

MINUTES OF RESIDENT AND BUSINESS REVIEW OF GLENMORE – SUMMER 2020
MONDAY 26 OCTOBER 2020

Present:

Hosted by:

Laura McNally (Chair, FLS)
Graeme Prest (FLS)
Paul Hibberd (FLS)
Grant Moir (CNPA)
Peter Crane (CNPA)

In attendance:

Alistair Dargie (Fire Service)
Andrew Mackenzie (Speyside Trust)
Duncan Ferguson (Resident)
Fiona Smith (Reindeer Centre)
Laura McHardy (Fire Service)

Matt Dare (Resident)
Neil Wilson (Speyside Trust)
Scott McNeish (Speyside Trust)
Shaun Roberts (Glenmore Lodge)
Vincent Tough (Police Scotland)

Abbreviations

CNPA – Cairngorms National Park Authority
FLS – Forestry and Land Scotland

Apologies:

Pine Marten bar
Loch Morlich Watersports
Camping in the Forest
Visit Scotland
Sled Dog Centre
MOD
Highland Council

1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

LMc will coordinate all actions unless otherwise stated.

All comments are by local businesses or residents unless otherwise stated.

The purpose of this meeting is to capture residents and business comments to contribute to 2021 planning and not to discuss them in depth.

A number of those invited had trouble with internet connectivity. **Action: LMc** to send minutes to all and reiterate the invitation to contribute comments and suggestions by email or phone to laura.mcnally@forestryandland.gov.scot.

PH summarised current improvements in the glen:

- Sugar Bowl car park resurfacing (complete)
- Roadside paths works (in progress)
- Utsi's Bridge replacement (in progress)

LMc highlighted actions taken by FLS this summer:

- ordinarily 3 staff, complemented by an additional 16 stewards comprised of 6 FLS staff and 10 temps for the Glenmore area. This is in addition to CNPA seasonal rangers covering the whole National Park.
- temporary skip to cope with additional litter pressures
- beach toilets opened as soon as possible with twice daily cleans

- litter picks by all staff
- work with CNPA and Fire Service to resolve the question of fires and BBQs on the beach (considered irresponsible access, evidenced by the dust devil in late August).
- digital sign updates (*note initially with Cairngorm Mountain, later with a temporary sign*)
- work with Highland Council to implement temporary road improvements
- key messages complemented with 'season 2020 only' signs and leaflets
- camping allowed for one night only on the beach to allow a safe place for visitors who failed to plan their visit (2020 season only).

LMc took the opportunity to thank the police and fire brigade for their support throughout the summer.

2. PARKING AND TRAFFIC

- roadside parking plans need to be improved.
- verges have been damaged and are muddy.
- the existing footpath on the visitor centre side of the road is overgrown.
- once cyclists commit to the main road to Aviemore there is little opportunity for them to get back onto the Old Logging Way.
- speeding vehicles are a problem. A permanent solution is needed.
- requested more information on the roadside path.
- request for clearway options to be considered (*LMc comment: Already tabled, no further action*)
- invasion of privacy to properties needs resolving through visitor management.
- safe transit of pedestrians from roadside parking to the beach a concern.
- MD raised the issue of turning and highlighted a pothole developing in his driveway.
- residents at this meeting generally support (and some requested) roadside parking charges be implemented.

GM summarised that traffic management seems to be the key issue as it effects camping and other behaviours. There's an opportunity now to make temporary solutions ermanent e.g. bollards may become bunding; highlighting where parking is ok and where it is not.

PC highlighted a new 'Internet of Things' project which will provide real time parking data if implemented (yet to be confirmed).

3. FIRES AND LITTER

– infrastructure is 40 years old. The public toilet provision does not match the visitor numbers.

- a joined up approach to investment is needed including joint spending (council, FLS, CNPA and local stakeholders)

- the skip is not very welcoming and a permanent solution is needed

- could we restrict local sales of sky lanterns and disposable BBQs?

