

**Aberdeenshire Local Outdoor Access Forum
Minutes of Meeting 79**

1st February 2021 – “Microsoft Teams” Meeting (under lockdown conditions)

Present: Mark Andrew, Wayne Gault, Wilson Irvine, Jonathan Kitching, Cllr. Anouk Kloppert, Ruth Riddell, Adam Wallace (Chair), Henry Webb, Chris York.

(Note: Meeting chaired by Chris York due to familiarity with MS Teams procedures).

Council officers: Richard Elliott, Bridget Freeman, Katherine Low *[part meeting]*.

Abbreviations: **A/O** Access Officer(s); **S/G** Sub-group; **A/C** Aberdeenshire Council **Action**

| 1 | a) Apologies Alison Mitchell. b) Declarations of interest [None]. | Action |
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| 2 | <p>Minutes of Meeting 78 Approved (prop. MA, sec. AW).</p> <p>Matters arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Item 3 – ALDP21 ALOAF response has been submitted. • Item 4 – Alison Espie Forum letter has been sent to family. | |
| 3 | <p>Consultations</p> <p>1) Coast Aberdeenshire Project Brief – Phase 1 (North)</p> <p>With the Powerpoint previously supplied to ALOAF Members, KL described the project, which is funded by the Crown Estate’s Coastal Communities Fund (CCF). Aberdeenshire has £25,000 for spending by 31/3/21. Funding for further work is anticipated in due course, and the project is expected to extend to other parts of the Aberdeenshire coast. The current phase, in conjunction with Alan Jones Associates (AJA), covers the sections of coast path and the coastal corridor (up to 1 mile inland) between Peterhead and Cullen. This includes the “regeneration towns” of Peterhead, Fraserburgh, Macduff and Banff. The project aims to benefit communities, visitors, the environment and the economy. A public consultation received a large response. It is intended to establish a community forum to address matters such as promotion, funding and maintenance (a big issue). Further outputs will be strategies for promotion, management and the funding of future phases.</p> <p>In discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half of the current funding has already been spent. Covid-related delays have hindered spending. • ALOAF support could comprise response to the public consultation (open until 5th February), or email AJA direct – e.g. re maintenance; proposals for projects to add to the list. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping: limited to (a) existing Core Paths maps; (b) Council GIS system. • Maintenance cannot depend solely on volunteers. It needs funding – ALOAF could think about this issue, and about ways of raising revenue (e.g. car parking), but needs to be mindful that much of the path is not on Council land. MA offered to compare notes re Haddo’s | <p style="text-align: center;">CY</p> <p style="text-align: center;">MA</p> |

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| | <p>parking charge system, while recognising that the coast situation is different.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> KL happy to report back to ALOAF, and will be reporting to the relevant Area Committees. Thanking KL for her presentation, CY suggested that a summary report would be welcome. <p>2) A96 dualling – Inverurie to Huntly route selection</p> <p>CY shared maps of the selected route, consultation on which closes on 15th February. See Knowledge Hub for further information. The issue for ALOAF is the impact on existing and possible future access along the route. The existence of opportunities for active travel and access are mentioned in the documentation but are not expanded upon. CY has asked Transport Scotland for information on which routes will be severed, but has had no reply. He will pursue as necessary. WG cautioned that the AWPR had not delivered adequately with regard to access – ALOAF should be sceptical. Communities must not face a repeat of this disappointment. CY wants information from the A96 designers, not just rhetoric. RE said that the Access Officers had informed the consultants about access, but other than the Old Kemnay Road right of way there is a risk that many routes will not come to the consultants' attention. ALOAF should make its voice heard about all routes and about honouring the active travel agenda, and should be watchful. Due to the orientation of the A96 strip maps, the Council has had difficulty matching them with its own GIS path mapping – they need “shapefiles” from the consultants. HW is aware of two routes west of Inverurie which are affected by the alignment, plus an instance at the Hill of Foudland. Agreeing that the consultants should be held to their brief, CY asked if ALOAF should write formally to note an interest in the impact of the project on access and mentioning the duty not to sever access routes. BF felt that the consultants' attention would depend on hard information being provided. She suggested that ALOAF members should be allocated sections of the route to check. HW will cover the “west of Inverurie” area. RE recommended a phased approach – firstly a general letter introducing ALOAF as a body to be consulted; to be followed later by route information. CY suggested that the initial letter should refer to the earlier lack of response, while using HW's route information as an example of the potential type of input. More intensive research by ALOAF could follow later. HW to supply his information as a map on the Knowledge Hub. The letter to the consultants should be on headed paper -- more effective than an email. Actions inferred from discussion: (1) An introductory letter to consultants raising awareness of ALOAF's role and expressing desire for appropriate recognition of access routes and the ActiveTravel agenda, citing HW's site knowledge as an example; (2) Forum members to identify other access routes affected by the route alignment; (3) results of (2) to be supplied to consultants.</p> | <p>KL</p> <p>CY</p> <p>HW</p> <p>CY</p> <p>ALL CY</p> |
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| 4 | <p>Update on activities and events attended by ALOAF members since previous meeting (New standing item initiated by CY to enable sharing of what people have been doing).</p> | |

