

CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE FORTY SIXTH MEETING Cairngorms National Park HQ, Grantown on Spey

Tuesday 17th May 2016

Item 1 – Welcome

1. EB welcomed everyone to the meeting including Rosie Winch who was presenting on The Mountains & The People Project. Lynda Dodd was welcomed as a new member.

Forum members in attendance:

Eric Baird (Convenor)	Lynda Dodd
Peter Mackay	Vicky Hilton
Anne-Marie Nuttall	Fiona Murdoch
Nigel Williams	John Grierson
Alasdair Johnston	

Others in attendance:

Pete Crane (CNPA)	Rosie Winch (M&PP)
Doug Stewart (CNPA)	

Item 2 - Apologies

2. EB noted the following apologies, mentioning that Richard Gledson had not attended a meeting for some time.

Richard Gledson	Nick Cole
Paul Webster	Katrina Brown

Item 3 – Ratify CLOAF Programme for 2016

3. DS explained the rationale behind the proposal for two meetings during 2016 and confirmed the meeting programme would remain dynamic and responsive to any need for additional meetings beyond the proposed two per annum. Members agreed and were content with this situation.

Item 4 – Minutes of the Last Meeting

4. The minutes of the last meeting were approved subject to one amendment put forward by FM and reporting on the listed AP's was agreed. PC mentioned John Muir award contributed to CNPA outputs under AP2 as well as the items shown.

Matters Arising

5. Peter Mackay confirmed that David Clyne (CNPA) had contacted him to confirm that suitable signage would be located on the Speyside Way Extension where the gradients are steeper.
6. PM noted however he felt that given the relevant standards had been followed for the design of the path (as had been confirmed to him by DC) then the standards themselves are arguably deficient. This point was noted. PC stated in response that every effort had been made to ensure the path was fit-for-purpose and the gradients were an outcome of the landscape through which the path passes. This was noted by PM.

Item 5 – National Park Partnership Plan 2017 – update on preparation and consultation

7. Pete Crane gave an update on the proposals for the new NPPP and the forthcoming consultation on it. He showed the basic layout of the Plan (slides) and explained that it would be focussed on 9 key themes setting out those issues most important to the NP and its future.
8. PC explained that he felt the LOAF would have direct interest in 3 of the 9 themes and suggested the LOAF consider preparing and submitting a formal response to the forthcoming consultation. He explained that the LOAF had submitted a group response in the past and that this was well received and a valuable endorsement.
9. Members discussed and agreed that a collective response was appropriate and that this would be the subject of the forthcoming meeting in September for which a different date was also discussed and agreed. The new date was set as 6th September 2016 with a start time of 1700 for 1730 to allow for debate.
10. Further discussion ensued around detail of the key themes, how they were arrived at and use of digital media to carry out the consultation - raised by EB. PM asked whether the Plan was intended to be 'resource neutral'. PC responded on these matters explaining that the plan would require partner funding commitments hence it was not 'resource neutral' and that the mechanisms of the consultation process were still under discussion however he would feedback accordingly on the use of online means.

Item 6 – The Mountains and The People (HLF) Partnership Project

11. Rosie Winch introduced the project as a partnership funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and running over a 5 year lifetime. The main object being to '*involve the people of Scotland in the enhancement and protection of the wild and special qualities of the mountains within Scotland's National Parks*' The project deliverables are 125km of path improvements spread over 43 mountain and hill paths and routes in Loch Lomond and Trossachs and Cairngorms National Parks. She explained the finished pathwork is intended to be high quality and:

