

CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE FIFTEENTH MEETING Albert Hall, Ballater

Tuesday 26th February 2008

Welcome and Introductions

Andrew Wells welcomed Katrina Brown, of the Macaulay Institute to the meeting. He also thanked Paddy Wright for a very interesting and enjoyable farm visit

Mike Atherton	Dave Horrocks
Simon Blackett	Peter Ord
Nic Bullivant	Catriona Rowan
Paul Corrigan	Roger Searle
Nonie Coulthard	Richard Wallace
Jo Durno	Andy Wells
Helen Geddes	Jamie Williamson
Fred Gordon	Paddy Wright
Debbie Greene	

In attendance

Murray Ferguson, CNPA
Bob Grant
Pete Crane
Adam Streeter Smith
Katrina Brown, MLURI
Bell MacAulay, Cairngorms Communities
Chris York, Walking the Talk

Apologies

Apologies were received from Dick Balharry, Tim Walker and Jack Hunt

Summary of Action Points arising from meeting

- AP1: BG to revise draft minutes and place approved version on website**
- AP2: FP to seek further information from John Thorne to update the Forum on cycle carriage discussions**
- AP3: BG to add *site* after *water based*.**
- AP4: FP to seek information from members to enable a skills register to be developed.**
- AP5: BG to draw up contract brief for engaging a facilitator and seeking the agreement of DB and AW before letting the contract.**
- AP6: Katrina Brown to present a paper on the Participatory Video project at the May meeting**
- AP7: Debbie Greene to circulate Sharing Good Practice programme to Forum members**
- AP8: Debbie Greene to circulate guidance on monitoring responsible access to Forum members.**

Minutes of the last meeting

1. Paragraph 25 - the use of the site by grass sledges was queried. Through discussion it was agreed that *providing done responsibly* be inserted after *use by grass sledges*.

AP1: BG to revise draft minutes and place approved version on website

Action Points from last meeting

AP1: discharged

AP2: in hand – copies of Outdoor Access Priority for Action Delivery Plan to be circulated to LOAF members

AP3: discharged

AP4: discharged

AP5: discharged

AP6: discharged

Matters Arising not otherwise appearing on the agenda

2. MF updated the Forum on AP4 stating that since the Section 14 Notice had been issued to Aviemore Highland Resort, the CNPA had been served a writ, in summary stating that the Notice be quashed. Forum members expressed disappointment that this had been the case and questioned whether a letter from the Convener supporting the CNPA position would be of value. Peter Ord dissented and drew attention to his dissent in the previous minutes stating that this matter should have never been brought before the Forum, considering in his opinion that members might not all be entirely familiar with the site and should be aware of the potential financial loss to the local economy if the development did not proceed. His concern was that the Forum itself could now be exposed to a full legal process. The contrary view from a number of Forum members was that the Forum gave *advice* to CNPA and it was the *decision* of CNPA on whether or not to take heed of that advice.
3. Forum members expressed continuing interest with the work John Thorne is doing regarding cycle carriage on public transport

AP2: FP to seek further information from John Thorne to update the Forum on cycle carriage discussions

Paper 1 – Outdoor Access Casework

4. Bob Grant introduced the paper and annexes and drew attention to the fact that there had been a quiet period with regards to access cases.
5. For information BG also noted the interplay at present between the duties under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and the Countryside Act 1967 in respect of Rights of Way where it would appear that this duty still lies with the Planning Authority. This anomaly presented itself in a recent case where a house owner closed a path that crossed an area outwith access rights,

namely their garden area, and that a complainant was pursuing this as a Right of Way.

6. A query was raised about what was meant by item 4 and it was clarified that this meant the case was being dealt with by another party
7. Members drew attention to the last case (case 52) which required the word "site" added to the end of the first sentence.

AP3: BG to add *site* after *water based*.

Paper 2 – Reviewing LOAF membership

8. BG introduced this paper by reminding members of the importance of a dynamic Forum and drew attention to the previous views sought on membership. The risk identified by the CNPA is that there will be little or no turnaround in community membership followed by a depletion of said membership and ultimately loss of continuity.
9. It was stated that one of the strengths of the Forum members is the range of skills they bring, often with a background in community and land management etc. It was proposed that members be invited to move position to free up space if ultimately the CNPA wishes to spread recruitment across the membership categories. It was agreed that CNPA staff would consider this suggestion as an interim measure.
10. It was suggested that further refinement could be done to the table to illustrate the representation of the members to highlight any weaknesses in representation.

AP4: FP to seek information from members to enable a skills register to be developed.

11. Those members indicating a step down from April 2008 were happy to stay through to the end of May 2008 ensuring continuity of advice on the Core Paths Plan.
12. All were content with elections of the Convener and Vice- Convener taking place in November 2008.

Paper 3 – Core Path Planning – formal consultation and next steps

13. AQSS introduced the paper and drew members' attention to the formal and statutory role the Forum has as a consultee on the Core Paths Plan. The need to ensure that the Forum provided an independent view of the Core Paths Plan and the best means of ensuring that could happen were debated in detail. To meet the consultative deadline the Forum will need to discuss their response at the May meeting.
14. The Forum agreed that the big issue was the sufficiency of the network and, whilst they needed to be conversant with the extent of individual paths, the feedback to CNPA should be on 'sufficiency' grounds.

