

Minutes of the meeting of Orkney Local Access Forum and Countryside Committee

Tuesday 28 October 2014 at 7pm
St Magnus Centre

Present:

Brenda Blunn	Orkney Ramblers Club
Stephen Jenkinson	Scottish Kennel Club/Chair
Roddy Mackay	Orkney Islands Council
Ian Wilkins	Orkney Islands Council
Alan Muir	Orkney Islands Council
James Green	Orkney Islands Council
Ken Lawson	Scottish Government's Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate
Sandra Miller	Orkney History Society
Anne Gascoigne	Orkney Field Club/Vice Chair
Victor Muir	National Farmers Union
Elaine Clarke	Historic Scotland Ranger Service
Roderick Thorne	Sanday Ranger
Hugh Halcro-Johnston	Scottish Land and Estates
Barbara Scollay	Secretary

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Rob Crichton, Jenny Campbell, Liz Dennison and Alan Leitch.

The Chair explained that Ian Thain, who represented the Scottish Rights of Way Society, had resigned from the society and as such would no longer be attending OLAF meetings. Thanks to Ian were noted from the committee members for his hard work over many years with the Society and OLAF. Stephen confirmed he had written to Ian to this effect.

2. Adoption of the Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 July 2014

The minutes were adopted on the proposal of Anne Gascoigne, seconded by Ken Lawson.

3. Matters Arising

Core Path Maintenance

Ian Wilkins handed out an update sheet (copy attached to the minutes) and confirmed there were no issues at present.

Right of Way Dispute in South Ronaldsay

James Green confirmed that the investigation is ongoing and a report will be made to committee in February 2015. The Chair asked how the OLAF members had felt about the dispute discussion and the following comments were made:

- it was a long evening and perhaps other disputes need to be dealt with in a separate meeting – noted and commented that this was a very complicated dispute whereas the usual ones are much simpler and can be gone through a lot quicker
- make sure photographs are available beforehand – noted and agreed that secretary will ensure they are forwarded
- make sure representation at the meeting is varied (not all walkers, not all landowners etc)
- useful process but need to ensure we add value to the OIC process without being too onerous on OLAF members

4. Update on OLAF contact details

The Secretary and Chair explained the details of some recent changes to the telephone number, email and web address that can be used to contact OLAF. We now have an additional web address which diverts to the orkneycommunities page (www.orkneylaf.org.uk), a separate telephone number with answering message (01856 477 847) that diverts to the secretary's home telephone, and a contact email address (info@orkneylaf.org.uk) that again diverts to the secretary's email account. The idea is to present a more consistent and professional front for OLAF and the secretary will circulate these details to OLAF members.

5. NAF Update

The Chair will be attending the joint meeting of the NAF and LAF next week and explained that it offers a useful networking opportunity. Members were asked if any of them would be interested in attending future joint meetings as OLAF may be able to contribute to costs. The Secretary will circulate future dates as and when they are confirmed.

Roddy asked if Steve could feed back on the availability of VC facilities for these meetings which would avoid travelling time and costs.

Item 7 was then taken and the numbering of items adjusted.

6. Update on Core Path Plan Review

James explained that informal consultation was due to happen prior to Christmas but they had decided to carry out more direct informal consultation with landowners until January. Letters will be issued to all landowners with documents available from the Council Offices, Libraries etc and copies of particular routes will be available on application. It is hoped this process will raise awareness of Core Paths and start a dialogue as amendments are proposed.

The informal consultation will form draft plan which will be reported to committee in either March or June dictated by any issues that arise. After committee approval the process of completing the review and making amendments will begin. James will bring back findings from the information consultation with landowners to the Jan/Feb meeting of OLAF for discussion.

Rod questioned whether the inspection regime would be completed before the review is completed as there are two paths in Sanday now completely unusable. One area of land has eroded away completely. Ian explained that in that particular case it came into a grey area between James and Ian's responsibilities and although steady progress was being made it would depend much on the weather and other work duties if the inspection regime would be completed in Sanday prior to the review.

7. Outdoor Access in Orkney Workshop – Elected Members and OLAF

OLAF members who attended the workshop agreed that it was a useful opportunity to raise awareness of the issues and tourism opportunities was a major highlighted item. It was noted that some islands have taken ownership of their own paths and highlighted some points such as building value to local businesses through walking holidays for example.

It is believed that it will have opened some Councillors eyes on the decisions that they have made and the Chair has since followed up correspondence with the Councillors present. Three 'quick wins' were identified: dog mess, setting out an accessibility policy and a business case for investing in the access network. The Chair then took the group through his presentation made on 15 September.

8. Review of OLAF Operation, Constitution and Membership

The Chair distributed a questionnaire about how members felt about certain aspects of OLAF, its membership and how it operates. After asking those present to get into small groups for discussion, all came back together to go over some thoughts on the questions posed. The group did not have time to go through every question together but some of the comments raised were as follows:

Q1 – Change – recently the forum has been more joined up with OIC rather than feeling like them and us; suggest we invite other Councillors; important that member's areas of expertise are available when necessary; need to establish clearly whether OLAF meetings are open to the public or not

Q2 & Q3 – Attendance and Members – 10yrs ago around 20 people attended the meetings; a lot of people attend through their work; ensure topics discussed are relevant; committee attendance as a whole is dropping everywhere; look after the countryside we are accessing, not just access to the countryside; the initial set-up of Core Paths may have taken over the meetings at the time and from then on there was less interest in other matters; idea about a new group made up of reps of organisations with a sub-group

Q4 – Opinions on key decision – may be a need to work meetings and input around OIC committee dates/deadlines; could input into access strategy, landscape partnership and core path plan; useful to have a key point of contact within OIC at a fairly high strategic level

Those present agreed that it was a useful exercise and the secretary will issue the questionnaire to all members asking for them to consider the questions and respond.

9. AOCB

None

10. Date of Next Meeting

A Doodle poll will be issued by the secretary to identify a suitable dates for meetings over the course of 2015. All agreed that 7 – 9pm would be an ideal time.

Thanking everyone for their attendance the Chair closed the meeting at 9.30pm.