

# Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum

## MINUTES OF THE TWENTY THIRD MEETING Albert Hall, Ballater

Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2010

### Summary of Action points arising from meeting

**AP1- AQSS to write to Invercauld Estate and Forestry Commission Scotland proposing the implementation of a monitoring system and providing other advice.**

**AP2- CNPA to define bird breeding dates to go with “keep dogs on leads” messages and provide advice to land managers.**

**AP3- AQSS to write to complainant updating them on progress**

**AP4- AQSS to review casework protocols to ensure complainants are regularly updated on progress.**

**AP5 – AQSS to establish if SNH are seeking the views of LAF’s and when would be the best time to feed in those views.**

**AP6- AQSS to liaise with Dave Craig on a possible Spey trip for the August meeting.**

**AP7- AQSS to discuss start time for the winter meetings with the Convenor and Deputy Convenor.**

**AP8- AQSS to propose options for use of the DVD at the next LOAF meeting.**

### **Forum members in attendance**

Simon Blackett (Vice Convener)	Catriona Rowan
Nic Bullivant	Richard Wallace
Hebe Carus	Jeremy Usher Smith
Thomas MacDonell	Juliet Allam
Peter Holden	Andrew Dunn
Paddy Wright	Roger Searle
John Grierson	
Bob Kinnaird	

### **Others in attendance:**

Bob Grant, CNPA  
Murray Ferguson, CNPA  
Adam Streeter-Smith, CNPA  
Justin Prigmore, CNPA  
Pete Crane, CNPA  
Keith Marshall, Macaulay Institute  
Liz Dinne, Macaulay Institute  
Fiona McNally, Paths for all Partnership  
Joyce Lyle, Cairngorms Communities

### **Item 1 – Welcome**

1. Simon Blackett opened the meeting and thanked all for attending and introduced the observers. The Convener had been unavoidably called away at the last minute due to family bereavement.

### **Item 2 – Apologies**

2. Apologies were received from Paul Corrigan, David Craig, Debbie Greene, Rachael Bromby and Malcolm MacIntrye.

### **Item 3 - Minutes of the last meeting**

3. The minutes were agreed with no changes.

### **Item 4 - Matters arising not otherwise appearing on the agenda**

4. None were raised.

### **Action points arising from the last meeting**

AP1 – Discharged – dogs DVD will be presented at the end of the meeting.

AP2 – Discharged.

AP3 – Discharged.

AP4 – Discharged – camping paper will be presented under item 5.

AP5 – Discharged.

AP6 – Discharged.

AP7 – Discharged.

### **Item 5 – Wild and roadside camping in the National Park.**

5. BG introduced the paper highlighting that wild camping is enjoyed by many people in the National Park and when it is carried out responsibly (e.g. light weight, transient and away from roads) and causes no problem. There are, however, two locations where the nature of the camping and the potential for cumulative impacts has led the Park Authority to consider what further assistance can be given to the relevant land managers. The two sites are Clunie Flats near Braemar and adjacent to Loch Morlich in Glenmore. Problems at the Clunie site are well known to Forum members and involve considerable congregations of tents and associated vehicles, resulting in littering, toileting problems, vandalism and anti-social behaviour. At Loch Morlich the problems can be more subtle but littering, sanitation, cutting trees and using the adjacent camp site facilities have all been causing difficulty for the land manager and others. In helping land managers tackle these issues the Access Authority needs to be able to provide clear advice as to when camping is outwith of access rights, what courses of action are available and what information should be recorded. As a result of previous discussions a range of management techniques are already being used at both sites but it seems that there are ongoing problems.
6. In the discussion members highlighted that the issue of camping at the Clunie Flats had been raised before with the Forum and it was agreed that being very close to a road, camping in this location was irresponsible and therefore outwith of access rights. As a result of previous meetings where the various parties were brought together a range of management measures (for example, making parking more difficult) had been implemented which the land manager reported had resulted in some improvements. A key, long-term solution at Clunie was to develop an alternative campsite to which people could be diverted. However, despite the efforts of the community, land manager and CNPA little progress has been made in that regard over the last 3 years.
7. There was, however, a concern expressed that defining any threshold for a given site could penalise individuals who are acting responsibly and that the CNPA could be departing from the spirit of the Code. As with Clunie, ensuring that there was suitable provision for informal camping in Glenmore should be the first step towards finding a solution and it was recognised that lack of suitable facilities at peak times may be a problem that is likely to grow rather than diminish. The

possibility of “displacement” from the central belt as a consequence of future camping restrictions around Loch Lomond make now a sensible time to consider this issue.

