

**Countryside Access Forum**  
**Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2009**  
**10am Grantfield Conference Room – Lerwick**

**Minutes**

**Present:**

Sheila Johnson	SIC, Planning
Abigail Robertson	Equestrian Association
Jill Blackadder	Shetland Field Studies Group
Austin Taylor	Heritage Manager
Deborah Kerr	Visit Shetland
Ian Walterson	A.S.C.C (Chair)
Claire Linton	SIC, Administration (Minutes)
David Adamson	National Farmers Union Scotland
Alec Miller	Shetland Anglers Association (Vice Chair)
Paul Harvey	Shetland Amenity Trust

**Apologies**

Pete Ellis	RSPB
Representative from SNH	

**1. Welcome and Introduction**

Ian welcomed everyone to the meeting and the usual introductions were made.

**2. Apologies**

There were two apologies and they are noted above.

**3. Minutes from previous Meeting**

There were a couple of changes from the previous minutes they will be changed and the minutes will be available on the website <http://www.shetland.gov.uk/developmentplans/ShetlandCountrysideAccess.asp>. Alec approved the minutes and Austin seconded.

**4. Proposed Wind Farm and Access**

Sheila started off by saying that the application is in from Viking but she has not seen it yet and is waiting for permission from John Holden (Development Management Manager) to have a look through the boxes. From what Sheila has seen access will not be completely cut off but will be restricted during construction and maintenance. There has not been much information from Viking Energy regarding access issues and Sheila will try to find out more.

Jill asked if the access information is not in the planning application could we suggest it is not complete? Austin explained that no one in planning has made a decision yet if the application is complete and can be validated. Ian asked if the access forum is going to comment on the wind farm application? The Forum will be consulted on regarding the wind farm and Sheila will be in touch when she has access to the application.

Paul had the Non-Technical Summary from a box of information that was sent from Viking Energy to the Shetland Amenity Trust. The consultation comment end date is the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 4 weeks from the advertisement date and people are asking for extensions as a lot of people and groups have not received the information yet. The information that Sheila had received was an email from David at Viking Energy. Austin spoke about how there hasn't been much dialog between SIC Planning Department and Viking Energy regarding access issues and they are very hard to get a hold of. Before they put in their application there was no pre application, which was spoken about previously.

Alec said that he had a look at the information that was in the Library but there were only 6 books of it and from what he saw there was nothing about countryside access. When Sheila has had a look through the application boxes then she will arrange a meeting as soon as possible to discuss before the comments closing date. Austin has been asking Jan Riise (Head of Service Legal and Administration) for advice about legal issues and is still waiting on a report from him.

Jill said that the looser the access agreement with Viking Energy then the more they can get away with, such as not tidying up after themselves. Ian explained that no one would be walking through a construction site anyway and David said that it would be unlikely for it to be fenced off given its size.

Abigail asked Sheila about the horse riding and Sheila read out the information she had and it stated that horse riding was only an issue at the coast and wouldn't be considered in the rest of the document. This will need to be addressed.

## **5. AOCB**

### **Bike Week 13<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> June**

Sheila spoke about the Active and Sustainable Travel Group and how they are promoting children cycling to school and cycling groups. Sheila asked the group if anyone would be able to contribute in any way through their organisations to bike week.

### **Invite Active and Sustainable Travel member onto Forum**

This was spoken about before at a previous meeting and Sheila will ask a member of this group to join the forum. Ian suggested it would be good for someone from the Roads department to come, as there are more and more questions about cycle paths, perhaps just to a forum meeting to explain their roads and cycle path proposals for the future.

### **Environment Forum and radio**

Sheila did a presentation at the Environment Forum and also did a radio interview. Austin said how it was all well received.

### **Shows – hazard signs (Cattle/bull)**

Sheila is going to produce signs based on the ones she has already stating 'Hazard form cattle/bull', but using a bulls head instead of an exclamation mark. She has given a lot out but in some places the crofters still haven't put

them up. She will be going round all the country shows this summer with them. Ian suggested more people would use them if they knew about them. Sheila will also put an advert in Landwise in the Shetland Times to try to raise awareness to crofters. An A2 poster of them will also be produced and put up at the Shows to attract attention. If the crofters have these signs up at the entrances to their fields of cows then they are covered should someone enter the field and get hurt by a cow. If they don't have the signs up they are liable if someone gets hurt. Sheila will also put some to the NFU stand at the shows.

### **Ness of Sound**

Jill spoke about the dangers at the Ness of Sound such as the barbed wire in places and certain areas being too steep and near the cliff edge. Sheila has been advised by the Paths For All Partnership to put a sign and map up at each end of the site to show the steep areas and to state that they must take care and be responsible for their own actions.

This area was mapped back when Vic Hawthorne and Roger Tait worked with Outdoor Access and was fenced specifically with access in mind. The land manager here has lost a lot of land by moving the fences back already to accommodate walkers. Jill went onto say about the narrow access next to the cliffs and that it would be an idea to put styles up at either end of a field to give people the choice of two routes. Sheila explained about the bull and cattle in the park and that it was even steeper there, which meant that you would have to veer further through the field around the livestock to avoid these areas which would be even more dangerous. There would not be an alternative route created and the barbed wire has to stay up because of the bull and cows leaning over the fence.

Ian asked who would have to pay for a new fence? And Sheila said if it is a safety issue the SIC would pay on a Core Path. A handrail was also suggested but decided against due to the safety issues of them in such an exposed area becoming loose. Ian said that if the signs were to go up at either side about the risks etc then people could make their own mind up about continuing on the route or not.

Jill suggested that if this part of the path was made safe then everyone would be able to use it, however Sheila explained that given the terrain this is not an all abilities route and people need to make an informed decision as to whether to go on it or not. If it is too challenging they can do another route in Lerwick like the Clickimin or Staney Hill. Ian asked, once you start doing things like this where do you stop? Austin said that you cannot make the outdoors completely risk free and Sheila stated that one person's perception of a risk is not another's. Once the signs are up then users can make an informed decision. They have been warned that it is a steep coastal route and can turn back if they wish. There are many routes in Shetland that unfortunately can't be all ability routes given the geography of the islands. This is the opinion of the Technical Officer for the Paths For All Partnership also.

### **Motorised wheel chair**

Sheila has spoken to Ray Ferry who owns the MichealsWood tree plantation in Aith. He has managed to source a motorised wheelchair that could access the plantation on the grass paths and is wondering where he could get

funding to help buy it. It would be there permanently for anyone with a disability to use. Paul said it would be worth asking Shetland Amenity Trust since they have helped with the plantation before and Ian said it would be worth asking the Sandsting & Aithsting Community Council as it may be easier to get funding from a few different places. Sheila will also ask Malcolm Johnson (Disability Shetland) if he knows of anywhere. Austin also suggested the health promotion person Anne Smith.

**Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Sheila is going to try and find out everything she can about the wind farm application and then contact the forum for a meeting, which may need to be at short notice.