



West Lothian Local Access Forum

26 April 2017

Sutherland Building,

Beechraigs Country Park

Present:

Eirwen Hopwood & Beverly Stirling (WLC Parks & Woodland)
Chris Alcorn (WLC Planning)
Jean Frame (WTS)
Andy Gibbs (SL&E)
Tracey Smith & Kirsty Morrison (part), Ranger (P&W)
Carol Campbell (CSGNT)
Gordon Alan (part) (Rep Small / Rural Community Councils)
Jamie Smart & Malcolm Hill (part) (NFUS)
Alastair Morrison (Scotways)

Action

1. **Apologies**

Colin Arthur WLC Environmental Health – Animal Welfare Officer, Donald Noble.

Chair

Beverly Stirling volunteered to be Chair.

2. **Minutes**

Donald Noble raised queries by email. CA to refer to later in meeting.

3. **“Scotways” Signage Network – summary of review (Kirsty Morrison)**

KM outlined project history - WLC worked with Scotways when signs first went up, many years ago. Number of Scotway-type signs around WL. The Ranger Service patrol a number of Rights of Way and other access routes across West Lothian which they record and monitor. Asserted and Vindicated ROW routes are the priority. 122 signs, 25+ROW and over 200 paths are on the network. WLC use GIS and surveys to record condition and had looked at over 60 in past few years. This review of the Scotway-type signs should highlight what signs are missing or vandalised and also highlight other access issues in these areas.

MH asked if claimed RoW will be looked at – WLC confirmed ‘no’.

JS asked if new signage would comply with Paths for All recommendation to put gradient information on signs. BS said no as this was outwith the scope of what we are tasked to do.

AM queried if Scotways knew of WLC’s work (as he was Scotways volunteer and wasn’t aware of WLC work) – BS confirmed yes, Aleisha Fahy at Scotways HQ was informed but work only recently started.

BS confirmed that new Access Ranger post would take this on when appointed.

AG suggested putting grid refs on them. CC suggested unique number for signs rather than grid ref etc.

CA said that green metal signs were still preferred rather than wooden posts etc.

CA queried if anyone knew what FKC did about Claimed RoW? (which WLC doesn’t support).

(Post Meeting Note – Angus Duncan of Falkirk Council confirmed that they undertake survey each year of Vindicated and Asserted RoW signage and only Claimed where it is also a Core Path. Signage replaced where needed).

MH suggested routes could be opened up through the planning system.
JS reminded Forum that liability of farmer changed if RoW went through livestock on their land. (KM left meeting).
Chris to get copy of Core Path Plan to new Woodland Trust Officer.

CA

4. 'Enjoying the Outdoors with Dogs' – Update from the NAF & LA Forum meeting of 17 March 2017 (Tracey Smith)

TS attended annual National / Local Access Joint Forum and summarised agenda. Morning concentrated on walking with dogs e.g. Stephen Jenkins (Kennel Club) encouraged promoting good / minimising the bad. WLC Rangers will include promotion of responsible dog ownership in the countryside this summer. Fiona Fyland had presented a research report in association with vets promoting people and dogs in woodlands for health benefits.

(Gordon Alan joined meeting).

Responsible dog walking on nature reserves – new info on SNH website. Working with NFU on responsible ownership.

WLC Rangers are keen to increase awareness of responsible access taking.

JS stated that bins need to be provided, not just handing out dog poo bags. He referred to FKC programme about how to approach owners and talk to them about issue.

It was mentioned Yellowcraigs at East Lothian had a “dog only walking route” but TS commented that this initiative had not been particularly successful due to irresponsible dog owners not clearing up after their dogs.

St Fillans and Kinneil projects were referenced in afternoon as examples of positive community initiatives.

TS will forward info from NAF on this issue when received.

TS

5. Commercial Dog Walking Scheme – (Tracey Smith in absence of Colin Arthur)

Now approved by WLC as a voluntary trusted trader scheme. 10 principles must be adhered to including requirements for insurance, <6 dogs with full control, written consent from dog owners, dog poo bags, leads for all, appropriate transport, provision of drinking water, dogs tagged with dog walkers details during walk, first aid kit for dogs provided.

JS was disappointed that permission from landowners wasn't a principle. TS replied that public land was only being promoted, the WLC website suggested where to visit and this was a start.

BS will forward info on scheme with minutes.

BS

CA has invited any comments from Forum.

ALL

MH referenced new scheme at Moss End Farm which he believes has £10 fee.

CA queried if forwarding info to NFU and he would advise Kerry Clark to share this WL Scheme with NFU members. JS and MH agreed.

CA

Suggestion to promote through WLC Facebook page, TS would pass info back to CA.

TS

6. Local Development Plan Update – (Chris Alcorn)

CA updated plan's progress – report completion by June/July. Recommendations of reporter are now binding (unless challenged through courts). Adoption expected by end of year. New Housing and Planning White paper seeks 10 year plans rather than 5 years. WLC think too long, things change over 10 years.

CA referred to DN query by email regarding role of Access Forum in relation to LDP process. He suggested consultation list on access, as LDP being prepared not at end once drafted.

CA to e-mail DN.

CA

EH reminded Forum this had been discussed before and suggested that review of Core Paths Plan as part of LDP was a good time to start.

CA said that about half Local Authorities were reviewing/renewing CPP (Core Path Plan). Rest going down LDP route. CA asked for opinion.

MH said that had to be done in full, rather than half-heartedly or piecemeal.

