

Minutes of Meeting held at 6.30pm on Monday 2 March 2026, online.

Loch Lomond and The Trossachs Access Forum

Present	In Attendance
Don Milton (DM) (Convenor) Chris Smith (CS) (Vice-Convenor) Grant Dolier (GD) Andrew Clark (AC) David Fettes (DF) Calum Langdale (CL) Rachel Taylor (RT) Sue Riches (SR) Emma Sandhu (ES)	Sue Hilder (SH) Dave Robinson (DR) Guy Keating (GK) Mick Foran (MF) Ayeasha (AT) (Clerk)

Items and Actions

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Convenor (DM) welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs Access Forum.

Apologies were received from Falcon Frost (FF) who hoped to join the meeting at some point if a deer count could be completed in time.

No communication had been received from Sheena Foster (SF)

2. Introductions and Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest from Forum Members.

The Convenor noted that it was Mick Foran's last meeting as he would be returning to his permanent role with the Ranger Service at the end of April. He acknowledged Mick's excellent contribution to the work of the Access Team and his support for the Forum during his secondment, thanking him on behalf of Forum members.

3. Minutes of previous full meeting held on 17 November 2025 and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2025 were discussed and only one amendment required – capitalisation of the 'W' in ScotWays. The minutes were approved subject to this amendment, and the approved version should now be added to the website.

AP 03/26-1 AT to upload the approved minutes to the website.

DM noted that the proposed Cross-Party Working Group had been supported by the members of the National Access Forum at the NAF-LAF meeting on the 22nd October 2025. While planning for implementation would start early in 2026, work with Parliamentarians would not be progressed until after the May 2026 elections when the new MSPs will be in place.

It was noted that all actions from the September meeting were now complete.

(CS and AT joined the meeting at this point.)

Action points from the November meeting were reviewed as follows:

- AP 11/25-1 DR to provide access team email address to complainant. Action completed,
- AP 11/25-2 Ballimore case – on the agenda at item 5. DM had contacted Simon Ovenden of SLE and SLE was unable to provide support on the Ballimore case. Action completed.
- AP 11/25-3 DM had contacted a local farmer, who is a previous Vice-Convenor of the LLTAF, about providing specialist farming advice to the Ballimore sub-group. While willing to consider answering specific questions after a site visit, she felt unable to be integrated fully into the sub-group as a specialist adviser. Action complete.
- AP 11/25-4 FF was unable to provide advice on the Ballimore case because of a possible conflict of interest. Action complete.
CS suggested the Forum might approach someone from the Cairngorms LAF to offer advice on the deer management aspect of the case. No action was suggested.
- AP 11/25-5 DM to discuss with DF his position in relation to his Board and

LLTAF membership (with reference to joining the sub-group). It was confirmed that no impediment to joining was envisaged. Action complete

- AP 11/25-6 DR had followed up with DM on progress re interaction with the landowner at Ballimore. Action complete.
- AP 11/25-7- AT to send round 4 doodle polls for 2026 meeting dates within the following week requesting a response from members within 2 weeks. Dates to be set by 5 Dec 25. Action complete
- AP 11/25-8 - AT to upload 2026 dates to the NPA website. Action complete.

There were therefore no actions to be carried forward from the November meeting.

4. Access team update + Q&A

Due to a technical issue with Teams, the Convenor was absent for a short period. CS advised all members had read the comprehensive report included with the papers and the forum members were happy to move to questions.

CS asked for an update on the budget position for the 2026/7 Financial Year.

SH advised that the NPA is content with the budget position, the outcome being better than expected, with a small reduction in revenue and a flat capital budget.

GK gave the Forum an update on the aging wooden **bridge linking Luss with the Glebe area** and core path. He advised that this was recently removed by Luss Estates Company as the bridge had suffered significant damage due to flooding. GK stated that the NPA will now work with local representatives to try and find a solution to restoring access; he noted that a replacement bridge is likely to be expensive in the current climate.

DF inquired if the NPA would be allocating any funding to the **Lochearn Railway Path project** in the next financial year. SH explained that a nominal budget of £200k had been allocated, but this level of expenditure would need to be approved by Government, and this was far from assured.

With regard to the newly installed access points off the **Haul Road, Glenfruin**, DM and CS noted their surprise that it had been considered acceptable for Luss Estates to install stiles instead of gates at two of the locations, given their understanding was that stiles were to be avoided, due to their impact on accessibility.

MF advised that after discussions with Luss Estates, who had previously raised concerns about high-speed traffic on the A817 and the gates being left open causing stock management concerns, it was agreed on this occasion that stiles would be acceptable at two of the access points due to the extreme unlikelihood of

users other than walkers taking access at these points. A self-closing gate has been installed at the other access point.

