

**Shetland Countryside Access Forum Annual General Meeting  
Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2006  
Islesburgh Community Centre**

**Present:**

Maurice Anderson	NFU Shetland (Chair)
Pete Ellis	RSPB
Sue White	SCFWAG
Malcolm Johnston	Disability Shetland
John Abernethy	NFU
Alec Miller	Shetland Anglers Association
Simon Smith	Scottish Natural Heritage
Allen Fraser	Shetland Field Studies Group
Paul Harvey	Biological Records Group
Sue Hilder	NFU Scotland Access Officer
Vic Hawthorne	SIC Planning
Roger Tait	SIC Planning
Paula Nicolson	SIC, Infrastructure Services

**Apologies**

Melanie Henderson – Equestrian Association  
Jim Henry – Shetland Islands Council

Meeting opened at 7pm

**1. Apologies**

Maurice welcomed everyone to the meeting; he introduced Sue Hilder who is the Access Officer with NFU Scotland.

**2. Minutes from Previous Meeting**

Alec Miller approved the minutes from the previous meeting on 14th November 2006.

**3. Matters Arising**

Vic advised the forum that the Access Officer post within the Council had now been filled. The post had been made a job share; Emma Georgeson and Gillian Morris were to take up their duties in January.

Sue Hilder gave a brief overview of her duties as Access Officer for the NFU and explained that she had been in the post from September 2005. Sue said she was happy to discuss any access issues that members may have.

#### **4. Achievements arising**

- Number of access improvement projects

Roger explained that 240 projects had now been completed over the past 4 years. Within this 95 walking routes had been improved.

- Core Path Plan

Roger reported to the forum that the Core Path Plan was now in draft form and ready to print. All community councils had been consulted. A full public consultation was to be held in February. It was hoped that the core path plan could be completed by December 2007. The newly appointed access officers would play a major role in the development of the Plan.

- Funding Secured

Vic advised that funding was to be sought from the Quality of Life Fund, which was held by the Scottish Executive. It was an ongoing project to secure external funding. Roger said that other funds were sought from Scottish Natural Heritage, Shetland Enterprise, Crofters Commission and SUSTRANS.

- Recording of Rights of Way

A student had been employed in the summer to record the rights of way in Shetland. At present 160 routes had been recorded. The old rights of way were discussed. Roger explained that a volunteer had come forward who was interested in surveying some of the old routes

- Promotion of Access code

To promote the access code local events had been attended for example the recent Northmavine Conference so that the public gained a better understanding of the Access Code. An access festival was to be held in the spring as part of Highland 2007, which was linked to the work currently underway with Visit Shetland and the Field Studies Group to promote Shetland. Vic explained that the Council had a statutory duty to promote the access code.

Roger gave a brief explanation on the forums role which were the following:

- Joint up Working and solving access issues
- Sharing ideas and good practice
- Promoting access management throughout Shetland

## **5. Review of the access strategy**

It was agreed at last years' AGM that the access strategy would be reviewed after one year. Vic gave an overview of the strategy, which was produced in 2005. It was agreed that the strategy would remain as it is for the next year. It was noted that the Strategy would form the basis of the Core Path Plan text sections.

## **6. Review of the Communication Plan**

It was also agreed at the last AGM that the Communication Plan would be reviewed after one year. This plan was available to view on the Council's website. It was agreed that the communication plan would remain the same for the coming year.

## **7. Objectives for the next year**

Roger asked the forum members for their ideas. Simon showed the group a booklet that Orkney Islands Council had produced it showed the walking routes in Orkney, the group agreed that this would be an excellent guide for Shetland but Vic felt that a booklet could be produced but would be something that could be done in the future. The group discussed the benefits of producing the booklet. There was a brief discussion of the objectives of the forum and Roger asked the group to consider and objectives for the following year. Alec suggested that the committee should sit down with the two new staff members to discuss the objectives of the forum for the next year.

## **8. Appointments of office bearers**

Maurice Anderson was voted as chairman for another year.

As Melanie was not in attendance, it was suggested that she would be asked to stand again as vice chair at the next meeting. If Melanie cannot stand again, another member of the forum would be appointed as vice chair.

## **9. Dates, venues and times of next years' meetings**

Everyone agreed that site visits were interesting and informative and hoped that they would continue next year. The next meeting was to be held in Islesburgh Community Centre on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2007 at 10am.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm