



West Lothian Local Access Forum 25 April 2018

Present:	Name	Representing
	Beverly Stirling (BS)	West Lothian Council (WLC)
	Eirwen Hopwood (EH)	West Lothian Council (WLC)
	Tracey Smith (TS)	West Lothian Council (WLC)
	Chris Alcorn (CA)	West Lothian Council (WLC)
	Carol Campbell (CC)	Central Scotland Green Network Trust (CSGNT), Lothians & Fife
	Gill Brittle (GB)	British Horse Society (BHS)
	Gordon Alan (GA)	Ecclesmachan & Threemiletown Community Council (E&TCC) and representing rural WL's Community Councils
	Andy Gibbs (AG)	Independent member attending as a landowner & general user
	Richard Toleman (RT)	Representing Sustrans & cycle users
	Alastair Morrison (AM)	Scottish Rights of Way Society (Scotways)

BS volunteered to Chair the meeting.
CC volunteered to take the minutes.

Apologies:	Malcolm Hill & Jamie Smart	National Farmers Union Scotland (NFUS)
	Donald Noble	Hopetoun Estate (HE)

Action

1. **Introductions, summary of role and why attending Forum**

Beverly Stirling – Ranger Services Manager with WLC.

Eirwen Hopwood – Parks & Woodland Manager for NETs, Land & Countryside, WLC. Parks & Woodland (P&W) have inherited some access duties, working with other Council departments to better manage access provision.

Tracey Smith – Ranger with WLC. Team of 4 Rangers are based at WL's 3 Country Parks and work across the district. Rangers, together with P&W staff, assist with access management in WL, alongside other duties.

Chris Alcorn – Principal Planner in Development Planning, WLC Planning Services – involved in a number of policy areas including access & active travel as well as working on Development Plan. Acted as former access contact.

Carol Campbell – Development Officer, Central Scotland Green Network Trust – responsible for working-up projects for delivery by CSGNT and all claims after Practical Completion including active travel and access projects.

Gill Brittle – volunteer with British Horse Society. Been active for a few months now in WL and trying to get to know contacts and establish good relationships.

Gordon Alan – Chair of E&TCC – representing rural community councils in WL. Within E&TCC they are bringing paths up to a good standard and trying to establish a safe, active travel route between Ecclesmachan and Threemiletown (even more important now that local bus service will be cut shortly), hoping to establish further links across the district.

Andy Gibbs - local landowner in Bathgate Hills, adjacent to Beecraigs Country Park. Independent

member with general interest.

Richard Toleman – representing cycle users. Volunteer with Sustrans with particular interest in NCN75 and NCN754. Sustrans campaigns for more cycle links to communities.

Alastair Morrison – Volunteer with Scottish Rights of Way Society (Scotways). Currently assisting in the revision of Spokes Cycling Map of West Lothian.

BS outlined new structure for meetings – time limits to topics to keep agenda compact and progressive.

2. Minutes and actions from meeting on 25 October 2017

CA – Quiet Roads Initiative (QRI) – Provided update from Jim Stewart.

Bid now made to Sustrans Community Links Programme to engage a consultant who would focus on Beecraigs area for developing QRI (no contact therefore yet made with rural landowners and businesses; will be moved forward by consultant if application successful).

CA did not write to Sustrans following discussion around the difficulty Local Authorities have in finding the required 50% match funding for grant success.

TS – Dog walking businesses – unable to contact Colin Arthur prior to the meeting but had checked and only 1 company had signed-up to the scheme. Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) guidance not updated on WLC website regarding the Scheme but is detailed on the website elsewhere.

CA – Seeking representative from Police Scotland – Tamar Jamieson, part of community regeneration team, was notified of this meeting with previous minutes. Covers large area. Chris Alcorn to send BS Tamar's e-mail contact details, to then add to the LAF mailing list.

CA

GA – missing sign on Philpstoun Bing – TS reported that audit will take holistic look at network and any future signage 'strategy'. GA reported that he notified Scotways of missing sign. Scotways informed him that there is a small grant fund for communities to apply for or Scotways can help with signage if landowner and statutory service drawings are obtained and supplied to Scotways. BS also reported that there had been discussions with Scotways about updating/upgrading signs across West Lothian and Scotways happy to work with WLC to ensure there is consistency of signage.

3. RT – Sustrans update. RT updated on behalf of Phillip Kearney. Sustrans are currently supporting WLC through the Sustrans Community Links Programme.

