

**Countryside Access Forum  
Thursday 29th May 2008  
Conference Room Grantfield – Lerwick**

**Minutes**

**Present:**

Ian Walterson	A.S.C.C (Vice Chair)
Simon Smith	Scottish National Heritage
Malcolm Johnston	Disability Shetland
Emma Georgeson	SIC, Planning
Sheila Johnson	SIC, Planning
Claire Linton	SIC, Administration (Minutes)
Sue White	SCFWAG
Natalie Pion	SCFWAG
Abigail Robertson	Equestrian Association
Austin Taylor	Heritage Manager

**Apologies**

Pete Ellis	RSPB
Jill Blackadder	Shetland Field Studies Group
Deborah Carr	Visit Shetland

**1. Welcome and Introduction**

Ian stood in as chair and introductions were made around the table, as there were some new faces, Natalie Pion who will be covering for Sue and Austin Taylor who is Emma and Sheila's new Manager.

**2. Apologies**

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

**3. Minutes from previous Meeting**

The Minutes from the previous Meeting were approved by Malcolm and seconded by Abigail.

**4. SRDP – changes to funding – SCFWAG**

Sue started off by saying that the Land Management Contracts (LMC) are finished. There is still money for access through an option within the Scotland Rural Development Programme SRDP. The Major difference between this and the LMC is only a maximum of 75% funding is available. The 75% funding puts people off as they don't know where they can get the other 25% funding and the Core Paths Plan (CPP) funding wouldn't be able to be used unless it fits in with the CPP. If anyone wants to apply for funding they have to see Emma or Sheila first to get a map and a written confirmation that they gave them the map. There is no provision for motor vehicles on the CPP bridges but there is a possibility that they can be made bigger for prams and disabled people. Signs can be put up saying that motor vehicles are not allowed, as bridges are not strong enough to hold them.

## **5. Access Complaints**

Emma asked if anyone had any issues regarding access improvements or visitor management issues. Complaints come in every week to Emma and Sheila and they sort them out as they see fit. The usual complaints are from Land Managers. Jill left a note with Emma of what she would have liked to have brought up at the meeting it is as follows - I wondered if the committee could look at the possibility of a rather special access issue in the Out Skerries, where the entire Mioness peninsula, representing archaeological tourism interest and a considerable potential grazing resource, is being cut off by winter sea erosion. The gap was formerly possible to clamber across, but no longer. Sue said that if there is any archaeology then Historic Scotland might help with funding. Simon mentioned that it might be an idea to contact the Skerries community and see if they want to do something about it and if they even know about it. Emma and Sheila are going to write to Skerries Community Council. Abigail explained that a gate at Robins Brae closes too fast for people going through with horses and the hinge needs to be changed. Emma will ask John Sandison who installed the gates to take a look and fix them. Ian asked about the ongoing vagueness about dogs whether they should be kept on a lead at all times and what close control really means. Emma and Sheila are trying to replace negative signage such as 'No dogs allowed!' by encouraging dog owners to act responsibly. Emma handed out leaflets to every one and it has all the information that is needed.

## **6. Core Paths Plan Update**

Sheila handed out the draft of the formal consultations for the CPP's for everyone to look through. The forum members commented that the new formal consultation looks a lot clearer than the one before. Maps in the CPP are all in the Community Council areas zooming in on certain routes. The formal consultation is going to the Planning Board at the end of June then going out for a 3-month formal consultation then going to full council. If Sheila has time she will go around the agricultural shows again this year with the CPP and support from the Forum would be good for this. Copies of the draft CPP can be sent to everyone in the forum so everyone can have a look through and make any changes or pick up any mistakes before it goes to the Planning Board. Since the last meeting in December land managers have been contacted by letter about the CPP. Not all land managers have been contacted as it is difficult to get their details but Community Council Clerks and Grazing Clerks have been contacted asking for more details of land managers.

## **7. Promoting CPP and SOAC**

Sheila asked if anyone had any ideas and if anyone would volunteer for anything. Emma suggested a sub group from the forum be made and come up with ideas for promoting the CPP and the Scottish outdoor access code. There is some money for promotions but not for people's time. CPP maps will be available for the public to buy for a reasonable price and will be printed to order. Maps could go to all the local shops to be put on display. Malcolm said that Disability Shetland could have a link on their website to the CPP one. Austin explained that the Heritage website is currently being re-designed and a comments page could be included for the CPP.

## **8. Access Forum Involvement**

Jill - it seemed that it might be an idea to invite members of this committee to take an interest in their own areas, in terms of how effective existing access was, or what new needs might have become apparent. These could be fed back to the committee based on direct experience. Secondly, in these same walks and preparation exercises, whenever I come across specific places which from a safety perspective would benefit from such stiles or gates, I feel that it would be helpful if this committee had access to a data base, or a web site in which detailed notes could be placed, gradually building up a bank of tasks for the immediate future, as man-power and funds permit, within the limits of the existing rolling programme. Thirdly I wanted to pass on several extremely warm comments from members of the public, who have appreciated very much, the arrival of the new stiles and self-closing gates in their areas, or in places where they had been walking. In the course of Shetland Field Studies Group walks and especially the pre-walking tasks which include risk assessments, we have met a great deal of positive feedback which I was very glad to hear and be able to pass on.

## **9. AOCB**

Austin brought up that the Lerwick coast is being fenced off and is very hard to get around and from here to the Marina there is no way of getting to the coast and it might be an idea to invite someone to the access forum meetings to discuss this. This may be a concern in the future with the Museum being there and boats coming in. Emma is leaving her post in a few weeks so it will just be Sheila dealing with the CPP. Simon – coastal walking.

## **10. Date and time of next meeting**

The next Access Forum meeting will be on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> July on the Evening and the place is to be confirmed few weeks before.