

# Caithness Local Access Forum

## Action Note

Meeting held on 14 January 2019 in Caithness House, Wick at 1400 hrs

### Present:

Karl Rosie (KR) - Landward Member - Chair  
Jay Wilson (JW) - Friends of the John O'Groats Trail - Vice Chair  
Bill Mowat (BM) - Dunnet & Canisbay Community Council  
Donna Mather (DM) - British Horse Society Scotland  
Islay Macleod (IM) - Thrumster Estate  
Ben MacGregor (BMG) - Pentland Canoe Club  
William Bruce (WB) – Caithness Kayak

### In attendance:

Matt Dent (MD) - Access Officer  
Alison McDiarmid, Business Support - notes (AMD)

Item		Action
1.	<p><b>Apologies</b> Islay Macleod and Cllr Raymond Bremner</p> <p>MD reported that there had been no response to the notice of this meeting, or that of the 23 Oct 2018, from Traylan Peat (Caithness Disability Access Panel). MD to check emails have been received by Traylan</p>	<b>MD</b>
2.	<p><b>Welcome and Introductions</b> KR welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made around the table.</p> <p>WB gave a brief outline of his connection to the Forum - was a member of the "old" Forum with various interests which include canoeing, mountain biking, cycling, walking, field studies, bird surveys etc</p>	
3.	<p><b>Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chair - KR was nominated by JW, seconded by BM,</li><li>• Vice-Chair - JW was nominated by BMG, seconded by BM, no other nominations received</li><li>• No other Forum members wished to be considered for either of the above posts and were in agreement with both proposals</li></ul>	

4.	<p><b>Notes from meeting - 23 October 2018</b> Agreed</p> <p><b>Matters Arising:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Constitution</b> Still same concern as noted at the last meeting - as the Forum is under the Highland Council - only a Chair and a Vice-Chair are required. Agreed that as communication is taking place via emails (list was previously sent out in October 2018) possibly no need to go further to progress the change in the Constitution. However, may come back to at a later date if it proves difficult to hold the meetings if both the Chair and Vice-Chair call off at short notice</li>   <li>• <b>Halkirk to Sibster Path:</b> <b>(First raised: <i>pre 09/17</i>, Date Closed: <i>ongoing</i>, Ownership: <i>KR</i>)</b> Being addressed but will take time</li>   <li>• <b>Jessan's Bridge / Burn of Garth:</b> <b>(First raised: <i>Pre 09/17</i>, Date Closed: <i>14/01/18</i>, Ownership: <i>MD/Cllr Mackie</i>)</b> MD has passed on the information to Cllr Struan Mackie and to the Chair of Castletown Community Council. Forum agreed to close.</li>   <li>• <b>Scrabster to Quarry Path:</b> <b>(First raised: <i>Pre 09/17</i>, Date Closed: <i>ongoing</i>, Ownership: <i>MD</i>)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MD has spoken with Steven Blackwood - gate ready to go in</li> <li>▪ Put forward the option of Highland Council buying the gate as their contribution. With the current and possibly ongoing financial constraints this is not now possible</li> <li>▪ Gate has been locked since 19 years ago, most people climb over the fence but this is not so easy for people with pushchairs, mountain bikes etc</li> </ul> </li>   <li>• <b>Braemore:</b> <b>(First raised: <i>Pre 09/17</i>, Date Closed: <i>14/01/19</i>, Ownership: <i>JW</i>)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ JW has spoken with/emailed Anson MacAuslan, Estate Manager as to what the Plan was</li> <li>▪ Estate Manager has no plan to apply retrospectively for planning permission</li> <li>▪ Forum has noted that Planning Permission would be the correct way forward.</li> <li>▪ As cannot change the plan at present, noted that there have been no complaints to date regarding the change of path, the Plan will be amended at an appropriate time</li> <li>▪ The change to the Path was carried out without consultation with the Forum or Highland Council</li> <li>▪ JW said that in respect of the JOG Trail, the Estate have been very easy to work with - 8 miles of the trail goes through the Estate</li> <li>▪ Recommendation by the Forum is to change the Plan.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
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5.	<p><b>The Highland Council Core Paths Plan - Caithness &amp; Sutherland - Amended</b></p> <p>Following on from Matters Arising, further discussions took place regarding the Coastal Path East of JOG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MD alluded to keeping the route through the Caravan Park in the Amended Plan with the 5 objections outstanding</li> <li>• Not suitable to have it running through the Caravan Park and to return to the Shore Path - JOG Development Trust taking forward</li> <li>• Caravan Park shut over the Winter months</li> <li>• A coastal path is far more beneficial to tourism and the locals</li> <li>• JOGT Path has been marked working alongside the landowner, unfortunately it does not make the campsite happy</li> <li>• Landowner would welcome a change to the Core Path</li> <li>• Do not want to upset the landowner more than we have to</li> <li>• Felt tourists want better attractions alongside easy access to the coastal path eg café, toilets, information etc</li> <li>• The development trust have put in an expression of interest for the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund which need to be followed up by application at end of this month</li> <li>• More resources of funding, possibly Sustrans/Community Links who will match funding</li> <li>• Unknown if stage 2 submission will be made to RTIF MD to follow up.</li> <li>• Still need to have a lease with the landowner as HC will not engage without a lease</li> <li>• Tourists/walkers etc want to end their walk at JOG not on a caravan site</li> <li>• Could the landowners boundary fence be changed, however this has not been discussed with them</li> </ul> <p>Agreed that the Core Path Plan route to remain through the caravan park with working towards a community driven solution backed by the Forum</p> <p>Forum voted on taking the CPP to the next Area Committee - vote was 4 for, 2 against, so will be taken forward</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Swiney Hill</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ One objection due to the path ending at a ditch</li> <li>▪ Core Path needs to end somewhere more acceptable so agreed to ending Achactle and links core paths</li> <li>▪ Oil/gas installation in situ is relatively hidden by the slope inland, does not affect the proposal</li> <li>▪ Small ditch which is not an issue to cross</li> <li>▪ Not heard from the landowners or the crofters regarding the modifying of the Plan</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	MD
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Altnabreac Crossing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MD gave a brief update on the background – route was previously in the core paths plan and was objected to by Network Rail. Matter went through PLI and reporter recommended inclusion of the route but Scottish Ministers decided not to include due to Law commission report that had just been started. Report now published and whilst no new legislation has come from the report none is needed for the Council to re-designate route as a core path which has triggered objection from Network Rail.</li> <li>▪ Previously there was a site visit with Police Transport along with previous members of the Forum - the Police were very adamant and giving nothing at all</li> <li>▪ Trains do slow down for the station to see if any passengers are wishing to board</li> <li>▪ Noted that there is very little flexibility but if the path is in situ before the track goes in, classed as Public Level Crossing. If it goes in after the track is in situ it is a Private Level Crossing which is the case at Altnabreac</li> <li>▪ Most crossings now have a telephone nearby - any doubt about the train timetable; advice would be to use the telephone to enquire.</li> <li>▪ Path is well signposted at either end of the route</li> <li>▪ The gravel track in Strathmore forest has been upgraded so that lorries can travel on it but this makes cycling a problem</li> <li>▪ Promoted in 2001 - 2004 for roads to be put in for Flow Country</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
6.	<p><b>Access Officers Report - cases raised during previous forums still ongoing</b>  Many items already discussed under Matters Arising and other agenda items in these notes</p> <p>Following the last meeting JW produced a table of Access Issues and Initiatives which will be updated by MD and distributed with the notes of the meeting</p> <p><u>Halkirk to Sibster path</u> – pass on further information to KR to discuss with CC <span style="float: right;"><b>MD</b></span></p> <p><u>Jessans Bridge</u> – forum agreed to close, update list <span style="float: right;"><b>MD</b></span></p> <p><u>Yarrows</u> – to consult with Cllr Bremner to check on current condition and community views <span style="float: right;"><b>MD</b></span></p> <p><u>Whaligoe</u> - to consult with Cllr Bremner to report on community council views <span style="float: right;"><b>MD</b></span></p> <p><u>Keiss Shore Sign</u>- Press owner for change or removal of sign <span style="float: right;"><b>MD</b></span></p> <p><u>Braemore Core Path</u> – note diverted route for future consideration <span style="float: right;"><b>MD</b></span></p>	

