

# ANGUS LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Note of the Meeting of the Angus Local Access Forum held in the Boardroom at Angus House, Orchardbank Business Park, Forfar on Monday 12 September 2016

**Present:** Gavin Dobson (Chair), Cathy Stephenson, John Hamilton, Kirsty Macari, Lesley Anderson, Gill Lawrie, Patricia Harrow, Barbara Thompson, Peter Fiabane

**In attendance** Paul Clark , Countryside Access Officer, Angus Council  
James Gray-Cheape, prospective new member  
Antony Gifford, prospective new member

**Apologies:** Alban Houghton

## **1. Welcome and introductions**

GD thanked everyone for attending, and introduced Antony Gifford, a prospective new member, who was observing the meeting.

## **2. Minute of Previous Meeting**

A typographic error in item 5 was noted. The minutes of 13 June 2016 were otherwise approved as a true record.

## **3. Matters Arising**

PC advised that the diversion of the core path at Lintrathen had been approved by committee. The Council had received a representation claiming that the original route was a public right of way, and was investigating the matter.

PC advised that he was meeting representatives of a local community group regarding the core path at Friockheim Mill Pond. BT advised that she would be attending as a representative of the community group.

## **4. Correspondence**

### **a) E-mail from Sidlaw Path Network regarding field margins.**

An e-mail had been received from Sidlaw Path Network regarding experimental 'magic margins' that had been introduced by the James Hutton Institute. The e-mail and a subsequent e-mail from the farm manager explaining the purpose of the margins, had been circulated prior to the meeting. PC introduced the matter. The ridged field margins were designed to hold surface water and reduce problems associated with surface water run-off. The concern was that these margins did not enable public access, particularly by horseriders, which was an added benefit of traditional field margins. PC asked whether there was any feedback from the Forum. JL agreed with the view that there was no obligation to make conservation margins suitable for public access, and noted that farmers were not permitted to take vehicular access over these margins. She also highlighted the fact that diffuse pollution through water run-off was an environmental issue which farmers very much have to be aware of. The Forum could not offer any additional advice to that already given, and was interested to hear of any future guidance that might become available at a national level.

### **b) E-mail from Sidlaw Path Network regarding Pitnappie Cutting.**

An e-mail had been received regarding the SPN group's proposed path in the former Pitnappie railway cutting. PC reminded the forum of the background to the project. The path was a potential link between the southern Sidlaws area and the Newtyle path network, avoiding a busy road. The group had cleared the route some years ago and had more recently commissioned a feasibility study into establishing a proper path link. The land had recently changed hands and agreement from the new landowner was not forthcoming. After discussion it was agreed that there could be benefit in land management representatives from the Forum informally discussing the matter with the landowner. PC agreed to relay this back to the group and obtain the appropriate contact details if they wished to take up the offer.

## **5. Access Issues Update**

**East Mains, Edzell** – PC advised that the path had now been re-opened.

**Kinnaber, Montrose** – PC advised that the path works were scheduled to take place in September.

**Meigle** – The landowner had advised PC that there were persistent problems with unauthorised vehicles, and that they were not prepared to amend the signage. The Council accepted that, whilst the wording could be better, the purpose of the signage was to deter vehicles.

**Gaigie, Kellas** – PC circulated maps and photographs. Access rights probably did not apply to all of the route, but it was regarded as a public right of way. Signs and gates had been erected and the public were being asked to use an alternative to part of the route. There were concerns that the gates and the alternative route made access difficult for horse riders. PC had discussed the situation with the owner. Electric gates were being installed. These would be accessible at all times, and riders would be able to operate them without dismounting. The alternative route had been cleared to make it more accessible to riders, and the owner had advised that they would not obstruct people who chose to use the original route. The signage was also being amended. The Council was satisfied with the outcome.

PC also highlighted a separate issue of barriers which has been put in place to prevent vehicular use of a nearby core path. He circulated photographs. It was possible to detour around the barriers, but concerns had been raised over accessibility for horse riders. PC would raise this with the owner and may be able to offer horse friendly barriers, as the route was a core path.

**Kirkinch** – PC circulated photographs of log barriers that had been put in place to prevent vehicular access and associated unlawful activities. Concerns had been raised over the accessibility of two of the barriers to horse riders, due to the width of the available gap and the proximity of a nearby trees in one case and a ditch in the other. The landowner had agreed to modify the barriers.

## **6. Membership and recruitment**

PC advised the Forum that the Council's Communities committee had agreed to formally appoint Peter Fiabane as user representative.

The Council had received membership applications from two potential user representatives, James Gray-Cheape and Antony Gifford. He reminded members of the Council's obligation to keep a balance of interests on the Forum, with no more than four representatives in each group, and sought the Forum's advice on the suitability of the applicants. After discussion there was consensus that both applicants should be appointed to the Forum, and that Ivan Laird, who had been unable to attend regularly, should be asked to step down.

There was agreement, highlighted by earlier discussions, that it would be helpful to have equestrian representation on the Forum. The Council would seek applicants via social media.

#### **7. Forum operating principles and procedures, and document retention - review**

Comments from GD, CS and BT had been circulated.

Operation Procedures – There was discussion over the need for succession of the Chairperson. GD was willing to stay for the time being, but intended to step down in 2017. AG highlighted an arrangement which worked well in another organisation, in which the Vice Chair in year one would take over as Chair for years two and three, and revert to Vice Chair for year four. There was insufficient time for further discussions and it was agreed to defer discussions to the next meeting.

#### **9. A.O.C.B.**

BT highlighted the fact that she had recently walked a number of core paths, and found that some of them were very overgrown. PC advised that the Council was not in a position to maintain every core path, but that it would be helpful to know where there were problems.

**7. Date of next meeting:** Monday 12 December 2016. Venue to be confirmed.