

CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE FOURTH MEETING

Held at the Lesser Hall, Newtonmore Village Hall
Tuesday 15 November 2005 at 18:30

Present

Dick Balharry	David MacKay
Simon Blackett	Ken MacMillan
Nic Bullivant	Peter Ord
Jo Durno	Roger Searle
Helen Geddes	Richard Wallace
Debbie Greene	Andrew Wells
John Grierson	Jamie Williamson
Dave Horrocks	

Apologies

Mike Atherton
Ian Dunlop
Fred Gordon
Jack Hunt
David Selfridge
Bryan Wright

In attendance

Adam Streeter-Smith, Paths for All Partnership
Murray Ferguson, CNPA
Bob Grant, CNPA
Sandra Middleton, CNPA
Fran Potheary, CNPA
Caroline Fyfe, SNH (observer)

Summary of Action Points

AP1: FP to ensure that the key issues paper will be appended to the facilitators report for future circulation.

AP2: FP to circulate an extra date for a single issue meeting on the Outdoor Access Strategy.

AP3: BG to bring to the attention of the Speyside Way Management Group the LOAF discussions on potential use of existing Ranger Services to maintain the extended route.

AP4: FP to table SNH paper for discussion at the next meeting and CNPA to formulate a response by 31 January 2006.

AP5: BG to send Forum members a link to the National Access Forum's outdoor access website.

AP6: FP to ensure National Access Forum business is a standard agenda item at Forum meetings, and that Forum members receive a prompt when the NAF papers are available on their website.

AP7: FP to confirm date in the spring for Annual Gathering and book Lonach Hall.

AP8: FP to circulate list of dates for 2006 with proposed locations.

Welcome and Introductions

1. Murray Ferguson (MF) opened the meeting by introducing Caroline Fyfe as an observer from the Recreation and Access Group in SNH.

Minutes of the last meeting

2. These were approved.

Matters Arising

3. Fran Pothecary (FP) drew attention to AP2 and informed the Forum that she had made the changes to the Communications paper and would circulate it in final form to the Forum members in due course.
4. Nic Bullivant and Richard Wallace reflected on the joint National and Local Access Forum day which had been held in Perth in September. They felt it had highlighted for them that the Cairngorms LOAF was running very smoothly, with a clear focus and purpose.
5. In response to a query on AP6, Bob Grant (BG) indicated that no feedback had been received from Rothiemurchus Estate at the time of the meeting.

The Election of the Convener and Vice Convener

6. Nominations had been received for Dick Balharry as Convener (proposed by Dave Horrocks and seconded by Fred Gordon); and for Andy Wells as Vice Convener (proposed by Peter Ord and seconded by Jo Durno). In the absence of other nominations both candidates accepted their positions. Murray Ferguson (MF) then stepped aside as interim Convener and Dick Balharry took his place.

The Outdoor Access Strategy workshop October 25th 2005

7. Bob Grant (BG) introduced the report from David Pirnie and asked the Forum members who had attended, if every point had been recorded. He stressed that the facilitator, David Pirnie, had been especially keen that every comment and post-it note had been included. The general feeling from the Forum was that the report had accurately captured the feedback gathered at the meeting. It was suggested that the key issues paper should be attached as an annex to the facilitators report for future circulation.

AP1: FP to ensure that the key issues paper will be appended to the facilitators report for future circulation.

8. BG indicated that the development of the Outdoor Access Strategy was following the good practice guidance issued by Paths for All Partnership and SNH. The next meeting of the Steering Group was due to be held on Thursday 17 November and it was anticipated that the draft OAS would be presented to the Board for discussion on 13 January, coming to the LOAF at the same time for discussion. Some Forum members felt strongly that the **whole** Forum – not only the Steering Group - needed to see and approve the strategy. After some discussion, and a reminder that the Forum had an

advisory role rather than a decision making role in relation to the strategy, it was agreed that there would be an extra meeting of the Forum prior to the presentation of the final draft paper to Board.

