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CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

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**Title:** A review of the Operating Principles

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**Purpose** The purpose of this paper is to review the current Operating Principles and seek advice from the Forum on proposed changes.

**Advice Sought**

The Forum is asked to consider the following specific questions:

- a) **How frequently should a review of the Forum take place and what form should the review take?**
- b) **Do we wish to consider a new item stating that members should be encouraged to declare an interest in any of the items on the agenda?**
- c) **Are Forum members content with the proposed wording?**
- d) **Are there any further substantive changes required?**
- e) **Is the Forum content with amendment 5g Appendix One that affirms the role of the Convenor and Vice Convenor in being responsible for the agenda?**

**Background**

1. The Forum approved the Operating Principles in June 2005. These principles are important because they set out the role and remit of the Forum as well as how the Forum should operate.
2. The last review of the operation of the Forum, as per item 4 (c), was carried out by questionnaire in March 2007 with a paper presented to the August 2007 with the findings of the review. At that time there was a high degree of satisfaction in the way the Forum was functioning.
3. In the period between the last review and now there has been a substantial change in membership and it is timely that we revisit the Operating Principles. It also provides an opportunity to address the comments and concerns raised after the LOAF meeting in February 2010. As the Communication Plan is an integral part of the Operating Principles it is timely to review it as well, as such it is included as appendix 2.
4. The process of updating the Operating Principles was started by the Convener and Vice Convener at a meeting held on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March 2010, in Tomintoul, where discussion centred on where the Forum is now and its future direction? A file note of the meeting was circulated to all members.
5. There as a lapse in reviewing the progress of the Forum in 2009 so advice is now being sought on both the wording in the Operating Principles and nature of the review. The review in 2007 was a very valuable exercise and we would favour carrying out another review in 2010 and biannually thereafter rather than an annual standing item.

**How frequently should a full review of the Forum's operation take place and what form should the review take?**

6. There have been instances in the past where members have had a personal or professional interest in a particular item. This has never been serious issue as the Forum is not making decisions, but generally providing advice. The current Operating Principles do not require members to declare this interest in a particular item. However, in the interests of transparency, and so that all members understand what may lie behind what is said at meetings, it is suggested that at the start of each meeting an opportunity is provided so that members can highlight anything that they think might be relevant. Generally there should be no need for members to withdraw from any discussion but they may opt to do so if they feel more comfortable.

**Do we wish to consider a new item stating that members should be encouraged to declare an interest in any of the items on the agenda?**

7. The proposed wording for the item is – *In the interests of transparency and good governance Forum members are encouraged to declare any particular interest they might have in an agenda item at the start of the meeting. Generally there should be no need for members to withdraw from discussions.*

**Are Forum members content with the proposed wording?**

**Are there any further substantive changes required?**

**Minor amendment**

8. There is one minor amendment proposed to the Operating Principles (5 (g) Appendix 1) that affirms the role of the Convener and Vice Convener in being responsible for the agenda.

**Is the Forum content with the minor amendment?**

**Next steps**

9. The next steps would be to revise and re-circulate Operating Principles and to instigate a review of the operation of the Forum before the November meeting.

**Adam Streeter-Smith  
Outdoor Access Officer  
May 11 2010**