

## Aberdeenshire Local Outdoor Access Forum

### Minutes of Meeting 37

**27<sup>th</sup> June 2011 – Council Chamber, Gordon House, Inverurie**

**Present:** Bill Ashcroft, Hamish Booth, David Culshaw, Cllr. Isobel Davidson, Drew Elphinstone, Alison Espie (Acting Chair), Judy Middleton, Alison Mitchell, Chris York.

**Council officers present:** Linda Mathieson, Kevin Wright.

**Other officers present:** Fiona McNally (Paths for All Partnership)

1	<b>Apologies, introductions, deputisings</b>	<b>Action</b>
	<p><b>Apologies:</b> Dan Cadle, David Finlay, David Fyffe (deputy), John Hughes, Calvin Little, Gordon McKilligan. Robin Maitland, Douglas Williamson, Matt Young (deputy). AE asked that the next meeting recap tonight's business to bring all up to date.</p> <p><b>Introduction:</b> AE introduced Colin Miller as Minutes Secretary and thanked Kevin Wright for his work in this role for recent meetings.</p> <p><b>Deputisings:</b> As Acting Chair AE apologised for her need to leave at 7.30pm due to another scheduled meeting; LM had agreed to Chair the remaining business.</p>	LM/KW
<b>2</b>	<b>Minutes of Meeting 36 and matters arising</b>	
	<p>Minutes approved JM, seconded DC.            Matter arising: letter of thanks to recently-retired ALOAF Reps not yet sent but will send with Newsletter – apologies from LM/GMcK.</p>	LM/ GMcK
<b>3</b>	<b>ALOAF administration</b>	
<b>3 (1)</b>	<b>Minutes Secretary</b>	
	AE welcomed CM.	
<b>3 (2)</b>	<b>Future agency representation</b>	
	<p><b>NHS, etc.:</b> LM reported no further progress with NHS. Discussion moved to the possible merits of inviting the Dee District Salmon Fishery Board (DDSFB) to participate in ALOAF's Agency sector, reflecting a similar arrangement in the Moray LAF, and given the significance of water access on the Dee. It was agreed that an approach be made to going as observers in the first instance and that they represent the fishery boards/trusts as a whole not just the Dee. Possibility of an approach to NTS also mentioned, but on hold pending NHS dialogue outcome. FMcI favoured NHS involvement due to access/health agenda. It was suggested that NHS should be given a further chance to fulfil an ALOAF role.</p> <p>FMcI to look into possibility of Freda Nicolson being NHS contact.</p> <p>LM to write NHS (CL) to ascertain whether they can or cannot field</p>	LM       FMcI

	<p>an ALOAF Rep.. Fallback option of “corresponding membership” better than nothing.</p> <p>LM to approach DDSFB re possible “observer” role in ALOAF.</p> <p><b>Paths For All Partnership:</b> FMcl reported that the new funding regime (90% from NHS) has directed much of PFAP’s work to an NHS-themed agenda. As Community Engagement Officer FMcl, along with a Technical Officer, continues the access remit, but on a Scotland-wide basis. AE conveyed ALOAF’s good wishes to Fiona and PFAP.</p>	<p>LM</p> <p>LM</p>
<b>4</b>	<b>Coastal Path Subgroup</b>	
	<p>CY reported that ALOAF’s John Hughes had done some work surveying the coastal path between Collieston and Whinneyfold. ID to help contact details for landowners at Collieston.</p> <p>Consultant’s coastal path focus is now on a multi-user link from Aberdeen to Newburgh. Two main issues: (1) getting maintenance and resourcing committed; (2) Access at Blackdog MOD Range. In a positive meeting MOD accepted their responsibilities and may be helpful re an inland bypass route, but the route design would have to ensure that this diversion was not hugely inconvenient for the public. One option would be to retain the beach route as “optional” (when firing not taking place).</p> <p>The beach route is a proposed core path. LM advised that the access legislation does not permit temporary closure of a core path or exemption from access (e.g. during firing). Options are to alter the beach route designation from “proposed” to “aspirational”, or to leave it as “proposed” pending further MOD dialogue.</p> <p>CY reported a further issue: a neighbouring landfill site for which planning permission has been granted.</p>	
<b>5</b>	<b>ALOAF activities</b>	
<b>5 (1)</b>	<b>Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan – Checklist idea</b>	
	Subgroup has not met yet.	G Mck
<b>5 (2)</b>	<b>Core Paths development – Community support options</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tarland a good case study/presentation topic.</li> <li>• PFAP engaging with community groups and local authorities; depends on what ALOAF wants to achieve.</li> <li>• Aberdeenshire Council are interested in encouraging community path development whether or not they are core paths. A good number of relevant groups in Aberdeenshire.</li> <li>• Possible ALOAF letter to community groups offering meetings to see what help is needed.</li> <li>• Funding: Highland Council’s successful LEADER bid;</li> </ul>	

