



West Lothian Local Access Forum

25 October 2017

Sutherland Building,

Beecraigs Country Park

Present:

Eirwen Hopwood & Beverly Stirling (West Lothian Council Parks & Woodland)
Chris Alcorn (West Lothian Council Planning Services)
Chris Smiley – standing in for Carl Gilbert (Scottish Rural Colleges Oatridge)
Alastair Morrison (Scotways)
Richard Toleman (Sustrans)
Tracey Smith & Ben Dolphin, Rangers (WLC Parks & Woodland – part)
Carol Campbell (Central Scotland Green Network Trust)
Gordon Alan (Rep Small / Rural Community Councils)
Jamie Smart & Malcolm Hill (National Farmers Union Scotland)
Donald Noble (Scottish Land & Estates / Hopetoun Estates)
Jim Stewart (WLC Transportation)

Action

1. Apologies

Jean Frame (Woodland Trust Scotland), Andy Gibbs (Scottish Land & Estates), Lynne Watson (British Horse Society)

Chair

Malcolm Hill volunteered to be Chair this meeting. Thanks to Malcolm for being the first to volunteer.

It was agreed that the Chair role would be covered on a rotational basis, for future meetings, between all persons present.

2. Minutes

AM requested that abbreviations are not used in the minutes. Also that they are sent out sooner as this would help him personally.

Minutes from 26/04/17 were agreed.

3. WLC “Quiet Roads Initiative”

Jim Stewart gave an update to the group on findings from the public consultation on the Quiet Roads Initiative and progress to date. Reported to Policy Development Scrutiny Panel on outcome of consultation and steps forward, report available online.

His brief summary highlighted the consultation was carried out in November 2016, 229 responses and over 200 comments received. 82% supported the concept of reducing speed limits however it was felt that signage alone was not enough for signage to work. The potential routes were generally supported however some of the routes would require further work. The next stage is that there will be formal advertising of proposals and a pilot project in the Beecraigs area. A report to Council Executive is required to start the statutory process. There is limited funding of around £10k which has been made available by Sustrans. There is a list of Statutory consultees which Roads are required to consult including Police fire etc. and an advert will be placed in the local paper giving further opportunity for comments.

JS & MH encouraged to contact all residents who lives and works in the affected areas. Jim

Stewart to contact CA to make sure that we contact the rural residents and businesses.

MH - main concern about how you get the public to safely access from Bathgate to the Bathgate Hills and the quiet roads area.

GA – agreed with MH's comments and concerns specifically with the blocking of gateways.

Jim Stewart – will take on board the comments and will look at the options. Will look to find a solution for all types of users.

JS stated that he was fully supportive of the initiative but felt that the Police must enforce the speed limits and asked if there was an exit strategy should the initiative fail. Jim Stewart said that this was exactly the reason for having a pilot project and commented that the police resources are limited. Specific issues can be raised and made aware to the Police. The points raised will be taken up.

DN what do the Council hope to achieve from the budget that has been allocated? Was it about increasing the numbers of people visiting the area, grow the economy etc. because if so this would need more resources, or is it about improving the situation for existing users.

Jim Stewart replied that the success would be measured by the reinforcement of the quiet roads message and that additional benefits would follow but primary purpose related to existing / increasing visitors not specifically about growing the economy in Bathgate.

MH emphasised the support from the group.

Jim Stewart explained that the pilot would be monitored to see how the initiative could be improved, but it would be put in as a permanent feature e.g. low cost lines and signs. The timescale would be dependent on the process of consultation and any issues raised estimating 2019 for the pilot project.

CA - asked about Oatridge getting involved in monitoring the scheme. CS confirmed that the Countryside Visitor Management Module students could potentially be involved.

{Further update from Jim Stewart / CA – Various Sustrans projects including Longridge to Fauldhouse, A89 corridor Polkemmet & in Whitburn Town centre, Heartland's path between Longridge and Fauldhouse parallel to B7010 having to be upgraded to tar as not up to spec, also to be solar stud lit.

It was suggested by the Forum that a letter be sent to Sustrans and the National Access Forum to emphasise the difficulty of achieving 50% match on all projects. It is difficult for the smaller Authorities to achieve this level of funding therefore good project are not being delivered.

CA happy to draft a letter/ National Access Forum too/Invite Phil Kearney from Sustrans on what's happening nationally / locally in relation to Active Travel.

GA raised that Sustrans may be looking at changing funding levels.

Jim Stewart left the meeting.

CA

4. Access issues raised in last 6 months (May– October 2017)

- Bangour Fishery – CA had meeting with Alastair Morrison in early October representing Scotways, concerns in this area and missing link potential at Blackcraig Farm.
- Bents RoW : LW 63 – raised by Stoneyburn Community Councillor again on route to Breich Water. Parks & Woodland would look again at steps infill issue
- Pentland Hills Regional Park – new Joint committee now met WLC Cllr Timson is Vice Chair. Problem with Leithhead Bridge across Water of Leith on LW 146 and WLC / CEC, as straddles administrative boundary, looking to fund replacement in 2018.
- Broom Park, area Between Mid Calder & East Calder – illegal felling that affected various well used desire lines. Forestry Commission served stop notice and Felling Licence to be required
- North Livingston Blue / Green Network - £20k grant from CSGN Development Fund to survey greenways and create feasibility study for volunteer & contractor improvements to 5 corridors with river side paths. SEPA Water Environment Fund available for

Lochshot Burn corridor Community consultation to occur in spring 2018.

