

**Aberdeenshire Local Outdoor Access Forum**  
**Minutes of Meeting 47**  
**Monday 24 June 2013**  
**6.00pm Council Chamber, Gordon House, Inverurie**

**Present:** Gordon McKilligan (Chair), Hamish Booth, Ian Cowe, David Culshaw, Drew Elphinstone, Alison Espie, John Hughes, Judy Middleton, Cllr. Patricia Oddie, Adam Wallace, Chris York.

**Council officers present:** Linda Mathieson, Marsaili Aspinall, Matthew Watt, Kevin Wright.

**Observers present:** Mark Andrew (RAFTS), Cllr. Graeme Clark (Councillor Reserve), Alison Mitchell (Access user Reserve).

*Meeting preceded by photo session – ALOAF complement plus event shelter (“tent”).*

	<b>Apologies, Deputising, Welcomes</b>	<b>Action</b>
	<p><b>Apologies:</b> David Fyffe, Robin Maitland, Jenny Spratt.  <b>Deputising:</b> (none).            The Chair welcomed Cllrs. Patricia Oddie and Graeme Clark, appointed to ALOAF as Aberdeenshire Council Representative and Reserve respectively.</p>	
<b>1</b>	<p><b>Minutes of Special Meeting preceding Meeting 46:</b> Approval proposed JM, seconded D Culshaw.  <b>Minutes of Meeting 46</b>            Approval proposed JM, seconded AW.  <b>Minutes of Closed Session (Meeting 46)</b>            Approval proposed CY, seconded JH.  <b>Matters arising:</b> <i>(Covered elsewhere in the meeting).</i></p>	
<b>2</b>	<p><b>Appointment of Vice-Chair:</b> One nomination was received. Nominee Hamish Booth was duly appointed Vice Chair.</p>	
<b>3</b>	<p><b>ALOAF Administration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Councillor rep – update:</b> Appointment to ALOAF of Cllrs. Patricia Oddie and Graeme Clark as noted above.</li> <li>• <b>ALOAF logo:</b> Discussion of a revised draft, provided by JH, and the existing Deeside Way logo, suggested further revisions:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-- simple design, capable of reduction for letterhead use.</li> <li>-- parallel the Aberdeenshire image, e.g. “mountain to sea”, map, blue (or possibly green) colour scheme, rather than yellow.</li> <li>-- “responsible access” strapline.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>It was agreed that JH would have a further look at the design, with a view to a draft going to the Council by 5<sup>th</sup> July. With possible technical support from the Council, it could go to the printers in mid-July in order to have it ready for the Turriff Show.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Land Management Representative:</b> The vacancy has been circulated (e.g. via NFUS) but needs to be advertised in the press to ensure that “unaffiliated” potential candidates are also aware. LM suggested that the Council would aim for</li> </ul>	<p><b>JH</b>  <b>LM</b></p> <p><b>LM</b></p>

	<p>applications to be submitted in September 2013. <i>[Linda, did I get this right?]</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Response to Commercial Access Paper – NAF:</b> LM asked if ALOAF wished to submit comments to NAF. DC observed that equestrian use can result in problems with horse dung on popular routes. LM said that where this becomes a serious issue, the Council can approach operators accordingly. AE anticipated that one result of the access legislation will be the establishment of additional activity-based businesses. AE noted that the paper failed to observe that novices may well have their first access-based activity experiences as customers, and therefore the businesses should employ best practice in what they do. In relation to equestrian issues, LM suggested that the British Horse Society recommends good practice and actually needs support in getting the message across. The Chair observed that commercial dog-walking businesses also utilise public access facilities. He asked AE to draft a response to the paper for circulation and approval.</li> </ul>	AE
4	<p><b>ALOAF Newsletter 2013/2014</b></p> <p>LM suggested that the newsletter could be a two-sided flier or a folded A3 sheet. Newsletter topics already noted on the agenda were allocated for article-writing as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Casework – overview: AW, with input from JH.</li> <li>• Grass margins leaflet: CY.</li> <li>• Community workshops: DC.</li> <li>• Events (e.g. Turriff Show; Wildlife Crime): ??</li> <li>• Land management vacancy: LM.</li> <li>• Dealing with planning applications/ checklist: GMcK.</li> </ul> <p>An article by Alison Espie had already submitted. LM welcomed any other submissions, and advised a deadline of 8<sup>th</sup> July.</p>	<p>AW, JH CY DC ? LM GMcK ALL</p>
5	<p><b>Upholding Access Rights Cases</b></p> <p>Discussion of casework – closed session for confidentiality reasons. <i>[Minuted separately as a confidential paper for ALOAF members]</i>.</p>	
6	<p><b>ALOAF Activities</b></p> <p><b>(1) Turriff Show [4 and 5/8/2013]:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Rota/Badges and material:</i> Tent purchased. LM suggested 3 shifts per day for volunteers. Available so far: AE, GMcK, possibly JM.</li> <li>• <i>Core Paths Plan maps:</i> Agreed that there should be large (i.e. small-scale) map on rear wall of tent, with large-scale maps for consultation on table. Maps to be revised by end of July to reflect modifications to Plan.</li> <li>• <i>Signs for land managers:</i> Can include actual signs in the ground; also signage manuals, and access code leaflets for (e.g.) dog-walking; grass margins; equestrians; mountain biking.</li> <li>• <i>Activities:</i> Quiz sheet for children; an ALOAF “path” in outdoor space shared with FCS and possible SNH input. Involving children encourages parents to get involved.</li> </ul>	LM