	<p>evidence of community-driven demand essential – such evidence would require meetings to obtain; possibility of meeting to look at funding options and technical ideas. CY noted successful initiatives at Tarves and Boddam, but cautioned that funding application process can be onerous. FMCI reported interest in the Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust example.</p> <p>Concluded that Annual Gathering event in autumn 2011 could be a community workshop on path development. First step: consult community groups re what they would want from this event (using ticklist).</p>	LM
<b>6</b>	<b>Aberdeenshire Council update</b>	
<b>6 (1)</b>	<b>Budgets – Proposed project expenditure</b>	
	<p>Current Access Strategy budget just under £50,000: projects – Coast Path at Cransdale Quarry (Collieston), Coast Path Whitehill – Boyndie, bridge at Stuartfield, possible link from Udney to F&amp;BW, possible Portsoy Road path at Huntly (with Huntly Development Trust), Tarland – Aboyne Phase 2 (Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust), Blackburn path upgrade for pram access, Deeside Way interpretive boards, possible assistance to Birse Community Trust for path work, possible work at Newtonhill.</p> <p>Capital budget projects: F&amp;BW farm crossing ramp at Brucklay, Deeside Way progression, ALOAF banners, newsletter and information sheet.</p> <p>Maintenance: Wrack Wood and Kirkies Wood, Cullykhan access road improvements, F&amp;BW bridges, N. Esk bridge at Edzell, Rowantree Car Park at Bennachie, Suie Hill and Gordon Way, Inverurie – Kemnay path at Old Kemnay Road link, Ladies Bridge, Polhollick Bridge.</p>	
<b>6 (2)</b>	<b>Upholding access rights</b>	
	<p>Discussion of cases postponed to October ALOAF meeting due to lack of time and in some cases awaiting legal advice from Council and/or guidance from management. At October meeting, ALOAF to have opportunity to take a view on cases presented.</p> <p>KW asked if ALOAF could assist with an independent view on specific privacy cases. LM said that for consistency, if an ALOAF subgroup was formed, all cases brought to them should be reviewed by the same personnel. Consultation should involve land owner /manager, community, and users.</p>	LM/KW
<b>6 (3)</b>	<b>Core Paths</b>	
	LM reported that the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the CPP has not yet been submitted, but it is hoped to get this and the CPP sent to the Scottish Government Reporter before the next	

	ALOAF meeting.	
<b>7</b>	<b>ALOAF Newsletter/Annual review</b>	
	<p>AE and JM commented favourably on the Newsletter. LM thanked all those who had contributed.</p> <p>In discussion it was agreed that the ALOAF information sheet “Outdoor Access Advice – Online” should be re-cast as an online document with live links. Agreed that walking/hillwalking should be added to the contents, possibly giving it priority due to its significance; also to give more attention to dogwalking. CY volunteered to create document when time allows, in liaison with KW.</p> <p>Council to circulate existing sheet to ALOAF members for comment.</p>	<p>CY/KW</p> <p>LM/KW</p>
<b>8</b>	<b>RNAS/RNCI Event, Dunecht -- Feedback</b>	
	<p>AE noted that this was a success for ALOAF, despite being excluded from the tent due to lack of space. She thanked LM and KW for attending on a Sunday and for the excellent ALOAF banners. About 70 Newsletters had been given out, also very many SNH dog leaflets. ALOAF to write thanking organisers and expressing interest in future such events.</p> <p>Discussion on confusion/lack of awareness of Core Paths Plan (CPP) by the public. CY and AE suggested that a simple explanatory leaflet on core paths would help. LM concerned that people visiting an ALOAF- only display might not realise that the CPP is Council-driven. Others felt that people do not distinguish between ALOAF and the Council, and that the public identify more with “visiting the countryside” than with specialities such as “walking” or “the CPP”.</p> <p>Need to look a year ahead regarding ALOAF participation in similar events; needs to be selective, as time-consuming, could be way of meeting the Annual Gathering commitment. Request to all to bring ideas to October ALOAF meeting.</p>	<p>AE/ GMcK</p> <p>ALL</p>
<b>9</b>	<b>Access consultations, Issues, etc.</b>	
<b>9 (1)</b>	<b>Use of field margins/conservation headlands/buffer strips</b>	
	<p>Clarification needed by farmers and Council on access. Farmers themselves are being advised not to access these areas, while the public apparently may be able to. DE and AE reported anxiety expressed by farmers faced with threat of fines if scheme rules are breached. DE wondered if the way forward might be to encourage people to stay clear of field margins if possible. Consensus that there is a need for consistent advice across Scotland and among all advisors. LM reported that SGRPID’s Jenny Kinnaird is happy to meet to discuss guidelines, but needs to know how legally definitive these are expected to be. The anticipated meeting may or</p>	

