

Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum

MINUTES OF THE THIRTY SECOND MEETING Talla nan Ros, Kingussie

Tuesday 8th May 2012

Summary of Action points arising from meeting

API- BG to present a paper on the main issues around cycling that need to be addressed in the Outdoor Access Strategy.

AP2- AQSS to redraft objective (b) and present this for comment at the next meeting.

AP3- CNPA to adopt these revised protocols.

AP4 – AQSS to circulate Jeremy Usher Smiths paper on car park charges subject to Jeremy’s approval;

AP5- BG to invite FCS to present the case for charging at the August meeting.

Forum members in attendance

Paul Corrigan (Convener)	Peter Holden
Hebe Carus	Catriona Rowan
Nic Cole	David Lyle
Gordon Riddler	Jeremy Usher Smith
Robbie Nicol	Andy Dunn
Dave Craig	Paul Webster
Thomas MacDonell	

Others in attendance:	
Bob Grant, CNPA	Graeme McLean, Cycling Scotland
Fran Potheary, CNPA	
Adam Streeter-Smith, CNPA	

Item 1 – Welcome

1. Paul Corrigan the Convener thanked everyone for coming especially welcoming Gordon Riddler, CNPA Board representative and Graeme McLean of Scottish Cycling. Special thanks went also to the caterers for the soup and sandwiches.
2. The Convener thanked Andy Dunn for a very informative and inspiring walk around the Kingussie path network.
3. The Convener drew attention to the plaudits for the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust in the “Scottish Walks” publication. He also highlighted the recent National Access Forum (NAF) meeting reminding members that papers of that meeting had been circulated.

Item 2 - Apologies

Richard Wallace	Nigel Williams
Ian Hill	Rachel Bromby
Richard Gledson	Malcolm McIntyre
Ian Cox	

Item 3 - Minutes of the last meeting – approval and matters arising not otherwise appearing on the agenda.

4. The minutes were agreed.

Action points arising from the last meeting

- API - Discharged.**
AP2 – Discharged.
AP3 – Discharged.
AP4 – Discharged.

Matters arising

5. AQSS highlighted that since the last meeting the Tay rafting judgement had been appealed and will go back to court. Representations will now be made by local rafting businesses as well. BG also highlighted that a paper is being taken to the Sustainable Tourism Forum looking at issues around cycling. This paper will also come to the LOAF for advice in August.

API- BG to present a paper on the main issues around cycling that need to be addressed in the Outdoor Access Strategy.

Item 4 – Scottish Mountain Bike Framework

6. Graeme McLean thanked the LOAF for the opportunity to present the framework and started by highlighting that Scotland has a world class mountain biking product. This is underpinned by progressive access legislation, high quality paths and facilities as well as world leading training and education.
7. In 2007 a public agencies came together recognising that mountain biking in Scotland lacked strategic direction. The result was the Mountain Biking in Scotland Framework. Key targets for the framework are to increase participation in mountain biking by 25% by 2015 and increase the tourism aspect by 20%.
8. The model used to address this lack of coordination and prioritise development is “cluster” groupings made up of key public agencies and private interests to decide regionally what the priorities and direction will be. So far clusters have been set up in Tayside and Fife and Highland. The Highland cluster covers the whole National Park. Within the Highland cluster they are looking at gaps in provision and developing an action plan.

9. It is hoped that best practice and guidance will be developed for these and other clusters to take forward. This will include trail development which will feed into wider path development and be taken up by the likes of COAT.
10. Other strands of the project include the development of route cards for trails. Developed in consultation with land managers these cards are a product for visitors and residents alike and provide the ideal opportunity to promote messages about responsible behaviour.
11. “Do the Ride Thing” is a strand to increase awareness of SOAC and appropriate behaviour. It was identified that there are gaps in rider knowledge about practically what it means to act responsibly. Innovative ways are being explored to deliver this education for e.g. an online game.
12. Further education and training is provided through the MBLA scheme and Cycling Scotland’s “Go Mountain Bike” award both of which have modules on responsible behaviour and the Code.
13. In the following discussion members were keen to establish if the “Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland” project was representative of mountain biker’s views, how it integrates with the work of Sustrans and how it views mountain biking events. In response to these questions Graeme highlighted that the project was not set up to represent or lobby for mountain bikers views but did work closely with the likes of Sustrans who do. On the issue of events both national guidance and local guidance i.e. CNP Guidance on Outdoor Access Events, was still very relevant.
14. The discussion turned to interactions between bikers and others in particular the interaction between bikers and horse riders. Graeme highlighted that this was picked up early in the development of “Do the Ride Thing” and specific advice has been developed as well as a level on the computer game.
15. Forum members raised the question of whether mountain biking as an activity was appropriate in the uplands. Graeme highlighted that research on the environmental impact was lacking but preliminary studies showed that responsible riding, on paths, was no more damaging than walking. It was broadly accepted that the issue is compounded by the lack of social acceptance of bikers in that environment. Path design also makes it difficult for bikers to ride responsibly. The development of route cards would be one of a range of tools for addressing those concerns and well as engaging with mountain bikers through social media.

