

Note of meeting of Caithness Local Access Forum (CLAF)
held in the Newtonhill Croft Cottage, Wick
on Tuesday 3rd March 2015

Present

Chris Hobson (CH), Chair – Land Manager
David Glass (DG) – Community Group
William Bruce (WB) – Access Taker/User
Ben McGregor (BM) – Access Taker/User
Islay Macleod (IM) – Land Manager

In attendance

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

Prior to the start of the meeting WB welcomed the CLAF to the Newtonhill Croft Cottage in his capacity as a member of the Friends of Newtonhill Group (FONG). He gave a potted history of the cottage which just passed its final building inspection by Highland Council.

As Newtonhill is an exposed site at present the cottage can be used by groups to shelter. There will be no provision for using the building as an overnight stay. Bookings will be taken by a diary and it is hoped that this will move on line next year.

An official opening is being arranged and a new logo for the woodland has been designed, through a schools competition, and is nearly ready for publication.

CLAF members present were very impressed by the standard of the works and the tremendous potential the cottage now gives the new site.

1. Apologies

Cllr. Roger Saxon (RS) – Thurso Ward Member of the Highland Council
Cllr Willie Mackay (WM) – Landward Ward Member of the Highland Council
Kirsty Rosie (KR) – Caithness East Ranger, Highland Council
Carol Graham (CG) – Access Taker/User

2. Notes from meeting of 2nd December 2014

Agree as presented, but with two amendments as below, DG/WB

Present - David Glass remove Access Taker/User, add Community Group.

6. Brough – afterfrom a bog, add ...following a route sign posted by a sign supplied by Highland Council.

3. Action points from above.

Halkirk to Sibster path – WM to speak to Cllr. G Coghill to ascertain progress of this issue with the local community – **ACTION – WM**

Jesson's Bridge – Chair to attempt to make contact with third landowner. Suggestion made as regards modifying road bridge for public use. **ACTION – CH**

Disability Access Panel (DAP) – Request that CLAF be added onto mailing list for DAP minutes. **ACTION – AM**

Crosskirk – Lengthy discussion on the closure of the bridge by Historic Scotland (HS) to Crosskirk .CH has had no reply to a letter sent to HS. CLAF understand that it is permissible to use the windfarm access to get to the Kirk.

ACTION CH – Write to Historic Scotland to obtain their position and future plans as regards the closed bridge.

ACTION CH – Arrange to meet with Caithness West Community Council to discuss their thoughts/plans for the bridge.

Ormlie Moors – Ground sold to Pentland Housing (PHA). MD has spoken to Highland Council housing officer who has stated that no complaints have been received by them over motorbikes using the moors. Suggest writing to PHA asking if they would install barriers to bikes and cars. MD can supply the signs. **ACTION – CH**

4. Local Disability Access Panel.

No report.

5. Local Access Officers report.

General enquiries being received from public concerning access to beaches with no particular beach being mentioned.

Dunbeath Broch path works done from the Strath. More work to be undertaken to facilitate a circular route. Sign s will be erected.

Burn of Whilk has finished felling and mulching timber. Track being reinstated to accommodate core path.

January storms had done a lot of damage to Dunnet forest and damage is being cleared away. The all abilities path is still in a mess.

MD would like to hear about any blocked paths.

Lambing will be starting and dog and stock signs are available from MD.

Yarrows car park is now done and open. Council risk assess part of the route e.g. styles, way markers.

IM advises that a festival will be held this year at Yarrows.

5a AOB

WB reports that there is a barbed wire topped fence at John O'Groats which has now allowed a metre and a half path for use.

6. DONM

Thursday, 11th June 2015.

Site visit to Yarrows meeting at the Yarrows site car park at 6.30pm.

Return them to Station Building, Thrumster for Forum meeting.