

CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

MINUTES OF THE TWELFTH MEETING The Duke of Gordon Hotel, Kingussie

Tuesday 27 March 2007

Present

Mike Atherton	Dave Horrocks
Nic Bullivant	Jack Hunt
Dick Balharry - Convenor	Peter Ord
Nonie Coulthard	Roger Searle
Helen Geddes	Richard Wallace
Debbie Greene	Tim Walker
Fred Gordon	Jamie Williamson
John Grierson	Bryan Wright
	Andrew Wells - Vice Convenor

Apologies

Cath Clark
Simon Blackett
Jo Durno

In attendance

Murray Ferguson, CNPA
Bob Grant, CNPA
Fran Potheary, CNPA
Katrina Brown, Macaulay Institute
Dr Keith Marshall, Macaulay Institute

Summary of Action Points

- AP1: FP to include Actions Points as a separate heading in the Minutes template**
- AP2: BG to communicate a Park Authority position statement on land manager contact with geo-cache organisers.**
- AP3: DG to report on results of the SNH Responsible Behaviour survey at next meeting**
- AP4: Forum members to return completed questionnaires to FP by the end of April 2007**
- AP5: The afternoon of August 21st will be assigned for the Forum to have a full debate and discuss a collective response on the interim draft CPP**
- AP6: FP to complete the LOAF business report by end June 2007**
- AP7: DB/FP to organise a date for a hill-farm visit**
- AP8: FP to organise more training events on the subjects of funding mechanisms and all-abilities access**
- AP9: FP to circulate information about Inclusive Cairngorms to Forum members**

Welcome and Introductions

1. Dick Balharry (DB) opened the meeting and welcomed Nonie Coulthard to her first meeting. Nonie is one of the most recently appointed Board members, a resident of Glen Isla and a self-employed ecological consultant.
2. He invited Katrina Brown (KB) and Keith Marshall (KM), land researchers with the Macaulay Institute to enlighten the Forum on the work they are undertaking. KB informed the Forum that the aim of their research is to better understand how access legislation and the operation of social norms and ethics combine to shape actions and behaviours. They have finished the pilot study and are starting the main survey this summer.

Minutes of the last meeting

3. The minutes of the meeting on 16th January 2007 were approved.

Matters arising

4. DB asked if Action Points could be included as a heading on the agenda before Matters Arising. Bob Grant (BG) informed the meeting that he would be carrying forward the action point on geo-caching to the next meeting

AP1: Fran Pothecary (FP) to include Actions Points as a separate heading in the Minutes template

AP2: BG to communicate a Park Authority position statement on land manager contact with geo-cache organisers.

Paper 1 - Update on Outdoor Access Casework

5. FP introduced this paper and drew attention to the fact that the spreadsheet now showed only live issues for 2007-08. She indicated that there appeared to have been a 'slowing down' of issues being reported for the first half of this year and that nearly all of the recent issues raised, had been easily dealt with. The following points were raised:
 - a. Given the under-reporting by land managers, it was suggested that Core Paths Planning (CPP) engagement events and other Park events could be promoted as an opportunity for land managers to raise issues with the Park Authority.
 - b. It was asked how cases are prioritised and FP drew attention to Paper 2 of the LOAF meeting on June 13 2006, which lay out the criteria for prioritising casework. She indicated that, at the least, casework is reviewed and re-prioritised on a quarterly basis before Forum meetings.
 - c. There was some discussion about Case 46, and from what sources the Park Authority was seeking advice over access and the natural heritage. The Forum was informed that an ecologist, familiar with similar issues on Loch Leven, had been invited on a site visit with CNPA access staff and that the advice/experience received would help shape the response to the draft guidance.
 - d. Under the paragraph headed Types of Issue, Murray Ferguson (MF) pointed out that the numbers of issues relating to groups or mass events

does not correspond with the actual number of events that are planned or proposed for the Park area, for example he was aware of 60 events this year. As very few of them are problematic in respect of access issues, only a very tiny proportion of them are reflected in casework statistics. It was noted that there were difficulties in getting a true record of organised outdoor access events held in the area as not all come to the notice of land managers, but that the Cairngorms, Rothiemurchus and Glenmore Group (CRAGG) and the Forestry Commission had knowledge of most of them.

Paper 2 – Section 11 Application – the Outsider Festival

6. FP introduced the paper and advised the Forum that she had recently received confirmation of the area requested for exemption and that it looked to be a relatively straightforward application. She confirmed that access rights did apply to the fields in question but that there were no paths crossing them and the likelihood of the exemption impacting upon ordinary access takers was minimal indeed.
7. It was suggested that as a perimeter fence was to be erected around the main arena, this should come down as soon as possible after the event so as to not to impede access. There was a short discussion about whether the other activities associated with the Festival – e.g. the bike race and running race would impact on the Cairngorm plateau. Although there was not enough information to confirm this at the meeting, it was understood that the events were restricted to Forestry Commission and Estate land and would not therefore have an impact high up. It was also pointed out that the events and activities are being run by local activity providers and that participants would be largely under supervision.
8. The Forum noted the progress of this application and supported the steps the CNPA staff was undertaking.

Paper 3 – Organised outdoor access events in the Cairngorms National Park

9. BG introduced this paper which focused on the development of effective guidance for land managers and organisers' vis-à-vis organised events. He pointed out that it was widely recognised that the Code was deficient in detail regarding organised events in Sections 3.60-3.61 and that these sections are likely to be first up for review by Scottish Natural Heritage as recommended by the National Access Forum. The CNPA have been asked to take a lead role in the sub group of the NAF which will look at developing this guidance – there is therefore an opportunity to address issues at both a national and a Park wide level.
10. The following points were made:
 - a. It was recognised that organised events are a big issue both at a Park wide level and nationally. In the absence of existing guidance, there is a tendency for estates and organisations to issue their own guidelines which has the potential to be counterproductive to the objective of providing consistent and joined up advice. Therefore more detailed advice at a national and Park-wide level would be welcome.
 - b. The **cumulative** impact of events must be looked at – not only the impact on environmentally sensitive sites, but on people's enjoyment of the area.