- could rangers have their own vehicle which clearly identifies them which could be used on the beach as a deterrent.

GM commented: Toilets are a big spend item.

GP commented: we do work together, joint strategies exist (comment: these are publicly available, please contact LMc for links) and we are working on our management plan. (comment: due for public consultation in April 2021).

PH commented: these issues have always existed but have been compounded this year.

AD commented: Daytime fires significantly reduced, but there continued significant numbers in the late evening with calls to the fire brigade at 11pm. AD requested messaging highlights the zero tolerance approach. Later in the season fires moved deeper into the woods and parking around gates became an issue for Fire Brigade Access. Key messages should be careful not to push people away from key areas. Attending fires frains resources that might be needed at RTCs or house fires.

AD continued: Our involvement with Glenmore was the most we had on any single site. I would support sales restrictions on certain items. The season did improve as time passed. We need better consistency e.g. the tourist office said it's ok to light fires.

(LMc comment: this was investigated with the tourist office. There were only 2 staff answering their phones and I spoke to both of them. Each knew the message clearly and had never told anyone that fires are ok in the park. There have been frequent incidences throughout the summer of the public bending the truth to defend themselves when challenged).

GM provided some statistics:

- 312 fires across the park, 144 of those in Glenmore and Rothiemurchus

- 960 tents across the park, 696 of those in Glenmore and Rothiemurchus

PC commented: the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 is clear in relation to fires: they are not permitted in woodland or on peaty soil which is most of the park.

GP reiterated FLS's thanks to the Fire Service for their involvement across the summer.

4. CAMPING AND CARAVANS

- the lochside car park became a caravan / campervan park. Could height restrictions be implemented?

- could lease caveats in future so FLS *could* influence business activity which doesn't benefit Glenmore in the round.

GM commented: the cairngorms business partnership are working on where campervans can go.

GP commented: discussion is ongoing with Camping in the Forest but no further information available.

MD asked: what needs to change for Camping in the forest to open?

LMc reponded: They plan to open on 1 April 2021 and have not openly discussed any caveats to that. Most campers on the beach and in the car parks cited they would not have camped in the campsite even if it was open.

5. SIGNS AND COMMUNICATIONS

- paths need to be managed and directed better to keep the public away from houses.
- tweaks include parking cones opposite the houses.
- overgrown pavements need to be managed.
- pedestrians are going off-track and walking into people's gardens (wooden houses).

GM asked: to the residents, would you like to see the parking in front of your houses taken away?

MD & DF commented: Yes, but keep the footpath.

GM: likely to be resistance but can look into this.

AD commented: parking around Glenmore lodge means we cannot access a large area of the forest with our vehicles.

- parking issues are compounded by a lack of bus service. An hourly service on weekdays is not good enough, the best approach is something like a 15 minute shuttle bus from the town where there is adequate parking.

- could implement a time limit for on-street parking.

- the route to An Lochan Uaine (the Green lochan) needs to be better signed from the Allt Mor car park.

- could move the green gate from outside Glenmore Lodge 100m further up and put a car park in for the Green loch.

LMc commented: this is not likely to be approved. Our strategy is and will be to reduce vehicle traffic into the area and to encourage active travel and public transport. It is tabled though so we will review our position but this is not likely to happen.

- (SR) Glenmore lodge want the road to remain 'public access' – they have a public bar. Glenmore lodge are willing to consider how they can contribute to issues e.g. as overflow, not competition. If FLS / CNPA can evidence when support is needed, Glenmore Lodge might be able to help.

PC commented: more parking may make the situation worse.

6. AOB

LMc offered AOB and checked with the Reindeer Centre (mic difficulties) and Speyside Trust. AM highlighted some satnav issues which were experienced less this year.

7. NEXT MEETING

LMc agreed to update the group again in January 2021.

Minutes taken by: Laura McNally

Date of minutes: 28 Oct 2020