

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

Tuesday 8 November 2016 at 7pm
St Magnus Centre, Kirkwall

Present:

Hugh Halcro-Johnston	Scottish Land and Estates
Anne Gascoigne	Orkney Field Club, Vice Chair
Victor Muir	National Farmers Union
Ross Irvine	Orkney Islands Council
Cllr Leslie Manson	Elected Member of Orkney Islands Council, Chair
Simon Treasure	Orkney Tourism Group
Alan Leitch	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Brenda Blunn	Orkney Ramblers
Ken Lawson	Scottish Government's Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate
Barbara Scollay	Secretary
David McNeish	Invited Speaker (for item 1)

1. St Magnus Way – David McNeish

David kindly re-arranged his obligations to attend our revised meeting date to talk about the plans and progress for the St Magnus Way, a planned 51-mile route across the West Mainland of Orkney. Project participants have traced what they believe is the pathway that the body of St Magnus was taken on and have planned a suitable pilgrimage walking route starting in Evie and moving to Birsay, through Harray, Finstown, over the hill to Orphir and onwards to Kirkwall; all using mostly core paths and minor roads although a few parts need a link to make the path cohesive.

The plan is to open the route before the Magnus 900 celebrations on 16 April 2017 and there is a huge amount of interest locally and from visitors looking to walk the route. It is likely that the Evie to Birsay part would be opened on 16 April and the remaining parts of the route would be launched throughout the rest of the year as it is recognised that this is a big project. Fundraising is ongoing and there is currently a Tesco 'Bags of Help' vote running in the Kirkwall store and the money obtained from this would go towards paying for stiles and fencing for the route.

Waymarking is crucial both to mark the route and to keep users in the right areas and stone waymarkers are planned with a carving of a simple logo on them. The team are also working with a developer on an app that will provide interpretation for users when downloaded prior to starting the walk; there is an intention to have a few interpretation boards on the route but the content on the app will be greater and is easier and cheaper to keep up to date.

A few questions were asked and it was noted that in terms of maintenance the project team would be looking to rely on community goodwill to a large extent and will be discussing with the Council as to whether they would adopt the route as a core path.

Leslie thanked David for his contribution to the meeting, noting that it was extremely interesting and heartening to hear such developments having been made in such a short space of time, and wished the team the best of luck with the project.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Roddy Mackay, Liz Dennison, Kate Townsend, Rob Crichton, James Green, Ian Wilkins, Emma Neave-Webb, Christine Skene and Sian Evans.

3. Adoption of the minutes from 24 August 2016

The minutes were adopted, being proposed by Ross Irvine and seconded by Anne Gascoigne.

4. Matters Arising

Update on car park at Standing Stones of Stenness

An update was provided to the forum via email after the last meeting however no further progress has been made on resolving the matter.

5. Update on access issue in Deerness

Ross advised that he would be able to report back on this matter to the forum shortly.

6. Update on access issue at Hoxa Head

After the update via email after the last meeting, notices were re-sent and hand-delivered by Sheriff Officers. No response has been received and on Thursday 10 November Ross, Ian Wilkins and two Council workers will be visiting the property to install a new kissing gate. The Police are aware of the action being taken. If obstructed, all will leave the site, report the details to the council solicitor and pass the information to the Procurator Fiscal and Police. As the gate belongs to the council any intentional damage caused to it could constitute a criminal offence. OLAF members present gave full support to the action being taken.

7. Review of OIC access strategy and proposed workshop on 22 November

Leslie advised that the draft presented to the D&I Committee was generally very well received and overall Members were supportive. A workshop for Members is planned for 10 November and it is proposed that a further workshop be run for OLAF members and other consultees on 22 November. Those present agreed that a morning session in either the Kirkwall and St Ola Town Hall or St Magnus Centre would be suitable. Ross will also be aiming to ascertain whether consultees wish to be an active part of OLAF or simply receive correspondence and updates. Responses to the consultation have been coming in and Brenda noted that the Orkney Ramblers will be submitting a collective response. *Action: Ross to make arrangements for the workshop and Barbara to communicate details to OLAF members.*

8. Annual Joint NAF and LAFs meeting, Fri 17 March 2017

It was proposed that the Vice Chair, Anne Gascoigne, attend this meeting, if available, on behalf of the forum. The forum will cover all reasonable costs incurred for travel and subsistence from its funds. Anne and Barbara to liaise over arrangements nearer the time.

9. Future of Access Officer post

The Council was unwilling to support a permanent post last year and with budget positions again uncertain it may be in a similar situation.

Without the access officer the aspirations the forum is working towards will be unable to progress and it would be a huge backwards step if the post is lost. *Action: Barbara to draft letter of support from OLAF addressed to the Convener and copied to the Chief Executive, Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure and Chair of the Development and Infrastructure Committee. Other member organisations of OLAF to consider similar approach.*

It was noted that in a future year it may be useful to approach HIE for funding to produce a business case for the post.

10. AOCB

None

11. Date of next meeting

To be confirmed, once the Council's budget-setting schedule is set – but will be either January or February 2017.