8. MF highlighted that it was important to get the context right. The role of the CNPA is to assist land managers but in order to do so the CNPA needed to develop the right approach. This has to be based on evidence and that is why as part of a range of solutions a simple monitoring system is being proposed. This approach was generally supported by members who advised that if the police are to be involved there needs to be evidence of the law being broken.
9. Members highlighted that in other locations ranger presence had done a lot to reduce the impacts of irresponsible camping.

**AP1- AQSS to write to Invercauld Estate and Forestry Commission Scotland proposing the implementation of a monitoring system and providing other advice.**

#### **Item 6- Dogs- Interpreting the Code in a National Park context**

10. JP introduced this paper by highlighting that, increasingly, CNPA is being made aware of concerns amongst the land management sector that the code is unclear, especially the wording regarding “dogs on leads or under close control” and these concerns are particularly prevalent amongst land managers that have ground nesting birds present. Three possible options for wording of signs were tabled, all of which were consistent with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.
11. There was qualified support for Option C – *“Keep your dog on a lead during the ground nesting bird breeding season”* but some concerns were raised that some environmental bodies are trying to unnecessarily restrict access and similar arguments have been put forward in the past by deer managers.
12. Members agreed with the principle that in order to promote responsible dog ownership, messages needed to be consistent across the National Park. There was concern, however, that the evidence backing up this position was poor and that the Code should not be used for something for which it was not designed. If there are persistent issues at some sites with disturbance then more relevant nature conservation legislation should be used to tackle the problem.
13. Members agreed that use of such strong messages should be in conjunction with wider campaigns to promote responsible dog behaviour, clearly explaining why such guidance was necessary.

**AP2- CNPA to define bird breeding dates to go with “keep dogs on leads” messages and provide advice to land managers.**

#### **Item 7- Core Path Plan monitoring**

14. AQSS introduced this paper highlighting the work that had been done since the last update to the LOAF at the meeting in August 2009. The monitoring framework has been developed to provide a simple assessment of whether or not each path in the network is Fit for Purpose to assess how well the network is meeting the needs of communities and visitors to the National Park. It will be used to provide year-on-year comparisons to show progress to the LOAF, Board and Delivery Team and help the CNPA plan areas of future work. In deciding if any path is Fit for Purpose the monitoring will focus on three key tests :

- a) **Barriers and obstructions** – the path should be the least restrictive possible.
  - b) **Path surface condition** – the overall path surface condition should cater for likely and potential users.
  - c) **Directional paths signs** – the path should have appropriate fingerposts and intermediate waymarking.
15. Clarification was given that whilst the level of survey will not provide the path condition information that would allow a full repair of any path to be costed, it will inform the annual work programme discussions with the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust.
16. The LOAF were content that the proposed methodology was sufficient to help promote improvement in the quality of the designated core paths and the proposed timescale was realistic.

### **Item 8- Guidance on community path leaflets**

17. PC highlighted the work that has been done to develop a leaflet template that will assist community groups when they come to re-vamp existing leaflets. The CNPA has developed draft guidance, in conjunction with interested community groups and other key stakeholders to ensure that future leaflets meet the needs of visitors. An example of one new community leaflet was shown and contrasted with the existing leaflets.
18. Members highlighted a number of minor points in relation to the specific leaflet shown.
19. Questions were raised regarding charging for leaflets as it was recognised that COAT derive income from leaflets that they have been selling in the Deeside area. PC stated that charging for leaflets poses two issues, one of copyright and one of availability. The Ordnance Survey has confirmed that the CNPA copyright would cover small charges for leaflets provided that it is to cover re-print costs. It was further clarified that the guidance doesn't stipulate that communities have to charge for leaflets or what should happen to any funds raised and that decision will be left to the community group to determine.
20. The Forum endorsed the guidance and agreed that adoption of the guidance would encourage a wider range of people to enjoy the outdoors and raise the profile of the National Park.

