

Minutes of Meeting of the  
Sutherland Local Access  
Forum held at Drumbuie,  
Golspie on 28 October 2024

Present:	Mr David Hannah,	DH
	Cllr Jim McGillivray,	JM
	Mr John Ross, CHAIR	JR
	Frances Gunn	FG
	Marion Milligan	MM
	Mrs Lesley Cranna	LG
	Cllr Leslie-Anne Nixen	LAN

**In Attendance:** Mr Matt Dent, Access Officer, Highland Council MD

### 1. Apologies

France Gunn, Betty Grieve, Allan Mackay

### 2. Notes from meeting of the 25 March 2024

JR asked if minutes had been sent soon after the last meeting as he did not recall seeing them. MD said yes minutes were sent as soon as they were written but would check and also ensure correct email addresses were on record **Action MD**

### 3. Matters Arising

The following are mentioned on the previous minutes but are not on this meetings agenda

- Clashmore – JR asked about these tracks - MD has not been able to visit. JR mentioned a locked gate on the way to Evelix. MD had a case with Scottish Woodland at Astle and supplied a gate, MD to send map to JR and follow up **Action MD**
- (a) The Local Access Forum restructure, as discussed on the 25 March, did not get taken to committee before the recess. And Malcolm Macleod (Assistant Chief Executive of Place) is keen to look at the restructure again. Expect another update at the spring 2025 meeting.
- (b) Upper Bighouse – MD had followed this up after the forum agreed what was proposed would be a minor/de minimis diversion. The owner Mr Morrison has done the work so after checking this can be formally signed off by senior THC officer. Sign post for promoting the route have already been produced.
- LC mentioned Balbair Loop off the Littleferry road.

#### 4. Modified Core Paths Plan Caithness and Sutherland Amended

MD verbally reported that the Scottish Government has written to the Council with the outcome of the public local inquiry. Taken a number of years since the 2017 and 2019 consultations. All candidate route to me adopted except the following;

- Track past pig unit at Embo
- Gobernuigach to Loch Merkland
- Cave at Elphin
- Railway level crossing at Dunrobin, Golspie

Adoption of core path plans by Sutherland Local Committee on the 12 November 2024

The plan from Highland Council is to adopt the core path access and egress at the level crossing but not the level crossing itself. Access and Long Distance Route manager, Phil Waite, has discussed this with senior Scottish Government civil servant.

MM asked about core path for further inclusion, like the Moine Path. MD has listed as this to be reviewed. MD wants to sign post the Moine Path as a public right of way. MM said river crossing at half way can be difficult to cross.

Also to consider signposting Achinduich to Sleastary. To check locked gate and contact owner at Achinduich

**Action MD**

#### 5. Access Rangers Update 2024

MD reported that the Access Rangers had worked in Sutherland with 4 staff working 3 FTE. Last day will be tomorrow. Some Access Ranger are expected to be continuing over winter.

Commented on transport issues around Loch Eribol is covering Durness from North Sutherland.

JM commented that work of the Access Ranger had been well received.

#### 6. Ongoing Access Enquiries and Work

- **Core Paths Plan review** – covered above. Still work for MD to undertake

- **Coul Railway Line** – gate installation ongoing with new farm manager. Gorse has been cut by HC and local Embo resident doing section to railway hut.
- **Sutherland Space Port** – The Council is awaiting instruction/direction from the spaceport operators, HC not driving the byelaws forward until ask.
- **Littleferry** – MD has struggled with taking this forward. No place to park at road end any more so public parking at NatureScot and the public still have access to foreshore. MD asked if he could approach Cllr Gale to assess if desire to continue taking forward. MD still concerned that even is gate unlocked would any visitor want to walk the route.
- **Dairy Park** – MD visited twice this year and it is grassy and less sandy than expected but surfacing ridged and grass tussocky. Route well used and the coastal route has suffered from rabbits and storm damage. LC walks every day and can feedback
- **Carbisdale** – Was discussed at the last meeting and still generating interest. Hall committee has had two volunteer days with no issues but still reports of conflict (in person JR reports) between parties at other times. MD looking to install a map panel but unsure about signposting in the woods.

## 7. AOCB

Nothing to report

## 8. Date of next meetings

31 March 2025  
29 September 2025