

ANGUS LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

Note of the Meeting of the Angus Local Access Forum held on 12 June 2023

Present: John Hamilton, Nick Hamilton (Chair), Irene McGugan, Norma Lyall, Mike Strachan (Scottish Forestry).

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

Apologies: Andrew Matthews, Euan Walker-Munro, Michelle Spink, Jonathan Dymock, Kelly-Ann Dempsey

1. Minute of Previous Meeting

The minute of the previous meeting was approved as a true record.

2. Matters Arising

- PC confirmed that he had given feedback on Harran Plantation access requirements to the forest manager. MStrachan advised that they had also asked the manager to take on board PC's response.
- PC advised that the Council's Communities Committee had approved the appointments on NL and MSpink to the Forum. The change to the way the balance of representation on the Forum was considered had also been approved. The committee report had highlighted the fact that more members with a primary interest in land management were required.

3. Correspondence received

The manager of a new woodland plantation near Lundie had highlighted a problem with fencing being cut. They had experienced issues with fencing being damaged on other sites and wished to make the Forum aware. The issue had also been reported to the Police. It wasn't clear why the fence had been cut, or by whom, as there were public access gates not far away.

Members sympathised with the land manager's concerns but were not sure that the Forum could offer any practical advice or support. There was discussion of the possibility of a news release, but members were unsure whether it would be beneficial unless in response to a pattern of issues and tying in with national responsible access campaigns.

There was also discussion of practical measures the land manager may be able to take, such as maps or marker posts to highlight the location of gates. But there was uncertainty as to whether it would help at this location, as there was no obvious need for access where the damage had occurred. It may have resulted from unlawful activity not associated with public access.

There was agreement that PC should acknowledge the matter on behalf of the Forum.

4. New forestry planting and public access routes – information gathering

MS explained that there were a number of proposals currently being developed for substantial areas of new woodland planting in the Angus Glens. These were mapped on Scottish Forestry's digital mapping system, which he hoped to share on screen with the meeting. Their mapping included information on core paths, but they didn't necessarily know about other access routes. He was keen to capture information on these routes

using the knowledge of Forum members. IM noted that Ramblers' Mapping Scottish Paths project was a useful source of information on other paths.

Unfortunately it was not possible to share the maps on screen due to technical issues. The discussion was therefore postponed to the next meeting. It was agreed that he would bring paper maps to that meeting.

5. LAF/NAF joint meeting 26 April 2023

NL had attended the meeting. The summary note that had recently been circulated with NAF papers detailed the discussions very well. It was notable that challenges with recruitment and engagement were common to many Forums. Use of digital and hybrid meetings worked better for some than for others, but was generally considered to be positive. MS thought there might be opportunities for engagement in conjunction with consultations that would be taking place on Angus Council's urban woodland management plan, and other emerging urban woodland proposals.

6. Access issues update

- Ferry Road, Monifieth – PC advised that the planning application had not yet been determined, and that enforcement of the access case remained on hold in the meantime. Officers were chasing the matter up. EWM had circulated a recent Courier article on the matter to members. NH re-iterated his dissatisfaction with the time it was taking to resolve the matter.
- Buskhead bridge – There was nothing new to report. It was agreed that this should be removed from the agenda unless there were any further substantive matters to report.
- Newbigging, Tealing – PC had recently been advised that the field had again been ploughed. NH had noted the same thing. PC had written to the landowner and had recently spoken to both the landowner and the owner of the land to the north. The owner had advised that the track had been removed primarily because it was no longer needed, but that unlawful activity associated with unauthorised vehicles was also a factor, as was irresponsible access.
PC believed the track was 'well used', which was relevant to reasonable management of land in relation to access rights. The continuation of the track to the north was however through an area that was likely to be part of a farmyard, where access rights may not apply. The owner of that land had indicated that they were not agreeable to people taking access through that area, in part because of alleged irresponsible behaviour.
There were also claims that the route was a public right of way, but further evidence would be needed to clarify this.
PC intended to gather evidence of use from interested parties before considering the matter further.
MS noted observations regarding temporary tracks in the previous minutes, and observed that a track such as this was likely to be recorded as 'other land' rather than productive farmland on land management mapping.
- Fergus, Glen Isla – NH had been back to the area and attempted to follow a signposted diversion around the southern side of the buildings. This wasn't straightforward, and necessitated fording the Fergus Burn. There was discussion about the merits of this route versus the route to the west that used a makeshift bridge, and the main track that also necessitated fording the burn. NH suggested that it would be necessary for PC to visit the site before following the matter up further.
- Core Path 212, Aucherhouse – PC had not yet met the landowner, but had raised the matter in response to a felling licence application for the location.

- Denmill, Kirriemuir – PC had spoken to the landowner following recent ploughing of the field. He understood that the landowner intended to sow grass in the field, and that the core path would remain accessible.
- Core Path 181, Panmure Estate – The Council had received a report of the core path being obstructed due the presence of cows and calves, with cattle feeders having been placed on the tracks. Fences bounding adjacent fields had been removed. PC had asked the owner to move the feeders elsewhere, but that had not yet been done.
- Westerton of Rossie – The Council had received recent complaints about obstructive behaviour towards horse riders. This was believed to be on paths that had been provided for the use of the landowner’s livery customers. Rights of responsible access would nevertheless be available to other people. PC had raised the matter with the landowner.
- Keptie Pond – A number of members had noted a recent newspaper article on the matter. Angus Council had agreed to grant Arbroath Scouts access for boating. They were seeking to engage with the interested groups to establish terms that would meet the needs of all parties and safeguard the environment of Keptie Pond. PC confirmed that his advice had been sought prior to the Council its current position.

7. Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair

NH confirmed that he was stepping down at this meeting. He would remain as an ordinary member for the next meeting, if available, after which he would step down from the Forum. IM was not in a position to take on the role, but was willing to stay on as Vice Chair to support the new Chair. No nominees for Chair were forthcoming. There was discussion of other options, including a rolling Chair, but these were thought to be unsatisfactory. NH agreed to ask AM, who was absent from the meeting, if he would be willing to take over the role. IM agreed to chair the next meeting if required.

8. A.O.C.B.

- IM noted that the NAF had responded to a Scottish Government consultation on the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.
- NL mentioned concerns over the impacts of increased use of electric mountain bikes in the Angus Glens. She had attended a recent meeting with Cairngorm National Park Authority, who had prepared guidance documents.
- NL advised members of an Angus Tourism Cooperative workshop on an action plan for Angus outdoor adventure activity. PC offered to circulate details to members.
- Members thanked NH for his work as Chair over the past three year.

9. Date of next meeting

Monday 9th October 2023