

Summary of 14th meeting of National Access Forum

Perth
5th November 2008

Present:

Bob Reid	Convenor
Mark Wrightham	Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH); Secretary
Robert Balfour	Association of Deer Management Groups (ADMG)
Dorothy Breckenridge	Activity Scotland (AS)
Jane Campbell-Morris	Scottish Sports Association (SSA)
Hebe Carus	Mountaineering Council of Scotland (MCofS)
Lee Cousins	sportscotland (SS)
Mike Dales	Scottish Canoe Association (SCA)
Roddy Fairley	SNH
Jamie Farquhar	Confederation of Forest Industries (ConFor)
Bob Grant	Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA)
Anne Gray	Scottish Rural Property & Business Association (SRPBA)
Alick Hay	Historic Houses Association (HHA)
Helen Jones	Scottish Government (SG) Rural Directorate
Jonathan Kitching	Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education (SAPOE)
Kevin Lafferty	Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS)
Alastair MacIennan	NFU Scotland (NFUS)
George Menzies	Scottish Rights of Way & Access Society (Scotways)
Dave Morris	Ramblers Association Scotland (RAS)
Simon Pilpel	Local access forum contact
Geoff Robson	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)
James Scott	British Association for Shooting & Conservation (BASC)
Pat Somerville	British Horse Society Scotland (BHS)
John Taylor	Cyclists Touring Club (CTC)

Funding for access

The forum discussed various matters relating to funding for access. The meeting included a brief update on the Scotland Rural Development Plan, which noted that discussion was underway with the European Commission to address the £500 capital limit that currently applies to the area access management option under Rural Priorities. A more detailed report will follow at the next meeting.

The forum also noted that funding previously provided to local authorities through SNH grants would be transferred to the main settlement from the Scottish Government from 2009-10. Several members expressed concern that this funding would be diverted into non-access related areas of local authority expenditure, and suggested that this could have important implications for access officers and local access forums. In discussion:

- various forum members suggested that access officers and local forums would need to make a case within each authority to ensure that this funding was directed into access-related work;
- the importance of making links to the National Performance Indicators that underpin Single Outcome Agreements was noted, and;
- the basis for the allocation of these funds to each local authority was due to be discussed with COSLA; information about the amounts transferred would be circulated to access officers and local forums as soon as possible. (Note: a meeting

with COSLA took place on 6th November and Directors of Finance are being consulted on the principles of the allocation).

Access issues on inland water

A paper from SCA suggested that on some rivers, there has been a recent increase in the frequency of reported incidents involving alleged aggression towards canoeists, which were attributed to a very small minority of anglers and ghillies. Discussion noted the social and economic importance of both angling and water-based activities within access rights, highlighted the generally high level of co-operation between these interests, and noted some management approaches that might help to pre-empt such incidents.

A range of partner bodies are developing access management guidance for inland water, but this process has been delayed – and the importance of this guidance, perhaps in conjunction with shorter leaflets aimed at key interested parties, was emphasised. It was suggested that discussion of this issue with the police would be of relatively little immediate value, but could be reconsidered in the light of experience with the practical application of the guidance.

Guidance on the management of informal camping

The forum discussed final draft guidance on the management of informal camping which has been developed by SNH in conjunction with the forum's camping sub-group. After minor final amendments, this will be made available online at www.outdooraccess-scotland.com. The forum thanked the sub-group for its input to the development of both this guidance and the ongoing SNH education campaign to encourage responsible camping.

Other items

- The forum noted further recent correspondence with Network Rail (NR) and was awaiting an update on progress with the risk assessment of 'authorised user' level crossings. NR had indicated that they were not promoting the *On The Level* educational video which demonstrates the safe use of such crossings. Members noted that this discussion has been very protracted and expressed dissatisfaction with the rate of progress.
- CNPA has completed a pilot process to develop guidance, for all interested parties, on large outdoor events in the Cairngorms. This will provide a foundation for the development of national guidance and the forum will establish a sub-group to take this process forward.
- The forum's stalking sub-group is developing guidance for land managers on stalking and public access, with particular emphasis on signage. This is now close to completion and will be considered at the next forum meeting.
- The forum thanked the Convenor, Bob Reid, for his enthusiastic and committed input to its work over the last four years – which have been a very important phase in the implementation of the access legislation. The new Convenor, Richard Cooke, will take over this role at the next regular meeting.

Date of next meeting

Wednesday 11th February (Battleby).