

CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM
Wednesday 23rd June 2021 from 6.30pm – 8.00pm
CNPA Lifesize meeting room

MEETING NOTES

Attendance

Who	Representing
David Clyne	CNPA
Pete Crane	CNPA
Murray Ferguson	CNPA
Andy Ford	CNPA
John Grierson	LOAF – Chair
Trevor Thorley	LOAF
Eilidh M Scobbie	LOAF
Neil Wilson	LOAF
Christopher Cassels	LOAF
Pete Wright	LOAF
Alisa Villegas	LOAF
Anne- Marie Nutall	LOAF
Guests	
UWE Stoneman	RSPB
Gavin Clarke	NatureScot
Johnathan Kitching	Scottish Canoe Association
Apologies	
Paul Hibbard	FLS

Item	Actions
Welcome Chair 1 JG welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
CNPA restructure - Planning and Place Murray Ferguson- Director of Planning and Place 2 MF highlighted to members that the CNPA recently went through a restructuring exercise meaning the Visitor Services has moved from Conservation and Land Management to Planning to create a new Planning and Place Team.	

<p>He highlighted that the pandemic had presented a number of challenges for the CNPA and this has meant more work in key areas such as Managing of Visitors and Planning. This work included the development of area Visitor Management Plans and the ongoing development of area visitor infrastructure plans.</p> <p>US highlighted that this work has been well received by partners and is working well.</p>	
<p>Managing of Visitors Pete Crane- Head of Visitor Services</p> <p>PC updated all on the partnership work to date and focused on four key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and engagement • Messaging and communities • People on the ground – including 5 FTE rangers, 9 seasonal staff and 4 kick start trainees • Infrastructure Improvements. <p>LOAF members highlighted they would like to see the managing for visitor impacts data.</p> <p>CC reported that the new Crown Estate Scotland ranger would be starting in July.</p>	<p>API- AQSS to send members ranger reports.</p>
<p>Waterborne Access Adam Streeter Smith- Outdoor Access Officer</p> <p>AQSS introduced this item highlighting that land managers in the Cairngorms have reported an increase in the number of people enjoying the Parks lochs and rivers on paddle boards, inflatable canoes and boats and in the water as “wild swimmers”. This forms part of a welcome national trend, which encourages people to enjoy the outdoors and become more physical activity. Both outcomes of the Active Cairngorms Strategy.</p> <p>However following lockdown land managers are reporting anecdotal evidence that increased levels of these activities may be having an impact on sensitive species such as Golden Eye and Osprey.</p> <p>Given reports of this increased usage we think now is the time to consider if Park wide guidance should be developed to ensure people and nature can thrive together.</p> <p>In the discussion that followed members were keen to highlight:</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The value of “blue health” (as in access to and on water) – it is vital that visitors and residents don’t lose connections to blue spaces that help with wellbeing and that restrictions, especially for nearby residents, can create a lot of ill feeling. • Members question whether this issue was more to do with providers rather than individuals: <p>US highlighted that in relation to the increase in paddle boarding on Loch Garten local communities voiced concerns about the perceived impact on the peace and quiet of the loch.</p> <p>LOAF members suggested the following key messages to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take responsibility for your own actions. • Plan ahead; identify alternative locations for you activity/parking/camping/etc in case of crowds. • Stay safe; follow the safety guidance from your sport governing body. • Assess the risks at the location of your activity. • Respect the interests of others. • Respect wildlife and care for the environment. Stop the spread of invasive plants and animals; whenever you leave the water, remember to check, clean, dry. Check boats, equipment and clothing after leaving the water for mud, aquatic animals, or plant material. • Clean everything thoroughly as soon as you can, paying attention to the inside of your boat and areas that are damp and hard to access. Use hot water if possible. Dry drain water from every part of your boat and dry with a sponge or towel before leaving the site. Dry everything thoroughly for as long as possible before using elsewhere as some invasive plants and animals can survive for two weeks in damp conditions. • Tread lightly in the park; follow the general guidance for park visitors. 	
5	<p>Changes to Local Access Guidance at Loch Kinord (Muir of Dinnet National Nature Reserve) in Response to Increased Water Recreation</p> <p>Gavin Clarke - Operations Manager – NatureScot, Tayside & Grampian</p> <p>GC introduced this paper highlighting that on Loch Kinord</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been local access guidance in place since 2009: • That as reserve managers they have seen an explosion in the number of paddle boarders and other water users 	

