

Operating principles of the National Access Forum

A. The role and status of the Forum

- A1. The Land Reform Act places a statutory duty on SNH to keep the Access Code under review, and to consult 'such persons or bodies as they think appropriate' in fulfilment of this task. The National Access Forum is a voluntary association of interested organisations convened by SNH for this purpose. It is for SNH and Forum members to agree the Forum's composition and remit.
- A2. The overarching aims of the Forum are to:
- facilitate responsible enjoyment of the outdoors;
 - encourage responsible management of land and water in relation to access; and
 - ensure that the reasonable needs of privacy, safety and conservation are safeguarded.
- A3. The Forum will achieve these aims by:
- advising SNH and other bodies on national issues arising from the implementation of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, including the use of duties and powers, the content and effectiveness of guidance, and resource requirements;
 - advising on the effectiveness of the *Scottish Outdoor Access Code* and on possible improvements to it;
 - advising on work to publicise the Code and to promote understanding of it, and keeping the effectiveness of this work under review;
 - advising on broad principles and approaches to best practice in access provision and management, including codes of practice, advice, signage and standards;
 - advising on other access-related issues of national importance arising from or impacting on responsible enjoyment of the outdoors, and;
 - liaising regularly with the new local access forums and advising SNH on their consistency in dealing with issues arising from the legislation.

B. Membership of the Forum

- B1. SNH will provide the Secretariat support for the Forum and will maintain an address and web presence for the Forum.
- B2. The Forum will comprise representatives of recreation, land management and other interests. These bodies should be non-party political, have a national, membership-based structure through clubs and/or individual members, and be both recognised and authoritative. The Forum will also include public bodies which have significant national roles in access and can represent the wider public interest. SNH will maintain lists of such bodies in consultation with Forum members.
- B3. Full members of the Forum will be identified and reviewed as follows:
- the Secretary will invite relevant recreation and land management bodies to express an interest in full membership. Six members will be identified from within each group by discussion at a meeting convened for the purpose. Where agreement cannot be reached by this method, membership will be determined by a vote involving bodies within the relevant constituency;
 - six relevant public bodies will be identified by agreement between the organisations concerned;

- the Secretary will invite relevant 'other' bodies to express an interest in full membership; up to five such organisations will be elected by full members representing the recreation and land management sectors, and these should include at least one body each to represent educational, commercial and conservation interests;
- unless they have expressed a wish to the contrary, all bodies which are not selected can become corresponding members of the forum.

B4. The Forum will be chaired by an independent Convenor. The Secretary will invite nominations for this role from all full and corresponding members, accompanied by a short summary of the candidate's background and confirmation of their willingness to stand. The Convenor will be elected by the full members of the Forum using the Alternative Vote (AV) system.

B5. If no nominations are received, the forum could discuss the issue in closed session to identify potential candidates (including a chair from within its own membership), or SNH could nominate an interim chair pending the identification of a suitable alternative.

B6. The Convenor's term will run for two years, subject to review, with the possibility of extension for a further two years. The forum should provide constructive feedback to assist the Convenor, which could be based on an annual appraisal and/or informal guidance. The review of the Convenor after the first two years of the appointment should be considered by discussion in closed session, and the chairing role should pass to another forum member for this purpose.

B7. The membership of the Forum will be reviewed on a four year cycle as follows:

Year 1	Review recreation and land management bodies; appoint Convenor
Year 2	Review public and other bodies
Year 3	No change in membership; review Convenor
Year 4	No change in membership

C. Running the Forum and its meetings

C1. The Forum will meet 3-4 times a year, or as required.

C2. Much of the work of the Forum will be conducted through time-limited working groups that report to the Forum. The working groups would most likely be chaired by Forum members but their membership would be drawn from both full and corresponding member bodies.

C3. Each working group will be serviced by a Forum member organisation, most likely one of the public body members.

C4. Forum and working group meetings will be minuted. Comments will be attributed to individuals and member organisations.

C5. Any member organisation can raise agenda items or prepare formal papers for discussion by the Forum with the agreement of the Forum. Formal papers must be with the Secretariat at least three weeks before the meeting.

C6. Agendas for meetings will be agreed by the Convenor and Secretary. Agendas, papers and minutes will be circulated to all members at least two weeks before meetings (unless

otherwise agreed between the Convenor and Secretary). Corresponding members can comment or raise other points through the most appropriate representative on the Forum or through the Secretary.

- C7. A brief meeting report, covering the main issues discussed and action points arising, will be produced, circulated to members and placed on the website within one week of each meeting. The report will be approved by the Convenor and Secretary.
- C8. A detailed note of the meeting will be produced within three weeks of a meeting and circulated to full members for comment on its accuracy and content. The note will then be formally approved at the following meeting.
- C9. The Forum seeks to develop a climate of openness and trust. At each meeting of the Forum, there will be an opportunity for members to declare any relevant interests or actions which are likely to affect the work of the Forum or the business on the day.
- C10. In the unlikely event of a vote on a particular action or activity, all full members will have equal status. Observer members would not vote.
- C11. In joint decisions taken by the Convenor and Secretary, the Convenor will, if necessary, have the final say.
- C12. Scottish Natural Heritage will be a non-voting member of the Forum but will participate fully in all Forum business. The Scottish Government will be an observer.
- C13. A work programme will be agreed by the Forum each year. This programme will set out the main areas of work, the main outputs expected and what working groups are likely to be required.

D. Keeping people informed

- D1. Agendas and papers will be placed on the website at least two weeks before a meeting, unless otherwise agreed between the Convenor and Secretary.
- D2. Meeting reports and approved formal minutes will be made public and placed on the website.
- D3. A short annual report will be produced each year. This will be published and placed on the website.
- D4. The annual report will be launched at a meeting which will be open to local access forum members and the wider public. This meeting will take place at a different venue each year, to give a good geographical spread around Scotland.
- D5. Regular meetings of the Forum will normally take place in a central location and will be open to the public. Members of the public attend strictly as observers, and should inform the Secretary beforehand in order to facilitate the arrangements for the meeting.
- D6. Members of the public can contribute written submissions on particular agenda items, which will be circulated to members or tabled at the meeting. These will be in the public domain, although the Convenor and Secretary may withhold material that is offensive or in breach of law.
- D7. Certain agenda items may be discussed in closed session, at the discretion of the Convenor and Secretary.

D8. The Convenor and Secretary may invite attendance by any individual or organisation that they believe will assist with the work of a meeting. More than one person may be invited to attend, as necessary, on behalf of a particular organisation.

E. The role of member bodies and their representatives

E1. Each member organisation will have one named representative on the Forum. Each representative can have a named individual who can deputise for them. If neither the nominated representative or their deputy can attend a meeting, the Secretary should be informed in writing at least 1 week before a meeting of who will attend in their place.

E2. At meetings of the Forum, no more than one formal representative will normally be allowed to attend on behalf of each member organisation.

E3. Members are expected to bring forward the views of their organisations, their general sector and any corresponding members who have contacted them, and feed back accordingly.

E4. The Forum should strive to reach a collective view on an issue, and members must be willing to work towards and adopt common positions where possible. Such decisions are binding on the Forum but not on member bodies. Where a common view cannot be reached, the different positions of the member bodies should be identified.

E5. The work of the Forum must be well-informed, so member organisations are expected to seek the views of their members regularly (such as through a committee).

E6. If a representative or their deputy fails to attend three consecutive meetings of the Forum then their membership may be rescinded.