

Note of meeting of Caithness Local Access Forum (CLAF)  
held in the Ross Institute, Halkirk  
on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2014

## **Present**

Chris Hobson (CH), Chair – Land Manager.  
Ben McGregor (BM) – Access Taker/User  
Willie Mackay (WM) – Landward Ward Member of the Highland Council  
William Bruce (WB) – Access Taker/User  
Carol Graham (CG) – Access Taker User  
Alan McVeigh (AM) – Disability Access Forum  
Traylan Peat (TP) – Disability Access Forum

## **In attendance**

Matt Dent (MD) – Access Officer, The Highland Council (THC)  
Marina Swanson (MS) – Caithness East Ranger, The Highland Council  
Alex Macmanus (AM1) – Ward Manager's Office, The Highland Council (clerk)

2 members of the general public.

## **1. Apologies**

Roger Saxon (RS) – Thurso Ward Member of the Highland Council.  
David Glass (DG) – Community Group  
Elena Koponen-Baikie (EK-B) – Community Group  
Helen Budge (HB) – Disability Access Forum  
George Duff (GD) – Countryside Ranger & Long Distance Route Manager.

## **2. Notes from meeting of 5<sup>th</sup> June.**

Agreed by CH and AM after amendment made to item 8 and the misspelling of Brough.

## **3. Action points from 2 above.**

**Halkirk to Sibster path** – WM to speak to Cllr Gillian Coghill to ascertain progress of this issue. **ACTION – WM**

**Jesson's Bridge** – Would be a large capital project for Council. Might suggest a parallel bridge to the road with a path from the old bridge. Another solution may be to make use of the 2<sup>nd</sup> car park although gate may at times be locked. It's understood that 3 landowners are involved. MD to check to confirm who the 3 landowners are and also arrange to obtain a map of the area. **ACTION – MD**

**Disability Access Forum (DAF)** – good access for members at Sibster, Georgemas.

AM to arrange to forward minutes of North Highland Access group meeting of 25<sup>th</sup> June which was held in PPP to CH. This meeting was well attended. **ACTION – AM**

**Booklet of accessible walks** – now to be looked at by MD in 2015. **ACTION – MD**

**Crosskirk** – MD has spoken to Historic Scotland (HS) to obtain a price for a new bridge. Bridge does not belong to HS and no agreement, as far as is known, exists. A chain has appeared across the bridge blocking its use but not known who put this in place.

Letter to be sent to HS from CLAF to remind them of their responsibilities as regards the bridge with copy to Paul Wheelhouse. Environment & Climate Change Minister. MD has spoken to Stephen Watt of HS about this. **ACTION – CH**

It was mentioned that wind farm money may be available for this project but this would have to be applied for by a constituted group or a charity.

**Keiss** – MD dealing with the right of way issue discussed with WM.

**Yarrows** – MS reports no work started at the car park.

**Signs at Brough** – Issue is between Landowners and person putting up the signs. No need for MD to get involved.

**Ormlie Moors** – RS to find out ownership of the land. Idea to have kissing gates with radar key for DAF. **ACTION – RS.**

#### **4. Local Disability Access panel report.**

AM - Good news on walks at Dunnet and Sibster and (Rogie???) Small issue at Castlehill with broken flag stones. MS would contact Paul Castle to investigate. **ACTION – MS**

#### **5. Access Officers report.**

**Crosskirk** – broken steps at bridge will hamper access.

**Stroupster Wind Farm** – Forestry Commission site. Signage and gates with Macleod's. An open and fully accessible site apart from out buildings and areas around bases of turbines. Hazard plan will be in place.

**Burn of Whilk Wind Farm** – No more word and not a lot of activity here. Access from Camster Road and Clyth End. 7km route. People using this area are now known to the construction company.

**Camster Wind Farm** – Core path signs up here and at Tannach. Two signs were wrong. Any complaints about this to MD

**Scrabster Quarry** – Padlocks on gates but access over open cattle grid. Maybe a case for radar locks. MS carries out guided walks in this area.

**Holburn Head** – Signs are now up.

Any access problems what so ever please advise MD. MD happy to hear about the good experiences being received by DAF members in the county.

**Dunnet Forest** – All abilities signs supplied by MD awaiting erection.

#### **5a. AOB**

**CLAF Membership** – Area Committee confirmed membership on Islay Macleod and Carol Graham this morning.

**AM** – New Equalities Act coming into force.

**WM** – LUC report to local Committee today. Link to CLAF members for their information. **ACTION – AM1**

**WB** – Copy of Orkney Outdoor Access Strategy booklet. Try to obtain further copies. **ACTION – AM1**

#### **6. DONM**

If Business dictates Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2014 at 7.00pm in Ross Institute, Halkirk.

Failing that first meeting in 2015 will be on 3<sup>rd</sup> March. It is hoped that this meeting will take place in the Newtonhill Forest 'bothy'.