- In April they undertook a mini consultation with key stakeholders on options for management:
- From May the local advice was to avoid areas of the loch however they felt that this wasn't working;
- Advice from specialists highlighted that 4 or more people on the loch could disturb the birds present:
- They acknowledge that most users were attempting to be responsible but that the cumulative effect is the issue:
- Due to declines in bird counts they have decided to go ahead with the advice to avoid using the loch until the end of August:
- This advice will be reviewed after the end of August.
- Several commercial providers have stated they won't use the loch.

JK highlighted that the SCA would prefer a zonation approach. He also highlighted that the moves to provide new parking and remove existing parking sites will make access to the loch for canoeists and kayakers very difficult. He also highlighted that there is very little in the way of flat water in Aberdeenshire therefore it was vital that water borne access can take place on the loch.

GC replied that the loch is too small to zone and there isn't an appetite for the use of buoys.

In the discussion that followed members highlighted:

- More work needed to be done to educate the public on access to the loch:
- More work needed to be done to understand why the loch is so popular – is it overspill from other sites?
- That we don't widen health inequalities by preventing nearby residents from enjoying the loch;
- The need to change the wording on the temporary advisory signs.

US stated he would be interested to hear what sort of data re disturbance LOAF are looking for. Gathering data is resource intensive. Goldeneye, breed in holes in trees, so gathering data can be intrusive. It is also almost impossible to construct a statistically significant causal correlation between breeding success and disturbance because sample size is small (single figures - there are only 200 breeding pairs in the UK) and there are probably many other factors to exclude, such as weather, food availability. Would the LOAF accept related studies about other species in different areas around disturbance impact?

The LOAF agreed in principle that as an emergency measure it was not unreasonable to ask the public to avoid using the loch.

AP2- DC to arrange a debrief with GC in September and chart a way forward.

<p>However it was agreed that such measures should be subject to a thorough in depth review and that revised guidance should be developed for 2022.</p>	
<p>CNPA Advice on Barbecues in the Countryside Adam Streeter Smith- Outdoor Access Officer</p> <p>AQSS introduced this item highlighting that land managers have raised concerns about the use of disposable barbeques and fire pits, namely that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. They continue to be used during periods of high fire risk; b. Smoke from these devices lead to fire alerts and on-site investigations; c. Irresponsible barbeque lighting leaves scorch marks on the ground; d. They are often used to host a fire after cooking has taken place. <p>In response to this the CNPA has developed a position on the use of barbecues and fire pits that will guide advice over the summer and beyond.</p> <p>LOAF members agree that the advice and position was appropriate.</p>	<p>6</p>
<p>Public Access in and Around Carrbridge Adam Streeter Smith- Outdoor Access Officer</p> <p>AQSS introduced this item highlighting that the Carrbridge Capercaillie Group have erected temporary seasonal signs at a number of locations in Carrbridge in partnership with the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA), Police Scotland and land managers. The signs request that dog owners keep their dogs on a lead in sensitive areas of nearby woodland.</p> <p>7 Some residents have questioned the validity of these signs. In addition to this there has also been a number of queries from the public regarding gates in the woodlands around Carrbridge that are either locked, inoperable due to vegetation growth and/or locked with side gates or stiles.</p> <p>In response to a number of questions that have been asked, the CNPA has drafted a statement of clarification as the designated body responsible for implementation of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 to members of the public.</p>	<p>7</p>

	<p>In the discussion that followed members supported the use of such signs on caper sensitive sites and the response to dealing with gates.</p> <p>Members did highlight that in considering advice due consideration should be given the likely range of user's needs.</p>	
8	<p>AOCB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next meeting to be before end of August re Park Plan • Update on Carrbridge to Aviemore cycle path was requested 	<p>AP3- PC to update members on Carrbridge to Aviemore cycle path</p>