

North Ayrshire Outdoor Access Forum

Note of Statutory Forum Meeting

Wednesday 4th April 2007 at Ardrossan Civic Centre, Glasgow Street, Ardrossan

Present: Luke Borwick, Bruce Davidson, Louise Dickson, Jean Highet, Rob Loney, Alex Millar, Frazer Mitchell, Jim Muir, and Councillor Donald Reid

Attending: Gordon Clark, Margaret Ferrier, Louise Kirk (all NAC) and Rona Gibb (PfAP)

Apologies: David Clegg, Kate Sampson, Dick Sim and Gerard Tattersfield

Welcome

The Chair welcomed the group to the meeting and highlighted that this could potentially be his last meeting dependant on the outcome of the elections. The Chair reminded the group that this was the last 2007 meeting in the Civic Centre due to the renovation works being undertaken to the Centre. The group was advised that the June meeting would be in Brodick, Isle of Arran and the September and November meetings would be held in the Ardeer Neighbourhood Centre. The AO advised that maps would be provided for these locations with the relevant meeting's agenda.

Progress update

• Projects 2006-07

The group was advised that all projects were on target and were shown the press cuttings from the photo call launches for the "Paws for Thought" project in which RL participated on behalf of the group. The AO advised the group that this project has been very popular and that the incentive packs have been widely distributed. RG advised that the PfAP have highlighted the project as being good practice to other Access Authorities. The AO also advised that the Responsible Horse Riding project and West Kilbride project would be launched later in the year.

• Access and Code issues

The AO advised that a few minor outdoor access issues had been raised prior to the meeting in relation to signage and path condition and that the following progress has been made in relation to the issues raised at the February meeting:

- Loch Lomond Dundonald Golf Course (LLDGC) – A meeting was held with LLDGC and attended by the AO, LB and Andrew Fraser, Legal Services Manager. The Golf Course agreed to go back to their lawyers for guidance on their policy in relation to access, to develop a new policy that is compliant with the legislation and to investigate options for an appropriate route for access users. The group agreed to examine the new policy in due course and for the AO to monitor this situation.
- Kelburn Avenue, Fairlie – The AO advised that subsequent to the February meeting the landowner advised that the neighbouring residents were not comfortable with the gate being opened. The neighbouring residents also raised a variety of issues with the AO, culminating in a letter from their legal representative. These issues have been clarified with Legal Services and a letter outlining the legislative position has been issued to the resident's Lawyer and the complainant. The AO advised that a response to the letter was anticipated in the near future. The group agreed that negotiating with the landowners was the most appropriate course of action at this stage and agreed that if required a meeting should be arranged between the landowners, their legal representative, the AO, the Council's Legal Services and a representative from the Forum. LB agreed to participate in the meeting on behalf of the Forum if required. It was agreed that if negotiation was unsuccessful it would be the Forum's recommendation that a Notice be served under Section 14 of the Act.

LB highlighted that it is beneficial for the Forum to be aware of issues from the initial stages to ensure that they are fully conversant with any issue should further Forum involvement be required.

AM highlighted issues in relation to narrow rural roads and verge maintenance including that narrower verges made it more difficult for access users to come off the road when vehicular traffic is present. The group agreed that this was an issue for the Council's Roads Services rather than the Forum although such issues would need to be considered when developing the Core Paths Plan. The AO agreed to raise this with Roads Services, ensure that they receive the Notes of Forum Meetings and invite them to attend as appropriate.

- **Projects 2007/08**

The AO highlighted to the group that the existing commitments for 2007/08 were as follows:

Commitment	Amount (£)
Community Outdoor Access Grant Scheme	2500
Go On - Get Out There! (Schools Grant)	1500
Subscriptions (Arran Access Trust and Scotways)	300
TOTAL	4300

The AO advised that this left a total of approximately £35,000 of Revenue Budget, of which approximately £20,000 will need to be retained for the core path planning process including preparing materials, organising events, advertisements, preparation of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and other items. The AO highlighted that approximately £5,000 will be required for engineer's fees and preparation of tender documents for the National Cycle Network upgrade and a further £3,000 for reprints of leaflets which leaves a balance of £7,000 for additional revenue works.

The group agreed that this was a reasonable distribution of the budget and to examine potential projects for the balance. The AO advised that only one additional project has been raised namely a feasibility study on the Island of Arran. The group requested more information on this project to enable them to discuss it in full at the June meeting. The AO agreed to obtain this from the Arran Access Trust.

Within the Capital budget, a £52,500 allocation has been secured through a successful application to Sustrans and the Scottish Executive for the upgrade of National Cycle Network (NCN) Routes 7 and 73 between Irvine and Kilwinning. The AO advised that this project might require an additional £7,500 from the Capital Budget to ensure that works are completed to a high standard. This would leave a balance of £42,500 for capital works to be identified by the group. The AO highlighted that the aim was to secure additional funding for any projects from external/internal sources to extend the benefits obtained from the allocation. The group agreed that this would be beneficial and RL highlighted the importance of cross-departmental working within the Council. RL requested that the AO investigate the potential for other departments to provide presentations to the Forum on their work in general and in relation to outdoor access. AO agreed to investigate this and highlighted that a number of the projects undertaken to date have been in partnership with Economic Development, Education and Roads.

