

ANGUS LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Note of the Meeting of the Angus Local Access Forum held at Angus House, Orchardbank Business Park, Forfar on Monday 10 December 2018.

Present: Lesley Anderson, Antony Gifford (Chair), James Gray-Cheape, John Hamilton, Nicholas Hamilton, Gill Lawrie, Cathy Stephenson, Barbara Thompson.

In attendance Paul Clark Countryside Access Officer, Angus Council

Apologies: Peter Fiabane, Fiona Waddell, Alan Hunter

1. Welcome

AG welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Minute of Previous Meeting

The minutes of 10 September 2018 were approved as a true record.

3. Matters Arising

Pitnappie Cutting – PC had followed up his request for a stile over the new fence. The landowner had stated that this would require agreement from the adjacent proprietors, as it was a march fence. PC had since spoken to the adjacent proprietors, who did not support development of a cycle path along the railway and were opposed to a stile over the fence at this location. They had suggested an alternative route and stile location. PC thought this route merited consideration as a potential alternative for developing a cycle path, but a standalone stile at this location was not a suitable alternative to one on the railway line unless part of an accessible through route. The Forum recommended that the Council should write to both owners stating that a stile was necessary to re-open an existing path on the railway line, and that the alternative did not do this.

Buskhead Bridge – PC had received an enquiry from Councillor Braes, and had offered to attend a meeting to discuss the potential project. Otherwise no update.

Edzell Riverside Path – Unfortunately further collapse of the riverbank had made the path unsafe and it was now closed. There was discussion over the importance of the path, which is promoted in various guides and used by locals and visitors alike. PC believed that the only viable option was to move it onto adjacent land as previously proposed. This would require agreement of the owner of the adjacent land, which had previously not been forthcoming. He was unsure how any further works could be funded.

4. Access Dispute, Valgreen, Murroes

This issue had been highlighted at previous meetings, but not discussed in detail. PC believed that the dispute was unlikely to be resolved through discussion with the landowner. The Council was therefore considering further steps to have the obstructive sign removed, and in doing so was seeking advice from the Forum. He had circulated a paper setting out the details of the dispute and the options available.

FW had forwarded notes setting out her observations and opinions, as the equestrian representative. These were circulated in her absence, and AG summarised the key points.

A number of members sought clarification of various details, which PC was able to provide.

After further discussion there was consensus that people were currently being obstructed from exercising access rights, and that the Council should take further action to have the sign removed. The potential availability of an alternative route within the adjacent field at certain times of year was noted, but not considered relevant. It was noted that this alternative route may not necessarily be suitable for all riders depending on ground conditions etc. The fact that one resident had a phobia of horses was considered unfortunate, but not a reason for preventing access.

It was agreed that AG and one other member of the Forum would offer to meet the owners. The purpose of this was primarily to explain the position to them and encourage them to co-operate with the Council's request. This did not alter the advice that the Council should progress towards further enforcement action.

5. Appointment of Vice Chair

There were no volunteers or nominations for the post. There was agreement that this was not urgent and that it should be deferred to the next meeting. PC highlighted the need to ensure that there was succession in place when the period of tenure for the current Chair came to an end. NH indicated that he may be willing to consider taking on the role.

6. Membership and recruitment

An appeal for new members had been sent out via Angus Council social media and to people on the access mailing list. PC would also arrange for it to be sent to community councils. Two applications had been received from prospective land manager representatives and there had been one other expression of interest. There was agreement that the applications received would be reviewed early in the new year.

7. 2019 public event

It was agreed that the Forum would hold a stall at the 11 May Forfar Farmers Market. PC to arrange the booking. Details to be discussed at the March meeting.

8. Access issues update

There was no change to the situation at the Piperdam biomass site since the last meeting. PC was chasing modifications to the access point at the eastern end of the track.

There had been no further progress regarding equestrian access concerns on the former Kinpurnie Estate. PC intended to have discussions with the various landowners.

The Council had received an enquiry about a gate in Newtyle that had been boarded shut. Access rights probably did not apply to the land, which was also within an area with planning permission for industrial units. It had been suggested that a public right of way may however apply. PC had requested provision of a gate at an alternative location.

The Council had received several enquiries about newly erected fencing at Cossans near Glamis, which had affected an area of woodland which was used by some members of the public. PC circulated an aerial photograph of the location. The estate has said they intended to graze cattle in the woodland. They did not intend to provide a gate or stile at the western end of the wood, as it was an area that was sensitive for game management. There were gates available further east and these could be accessed via the former railway line. The Council did not consider that access to the area as a whole was

unreasonably obstructed if these gates remained accessible. There was some discussion over the desirability of grazing cattle within woodland, and also whether the apparently dense canopy of the woodland made this particular area suitable for grazing. JL noted that there was currently an emerging interest in grazing cattle within woodland to improve habitat. PC believed that the woodland was more open than the aerial photograph suggested, and that there was sufficient ground vegetation for grazing within the area.

The Council had received an enquiry about field gates that has been erected at the entrance to a core path near Brechin. The gates were not locked, but may be difficult for some people to open. There was a pedestrian step-over at the side. The path was not currently signposted, and may be partially overgrown. PC would discuss this with the landowner and may be able to offer more user-friendly gates in conjunction with signposting and clearance work.

The issue of an obstructive sign near Wester Pearsie had been raised. PC intended to contact the landowner and seek its removal.

The Council had received an enquiry about a locked gate at Camustane Wood near Monikie. BT highlighted other issues she was aware of in the same area. PC intended to discuss these with the landowners.

The Council had received an enquiry about a locked gate at Red Castle Farm, Lunan Bay. LA had also been made aware of the issue. The gate may have been locked to prevent unauthorised vehicular access, but there was no alternative access alongside for non-motorised users, with the narrow gap between gate post and field fence having been blocked. PC intended to raise this with the owners.

6. A.O.C.B.

There was no other business.

7. 2019 meeting dates

The proposed meeting dates were approved. Date of next meeting Monday 11 March 2019