

2014 Joint Meeting of National Access Forum and Local Access Forums

Summary Note

Equestrian Activities Centre, Gleneagles
4th November 2014

This note provides a summary of key points from the presentations and discussion at this year's NAF-LAFs annual joint event – but is not intended as a formal minute of the meeting.

1. Welcome - John Thomson (*Convenor, National Access Forum*) welcomed everyone to the venue at Gleneagles, and to the annual joint meeting which this year had a theme of equestrian access. John noted some key topics from the past year, including the report from the Land Reform Review Group, and the conclusions of the recent review of the NAF.

2. Forums' Updates -

a) Rob Garner (*National Access Forum Secretary*) - provided a brief update on key topics for the NAF over the past year, including comments on several national strategies, and on topics like level crossings, dogs, and commercial access. Key submissions had been made to government over the prospects for access resources and the new SRDP, and to the Land Reform Review Group, while the full Review of the NAF had largely endorsed the current activities and shape of the NAF, with some suggestions for updated priorities.

b) Simon Pilpel (*Local Access Forums' representative on NAF*)- described how his role was to speak on behalf of LAFs in NAF discussions, and to be a two-way conduit for views. Simon noted that LAFs are often very dependent on the activity and support of the access authority, and economic constraints were therefore having an effect, while there were also pressures on the time of the volunteers who comprise LAFs. There is consequently quite a variation in the functions and effectiveness of LAFs across the country, and some recent research (James Hutton Institute) comparing urban and rural LAFs was interesting, as was a recent SOAN networking day looking at the patterns and some good examples of LAF activities

3. Main Session - Equestrian access and shared paths for all - This lively interactive session and presentation by Vyv Wood-Gee (*BHS Scotland*) used group sessions to test perceptions of the access rights, and illustrated actual case situations.

4. Open Discussion - Discussion centred on aspects of irresponsible behaviour, and what can be done. Several contributors commented on the need for more consistent and effective enforcement actions, eg over locked gates on paths, and over irresponsible access takers. Lack of enforcement can de-motivate LAFs, as well as setting difficult precedents.

In many cases there can be an effective role for working together, eg between the LAFs and user-charities like BHS, or similarly the joint BHS-SLE-NFUS programmes, and also for practical assistance using volunteers. There was wide agreement that training and

education will continue to be important in the long term, and possibly the inclusion of topics around the Access Code in schools' curricula would help to instil the cultural messages and norms, alongside joint approaches at the more local level.

Lunch and networking

5. Arena session - Access on the hoof: practical demonstrations with commentary from Helene Mauchlen (*BHS Scotland*) physically illustrated horse-riders' experience with various path widths, dealing with dung on paths, how horse riders use gates, etc.

6. Workshops -

- a) Standard waymarked path grading system for Scotland
- Phil Whitfield *FCS*, and Catharine Idle *PfA*
- b) New National Strategies and developing Action Plans : National Walking Strategy, and NPF3 - National Walking and Cycling Network
- Rona Gibb *PFA*, and Ron McCraw *SNH*
(*copy of the power-point presentation available on request from NAF Sec*)
- c) Resolving equestrian access issues on the ground: case study examples
- Vyv Wood Gee, and Helene Mauchlen

7. Open Discussion - This discussion focused particularly on resources for access. It was recognised that there is no ring-fencing of local authority budgets, and funding for access and recreation can be a soft target for cuts compared to priorities education. It was noted that even extending statutory duties for spending would not be an answer, since it would be very difficult to do, and in any case councils are already having to decide on cuts between statutory duties. It is more an issue of political will, and demonstrating the pay-back that can be gained across a wide range of major public policy issues by improving public access opportunities. This might involve engaging local MSPs, where LAFs may be able to help in showing how relatively small expenditure on access brings substantial benefits.

An example was raised over how East Lothian runs a network of volunteer path wardens, organised by the council rangers and access officers, but with volunteers trained, equipped, insured by the council. They work on core paths, using the s19 powers, in conjunction with the local land managers, and this helps to engage both volunteers and land managers.

Other authorities do similar work based on their council-owned land and paths.

Local authorities clearly have a key role, and several contributors endorsed how important it was to have local authority councillors on the LAF, and engaged in its work. Any LAFs which do not already include local councillors were encouraged to bring them on board.

