

Caithness Local Access Forum

Minutes - Action Note

Meeting held on 11th October 2021 on Microsoft Teams

Present:

Jay Wilson (JW) - Friends of the John O'Groats Trail - Vice Chair
Ben MacGregor (BMG) - Pentland Canoe Club
William Bruce (WB) – Caithness Kayak Club

In attendance:

Matt Dent (MD) - Access Officer

David Angus (DA) – Brabster Farms, Barrogill

Callum Angus (CA) – Brabster Farms, Barrogill

Item		Action
1.	Apologies Paul Castle – Highlife Highland Ranger Cllr Karl Rosie - Chair Donna Mather Jay Wilson took the chair	
2.	Notes from meeting of the 9th March 2020 MD went over minutes, most items covered elsewhere on this meetings agenda. Sandside Gate – to add to Caithness Access Issues and Initiatives table	MD
3.	Mains of Warse MD introduced David Angus to the Meeting. A map of the track and photos were presented to the meeting Since proposed as an agenda item the lock has been removed from the Upper gate on the Mains of Warse track. DA stated the lower gate has never been locked. The upper gate was locked because the gate had been removed from its hinges and stock allowed onto the road. The Angus's accept public access rights on the track but do not consider the track to be a public right of way or a route where the public has a right drive a vehicle.	

	<p>The Covid related signs on the gates have become unreadable/virtually disintegrated over the year they have been installed and are no longer an issue for the Access Officer.</p> <p>There is no “red sign” on the lower gate but the upper gates still has a “red sign” which states “no access”, “danger” and “no dogs allowed”. This wording could deter the public from exercising their access rights.</p> <p>DA referred to a letter sent to the Council to explain their position. MD pointed out that he would have read out the letter if no-one from Brabster Farms attended the meeting. As DA and CA were in attendance this was their time to make their position known to the Local Access Forum. This was made clear to Graeme Angus (another of the farms partners) prior to the meeting.</p> <p>CA made clear that the track is used by animals all year round to pass from field to field and to access water. A concern for them is the channelling of animals towards the gates as and when the public pass along the track. Some trampling/lower leg injuries had occurred because of this.</p> <p>JW suggested the Angus’s liaise with the Access officer to come up with a suitable worded sign to resolve the matter.</p> <p>JW thanked David and Callum were their time.</p>	MD
4.	<p>Thurso High School – Access in grounds and public right of way</p> <p>Reports of the public using the school playing fields in addition to an established public right of way through the car park area to the east of the campus</p> <p>MD stated the two open accesses to the grounds are not gated or signed to deter the public. MD intends to advise head teacher these can be gated and signed</p> <p>No affect to the public right of way</p>	
5.	<p>Camster Wind Farm/Achairn gates</p> <p>MD displayed a photo of a loch gated cattle grid on access to Camster WF at Acharin. Despite repeated calls no side pedestrian gate has been installed, though a railed gap is in place to accept a gate.</p> <p>MD to bring back to LAF for further action as required.</p>	MD

6.	<p>Ramblers Scotland – Mapping Scotland Paths Project</p> <p>MD presented a snapshot of Ramblers Scotland, Mapping Scotland Paths Project. Ramblers are seeking volunteers to test and updated the path record which they are developing. The current data is not very good, open to all via Ramblers Scotland</p>	ALL
7.	<p>Matters Arising (Accompanying table of Caithness Access Issues and Initiatives)</p> <p>Noted all update of the table, no feedback on Yarrows, liaise with Cllr Raymond Bremner.</p> <p>Level crossings raised due to Althnabreac crossing in the amended core paths plan. JW raised Portgower crossing which is on the John O'Groats Trail and ladder stiles have been removed. WB stated he considered this a public right of way as used before railway was built to access foreshore for seaweed and shell fish, and continued use since. MD to seek evidence</p>	MD/RM MD
8.	<p>AOCB</p> <p>JW asked about Zoom as preferred tool by LAF members. MD to seek advice</p> <p>Query about membership and missing people today. MD to ask if member still wish to remain in the LAF. Possible to seek new members if any interest.</p> <p><i>Currently 2 landowner/occupier places</i></p>	All
9.	<p>Date of Next Meetings</p> <p>Agreed at 7th March 2022 and 5th September 2022</p> <p>Possible for early January meeting if held online</p>	MD

Meeting closed at 14:50 hrs

Minutes by Matt Dent, 18 October 2021