General maintenance – work parties have focussed on Blackridge area – litterpicking/vegetation management on NCN75.

Discussed farmer misuse on NCN75 - ½ mile under A801 at Armadale (mud on track) used by the farmer as an easy link between fields and creating access issues for the public. RT said that someone needed to take action to maintain access. (CA provided background – landowner had access cut when railway re-established – difficulties getting under A801. Network Rail did not complete snagging list. WLC will not put on adoption list therefore no planned maintenance done by WLC but some reactive work carried out).

Potential establishment of connection from NCN75 to south platform of Bathgate Train Station – Sustrans would fully support and prioritise any applications made to them by WLC.

EH to speak to Tony Fleming to add NCN75 to work programme and address gorse encroachment.

EH

CA to request list of community link application submissions from Transportation, WLC to Sustrans to identify if above link has been included.

CA

4. Livestock worrying/review of the law (Dogs Protection of Livestock Act 1953 & the Control of Dogs Scotland Act 2010) – JS not at meeting but see link for Jamie's statement on NFUS website

<https://www.nfus.org.uk/news/blog/legal-and-technical-chairmans-blog-12-april-2018>

Any further update from Jamie will be sent out.

JS

TS updated group that local Police Officer and NFUS had been liaising with the public at Beecraigs Country Park last week about responsible dog walking in the countryside and particular reference to livestock worrying.

AG concerned for public safety on LW125 Cockleroy to Cairnpapple, where cattle were in the field.

CA queried if there was a sign warning public.

Ranger Service to go out on site to have a look and consult with landowner if required.

TS

5. GA – "Town Heritage and Art Trail" presentation. Broxburn Town Centre Management Group

suggested an art history trail to inform residents and visitors of history in area but also create recreation route. GA passed around map of art trail. 3 artists were short listed and Glasgow based company - Bespoke Italia – was appointed. Community consultations undertaken to record people's suggestions. Proposed art/route -

- 1) Start at Uphall Community Centre – introduction to history of 2 towns – plaque.
- 2) Map of trail in Uphall Community Woodland - will have link to future brochure on sign.
- 3) Strathbrock Church – history of church – patron St Nicholas etc.
- 4) Bottom of Ecclesmachan Road – issues currently with shopkeeper so stand will be erected in front of traffic control box – history of galas.
- 5) Horseshoe imprints – engraved plaque on side of Oatridge Hotel.
- 6) Middleton Hall – plaque – drawing of house with inscriptions telling history of house.
- 7) Cemetery wall – representation of different families coming to town as town expanded due to oil shale workings – in traditional dress.
- 8) The bakery – milestone depicting points of interest.
- 9) Canal – 2 areas - i) frame to enjoy the view. ii) plaque – history of local area.
- 10) Greentree Pub – replace plaque on gable and another new plaque on wall as well as oak leaves etched into pavement.
- 11) Argyle Court – masonic building – gable end montage representing 'flat cap' workers and brass band with gala day background.

All approved by Steering Group. Received 1 objection from member of public. £20k budget for consultation, design and delivery of project.

CA requested Bespoke Italia contact from GA – WLC will undertake conservation area consultation shortly.

GA

CA also referenced previous 'B.U.R.N.' project – community orientated project. Art trail was a good update of this.

CC informed Forum of potential project to 'resurrect' Shale Oil Trail by Lothians & Fife Green Network Partnership – would start in Broxburn. BS said that she had an old trail leaflet that may be of interest and she will e-mail to CA.

BS

BS also said that WLC can put a link on its website for both projects. Also looking at promoting links/trails to woodlands. GA welcomed this as keen for more people to visit and enjoy facilities/destinations in Broxburn area as he also chairs Broxburn and Uphall Traders Association (BRUTA). CA and GA to e-mail BS the links to the project websites.

CA & GA

6. Historic access issue – Torphichen – Linlithgow – Beecraigs Link. Torphichen Community Council had approached WLC regarding links to Linlithgow and Beecraigs. Previously needed to cross livestock fields. TS liaised with landowners and has secured general landowner agreement for a proposed route. There are biosecurity concerns on the land that will need addressed in the provision. Money previously from Torphichen community is no longer available. TS will contact landowners again to confirm agreement for pilot signage along agreed route to then hopefully install for summer'18. If pilot goes well, then Rangers and landowners could potentially seek funding for permanent route.

BS informed Forum that there is intention to have summer 'outing' to visit this new route if installed by then.

CA – Reported that Torphichen Community Council had folded and reformed a number of times so complimented TS on her success in developing project.

