

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

Tuesday 13 June 2017, following the AGM
Evie Community Room, Evie Primary School

Present:

Hugh Halcro-Johnston	Scottish Land and Estates
Anne Gascoigne	Orkney Field Club, Vice Chair
Ken Lawson	Scottish Government's Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate
Jan Blatchford	Orkney Archaeology Society
Ross Irvine	Orkney Islands Council
Ian Wilkins	Orkney Islands Council
Cllr Leslie Manson	Elected Member of Orkney Islands Council, Chair
Cllr Steve Sankey	Elected Member of Orkney Islands Council
Simon Treasure	Orkney Tourism Group
Barbara Scollay	Secretary

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Iain Talbot, Ian Robertson, Roddy Mackay, Liz Dennison, James Green, Sian Evans, Alan Leitch and Victor Muir.

2. Adoption of the minutes from 28 March 2017

The minutes were adopted, being proposed by Anne Gascoigne and seconded by Simon Treasure.

3. Matters Arising

Deerness issue

The last update noted that a drain had been dug and the resulting mound of earth had been left alongside. Although digging drains is acceptable, landowners are required to reinstate ground within 14 days. The aspect of whether the drain and mound are deliberately preventing or deterring access is very difficult to prove.

Ross explained that he had continually reviewed the area over several months and people are now taking access and there have been no further complaints. Ross continues to check the area every few weeks. The issue is that the path must be accessible all year round and whether access was being deterred by the mound which could get very muddy and slippery in winter.

There is another matter regarding a disagreement with a neighbour over access and it was noted that the path is a core path but not a right of way. The members of OLAF present recommended that Ross continue to monitor the area and if further problems arise he will report back to the forum.

Hunda issue

Ross gave some background to the matter and noted that the Hunda was well-known and publicised as a walk although is not a core path nor right of way. The new owner of the land does not want members of the public coming through his farmyard, and has had problems with people opening and leaving open a closed field gate and taking access through this particular field. He has now erected signage to direct people via another route and to another area where they may park their cars but with limited success. Unfortunately, there are a lot of guidebooks recommending and directing people to the area for walking.

The field gate is now locked and the landowner has emailed Ross and raised the issue with their local councillors. It was noted that this was the only field gate out of 9 fields and 17 gates to be locked and that as there were livestock in the field next to the road it was an acceptable action to lock the gate.

Member present noted that the matter was outwith the scope of the forum and felt that appropriate action had been taken by the landowner and would encourage the community council to seek a mutually suitable solution.

Standing Stones of Stenness car park

Ross will try to get an update on the ownership matter of the car park.

NHSO representative

Barbara noted that Jessica Jones had joined OLAF as NHSO representative and although Jessica could not attend this meeting she hopes to attend one shortly.

Scapa Bay path

Where the core paths ends and becomes the Scapa Flow Landscape Partnership path, an area has collapsed and so is no longer safe to traverse. Signs to this effect have been erected and representatives from the St Magnus Way are discussing an alternative route with landowners.

4. Future OIC elected member representative

As dealt with at the AGM, Cllr Steve Sankey will become the new elected member representative on OLAF once a report is presented to the Development and Infrastructure Committee in September.

5. Outdoor Access Strategy Workplan

Ross explained the plan and objectives and focused on objective one, the review of the Orkney Core Paths Plan. The timescale for consultation was discussed with a suggestion made that extending the deadline to allow the consultation to be showcased at the local agricultural shows would be a good idea. The priorities in terms of staff capacity were also commented on but overall members were impressed by the workplan and look forward to receiving progress updates in future.

6. AOCB

A query was raised on behalf of another party about access past Highland Park House being blocked, and Ross asked that his details be passed to that party to allow them to discuss and investigate.

The outgoing Chair, Leslie Manson, expressed his pleasure to have been part of the group and that he had found it a positive experience, and commended the commitment of the individuals that participate.

A vote of thanks was then reciprocated to the Leslie for his interest, enthusiasm and participation in the group.

7. Date of next meeting

~~Wed 23 August~~ at 7pm in the St Magnus Centre – *subsequently amended to Wed 6 September at the same time and location.*