

Caithness Local Access Forum
Action note
9 February 2017
Town Hall, Wick.

Chair – Chris Hobson

Present	In attendance
Chris Hobson (CH) – Chair – Land Manager Allan Tait (AT) – Access taker/community Islay Macleod (IM) – Land Manager Ben McGregor (BM) – Access taker/user William Bruce (WB) – Community Group. Willie Mackay (WM) – Landward Member	Matt Dent (MD) – Access Officer. Highland Council. Alex Macmanus (AM) – Clerk, Highland Council Katie Dixon (KD) – Ranger Service, Highland Council

Item		Action
1.	Apologies Cllr Roger Saxon	
2.	Notes from meeting of 25th November 2015 Agreed	
3.	<p>Action points from 2 above not covered in agenda</p> <p>Halkirk to Sibster path – Land Owner now not interested. SSEN track 0.4 of a mile from village boundary. Would local Community Council or Village Council be interested in taking this project forward? MD to take forward with input from Cllr Bremner. ACTION</p> <p>Jessan's Bridge – CH to speak to Castletown Community Council to see if they would take this project forward. ACTION</p> <p>Ormlie Moors – MD visited last week. There is still evidence of vehicles misusing the land.</p> <p>Scrabster to Quarry path – Locked gate still in place although sometimes the gate is unlocked but not on a regular basis. WM would contact farmer. WB suggests that a stile may be more favourable. ACTION</p> <p>Braemore – The Estate are still interested in making a diversion around the cottage themselves.</p> <p>Coastal path east of John O'Groats – MD continues to liaise with landowner. WB reports that section of path is in a shocking state. MD will contact Mr Green ACTION</p>	<p>MD</p> <p>CH</p> <p>WM</p> <p>MD</p>

	<p>John O’Groats Trail – Successful launch at Thrumster House. KD has led 6 ranger walks over various sections of the trail. MD advises that route is unlikely to be included in Core Paths Plan as it does not fit the criteria e.g. long sections not defined on the ground. Trail is advertised on Caithness.Org.</p>	
4.	<p>Core Path review - MD</p> <p>Working on plan. Making contact with Landowners re. any new paths. Receiving more feedback now as being in direct contact. Slight concerns raised over increase in user numbers due to promotion of core paths.</p> <p>Paths need to be promoted on the ground e.g. more finger points. Plans to have core paths noted on OS maps. More signage also needed which BM noted would make an improvement to the Yarrows trail.</p> <p>Scotways can supply a catalogue of Rights of Way https://www.scotways.com/</p> <p>Stalking concerns raised over deer being moved from landowner to landowner by access rights users. No core paths run up hills.</p> <p>Foresters have a duty of care to protect the public hence core paths may be closed due to felling but alternative route should be provided to avoid dangers.</p> <p>MD now has the experience in core paths over the years and is happy to take questions from all interested parties.</p> <p>Altnabreac railway crossing – this was removed by Ministers. Highland Council want to promote to put this back in the plan. 2013 white paper on level crossings has still to be debated by Scottish Government.</p> <p>John O’Groats caravan site – Highland Council carried out two spends on repairing this path which was washed away both times and will not carry out repairs again until suitable coastal protection is in place. It would not be a unique case to go through the caravan site although there could be local opposition. MD will speak to local Community Council and members.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">ACTION</p> <p>Auckengill to Stroupster – MD reconsidering this route.</p> <p>Yarrows – Still a core path.</p> <p>Dunnet Head – RSPB delayed works due to the weather. Car park belongs to the Highland Council.</p> <p>Sibster trails – popular and being well used.</p> <p>Newtonhill – as above with 25k users last year.</p>	MD

	Rumster paths – debadged by Forestry Commission – no longer promoted. Still core path	
5.	<p>Local Access Officers report - MD</p> <p>Sandside Estate fence – Locked gate at fence on north coast since 2013 is in a remote location. MD is trying to contact Landowner with no success and is now making contact with Reay Farms Solicitors in Edinburgh. Issue raised by Council Ranger. MD to contact NH College (D Shaw)</p>	
6.	<p>Future of Local Access Forum.</p> <p>Membership has diminished over the past 4 and a bit years. Suggest that available posts be re-advertised by MD. Hope to have full membership by September meeting (date still to be arranged).</p> <p>Council Budget decisions may result in reduction in the number of Forums, possibly merging with Sutherland and beyond. Caithness members in favour of continues Caithness forum.</p> <p>Two members of the Forum have resigned after 10 years and nearly 5 years' service. Chair would write to them both. ACTION</p>	CH
7.	<p>AOB</p> <p>Countryside Rangers are happy with the works carried out at the Reiss beach access. Just a few snagging issues to be rectified.</p>	