There was broad interest and support over the idea of groups of neighbouring LAFs meeting regularly, to share experience and ideas on obtaining good results and benefits. There was interest in seeing how regional groupings of LAFs might meet together, possibly with some assistance and help from the National Access Forum, to share ideas and complement each other's work, and to help in jointly enhancing the case for adequate resourcing.

Conclusion and close - John Thomson warmly thanked all speakers and contributors.

Attendees -

No	Name	LAF Area	Position
1.	John Thomson		NAF Convenor
2.	Rob Garner		NAF Secretary
3.	Simon Pilpel		NAF- LAFs rep
4.	Vyv Wood Gee		Speaker - BHSS
5.	Helene Mauchlen		Speaker - BHSS
6.	Rona Gibb		Speaker - PfA
7.	Catharine Idle		Speaker - PfA
8.	Ron McCraw		Speaker - SNH
9.	Phil Whitfield		Speaker - FCS
10.	Marsaili Aspinall	Aberdeenshire	Access Officer
11.	Judy Middleton	Aberdeenshire	LAF Member
12.	Eric Baird	Cairngorms NPA	LAF Convener
13.	Nick Cole	Cairngorms NPA & Perth and Kinross	LAF Member LAF Convenor
14.	Caroline Paterson	City of Edinburgh	Nat Heritage Officer
15.	Martin Dean	Clackmannanshire	Access Officer
16.	Peter Ross	Dumfries & Galloway	OAF Chair
17.	Catherine Makepeace	Dumfries & Galloway	OAF Member
18.	Beverley Vaux	Dumfries & Galloway	OAF Member
19.	Bryan Scott	Dumfries & Galloway	C'side Dev Officer
20.	Bob Diamond	East Dunbartonshire	LAF Vice- Chair
21.	Clr Eric Gotts	East Dunbartonshire	LAF Chair
22.	Alan Gemmell	East Dunbartonshire	LAF Member
23.	Jennifer Lothian	East Lothian	Access Officer
24.	Christopher Spencer	East Lothian	LAF member
25.	James Wyllie	East Lothian	LAF Chair
26.	Joyce Kent	East Lothian	LAF member
27.	Angus Duncan	Falkirk	Access Officer
28.	Sheila Hall	Falkirk	LAF Vice Chair (Eq rep)
29.	Beryl Leatherland	Fife	LAF member
30.	Alison Irvine	Fife	Access Officer
31.	Sue Hilder	Glasgow City	Access Officer
32.	James Riddell	Glasgow City	LAF Member
33.	Guy Keating	LLTNP	Access Officer
34.	Bob Ellis	LLTNP	LAF Member
35.	Peter Baker	LLTNP	LAF Member
36.	Ian Douglas	Moray	Access Officer
37.	Michelle Gillibrand	Moray	LAF Convener
38.	Mary Stelmach	Moray	LAF Member
39.	Kevin Lafferty	NAF	Forestry Comm Sc
40.	Jamie Smart	NAF	Nat Farmers' Union Sc
41.	Anne Gray	NAF	Sc Land & Estates

42.	Helen Jones	NAF	Sc Government
43.	Jonathan Kitching	NAF	Sc A P Outdoor Ed
44.	Elaine Fotheringham	NAF	Sportscotland
45.	Eddie Palmer	NAF	Sc Canoe Assoc
46.	Andrea Partridge	NAF	Mountaineering CofSc
47.	Eileen Stuart	NAF	Sc Natural Heritage
48.	Paul Timms	NAF	Cyclists TC
49.	David MacDonald-Wagstaffe	North Lanarkshire	LAF Chair
50.	Jennifer MacDonald-Wagstaffe	North Lanarkshire	LAF Member (Eq rep)
51.	Stephen Jenkinson	Orkney	NAF - SKC, LAF Chair
52.	Heather Baker	Perth and Kinross	LAF Member (Eq rep)
53.	Kate Cuthbert	Renfrewshire	Access Officer
54.	Ian Leith	Renfrewshire	LAF Member
55.	Phil Waite	Ross & Cromarty	Access Officer
56.	William Davidson	Sc Borders	LAF Chair
57.	Neil Mackay	Sc Borders	Access Officer
58.	Douglas Wright	Sc Borders	LAF Member
59.	Rachel Shipley	South Ayrshire	Access Officer
60.	Rob Field	Sutherland	LAF Member
61.	Malcolm Hill	West Lothian	LAF Member

For any queries, please contact the NAF Secretary, Rob Garner, RobGarner.NAFSEC@snh.gov.uk