SH further noted that there was no legal requirement to replace stiles with gates, though barrier reduction was considered best practice. She reassured the Forum that the NPA would always follow the principle of using the 'least restrictive option' wherever this could be reasonably achieved. In this case the stile was considered an acceptable exception in the specific circumstances.

5. Review of trial diversion at Ballimore, Glen Buckie – update and discussion

DM advised that DR had met with a sub-group of Forum members who would be part of any site visit, if this could be arranged with the landowner, and asked DR to provide an overview to the rest of the Forum members.

DR noted that there are 3 key questions the NPA would like the Forum to address, as follows:

1. Is the alternate route acceptable? For example, is it usable by all and is it as easy to use as the obstructed route?
2. If not acceptable, what are the other options?
3. How valid are the reasons for closing the original route to public access?

In relation to question 3, DM reminded the meeting that, in the Drumlean Appeal, Lord Carloway in his summation stated that S14 of the Act, "...does not refer to the landowners' purpose as such but to the landowners' acts...". Members should recognise this in their response.

DR explained that the NPA had contacted the landowner three times since December to try to arrange a site meeting with the Forum sub-group but has had no response. DR had also contacted the 4 complainants and one response has been received so far.

DR advised that the Access team would be discussing the matter at their upcoming team meeting and taking legal advice on how to move the matter forward as the trial period had ended in October. In the event of continuing lack of engagement from the landowner, the procedure for escalating to more formal communications would be followed.

DM asked why the NPA has not already gone down the legal route due to how long the issue has been going on.

SH advised that as the landowner had eventually provided the trial alternative route in line with what had originally been agreed by the NPA, it was necessary to

formally evaluate the trial to determine whether the alternative route had provided a reasonable solution before moving forward to the next stage. The landowner had raised concerns about livestock management and public safety associated with the original route and could argue that in providing the trial alternative he has done all that was asked of him. Only if the review shows the trial route to be insufficient can alternative solutions be pursued, and the Forum's views will be important in making that determination.

If the landowner continues to not to engage with NPA communications it will be necessary for the Forum to provide its views based on a desk-top review of the case materials, rather than a site meeting.

DM requested feedback to the Forum on the outcome of the Access team meeting and discussions with the Legal team.

AP 03/26-2 DR to continue to provide updates on the case to DM.

DM advised he has sent several emails to SF to ask if she would be willing to act as farming advisor to the Forum with no response so far.

The Forum had a discussion on different options available to proceed with this matter.

6. Camping Management Byelaw Review – feedback from engagement sessions

The first session had been attended by RT and CS, with DM and CL attending the next session. The following feedback was provided by CS:

- The session was attended by the Woodland Trust, RSPB and FLS and facilitated by NPA staff, who were very receptive to suggestions from attendees.
- A 3-month public consultation will take place in early summer; Forum members are invited to take part in this process.
- The aim is to submit draft changes to the Scottish Government in early 2027. Any enactment would not be until 1 April 2028.
- The intention is not to make wholesale changes in terms of areas or the overall approach to camping management.
- Those attending the session were in agreement with extending the camping management season till 31 October.
- If areas increase, there may be a need for supporting the Access legislation with signage, education and the like.

RT added that there had been some discussion on potentially changing dates and extending camping areas, and there was some support in the room for increasing restrictions. RT had expressed concerns about potential 'future creep', i.e.

incremental increases in camping management zones at future reviews. RT reported that there had also been positive data about the camping fees being kept low to facilitate campers from different economic backgrounds.

It was noted that a separate, but inevitably not wholly unrelated concern, is the potential for the 'campervan issue' to distract from the main thrust of the review

AP 03/26-3 RT to circulate to members the slide pack provided at the engagement session

DM and CL confirmed that the second session followed similar lines and included attendees from local communities.

Sue passed on thanks to those attending the sessions and suggested that Matt Buckland (MB), Visitor Operations Manager, could be invited to a future forum meeting to provide an update on the review to the full Forum.

AP 03/26-4 SH to see if MB is available to attend the next Forum meeting.

7. Website discussion sub-group

DM advised the sub-group had prepared some questions on the new website content for Lesley Clark, the Digital Communications Manager, and asked what the timescale would be to have a meeting.

AP 03/26-5 SH to liaise with Lesley on her availability to meet with the Forum sub-group in the next 2 weeks.

