

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

**COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 28 MAY 2019**

**ANGUS LOCAL ACCESS FORUM – MEMBERSHIP UPDATE**

**REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITIES**

**ABSTRACT**

This report advises the Committee of the changes to the membership of the Angus Local Access Forum and seeks approval for appointment of new representatives to the Forum.

**1. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) agrees to the appointment of Irene McGugan as a User representative;
- (ii) agrees to the appointment of John Rymer and Euan Walker-Munro as Land Manager representatives;
- (iii) agrees to the appointment of Meg Mearns as a Community representative;
- (iv) agrees to the appointment of Mike Strachan as the Scottish Forestry representative.

**2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS LOCAL OUTCOMES IMPROVEMENT PLAN/COPORATE PLAN**

2.1 This report contributes to the following local outcome:

- Improved physical, mental and emotional health and well-being.
- Safe, secure, vibrant and sustainable communities.
- A reduced carbon footprint.
- An enhanced, protected and enjoyed natural and built environment.

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 required “that each Local Authority shall establish for its area a body known as the Local Access Forum”. The Act further specifies that the function of such a Forum will be to “advise the Local Authority and other person or body consulting the Forum on matters having to do with the exercise of access rights, the existence and delineation of rights of way or the drawing up and adoption of a plan for a system of core paths”.

3.2 The Act did not specify the makeup of the Local Access Forum and the Council agreed to follow the guidance produced at the time by “Paths for All”. This recommended that the Forum comprise four interest groups i.e. Users, Land Managers, Community Interest and Public Agencies. A total of four representatives are sought for each group other than Public Agencies but there is no minimum number required for the Forum to operate successfully; the more important aspect being that the Forum maintains a balance across the groups.

3.3 Members agreed the appointment of representatives to the Angus Local Access Forum in 2005 (report No. 519/05 refers). Subsequent changes to the membership of the Forum were duly reported to members.

#### **4. CURRENT POSITION**

- 4.1 The Forum currently has three User representatives, two Community representatives and three Land Manager representatives, following the resignation of Peter Fiabane (User representative), and Lesley Anderson (Community representative).
- 4.2 Two remaining members, Gill Lawrie (Land Manager representative) and Barbara Thompson (Community Representative) have expressed a desire to step down from the Forum.
- 4.3 Applications for membership were sought in November 2018. Ten applications were subsequently received.
- 4.4 Due to the number of applications received, applicants were invited to attend a selection meeting. Four of the applicants attended either the selection meeting or the preceding Forum meeting, to discuss their applications with existing Forum members. The existing members have recommended that all four applicants are appointed to the Forum.
- 4.5 Scottish Forestry has nominated a new member of staff to represent them on the Forum.

#### **5. PROPOSALS**

- 5.1 Following consultation with the existing Forum membership it is recommended that Irene McGugan should be appointed as a User representative, John Rymer and Euan Walker-Munro as Land Manager representatives, and Meg Mearns as a Community representative. Irene McGugan is a member of Ramblers, and involved in local health walks. John Rymer is a farmer, with various community interests and experience of horse riding. Euan Walker-Munro is a farmer, representative of National farmers Union Scotland, and community councillor. Meg Mearns is a community councillor and is involved in a wide range of community organisations and projects.
- 5.2 It is proposed that Gill Lawrie will remain on the Forum as a Land Manager representative for a further 6 months. Whilst this would temporarily increase the number of Land Manager representatives to five, it would help maintain a balance of existing and new members on the Forum to ensure continuity. This would not significantly affect the balance of interests on the Forum, as most members have a range of interests beyond those of their nominated interest group.
- 5.3 Barbara Thompson has agreed to remain on the Forum until one or more replacement Community representative is found.  
  
Scottish Forestry, successors since 1 April 2019 to Forestry Commission Scotland, has nominated Mike Strachan, Operations and Development Officer, as their representative.5.4
- 5.4 In accordance with the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, the members of the Local Access Forum are to be appointed by the local authority. It is therefore recommended that the above candidates be appointed as members of the Forum.

#### **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from the recommendations contained in this report.

**NOTE:** No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

**REPORT AUTHOR:** Stewart Ball, Director of Communities  
**EMAIL DETAILS:** [Communities@angus.gov.uk](mailto:Communities@angus.gov.uk)