

CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM
Wednesday 25th of August 2021 from 6.30pm – 8.00pm
CNPA Lifesize meeting room

<https://call.lifesizecloud.com/988805>.

Who	Representing
Adam Streeter-Smith	CNPA
Eilidh Scobbie	LOAF
Eleanor Mackintosh	CNPA Board
Gavin Clark	??
Jenny Allen	CNPA (minutes)
Jonathan Kitchinger	Scottish Canoe Association
John Grierson	LOAF – Chair
Neil Wilson	LOAF
Pete Crane	CNPA
Pete Wright	LOAF
Sandy McCook	LOAF?? Or Nethy Bridge CC?
Trevor Thornley	LOAF
Uwe Stoneman	RSPB
Apologies	
Alisa Villegas	LOAF
Mark Johnston	LOAF

Item	Action
<p>Welcome and Minutes of last meeting on 25 August 2021</p> <p>JG welcomed all to the meeting.</p> <p>Matters arising from Minutes</p> <p>Meeting note agreed</p> <p>Previous Actions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. AQSS to publish meeting note on LOAF meeting webpage – AQSS clarified that the note should be agreed at the following meeting and then put onto webpage. He confirmed that previous meetings are now up to date. 2. AQSS to facilitate response to NPP4 with a focus on actions and outcomes relevant to outdoor access. On agenda for current meeting. 3. AQSS to feedback to LOAF on outcomes of the stakeholder meeting on Dalwhinnie Railway Crossing. On agenda for current meeting. 4. AQSS to feedback to LOAF on outcomes of the stakeholder meeting. To be covered in AOCB. 	

Item	Action
<p>National Park Partnership plan review.</p> <p>AQSS introduced the item highlighting that information has gone out to members asking them to look at the plan and raise any issues in LOAF or as an individual. There may not be anything controversial in terms of access, but a review of infrastructure and core path plans is part of the NPP, so there will still be LOAF input to shape it.</p> <p>No issues were raised in the meeting. JG commented on the length and duplication within the plan, but that there didn't seem to be anything that would impact on access. TT commented that it was good to read about the policies and links in the document that give the background that the NPP has been based on.</p> <p>PC suggested that if LOAF is supportive of proposals in the NPP then submitting response to that effect would be useful, as often only negative responses are received.</p> <p>Action: JG will submit a report to say that LOAF is supportive of the plan.</p> <p>EM will also pass on the positive response at the Board meeting.</p>	<p>JG</p>
<p>Managing Visitors update</p> <p>PC gave an update on developments since the last meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CNPA seasonal rangers and rangers from some of the partner services have now finished. There remain 4 CNPA rangers and ~20 partner rangers around the Park. • Feedback has been collected from partners, rangers and other groups, and has all been very positive. • Kate Forbes MSP has also expressed her support. She has been interested in the work between Rangers and Police Scotland, as lessons learned may be applicable to other hot spots in the Highlands. • Work on amenities being done over the winter include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aberdeen Council – Glenshee public toilets ○ Grantown – public toilets by Museum ○ Glenmore public toilets refurbished ○ Loch an Eilien – toilets have been reopened. ○ Loch Garten – further work is going on including upgrading the Visitor Centre and installing a totally accessible toilet. ○ Highland Council – Glenmore roadside parking work ○ Dinnet estate – expanding the car park <p>CNPA and OAS were turned down on their application for Beinn a' Ghlo carpark upgrade. The project has planning and landowner permission, but needs another way to fund it.</p>	