Monitoring numbers and locations of events in the Park is an important part of this as is management of the event itself.

- c. Some governing bodies have developed best practice guidance in running organised events, but that the Code needs more detail which governing bodies can follow in their future revisions of guidance.
 - d. There is a 'grey' area between permission being required and advice being sought and it is not a simple numbers game – for example 150 people in a crocodile over one path could be an issue, whereas 15 groups of 10 people spread out over an area would not necessarily be so.
 - e. The economic benefits of events to the area are huge as 80% of the economy depends on tourism. Attendance at events as a non-participant can also precipitate and encourage active participation in the outdoors. However it was also pointed out that there could be a dis-benefit to the area due to a loss of revenue from those who might avoid places where there was a high proportion of events scheduled.
 - f. Risk assessments and environmental impact assessments are an important and necessary part of the process of running an event but they should be carried out at an appropriate scale.
11. The Forum were content with the suggested way forward and asked to be kept informed and involved as matters progress.

Paper 4 – Engagement with Land Managers

12. FP introduced this paper which outlined the steps taken by the Park Authority to engage with land managers over a range of access related issues. The following points were raised:
- a. Debbie Greene agreed to check out the results for the 2nd annual survey of responsible behaviour, undertaken by SNH
 - b. Information on Land Management Contracts under Option 15 Improving Public Access has been poor to date. There remains a need for SEERAD to make available to access authorities information on farm units that are receiving payments and for applications made in the 2006/07 year this information should be available by the end of May. This will help ensure effective promotion of paths that are being maintained through LMCs. Aberdeenshire Council have let a contract through FWAG to find out where payments are being made.
 - c. It was noted that there is a need to gain the confidence of land managers and a query was asked about the CNPA leaflet about access for land managers. The Forum was informed that this had been on the back burner as a result of information produced at a national level by SRPBA and NFUS. It is now intended to complete this and distribute it at the same time as information about the new signage available to land managers from the CNPA.

AP3: DG to report on results of the SNH Responsible Behaviour survey at next meeting

Paper 5 – Reviewing the Forum

13. FP presented the paper and noted that a review of the operation of the Forum was required after two years in line with operating procedures. The review will highlight the strengths, as well as areas for improvement, of the Forum.

14. Forum members were asked to complete the questionnaire and return to FP. The information will be collated and presented at the next meeting in August.

AP4: Forum members to return completed questionnaires to FP by the end of April 2007

Paper 6 – Core Paths Plan – the Forum as a statutory consultee

15. BG presented this paper and asked the Forum their opinion on the best means on determining their collective response to the draft CPP.
16. There was some variety of opinion about whether it would be possible to come to a collective view about the draft Plan but it was agreed that the value of the Forum was that members do strive to reach a consensus position on matters they are consulted on. It was agreed that Option 2 offered the best opportunity to try and achieve this and that time would be set aside on the date of the next Forum meeting, August 21, to do this.
17. There was a query about whether the Park Authority was asking the right 3 questions of the public and whether they should be asked whether *specific* paths should be in or out. It was indicated that people would have the opportunity to comment on individual routes and omissions, but that the purpose of the consultation was to get views on whether the network of routes was adequate. Forum members were reminded that they too would have the opportunity to respond to the Plan as individuals, and that there will be another opportunity to input at the November LOAF meeting.

AP5: The afternoon of August 21st will be assigned for the Forum to have a full debate and discuss a collective response on the interim draft CPP

Paper 7 – Update and forward look March 2007

18. FP presented this paper which provided an update on main areas of work undertaken by CNPA staff since the last Forum meeting. The following points were raised:
 - a. A query was raised about the progress of the Annual Report. The Forum members were informed that the report would be completed by the end of June and would encapsulate the first two years of the Forum's work. The major part of the report is in place and requires further information and financial updates from the last few meetings.
 - b. Forum members indicated that they would like the opportunity to visit an agricultural enterprise or hill-farm. The Convenor suggested that a date could be set outwith the Forum meeting.
 - c. Forum members also indicated that they would benefit from further information on funding mechanisms for access and that this would be a suitable pre-meeting topic.
 - d. On recruitment there was some discussion about whether there needed to be a specific representative for all-abilities issues. It was pointed out that with Ken MacMillan stepping down a source of expertise would be lost. There was no clear consensus about whether a *specific* representative should be sought as a replacement. MF drew attention to the newly set up advisory group 'Inclusive Cairngorms' and offered to provide more information to the Forum about its role and function. It was also mooted that the whole topic of all-abilities access could be a pre-LOAF meeting

event, and it was suggested that researchers from the Open Space access project could be invited to speak.

AP6: FP to complete the LOAF business report by end June 2007

AP7: DB/FP to liaise with Paddy Wright re date for a hill-farm visit

AP8: FP to organise more training events on the subjects of funding mechanisms and all-abilities access

AP9: FP to circulate information about Inclusive Cairngorms to Forum members

Date of Next meeting

19. This will be held on Tuesday 21 August at the Albert Memorial Hall in Ballater from 18:00-20:30. The meeting will be preceded by an afternoon discussion to formulate a collective response to the Interim Draft Core Paths Plan