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| | <p>1) Access users JK Attended National Access Forum (NAF) meeting. Next NAF/LAF meeting (online) is 26/3/21 which should encourage participation. BF and JK attended Ramblers Scotland presentation on “Are you a responsible walker?”. BF asked if this would be of interest to ALOAF. JK also mentioned an access issue on riverside path at Aboyne, which RE is dealing with.</p> <p>WG In a work context he met with Gillian Martin (MSP, Aberdeenshire East, and Chair of the Scottish Parliament Land Reform Committee) to emphasise the work of Ramblers Scotland in protecting access rights against spurious claims of Covid infection risk caused by access users -- this relates to the importance of outdoor exercise to people at this time; also generally to urge protection of the access rights embodied in the Land Reform (Scotland) legislation. CY stressed that the law confers responsibilities both on access users and on land managers.</p> <p>2) Community representatives HW Has volunteered to serve on the Coast Aberdeenshire community forum. CY noted that this will provide a link with ALOAF.</p> <p>3) Land managers MA In his experience at Haddo Country Park and on the surrounding Estate, visitor behaviour has mostly been responsible. An increase in litter has been observed. Uncontrolled dogs continue to cause limited annoyance, although with no game shooting at present (due to Covid) this is less of an issue than usual. Possible solutions are more education or more severe fines.</p> <p>Cllr AK Newburgh has been awarded funding from the Crown Estate and the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund for a path, bridge and car park improvements at the south side of the Ythan estuary.</p> <p>JK alerted ALOAF to the National Visitor Management Strategy. In his view, some participating agencies are more organised than others – car park capacity issues being an example of where input needs to be more organised. CY observed that as and when Covid restrictions are relaxed there will be more visitors and more pressure on parking due to people focussing on their local area and being reluctant to car-share. RE noted that the tourism agencies are funding the promotion of Aberdeenshire to the local and UK market, presaging a busy summer for outdoor facilities. Based on experience in 2020, car park issues are predictable for 2021 and need to be prepared for.</p> | |
| 5 | <p>Planning for activities, events, training, information Due to Covid, there have been no activities, events or training. CY thanked WG for his article raising awareness of ALOAF, and he also thanked BF for updating the Council’s ALOAF web pages. (At https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/paths-and-outdoor-access/local-outdoor-access-forum/welcome/ Min. Sec.). BF urged all to check these pages for any omissions. CY emphasised the importance of disseminating information on issues and how to deal with them.</p> | ALL |
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| 6 | <p>Aberdeenshire Council update</p> <p>1) Staffing The Environment Planner (South) full-time post has been advertised (applications now closed). James Davidson now has responsibility for the Deeside Way. RE recommended that he be asked for an update at the next ALOAF meeting on this and on the Formartine and Buchan Way bridge works.</p> <p>2) Casework RE and BF have noted a larger amount of casework than usual in winter, presaging a busy summer.</p> | CY/A/Os |
| 7 | <p>Core paths, rights of way and landowner liabilities</p> <p>Access Officers have noted repeats of issues which the Council has already dealt with, leading to further expenditure of time and money. Issues can involve land managers or access users. What can be done to address this, given that better weather will bring increased pressures? WG endorsed the expectation of increased use of the outdoors. He noted that the 1918-20 influenza epidemic was followed by a surge in pleasure-seeking in the 1920s. CY encouraged all to think about the potential for issues, even if there is no ready answer at this stage. At Cllr AK's suggestion, the Forum agreed to write, noting these concerns, to the Council Leader, the Opposition Leader, the relevant Council services, and to the press. On litter, RR felt that it would help if people were informed that littering costs everyone money. However, WG and MA did not agree with this. WG noted that social psychology studies show that people engaging in irresponsible behaviour don't respond to the threat of penalty. They do respond to being shown that their peers do not engage in the same behaviour, i.e. that they are the odd ones out. An example might be to say "Most people of your age put litter in a bin".</p> | CY |
| 8 | <p>AOCB [No items raised].</p> | |
| 10 | <p>Election of new chair [Considered ahead of Item 9 closed session]</p> <p>This being his final ALOAF meeting as Chair, AW said he had enjoyed the role and will be continuing as a member of the Forum. He received thanks from the meeting for his service as Chair, and thanked CY for standing in as facilitator/Acting Chair for the current meeting. As sole nominee, CY was unanimously elected Chair and expressed his gratitude for the Forum's support.</p> | |
| 9 | <p>Closed session – upholding access rights cases</p> <p>[No public minute]</p> | |
| | <p>Date of next meeting 12th April 2021</p> | |
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