- a) Naturalistic in design
 - b) Light touch
 - c) Attractive to walkers
 - d) Low impact
 - e) Effective drainage
 - f) Low maintenance
12. RW went on to describe her role her role as Activity Project Officer and the activity programme that includes:-
- a) Awareness raising, information and interpretation
 - b) Increased use of mountain paths – supported upland walks for less experienced walkers
 - c) Education
 - d) Volunteering - both practical maintenance and revitalising the ‘adopt a path scheme’
13. RW confirmed that the activity programme was being developed with the partners so that it compliments existing work and so that there would be a sustainable legacy beyond the life of the project. She also requested members forward suitable paths for consideration for volunteer repair work.
14. PM asked how the Mountains and People name and logo related to Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust. It was explained that the project is funded via the Heritage Lottery Fund, managed by COAT and supported by Scottish Natural Heritage, Forest Enterprise Scotland and Loch Lomond and Trossachs and Cairngorms National Park Authorities. The name and logo are used to represent the partnership project as collective endeavour.
15. NW asked about current stone pitching designs and how open cross drains were being used currently. RW explained that best practice was followed to ensure maximum accessibility and durability. Further discussion around the subject ensued and concluded to say that current pathwork and practice has evolved over circa previous two decades to mean current standards are high and cater well for all users.
16. PC explained that a key issue to be tackled is funding of path maintenance following on from capital works and how this can be sustained. PC confirmed that the Mountains & People project incorporates a commitment to maintaining improved paths for a set period.
17. RW concluded by saying CLOAF could become involved through suggestions for suitable sites to carry out patchwork training tasks for volunteers - these could be small scale focussed repair tasks local to members areas. She also said members could advise on groups that might wish to get involved.

Item 7 – LRA Section 13 Duty

18. An amended reporting sheet was passed to members and relevant errors on the original pointed out. Apologies were offered by DS for this.

19. DS then updated members on the current live and closed cases and explained that two cases were undergoing monitoring although they had been resolved on the ground. Some discussion took place around this, specifically Revack where it was felt the situation had led to a reduction in the availability of paths which had previously been accessible to the public.
20. DS explained that this may be an unavoidable outcome due to changes in the area that can now legally considered to be the 'privacy zone' associated with the main house. This had in the past been smaller due to the location of the (now closed) shop and café. VH said she would visit the site and check how the situation was.
21. Members noted the situation and EB responded by registering some concern that complaints would tail-off thereby suggesting the problem was resolved however it could easily be a symptom of resignation to the impacts. DS confirmed that CNPA had made strong representations to the owners to ensure that access rights were only impacted to the extent that was lawful and hoped that the new circumstances would bed-in over time including signage
22. DS asked Fiona Murdoch to make enquiry to Dave Fallows (CNPA Board Member) as to progress on the matter of prohibitive signs at Balavil Estate. Dave Fallows was to meet with the Estate Factor and would be raising the issue directly as agreed and discussed with DS. FM said she would do this and report back.

API – FM report back on Balavil Estate signage.

Item 8 – Activities update and forward look

23. DS introduced Paper 2 and highlighted the key subjects.
24. The next phase of the Speyside Way extension is underway with a survey being carried out for the remainder of the route to Kingussie. DS updated the LOAF there were some specific challenges in securing a route via Inshriach where Caper issues were the subject of discussion with FCS. A route has now been agreed.
25. Storm Frank was acknowledged as causing significant disruption to Deeside including the local path network around Ballater. DS explained that a bid for reinstatement funds has been put forward for submission to the Scottish Government in conjunction with Aberdeenshire Council. The sum required for repair of the access network exceeds 1 million when the two damaged historic bridges are included. An outcome is awaited.
26. Nigel Williams highlighted Glenmore Lodges keenness to support this programme and would happily offer free map reading training. NW highlighted that the way map reading is and was taught can be a real put off for prospective hill walkers and mountaineers.
27. DS highlighted CNPA input to the A9 dualling preparatory stages include detailed submissions on issues affecting non-motorised users. The formal consultation stages continue with a forthcoming key event being a meeting of NMU Forum in Perth on Friday 17th May. EB confirmed he would be attending and asked DS to prompt Ruaridh Ormiston in order that he is aware and might also attend. DS agreed.

AP2 – DS to contact Ruaridh Ormiston over NMU User Forum meeting.

Item 9 – AOCB

28. PC raised the subject of the current NP Design Awards prompting members to encourage participation among their contacts. The Awards scheme has run successfully in previous years. This was noted by the group.

Item 10 – Date of Next Meeting

29. This was agreed as Tuesday 6th September 2106 at 1700 for 1730 start.