8. Membership and succession-planning

DM provided a reminder that Forum members are normally appointed for a 3-year term with the option to extend this for another 3-year term. Due to the hiatus associated with the Covid lockdown, DM had agreed to further extend his term of office meaning that he had been in the role far longer than originally envisaged. Consequently, he advised that he will stand down as Convenor in October.

DM asked for clarification about the start date of the new members, i.e. would this be taken from their appointed date or the date of the first meeting they attended? SH advised this would be from the date of their first meeting.

DM raised the matter of member consideration of representation coverage across the Forum, together with the specific issue of persistent lack of attendance from the farming representative, and asked how this could be managed.

AP 03/26-6 SH to email NFUS to ask if they still wish to provide the farming representation on the Forum.

RT advised that she had a chance engagement with a filmmaker and 'Munroist' (Kevin Woods), who takes keen interest in access matters, at events in Dundee

and Fort William Mountain Festivals. He had expressed interest in the Forum and she had asked him to let her know by the 2 March if this was something he would like to progress, thinking that he could represent commercial interests. This date passed without further contact.

SH advised that the Forum had to retain a balance of interests and that in seeking new members, care needed to be taken not to increase representation of interests that are already covered at the expense of areas that may be less well-represented. She reminded the Forum that it is the role of the Access Authority to appoint members and there needed to be a level of process around this for transparency purposes.

DM noted he has still not had feedback on skills gap areas from members.

CL suggested reaching out to the Adaptive Riders Collective to gauge interest in a representative joining the Forum.

All agreed a member from Bike Trossachs would be a good fit for the Forum. DR offered to reach out to them and ask if a member would be interested in joining. However, for transparency purposes, SH suggested conducting a skills gap analysis for all areas of representation first. Then, if cycling came out as an area lacking sufficient representation, an approach could be made to all cycling organisations, noting that both the Adaptive Riders and Bike Trossachs had previously been approached at the last recruitment round.

RT added that members need to be careful not treat the recruitment of potential new members as a stakeholder's group representative and to look for a wide range of expertise to advise on cases.

DM agreed that the role of Forum members is not to act as lobbyists for their organisations but to bring their own individual experience, knowledge and expertise to Forum discussions to ensure the Forum's advice is robust and independent.

There was some discussion about geographical coverage, but it was acknowledged that given the requirement to retain a balance of interests, geographical spread would necessarily be a secondary consideration but could be used for 'weighting' in the event that there were two candidates able to represent the same interest group.

CS suggested that, given the appointment of Forum members was the NPA's responsibility, the Access Team could conduct a skills audit over the next 3 months and provide the Forum with a matrix.

AP 03/26-7 SH and team to facilitate a representation audit in advance of the next recruitment round.

9. Training needs and site visit planning

No business to report here.

10. Any Other Business

SH asked if members would be interested in receiving the monthly trails update from FLS that gives details of which trails are open or closed in relation to scheduled felling operations.

All members agreed that this would be useful and AC offered to ensure members were added to the mailing if they provided him with their contact details NPA could provide the necessary contact details.

AP 03/26-8 Forum members to email AC if they wish to be added to the trails update mailing list.

11. Date of next meeting

Date of next meeting is 18 May 2026

SH gave her apologies ahead of the next meeting.

ACTIONS TABLE

Action number*	Description	By whom	By when
<i>Minutes of Previous Full meeting held on 11 November 2025 and Matters Arising</i>			
	All previous actions complete.		
AP 03/26-1	AT to upload the approved minutes to the website.	AT	31 March
<i>Review of trial diversion at Ballimore, Glen Buckie – update and discussion</i>			
AP 03/26-2	DR to continue to provide updates on the case to DM.	DR	March – May
<i>Camping Management Byelaw Review – feedback from engagement sessions</i>			
AP 03/26-3	RT to circulate to members the slide pack provided at the engagement session.	RT	March/April
AP 03/26-4	SH to see if MB is available to attend the next Forum meeting.	SH	31 March

<i>Website discussion sub-group</i>			
AP 03/26-5	SH to liaise with Lesley Clark on her availability to meet with the Forum sub-group in the next 2 weeks.	SH	9 March
<i>Membership and succession-planning</i>			
AP 03/26-6	SH to email NFUS to ask if they still wish to provide the farming representation on the Forum.	SH	31 March
AP 03/26-7	SH and team to facilitate a representation audit in advance of the next recruitment round.	SH/Access team	September
<i>Any other business</i>			
AP 03/26-8	Forum members to email AC if they wish to be added to the trails update mailing list.	Forum members	31 March

***NB:** Action numbering convention = AP (Action Point) Month/Year Action number, e.g. 'AP 03/26-1'.