	may not need to include Government legal input. KW said that the aim is to produce an information leaflet with the agreed guidance, when resolved. JM suggested that as this was a national issue it should be pursued by NAF. LM said that NAF's deliberations tend to take a long time and, as Aberdeenshire had many such agri-environment schemes, there was an argument for taking the initiative locally with a view to doing groundwork which NAF could pick up and expedite in due course.	
	<i>[AE left meeting at 7.30pm as previously advised; passed Acting Chair role to LM]</i>	
<b>10</b>	<b>Events, training, information</b>	
<b>10 (1)</b>	<b>National Access Forum papers</b>	
	ALOAF discussion focussed on the paper on access provision through the SRDP successor scheme. LM suggested that feedback should request clear guidance on public access. CY recommended seeking clear public benefit from the access component of any such scheme. Re the current LMO access scheme, KW reported that SGRPID had consulted with the Council on a number of these on the past month, and that they did give the prospect of some benefit to the public.	LM/GMc K
<b>10 (2)</b>	<b>Perth and Kinross Outdoor Access Forum Open Meeting, 10<sup>th</sup> May</b>	
	<p>JM reported back on the following topics covered at this well-attended event:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to implement the CPP (approval anticipated late summer 2011).</li> <li>• Despite efforts by Forum, no resolution of dispute between commercial rafters and anglers on Tay.</li> <li>• Irresponsible access: police hampered by difficulty of getting evidence. Now fixed penalties for cutting live timber.</li> <li>• Scottish Canine Consultative Council's George Cochrane willing to talk to ALOAF.</li> <li>• Atholl Estates embracing access for tourism; involving all staff.</li> </ul> <p>Among "question time" topics, commercial dog walking stimulated ALOAF discussion, e.g. operators with numerous dogs off the lead. KW advised that recent dog control legislation was assisting Council Dog Wardens and the police regarding irresponsible dog owners. "Green dog walking" schemes exist and have been very successful (e.g. Auchenblae, Udney) due to peer pressure but care required not to make them too controlling.</p> <p>FMcl to send Green Dog Walking powerpoint to LM.</p> <p>LM suggested that further dialogue with dog wardens would be useful.</p>	<p>FMcl</p> <p>LM/KW</p>

<b>10 (3)</b>	<b>Paths For All Event – Out and About in Moray, 19<sup>th</sup> May</b>	
	DC reported on a morning viewing high-profile, hi-spec creation of cycling/walking routes within Elgin, funded by ERDF for 2 years. The afternoon focussed on the Dava Way, community-driven and community-maintained, with good value obtained from contractors. He felt that others would learn from seeing these achievements, and thanked Fiona McInally of PFAP for organising the event.	
<b>10 (4)</b>	<b>SCAN Workshop 25<sup>th</sup> May – LAFs/Commercial access</b>	
	<p><b>LAFs</b> - LM reported that following completion of their CPP work, a number of LAFs are poorly attended and lacking in focus (exceptions included Perth and Kinross, Moray, and ALOAF). FMcl attributed this in part to departure of land managers after CPP completion, and to loss of access officers due to budget cuts. LM suggested that ALOAF's practice of pre-meetings between Chair, Vice Chair and Council helps ALOAF meetings function smoothly. She is thinking of SCAN consulting with Council Access Officers to identify examples of good practice.</p> <p><b>Commercial Access</b> - On commercial access, the problem of cumulative access pressures is to be the subject of a paper to NAF by Scottish Land and Estates (formally SRPBA).</p>	
<b>10 (5)</b>	<b>Chapelton of Elsick Exhibition 30<sup>th</sup> June-1<sup>st</sup> July</b>	
	<p>Last-minute notification from developer of exhibition on 30<sup>th</sup> June/1<sup>st</sup> July.</p> <p>JM reported that the developer is keen to involve the local Disability Access Forum.</p>	
<b>11</b>	<b>A.O.B</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>City and Shire Cycle Road Show:</b> Aberdeenshire route leaflets now available free and online.</li> <li>• <b>Scotland's Great Trails:</b> F&amp;BW included; Council has meantime provided new interpretive panels and a leaflet-pack (£2.50).</li> </ul>	
<b>12</b>	<b>Items for next meeting's agenda</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Items as noted above.</li> <li>• ALOAF meetings and events dates for 2012. Please bring diaries.</li> </ul>	ALL
<b>13</b>	<b>Dates of next meetings</b>	
	3 <sup>rd</sup> October; 28 <sup>th</sup> November.	