

# Caithness Local Access Forum

## Minutes - Action Note

**Meeting held on 28th March 2023**  
**Ross Institute, Halkirk 1800 to 2000**

**Present:**

Karl Rose (KR) – Highland Councillor (Chair)  
Ben MacGregor (BMG) - Pentland Canoe Club  
William Bruce (WB) – Caithness Kayak Club  
Andrew Jarvie (AJ) – Highland Councillor  
Donna Mather (DM) – British Horse Society Scotland  
Jay Wilson (JW) – John O’Groats Trail

*In attendance:*

Matt Dent (MD) - Access Officer  
Paul Castle (PC) – Highlife Highland Countryside Ranger

Item		Action
1.	<b>Apologies</b> Jan Banks – Wick Community Council  Janet McEwan – replacement representative for Caithness Disability Access Panel required?	<b>MD</b>
2.	<b>Notes from meeting of the 7th March 2022</b>  Minutes agreed to be a right and proper account of meeting	

3.	<p><b>Matters Arising</b></p> <p><b>Items in minutes of 7<sup>th</sup> March 2022 but not on agenda or Table of Caithness Access Issues and Initiatives</b></p> <p><u>Thurso High School</u> – since the last meeting signs have been installed at the school grounds to restrict public access to playing fields during school day and not permit dogs at any time. The public right of way from Ormlie Road to Juniper Bank through the schools car park is unaffected. Other plans to secure the school grounds (it is currently predominately unfenced) have probably take a back seat as there has been building structure matters at the school.</p> <p><u>Camster Windfarm</u> – no progress on side gate instal to the side of the locked field gates. WB suggested MD had tried to resolve this matter so too long and should take further, BMG agreed. <b>Action - MD to take further.</b></p> <p>This led to general discussion on unauthorised vehicle access. DM said there was still motorbike activity from the Blingery access. KR raised activity at Ormlie Moor which was a long standing occurrence, MD mentioned Pentland Housing had previously ignored any request to manage. Cairn now manage the land, <b>Action – MD to contact Cairn to ask managing access from their land</b></p> <p><u>Access Rangers</u> – MD stated that the Winter staff were starting their patrols for the start of this season over the Easter weekends. Access Rangers visit many car parks and discussion on payment for parking came up.</p> <p>AJ said he thought invitation to pay had been successful. WB stated many visitors were more than keen, and if fact expected to pay, WB also suggested that any move to compulsory charging would only be supported if local residents did not have to pay.</p> <p>MD to pass CLAF members a list of the patrol routes used by the Access Rangers. <b>ACTION – MD</b></p> <p><b>Table of Caithness Access Issues and Initiatives</b></p> <p><b><u>Halkirk to Sibster Link</u></b> MD stated that Gillian Coghill has worked to identify landowners and arranged a visit with MD. Both landowners in general agreement that a path may be built if done under lease/agreement with the Halkirk Village Council.</p> <p>There is a strip of ground just outside the Forest and Land Scotland holding which is of unknown ownership, as this would be the location of one abutment of the bridge required it is important to identify the owners. 100k verbally agreed from Halirk District Commuity Benefit Fund.</p>	<p><b>MD</b></p> <p><b>MD</b></p> <p><b>MD</b></p>
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	<p>Next step is planning application and progressing agreements</p> <p><b><u>Altnabreac Railway Crossing</u></b> No change – still awaiting Minister decision on Core Path plan review proposals.</p> <p>Dalwhinnie Crossing closure has raised profile and this matter is being resolved first but should then lead to timely answer to Altnabreac.</p> <p><b><u>Yarrows Heritage Trail</u></b> No progress on signs and new gates. Try again with contractor, if not look elsewhere. Ground still poached. MD thinks visitor numbers are low. WB said he still sees visitors coming to find the trail.</p> <p><b><u>Whaligoe</u></b> JW agreed the barbed/spiked fence is no longer an issue – close case. The path around the croft though still needs improvements (bridges). MD pointed out the car park also is not suitable for the level of use it gets.</p> <p><b><u>Keiss Shore Sign</u></b> Sign long since removed, new signs to JOBT on gates etc. Field gate, installed as part of pod development, spring bolt to be improved. <b>ACTION -MD to follow up with developer.</b></p> <p><b><u>Mireland Access Gates</u></b> Follow up new access tracks to south and how this may link up with the bridge which is on poor condition but now with side pedestrian only gate</p> <p><b><u>Sandside Cliff Top Locked Gate</u></b> PC reported contact made with owners and MD has passed details of improvements required. PC to follow up as reasonable.</p> <p><b><u>Considerations for Core Path Plan Changes</u></b> JW asked that John O’Groats Trail is considered for inclusion in core paths plan</p>	
4.	<p><b>AOCB</b></p> <p>DM – Asked MD if he had looked at North Keiss tracks, MD has not.</p> <p>BMG – Raised matter of gate across public road in Sutherland. MD raised and passed to roads.</p> <p>AJ – Mentioned repairs to Portormin Bridge, Dunbeath required to be signed off by Highland Council ACTION – MD to follow up</p>	<p><b>MD</b></p> <p><b>MD</b></p>

5.	<b>Date of Next Meetings</b>  18 <sup>th</sup> September 2023 - Ross Institute 1800 - 2000  KR and MD to arrange summer meeting/outside visit as required.	
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**Minutes by Matt Dent, 3rd April 2023**

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