

CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE FORTY EIGHTH MEETING

The Pagoda, Grantown-on-Spey

Tuesday 30th May 2017

Item 1 – Welcome

1. EB welcomed everyone to the meeting including Trevor Thornley and Neil Sinclair who were presenting on the work of Dava Way Association.

Forum members in attendance:

Eric Baird (Convenor)	Nick Cole
Nigel Williams	Anne-Marie Nuttall
Peter Mackay	Vicky Hilton
John Grierson	Eilidh Scobie

Others in attendance:

Doug Stewart (CNPA)	Neil Sinclair (DWA - Chair)
Trevor Thornley (DWA - Trustee)	Jacki Munro (CNPA – Minutes)

Item 2 - Apologies

2. EB noted the following apologies:

Fiona Murdoch	Richard Wallace – FCS (now retired)
Paul Webster	Lynda Dodd
Ruaridh Ormiston	

3. No Apologies Received:

Richard Gledson	

It was noted that Richard Wallace has retired from FCS and Fiona Murdoch has stepped down from the CNPA Board, so will no longer be sitting on the LOAF. Thanks were expressed to them both for their support.

Item 3 – Minutes of the Last Meeting

4. The minutes of the last meeting were checked for accuracy and approved.
5. DS noted due to unforeseen circumstances Pete Crane had not actioned Par 9 from previous minutes to obtain Active Travel info. **DS to action**

Matters Arising - None

Item 4 – Dava Way Association - Presentation

6. Neil Sinclair and Trevor Thornley gave a presentation explaining who the Dava Way Association (DWA) are, what work had been done and what was hoped to achieve on the Dava Way. DWA formed in 1997 due to support for a walking and cycling route. They are a voluntary group with charitable status, run/governed by a Board of Trustees currently with approx. 20 members. The route is a 24 mile Long Distance Route now recognised as a core path by Highland Council, Moray Council and CNPA. It is maintained by DWA in partnership with land owners and other organisations such as schools, Wild Things, Boys Brigade, Scouts, COAT, Sustrans, SNH, Long Distance Walking Association (LDWA). DWA own their own equipment and have volunteers who are fully trained in its use.

DWA has insurance costing approx. £350 per annum that is specific to voluntary groups, covering all volunteers, third party users of the route and indemnifies land owners. This was necessary in order to keep the access agreement in place with land owners.

DWA liaise with various organisations such as Voluntary Action Scotland (VAS), Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR) to get appropriate information/guidance enabling them to ensure they are working to the same standards as the private sector making working together more aligned.

Funding comes from various places, and it has been calculated that in order to upgrade the route to Sustrans' standards £600,000 would be required, a further £300,000 would be needed for related drainage improvements, and £15,000 for annual maintenance works.

A discussion ensued where it was noted there is a gap for managing and maintaining core paths. CNPA are actively working towards increasing conservation volunteers. The group felt providing insurance and taking the indemnity away from landowners was unique. DS felt it was good to see how a group had harnessed alternative mechanisms of raising funds and volunteers as a model going forward. EB thanked Neil and Trevor, noting their great enthusiasm and awareness of the responsibilities and drawing from the expertise of others by asking questions of appropriate organisations.

Item 5 – Advice sought over Access Team steps towards promoting SOAC to landowners and managers – Paper 1

7. In light of a recent increase in the number of cases involving land owners' actions it was suggested the Access Team should examine improving promotion of the SOAC to this group.
8. A page on CNPA's website was suggested to encourage landowners to engage better with the public and to highlight what access issues people are struggling with and how they could provide better information through signage i.e. 'this gate is locked because ...'. However, it was felt it would only be useful if landowners/managers knew it was there.
9. A seasonal campaign was proposed to highlight the page picking on these issues twice yearly or annually. Although success would rely on channels being used that are to hand. It was also suggested landowners/managers should be encouraged to contact the Park to advise why they intended to take any action. It was agreed to proceed with the webpage subject to resources being available. **DS to Action**

Item 6 – LRA Section 13 Duty – Paper 2

Access Casework Update

10. DS reported there was only one current live case, Case No 30 – Strathspey Estate. DS stated that a way forward has been agreed between Highland Council and Seafeld Est. with the installation of a pedestrian side gate. It was suggested that should be the standard if a forestry gate is installed.
11. It was stated that geographically Speyside had more cases. That is recognised by CNPA and thought to be due to the population and visitor numbers being higher than Deeside.
12. It was noted most cases are reported by LOAF members due to users not knowing where or who to complain to. There is no information on community path leaflets although the SOAC is referenced. It was suggested that CC's be a conduit for users to raise an issue. JG to table the issue at the next AoCC meeting to make them aware of LOAF's existence.

