

Note of meeting of Caithness Local Access Forum (CLAF)  
held in Castlehill Heritage Centre, Castletown  
on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2014

Agenda

## **Present**

Chris Hobson (CH), Chair – Land Manager  
David Glass (DG) – Community Group  
Elena Koponen-Baikie (EK-B) – Community Group  
Roger Saxon (RS) – Thurso Ward Member of the Highland Council  
Islay Macleod (IM) – Land Manager/Community Group  
Alan McVeigh(AMV) – Disability Access Forum

## **In attendance**

Matt Dent (MD) – Access Officer, Highland Council  
Paul Castle (PC) – Countryside Ranger, Highland Council  
Alex Macmanus (AM) – Ward Manager's Team, Highland Council (clerk)

8 members of the general public.

## **1. Apologies**

Willie Mackay (WM) – Landward Ward Member of the Highland Council  
Ben McGregor (BM) – Access Taker/User  
George Duff (GD) – Countryside Ranger & Long Distance Route Manager

## **2. Notes from meeting of 6<sup>th</sup> March 2014.**

Agreed by Members present.

## **3. Action points from 2 above.**

**Reay** – Gate now open. MD has e-mailed land owners.

**Dunnet Forest** – Signs and markers finished and ready to put in. Industrial area access at forest is always locked and parking is not encouraged at that end. Pedestrian access should be kept clear as horse riders use this entrance. There is no scope for disabled parking at east end.

**Braal Castle to the pond** – CH to speak to Cllr. Coghill and local Community Council over condition of this path. **ACTION – CH.**

**Bishops Walk, Thurso** – Query over land ownership at Old Coastguard Houses. CH to investigate. **ACTION – CH**

**Halkirk to Sibster path** – Update on progress with Community Council/Cllr Coghill from CH. **ACTION – CH**

**North Highland Way** – Response to presentation/project agreed. **ACTION MD/AM**

#### **4. Discussion on site visit.**

Endeavour to look for a solution for Jesson Bridge path. MD would have a report ready for next forum. **ACTION – MD**

2<sup>nd</sup> bridge on this path could be inspected by Community Services.

Suggestions made to get path improved by strimming grass along the sides and perhaps this work could be undertaken by local village officer via local Community Council. Felt that approval by land owner would need to be given before any work was carried out to maintain a public right of way.

#### **5. Local Disability Access panel report (DAG) – Alan McVeigh**

Commended Dunnet Forest for good access. DAG members would like to be able to get access closer to the coast.

Thanked MD for his attendance at DAG meetings which is of great benefit to their members.

Banks are now putting in ramps to aid access and chemist's shops are addressing these issues.

DAG is also working with the impaired sight group.

Making use of a boat on Loch Watten but there is no deep sea boat available in Caithness

Group have still to visit the new Newton Forest site.

Visit to Sibster Forest path carried out with concerns over stones on paths but conceded that after foot traffic this should not be a concern.

North Highland Access groups due to meet in PPP on 25<sup>th</sup> June. MD unable to attend. Volunteer requested. **ACTION – CH**

MD to compile a booklet of accessible walks.

MD can supply and has available radar padlocks and keys.

RS advised that there was now a new gate at Achanarras Quarry for all ability access.

#### **6. Access Officers Report – MD**

Trying to visit Crosskirk to look at bridge. Have spoken to Safety Advisor at main Forss Business Park. Historic Scotland (HS) are keen to replace the bridge and look after it but have no capital funding to carry this replacement. Local Community Council is not keen on the path going through the windfarm. CLAF to write to HS about their responsibilities as regards this bridge with copy to Paul Wheelhouse, Environment and Climate Change Minister. **ACTION – CH**

**Stroupster Wind Farm** – not a heavily used core path.

**Burn of Whilk** – Core path kept open with temporary diversion put in. Pedestrian gate put in at Clyth end. Developers to meet with Yarrows Trust also.

**Camster Wind Farm** – signs now going up.

**Keiss** – Dealing with a right of way issue.

**Yarrows** – Car park not yet started. Complaints being looked at by Highland Council as regards styles and boardwalks.

## **7. Caithness LAF Membership**

Report taken in private. Letters to be issued to existing member and prospective new member(s). **ACTION – MD**

## **8. AOB**

**Signs at Brough** – debate took place amongst members and, as agreed by the Chair, members of the audience over ownership, permissions to erect and safety of messages on some signs.

No permission to erect had been given by MD. Signs gifted By Highland Council (MD) to erector. If erected on private ground with no permissions can be removed by land owner and returned to Highland Council. Suggested that police be advised if this option is taken.

MD would look at this week commencing 9<sup>th</sup> June. **ACTION – MD**

**Ormlie Moors** – Core path being damaged by motor bikes and quad bikes. RS advised that police had spoken to bikers and hopefully this had now been sorted. The land is not common land as is believed by many people in Thurso. RS agreed to check and find out ownership. **ACTION – RS**

## **9. Date of next meeting**

Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2014. 7.30 start at Ross Institute, Halkirk.