The group discussed the merits of the project raised in the February meeting namely the upgrade of NCN 73 through Ardeer Park and the remaining section of the Lynn Glen route. It was agreed that further consultation with the landowner was required in relation to the Lynn Glen route and LB agreed to assist with this process. Regarding the Ardeer Park project it was agreed that an approach should be made to Educational Services and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) for assistance towards this project. The AO agreed to investigate this further and report back on progress at the June meeting.

The AO also highlighted that a number of projects are to be undertaken in 2007/08 in relation to woodlands, which will offer benefits in terms of outdoor access namely:

- Preparation of the Healthy Woodlands leaflet and signage as part of the North Ayrshire Urban Woodlands Project (NAUWP) funded by the Forestry Commission and North Ayrshire Council
- Creation of a new path and equestrian route within Eglinton Country Park also part of NAUWP
- Creation of a new forestry road on Arran by the Forestry Commission

Forum development

The AO advised that the Planning Committee (19/03/07) approved the report on the appointment of new representatives to the Forum and the Full Council Committee ratified this (27/03/07). The AO agreed to write to all new representatives advising them of their appointment and inviting them as appropriate to the Arran meeting.

The group discussed the role of the Chairperson and that the good practice guidance advises Access Forums should now be moving towards an independent Chair. The AO advised that a representative (LB) has come forward and been seconded (by RL) for the role of Chairperson. The group discussed the potential for the Council to continue in the role of vice chairperson to ensure continuity throughout the hand-over period and to provide support to the new Chair in the future. The group agreed that LB should take on the role of Chair with the current Chair acting as Vice Chair and that this advice should be reported to the Council's Planning Committee for approval after the election.

The group discussed the potential to undertake an element of the second phase of informal consultation on the Core Paths Plan at the AGM and what could be practically achieved on the day. Potential dates were considered to ensure that it did not conflict with the holiday period to encourage the maximum level of participation possible. It was agreed that a weekend date would be preferential to ensure that it is inclusive and that the meeting in September should be rescheduled and be held in the morning prior to the AGM. The date of the AGM was then set for Saturday 15th September and it was agreed that the AO would advise the group of the details for the AGM at the June meeting.

Core Path Planning

The AO advised that the core path planning process was on target. Discussion arose on whether the whole group or a sub-group (as per the preparation of criteria and weightings) should undertake the assessment of the routes identified through the Toolkits. It was agreed that the whole group should take part in this process and a date was set for 16th May 2007 at Montgomerie House, Kilwinning between 10am and 4pm.

RG highlighted some of the issues that were raised at the PfAP networking session on core path planning that the Forum may wish to consider, including:

- Whether core paths start in towns or from the edge of towns
- The potential for joint working with Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs)
- The Standards required for multi-use
- Issues in relation to sufficiency
- Issues in relation quiet roads and speed limits
- How and where to signpost core paths
- Creating hooks to the Local Plan and incorporation of the Core Path Plan into the Local Plan

RG highlighted that Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) now covers the whole of North Ayrshire Council and has replaced Westrans (for the mainland) and Hitrans (for the Islands). SPT is one of the seven RTPs established under Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 and is responsible for planning and co-ordinating regional transport. The group was advised that the RTPs are currently producing Regional Transport Strategies, which will provide a vision and objectives for transport throughout the region. The Strategy will also provide a steer for Local Transport Strategies and set out a programme of activities, projects and interventions. RG stressed the importance of outdoor access being incorporated into both the Local and Regional Strategies as this would ensure an integrated approach and may provide funding opportunities in the future.

The group was then provided with maps of some of the information digitised to date to try assessing the paths using the criteria and weightings. It was agreed that the maps for the May session should include local features and points of interest such as schools, community centres and parking places and should where possible differentiate between on road and off road routes. It was agreed that the maps would be sent to the group in the week commencing 7th May 2007 to allow sufficient time for representatives to examine the maps.

The group discussed the proposed time scale for preparation of the Draft Plan and agreed it as follows:

Date	Meeting type	Element of core path planning process
4 th April 07	Forum meeting	Agree time scales and proposals
16 th May 07	Forum or Sub-group meeting	Assess potential core paths
13 th June 07	Forum meeting	Identify potential core paths
15 th Sept 07	Forum meeting (morning) AGM (mid-morning/afternoon)	Commence informal public consultation on potential core paths
22 nd Nov 07	Forum meeting	Examine findings from informal public consultation and prepare skeleton of Draft Core Paths Plan
TBC Jan 08	Forum meeting	Prepare and agree Draft Core Paths Plan
TBC Jan 08	Committee	Approval to undertake formal consultation on Draft Plan

AOCB

No other competent business was raised.

Close of meeting

The Chair closed the meeting and thanked the group for their continued involvement. The group thanked the Chair for his support and commitment to the Forum to date.