination had been received for Gordon McKilligan (GMcK). There being unanimous support and no other nominations, GMcK accepted his appointment to the office.

7 Aberdeenshire Council Update

- **2008/09 spend.** CM reported the intended spend [*details will be provided on a paper to be supplied for the 21/7/08 ALOAF meeting.cm*], and was requested to supply a note of what was actually spent in 2007/08. **Action: CM.**
- **New Environment Team structure:** CM reported on the re-structure into separate North/South teams.
- **Loch of Skene:** SNH and Aberdeenshire Council are working on preparation of guidance. The estate will be making parking available at the gatehouses at certain times.
- **Deeside Way:** Peter Dawes reported that the Aboyne – Dinnet section is now useable, so the Way is complete from Duthie Park to Banchory and from Aboyne to Ballater. The missing part, which is non-railway, is being progressed but will take some time. David Finlay (DF) expressed concern regarding possible pressure on farmers. Alison Espie (AE) reported positive feedback from the Aboyne – Ballater section.
- **Core Paths Plan (draft text enclosed):** it was suggested that paper copies go to statutory consultees. PD and KT requested paper copies (rather than CDs) as ALOAF Members. Tom Johnston noted an instance of annoyance at the lateness of letters going to landowners. DF asked if liability will be increased by Core Path designation; also noted an error in a sentence under Frequently Asked Questions. **Action: CM to note and amend.** AE suggested unstaffed CPP display for events, e.g. Shows. DF said that the NFUS would be willing to display if provided with material (e.g. locally-focussed information).

8 Annual Gathering (papers enclosed)

Papers to be finalised and publicised asap. Apologies from KM as she will be on leave. The Chair explained the timetable. OV recommended that the Press Release be shortened for clarity. It was decided that this could be addressed by moving the list of Members' names, etc., from the main text to the Notes for Editors. Members were invited to volunteer to staff the CPP display on 9/6/08, and the Chair reminded all to come along and to wear their ALOAF badge.

9 Plans, Strategies, etc. – ALOAF input

KT has not had an opportunity to progress this but hopes to do so soon.

10 Access Consultations, Issues etc

- (1) **Menie:** KT's letter of 24/3/08 to the DPEA, which had been included in the papers received by Members before the Meeting, containing the main representations from ALOAF. A more detailed list of points contained in KT's precognition was distributed at the meeting. KT explained that the pre-PLI meeting had decided that ALOAF would be grouped with the Ramblers and Scotways in the scheduling of the PLI. He asked for the Forum's views on ALOAF involvement so far. After discussion, no objections were raised to the current ALOAF input. In the discussion, DF asked if a representation would carry more weight if backed by a Council officer (e.g. Access Officer). KT replied that there was already mutual support in that the Council has asked for an Access Plan. KT posed the question of whether ALOAF should accept any

invitation to be on a management group. The consensus was that it would be better to be outside any such group, in view of the Forum's key role to be an independent adviser in the event of disputes. KT said that he may be called as a witness, but felt he had put enough information in writing already. OV said that it is important to keep in mind the basic LRSA access rights and principles (e.g. access across golf courses). AE suggested that it was perhaps not entirely appropriate for ALOAF, as an impartial body, to be grouped at the PLI with the Ramblers and Scotways, which were more of in the nature of lobby groups. OV stated that it was therefore important to say how ALOAF's identity and role differs from the above two groups. KT acknowledged this and will proceed cautiously.

(2) **AWPR:** nothing new reported.

(3) **Other:** nothing new reported.

11 AOB

- (1) **Walking and Cycling Strategy:** Brian Martin had been contacted in relation to a community groups database. CM clarified the role of that strategy (a Nestrans/T&I study) in relation to the Core Paths Plan.
- (2) **Heritage Paths:** KT has information for those who wish to follow up individually outwith ALOAF.
- (3) **Website:** some out of date material – KT suggested ALOAF review their material in the autumn.
- (4) **New SNH dogs info leaflet and posters:** angle somewhat controversial, but a large number of leaflets and some posters are available.
- (5) **Wild camping:** KM reported that the SNH education campaign is being addressed through material at filling stations.

12 Events, Training, Information

Nothing reported.

13 Items for next meeting's agenda

(KT gave his apologies for the 21/7/08 meeting).

- Feedback from Annual Gathering
- Plans and Strategies.

14 Date of Next Meeting

21 July 2008.