Item 5 Core Paths Review

16. AQSS reminded members that the development of the Core Paths Plan is a statutory duty of the Park Authority and is also an important tool for:
 - Prioritising path development (construction and maintenance);
 - Securing and protecting paths with regard to development;

- Ensuring there are reasonable opportunities for everyone to enjoy the countryside and;
 - Supporting land managers through visitor management measures.
17. Currently there are no core paths in Blair Atholl and Glenshee so to address this there needs to be review of the plan. National guidance expects that the earliest opportunity core paths will be incorporated into Development Plans. The CNPA has also given a commitment in the Main Issues Report to review the core paths network using it to identify key links across the Park.
18. It was highlighted at the last meeting that the CNPA had considered how best to achieve the core paths plan review and incorporate it in the development plan and deal with objections under the provisions contained in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act. This will be to adopt the plan as supplementary planning guidance.
19. AQSS highlighted that one of the quirks of the Act is that any additional core paths would mean that the whole plan would be open up for challenge. Broadly speaking, the CNPA is of the view that the plan is sufficient, once those paths in Annex 1 are adopted. However as part of the informal and formal review the CNPA will be seeking views on the gaps in the network.
20. Members reminded the CNPA that consideration has to be given to the impact on the paths from designation, mountain paths being cited as an example. It was agreed that the principle of only designating the robust connecting routes through the mountains was a sound principle to carry forward. This principle would also support the view from the Main Issues Report which was that the network should improve connectivity across the Park.
21. Forum members accepted the view that in the most part, and subject to any outstanding issues, the draft network for Blair Atholl and Glenshee was suitable to put forward for consideration in the formal review.
22. With regards to the objectives of the Core Paths Plan it was identified that objective (b) *help those living and working on the land* would be more appropriately referenced as 'accommodating' access. This is because a land manager would not necessarily see core paths as 'helping' his or her objectives in managing land

AP2- AQSS to redraft objective (b) and present this for comment at the next meeting.

Item6- Outdoor Access Protocols

23. Fran Potheary (FP) introduced this item highlighting that the CNPA has to deal with many cases that are the lower end of low priority and that staff time and resources want to achieve widespread improvements in access. There are also cases that are clearly neighbourhood issues which underpin some issues that the CNPA should be aware of. The proposal is that when the CNPA is minded to close a case having carried out the necessary actions, the Forum advises on if there are any other matters that should be considered. As with all cases, issues can be further opened and addressed if the situation changes.

24. The members acknowledged in the most part this best practice does prevail but raised concerns that this may put the Forum in the firing line on contentious cases. It was confirmed that in essence the CNPA is seeking reassurance from the LOAF that the necessary steps have been taken, and the responsibility for decisions remains with the CNPA.

AP3- CNPA to adopt these revised protocols.

Item 7 Year end casework review

25. FP highlighted that the CNPA has been dealing with less cases, and more are being closed. One of keys to this success has been the willingness to provide funds for gates etc. that tends to resolve cases more speedily.
26. FP highlighted some good news stories of where this collaborative approach had worked well including the Gaick Pass and the Burma Road in Aviemore.

Item 8 Outdoor Access casework

27. FP introduced this item highlighting that there have been five new cases and eight cases are in the process of being closed. She then went on to highlight a number of live cases including:
- Cases 7&8 Ballater- This case has been re-reported and approaches have been made to the neighbouring estate to exert some influence. As such the ranger is undertaking some of the preliminary work;
 - Case 9&10 Ballater- These cases have been ongoing for a long period of time. Strong local views on this case have emerged but a set of actions have been agreed and the case will be closed shortly;
 - Case 25 Killiecrankie- AQSS highlighted that this case was brought to the Forum previously and significant progress has been made in finding an equitable solution. A diversion is currently being discussed with the estate and community.

Item 9- National Access Forum Updates

28. BG introduced this item highlighting that at the last meeting the NAF discussed a range of papers including – access to wind farms; an update on the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs camping bylaws; the SNH code campaign and a paper from Scottish Land and Estate looking at charging for access. He heavily encouraged members to read the paper on charging as it posed some interesting questions.

Item 10 Update and forward look

29. AQSS highlighted the ongoing work to develop path signage and path leaflets around each community. Projects are close to completion in Strathdon and Dulnain Bridge with funding being sought for Kingussie and Braemar.

Item 11 Joint meeting of the LOAF, COAT and CNPA Board

30. BG reminded members that due to a number of members being unable to attend a decision had been made to postpone the meeting to 2013.

Item 13 AOCB

31. The Convener highlighted that Jeremy Usher Smith had submitted a paper raising a number of concerns and issues around car park charging on FCS sites. Being well aware of the sensitive nature of the issue he asked members if they thought it was a good idea to invite FCS to present a paper on the programme at the next meeting. Members agreed to this and requested that Jeremy's paper be circulated around the Forum for information and background.

AP4 – AQSS to circulate Jeremy Usher Smiths paper on car park charges subject to Jeremy's approval;

AP5- BG to invite FCS to present the case for charging at the August meeting.

Item 14 - Date of next meeting

32. Tuesday 21st August, Strathdon