

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

Minute of Meeting of the Ross and Cromarty Local Access Forum held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Dingwall on Friday 3 February 2023 at 2.10 pm.

Present:

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| Dr C Birt | Mr F Fotheringham |
| Mr N Chisholm | Ms M MacCallum |
| Mr R Forrest | Mr H Munro |
| Mr T Forrest, | |

In Attendance:

Mr P Waite, Environment – Development and Active Travel
Miss J Maclennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager
Miss R Ross, Committee Officer

Mr R Forrest in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr J Mackenzie and Mr N Fraser.

2. Confirmation of Minutes

There had been submitted the minute of the meeting of the Ross and Cromarty Local Access Forum held on 15 December 2021 which was **APPROVED**.

3. The Highland Core Path Plan Review Update

It was reported that completion of the core path plan for West Highlands & Islands was currently held up by the issues at Glen Borrodale, which is subject to legal action by the landowner. The Scottish Government Division of Planning & Environmental Appeals (DPEA) has stated that it would like to receive all the reviewed paths in one submission. However, inquiries were being made to the DPEA about the possibility of submitting for the rest of the plan excluding the contested section at Glen Borrodale.

4. The Highland Council Access Ranger Team

There is had been circulated the Highland Council Access Rangers Annual Report 2022.

This year the Ranger team had expanded with 5 Rangers covering parts of the Ross and Cromarty Area and site wardens for smaller areas such as Chanonry Point. The number of motor homes recorded in the area had risen since the previous year while the number of off-site tents had fallen, although numbers will still be higher than before the pandemic and there were still issues such as

outdoor toileting, littering and fires. Cumulative Camping was causing erosion in some areas and effected areas were being identified and may be cordoned off to allow the land to recover.

However, it was likely that there would be fewer Rangers in 2023/24 due to Council budget pressures and if there is no funding from Scottish Government through NatureScot. Attention was drawn to the fact that there was still a need for the ranger service, especially due to the popularity of the North Coast 500 and that the forum would wish to retain the maximum number of rangers possible. It was clarified that the cost of the service was £25,000 per ranger and it was suggested that land owners might be willing to pay a levy for this service.

The Forum **NOTED** the report and **AGREED** to write to the Highland Council emphasising their support for retaining the same number of Rangers as 2022.

5. Access Issues

i. Peffery Way – Path Order

The Outdoor Access Manager provided an update on the Path Order on the Peffrey Way at Dingwall, it had been confirmed by the Scottish Minister on 1st February 2023

The confirmation of the path order was welcomed and it was clarified what action would be taken to clear the vegetation and remove the fence to prepare for the path surface to be laid.

ii. Flowerdale, Gairloch Estate- diversion of core path.

The Outdoor Access Manager provided a report on the proposed diversion to a core path in Flowerdale Estate. The proposed diversion would move the path further away from the house and divert the path over more boggy ground. All costs for the diversion would be met by the landowner.

The forum **AGREED** to accept the proposal on condition that the path was made up to a suitable standard and access rights still permitted on the existing path. It was also agreed that this current acceptance was only if the path was completed within the following 12 months.

iii. Muckernich, Tore, possible right of way.

The Outdoor Access Manager provided a report and showed maps of the possible right of way.

The possible Right of Way, which was currently being blocked by farm equipment, had considerable support from the community as it would provide a safe route into the woods for children and residents of Tore. It would also provide a link from Tore to Alcaig. The land owner claimed that the Right of Way was along another route which was no longer viable due to new houses being built.

The forum **AGREED** that more evidence of the route's historical use needed to be provided.

iv. Loch Achilty- access

The Outdoor Access Manager provided a report including maps and photos of the deer fence that had been erected at the eastern end of Loch Achilty. A large deer fence, topped with barbed wire had been erected seemingly to block access for water users. After discussion, the Land owner had added a long chain to one of the gates to allow pedestrian access to the shore but this chain had been shortened making access difficult.

The forum **AGREED** that the access provided by the long chain was not suitable and that the fence should either be removed or have self closing pedestrian gate fitted to provide suitable access.

v. Gruinard – waymarking

The Outdoor Access manager showed maps highlighting the proposed core path to be waymarked, Various options for waymarking, including wooden posts, painted rocks and cairns, were discussed. Wooden posts would have been the easiest and most cost effective solution and could be removed once the path was more established.

The forum **AGREED** that further discussion with the landowner was needed before a final decision was made.

6. Exemption from Access Rights, S11 Land Reform (Scotland Act) 2003 – Snowman Rally 2023

There had been circulated an Application for Order to Exempt an Area of Land from Access Rights under Section 11 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003

The Access Forum **AGREED** the amended Exemption Order suggested by the Outdoor Access Manager provided that sufficient Marshals would be stationed along the public Right of Way.

7. National Access Forum Matters

There had been circulated the Minutes of the 58th National Access Forum held on 21 September 2022.

The Forum **NOTED** the Minutes.

8. Any other business

There were two vacant positions on the Forum and current members would be advised if they had come to the end of their 5 year term. They were entitled to stand down if they wished. The process for appointing new members to the Forum was discussed and ideally some younger members could be recruited.

9. Date of Next Meeting

It was decided that the next meeting would take place in approximately 6 months with an exact time and date to be confirmed.

