

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

Tuesday 31 May 2018
Birsay Hall

Present:

Cllr Steve Sankey	Elected Member of Orkney Islands Council, Chair
Anne Gascoigne	Orkney Field Club, Vice Chair
Hugh Halcro-Johnston	Scottish Land and Estates
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
Simon Treasure	Orkney Tourism Group
Mary Connolly	Scottish Women's Institute
Iain Talbot	Orkney Ramblers
Carolyn Griffiths	Orkney Access Panel
Barbara Scollay	Secretary

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Jessica Jones, Roddy Mackay, Liz Dennison, Sian Evans and Alan Leitch.

2. Adoption of the minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2017

The minutes were adopted on the proposal of Steve Sankey, seconded by Hugh Halcro-Johnston.

3. Chair's report

We held four well attended meetings during the year, and I'd like to thank you all patience and support as I got to grips with my new role. We've held discussions on many issues such as the OIC Core Paths review, and invited guests along including those from RSPB and SNH to discuss other important matters of interests such as stoats. I need to thank a few people, and in particular I'd like to thank Barbara for taking the minutes and organising everything; Ross for his technical advice; Ian for his practical fixes and reporting; and Anne for her Vice Chair role and representing OLAF at the Joint National Access and Local Access forum meeting. Most of all I'd like to thank you all for continued attendance and interest.

There have been several items of extreme importance and interest over the last year, and I'd like to highlight 3 items in particular:

- The final section of the St Magnus Way from Orphir to Kirkwall was launched on 7 September 2017. To have a 55-mile LD route in Orkney, conceived and implemented by volunteers, is nothing short of remarkable! I'm going to try it out for myself this summer.
- The 'dummy run' review of our Core Paths network, followed by the real formal thing was masterminded by Ross, and we have discussed it at OLAF as a standing item. The recommendations of the formal review will no doubt return to us around this table before it is finalised later this year.

- Finally, as we all know we have been invaded by stoats during this decade, and the recent presentation to us by RSPB and SNH was a fascinating insight as to the sheer complexity and cost of removing a non-native invasive species once one has got in. I can tell you that the stoat eradication project ahead will leave few landowners untouched, as the project team of RSPB, SNH & OIC get to grips with the deployment of circa 20 staff over a 5 year period once the £7M+ budget kicks in. This assumes that they're successful with their EU Life and HLF bids of course. Their bid deadline is imminent in the 1st week of June. I can tell you that a dog handler from NZ will be here for 3 months from July, and her specific job is to prove conclusively that there are no stoats on the nearby islands of Hoy, Rousay and Shapinsay. The RSPB will need urgent help shortly from Hugh, the NFUS and SGRPID in the identification of landowners and specific parcels of land for trap deployment; at 12 km² or circa 7,000 x2 in 'double deployment' or 14,000 traps in total; it's the biggest project of its type in the world!

So, there's much to look ahead to, and I have a particular item that I still need to plan, and that is a conference on the access situation in Orkney, looking at various dimensions of our work and the challenges ahead. I pledge to make this happen in the year ahead.

Finally, in case some of you are unaware, I'm delighted to announce that Ross has been made permanent recently by OIC as a Rural Planner. I extend my congratulations to him on behalf of you all, and if you'll have me I'd be happy to stand another year as your Chairman.

4. Treasurer's report

Copy statement attached to the minutes.

The finances remain healthy for the forum and the expenditure is very similar to the previous financial year. It was noted that we have sufficient finances to support the intended conference on access issues. Those present were content to accept the report for 2017-18.

5. Election of office bearers

Chair – Steve Sankey accepted the nomination after being proposed by Hugh Halcro-Johnston and seconded by Anne Gascoigne.

Vice Chair – Anne Gascoigne accepted the nomination after being proposed by Steve Sankey and seconded by Ken Lawson.

Secretary and Treasurer – Barbara Scollay to continue in this post after being proposed by Steve Sankey and seconded by Anne Gascoigne.

6. AOCB

History of joint/separate roles of Secretary and Treasurer to be explored and clarified.