

North Ayrshire Outdoor Access Forum

Note of Statutory Forum Meeting

Tuesday 9 June 2009 – Brodick Country Park, Brodick, Isle of Arran

Present: Bruce Davidson, Louise Dickson, Jean Highet, Cllr Jean Highgate (Vice Chair), Rob Loney, Kate Sampson and Gerard Tattersfield.

Attending: Ruth Campbell (PfAP), Margaret Ferrier and Louise Kirk (both North Ayrshire Council).

Apologies: Annique Armstrong, Luke Borwick (Chair), Kenny Burns, David Clegg, PC Donna Harrison, Sandy Miller and Dick Sim.

Welcome and introduction

Councillor Highgate welcomed the group to the meeting. Ruth Campbell from the Paths for All Partnership (PfAP) was formally introduced to the group as the new Development Officer for North Ayrshire.

No issues were raised in relation to the Note of the March 2009 meeting. The group then briefly reviewed the morning's site visits along the Fisherman's Walk and in particular where it passes through Brodick Golf Course and then to Brodick Country Park to look at the various issues the Park is dealing with. The group thanked KS for guiding them through the Park and the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) for hosting the meeting.

Progress update

• Access and Code issues

The AO advised the group of the following issues and requested their input:

- Dogs: The AO advised that Environment and Related Services have organised a series of patrols with the Police throughout North Ayrshire during the week commencing 15 June 2009. Photo calls have been organised with the local press to raise awareness of the re-launch of Paws for Thought. Further activities are planned for later on in the summer including schools projects and competitions to increase awareness further. It was agreed that the AO would advise the group of the outcome of these activities at the next meeting.
- Easter Highfield: An agreement was reached regarding a minor diversion for the route with the landowner in April 2009. One of the complainants has subsequently claimed that they and others have used the route for purposes other than walking and that the field that the route is diverted through is used to graze cattle. The group agreed that if the latter is the case fencing would be required to ensure that the cows did not deter users and that the route provided was not of a lesser standard to the original route. It was agreed that the AO would investigate this further and advise the group accordingly.
- Kelburn Avenue, Fairlie: The AO advised that the gate remains locked and discussions are on-going with the landowners' Solicitor. There has been considerable community interest in this issue via the S1 Fairlie website. It was agreed that the AO would advise the group of any progress.

- Silverburn Farm: The final Evidence of Use Questionnaires have been received and are being analysed. Advice will be taken from Scotways prior to responding in full to the landowners. It was agreed that the AO would keep the group informed of any progress.
- Davies O' The Mill: The AO is advised that the investigation is on-going and that contact is being established with the landowners. It was agreed that the group would receive an update at the next meeting.
- Homecoming Music Festival 2009: The group were advised that the organisers of the Festival had cancelled it therefore the Section 11 Order was not utilised. The AO advised that a number of reasons for the cancellation have been cited in the local press and that the Council did everything possible to assist the organisers.
- Brodick to Corrie Cycle Route: The AO advised that consultation regarding on road signage for the existing on-road route between Brodick and Lochranza has been undertaken. New signage has been developed as a result of this. It is proposed that this signage be used on all on-road Core Paths in North Ayrshire. The wording and design of the signage is compliant with the Roads legislation. The group considered the signage and agreed it seemed appropriate. It was agreed that the AO would progress this as agreed in March. GT provided the group with an update on the proposed off-road route between Brodick and Corrie. Agreements are in the process of being signed with the landowners and information has been passed to the Council's Development Management section for guidance on the requirement for Planning Permission and potentially Roads Construction Consent. The AO highlighted that a request had been received to reroute the National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 73 over the String Road and for cyclists to be directed to cycle in "pods" of 4 equally spaced out to reduce the potential for conflict with vehicles. The group discussed the proposals and agreed that the String Road was not a suitable road to divert the route across and that neither the Roads legislation nor Land Reform legislation provided for such directions to cyclists. Guidance for cycling on roads is provided by the Highway Code. It was agreed that the AO should advise the author of the correspondence accordingly.

