

## **ABERDEENSHIRE LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**

### **NOTE OF FIRST MEETING, HELD ON MONDAY, 21<sup>ST</sup> FEBRUARY 2005 AT THAINSTONE CENTRE, INVERURIE**

#### **Present:-**

Molly Atkinson (User representative)  
John Brownlee (Community representative)  
Peter Dawes (User representative)  
Cameron Ewen (Land manager representative)  
David Finlay (Land manager reserve)  
David Fyffe (Land manager representative)  
Patricia Goodwin (Land manager reserve)  
Alan Harper (Agency [Forestry Commission Scotland] representative)  
Tom Johnston (Land manager [NFUS] representative)  
Ron Macdonald (Agency [Scottish Natural Heritage] representative)  
Neil McLean (User reserve)  
Robin Maitland (Land manager [SRPBA] representative)  
Brian Martin (Community representative)  
Daniela Mayes (Community representative)  
Alison Mitchell (User reserve)  
Iain Taylor (Community representative)  
Ken Thomson (User representative)  
Owen Vaughan (User representative)

#### **Council officers also present:-**

**Interim Chair:** Christine Gore, Director of Planning & Environmental Services

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

#### **1. Apologies and Introductions**

Apologies were noted from Councillors Jim Anderson and Jenny Watson. Thereafter Christine Gore introduced herself as the recently appointed Director of Planning and Environmental Services and outlined the aims of the forum.

#### **2. Call for Any Additional Agenda Items**

Views were sought as to whether any issues, not otherwise covered on the agenda, needed to be discussed during the course of the meeting. Cameron Ewen raised the issue of sources of funding and suggested that there be a paper to a future meeting. Linda Mathieson advised that she was on a COSLA working group which was looking at ways of raising more resources for local access forums. Members' travel expenses, and also insurance cover issues, were also

raised and it was agreed that the officers would undertake further research and report back to a future committee.

ACTION: Linda Mathieson

### 3. Procedural Issues

#### (a) Partnership Agreement

There was circulated to the meeting the Partnership Agreement entered into by Fife Council. Ken Thomson raised the status of this document at this meeting and it was explained that the document had no status but was circulated as an example which could form the basis of a similar agreement for the Aberdeenshire LAF. It was agreed that Keith Jones prepare a draft to cover the Aberdeenshire situation for circulation at a future meeting.

ACTION: Keith Jones

#### (b) Establishing Chair

It was agreed that Christine Gore act as Chair for the next two or three meetings, by which time the LAF would have elected a Chairman and Vice-Chairman. There followed considerable discussion on the duration of office, the system of re-appointment and various procedural matters. Following discussion it appeared that the consensus was:-

- (a) nominations for Chair and Vice-Chair would have no regard for the particular sectoral interest represented;
- (b) that appointment be by way of secret ballot;
- (c) that a nomination paper be devised which required signature both by the candidate and a proposer;
- (d) that the election take place at the last meeting before 2005 summer break;
- (e) that it would not be appropriate for a Council member or officer to be appointed as Chair;
- (f) that the Vice-Chair would be the nominee with the second largest number of votes;
- (g) that it would be inappropriate for agency representatives to be Chair;
- (h) that all members of the forum, including reserves, would be entitled to vote;
- (i) that the initial members serve for a period of two years, thereafter retiring on a one-third rota basis (by consensus within the sector), elections accordingly being held after two years, three years or four years; and that members serve for a maximum of two consecutive terms of office.
- (j) that elections take place at a public meeting;
- (k) that the Chair serve for two years, with the opportunity to stand down after one year.
- (l) that casual vacancies be filled by the reserve member for the particular sector to serve until the next elections appropriate for the position;
- (m) that the forum be entitled to co-opt members with special interests for a period of time and that generally the mix of membership be kept under review;

- (n) to emphasis the principles of accountability and the need to maintain an active and knowledgeable membership.

It was suggested that, should the Chair step down prior to the end of the term of office, the Vice-Chair should automatically become Chair for the remainder of the term.

Suggestions for ways of attracting new members of the LAF were:

- (1) Periodic special public meetings;
- (2) Recruiting via the proposed 6 Area-based access groups.

Meanwhile, any nominees unsuccessful in the recent selection process could be encouraged to maintain their interest for possible future opportunities and/or could consider standing as nominees for the proposed Area-based access groups.

There was also discussion on the need for there to be a fourth agency place and there was discussion as to the various interests that could be represented, e.g. tourism, police, rail, National Trust for Scotland. The name of a potential candidate was mentioned. It was noted that one of the Aberdeenshire Area Managers was involved with the tourism sector as part of his role for the Council and it was agreed that Linda Mathieson would discuss tourism needs with him before the next meeting.