JS asked who would pay for new paths. JS would like to see CPP as part of LDP but not just lumped in, needed to be done with full consultation particularly new paths or formalisation of existing routes. Also, had to realise full effect and cost implication (to landowner) of formalising paths.

GA added that paths needed to be joined up rather than 'bitty'. Council supports access links but without financial assistance etc. e.g. Ecclesmachan to Threemiletown multi-use paths. Suggested disparate groups needed strategic direction to work together. CA asked if there was any update from landowner re this route. GA said Hopetoun Estate had not indicated when review of landholdings would be completed.

(CA confirmed yes and that a business case for post replacement had been made. If post not replaced, then WLC needs to think about bringing in funding for WL projects in other ways. MH also asked about replacement for Chris Norman, WLC Development Management Manager; CA confirmed 2 officers 'acting up' jointly but no replacement as yet).

CA confirmed that many of WL desired routes were recreational rather than functional so more difficult to attract funding. Sustrans for example, would not fund recreational routes.

DN acknowledged by e-mail the many positive access projects and activities and asked how their outcomes were being objectively measured (e.g. KPIs for leverage with funding). CA will respond to DN.

CA

7. Access issues raised in last 6 months (Oct 2016 – April 2017, Chris Alcorn)

- 1) Glendevon – neighbour disputes over plan for house and garage. Access dispute over claimed route – not supported by WLC.
- 2) Blackridge Community Council – lowland croft route to Blawhorn Moss. Community Council has used VIF to improve route albeit only partially completed due to distance involved.
- 3) Linburn Estate – Scottish War Blinded had approached WLC about unrestricted horse use and damage to paths. Parks & Woodland Ranger Service had worked with BHS and estate to contact the surrounding liveries and also contact horse owners who used area and erect notices to point out problems and impose a 6 month respite for the Estate paths.
- 4) Freedom of Information Request received and responded to relating to Green Lanes and specification for signage – was more an English countryside issue.
- 5) Hopetoun Estate – meeting held with CSGNT using SNH funds to upgrade "Blue Gate" and Nethermill Gate on John Muir Way through estate.
- 6) John Muir Way signage – CSGNT had produced a report on an alternative / spur from the main route into Linlithgow centre to access services. To be funded by Town Centre Management Group.
- 7) Woolfords, Auchengray & Tarbrax Improvemnet Foundation (WAT IF) had met with West Calder & Harburn Community Development Trust on providing the missing link between their two areas at Pearie Law wind farm site. Lothian & Fife Green Network Partnership officer had negotiated with owners agent and designed and costed path.
- 8) Fauldhosue – Longridge parallel B7010 cycle path – after new owners did not want any issue to burden the land transfer, WLC Legal had now raised the project again with new owners.

8. Matters Arising – Bathgate Hills Quiet Roads Initiative update – (Chris Alcorn)

Deborah Paton has now left WLC. CA will seek update for Forum including result of Sustrans funding bid from colleagues.

AM pointed out that not much funding required just signage.

MH again stated that QRI was good but it was getting people to these areas safely, without extra traffic that was important. Could then attract rural economic development.

AM said that most cyclists will look at other quiet roads to access these areas.

CA

MH pointed out that was for all non-motorised users e.g.; horses and walkers.
AM said that there was a missing link from Livingston greenways to Bathgate Hills that needed looked at.

9. John Muir Way – (Eirwen Hopwood)

10 local authorities are now on board and Central Scotland Green Network Trust (CSGNT) are now taking the lead from SNH. CSGNT now has JMW Officer (1 year post to Oct'17 – possible extension through Leader application) leading on delivery of JMW, to develop and promote the trail. Number of working groups now set up to look at JMW strategically e.g. Strategy Group, Tourism / Economic Development Group Communications Group. Economic benefits have been surveyed and lot more promotion. CA confirmed he attends the JMW Infrastructure Group.

10. AOB

JS mentioned deer hunting issue was on the rise again and liaising with Police.

JS – farmers having to tackle increased fly tipping. Farmers considering locking more gates as consequence.

JS – reported that police have stated an increase in livestock worrying. TS outlined Ranger-led initiative over Easter at Beecraigs / Cockleroy using targeted signage to encourage responsible dog walking. JS said NFU looking at updating code referencing “dogs on a lead rather than under close control”. JS to update on NFU action taken / planned with dog worrying in WL.

JS

AG - queried remit of Access Ranger. EH outlined the post will co-ordinate the planning, development, implementation and management of access. The role will include the promotion of responsible access and awareness of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code / Land Reform (Scotland) Act / West Lothian Core Plan. Post will be part of Ranger Service so will have back-up of colleagues.

JS - reminded Forum that Access Officers should be upholding access takers and land managers issues equally.

AM - distributed sheet about volunteer path wardens which operates through Falkirk Council. Asked if WL knew of scheme and was it something to consider. TS confirmed WLC knew about it. Might be considered when Access Ranger is taken on but needed a lot of time and energy to “manage” volunteers. AM also stated that Scotways and Ramblers Scotland had mechanism for identifying and reporting path/access issues. CA stated that no reports had reached WLC through these projects. JS suggested that there might be issues about wildlife security through this scheme but it was a good source of cataloguing access problems. BS believes it is still just a pilot.

CC outlined issue of sheep worrying by dogs south of Seafield which had resulted in farmer suggesting erection of electric fencing.

11. Date of Next Meeting

3.00pm, 25th. October 2017 at Sutherland Building, Beecraigs Country Park.