

Countryside Access Forum
Wednesday 16th July 2008
Pier Head Pub, Voe
6pm

Minutes

Present:

Maurice Anderson	NFUS
Ian Walterson	A.S.C.C (Vice Chair)
Simon Smith	Scottish National Heritage
Sheila Johnson	Outdoor Access Officer, Planning
Natalie Pion	SCFWAG
Abigail Robertson	Equestrian Association
Jill Blackadder	Shetland Field Studies Group
Alec Miller	Angling Association

Apologies

Jim Henry	Lerwick Community Council
Austin Taylor	Heritage Manager
Claire Linton	Administration

1. Welcome and Introduction

Introductions were made around the table, as some members had not met before.

2. Apologies

There were only 3 apologies made and they are noted above.

3. Minutes from previous Meeting

Simon Pointed out that point 9 on the previous minutes meant that he was informing people of the 'Scottish Coastal Route'. The Minutes from the previous Meeting were moved for approval by Simon and seconded by Abigail.

4. Shetland Draft Core Paths Plan Formal Public Consultation update

Sheila gave an update on the Draft Core Path Plan having gone out for the 12 week formal consultation. It has been sent out to all Community Councils, the Library, Infrastructure Services Reception, Countryside and Natural Heritage Division of the Scottish Executive, Paths for all Partnership, Historic Scotland, Access Forum, Scottish Natural Heritage, National Farmers Union Scotland, Shetland Amenity Trust, Royal Society for Protection of Birds, Legal Services, The Rights of Way Society, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Shetland Crofting Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, the Angling Association and the Equestrian Association. 102 Grazings Clerks have been written to informing them of where they can view the Core Path Plan and the Plan has been put on the SICs web site.

A Public Notice was put in the Shetland Times at the beginning of the Formal Consultation period and also for the Environmental Report, which accompanies it. Alec Miller suggested a press release in the Shetland Times. Alec also suggested burning CDs and leaving them at the library for people to take and perhaps approaching Radio Shetland or SIBC about CPP announcements as further methods to draw peoples' attention to it. Abigail suggested putting up posters at the Horse Shows and a poster has also gone up at the Marts.

Leaflets explaining Core Paths in general and Objection forms have also been produced to accompany the plan.

Sheila explained that there would be an Access stall at all the agricultural shows primarily to display the CPP but also access information and signs in general. She has got leaflets for dog owners which explains the relevant parts of the legislation which has been mentioned previously at Access Forum meetings and is hoping to put together a leaflet on Insurance and Liability in time for the shows as well which can point Land Managers in the right direction for more information. She has also attained 'A Brief Guide to Occupiers' Legal Liabilities in Scotland' booklets produced by SNH to distribute at the shows.

5. AOCB

Ian Walterson informed us that the CPP had been discussed and the Walls and Sandness Community Council meeting and they were generally pleased with the document. They wanted to know if all routes which had access improvements done would be produced on a booklet. Sheila explained that at the moment they are overhauling the maintenance database and mapping system for all the access routes and would soon have a complete map of all routes which could then be used for this purpose. She is not sure what format it will take and was waiting to see how other Local Authorities produced the final adopted version of their Core Paths Plan and perhaps get some ideas for our CPP and maps of all access routes. She would welcome any suggestions on producing these. One concern on producing maps with all routes on them was that some land managers don't want their routes to be promoted. However it should be pointed out that they agreed for the access improvements in the first place which were paid for by the SIC and the council ensures the routes that they have improved anyway.

Ian also stated that the Association of Community Councils were happy with the CPP as long as the Land Managers were informed. Sheila explained that as many Land Managers as possible were written to back in March to draw their attention to this. Since the meeting she can confirm that approximately 150 Land Managers were written to on the 17th March 2008. Most of the CPP routes have been improved and the land managers were contacted to ask for their permission at the time the improvements were done.

Ian also raised the issue of liability and insurance as this is the main issue that crops up with Land Managers. Sheila explained that the Core Path Plan and the Land Reform Act do not impact on the Land Managers existing duty of care to people on their land, which is already in place under the Occupiers Liability (Scotland) Act 1960. Ian's concerns are for those Land Managers

who do not have their own Liability insurance. The SIC have their own insurance for the infrastructure that is put in place on Core Paths and Access Routes. The Rangers survey the routes one, two or three times a year. They not only check the infrastructure but also any hazards natural or man made on the routes that we may need to contact the Land Manager to sort out. Sheila will try to explain this in the leaflet.

Risk Assessments are carried out on each Core Path Plan Route by SIC. Simon informed everyone that the SIC is the only Local Authority that takes on the Risk Assessments and Insurance of the routes. He also stated that in the case of natural hazards the case law so far has been on the side of the Landowner.

The Access budget is much less than previous years and we are not in a position to help every land manager to put infrastructure in. However there is a stock of flat pack stiles that we can provide to land managers free of charge to help. Alec is looking into perhaps getting the Community Service people to provide the labour for putting stiles to fishing lochs.

A representative from the Lerwick Port Authority will be invited to the next Forum meeting to discuss the problem of blocked access when trying to walk around the shore in Lerwick.

6. Date and time of next meeting

The next Access Forum meeting will be on Thursday 2nd October at 10 am at Infrastructure Services, Grantfield.