	Cllr. Oddie noted that the Show was an opportunity to promote the responsible access message. The Chair noted that the Show attendance was expected to be 40,000.	
7	<p><b>Aberdeenshire Council Update</b></p> <p><b>(1) Core Paths update:</b> LM reported that the Council is progressing an interactive core paths map; also paper copies for ALOAF use.</p> <p><b>(2) Path Survey and assessment; and (3) Scottish Government monitoring:</b>The meeting had before it a table of outdoor access management and maintenance costs for 2012/13. A paper on management and maintenance will be provided for the October 2013 ALOAF meeting. Discussion ensued on the significant costs of bridge repairs. Finally, GMcK reported that the future of SRDP and LEADER funding is currently unclear, but clarification is hoped for later in 2013.</p>	LM
8	<p><b>Access Consultations, Issues etc</b></p> <p><b>Meldrum Meg Way:</b> JH reported on two particular issues, (a) possibility of a diversion route at a farmhouse, and (b) an objection to the proposed path, which might require looking into the feasibility of a diversion. CY advised that the consultancy report was about to be completed, and thereafter it would be for the community group to decide how to take matters forward. LM recommended that further consultation take place with the parties involved in (a) and (b) above. It was observed that the farmhouse diversion question was a key determinant for the overall route. Finally, LM updated the Forum on the Meldrum Paths Group and JH's research.</p> <p><b>Deeside Way:</b> DC expressed concern over lack of progress on sections of route for the Deeside Way, and also noted two instances of non-cycle-friendly sections, one due to poorly re-instated surface, the other to steepness. On the missing sections, LM explained that one of the two objections is on safety grounds due to perceived potential conflict between path users and vehicles. LM saw the use of compulsory powers as a last resort, which could cause years of delay, and she recommended continuing to attempt to work with landowners towards solutions. JM favoured this approach, to "get it right" through negotiation. LM said that the Slewdrum option, for example, enabled route development momentum to be maintained, allowing for incremental improvement. DC reported that, after initial scepticism, communities in Argyll were in favour of long-distance routes, and Cllr. Clark said that visitor facilities will follow as the Deeside Way is developed. He had, however, received concerns from cyclists who felt at risk on the pavement section beside the A93 at Crathes. He had asked the community council if an alternative route could be found, and he reported that people saw the fenced corridor at Kincardine O'Neil as an example of a practical solution. LM undertook to feed this back to Alastair Fullwood, the Council's lead officer on the Deeside Way.</p>	LM
9	<p><b>Events, Training, Information</b></p> <p><b>(1) EGD MG – feedback:</b> AW reported that no access issues in regard to deer management had been raised either by land managers or the public. Likewise no access issues had arisen with regard to electric fences. JM thought that such fences were off-putting, but AW</p>	

	<p>said that they seemed to be meeting the requirements. JM noted that not all estates are on the Hillphones scheme, and she felt that it would be helpful if they were. LM advised that the next EGDMG meeting would be on 25/11/13, and any deer-related issues should be reported to ALOAF for referral to AW.</p> <p><b>(2) National Access Forum Papers:</b> LM asked for any comments on the NAF papers which had been distributed. Denial of access across dams was an issue elsewhere but not in Aberdeenshire [due to lack of dams in key access areas].</p> <p><b>(3) Dee Catchment Business Plan launch:</b> LM advised that GMcK and AE had been invited. Should GMcK not be available to attend, another ALOAF member could substitute.</p>	
<b>11</b>	<p><b>AOB</b> (<i>considered before Item 10</i>)</p> <p><b>E-mail received:</b> A person engaged in a dissertation on access and trespass had expressed interest in joining ALOAF. It was agreed that nothing would prevent the person attending as an observer.</p>	<b>LM</b>
<b>10</b>	<p><b>Handover of Chair</b></p> <p>In handing over the role of Chair to AE, Gordon McKilligan observed that he had enjoyed his time in office, and thanked the Forum for their very good input and lively debate. He extended his thanks too, to Council officers for their assistance with the meetings. Finally, he asked the Forum to give their full support to Alison Espie and Hamish Booth as incoming Chair and Vice Chair respectively. AE commended Gordon for his encouragement of Forum debate and courtesy to all concerned; and she hoped he would continue with the Forum despite the many other calls on his time. Finally, Gordon was asked to accept a presentation in recognition of his work as Chair.</p>	
<b>12</b>	<p><b>Dates of next meetings:</b> <i>[not discussed]</i> 7 Oct, 25 Nov.</p>	
	<p>In conclusion, the new Chair thanked all present for the very good turnout for the meeting.</p>	