

**The Highland Council
Ross and Cromarty Local Access Forum**

Minute of Meeting of the Ross and Cromarty Local Access Forum held in the Chamber, Council Offices, High Street, Dingwall on Wednesday 16 January 2020 at 2.00 pm.

Present:

Mr G Adam, Mr R Chalmers, Mr N Chisholm, Mr R Forrest, Mr T Forrest, Mr F Fotheringham, Mr J MacKenzie and Mr H Munro.

In Attendance:

Mr P Waite, Access and Long Distance Route Manager, Development and Infrastructure Service
Mrs A MacArthur, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Office

Mr R Forrest in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr N Fraser and Dr I Cockburn.

2. Confirmation of Minutes

There had been submitted for confirmation as a correct record the minute of meeting of the Ross and Cromarty Local Access Forum held on 2 July 2019 which was **APPROVED**.

An update to the item at 3ii of the minute would be given at the next meeting of the Ross and Cromarty Local Access Forum as there was considerable business to get through at this meeting in relation to the Highland Core Path Plan Review.

Declaration of Interest – Item 3 – R19 11C – Mr John Mackenzie.

3. The Highland Core Path Plan Review – West Highlands and Islands

Mr John Mackenzie declared a non financial interest in relation to R19 11C as he was related to the landowner, and took no part in the discussion.

The Access and Long Distance Route Manager asked for views following the final consultation submissions prior to submission of the Highland Core Path Plan Review – West Highlands and Islands to the Scottish Government.

Views were expressed as follows:

RC19 11C – Cemetery to Flowerdale House – An alternative route had been put forward to take people away from the house on the grounds of privacy. The new route would be signposted and would only be accepted if it was of a similar standard to the previous route. If the area was boggy the landowner would need to construct a raised surface or boardwalk.

The Forum **AGREED** to accept the variation, with clarity given that the old path would still have access rights and should remain useable although it would no longer be the core path.

The Forum **NOTED** that this and any other changes would need to go back out for consultation as a variation to the original notification.

RC20 08C – Little Garve area – Forestry and Land Scotland had objected and Scotways had supported.

This was an historic path that had been waymarked and signposted since early 2000. As this was already a right of way it couldn't be closed for forestry interests. The Forestry argument had been that it would make forestry management more difficult and as a core path access would be required at all times. When felling an alternative access as near as possible to this access would have to be given.

The Forum **AGREED** that the reasons were not accepted.

R28 06C – Coulin Pass, Achnashellach Route – The Forum disagreed with the Network Rail objections. This was a right of way. Network Rail had suggested another route that would add one mile and where there was no parking available. Their survey had been done in December when there would be very few people out walking. Network Rail had previously had a counter on the crossing but no results had ever been given.

The Forum **AGREED** to give comments to challenge Network Rail's statements. The forum did not agree with their reasons for objecting.

R29 10C – Craig to Scardroy.

As previously for the Coulin Pass, the Forum **AGREED** to give comments to challenge Network Rail's statements. The forum did not agree with their reasons for objecting.

RC44 01 Strathconon – Objection by the Forestry agent for the owner. This route would disrupt forestry management as:

- there was little scope for diversion,
- protected species in the area;
- steep area and this path was needed for effective gear control.

The Forum was not convinced by their argument. The Community Council were supportive of these routes. There were three other routes in the area and this would give a small path network.

The Forum **AGREED** that the reasons were not accepted.

RC45-12C Strathpeffer to Knockbain –. The path was to culminate at Knockbain and the landowner had accepted the use of this area. This route employed the old railway line route. The main road from Strathpeffer to Dingwall was a busy road with heavy, fast traffic that was unsuitable for pedestrians and cyclists. This was already an access route but there was 0.5 km still required for this route to be completed as a core path. The route as it was, was not suitable for cyclists or propelled vehicles as they would be unable to climb the fences. This proposed core path route had been well supported in the area.

The Forum **AGREED** not to accept the objection.

R45 13C – Bottacks to Loch Garve – An objection had been received from Forestry and Land Scotland stating that it would make forestry management work more difficult as there was limited room for diversions. This road was also often used for the Snowman rally. The forestry strategic plan was currently out for consultation. This was in a large section of forestry and linked to the existing core path in a beneficial way. A lot of felling had already been undertaken in this area. The path would potentially link communities.

The Form **AGREED** not to accept the objection.

R49 07 – Inverlael circuit – The purple route was an old trail which was no longer waymarked, checked or maintained. A higher route in the area was now promoted. Ms M Donaldson when with RC Disability group had worked with the access forum and tested this walk's suitability for disability access on a disability scooter. One route could be closed as long as the other remained open during felling as was done in a similar walk in Garve.

The Forum **AGREED** not to accept the objection.

R49 09C and 10C –An email was received from the landowner objecting to these routes in the form of an FOI request. A response was sent to the landowner explaining the core path process and the notification over six months ago and nothing further had been received.

The Forum **AGREED** that this objection had been resolved.

R49 01E – Dun Canna – An objection had been received in relation to the management of the deer beside the proposed extension to the path. There had been no objection to access rights except during the rut and calving period, although access rights would still apply.

The Forum **AGREED** to accept the objection, but not on all points and **NOTED** that access rights would still apply and to propose another route to form the loop.

A report on the above objections and the Forums comments will go before the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee for their consideration. This process is also under way in Skye and Lochaber. Once the West Highlands & islands Core Path Plan review and any comments and objections have been considered by the relevant Area Committees, any changes (modifications) would once again require to go out for consultation before sending to Scottish Government for confirmation.

4. National Access Forum Matters

The next meeting of the National Access Forum was on 20 March 2020 and members were asked to confirm with the Access and Long Distance Route Manager whether they were interested in attending.

A further meeting would be held to discuss this item in April 2020.

5. Any Other Business

The Access and Long Distance Route Manager advised that a further meeting would be held to discuss this item in April 2020.

The position was **NOTED**.

6. Date of Next Meeting

It was **NOTED** that the next meeting would be confirmed following a doodle poll of members and would likely be in April 2020.

The meeting ended at 4.40 pm.