

**HIGHLAND COUNCIL**

**Committee:** Lochaber Area

**Date:** 19 February 2020

**Report Title:** Lochaber Local Access Forum Annual Report

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

**1 Purpose/Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to describe the work of the Lochaber Local Access Forum in the last 12 months.

**2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the report

**3. Implications**

- 3.1 Resource – none.
- 3.2 Legal - none
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) - none
- 3.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever - none
- 3.5 Risk – none
- 3.6 Gaelic - none

**4 Introduction**

- 4.1 The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 required that each local authority establish a Local Access Forum. There are currently 6 Local Access Forums in the Highland Council area; the Lochaber Local Access Forum is one of them.

The Forums' functions are to advise the local authority and anyone else who consults them on the exercise of access rights, the existence and line of public rights of way or the drawing up and adoption of a core paths plan.

The Forums may also offer and give assistance to parties in any dispute on these subjects as well as the use of core paths. Where someone wants to exclude an area of land from access rights for six or more days and the local authority thinks it should make an order to that effect we have to consult the Forum. We consult them as a matter of policy when someone applies for a period of less than six days.

4.2 The membership of the forum is made up of 10 members of the public and two Highland Councillors. Representation is balanced across a range of interested groups in each of the following categories.

- **Members** – Ben Thomson and Niall McLean
- **Land managers** – Ian M Stewart, Drew MacFarlane Slack and Jackson Anderson
- **Community groups** – Lea MacNally, Michael Foxley and Ruari Watt
- **Access takers** – Marion MacDonald, Ian Moir and Bridget Thomas
- **Disability access panel** – vacant.

4.3 Where there are existing or future vacancies on the Forum within the 5 year term, Council officers will seek to invite suitable persons, agreed by the Forum members, to sit on the forum. Such applications will come to the area committee for approval.

## 5. The work of the Lochaber Local Access Forum in 2019

5.1 The Lochaber Local Access Forum met twice in 2019.

5.2 In April it met to see examples of unauthorised mountain bike trail building, to discuss ways of managing it and to explore the new guide for land managers and riders produced by the National Access Forum.

The meeting then moved indoors to discuss attendance, standing orders and membership along with the review of the West Highlands and Islands Core Paths Plan. Discussion followed on access issues brought to the Council, access projects and future meetings.

Topics addressed included the use of quarried material on paths supported by the Scottish Rural Development Programme, the development of the Puggy Line and 2 additional routes as candidate core paths. Queries, feedback and updates were provided on the access issues at Glenborrodale, Blackwater Reservoir, Glencoe House and Glen Etive. Issues at Glengarry were reported on and updated.

5.3 A further meeting was held in December 2019, this time in the Charles Kennedy Building in Fort William. While the minutes of this meeting have yet to be approved the Forum discussed the standing orders, response to and recommendations for the amended core paths plan, access issues and projects. A paper on the Amended Core Path Plan will be presented to the next Area Committee meeting in May 2020 along with a site visit to Glenborrodale.

5.4 In addition to these meetings the Forum was also consulted on the exemption of land from access rights for the Mountain Bike World Cup event in 2019.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

Date: 03 February 2020

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