- Hopetoun Estate - access issues arising from success of "Outlander" impacting on curtilage of Mid Hope Towerhouse by Abercorn.
- John Muir Way - temporary closure for felling on Claimed RoW LW1 & Core Path proposed by Hopetoun Estate for 6 weeks in mid-summer to allow felling. Discussions ongoing about temporary / alternative route for works to now start early in 2018.
- Ecclesmachan - Paths for All going to see if money available for Burnside to Union Canal route (LW 185) after they succeeded in getting Landfill Trust, EB Scotland, funds for path works at Oatridge demonstration paths. WLC covered 3rd party costs
- West Calder High School – formal stopping-up of north / south right of way LW48 but new bridge access road to high school to west continues access in this area
- Blackburn South – CSGNT still looking at creating new south riverside walkway along River Almond as part of Council Housing site but builder currently left levels in an unsatisfactory condition.
- SW West Calder Green Network – CSGNT and West Calder & Harburn Community development trust to work with landowners in Spring 2018 to see if interested in getting involved in green network / access improvement schemes with WL Development trust funds.
- Graham Anderson, Paths for All (PfA) new technical officer reworking their demonstration path in the college extending to link to another right of way. Steps in an accessible area will be sorted out. CA may invite Graham Anderson to a future meeting.
- Richard Toleman reported that Sustrans volunteers were lobbying for improved access to Bathgate Station (South Platform connection).

TS reported on 6 residents raised concerns at Kirknewton – north of rail line when owner had fenced off. Previous landfill and no access rights and landowner within his rights.

Almondell Country Park Ranger had also been involved with Scottish War Blind Association at Linburn Estate near Wilkieston along with British Horse Society who had been most helpful with problems caused by adjacent liveries / horse rider misuse of estate grounds. Proposals for more formal signage and a dedicated horse route being agreed with the Estate.

LW 139 western end (Oatridge) has a fencing and drainage issue.

Kirknewton Community Council and some residents had raised concerns at new signage by farmer on Ormiston – Selms Claimed RoW LW 40 indicating "Private - No through Road". Rangers had investigated and spoke to farmer but he was not prepared to removed them.

Philpstoun North Bing - Complaint received that Hopetoun Estate had fenced off access from wooded bing site to adjacent to Union Canal towpath due to off road bikes misuse. Rangers were investigating and about to meet Hopetoun / Scottish Canals on site

5. Introducing Ben Dolphin – Honorary President of Ramblers Scotland

BD introduced his new role, was approached due to his online presence, writing a blog and Walk Highlands approached him in January 17 about the honorary position which is elected every March for 3 year term.

6. WLC Parks & Woodland "Poo Campaign"

Ben advised on the campaign to address dog fouling issues within the Country Parks. To date 2 dog poo avenues at Almondell and 2 at Beecraigs have been rolled out using an 8 poster campaign. Essential to highlight that kids go roaming and playing everywhere in the Country Parks. Survey carried out before and will be repeated following the campaign to review its success. BD mentioned that after the initial survey the public didn't realise that you

could bag it and put it in any bin.

DB also advised on a number of successful public events that had been held across the county promoting the message including “Wild Wednesdays” and the recent dog show partnership event at Beecraigs.

JS – wanted it noted that he felt that all land used for access should be classed as public land, including agricultural land to encourage responsible bagging of dog faeces. JS also mentioned that the Falkirk Council dog walking scheme had been very successful.

BD mentioned that the Council will be trialling a number of dog poo-bag dispensers in the 3 Country Parks as part of a larger rollout by WLC Cleaner Communities Service.

10. AOB

- BS distributed the National Access Forum note to everyone.
- MH asked RT to ask whether Sustrans could prioritise education programme for cyclists to encourage more responsible cycling.
RT stated that it is a national issue not local - Sustrans will continue to promote. It was noted that education wasn't mentioned in Sustrans strategy document. CA suggested that Phil Kearney be invited to the next meeting, Chris to investigate opportunity with Sustrans. CA
- JS dissatisfied that Cockleroy appeared to sit within the Country Park & Woodland areas in West Lothian Council's Commercial Dog Walking scheme. No reference to SOAC in the Commercial Dog Walking Scheme. TS will raise with Colin Arthur, Animal Welfare Officer at WLC Environmental Health - BS suggested inviting Colin Arthur to the next meeting. TS
- JS disappointed Police Scotland not attending. CA going to chase for a rep and invite to next meeting. JS commented that a superb event at the new Visitor Centre in the summer highlighted concerns over sheep worrying. CA
Note: JS – could you follow-up in April with your update on NFUS action taken / planned with dog worrying in West Lothian (see minutes from 26/04/17). JS
- CA – related WLC recent “Transforming Your Council” public consultation about saving £73M over next 5 years – he encouraged everybody to respond individually and as members of their organisations. GA - Community Council received a letter from the public re missing sign from LW185. Rangers currently surveying the Scotway designed signs and this will be considered as part of this work. It was pointed out that not all paths had Scotway designed signs and it will be WLC that decide where these are to be replaced (funding and staff resource dependant). GA was asked to e-mail TS so that the Rangers can review. Landowner permission would be sought before any signs are installed. GA/ TS

11. Dates of Meetings in 2018

- **3pm, Wednesday 25th April 2018** at Sutherland Building, Beecraigs Country Park
- **3pm, Wednesday 24th October 2018** at Sutherland Building, Beecraigs Country Park

Notes for Diaries:

- 07/02/18 National Access Forum meeting
- 16/03/18 National Access Forum meeting
- 16/05/18 National Access Forum meeting