

ANGUS LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Note of the Meeting of the Angus Local Access Forum held at Angus House, Orchardbank Business Park, Forfar on Monday 11 March 2019.

Present: Lesley Anderson, Antony Gifford (Chair), Peter Fiabane, John Hamilton, Nicholas Hamilton, Cathy Stevenson.

In attendance: Paul Clark (Countryside Access Officer, Angus Council), Irene McGugan (prospective new member).

Apologies: Fiona Waddell, James Gray-Cheape, Gill Lawrie, Barbara Thompson, Alan Hunter.

1. Welcome

AG welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Minute of Previous Meeting

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

3. Matters Arising

Pitnappie Cutting – The Sidlaw Path Network group had looked at the suggested alternative route and had put a proposal to the owner of the southern part of the cutting. The owner had advised that they were not willing to make the land available for a path. PC had re-iterated his request for a stile on the line of the original railway, in the absence of an alternative route. The owner was willing to install a stile, but the neighbouring owner was opposed to this. Discussions were on-going.

Buskhead Bridge – PC had re-iterated his offer of a meeting to discuss the proposed project, following an approach to Angus Council from the new Chair of Inveresk Community Council. His offer had not yet been taken up.

Edzell Riverside Path – Feedback from Inveresk Community Council was that the adjacent landowner may have an alternative proposal for re-instating the path. Angus Council had not seen the proposals. PC had offered to meet the relevant of the Community Council to discuss the matter, but his offer had not been taken up.

Valgreen, Murroes – The owner had declined the offer of a meeting with Forum members. PC advised that title deeds had been checked, and that the sign appeared to be slightly outside the ownership of the responsible party. Serving a notice under the land reform legislation may not therefore be legally competent. The location was considered to be within the verge of the adopted public road, and therefore within the control of Angus Council, as Roads Authority. The responsible party had therefore been asked to remove it, as it did not comply with roads signage regulations. NH advised that it had now been moved onto the verge of the track. The Council would now proceed towards serving a notice under land reform legislation, as previously intended. This would, in the first instance, involve seeking Committee approval to proceed. AG re-iterated the Forum's view that the Council should progress the matter without further delay.

4. 2019 public event

PC confirmed that a pitch had been booked at Forfar farmers market, for Saturday 11 May. There was agreement that the event should be used to positively promote opportunities to enjoy the countryside, as well as highlight responsible access messages. PC would check what leaflets and other material were currently in storage, and send a list to AG. PF could provide information from Ramblers.

5. Membership and recruitment

IM was attending the meeting as a prospective user representative, as she was unable to attend the selection meeting on 25th March. She spoke about her background and interest in outdoor access, and answered question from members. She then left the meeting.

There was discussion over the format of the selection meeting and the need to maintain a balance of interests on the Forum. PC clarified that legislation required the Council to ensure a balance between land management interests and recreational interests when appointing members to the Forum, and that there should also be a range of interests within those groups. There was no legislative requirement for separate community representation, but community representatives had been appointed at the outset in line with best practice guidance at the time. Community interests could include areas such as disability, nature conservation and dog walking, as well as knowledge of issues experienced by community councils as a whole.

There was agreement that it would be preferable for the Forum as a whole to meet and hear from all prospective candidates, rather than break up into separate selection sessions for each interest group. Some candidates may be suited to more than one group, and this format would be more conducive to continued collaborative working.

It was agreed that AG and PC would both give an introduction, after which each candidate would be given up to 5 minutes to introduce themselves and to answer any questions. The existing Forum members would then consider the applications and make their recommendations to the Council.

PC would supply name cards.

6. Appointment of Vice Chair

NH confirmed that he was willing to become Vice Chair. His appointment was approved by those present.

7. Access issues update

The width of the gap at the Piperdam biomass site had not yet been increased. PC was chasing it up.

PC had requested a meeting with one landowner regarding locked gates on the former Kinpurnie Estate. No further progress.

PC had written to the landowner regarding the sign at Wester Pearsie. He had not yet received a response. NH advised that the sign was still there when he last passed.

PC had requested a meeting with the owners of Camustane Wood.

PC had met the owners of land at Red Castle Farm. They had locked the gate due to persistent problems with unauthorised vehicular access, and also more general security concerns. The landowner had agreed to remove fencing beside the gate pier, which left a narrow gap suitable for pedestrians only. PC did not feel that a wider gap could be insisted on in this location, if there was a genuine reason for locking the gate, as it would involve re-configuring and existing gate. LA advised that she was aware that commercial dog walkers and others had been taking regular vehicular access to the beach at that location.

The Council had received an enquiry about difficulties traversing a spur of the Sidlaws at Berry Hillock near Charleston. The presence of electric fencing around woodland necessitated climbing a barbed wire fence, as no alternative was available. This could be resolved by installing a stile. PC thought that the location was probably visited quite infrequently, but that those who did would want to follow the ridgeline. NH observed that there were many locations in the Sidlaws where people might occasionally wish to cross fences and desire a stile, but that it wasn't necessarily realistic to expect or request one at every location.

PC had received an enquiry regarding a recently installed bridge over the Quharity Burn, and difficulties crossing a recently replaced stock fence immediately beyond it. AG advised that this was on Kinnordy Estate land and that the bridge had been installed by a shooting tenant. The bridge and stock fence had both been installed several years ago. It was thought that crossing the fence could be avoided by following the burn. He would investigate this. He observed that new stiles were a potential health and safety liability, requiring inspection and maintenance.

8. A.O.C.B.

PF and LA both formally tendered their resignation from the Forum, to take effect immediately after the selection meeting. They were both thanked for their contribution to the group.

AG and NH both offered to attend the NAF/LAF joint meeting at Battleby on 5th April. PC would book the places.

7. Date of next meeting

Monday 10 June 2019