7.	<p><b>Future Work of the Forum</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work of the Forum appears to go through cycles with a lot of good work being done. Previously have gone on site visits and met with landowners which have proved invaluable and resolved many issues quickly</li> <li>• Paths for All - very good website</li> <li>• Some landowners will not change their opinions on land access and put obstacles in the way of developing areas</li> <li>• How can some public relation work be done to promote the Forum and its focus</li> <li>• Suggestion to set up a Recreation Sub-Group which would not be under the HC banner which would then could be used to apply for funding? DM to take forward with KR</li> <li>• To be conscious of crofters as well as landowners</li> </ul>	DM / KR
8.	<p><b>Any Other Current Business (AOCB)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BM was enquiring about the Mey Estate which is owned by an American lady calling herself Lady Cannisbie who is also an absentee estate owner - no contact can be made with her regarding any concerns over the estate - can the Forum assist in anyway? <i>Response - would certainly try if there were any Local Access concerns but until then it is not in the remit of Forum</i></li> <li>• National Access Forum's next meeting is to be held on 5 April 2019. To date there is no notification of venue/location/theme. MD will forward once known. <u>Important Note to all Forum members</u> - permission to attend the above or any courses/training must be sought via MD otherwise no expenses will be reimbursed, also there is a limit on the amount of expenses which can be claimed</li> <li>• DM will email MD about the Reay Gate - this will either be an update or a main agenda item at the next meeting.</li> </ul>	MD  ALL DM / MD
9.	<p><b>Date of Next Meeting</b> Date to be agreed via email correspondence</p> <p>Previously the Forum met quarterly but now meets twice a year - members agreed that, if required, they would meet out with and update at the next regular meeting.</p>	MD

Meeting closed at 16:35 hrs

**Cllr Karl Rosie**  
Chair

**Monday 14 January 2019**