- **NCN Feasibility Study**

The AO provided the group with a progress update on the Feasibility Study. A preferred option has been identified by the consultants however further consultation is required with a number of landowners. The AO advised that the consultation on the Study and Health Impact Assessment (HIA) undertaken on 8 June 2009 was successful and reasonably attended. A number of issues were raised including flooding issues, fear of crime on routes and issues in relation to maintenance. Progress on the HIA report is ongoing with greenspace scotland. It was agreed that the final HIA report and draft Feasibility Study would be circulated to the group for comment in due course.

Discussion arose on the difficulty of funding the implementation of the Study due to the current financial climate. The group then discussed the difficulty of proving the success of off-road route in encouraging increased use or improving health without the existence of the route.

- **Projects 2009/10**

The AO advised that no new projects had been identified by Forum representatives. The response from Sustrans regarding the application to upgrade the NCN Route 73 through Ardeer Quarry has not been received therefore no further progress has been made on this project.

BD highlighted the potential opportunity for a project linking the two LEADER programmes. The group discussed the potential types of projects and agreed that the AO should investigate this and advise the group accordingly at the next meeting. BD highlighted that the next closing

date for the Ayrshire LEADER programme was 22 July 2009. The AO highlighted that the next Argyll and the Islands deadline was 31 July 2009. The group discussed the need for the project to be innovative and have clear links to the two programmes. The AO advised the group that the Argyll and the Islands LEADER programme requires 65% public funding and therefore offers a potential maximum intervention rate of 35%.

It was agreed that projects for 2009/10 would be discussed in full at the next meeting once the outcome of the Sustrans bid and any potential LEADER bids is known. The group was requested to advise the AO of any potential projects by 31 August 2009 for consideration at the next Forum meeting.

Forum development

- **Training**

The group discussed the need for training and potential types of training that would be useful to representatives. The group agreed that it would be beneficial to have a better understanding of the needs of the various user and interest groups. Discussion arose on how this might best be achieved and it was agreed that the various organisations e.g. cycling interest groups could be invited to future meetings to provide a talk or presentation on their group's needs and aspirations to provide Forum representatives with a better understanding. It was agreed that the AO would investigate this and report back to the group.

RC highlighted that PfAP had produced new guidance on path signage and that this could be a future training topic. The group agreed given the need to sign the Core Paths network, it would be useful to receive a presentation/short training session on this at a subsequent meeting. It was agreed that the AO would schedule this into a future meeting and advise the group accordingly.

- **Site visits**

The group discussed the need for site visits and potential locations. It was agreed that these could be scheduled prior to Forum meetings to enable informed discussion at the meeting. The group agreed that once a short list of future projects was prepared, site visits would provide a useful way to consider each project.

RC highlighted that PfAP have created a path demonstration site at Oatridge College which includes examples of path surfacing, gates and other techniques. The group agreed that it would be useful to visit this site at some point but were conscious of the distance. The AO reminded the group that a demonstration site was also being developed at Stevenston Beach Local Nature Reserve to demonstrate innovative coastal path techniques. It was agreed that a site visit would be useful during the works if possible and after the construction of the path.

- **Meetings**

The AO advised that a number of representatives and substitutes had advised that they no longer have the ability or capacity to be involved with the Forum. In particular, the AO advised the group the PC Harrison had advised that she would no longer be acting as the Wildlife Liaison Officer for North Ayrshire. The group agreed that the liaison with the Police was important and providing a valuable interface with the community. It was agreed that the Forum should write to the Chief Superintendent at Irvine Police Station regarding this matter.

The group discussed the frequency, timing and location of meetings and agreed that these seemed reasonable and not overly onerous for representatives. The AO highlighted that in a number of cases the constraints related to the current financial situation and a reduction in staff for some organisations. It was agreed that this should be monitored in case of further change and would be reviewed at a subsequent meeting if required.

Core Path Planning

• Implementation of the Core Paths Plan

The AO provided the group with a reminder of the actions required to implement the Core Paths Plan to ensure that they are accessible, sign posted and promoted within two years of adoption of the Plan. The group discussed potential methods and sources of funding for the implementation. Discussion arose on the need for locally distinctive signage and continuity throughout the area. GT and KS highlighted that the signage used as part of the Arran Access Trust's projects was already well known on the Island and in keeping with the environment. The group agreed to discuss this in more detail after consideration of the new PfAP guidance.