15. The merit of having an independent facilitator was agreed and a number of organisations that could undertake this role were put forward including the Paths for All Partnership and the Association of Cairngorm Communities. To take this forward it was agreed that CNPA staff would draft a contract brief for a facilitator which would require approval from the Forum Convenor and Vice Convenor.

AP5: BG to draw up contract brief for engaging a facilitator and seeking the agreement of DB and AW before letting the contract.

Paper 4 - Outdoor Events Guidance – an update

16. BG introduced this item by firstly apologising for the lack of a paper, reminding all that this work is as a result of the policy statement in the Outdoor Access Strategy. The workshop held in November and subsequent advice from the Steering group is pointing towards a web based piece of guidance that will provide a 'portal' to more detailed advice and guidance.
17. A draft will be completed by the end of May and circulated around members and workshop attendees for comment.

Paper 5 – Path Signs

18. Pete Crane introduced this paper outlining that there are two key drivers to deliver better quality signage for access in the Park, the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and the current Core Paths Planning process which will lead, over time, to new path signs being installed across the National Park.
19. National guidance has recommended that signs should include the word "path" destination and distance. Whilst most promoted paths in the National Park are signed, there is a lack of consistency in design and content and few meet the recommended national guidance.
20. CNPA has appointed Walking the Talk to work with stakeholders to produce sign design guidelines for the CNP to improve the quality of signage and to get 'buy-in' from stakeholders.
21. It was queried if there was a desire to clearly link signs to the National Park. PC stated that it was felt that if the designs resulted in quality signs with clear and consistent information then this would, in time, be associated by visitors with the National Park. There was no intention to use the CNP brand or any associated colour scheme on path signs.
22. A further enquiry asked if Principle F in the paper was only for core paths. This is not the case but core paths will be the focus for the short term before rolling it out across the network.
23. A question was asked about the potential involvement of the National Access Forum in this matter. CNPA is working with Phil Clark of the Paths for All Partnership who is producing national advice. The aim of the project is to shape the national advice to best fit the CNP.
24. Forum members questioned the financial implications of replacing all of the existing signs. There is no intention to replace signs 'overnight' but to use the

published guidelines as part of a rolling programme if and when signs are being replaced. The costs of maintaining core paths presented to CNP Board included costs for signs.

25. A suggestion was made that the guidance should also address when and where signs should be and ensure that the wider countryside is not "littered" with signs. This was agreed, and it was confirmed that under the CNP Outdoor Access Strategy 'there will be a presumption against way marking in wild, remote or other sensitive areas..'
26. It was stated that the signs should take into account all needs of different path users particularly on legibility, and the current policies on Gaelic.
27. It was stated that the sign materials should be robust enough to prevent vandalism.
28. It was suggested that the work should specifically cover guidance on the location of signs; directional signage and intermediate way marking. This was agreed.

AOB

SNH Responsible Behaviour Survey

29. Debbie Greene highlighted to the Forum the current year results of the 3 year study being carried out by SNH in responsible behaviour. She is currently working with colleagues to determine whether or not it would be possible to isolate information in the survey relevant to the National Park. When the collation of all 3 years is put together DG agreed to present the results to a future Forum meeting.

Opportunity for an access-based Participatory Video (PV) Project

30. Katrina Brown of the Macaulay Institute introduced the Forum to the concept of PV which is a process by which a group of people make a short film about the issue important to them: the value being that both the process and the product are valuable to the participants. The Institute identified the Forum as being a candidate for such research for a variety of reasons including the strength of the Forum's constitution and make up. Forum members agreed that further information on the proposal would be welcome

AP6: Katrina Brown to present a paper on the PV project at the May meeting

Future of the Upper Deeside Access Trust

31. Chris York provided a brief background on the up and coming changes to UDAT. Chris York started by stating that as a model UDAT has been very successful and more recently, has come to the end of its role in Deeside. Since late 2006 the trust has been going through both a legal and developmental transition to extent its remit to a Park wide trust. There will be a launch of this new trust - the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust, on April 15th at the Lecht.

Scottish Outdoor Access Code

32. Debbie Greene informed the Forum that next year's themes for Code promotion are going to be dogs and camping. As part of this programme, 7 to 8 training events are to be held around the country.

AP7: Debbie Greene to circulate Sharing Good Practice programme to Forum members

33. As part of a funding package to Linking Environment and Farming (LEAF) which aims to provide farm visits, those organising the visits will have to include messages about responsible access.

34. Debbie Greene also informed the Forum that guidance on "Monitoring Access and Recreation at Sensitive Natural Heritage Sites" will be published soon.

AP8: Debbie Greene to circulate the guidance on monitoring access at sensitive sites to Forum members

Date of the Next Meeting

35. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 20 May 2008 at the Cairngorms National Park Authority offices, Grantown on Spey. The meeting will be preceded by a workshop on the Draft Core Paths Plan at 13:00 (**NB – TIME CHANGED TO 15:00**).

Adam Streeter Smith
Outdoor Access Officer
February 2008