

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

Wednesday 3 October 2018
St Magnus Centre

Present:

Cllr Steve Sankey	Elected Member of Orkney Islands Council, Chair
Emma Neave-Webb	Sanday Ranger
Jessica Jones	NHS Orkney
Hugh Halcro-Johnston	Scottish Land and Estates
Ken Lawson	Scottish Government's Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate
Ross Irvine	Orkney Islands Council
Ian Wilkins	Orkney Islands Council
Simon Treasure	Orkney Tourism Group
Ian Robertson	Orkney Ramblers
Carolyn Griffiths	Orkney Access Panel
Sarah Wilkins	Orkney Access Panel
Tracy	BSL Interpreter for Orkney Access Panel
Barbara Scollay	Secretary

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Liz Dennison, Sian Evans, Victor Muir, Anne Gascoigne, Jan Blatchford, Iain Talbot, Ann Marwick, Mary Connolly.

2. Adoption of the minutes from 31 May 2018

The minutes of the previous meeting were adopted, being proposed by Steve Sankey and seconded by Ken Lawson.

3. Matters arising

None not already on the agenda.

4. Core Path Inspection Plan 2016 to 2020

The questions posed to the group were discussed in turn.

Question A – it was agreed that the schedule for the 4-year plan is working and it should continue for the remaining 2 years of this plan. It is impressive how much of the network that Ian manages to get around by himself and his work helps to resolve issues before they get out of hand. Paths are checked every two years with those with furniture checked annually.

Question B – no alterations were suggested.

Question C – the opportunity to get organisations such as Orkney Ramblers, community councils and the Community Payback Scheme involved was discussed. Ian will meet with the Orkney Rambler reps and agree on how they can contribute to his work.

5. Maintenance update

The handrail and the steps at the Brough of Birsay have been repaired; the steps at Dingieshowe are in the hands of a contractor; and the bridge at the Bu has been repaired and held up fine in the stormy weather last week. An issue with a commonly waterlogged path in Sanday was discussed.

Hunda access was raised again and it was noted that the landowner is acting lawfully and walkers need to find an alternative route not through the farm; the route used in the past is not a core path nor a right of way. Ross gave an explanation of the issues and there was some discussion on alternative routes.

6. Outdoor Access Strategy Workplan/Core Path Plan Review

A good level of response to the formal consultation was received, and some additions and deletions are proposed. The Scapa Flow Landscape Partnership Scheme paths will be included. The final draft will be presented to the Development and Infrastructure Committee in a couple of weeks, and if approved progress to the General Meeting of the Council for adoption. The plan will then be passed to the Scottish Government for approval and once this is received the plan can be published. The walks that are part of the Core Path network in Orkney would be published on the council website.

A question was raised about applying ratings to paths, and Ross confirmed that this is an aspiration included in the action plan associated with the Core Path Plan Review, including gradients and footwear required; accessibility was also recommended as a criterion. Simon explained that he is keen to discuss the promotion of walks with the new CEO of Destination Orkney and the issue of waterlogged paths was discussed.

The first meeting of the group discussing a new Accessibility Policy was held yesterday and will meet regularly to progress the document. A Kirkwall town centre path is to be looked at initially as a template for accessible routes.

Action: Ross to bring criteria rating to the next meeting for information

Action: Barbara to invite David McNeish, lead for the St Magnus Way, to the next meeting to hear about how the team are managing maintenance and upkeep.

7. Orkney Native Wildlife Project

Steve read through the report from Sarah Sankey, RSPB Orkney Manager as circulated. It is important to note that people who own land that are interested in allowing access for traps and dog searches can continue to contact the project team on ONWP.landaccess@gmail.com. A question was raised about Eynhallow and it was confirmed that trial traps had indeed been set there too.

8. AOCB

- HES update

Sian provided an update via email as she was unable to attend the meeting, and noted about the handrail at Birsay being repaired, the restrictions at the Ring of Brodgar being largely successful (although additional rangers will be needed to ensure people do not ignore the access restrictions next year), and the ongoing discussions regarding the car park at the Stones of Stenness.

- OLAF Conference

Steve is keen to get plans for an OLAF conference underway and is looking at a date for mid to late November in Kirkwall, running late morning to early afternoon and to feature a summary of Access Law in Scotland and the Orkney Native Wildlife Project. Some discussion took place around who to invite etc and Steve, Ross and Barbara will collaborate to progress this.

Action: Steve, Ross and Barbara to make arrangements to hold conference

- Active Travel

A question was raised on whether the community councils had been notified of the opportunities around this, and it was confirmed that the information had been circulated to all community councils in Orkney, and it is believed that Burray are considering an application.

9. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 13 February at 7.30pm in the St Magnus Centre, Kirkwall.