AP2: FP to circulate an extra date for a single issue meeting on the Outdoor Access Strategy.

The Speyside Way

9. **Speyside Way Extension** - BG introduced the paper and commented that there was still some way to go in resolving the route issues, but that meetings and correspondence were still underway in progressing these. He reminded the Forum members that the authorisation of the final route is done by Scottish Ministers and that Scottish Natural Heritage will have the responsibility for writing the report advising Ministers of the proposed line.
10. **Existing Speyside Way** - Regarding the existing route, BG informed the Forum that it had recently been agreed by the Board that the Park Authority will contribute approximately £60,000 to the management funding of the existing route. This figure is proportional to the length of route that falls within the Park boundary.
11. A query was raised regarding the potential for Land Management Contracts to help fund maintenance on sections of the Speyside Way. It was agreed that this was one of several options, but would not be an option that all Land Managers may wish to take, given that the grants available for access improvements are capped which might encourage their spend elsewhere. CNPA staff are continuing to try and influence the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department (SEERAD) to ensure future tranches of Land Management Contracts encourage a more effective dialogue between farmers and the access authority.
12. There was some discussion about the need for a single management agency for the whole Speyside Way and the possibility of communities along the way adopting sections of the route. It was recognised that maintenance could also be devolved but that it would be important to retain a consistency in the quality and management of the route. The issue of rangers on the Speyside Way was also discussed with the suggestion that existing rangers could be deployed to work on the extension thus giving a locally based service. The Outcome of the Ranger review, currently being undertaken, would be relevant to such proposals.

AP3: BG to bring to the attention of the Speyside Way Management Group the LOAF discussions on potential use of existing Ranger Services to maintain the extended route.

13. The formal adoption of the Tomintoul Spur as part of the Speyside Way was discussed and the Forum was asked whether this should be raised with SNH. BG felt that the fact that the route wasn't currently adopted was probably an oversight which occurred when the Spur was created as an alternative destination when difficulties were still to be overcome on the section from Aberlour to Aviemore. SNH may wish to consider the inclusion of the Tomintoul Spur when they seek approval from Ministers for the extension to Newtonmore.

Upholding Access Rights

14. Fran Potheary (FP) introduced the paper and noted that the number of enquiries coming forward was steadily increasing, possibly as people are becoming more aware of access rights and the role of the local and national park authorities in relation to outdoor access.
15. The question of staffing resources was raised and Murray Ferguson (MF) indicated that the possibility of a third access officer was under review. The Forum expressed some concern that actions may be at risk of being delayed due to time pressures and lack of resources. FP drew attention to the fact that much of the work of the access staff had been, and was continuing to, relate to the setting up of systems that once in place should be less demanding of time, and free up time to focus on the access issues. MF informed the Forum of the work being undertaken to develop a protocol for working with local authority ranger services in addressing access issues in the Park.
16. A query was raised about liaison with, and response time to, those people who are raising access issues with the Park. FP suggested that the degree of comfort that people needed in relation to access issues raised varied widely – some people were content to simply report issues and did not require feedback; others wanted to be kept informed of the process of resolution.
17. The issue of confidentiality was raised again in relation to the anonymous nature of the paper. It was felt that given that all the queries under discussion were still at an informal stage of negotiation, or hadn't been raised in their entirety, it was appropriate to keep them confidential. It was felt that as the paper was intended to convey the flavour and type of issues under scrutiny, there was no need to identify specific locations. However it was agreed that when the Park Authority were considering taking formal action in upholding access rights, and requesting input from the Forum, then the matter would be discussed in full, as per Paper 5 of the previous meeting.
18. It was commented that Case 4 seemed to be protracted. FP responded that this was correct but that there was a need to evaluate the seriousness of this matter against other access issues in hand, and decide where the time and resources are best directed at any one time. In this case, the barrier presented was less severe than in other cases and in addition, one aspect of the two original reported problems had been resolved.
19. FP drew attention to Case 5 and commented that other cases had emerged where access was not being actively blocked but land owners were unwilling to allow communities to improve or promote routes, thus frustrating community plans for development of path networks. FP recognised that these issues will become more acute as the expectations of communities are raised under Core Path planning.
20. Overall the Forum were positive about the value of being kept in touch with access issues, and having a more direct role where required in specific cases. BG indicated that consultation over the Outdoor Access Strategy (OAS) was highlighting awareness raising about the Code and responsible behaviour as being key issues, and suggested that this may lead to the development of further guidance that could be targeted at specific audiences.

