

National Access Forum Update – May 2019

Summary of main topics - National Access Forum meeting 29 May 2019

Review of IPA -

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) informed the Forum about a review of the 'Improving Public Access' (IPA) scheme, the findings of which will inform transitional arrangements and any future schemes for improving access in rural areas. Data to be reviewed includes; the types of paths, lengths, popularity of options, types of project and geographical spread, as well as quantifying the benefits. A wider consultation is planned for the summer months with findings from the review and recommendations presented to the NAF meeting in September. Forum members highlighted the success of the scheme in terms of uptake and delivery and welcomed further input to the consultation. A small NAF working group will meet over the summer to feed into the SNH review.

Path Mapping –

Ramblers Scotland provided an update to Forum members on their path mapping project. A project manager is currently being sought and a potential test area identified around South Loch Lomond and Dunbartonshire. Starting with publically available datasets the project aims to develop a national consistent data set of paths which are mapped, appropriately waymarked and promoted. Further updates will be presented in September once the project is underway. The Forum also discussed potential synergies between this project and the work of the Core Path and OS mapping subgroup. The need to continue to promote the benefits of mapping core paths on an OS backdrop would continue to be pursued through a number of contacts including Scottish Government.

Tourism and the Value of Outdoor Access -

A presentation by Visit Scotland confirmed the importance of Scottish outdoor access to the visitor economy (worth a total of £11.3 billion) and explained how it is currently used to market Scotland. Whilst the biggest driver for visiting Scotland remains the scenery and landscape (Highlands and Islands, Argyll and the National Parks), the range of activities and 'to get away from it all' also feature highly as key motivators for the tourism sector. This is particularly relevant for both of the National Parks, Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders, although other areas can benefit from these trends.

In terms of the value to the economy Forum members heard that combined figures for long and short walking are estimated at around £1.7 billion, and for cycling and mountain biking £105 million. These markets along with wildlife and dark skies/astro tourism are all set to increase. Other visitor trends include those seeking restorative recreation, self-enrichment, green getaways, sensory tourism and immersive experiences. Visit Scotland work with many partners to promote Scotland as an activity destination and to connect with nature. Visit Scotland also promote the Scottish Outdoor Access Code through a variety of guides and also online to encourage visitors to act responsibly. A number of Forum members offered to work further with Visit Scotland to promote responsible access across a number of sectors.

SOAC Messages for target groups –

SNH outlined work to improve SOAC messages to a number of target audiences. New concise guidance for campervan and motorhome users has been placed on the SOAC website. It draws on existing guidance from 'Camper' the organisation for campervan rental sector. Brief guidance about the use of drones is also being finalised and takes into account new guidance on commercial drone use and the rise in leisure drone use. A small group of Forum members are working on options for improving messaging about dogs and livestock based on the current advice in the Code. The recent SPARC campaign was thought to have

reached 2 million through radio coverage and 6.6 million through social media, widening the audience reached. However, reports of attacks on livestock continue to increase and sustained messaging as well as other measures to tackle unaccompanied dogs will be required. In terms of developing SOAC messages for young people the Forum heard about SNH's work with Young Scot. An initial questionnaire of young people was pointing to the use of social media to deliver SOAC messages and various products will be designed with this in mind.

Mediation -

A report from the first meeting of the NAF subgroup on mediation was presented to the Forum and views invited on whether or not it would be useful for NAF to prepare a guidance note on this subject. Experiences on the use of mediation by NAF members including corresponding members and LAFs would be sought. The sub group meets again at the end of June.

NAF/LAF Joint meeting 2019 –

A summary note from the joint NAF/LAF meeting on 'Improving the NAF/LAF Network' was discussed. A total of 23 LAFs were represented along with approximately half of NAF members. Feedback from the event was positive with support for the more interactive approach, greater networking time and the variety of topics selected by the LAFs themselves. A similar format would be considered for next year. Forum members discussed the issues raised in annex 1 of the paper and potential topics for 2020 including; more information on resources and funding for access and promotion of the role of LAFs within councils.

Scottish Forestry and Forest and Land Scotland –

A brief description of the two new executive agencies for forestry was presented to the Forum.

- i) Scottish Forestry (<https://forestry.gov.scot/>) represents the policy, support and regulatory functions,
- ii) Forest and Land Scotland (<https://forestryandland.gov.scot/>) manages the forest estate, approx.10% of Scotland, including the management of forests for tourism and recreation. A new corporate plan is currently out to consultation.

<https://consult.gov.scot/environment-forestry/forestry-and-land-scotland-corporate-plan/>.

NAF membership –

Nick Cole attended the meeting as the new LAF representative along with Martin Duncan the new deputy local authorities representative. It is hoped that both these appointments will help strengthen the links between the NAF and individual LAFs. LAFs are encouraged to raise any pertinent items for discussion with Nick to be raised at future meetings.

Future NAF meetings –

The next Forum meetings are; **Friday 20 September 2019** at Battleby, **Wednesday 29 January 2020** Battleby, Joint NAF/LAF meeting 2020 (date and venue tbc). n

For more information or comment on any of the above topics, please contact the NAF Secretary – Janice Winning (NAFsec@nature.scot ; 0131 316 2639). Further information can be found on the National Access Forum pages at <http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/access-forum/>.