



Reviewing and refreshing the Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum

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Purpose

To review and refresh the role of the Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum if necessary and put plans in place to recruit new members.

Recommendations

- a) The Forum is invited to discuss and advise on a refresh of the Forum.
- b) Members of the Forum are invited to consider their own term of membership and notify the Secretariat of their desired future length of term no later than 31st of March.

Background

1. The Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum (LOAF) will have been operational for 19 years on the 31st of March 2024. For 19 years the LOAF has played a crucial role in helping the Park Authority shape and develop policies and plans, address access issues and advise on the sustainable management of outdoor access. Members time and dedication is highly valued by the Park Authority and by the Park Authority Board.
2. This paper considers the future role of the Forum with the aim of:
 - a) Ensuring the focus of the LOAF is on matters most relevant to long term sustainable management of recreation and outdoor access:
 - b) Providing interest and opportunity for new members:
 - c) Ensuring members can contribute to discussions on outdoor access:

The Operating Procedures

3. The Operating Procedures (see annex 1) set out the objectives and function of the LOAF. It is suggested that these objectives and function are still relevant and that there is no need to change these.
4. However, it is recognised that in the last few years it has been challenging to recruit new members and that attendance at meetings has been low. This is not a unique



problem for the LOAF and reflects similar challenges in other Access Authority areas. It should also be recognised that the pandemic has played a role in this.

5. In 2024 the Park Authority and the current Convener would like to take steps to refresh and reinvigorate the LOAF to provide informal but informed views on things like progress with Active Cairngorms as well as formal advice on matters relating to outdoor access. These could include:
 - a) Meeting format including locations, timing and papers:
 - b) Meeting topics- balance between statutory duties and wider outdoor access / recreation matters
 - c) Communications- opportunity to raise the profile of the LOAF beyond the statutory function:
 - d) Engagement with members outside of meetings – use of subgroups and or technology for topics
 - e) Recruitment.
 - f) Terms of reference for members

The Forum are invited to discuss and advise on a refresh of the Forum.

Recruitment

6. The Operating Procedures state there will be a maximum of 15 members including one CNPA Board member. Currently there are 11 members, and it is proposed that the Park Authority seeks to recruit new members over the spring of 2024.

Members of the Forum are invited to consider their own term of membership and notify the Secretariat of their desired future length of term no later than 31st of March 2024.



Annex 1

OPERATING PROCEDURES

The Cairngorms Local Access Forum is established under Section 25 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. It will have a maximum of 15 members and include one CNPA Board Member. The Forum will comprise members appointed to it by the Cairngorms National Park Authority. The CNPA and the Forum itself will keep membership of the Forum under review, including a review of public agency involvement.

Name and area of operation

1. a. The group will be called the **CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM** (referred to below as the Forum);
 - b. The Forum's area of operation will include all land and water within and including the boundary of the Cairngorms National Park

Objectives and Functions

2. The objectives and functions of the Forum shall be:
 - a. To act as the local access forum for Cairngorms National Park and to undertake the functions of that body under the terms of Section 25 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003;
 - b. To advise the Authority in the review of the Core Paths Plan;
 - c. To advise the Authority in the review of its Outdoor Access Strategy;
 - d. To advise the Authority and any other person or body consulting it, on the existence and delineation of rights of way and the exercise of access rights;
 - e. To promote responsible access and land management through assisting the Authority in publicising the Scottish Outdoor Access Code;
 - f. To promote discussion and the sharing of knowledge, awareness and good practice in outdoor access matters;
 - g. To support the provision of appropriate infrastructure that improves responsible access to the countryside for all; and
 - h. To offer advice that will assist in the resolution of outdoor access disputes.

Structure and Membership



3. a. The Forum consists of such persons as are appointed to it by the Park Authority and in line with good practice shall include representation from the following key sectors: Land Managers; Community Interests; Recreational Users; and Public Agencies;
- b. The Forum shall elect a Convenor and Vice Convenor to serve a term of three years. Members can stand as Convener and Vice Convener for up to, but not exceeding six years;
- c. Forum members are appointed for a three-year period. After this duration, Forum members will be invited to extend their membership for one to three years, by self-selection initially, but organised so as to achieve a balance of three-year memberships to six-year memberships;
- d. No member shall serve more than six continuous years on the Forum but may re-apply after standing down for a minimum period of one year;
- e. If a representative fails to attend three consecutive meetings their membership may be rescinded and the CNPA asked to instigate selection of a replacement;
- f. During the course of a Forum meeting members are required to declare an interest in an item at the point at which the item is raised. This may not exclude them from the discussion;
- g. The public agencies are charged with the responsibility for nominating a suitable officer to attend meetings, or delegate a substitute if the main member is unable to attend.
- h. Setting up working groups to address specific topic or area based access issues where appropriate. The subgroups may consist of Forum members, external interested parties, specialist advisers and others as agreed by the Forum.

Proceedings of meetings

4. a. The Forum will hold no fewer than two meetings per calendar year. Meetings may be rescheduled but not cancelled;
- b. Forum meetings will be held online or at a range of suitable venues across the National Park (accounting for travel and accessibility) with at least one meeting held at CNPA HQ, Grantown on Spey;
- c. A review of the operation of the Forum will take place every three years. The review will take the form of an agenda item and discussion.

Administration of meetings

5. a. CNPA staff will be responsible for the administrative support, accommodation and facilities for meetings of the Forum;
- b. The CNPA may provide secretariat for Forum sub-groups at its own discretion.



- c. Meeting agendas shall be reviewed and agreed between the Convenor and Vice Convener and the CNPA staff as secretariat. Any member may have an input to the agenda through the Convenor. A short briefing paper shall also be supplied to the Convener and Vice Convener on all papers submitted in advance of the meeting;
- d. All Forum members shall receive business papers by email to be circulated no less than 5 working days before the next meeting;
- e. Comments on papers received prior to the meeting from members who are unable to attend, will be circulated to the whole Forum;
- f. Minutes shall be kept of all Forum meetings;
- g. Parties with direct involvement in cases being discussed by the Forum will have the right to make short written submissions or short (5 minute) presentation at the discretion of the Convenor. Written submissions will have to be submitted to the Secretariat for circulation seven working days in advance of the Forum meeting.

Communication issues

6. The Forum will endeavour to communicate with organisations and individuals that have an interest in outdoor access by:
 - a. Making minutes and agendas of meetings widely available to the public through the CNPA website. Papers will also be circulated to CNPA Board members and neighbouring Local Outdoor Access Forums.
 - b. Communicating via the Press using such as post-meeting press releases when appropriate issues arise. The Forum will target the main local papers - the Strathspey Herald; the Deeside and Donside Pipers; the Northern Scot; the Forfar Dispatch Group; the Dundee Courier; Parklife and the Press and Journal. The Forum will also consider communicating where appropriate with more specialist press such as community, land management and recreational user media within the Park boundary. All press communication will be approved by the Convener.
 - c. Convening or jointly hosting a public event or meeting every two years on a key theme of outdoor access aimed to involve the wider population of outdoor access interests.