



## Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum

### Minute of meeting 5 March 2025 (online)

Present:	Adam Streeter-Smith (AQSS)	National Park Authority
	Ben Dolphin (BD)	LOAF
	Ben Oliver Jones (BOJ)	LOAF
	Colin Cadden (CC)	LOAF
	Colin Simpson (CS)	National Park Authority
	John Grierson (JG)	LOAF (Chair)
	Maree Morrison (MM)	LOAF
	Mark Johnston (MJ)	LOAF
	Patsy Richards (PR)	LOAF
	Sarah Lawther (SL)	National Park Authority
	Vicky Hilton (VH)	National Park Authority

Apologies: Trevor Thornley  
Pete Wright

### Welcome and Minutes of last meeting on 13 November 2024

#### Discussed

#### Action

- JG - welcomed group and gave apologies. Minutes of the last meeting approved. Previous actions discharged with the exception of seeking clarity on inclusion of fireworks vs pyrotechnics in the definitions, the definition of a fireplace, and the addition of the wording 'hot coals'.
- CS - Introduced himself to group and confirmed that the matter had been discussed with lawyers, and they were happy with existing wording. There were concerns that if specific examples were given, it would prove to be an exhaustive list and vulnerable to loopholes.

### Paper 1 - Responsible behaviour messaging

#### Discussed

#### Action

- VH- Introduced paper and explained that it was focused on messaging that is used on signs regarding dogs and leads or dogs under close control. Reminded group of the SOAC standard messaging and the definition of short lead, heel and close control. Discussed the differences in wildlife



messaging in general and those that relate to protected species, and other wildlife that is still vulnerable despite not being identified as a protected species but do appear on the Red list. Requested feedback from group as best messaging moving forward.

- PR/VH- Discussed the kind of area envisaged for the signage which would be for minimum area required for the shortest amount of time. Also discussed how long the stay on path messaging might be used for which is potentially the breeding season (1st of April through to 31st of July).
- BOJ- Felt that 'keep dogs on lead' signage and removal of 'at heel' messaging due to its ambiguity would be very helpful, whereas 'stay on path' messaging more difficult where paths are undefined.
- BD/VH- Discussed size of spaces in areas such as the Cairngorms and the balance between protecting species whilst allowing people access.
- PR/JG- Expressed support of the paper and JG felt that 'dogs on lead' was clearer messaging than 'under close control'.
- CC/VH- Discussed how much notice would be provided with the signage, the variety of signage styles and need for signage to be put up and taken down at the beginning and end of the season.
- AQSS- Advised group that there is an area of work that's being looked at with a variety of different partners looking at Dotterel disturbance. The Caper project has shown that being able to provide very specific information at the right times is important to enable people to make the right decision.
- CS- Advised group that the Park Authority are tasked with ensuring that people comply with the access legislation, by applying access legislation where possible and required.
- BD/VH- Discussed voluntary access agreements between the access authority, the landowner, the local community and relevant user groups in order to reach a decision.



- PR- Felt that it would be useful to be proactive with Comms and likely Q&As in preparation for feedback.
- CC/VH/CS- Discussed situations where signage is Park Authority branded or not, the risk that landowners would erect signage inappropriately and that the template of the capercaillie signage would likely be used for dogs on leads or under close control.
- AQSS- Stated that ultimately the Park Authority want to provide landowners with the tools to allow them to effectively manage visitors on their land. There would be dialogue between the Park Authority and the landowner based on an understanding that there is a degree of risk and likely evidence that there has been disturbance, due to its proximity to a particular popular route or similar.
- JG- Asked group if they agreed that there should be signage stating that dogs to be kept on leads and on paths for protected birds areas, and dogs on leads under close control message for Red list species or a case-by-case assessment for issue areas to apply the dogs on leads only message. Group confirmed agreement.

**Paper 2- 2024/2025 Delivery of section 10 and 13 statutory duties as conferred by the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003**  
**Discussed**

**Action**

- SL- Advised group that 24 access obstruction cases have been reported this year (to date), with 20 now closed and the remaining 4 open. This represents a slight decrease on the previous year where there were 33 cases, compared to 28 cases in 2022/23.  
The 24 access obstruction cases consisting of 16 locked gates or barriers, 2 with obstructive signage, and 2 with obstructive behaviour. There are significantly higher number of cases within Badenoch & Strathspey compared to other areas in the National Park.



- VH- Shared a presentation of Deshar Woods illustrating maps and gates and discussed issues with one locked gates, an alternative unlocked entry point and some paths not appearing on all styles of mapping.  
Requested LOAF opinion on how many gates do you need to access a woodland, and do they all have to be unlocked, and what is a reasonable level of access?  
Landowner has given reason for locked gate as being unauthorised vehicle access although no evidence found for this. Group discussed how long gate had been locked for and that locked gates can create unwelcome visit to the area as well as prevent less able visitors, e-bike users or horse riders from accessing paths. Currently the locked gate can represent a detour of approximately a third of total route. It was felt that default should be that gates remain unlocked unless there was a legitimate reason for locking it. In general, the group agreed that it is unreasonable to expect visitors to use the alternative gate and it is a hindrance and an obstruction to have that gate locked.
- VH-Will go back to the landowner and report that following this discussion it has been concluded that the alternative is not acceptable and that the obstruction should be removed or a alternative provided. VH
- AQSS- Requested feedback from group regarding how group would like to be advised on casework going forward.
- BD- Appreciates current system of reporting.
- CC- Also likes the current system but felt emerging patterns would be useful.
- AQSS- Thanked group for feedback and confirmed that he would provide an annual paper looking at the previous financial year in terms of casework stats, and on an ongoing basis, will provide some individual cases that are being worked on to get the groups input on.
- JG- Stated that in previous years a lot of information was provided which has evolved into current system which he felt was better suited to the group's needs.
- CS- Thanked the group for their time and input which feeds into the wider organisation perspective.
- SL- Confirmed that deer park issue previously described is for interest, rather than seeking advice from the group.



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### **Paper 3- Update and forward look**

- AQSS- Discussed couple of current projects; directional signage work on the Speyside Way, which has just finished, and replacing some of the rambler gates between Cromdale and the Park boundary. Past projects that have recently been completed include work on the riverside path at Dulnain Bridge. There is also an update on the Fire Bylaw in the paper.
- CS- Advised group that the draft fire bylaw will be submitted to Scottish Government next week with unknown timescale of when they are likely to respond but suspect it could be in the summer at the earliest.
- AQSS- Path works at Meall a' Bhuchaille have been completed.
- CC- Mentioned that the work carried out on the Speyside Way towards Kinraig significantly improved the path.
- AQSS- Next section to be looked at is mid Kinrara drive and discussions with new landowner planned.

### **AOB**

- JG/AQSS/BOJ- Discussed rogue capercaillie near Ryvoan that has been reported as scaring visitors in the vicinity. RSPB have moved signage correspondingly to advise visitors.

### **Date of next meeting**

- Wednesday 4 June 2025. Hybrid meeting with opportunity for site visit. Details TBC.

Meeting ended at 8:04pm