The AO highlighted to the group that the implementation of the Plan also forms a number of actions within the Council's Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) Action Plan. The AO advised the group that a report has to be submitted for each of the actions on a quarterly basis. It was agreed that a sub-group of the Forum should be formed to examine this and identify suitable activities for each. BD, GT, JH, RL and LD agreed to take part in the group. It was agreed that the AO would organise the first meeting with the volunteers and relevant Council Services and that the sub-group would report back to the Forum.

• Promotion of the Core Paths Plan

The group discussed the aspiration to produce new path network leaflets in light of the Plan's adoption and to encourage increased use of the path networks for health improvement, recreation and tourism. The AO highlighted that the production of new leaflets could reduce the volume of leaflets currently produced by a number of organisations and promote outdoor access to a wide range of audiences. It was agreed that this should be investigated further as part of the SOA Action Plan. The AO highlighted that applications to the LEADER programmes could be considered for the production of the leaflets and agreed to investigate this.

Discussion arose on the lack of a Tourist Information Centre in Irvine or within the Three Towns areas. The group agreed that there was no clear location for visitors to obtain information and therefore it was important that it was widely available. The group discussed the community run tourist initiative in Largs and agreed that it would be beneficial if this was replicated in other areas. The AO advised that leaflets are currently distributed through a number of community buildings and visitor attractions.

The AO advised the group that the Information Commissioner had queried the variation in charging for the Plan i.e. charging community groups and voluntary organisations £30 and businesses and other organisations £50. The Council has advised the Information Commissioner that the variation in price is to reflect the input made to the Plan by the community and voluntary sector. The group agreed that these charges were still appropriate. It was agreed that the AO would advise the Forum of any further correspondence from the Information Commissioner in relation to this.

North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership

• Environment Partnership Update

RL provided the group with a summary of the May meeting of the Environment Partnership. This included an update on the success of the Great Green Get Together as part of Community Planning Week. The AO thanked all representatives who assisted with or attended the event. RL advised that new reporting procedures have been developed by the Community Planning Partnership for partner organisations and the Forum will be required to prepare a report for each Environment Partnership meeting. It was agreed that the AO would prepare these in partnership with RL and that they would be circulated at future Forum meetings.

RL advised the group that he had highlighted the benefits of partnership working between the various Thematic Partnerships to the Environment Partnership and the strong linkages between the various agendas. The group agreed that the outdoor access agenda in particular cuts across a number of the Partnerships. It was agreed that this would be reinforced in the Forum's reports to the Environment Partnership.

RL highlighted that a sub group of the Environment Partnership had been formed regarding Carbon Management, to ensure that the various partner organisations were committed to reducing their Carbon Footprint. RL advised the Environment Partnership that the Forum would not be represented on this as it a relatively small voluntary organisation but that it was committed to encouraging sustainable practices and contributing to the Community Planning process.

• Single Outcome Agreement and Action Plan

The AO highlighted that the Forums' recommendations have been incorporated into the final SOA and Action Plan. RL advised the group that the following actions had been incorporated into the Action Plan:

- Prepare and implement Year 1 of a promotional scheme for the Core Paths Plan including the production of path network leaflets and web based information
- Promote the use of the wider path network through improved signage and the production of promotional materials.
- Provide support to schools and community organisations to encourage walking and cycling to school through the Go On Get Out There! and Community Outdoor Access Grant Schemes and related initiatives
- Prepare and implement Year 1 of the improvements and signage scheme for the Core Paths network
- Prepare and implement an improvements and signage scheme for the wider path network and associated infrastructure within Council ownership
- Review the existing provision for outdoor access within strategic Council owned parks and open spaces to identify opportunities for improvement and inform the preparation of funding applications.
- Review the inspection and maintenance requirements of the existing path network within Council ownership and prepare a maintenance scheme for paths and associated infrastructure. This action is being led by the Council's Environment and Related Services.

The group welcomed the recognition of outdoor access in the SOA and Action Plan and agreed that it was important to keep it high on the agenda. The group agreed that the formation of

the SOA Action Plan sub group (as discussed under the Implementation of the Core Paths Plan item) would ensure that the actions were implemented.

AOCB

No other competent business was raised.

Close of meeting

Councillor Highgate thanked the group for participating in the site visit and meeting and reminded them that the next meeting will be on 7 September 2009.