### **Item 9 – Outdoor Access Casework**

21. AQSS introduced the paper by providing a short overview on progress over the last 6 months. AQSS also proposed changes in how casework is presented to the LOAF to provide a clear précis of the cases dealt with quarterly using the existing spreadsheet and an annual paper which will show statistics and trend information. This proposal was agreed as a logical way of presenting the information.
22. A question was posed concerning one particular case, the difficulty in identifying it on the spreadsheet and the apparent lack of an update to the complainant. AQSS explained that the case related to a number of locked gates over several community council areas so, for recording purposes, each gate had been viewed as a single case. In doing so, the priority of each gate had also been assessed with some being higher than others. It was agreed that the complainant should have been contacted more recently and updated on progress.

**AP3- AQSS to write to complainant updating them on progress**

**AP4- AQSS to review casework protocols to ensure complainants are regularly updated on progress.**

**Item 10- Update and forward look**

23. AQSS introduced this paper highlighting that the CNPA will be bringing a paper to the LOAF on the responsible promotion of outdoor opportunities in May before going back to the Board later in the year.

24. Attention was also drawn to SNH's consideration of a review of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and members confirmed that they would wish to feed their views into this process.

**AP5 – AQSS to establish if SNH are seeking the views of LAF's and when would be the best time to feed in those views.**

**Item 11 – Ideas for future meetings**

25. Three topics have been proposed for the next meeting: guidance on responsible promotion of access, SOAC monitoring and Dogs DVD next steps. Members were asked for further issues that would benefit from discussion and advice.

26. The Vice Convener reminded the Forum that a biannual open meeting of the Forum was due this year. AQSS confirmed that this was the case and that the format used in the previous two years had been relatively successful but had not attracted a large audience. Given the amount of time involved for both Forum and staff it would be prudent to consider the best format for future open meetings. It was agreed that a paper with options be presented at the May meeting.

27. The Vice Convener also highlighted that the May meeting will be the start of the season when LOAF meetings were combined with site visits and canvassed members for suggestions. The last site visit in Tomintoul was a walk along the Speyside Way Spur. This time it was felt there would be merit in focussing on the work of Crown Estate in delivering the wider benefits of access. A proposal was also made to organise a canoe trip down the Spey which could be for the August meeting.

**AP6- AQSS to liaise with Dave Craig on a possible Spey trip for the August meeting.**

28. Members also expressed concerns about the late meeting times during the winter. It was pointed out that the Lecht was not ploughed or gritted after 5pm and it might be sensible to opt for an early afternoon start time for the November and February meetings. It was noted that this would not suit everyone but was favoured by the majority.

**AP7- AQSS to discuss start time for the winter meetings with the Convenor and Deputy Convenor.**

**AOCB**

29. AQSS indicated that some memberships were due for review and that he would be writing to the members asking if they wish to stay on for another term. It was also highlighted that the LOAF is still short of both a community and land manager position and once members had stated their intentions the positions would be filled from the existing waiting list. A further issue was the need to consider recruiting from Perth and Kinross when the boundary is extended.

**Item 12- Dogs Participatory Video Project**

30. The screening of the final edit was introduced by Keith Marshall of the Macaulay Institute who asked members to contact him if they needed copies and if they were content for clips to be available on the Macaulay website. The project is now complete although there is some limited funding for images and production of DVD's, but not editing.

**AP8- AQSS to propose options for use of the DVD at the next LOAF meeting.**

**Date of next meeting**

**31. Tuesday the 11<sup>th</sup> May 18:00-20:30 Village Hall, Tomintoul.**