



Operating principles of the National Access Forum

The role and status of the forum

1. The National Access Forum is a voluntary grouping of interested organisations convened by NatureScot. Its main purpose is to help NatureScot fulfil its statutory duty under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 to keep the Scottish Outdoor Access Code under review, and to consult 'such persons or bodies as they think appropriate' in fulfilment of this task. It is for NatureScot and forum members to agree the forum's composition and remit.
2. The overarching aims of the forum's work are to:
 - facilitate responsible enjoyment of the outdoors
 - encourage responsible management of land and water in relation to access
 - ensure that the reasonable needs of privacy, safety and conservation are safeguarded
3. The forum will achieve these aims by:
 - advising NatureScot, 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
 - liaising regularly with local access forums
 - advising on the effectiveness of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and on possible improvements to it
 - advising on work to publicise the Scottish Outdoor Access 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

Membership of the forum

4. The forum membership will include representatives for organisations covering recreation, land management and other interests. These organisations should be non-party political, have a national, membership-based structure through clubs and/or individual members, and be both recognised and authoritative.

5. The forum will also include public bodies which have significant national roles in access and can represent the wider public interest.
6. The forum membership will also include:
 - a representative for Scotland’s local authorities
 - a representative for Scotland’s national park authorities
 - a representative for Scotland’s local access forums
7. Members of the forum will be identified and reviewed as follows:
 - 7.1 Recreation and Land management organisations – 12 members
 - the NAF Secretary will invite relevant recreation and land management bodies to express an interest in forum membership
 - twelve members will be identified, six from recreational interests and six from management interests
 - selection will be agreed through discussion at a meeting convened for the purpose. Where agreement cannot be reached by this method, membership will be determined by a vote involving organisations within the relevant constituency
 - 7.2 “Other interests” organisations – up to 6 members
 - the NAF Secretary will invite relevant “other interest” bodies to express an interest in forum membership
 - up to six such organisations will be elected by members representing the recreation and land management sectors, including at least one body each to represent educational, commercial and conservation interests
 - 7.3 National public bodies – up to 4 members
 - up to four relevant national public bodies, will be identified by agreement between the organisations concerned
 - 7.4 Representative roles for local authorities, national park authorities and local access forums – 3 members
 - one person from a local authority will represent all local authorities and will be identified by agreement with the organisations concerned
 - one person from a national park authority will represent all national park authorities and will be identified by agreement with the organisations concerned
 - one person from a local access forum shall represent all local access forums and will be identified by agreement with the organisations concerned
8. The membership of the forum will be reviewed on a four-year cycle as follows:

Year 1	Review recreation and land management organisations (7.1)
Year 2	Review “other interests” organisations, public bodies and LA/NPA and LAF representative roles (7.2, 7.3 and 7.4)
Year 3	No review required
Year 4	No review required

Forum Convenor

9. The forum will be chaired by an independent Convenor.
10. When required, the Secretary will invite nominations for this role from forum members and any other interested parties. To be valid, a nomination must be submitted on time and accompanied by a short summary of the candidate’s background, confirmation of their willingness to stand, and the support of at least one member of the forum as defined in the section above.
11. The call for nominations will be for a period of at least 4 weeks as determined by the Secretary in consultation with the forum. At the next meeting following this deadline, forum members will then elect a Convenor from the valid nominations submitted. NatureScot will chair this part of the meeting, with the Secretary organising the election. Each member will have one vote.
12. If no nominations are received, the forum should discuss the issue in closed session to identify potential candidates (including from within its own membership, or a short-term extension to the incumbent Convenor), or NatureScot may nominate an interim Convenor pending the identification of a suitable alternative.
13. 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.

Running the forum

14. NatureScot will provide the Secretariat support for the forum.
15. The forum will meet 3 times a year, or as required.
16. Members can raise agenda items or prepare formal papers for discussion by the forum with the agreement of the Convenor and Secretary. Formal papers should be with the Secretariat at least three weeks before the meeting.

17. Agendas for meetings will be agreed by the Convenor and Secretary. Agendas, papers and minutes of previous meeting will be circulated to members at least two weeks before meetings (unless otherwise agreed between the Convenor and Secretary).
18. In the event that the Convenor is unavailable at short notice, the forum may agree an alternative Convenor for the meeting.
19. A brief meeting summary, covering the main issues discussed, will be circulated to members and placed on the website within two weeks of each meeting. The summary will be approved by the Convenor and Secretary.
20. In joint decisions taken by the Convenor and Secretary, the Convenor will, if necessary, have the final say.
21. Minutes of the meeting will be produced within three weeks and circulated to members for comment on its accuracy and content. The minutes will then be formally approved at the following meeting, before being placed on the website.
22. 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 conflicts of interest which are likely to affect the work of the forum or the business on the day.
23. In the unlikely event of a vote on a particular action or activity, all members will have equal status. NatureScot will be a non-voting member of the forum but will participate fully in all other forum business. Scottish Government will be an observer.
24. A work programme will be agreed by the forum for the year. This programme will set out the main areas of work, outputs and any working groups that may be required.
25. Much of the work of the forum will be conducted through time-limited working groups that report to the forum. The working groups will routinely be chaired by forum members. Their membership may be drawn from forum members or non-members with specific or specialist knowledge. A note will be taken of any meetings.

Keeping people informed

26. Forum agendas, meeting papers, meeting summaries, minutes and any other relevant meeting documents will be made available on the [Outdoor Access website](#).
27. Meetings of the forum will normally take place in a hybrid format, on-line and in person meeting, and will be open to the public. Members of the public attend strictly as observers and must inform the Secretary beforehand.
28. Members of the public and other interested parties can contribute to the work of the forum through:
 - contacting a forum member – a member representing the appropriate topic or area of interest

- the forum's Secretary
 - by written submission on a particular agenda item – these 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.
29. Certain agenda items may be discussed in closed session, at the discretion of the Convenor and Secretary.
 30. 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.

The role of members

31. 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 nor 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.
32. At meetings of the forum, no more than one formal representative will normally be allowed to attend on behalf of each member organisation.
33. Forum members are expected to seek and bring forward the views of:
 - their organisation
 - their membership
 - their general sector
 - any interested parties who have contacted them
34. 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 individual members. Where a common view cannot be reached, the different positions of the members should be identified.
35. If a representative or their deputy fails to attend three consecutive meetings of the forum, their membership may be rescinded and a new member selected.

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