

**Dumfries and Galloway Outdoor Access Forum**  
**Minute of Meeting held on**  
**Wednesday 8th June 2011**  
**Town Hall, Castle Douglas 4pm**

**Attendance**

<b>Forum Members</b>	
David Rothwell (DR) – Land Managers, Chair (part)	Owen Watt (OW) – Land Managers
Peter Ross (PR)- Recreation Groups Chair (part)	William Crawford (WC) – Land Managers
Alistair Clark (AC) – Public Bodies	June Hay (JH) – Recreational Groups
Ken Muir (KMR) – Recreation Groups	Ian Carruthers (IC) – Councillor
Mona Parr (MP) - Recreation Groups	Linda McFarlane (LM) - Public Bodies
David Austin (DA) – Land Managers	Bill Meadows (BM) – Public Bodies/Land Managers
Carolyn Dunlop (CD) – Land Managers	Stewart Robertson- Public Bodies

<b>Officers in Attendance</b>	
Karen Morley (KM) – DGC	Jo Mercer (JM) – DGC

<b>Member of the Public in Attendance</b>

**Welcome**

The Chair welcomed everyone, and convened the meeting.

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Apologies</b>	<b>Action</b>
1.1	Ian McCall (IM) – Paths for All John Blaikie (JB) – Recreation Groups Beverley Vaux (BV) - Recreation Groups Jim Campbell (JC) – Recreation/tourism	
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Previous Minutes</b>	
2.1	The minutes of the meeting on the 8 <sup>th</sup> of December 2011 were agreed as a true record of the meeting and were approved.	
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Matters Arising</b>	
3.1	There were no matters arising	
3.2	<b>Welcome &amp; membership update</b>	
3.3	The chair welcomed Ken Muir who is a member of the Wigtownshire Ramblers and has agreed to take on the role of walking representative. His deputy will be Garry Tait, also a member of the Ramblers but from the eastern side of the county.	
3.4	KM reported that there had been some progress on filling other forum posts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharon Walker wants to step down as Linda McFarlane's deputy. Linda suggested Chris Topping, who is part of a joint health and wellbeing unit (NHS &amp; Council) and who shares responsibility for physical activity with Linda. Chris is a council employee, however members felt that this was not a problem.</li> <li>• Peter Ross has recruited David Ferguson another health walk volunteer to be his deputy</li> <li>• Jim Campbell has been appointed as a representative for Destination Dumfries and Galloway which will represent the tourism sector. This follows on from a successful committee report suggesting cutting Councillor representation to one member to allow space for a tourism representative. Fred Finlay will be the deputy.</li> <li>• We still need deputies for JH, &amp; JB, we have no representation for communities or NFUS members.</li> </ul>	
3.5	DR noted that on reviewing the constitution it was clear that turnover of members had not been undertaken according to the constitution. This had largely been due to the requirement for stability while core path planning was undertaken. A poll of members present highlighted three members who wished to step down (DA, OW & MP). The group wishes these members all the best for the future and thanks them for their contribution of a number of years. Retiring members to work with KM to ensure their roles are filled. DR requested members consider when in the next 3-5 years they may wish to step down so a programme of renewal of forum membership can be drawn up at the next meeting to guide the forum over the next few years.	
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Core Path Update</b>	
4.1	JM advised that the Directorate of Planning and Environmental Appeals (DPEA) had received the	

