

Caithness Local Access Forum

Minutes - Action Note

Meeting held on 7th March 2022 on Microsoft Teams

Present:

Karl Rose (KR) – Highland Councillor (Chair)
Ben MacGregor (BMG) - Pentland Canoe Club
William Bruce (WB) – Caithness Kayak Club
Raymond Bremner (RB) – Highland Councillor
Islay Macleod (IM) – Thrumster Estate/Yarrows Heritage Trust (Item 6)

In attendance:

Matt Dent (MD) - Access Officer

Item		Action
1.	<p>Apologies Paul Castle – Highlife Highland Rangers Roz Summers – Highlife Highland Rangers Janet MacEwan – Caithness Disability Access Panel Bill Mowat – Dunnet and Canisby Community Council</p>	
2.	<p>Notes from meeting of the 11th October 2022</p> <p>Main item Mains of Warse – gates have remained unlocked. Sign on upper gate, to discuss in this meeting</p> <p>Thurso High Street – Signs agreed to manage/restrict public access to school playing fields and school grounds</p> <p>Camster Windfarm – on agenda</p> <p>Ramblers Scotland – mapping Scotland paths project (ongoing project)</p> <p>Yarrows – on agenda (action table)</p> <p>Level Crossings – on agenda (action table)</p> <p>No questions - minutes accepted</p>	

3.	<p>Mains of Warse</p> <p>MD showed photo of sign on upper gate, still states “no access”. Gates are unlocked and “no dogs” wording removed.</p> <p>To take up with Angus about “no Access” wording? no complaints since lock removed. MD suggests would assume this refers to vehicles only.</p> <p>BMG says does not like the sign but happy for it to remain. WB agrees.</p> <p>MD expected Angus’ to ask for suggested wording. MD to keep on action list and will write to the Angus’.</p>	MD
4.	<p>Camster Wind Farm – Achairn Access</p> <p>MD loosing patience with RWE about access at Achairn. Was not an issue for many years as cattle grid gates unlocked. Then issues with poaching, stealing firewood, FLS gates at Blingery and Camster locked but with by-pass, no such by-pass at Achairn despite a space being left for a pedestrian gate.</p> <p>RWE has engaged contractors but no works. MD will keep on action list until gate installed, dispoited it has taken over 2 years for an access on public land.</p> <p>DM visited on request and spoke to Morven Corgill, Blingery Farm. The owner said no and they had locked the gate. MD said gate is not theirs nor the fence and RWE have dragged their heels (possibly wunder pressure from neighbours), delay due change of ownership, maternity leave and then COVID.</p> <p>To monitor</p>	MD
5.	<p>Access Rangers – Fire Signs 2022</p> <p>Seasonal access ranger patrolled Caithness and common problem was repeated fire sites.</p> <p>MD showed the “please no fire signs” to forum</p> <p>Wording discussed with Fire Service. There were 17 Seasonal Access Rangers and though they had reference to a standard operating procedure (SOP) use of these signs (and similar regards camping) was varied across Highland. Plan to modify the SOP.</p> <p>Majority welcomed the signs small number questioned. MD asked the forum if they agreed with sign. DM would prefer no fires on any land the person does not own.</p>	

	<p>MD discussed the legislative background and weakness of the code.</p> <p>WM welcomed the signs as did BMG.</p>	
6.	<p>Matters Arising (Accompanying table of Caithness Access Issues and Initiatives)</p> <p><u>Halkirk to Sibster link path.</u> North link much closer to Sibster Forest than thought at last meeting. KR asked about which group in Halkirk would be relevant to take this forward. Community Council cannot enter agreement so Development group, for Halkirk is the village council suitable. KR to raise with Halkirk. MBG stated this has been ongoing for a long. A local group needed to drive it forward. WM says active travel much higher up agenda.</p> <p><u>Altnabreac Railway crossing</u> – imminent decision!</p> <p><u>Yarrows</u> – No progress between YHT and the crofting tenant, MD has ordered new fingerposts. IM says path heavily poached and path should ideally be rerouted. This would be acceptable to MD if either new path was built and/or path segregated from the grazed fields. Tenant did apply for planning permission for new path, was not workable/desktop exercise.</p> <p>IM and RB to take forward. WB interested in this path</p> <p><u>Whaligoe</u> – to discuss with John O’Groats Trail</p> <p><u>Keiss Shore Sign</u> (now pod development) – DM concerned over space on pedestrian path in vicinity of new cycle shed. MD says if the public cannot use the pedestrian the vehicle track and use the field gate. WM says not looking very visitor friendly, MD says it will be signed and the green finger post will be replaced. DM says farm tenancy has changed with a sale of the whole likely. DM says there is a public right of way from the coast to the main road. DM asked if planning approval for the cycle shed</p> <p><u>Mireland Forest Access</u> – new locked gate enquiry by Lyth. Not a good response from forest agent or farm owners.</p> <p><u>Sandside Deer Gate</u> – no engagement with owners or agent. Gate installed in late 2000’s/. BMG says he was there a month ago, deer gate is on the ground with a low fence across gap which can be stepped over easily. Ground very wet and muddy, awkward but should be a gate. MD to take up with agent again</p>	<p>KR</p> <p>RB</p> <p>MD</p>

7.	AOCB None	
8.	Date of Next Meetings 5 th September 2022 KR and MD to arrange summer meeting/outside visit as required.	

Minutes by Matt Dent, 15th March 2022

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