Cycle access was a definite no, due to biosecurity issue. May be re-looked at in future if trial was successful but needed to be very conscious of landowners' concerns at moment. The success of this project could encourage other WL landowners to enhance access provision.

TS
EH & BS

7. NAF/LAF meeting of

- 07/02/18 – JS to update all at next meeting.
- 16/03/18 – In JS's absence EH updated Forum. See attached note (20180316).

8. TS - summary of access issues since October 2017 covering areas Greenburn Golf Club in Fauldhouse, Stoneheaps Farm in Stoneyburn/Bents, motorised vehicles on Seafield Law, Beecraigs Loch, Avant Homes in Armadale, Linburn Estate, East Calder Main Street to Uphall Station path, West Calder and Harburn Community Development Trust, Claimed LW40, Polkemmet Road and Cult's Farm blocked access, access to Philipstoun Bing, Ormiston House access, South Queensferry path link to Hopetoun Estate & Kingsfield to Linlithgow tow path.

9. CA - Access related update October 17 – April 18

i) Clarendon House, Linlithgow – Council selling building. Adjacent residents have used estate in past. No formal paths but Legal believes that there is a case for access.

ii) Longridge – conditions of paths through lowland crofts – landowner may have made application through Village Improvement Fund.

iii) Westershire Wood, Hopetoun – thinning of woods completed. Reinstated paths but further

remediation requested which Hopetoun has agreed.
iv) Pentlands – new bridge – WLC provided funding.
v) Livingston North Blue Green Network - £20k (grant funded by CSGN) for feasibility study completed.

10. WL Access Forum – role, function and membership. BS outlined need to get ‘new blood’ into Forum. Previous paperwork does not address membership, role, duties, etc. and needs to be rewritten to apply to the current LAF. BS and EH will pull together draft terms of reference by autumn and then send out to Forum members for comment. SNH has produced ‘Local Access Forums, A Guide to Good Practice.’ Further information available at <https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/The-Act-and-the-Code/Local-Access-Forums> Members were asked to read through and consider.

BS/EH
All

GB stated that BHS attended a number of forums and could provide good examples. GB to send to BS.

GB

Hope to appoint Chairperson and expand membership with other access user types not currently represented (e.g. canoeists, mountain bikers, etc.) once formal documentation is completed. Forum to forward any suggestions for potential new members to BS.

All

BS raised potential for AGM as there are only 2 meetings per year. As the WL LAF will not be constituted any AGM would be led by the Forum’s members. Discussion over whether the number of meetings per year should increase. This will also need to be considered when Core Paths Plan is reviewed/revised and there was a discussion around need for working groups as and when required.

BS advised the Forum of the networking group SOAN (Scottish Outdoor Access Network) working on outdoor access and related issues. Free to join and LAF members may want to consider. See <http://soan.org.uk/>

11. Date of the proposed summer outing to be considered.

BS

12. **Any Other Business**

MH had raised his concerns over recent trespass and vandalism around his farm (through previous correspondence). BS had advised him to notify NFU and Police. Forum not in position to act and resolve.

CA - Funding and staffing update

- i) WLC can provide details of liveries to GB from Economic Development colleagues.
- ii) ‘Transforming your Council’ – staffing pressures highlighted across the Council and CA acknowledged NET’s, Land & Countryside officers’ support to the Forum.

CA

TS queried if WLC held any dataset of private landowners. CA confirmed that there was nothing formal but generally in people’s head. CC suggested using Registers of Scotland online (payment required) for specific landowner queries or web-based search engine for list of farmers and contact details.

AM - For info – handed out information sheet. There are access rights on fisheries (which he had previously interpreted as not being available).

AM queried last minutes – Longridge to Fauldhouse pavement – legal agreement would need to be followed up with new landowners of Heartlands. CA and AM discussed.

AM queried progress of Ecclesmachan to Threemiletown route – GA confirmed that Community Council is still pursuing with Hopetoun. Recent meeting was positive so Community Council is hopeful it may be progressed after 2020 (when grant contract ends).

EH – Whitburn town walk – Phase 1 has been completed from Lidl to Polkemmet.

BS – 4 full-time Rangers were previously supported by seasonal Assistant Ranger posts. No Assistant Rangers from 2018. The service is still supported by Council and members but the reduced number of staff will affect output.

Date of Next Meeting

- **Summer meeting, location/date/time to be agreed**
- **Wednesday 24 October 2018 at 3pm Sutherland Building, Beecraigs Country Park**