Item	Action
<p>JG commented that CNPA need to publicise the work that is being done more. He also said that the local feedback about Rangers had all been positive.</p> <p>PW asked if there had been any feedback from any the Community Councils. PC has sent out a questionnaire to all the CCs, and has had one response. He assumes that the lack of response from others is a positive reflection on the work that has been done.</p>	
<p>Gavin Clark – Operations Manager for NatureScot in Tayside and Grampian</p> <p>GC last presented to LOAF at the June meeting. There had been a significant increase in visitors going in and on Loch Kinnord, in particular paddleboarders. In June they had just introduced new guidance on access to the water. Updates since then:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with the restricted access requests had been reasonably good. • They have received one formal complaint about the restrictions, and other groups have made negative comments. • They have had a number of written representations in support of the restrictions. • Annex 1 of the paper has a summary of the bird counts made before and after the restrictions were brought in. GC highlighted the difference in the bar charts for before the 16th June compared to after, although he pointed out that other factors may have influence the change as well. <p>?? are proposing to do a more thorough review of the season, and to repeat and expand the stakeholder consultation. They want to look at other measures that might be appropriate (eg zoning; and a discussion about whether different types of watersports have different levels of impact).</p> <p>They are also aware of the need to take in to account the impacts on other sites from activity users who are displaced from Loch Kinnord.</p> <p>Annex 2 gives stakeholders who were consulted last time, and planned additional stakeholders to consult this time. GC proposes to write up findings and bring back to LOAF in February.</p> <p>Jonathan Kitching introduced himself as the Scottish Canoe Association Access Officer for NE Scotland and the Dee Catchment area. He was involved in the negotiations 10 years ago when sailed craft were asked to not use Loch Kinnord. He understands the reason for the current increase in restrictions, ad agreed that zoning isn't a feasible solution. He agreed with GC's statement that visitors had been very good and that the paddlesport community had tried hard to be compliant; however he asked if the length of time that the access on the loch was restricted for could be reduced by 4 weeks.</p>	

Item	Action
<p>GC said that the length of time for the restrictions had been based on the recommendation of specialists.</p> <p>JK offered to be involved in further discussions particularly around displacement, as he is familiar with watersports venues across NE Scotland.</p> <p>GC asked if LOAF had any suggestions about the planned stakeholder consultation and next steps. There were no further comments, which was taken as the group is content.</p> <p>Action – GC will report back to Feb meeting</p>	<p>GC</p>
<p>Paper 2 – RSPB Uwe Stoneman and Sandy McCook from Nethybridge Community Council</p> <p>US introduced the topic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is the first Visitor and Access plan that RSPB have put together for reserve since they took over in 1988. It came about from ‘explosion’ in visitor access after Covid. • It’s something that the local Community has been very interested in, and has been developed in conjunction with a working group of 15 local people as well as wider local consultative meetings. • They are now bringing it to LOAF to seek advice on the plan, and on any ways to get more input to make document stronger. • They have been following Scottish Land Commission’s guidance on community engagement. <p>SMc gave some more background. Until recently the RSPB at Forest Lodge has been very separate from the village, and he commended US and his team for the progress in bringing the two together.</p> <p>There were questions and discussion around the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The watersports issue is quite similar to that at Loch Kinnord. However having Loch Morlich close makes it easier to ask people to go there instead. While the visitor centre pulls people into the area, it and the two rangers also makes it easier to engage with visitors. • The RSPB has funding from Cairngorms Connect for a feasibility study on rerouting the Speyside Way. • There is concern about the amount of activity on the RSPB owned land on the Cairngorm plateau, and they are hoping to get funding for the 2 ranger posts at Loch Garten and a third one on the hills. • There was discussion about whether the RSPB plan should include a section on outdoor events. There is a tension between quiet enjoyment of the area and more active organised activities. Could there be guidance about what events the RSPB could support (eg Nethy Highland Games), and what doesn’t fit with the ethos of the area? There is no direct way 	

Item	Action
<p>to restrict events, but some guidance about types of event and appropriate areas to use might be of use</p> <p>JG summarised the discussion that the consultation and communication had been excellent, and a good example of how to carry out a consultation. LOAF would welcome to be kept informed on progress, and US was invited to a future meeting to update on it.</p>	
<p>Dalwhinnie Railway Crossing</p> <p>AQSS updated the group. On 22nd September Network Rail (NR) met with representative groups to talk through decision and why the crossing will remain closed for now. The situation is complex as NR has strict rules on health and safety. There have been a number of occasions where people have been observed not crossing sufficiently quickly to be within the safe limits, and there are difficulties with solutions such as traffic lights due to the proximity of the station and sightlines. It was highlighted in the meeting that people climbing over the locked gates are making the situation more dangerous. Scotways believe the crossing might be a Right of Way. NR has said they will look at the situation again.</p> <p>It was noted that LOAF haven't put out a statement about the situation, and it was felt it would be appropriate to do this.</p> <p>Action – JG will write to Network Rail and Transport Scotland, copying in CNPA, Kate Forbes and Highland Council.</p>	<p>JG</p>
<p>AOCB</p> <p>At the next LOAF meeting AQSS suggested the following are discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership structure of CLOAF and standing procedures • Loch Kinnord proposals • Casework review – end of year • Strategic infrastructure plan 	
<p>JG thanked everyone who came, particularly those presenting papers.</p> <p>Next Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January/February 2022 	