	<p>plan last November. Dumfries and Galloway Council submitted the draft plan plus 1) the unwithdrawn objections 2) the amendments agreed between DGCC and objectors, leading to objections being withdrawn and 3) proposed amendments identified by DGCC staff that didn't arise as part of the consultation process. [All the proposed changes were reviewed and endorsed by the access forum last year.]</p> <p>The procedure to date with local authorities who had no unwithdrawn objections is that they were able to make changes to the plan and then adopt it without reference to the DPEA or Scottish ministers. However the procedure where there are unwithdrawn objections and therefore the plan becomes the subject of an inquiry seems to be evolving, so that now the DPEA have indicated that they will be obliged to scrutinise all proposed changes to the plan, although this is not stated in the legislation, the guidance or the code of practice. Moreover they have indicated to DGC that this places an excessive burden on their resources and they have requested that we look at ways to reduce the number of proposed amendments.</p> <p>JM has therefore suggested to the DPEA that the proposed changes are reduced to those which involve the addition of a new route. An example of this is Cairnsmore of Carsphairn, where the path was identified as an aspirational route as a key bridge was missing. Since the draft plan was published this bridge has been installed and the land-owner consented to designate this popular hill walk as a core path. DGC could then adopt the plan as directed and immediately review and make the additional changes which involve either the deletion or diversion of core paths, as agreed in the consultation process. This is in line with section 20 of the Land Reform Act, which allows local authorities to delete or divert core paths without public consultation.</p> <p>The DPEA has yet to respond to this proposed course of action.</p> <p>There was a general discussion of the process and disappointment that it was taking so long. It was mooted that the Council should lobby the DPEA through CoSLA for a clarification of the procedure, and that Roger Grant, chair of the PHE committee should be advised of the issues.</p> <p><b>Action</b>  <b>JM to contact SCAN CoSLA rep.</b>  <b>SF to brief Roger Grant.</b></p>	JM/SF
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Access Strategy</b>	
5.1	<p>KM express disappointment at the response to the consultation amongst OAF members on the draft Outdoor Access Strategy. It was stressed that this document would define the council's approach to access over the forthcoming years and was therefore an important document. Members have a second chance to express their views when the document goes out to public consultation from the 15<sup>th</sup> of August. Members requested that if possible changes made following the initial consultation could be highlighted so that those who had read it the first time round could easily see what had been changed.</p> <p>Action - KM will e-mail the documents again to members  - David Clyne to investigate possibility of highlighting changes</p>	KM/DC
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Cally Woods</b>	
6.1	<p>A meeting took place in the spring regarding Cally woods (DR, PR, BV, &amp; Keith Muir (FCS) attended) Since then Keith Muir (FCS) has costed up fully upgrading the route and cost are in the region of £50,000. There was some debate about whether this had been the agreed outcome of the meeting and those involved thought that a lower cost 'holding job' could be done on the better areas with the back loop closed off, use of the route monitored for a year while decision were made about its future. In general the forum has doubts about the cost effectiveness of spending this sort of money on such a short route which has difficult ground conditions. It was felt that better buy-in could be achieved if the route were looked at in the context of the development of a wider 'Fleet valley' route with longer distances and more variety. It was felt that this issue which is very specific in nature would be best dealt with by a sub group of MP, PR, BV, Keith Muir (FCS) and the Chair of the Gatehouse Initiative. KM to draw up terms of reference for the subgroup for circulation to forum members. Once agreed the group to meet.</p> <p>Action – KM/PR to draw up terms of reference  - PR to convene meeting of the subgroup</p>	KM/PR
<b>7.0</b>	<b>AOB</b>	