With regard to a disability representative, there was a strong general feeling among the group that there should also be a disabled representative, rather than an adviser, on the group and it was agreed that Bill Dow should be co-opted.

ACTION: Linda Mathieson, Keith Jones

#### **4. Support System**

It was agreed that Aberdeenshire Council should take on the secretarial role and that papers should be distributed about a week beforehand. There followed discussion as to whether papers should be issued by E-mail, but it was felt safest that paper copies be sent out meanwhile. Expenses claim forms were distributed to all present. As mentioned earlier, it was noted that the expenses for members and other procedures would be clarified.

ACTION: Linda Mathieson, Keith Jones

#### **5. Communications**

Following discussion as to whether meetings be held in public or private, it was agreed that meetings should, in due course, be open to the public but at the current phase whereby the organisation was in the course of being set up it was agreed that confidentiality was necessary until the strategy, vision and aims are in place. It was suggested by the Interim Chair that in due course LAF meetings could follow the Council Committee structure of reserving a part of the meeting for considering matters in private when appropriate. During public sessions it would be up to the LAF to determine whether members of the public should be allowed to address the meeting. It was agreed also that Linda Mathieson would seek advice on press and public relations for the group from the Aberdeenshire Press

and Communications Team. It was felt, however, that a formal press release would be inappropriate prior to the next meeting of the group.

After further discussion, it was noted (a) that there should be a protocol for communications; (b) that a list of contact details be handed out to members; (c) that Aberdeenshire Council's website could be used as a means of bringing the forum to the attention of the public; (d) that someone within the group may wish to edit a newsletter describing activities.

ACTION: Linda Mathieson

## **6. Logistics**

It was agreed that Monday evenings at 5.30 – 6.00 p.m. were the most convenient to hold meetings, that meetings should be held approximately every 6 weeks and initially the Inverurie area appeared the most convenient venue. A question of whether meetings should be held in licensed premises was raised. It was agreed that the next three meetings be held on Mondays, 11<sup>th</sup> April, 23<sup>rd</sup> May and 27<sup>th</sup> June at The Barn and Bushel (Thainstone Mart) if possible. Longer-term arrangements would be decided later.

ACTION: Linda Mathieson

## **7. Events, training, information**

PFAP National Networking Day 2/3/05: places limited to 6 from Aberdeenshire LAF. Agreed attendance MA, PD, D Fyffe, N McL, DM, plus CM. (AM attending for Aberdeen City LAF).

“Spring Outdoor Access Festival” 18-28/3/05 noted.

“SOAC” distributed to all present.

“Towards Responsible Use” and “Management for People” not yet available at Council.

Council's “Countryside Access Strategy” to be distributed at next meeting.

Information on the forthcoming Coastal Forum meeting was made available.

## **8. National Access Forum**

Communication process between NAF and LAF to be discussed at next LAF meeting. Council to distribute NAF meeting papers to all members.

## **8. Work priorities; agenda suggestions for next meeting**

It was emphasised that the LAF's work would be of significant importance.

Agenda suggestions:

-- it was agreed that Pauline Jewett and a tourism representative be invited to attend the next meeting.

-- LM: has some specific access issues to be considered in early course.

-- OV: access and “private” level crossings on the Aberdeenshire rail network.

- KJ's "Operating Principles" document.
- Communications strategy for the LAF.
- a draft Press Release for review.

**10. Any Other Business**

- It was agreed that, as the LAF procedural framework was still under discussion, all members of the LAF would be invited to attend the next meeting.
- IT: funding is being sought for a community walks booklet (LM advised that the authors should approach the Council direct).
  - CG: asked LM to prepare a briefing paper for the LAF on access funding at national level.

ACTION: Linda Mathieson.

- LM: Council will prepare a briefing paper for the LAF on the Council's access work.

ACTION: Linda Mathieson.

CG observed that it would be necessary to clarify the respective roles of the LAF and the Council.

CE said that the LAF would need to know that the LAF's recommendations would be supported by funding for the council to carry out the work.

KT observed that the LAF has a formal task of inputting advice to the Core Paths Planning (CPP) process, and he would like to ascertain how the Countryside Access Strategy would relate to the CPP.

D Finlay asked when the Area-based access groups would be established. LM said this would be going to Committee within the next couple of months.

CE reported that there was some discomfort with the name "Aberdeenshire" forming part of the LAF name. The response was that it was necessary to include the local authority name in order to avoid confusion.

It was agreed that the invitation to Bob Reid (Convener, NAF) to attend an LAF meeting be repeated.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm.