

## Aberdeenshire Local Outdoor Access Forum

### Draft Minutes of Meeting 44

26<sup>th</sup> November 2012 – Council Chamber, Gordon House, Inverurie

**Present:** Hamish Booth, Ian Cowe, David Culshaw, Alison Espie, John Hughes, Gordon McKilligan (Chair), Judy Middleton, Andrew Robertson (dep. for Drew Elphinstone), Jenny Spratt, Adam Wallace, Chris York.

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

**Observer present:** Mark Bilsby (RAFTS).

*[Start of meeting delayed by 40 minutes due to traffic congestion caused by RTA]*

	<b>Apologies, introductions, deputisings</b>	<b>Action</b>
	<p><b>Apologies:</b> Ewen Cameron, Cllr Isobel Davidson, Drew Elphinstone, David Fyffe, Calvin Little, Robin Maitland. Also Alison Mitchell (Observer).</p> <p><b>Deputising:</b> Andrew Robertson for Drew Elphinstone.</p>	
<b>1</b>	<p><b>Minutes of Meeting 43 and matters arising</b> Minutes approved: proposed by DC, seconded JM.</p>	
	<p><b>Welcome to new Community reps:</b> The Chair welcomed new Community representatives Jenny Spratt and Adam Wallace to the Forum.</p>	
	<p><b>Matters arising:</b> <b>Item 3(6)</b> LM advised that a response to Margaret Ridge has not yet been sent. <b>Item 7</b> The meeting had before them IC's responses to the questions raised. Following a question from DC, LM agreed to look into temporary signage for the Deeside Way within Blackhall Forest, pending the installation of permanent signage now postponed to spring 2013 due to a backlog of orders at the supplier. The Chair thanked IC for his responses.</p>	<p><b>LM</b> <b>LM</b></p>
<b>2</b>	<p><b>Upholding Access Rights Case – Garioch</b> Closed session – Casework – Confidentiality. <i>[Minuted separately as a confidential paper for ALOAF members].</i></p>	
<b>3</b>	<p><b>Operating Principles</b> Discussion as to possible changes for consideration at February meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Proxy voting:</b> The Chair reported that <i>[in connection with the recent election of Community sector representatives]</i> an ALOAF member had enquired whether this would be possible, but there was no such option in the current Operating Principles (OPs). The Chair asked if the Forum felt it could think about looking at the idea. He noted that this was the first such enquiry. While</li> </ul>	

	<p>discussing sub-group representation (see below), DC said that he thought that proxy voting seemed reasonable if members had the opportunity to read the candidates' statements, but not if it was a matter of a "last-minute" candidate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sub-group representation:</b> As explained in para 6(ii) of her paper before the meeting, AE had recently found herself as the only Land Management representative available to represent that sector on a sub-group constituted under the current OPs. She felt that the OPs could be modified to allow this sector to be represented by a member from another sector if that person also had a land management background. MB advised that when a similar problem occurred at RAFTS, their register of skills and interests had proved helpful. LM agreed with MB, if members provided the data for such a register. DC thought that AE's idea seemed reasonable. IC identified the idea as "secondary representation". However, CY felt that representatives of a specific sector should wear only one hat. Otherwise it would be unclear to the public how impartiality could be maintained. The Chair said that AE's situation had arisen when there was limited attendance at the meeting, i.e. she had very little choice. The idea was to provide a fallback option. AE said it would allow the best use to be made of the other skills of Forum members. IC shared CY's concerns, observing that if the proposal was implemented, sub-group composition might be thought to have been manipulated. A solution might be to get more representatives. LM emphasised the need to be careful to maintain [sectoral] balance. If the relevant OP wording was clear and if the specific circumstances were endorsed by the Forum it could be OK -- but the question of "Which hat am I wearing?" remained. GMcK felt that if the sub-group's remit was totally new to a member, that person should be capable of being impartial. On a related matter, and while not questioning the integrity of anyone so placed, AE felt that a person asked by a third party to bring an issue to the Forum's attention would be in a difficult position when asked to serve impartially on a sub-group addressing the issue concerned. However, she acknowledged that her views on this had been misunderstood by another party. LM remarked in that party's defence, that they had no first-hand knowledge of the background to the matter.</li> </ul>	
<b>4</b>	<b>ALOAF administration</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Councillor rep – update:</b> LM reported that due to lack of adequate data from some respondents to their review of appointments, the Council has deferred a decision until 19<sup>th</sup> January 2013. ALOAF not at fault.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>FCS Reserve representative:</b> IC asked for deferral of this item, as the Reserve-designate has moved on. FCS expects to find a new reserve before the next ALOAF meeting.</li> </ul>	<b>IC</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Re-appointment of ALOAF representatives:</b> HB, DC and JM stated that they are willing to stand for a second term of office. Members endorsed this.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Canoeing representative:</b> Acknowledging that JM had shouldered this role as part of her access user rep responsibilities, LM advised that Scottish Canoe Association member Jonathan Kitching (JK) had expressed an interest in joining the Forum. Although she supported the idea, there is a full complement of Access User reps, so it would not be possible for him to stand for membership, but he could be invited to attend as an observer. MB spoke highly of JK's assistance in resolving incipient issues on the Dee. JM pointed out that in a similar context there was no specific equestrian rep at present. DC thought that the point was that access user reps represented all access users. LM said that the idea was to call on JK as and when required. IC felt that this was more appropriate given that there was a sectoral balance at present.</li> </ul>	LM
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Public attendance:</b> LM reported that a member of the public, having missed the call for candidates for the recent Community rep election, wished to attend ALOAF meetings. However, he had no transport. A solution was not forthcoming.</li> </ul>	LM
<b>5</b>	<b>ALOAF activities</b>	
	<b>(1) Turriff Show – options for 2013:</b> The Chair reiterated the options discussed at the previous meeting. IC advised that February 2013 is the time for booking. FCS was considering the possibility of a “Year of Natural Scotland” stand with SNH. There would be ample time to include ALOAF if interested. No need for ALOAF to decide before February. Agreed to defer to February ALOAF meeting.	
	<b>(2) Liaison Wildlife Crime Officer presentation February:</b> ALOAF had been asked to suggest topics for discussion, but LM suggested that as the February meeting was now going to have a full agenda, the presentation itself should be deferred until the May 2013 meeting.	LM
	<b>(3) Liaison with Aberdeen Outdoor Access Forum:</b> Alastair <i>[spelling?]</i> Watson has asked that ALOAF defer attendance at AbOAF meetings until he has had a chance to discuss further with AbOAF members.	
	<b>(4) Letter re Chapelton of Elsick Underpass:</b> LM reported that this had not yet been actioned, but the letter would be circulated by e-mail for Forum approval.	LM
	<b>(5) Oakridge visit:</b> <i>[Discussion deferred due to lack of time?]</i>	
<b>6</b>	<b>Aberdeenshire Council update</b>	
	<b>(1) Core Paths update:</b> Response from Scottish Ministers arrived with Council today. Will be circulated to ALOAF members after checking, and will update at next meeting.	LM
	<b>(2) Council path survey and assessment study:</b> Discussion deferred due to lack of time.	
<b>7</b>	<b>Access consultations, issues, etc.</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Land Reform Review:</b> LM confirmed the Chair's observation that access does not feature to a major extent. However, access</li> </ul>	

	<p>interests are suggesting a need for more clarity in SOAC regarding dogs, wild camping, and field margins. She asked if ALOAF wished to provide any feedback. CY wondered whether or not members might wish the LRSA to be revised to strengthen the role of LAFs. LM asked how the Forum would want to address this in time for the Review deadline of 11<sup>th</sup> January 2013. CY asked if circulation by e-mail would be acceptable. LM said yes, if everyone responds. Alternatively, a response could be homologated at the subsequent ALOAF meeting in February. CY sought feedback from those present, <i>[but the necessarily imminent closure of the meeting inhibited discussion]</i>. LM proposed that she would circulate the review document by e-mail for comments.</p>	<b>LM</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>BHS Guidance – drainage channels:</b> AR reported that some of the channels on the path in question had been covered by grids. Fuller discussion deferred to next meeting.</li> </ul>	
<b>8</b>	<b>Events, training, information</b>	
	<b>(1) National Access Forum (NAF) papers:</b> Discussion deferred to next meeting.	
	<b>(2) Feedback from NAF/LAF Joint Meeting:</b> Discussion deferred to next meeting.	
	<b>(3) East Grampian Deer Management Group AGM:</b> AW reported on his attendance. The Group is keen to publicise “Heading for the Scottish Hills” and signage for horse-riders and walkers. The Group has hopes for installing an extensive electrified deer fence in the hills of west Aberdeenshire and Moray, but it was noted that was outwith the area covered by ALOAF. AW observed that the Group is sympathetic to reasonable access across such fences.	
	<b>(4) STAG Report Aberdeen City:</b> LM drew the meeting’s attention to this report on options for the Bridge of Dee crossing which was included in the papers for the meeting.	
<b>9</b>	<b>A.O.B</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Expenses forms:</b> LM advised members that expenses forms were available for those who wished to claim.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	
<b>10</b>	<b>Items for next meeting’s agenda</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access issue – Garioch (CLOSED SESSION)</li> <li>• Operating Principles</li> <li>• Core Paths Plan update</li> <li>• Deferred item 7: drainage channels (if time allows)</li> <li>• Deferred item 5 (2): Wildlife Crime Officer presentation</li> <li>• Turriff Show</li> </ul>	
<b>11</b>	<b>Dates of next meetings:</b> 2013 dates as per agenda – 4 Feb, 13 May, 24 June (to be confirmed), 7 October, 25 November.	