

**Countryside Access Forum  
Wednesday 31 May 2006  
Sumburgh Hotel**

**Present:**

Misa Kotkova	Visit Shetland
Pete Ellis	RSPB
Jill Blackadder	Shetland Field Studies Group
Malcolm Johnston	Disability Shetland
Vic Hawthorne	SIC Planning
Roger Tait	SIC Planning
Sue White	SCFWAG
John Ridland	A.C.C
Maurice Anderson	NFU Shetland (Chair)
Melanie Henderson	Equestrian Association
Joanne Sinclair	Planning Student
Howard Towell	Shetland South Ranger
Christine Allan	SIC, Infrastructure Services

**Apologies:**

Alec Miller	Shetland Angling Association
Jim Henry	SIC

1. Introduction and Welcome

Maurice began by saying that this morning had been good and very worthwhile and it should be done again.

2. Progress on Draft Core Path Plan

Roger explained that he had written to all Community Council and that most have responded. All the information has been recorded on computer. 85 routes and the land management routes as a basis of the core path plan. He hopes to have this in draft by July and will bring to this group.

Land management contracts mean they are required to tell Planning and it is in the guidance that is issued by SEERAD. These contacts can be chased up if no information is received.

Not all routes will be in the Core Path Plan. It was agreed that they should include the land management routes, as this will provide their proof that it is being advertised.

Toilets, bus stops and parking will be marked on the plans.

There is a routes from Croft Museum to Pool of Virkie. At present there is still a gap at Levenwick. Roger is to follow this up in the next few weeks. Howard, Roger and John to get together.

John referred to an existing peat road. Also the coastal parts can be very boggy and there are ditches. Roger and John to discuss further.

Dalsetter – there are gates which have been built up and there are old paths here. Vic said that the gates last longer than the stiles, as the stiles we crossed today will need replacing in a year or two. The ladder stiles cost £250 and the others costs £150 which includes the contractors time to put together and install. They come flat packed and cost £50. The price is double for the steel gates.

Vic said he was not prepared to use recycling for anything which has a specific specification but there could be other possibilities.

There are 8 routes completed this year with 10 ongoing. The completed routes are Croft Museum to Pool of Virkie; Sandfirth; Sandness; Fedaland; Vementry; Watsness – Walls, Muckle Roe.

We are also looking at Trondra Farm for disabled access, Papa Stour, Busta Loch, Burn of Lunklett Whalsay and Burland.

John said that apportionment is an issue in Burra. Vic said they are talking with others about this. If the Crofters Commission agree to community apportionment taking place and they agree to a stile or gate going in at the beginning then it would make life easier.

Kissing gates are not practical as sheep can get stuck in these. The small self-closing gates are preferable.

3. Current Access Improvement Projects ongoing (update from working group)

There is no progress on this. Maurice and Vic will discuss this later today.

4. Any access issues and problems

Jill asked about easy footpath walks for the elderly. Vic said he had spoken to the couple concerned and asked them to be involved but he has not heard back from them. Jill thought that there might be others and also suggested putting something into their newsletter. Vic asked to see a copy of the newsletter before it is distributed. John said they also had a newsletter where they could put something in. Jill agreed saying that there would be two points, to identify easy routes and to volunteer to help.

Vic said they would need to chase up Fair Isle as they have not heard from them in 6 months. Pete agreed to do this as he was going to the Observatory at the weekend.

Roger said that the routes to be promoted would need to be agreed by this group and that the routes would cover all of Shetland.

5. Promoting Shetland as a walking destination

(Visit Shetland) Walking in Shetland – They are hoping to get a walking website and brochure produced to include 30 walks. They are looking for experts and other bodies to ensure that the information is correct. They are also to look at new trails. Vic

suggested that the well known routes are not include and they concentrate on new and relatively unknown routes. Maurice did not agree.

(Visit Shetland said that there would be 2 sets of information. One to be used for promotions and one for the actual walkers who come to the islands. The information would be redone and updated every three years. She thanked everyone for their help so far.

## 6. AOB

The previous minutes were agreed.

Vic referred to the Press who were accusing the group of meeting behind closed doors. A reporter is insisting on coming to these meetings. Access has been promoted positively in last weeks Shetland Times. Vic said that the minutes go on the website and so are in the public domain. This is not a Council Forum although we have the word Forum in the title and this may be causing confusion. Vic said that if anyone received calls from the Press he was happy for them to redirect them to himself or Roger.

John said that access had been mentioned at a Marine Meeting he had attended. Grants were available to upgrade beach to blue flag status. Vic said that beach study links back to a tier 1, 2, 3 system and it did not sit within the existing remit of this group. There was some discussion on the system in place and where samples were being taken. Vic said that this group will assist with visitor management.

The beach access at the north end of Sumburgh could be improved with disabled access. Again this is beyond the remit of this group. Erosion here is also a big problem.

Jill mentioned the Shetland Way and Vic said that they are looking at it and he and Roger would discuss with the promotion of walking routes. Hand held GIS is a solution but they need to know they are 100% accurate before issuing them.

Jill thought that a Broch trail south from Lerwick could be promoted fairly quickly and Visit Shetland should be involved. Vic said he would leave promotion to the relevant people as we are involved in visitor management.

Tingwall – Scalloway route. A footpath along, nearby the road perhaps boardwalks 20 yards above the loch along the east side of the golf course. Historically this is the oldest walked route in Shetland. Vic said that he would like to see the priority taken away from car users. Maurice thought that this was out of our remit.

## 7. Date and Time of Next Working Group/s

It was agreed that these meetings should continue in the same vein as today's. Somewhere else on the mainland would be decided for the next meeting sometime at the end of August.

The meeting closed at 2.05 pm