

**Minutes of the meeting of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Local Access Forum
held on 9th August 2016, 6.30pm at NPA HQ, Balloch.
LAF 03/2016**

Present

Bob Ellis (VC)	Bob Sparkes	Sue Riches
Yvonne Boles	Will Huckerby	Chris Smith
Iain Wilkinson	Paul Prescott	

In attendance

Babs Robertson	Kenny Auld	Bridget Jones
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Apologies

Kevin Fitzgerald	Grant Dolier	Alasdair Eckersall
Don Milton (C)		

Welcome and apologies

Bob Ellis (Vice Chair) chaired this meeting in the absence of Don Milton.

Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held in April were approved subject to one change from “west” to “east” on an item within the Access Officers Update, which should read “St Fillans **east** to Tynreoch will be complete by May 2016”.

Site visit discussion

BE extended thanks to Park Authority staff, Carlo D’Emidio and Kenny Auld, for hosting the site visit to Loch Chon.

The visit gave the forum the opportunity to look at the proposal for this site to be used as a semi-formal campsite providing a managed wild camping experience within one of the management zones under the new camping management byelaws that come into effect on 1st March 2017.

Members provided very positive feedback on the site and thought it was a viable option. General comments were that it could offer wider recreational opportunities; curb anti-social behaviour through site management and provide novice campers a ‘taster’ for a wild-camping experience whilst knowing that toilets and water supply were available. It was suggested that some vegetation management could help to open up the area and offer a better visitor experience, particularly given the midge factor, and agreed that visitors would benefit from the proposed communal use of the beach rather than having any bookable tent pitches on the shore. It was also suggested that once developed and operational it could be used as an example of best practice for use by others interested in developing camping provision (not limited to the National Park). The importance of consistent and high standards of provision was also discussed both in terms of site design, visitor experience and affordability. Mention was also made of the importance of considering any local employment opportunities for the sites operation and management.

Questions arising about the management of this site in relation to other sites and potential implications of applying byelaws prompted the following key points:

- An operational model will be developed to ensure the site is managed in line with Park Authority requirements.
- The site will be seasonal but could still be used out of season. There are currently no plans to have toilet provision in winter.
- The development, operation and use of the site will be subject to on-going review and it is expected that lessons will be learnt and improvements made.
- A pragmatic approach to management of the camping provision was discussed, particularly when the byelaws first come into force.

Questions arising about the byelaws prompted the following:

- Discussion was had about the byelaws being worded in order to ensure if they do result in a report to Fiscal they are robust enough, and that it is hoped that education and preventative approaches through good information and Ranger patrolling will tackle the issues.

It was agreed that an update on the progress of Your Park (byelaws and camping provision) would become a standing item on the forum's agenda and that a further site visit will also be organised for when the first site is up and running.

Respect Your Park

Members were shown the newly revamped Respect leaflets and display stand. This is a refresh of the original Respect the Park campaign. Go Outdoors, the outdoor equipment retailers, have been supplied with the stand, leaflets and staff training to enable them to share the messages and advice with customers, which is also available at key NP information points and visitor centres and also distributed whilst on patrol by Park Authority Rangers.

Comments were made in relation to the main message sounding patronising and could be misread as such, it could benefit from a strapline stating why respect is needed. It was felt that the audience that need to hear it won't read it, but that educating the audience about the reason for respect would be more useful.

The messages were agreed with and it was generally felt to be eye catching and may work for some audiences but not the ones causing the most issues.

ACTION –BJ to feedback to Park Authority Communications Team.

Open Water Swimming

Members were provided with copies of the newly printed leaflet, which has been published with the backing of the Loch Lomond Association. This is a simple, concertina style leaflet, aimed at advising swimmers and boaters on Loch Lomond of best, safe practice while on the loch and to highlight the different users. It will be reviewed after circulation and endorsement from other relevant governing bodies/NGO will be sought with the aim of setting best practice and increasing coverage to all waterbodies in the National Park.

ACTION – add to Forum agenda to review leaflet end of summer 2017

Ramblers Scotland

Members were advised of a new app, Pathwatch, that is to be launched by Ramblers Scotland that allows the public to report issues with paths. Paths/locations are easily linked to by using address, postcode or co-ordinates and can then be ranked by experience (positive or negative), issue or obstruction and has the ability to accept uploaded photos. The information gathered will be administered by Ramblers Scotland, and anything of relevance passed to the respective access authority for consideration. The launch date has been put back but a link will be circulated once this goes live.

National Park Partnership Plan

The Plan is currently being drafted, using the three strands of Conservation, Rural Development and Visitor Experience. Don Milton attended a NPPP workshop at end of May and contributed to discussion on access and recreation and health and well-being, which are the policy areas of most relevance to the Forum. There will be a public consultation period of which the dates still to be confirmed but likely to be in autumn. The Forum will be a consultee, and a further briefing will be provided at the next Forum meeting.

ACTION –BJ to brief Forum at next meeting.

Callander Landscape Partnership

PP provided an update on the progress of the project. They now have Emma Martin in post as project manager and are going through the process of 'de-risking' projects. Decisions have been made with regards to the location of a Leny Falls bridge and how it links to the wider path network and car park.

Emma is also looking at potential match funders for the other projects as there are now concerns with regards to future EU related funding.

The public consultation reviewing the Callander Community Action Plan is underway and being progressed by the Callander Community Development Trust. This is looking at what the community priorities are for the area, and indications are that the desire for better footpaths, better signing and more outdoor activities is still a priority which fits with the work of the CLP.

The Mountains and the People

BJ provided an update on the progress of the upland paths works being undertaken under this project, being led by the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust.

Ben A'an path is complete and work on Ben Lomond has almost been completed. Work is ongoing on The Cobbler, with the first phases of work underway on the main path at present. There is also work underway to fully specifying the Beinn Dubhchraig pathworks. The project is also delivering in the same way in the southern area of the Cairngorms National Park.

Rosie Winch has been appointed as the projects Volunteering and Education Officer, and the Environmental Conservation SVQ training course is progressing well. A case study paper was circulated to Forum members, highlighting the work being delivered by trainees at the start of the Beinn Dubh path. The site was provided by Luss Estates with materials supplied following an approach by the NPA Access Team.

Another element of the project is the 'Adopt a Path' scheme which encourages members of the public to people to sign up to keeping an eye on the condition of key mountain paths. This helps with the planning of path maintenance and programming of path volunteers. The Forum were asked if they would like to consider a path to adopt and to feedback suggestions –led by PP suggesting Bienn Gullipan as an option.

ACTION-BJ to invite Tom Wallace, TMTP Activity Manager, to give a project update including a site visit to see the work undertaken by trainees and contractors in Spring 2017.

Forum Work Programme

BJ discussed the future work programme for the forum which could look at:

National Park Partnership Plan Consultation – expected consultation period Oct/Dec. Opportunity for forum discussion at October meeting, and a formal response to the statutory consultation.

Outdoor Recreation Plan –this is due for a progress review and potential updating, to reflect any NPPP policy developments and any changes in priorities for stakeholders and partners. There is an opportunity for discussion and feedback from forum on progress so far and next steps at October meeting.

Core Paths Plan Review –this will progress in 2017/18 and will be linked to any ORP review. Advice on the proposed review and consultation approaches will be sought and could be discussed at the forums meetings in January or March 2017.

There would also be opportunities to improve understanding and knowledge of path surfaces and design requirements through site visits and discussions with Sustrans (as mentioned at previous forum meetings); get more involved/better understanding of the Mountains and the People project and to review the pilot of the Ramblers Pathwatch app and feedback. This would be in addition to any requests for advice on access issues which may arise during the course of the year.

ACTION –KA to plan site visit, possibly St Fillans area, to discuss path design and standards, with input from Sustrans and Paths for All for at October meeting.

DONM

4th October –time and place to be confirmed.