

National Access Forum Update – September 2018

Summary of main topics - National Access Forum meeting 26 September 2018

Mountain Biking and Enduro Activity -

There was an update from the NAF sub group summarising the feedback from the consultation workshops that had taken place over the summer at Aviemore, Glentress, Birnam and Banchory. Stakeholder comments had been incorporated and a final draft 'Unauthorised Mountain Bike trails: A guide for Land Managers and Riders' was presented to the Forum for approval. There was a positive response to the guidance with small amendments suggested to strengthen messages on liability and consideration of other users. The guidance will now be finalised and launched at the 'Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland' conference on 21 November. The sub group will also be working on how to promote and communicate key messages from the guidance to the landowning and mountain biking community.

Educational resources to engage with young people -

Forum members discussed a summary paper of the existing resource materials for engaging with young people to promote responsible access. A variety of good resources do exist for promoting the Code to young people, however some are in need of a refresh and some target age groups are not met through existing materials. Scottish Natural Heritage offered to explore options of co-designing aspects of the Code with 'Young Scot' and agreed to bring a paper to the January NAF meeting. Forum members identified a number of organisations that have experience in working with young people that could also be involved in developing new resources.

Communications and Campaigns -

The Forum heard from Mark Wrightham about the progress with the revision of the SOAC website. The website is now embedded in a new web platform within the SNH website but it retains its separate user – facing identity. The existing well known structure of the site is also maintained. Over the next few months the SOAC website will be re-populated with key documents and any broken web links repaired. The new web platform will allow updates to be made more easily.

LAF Activity -

A paper summarising the activity of Local Access Fora based on the annual monitoring programme undertaken by Scottish Government was discussed by the Forum. This showed the decline in the number of LAF meetings held per year and the type of activity undertaken eg dispute resolution, path projects, promotion, core path planning etc. Whilst the data is now out of date it was still felt by members to be vital in determining trends, regional variation and identifying how NAF might better support the LAF network. Support for updating the annual monitoring and continuing it was expressed by Forum members. A suggestion for a standing item 'LAF question time' on the NAF agenda was also made.

NAF/LAF Joint meeting 2019 –

The Convenor outlined the key points from the summary of responses from LAFs in response to questions about the venue, timing, format and topics for the next joint NAF/LAF meeting on 5 April 2019. A small group would convene in November to develop the joint NAF/LAF meeting for next year focusing on the responses and the overall theme of improving ways of NAF/LAF joint working and sharing good practice across the LAF network.

Revised guidance for Local Authorities under Section 27 of the Land Reform Scotland Act 2003 -

Forum members emphasised the importance of the revised guidance for new and existing access officers as the previous guidance was now out of date. The revised guidance includes input from practitioners and would provide much needed assistance on the ground and help reduce unnecessary conflict.

Core Paths and OS mapping –

Helen Todd reported that the Ramblers had commissioned Philip Glennie to look at the core path data set and the extent to which it appeared on OS maps. There is huge interest from their members in getting core paths and other paths represented on maps and she suggested that the previous NAF sub group on this matter should reconvene. Notwithstanding the technical issues to be overcome with OS and issues around ground truthing of paths there remains support from Forum members for this to happen. A paper would be brought to the next NAF meeting outlining a way forward.

Midlothian public access case Manson versus Midlothian Council-

The Forum heard about the recent positive outcome of the Manson versus Midlothian Council public access case in Penicuik, Midlothian, where the owners of Cairnbank road had blocked the route with barriers and inappropriate signage. The Council had issued a Section 14 notice to have the blockage removed but the owners appealed the notice. The Sheriff found in favour of the Council in upholding public access provision under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. A link to the full report is available at;

<https://www.scotcourts.gov.uk/docs/default-source/cos-general-docs/pdf-docs-for-opinions/2018scedin50.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

Review of National Access Forum Membership –

The Secretary reported on the completion of the National Access Forum membership review, and a table of the final list of full and corresponding members was presented. Police Scotland and the Woodland Trust (Scotland) are new full members and both Visit Scotland and RSPB have become corresponding members. A number of new representatives for both full and corresponding member organisations have evolved through the review process, which also refreshes member involvement.

Convenorship extension -

A proposal to extend the term of the current Convenor for a further two years was discussed in closed session. Forum members were very supportive of the operation of the current Convenor and fully supported an extension until the end of 2020. A new convenor would be elected to commence in Jan 2021.

Future NAF meetings –

The next Forum meetings will be on Wednesday **30 January 2019** and Wednesday **29 May 2019** at Battleby. The next joint NAF/LAF meeting will be on **Friday 5 April 2019** also at Battleby.

For more information or comment on any of the above topics, please contact the NAF Secretary – Janice Winning (NAFsec@nature.scot ; 0131 316 2639). Further information can be found on the National Access Forum pages at <http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/access-forum/>.