

ANGUS LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Note of the Meeting of the Angus Local Access Forum held online on Monday 13th June 2022

Present: Nick Hamilton (Chair), Irene McGugan (Vice Chair), John Hamilton, Euan Walker-Munro, Jonathan Dymock, Andrew Matthews, Kelly-Ann Dempsey

In attendance: Paul Clark, Countryside Access Officer, Angus Council

Apologies: There were no apologies.

1. Minute of previous meeting

The minutes of 14 March 2022 were approved as a true record.

2. Matters arising

Ferry Road, Monifieth – PC advised that the Council had served a Section 14 notice, and that there had been subsequent dialogue with the property owner. The owner was believed to have submitted a planning application for works that would restore access. The Council had agreed to an extension of the appeal period for the notice, to allow time for the planning application to be determined.

Cookston Road, Brechin – PC was in further dialogue with the owner. There was nothing further to report at present.

Buskhead Bridge – JH advised that Scotways had not followed the matter up further and that there were currently more urgent priorities for Scotways staff.

Mill of Murroes – PC had made the landowner aware of evidence from members of the public that suggested a public right of way may exist. He was seeking their observations before considering the matter further.

Denmill, Kirriemuir – The path had been ploughed again. PC had raised the matter with the landowner and would be following up the previous offer of a meeting facilitated by a local councillor. NH re-iterated the Forum's previous view that, being a core path, the matter should be a priority.

Deer fencing – PC had received a further enquiry regarding the fence on Milldewan Hill. The same person had experienced no difficulty traversing the Craig of Balloch gorge from west to east. PC understood that the landowner had now installed pedestrian gates on Milldewan Hill. He understood that the landowner was also preparing maps of gate locations, which would be attached to the gates. NH has contacted Nick Cole, the LAF representative on the National Access Forum, who had confirmed that deer fencing was being discussed at a national level.

There was further discussion on a National Access Forum paper relating to access and deer management. NH thought it was a well-balanced paper but noted that Angus wasn't a 'hot spot' for the issue. EWM thought it was encouraging to see that some of the potentially negative aspects of access such as disturbance to Capercaillie were being

recognised. AM noted that some of the issues were common to those being experienced by Angus communities, and that there were certainly hotspots in Angus for issues such as antisocial behaviour. There was further discussion on antisocial behaviour issues including littering, and consensus that there needed to be a long-term commitment to education at a national level to effect real change. Both AM and JD highlighted the importance of face to face engagement with people. KAD mentioned the work of Angus Clean Environments, including awareness raising on littering issues.

3. Correspondence received

Correspondence had been received from a member of the Kingsmuir community, seeking support with a path they were improving. IM and JH had attended a community Jubilee event, and IM had participated in a walk which took in the path. AM had also been in contact with the individual. PC was aware of issues surrounding the path and had offered advice to the community members who were improving at. There had been some resistance to the proposals from one landowner. The feedback following the Jubilee event was that the path was accessible, with stiles and signposts in place, and that there were no current issues. JH had visited and reported that the landowner, who he had met, was not agreeable to people parking on adjacent road verges. There was agreement that no further Forum involvement was required at this stage.

4. Membership and recruitment

NH confirmed his intention to step down as Chair at the September meeting, and asked people to consider putting themselves forward for the role. PC reminded members that the operating principles allowed for the Vice Chair to take over as Chair. IM advised that she was unable to do so due to other commitments. NH asked everyone to give it consideration before the next meeting.

There was discussion over the need to recruit new members to fill the current vacancies. PC had drafted revised selection criteria following discussions at the previous meeting. After discussion, there was agreement that these should be sent to community groups and others with a request for new members. EWM agreed to draft an accompanying letter for circulation. There was further discussion on ways of raising awareness of the Forum and encouraging membership. Suggestions included re-instating an annual public event, and setting up a dedicated website. EWM noted that the existing web page on the Council website could be easily found via a web search, and thought the content clearly set out the role and membership of the Forum. The membership criteria and form should also be available on the page. PC agreed to arrange this.

There was further discussion on the core path information available on the Council website. AM had found the PDF maps difficult to navigate. PC advised that the maps formed part of the formally adopted core paths plan, so should remain in their current form. But that the information could also be presented in other formats. There was an interactive map with core path information, but it appeared not to be easy to find. PC would look into this. There was also discussion on other ways of promoting core paths, such as a 'path of the month' feature. This was something that Angus Council had considered. NH offered to walk a path and prepare a short write up, with photographs, that could be made available on social media channels.

5. Access issues update

PC briefly described access issues he was investigating at Newbigging near Tealing, Auchmithie Harbour, and Balloch, Glen Isla.

The Newbigging issue involved a track that had been ploughed. He had done some initial investigation but had still to raise it with the landowner. NH observed that it may be used to access a bus stop on the A90, and also believed it may have been used by some horse riders. PC said it would be helpful to hear from any individuals who had used it.

The Auchmithie case involved obstructions to vehicular access to the old harbour. The access track may be a vehicular public right of way. It had been closed for some time as erosion had made it impassable, but the surface had now been repaired. PC was awaiting the landowners' observations on the matter.

The Balloch case involved a relatively recent forestry plantation to the north of the B951 road from Glen Isla to Glen Shee. It was on a route that was promoted on the Walk-Highland website. The concern was that an unhinged gate at the north west corner of the plantation was difficult to open and unsuitable for public access. There may have been an accessible route between the new plantation and an existing forest, but it was impassable due to storm damage. PC would be raising the matter with the forest manager. NH believed the location was well used by walkers as a route to Duchray Hill.

6. A.O.C.B.

JH asked when it would be possible to go back to face to face meetings. PC hoped that information on access arrangements for Council offices and meeting rooms would be available soon. There was also discussion on the possibility of using other venues. NH observed that online meetings were easier for those with hearing difficulties, but thought that meeting face to face would be beneficial.

7. Date of next meeting:

Monday 12 September 2022