Item 7 – Activities update and forward look – Paper 3

13. Aviemore Hospital – CNPA are in discussion to secure a partnership between Sustrans, NHS Highland and Macdonald Resorts towards significant new thinking on how the hospital can promote non-motorised travel in and around Aviemore, reducing traffic and increasing pedestrian options.
14. Active Cairngorms Health Walks – The new Volunteer Co-ordinator has made a good start in taking the project forward, increasing numbers and working up principals for Health Walk Volunteer Rangers, not to be confused with Volunteer Rangers.
15. Deeside Way Ext. – Planning will shortly be going in for the Braemar to Invercauld Bridge section. Which will allow things to move forward once the Speyside Way Ext. is complete.
16. Speyside Way Ext. – The final section, Ardgeal to Insh is due to go to Planning Committee in June. Funding is still being sought. It was noted the Dalraddy section is still a cause for concern. Users have voiced several complaints to LOAF members. DS confirmed agreement has been reached on additional signage to ensure the safety of users.
17. It was noted there is currently no badging to identify who is responsible for maintaining paths within the Park or a way for users to record incidents that occur. The Ramblers Pathwatch scheme was suggested as an example. DS to take this back to the Access Team and report back at the next meeting. **DS to Action**
18. Cairngorms NPPP has been signed off by Scottish Ministers and is available online. Thanks were expressed to LOAF members for their input.
19. Mountain Paths Project – This is continuing at a good pace between the two NP's.
20. A9 Dualling – Stage 3 consultation for Killiecrankie to Glen Garry has now been submitted to the NP looking at non-motorised user detail such as underpasses and a proposal for a cycleway. In regard to Stage 2 it was reported to date there has been no response to Aviemore CC's objections. DS confirmed the Board had signed off the CNPA's Stage 2 response.

21. Cairngorms Capercaillie Framework HLF Bid - Andy Ford, Cairngorms Nature Manager addressed the meeting to ask for a letter of support from LOAF. This would accompany the HLF application to secure funding to deliver a significant part of the Framework. He explained the Framework aims to sustain long term survival of the species through 3 main objectives:- Building support for Capercaillie conservation, working closely with community as a development stage; undertake sustainability, how to meet the needs of the community and the species supported by a community ranger; and sustaining long term survival of the species and habitat expansion.
AF stated there had been overwhelming support from Carr Bridge community and invited LOAF to be included as an advisory board for the project.
All agreed a letter of support should be submitted. **EB to Action**
22. Snow Roads – final installation (the Still) is complete.
23. CNP tear-off map pad – these have been redesigned and will be ready for distribution shortly.

Item 8 – AOCB

24. A member reported being approached regarding what LOAF were doing about unofficial mountain bike paths. It was confirmed this is being considered by NAF and further guidance/advice may follow.
25. It was asked if LOAF were aware of current issues being considered by NAF. EB confirmed he had not been on NAF's contact list but is now, therefore the NAF information will be on the Agenda at the next meeting for discussion. It was suggested when CNPA receive the updates they could be circulated to members. **DS to Action**
26. EB reported the Ranger Employers Forum felt the wording is ambiguous on Tread Lightly leaflets. It was noted the wording had been pulled from SOAC and ratified by LOAF, and if it were to be altered care must be taken to remain consistent with SOAC. It was suggested using plain language might be better than the Code text.
It was thought there was a genuine case for rewording SOAC around the subject of fires, especially in view of the number of wildfire occurrences over the last 5 years but NAF would have to be approached in the first instance. It was felt that neither LOAF or CNPA could readily lobby the NAF on this issue. EB will report back to the Ranger Employers Forum on LOAF's decision. **EB to Action**
27. The Association of Deer Management had asked for a member to sit on the group. DS is awaiting a response from Mike Cottam, Land Management Adviser - CNPA. **DS to Action**
28. It was commented new members would be needed as Fiona and Richard had stepped down. DS suggested SCS would have significant relevance to LOAF and will follow that up. He will also consider approaching some land managers and the RSPB. **DS to Action**

Item 9 - Date of next meeting

29. 3rd October 2017 – Time and Venue TBC

Meeting closed. The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and input.