

The Highland Council
Skye & Lochalsh Local Access Forum

Minute of the meeting of the Skye & Lochalsh Local Access Forum held remotely via Microsoft Teams on Wednesday 8th December 2021 at 2:00pm.

Present:

Nic Bullivant (NB); Alistair Danter (AD); Willie Fraser (WF); Matt Harrison (MH); Cheryl McIntyre (CMI); Sarah Sutton (SS); Rob Ware (RW).

In Attendance:

Mark Crowe (Highland Council Access Officer); Rosamonde Birch (Highland Council Access Ranger)

1. Welcome and introductions

MC introduced himself to the Forum, and welcomed the newly appointed members, Matt Harrison; Cheryl McIntyre; Sarah Sutton and Angus Murray who was unable to attend due to prior commitments.

2. Apologies for absence

Ally MacAskill; Angus Murray; Jim Towers; Cllr Biz Campbell

3. Matters arising from December 2019 meeting

AD asked if the access issues at Strome ferry were still unresolved. MC stated that he had received no correspondence and was unaware of any current issue but would inspect on his next visit passing Strome ferry.

Aside from that no matter were arising and the **previous minutes were agreed.**

4. Current access issues in Skye & Lochalsh

MC gave a PowerPoint presentation to the forum on some current issues. The presentation will be circulated to LAF members with these minutes.

- **Plockton Common Grazings:** Summary of resolved case presented to the Forum. AD noted that there is a difference in legislation between Common Land and Common Grazings. MC noted that the land had been treated as Common Grazings after confirmation from the Crofting Commission. RW noted the tone of correspondence

from the complainant and the appropriate response to this from the Council. NB mentioned trials to use GPS collars with electric pulse as virtual fences, and that local crofter were considering this. MC noted that HSE did not regard this as sufficient measures where there was conflict with the general public. The Forum **noted** the case and **agreed** the outcome was appropriate.

- **Isle Ornsay:** Landowner and caretaker has erected high fencing and discouraging signs preventing access to around 90% of the island of around 95 acres. MC noted that RW had assisted greatly with local knowledge and in helping to trace landownership. MC awaiting invite to attend with caretaker to assess in terms of Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 (LRSA) compliance. The Forum **agreed** that the Access Officer should progress this.
- **Duncraig Cottage and Pier:** There exists a recorded public right or way recorded with Scotways as route HSL106 from the public road to the pier. Beyond the railway bridge, gates with an intercom system have been installed with a difficult to spot style arrangement within the stone wall to bypass this. The style is difficult to use. MC agreed to look at title and planning history and write to Plockton & District CC. NB questioned whether the presence of locked gates and difficulty in access constituted unreasonable obstruction. WF questioned whether the pier / slipway was ever a public place, or was it privately owned. The Forum **agreed** that the access officer should investigate further.
- **Luib proposed RoW diversion:** The landowner close to the commencement of RoW HSL46 from Luib to Loch Slappin is seeking to de-croft a portion of their apportionment and develop a house site. They are seeking agreement to divert the start of this RoW. It appears that this would return the start to its former location. NB said this seemed sensible and concurred with what was on the OS map. CMI requested that agricultural access be maintained alongside a pass gate. The Forum **agreed in principle** to the diversion.
- **Moll Road:** NB raised that this route had been previously supported by the LAF as an alternative for non-motorised access users to the A87 over Druim nan Cleochd, and that support should be sought to repair the landslide sufficiently to allow safe access across it. There was broad **agreement** across the LAF for this. MC agreed to write to local elected Members via the Ward Manager to express this wish.
- AD requested that more attention be given to Equine users when considering access provision within Skye & Lochalsh. MC noted this and said that where improvements were being undertaken by the Land Manager or the Access Authority, fully compliant provision was sought.

5. Path maintenance schemes

MC gave a presentation of path maintenance projects which had either commenced or were about to commence in the coming weeks

- **Shulista – Rubha Hunish:** works to form a dry path route beyond the existing made path and towards the top of the cliff. 50:50 funded with SGRIPD and hopefully completes the entire route.
- **Garafad – Staffin Slipway:** works to form a dry path up to the wall from Columba 1400, drainage over the top of the hill and down the stone pitched path towards the slipway. Also, some path surfacing in the wet spots at the bottom. Again 50:50 funded with SGRIPD and will complete the entire route.
- **Talisker – Fiskavaig:** works to compliment the IPA funding bid secured by North Talisker Grazings to improve the core path, notably drainage on the Talisker hill path section.
- **Broadford – Corry Lodge:** joint venture with the Community Company to improve drainage and path surface along this well used route. Beyond the main part of the route there are two sections of sea wall and drainage issues to attend to also.
- **The Plock, Kyle:** this scheme will provide a 40m low level boardwalk to assist the Community Trust in improving accessibility to the paths and meadow area of the Plock. Funded from Place Based Investment funding by Ward 5 elected Members.
- **Glenelg Village – Galtair:** again, funded by Ward 5 allocated Place Based Investment funds, seeking to improve the path surface and bridge between Bernera Barracks and the army installed bridge over the Glenmore River. Collaboration with both the Community Council and Skye Ferry CIC.

AD discussed the potential for voluntourism, and for tour bus companies undertaking some volunteer path works to put something back into the area.

MC noted that he was in discussion with some businesses who use the Cuillin for adventure tourism, to form a volunteer path body to look after access in the area.

CMI made the Forum aware that as part of Broadford College Rural Skills Course, there is a unit on Estate Maintenance and Upland Path Building. The college have a tool store in Broadford. MH stated he is looking to hold a tool store in north Skye in the near future.

MC presented information on some other general path maintenance which is being undertaken; an update on the Skye iconic Sites Project; Storr Path Construction funded by the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund.

6. Visitor Management & Access Rangers 2021

MC presented a brief PowerPoint presentation highlighting the Access Ranger service undertaken during 2021 as an initiative to assist in dealing with visitor management pressures and visitor outdoor access behaviour.

NB noted that the majority of issues that Access Rangers had to deal with were outside of the remit of SOAC, and were more generally related to visitor management, such as parking pressures, road obstruction and informal roadside camping. The Forum had a general discussion about visitor management and also in relation to SOAC.

7. Glenbrittle Location Action Plan (LAP)

RB gave an outline of the aim and purpose of the Location Action Plan, and presented the work undertaken so far.

NB welcomed the progress RB had made.

8. AOB

RW asked that if anyone had a suitable article, as a trustee he assembles a quarterly newsletter for the Skye & Lochalsh Environment Forum and would welcome contributions.

AD reflected that the Forum had discussed access related pressures, some of which were local issues, some of which visitor related. It was generally felt that obstructions tended to be local, and path pressures visitor driven. However, some obstruction of access in recent times seemed to reflect a desire to discourage increased visitor access to land, notable informal camping.

9. Next Meetings of the Forum

MC proposed that future briefing would not take up so much time and planned to have a meeting pre and post visitor season. Proposed dates:

- Wednesday 30th March 2022 @ 2pm
- Wednesday 2nd November 2022 @ 2pm

The meeting closed at 4:30pm