7.1	JH requested the forum's backing to be an observing member of the SWESTRANS board as many cycling issues are dealt with by this body. This was agreed by the forum <b>Action - A letter of support to be written for JH</b>	KM
7.2	Interest was expressed in the Biosphere project and how the forum may support the project. <b>Action - A briefing to be brought to the next meeting</b>	KM
7.3	MP reported problems with a popular bridleway locally which had a gate locked. Richard Masters (Access Officer for Anndale and Eskdale) is investigating. DA expressed concern with recent wild fires. There was talk of the fire brigade considering charging landowners for the cost of dealing with these fires. The starting of fires may sometimes be blamed on those taking access and if charging were to be implemented this may have a negative effect on landowner's' attitudes to access especially in times of drought. AC thought that this might have been relating to some fires in the north of the country where landowners brought in helicopters paid for by insurance companies to protect timber crops. <b>Action – consult with National Access Forum to see if this was becoming an issue</b>	KM
7.4	DR reported back that a reply had been received to his letter to the chief executive regarding resources. Action - A copy to be circulated with the minutes.	KM
8.0	<b>Council Countryside Team Restructuring</b>	
8.1	The council's countryside services team is entering a period of restructuring aimed at responding to structural changes within the council increasing efficiency and effectiveness allowing the service to be in a better position to address the ongoing financial constraints placed on the council. The countryside team is made up of Access Officers, Rangers and a Countryside Projects Officer and is headed up by Simon Fieldhouse. The restructuring will not lead to a loss in personnel at present, but may see changes to job remits. Once more information is available the Access Forum will be consulted for their views.	
9.0	<b>Election of Chairman</b>	
9.1	After four years of service DR wishes to step down as Chairman. The forum expressed their appreciation to David for his leadership and hard work to support access and the forum over the years. DR then proposed PR as the next Chair, this was seconded by JH. There were no other candidates proposed so PR was elected as chair unanimously. Vice Chair to be elected once restructuring complete to give the opportunity for a new member to put themselves forward.	
10.0	<b>Future of the Forum workshops</b>	
10.1	The group split into two groups to discuss ideas for the future role of the forum, this was split between land managers and recreation users to allow for in-depth discussions from both sides. There was some unease from forum members over this split as it could be seen to be divisive	
10.2	Group 1 – Recreation users AC, PR, LMC, MP, KM, JH, led by KM. Wide range of issues discussed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on bigger issues, national access forum?</li> <li>• Should there be disabled representation on the forum?</li> <li>• Forum should be seen as independent and trusted by all.</li> <li>• Be involved in negotiation between parties</li> <li>• Involved in Community Planning &amp; Single Outcome Agreements (SOA)</li> <li>• Promote more widely the new Access Strategy</li> <li>• Focus on implementing the strategy</li> <li>• Links with SOA important</li> <li>• Planning/ Development Control more involvement</li> <li>• Facilitating Access for recreational groups</li> <li>• Active in the public forum, presence in the media, at shows, good website, involved in events such as the 'Day of the Region' in Glenkens in September</li> <li>• Dispute resolution – but not agencies</li> <li>• Creation of subgroups to bring focus</li> <li>• Promotion of responsible access</li> <li>• Look at reviewing the constitution, more flexibility for deputies to get involved, better definition of agencies roles, could get external help to look at it?</li> <li>• Keep forum meetings to four times a year even if subgroups meet in between</li> <li>• Networking of information</li> <li>• Fundraising? – possibility for the future depending on cuts at the council</li> <li>• Future planning</li> <li>• Evaluated suitability of proposed core paths for specific user groups</li> </ul> Group 2 Land managers, DR, DA, WC, OW, CD, BM, SR. A wide range of topics were discussed, including livestock traceability. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of core paths - WC noted that there was a role for the forum in identifying new</li> </ul>	

- routes, particularly coastal routes.
- Obstructions and resolving disputes – CD noted that NFUS was involved in this in other locations and would be interested in mediating.
- Funding/resources/sustainability – DR noted that the OAF had been most successful as a lobbying group in the past when organising face-to-face meeting with councillors and other politicians.
- Review of constitution – DR had given the constitution some thought, in particular a procedure for ensuring a rolling programme of replacements for existing members.

During coffee JM & KM compiled a summary list of the most popular suggestions. The final session asked members to tag which of the suggestions they agreed with and also put their names to any which they would be willing to get involved with.

**Results**

After the meeting the results were analysed, the results were as follows

Task	No of Votes	Volunteer names
Evaluate existing paths	11	PR, DR, BM, JH
Review of constitution	6	PR, DR
Future planning	9	PR,NFU,BM
Planning/development control	4	PR, JH
Ad hoc sub groups	8	MP, FCS, LM, PR, SGRPID
Path development	6	MP, PR, JH, WC
Lobbying	8	NFU, PR,
Obstructions	5	MP, PR, FCS, WC, CD (NFU)
Promoting the forum	5	JH, PR
Education	9	CD
Training	1	JH

After scoring, the following priorities were identified;

- 1) Evaluate existing paths
- 2) Form ad hoc sub groups
- 3) Future planning
- 4) Path Development, Obstructions,
- 5) Lobbying, Education
- 6) Review of the constitution, planning development,
- 7) Promoting the forum
- 8) Training for the forum

From this it appears that evaluating existing paths is a high priority for members of the forum with support for ad hoc sub groups which will enable a wide variety of issues to be dealt with on a time limited basis. Future planning looks like an interesting third. Any of the others may well depend on interested individuals from the forum putting time in to develop them or may need to wait until other issues have been dealt with.

**Action To evaluate the results in the context of council strategy and to draw up a suggested plan for discussion at the next meeting**

KM

**11.0 Date of next meeting**  
Wed 7<sup>th</sup> Sept 2pm Dumfries

**Close**

Chair thanked everyone for coming.