Review of other VSRG work

21. FP informed the Forum that the purpose of the paper was to give the Forum an indication of other work undertaken by the Visitor Services and Recreation Group. The following points were raised in discussion:
- Integrated Grants Programme – it was raised that CNPA and SNH are in discussion over the possibility of merging their grant schemes next year to reduce inefficiencies in running two schemes.
 - FP alluded to recent discussions with neighbouring local authorities about the River Spey and the importance of the route as a long distance waterway which has the potential to share facilities with the Speyside Way.
 - In response to a query about the unattractive state of some of the entry points to the Park, MF referred to a recent meeting with the Scottish Executive regarding the Point of Entry Marker project and upgrading of lay-bys.
 - A question was asked about the timetabling of Peter Scott's review of the ranger services, which MF indicated is due to be complete in mid January.

Any other Business

22. **National Access Forum** - FP handed out a paper written by SNH, in their secretariat role to the National Access Forum (NAF), on the future relationship between the National Access Forum and Local Access Forums. BG informed the Forum that currently two places are available on the NAF for local access forums one of which is taken by a National Parks representative. It was agreed that the paper will be tabled for the next meeting for discussion and a formulated response will be sent to NAF by the deadline of 31 January 2006. It was agreed that news from the NAF should be a standard agenda item for the Cairngorms Forum, and that Forum members will receive a prompt when NAF papers are available for viewing on the website.

AP4: FP to table NAF paper for discussion at the next meeting and CNPA to formulate a response by 31 January 2006

AP5: BG to send Forum members a link to the National Access Forum's outdoor access website.

AP6: FP to ensure National Access Forum business is a standard agenda item at Forum meetings, and that Forum members receive a prompt when the NAF papers are available on the website

23. **Annual Gathering** – FP reminded the meeting that part of the communications plan of the Forum is to schedule an annual gathering of LOAF members and the general public, to enable people to become more familiar with the work of the LOAF directly. She suggested that such a meeting should have a key theme and suggested that the gathering would provide the opportunity to launch the core path planning process, and consolidate the role of the Forum in this. There was some further discussion, reflecting on the experience of the Newtonmore core path planning pilot, of the difficulty for locally based consultations to effectively engage with users from outwith the area, visitors and the communities of interest such as cyclists, horse-riders, canoeists etc. It was therefore stressed that stakeholders, along the lines of those invited to the OAS strategy workshop should be invited to the gathering.

24. It was decided that the date of the gathering should be around early spring, as fits in with the start of CPP, and the location should be the Lonach Hall in Strathdon if available.

AP7: FP to confirm date in the spring for Annual Gathering and book Lonach Hall

25. **Dates of meetings 2006** – it was agreed that FP would circulate dates for all meetings next year. It was confirmed the Forum should have 4 standard meetings a year, not including scheduled extras, and one annual gathering, making a total of five meetings annually. It was agreed that the following meeting in January would be held earlier in the day – 4pm was suggested – and in the Grantown area, to facilitate ease of access at a time of year when weather conditions can be difficult

AP8: FP to circulate list of dates for 2006 with proposed locations

Dates for the Next Meetings

26. Tuesday 24th January – Grantown **16:00 (NB new time)**

The meeting closed at 20:30