

EAST LoTHIAN COUNCIL

PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNITY SERVICES

Minutes of the meeting of the **EAST LoTHIAN LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**
held on **30th October 2024** via Teams.

PRESENT:

Thomas Stanley (Chair) ... Landowners	Martin Andrews.....Wemyss & March
John Hardy ELCV	Mark JamesCycling UK
Shona McIntosh ELC Councillor	Constance Newbould.BHS
Gordon Stewart National Trust Scot.	James WyllieNFUS

ATTENDING:

Jo Allen ELC Coms	Cheyne Hamm.....ELC Climate Change
Jenny Hargreaves ELC Countryside	Chris Milne.....ELC Sustainable Travel
Nick Morgan ELC Countryside	

APOLOGIES:

Peter Hildrew Scotways	Beth Leslie.....Ramblers Scotland
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ACTION

1. CLIMATE CHANGE

- 1.1 Cheyne Hamm, the Council's Sustainability and Climate Change Officer talked about the new draft Climate Change Strategy for 2025 – 2030. He has just put this out for public consultation and is also consulting with Council departments. A link to the consultation is here <https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/climate-strategy-consultation> There will also be a number of drop-in events.
- 1.2 Cheyne has also produced an Action Plan. Some relevant actions include increasing the number of Council workplaces with cycle-friendly employer status, supporting active travel infrastructure and expanding the path network.
- 1.3 Gordon reported that the National Trust has a ten year strategy – 2021 – 2031. Their aim is to become carbon-negative. The strategy is quite detailed and includes making the properties more efficient, how visitors get to properties and the credentials of suppliers.
- 1.4 It was agreed that it is very difficult to monitor the targets because there are so many variables and expertise it still being worked up. James suggested that running a business efficiently can often get the same results.
- 1.5 Thomas asked Cheyne if he had three easy wins. He suggested providing more active travel infrastructure at Council work places, improving energy efficiency of buildings and improved awareness of what sort of infrastructure will be impacted by climate change.
- 1.6 Gordon said that the NTS have been raising awareness and sharing information between teams (taking regular electricity readings, moving staff to regional hubs, or

using Teams for meetings, improving insulation, etc). That way staff see that things are moving in the right direction.

- 1.7 Cheyne also said he wants to target business mileage. This can be done through better planning, using active travel, or car sharing with electric vehicles.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING held on 7th August 2024.

The minutes were agreed as a true reflection of the meeting. Proposed by James and seconded by Constance.

3. MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 Shona has been in touch with someone to ask if they know of anyone who may be interested in representing people with disabilities on the Forum.
- 3.2 Jo Allen of Team Leader of News & Media in Corporate Communications will attend future meetings when she is available.
- 3.3 The two proposed Facebook posts have been put onto Facebook.

4. PLANNING AND ACCESS

- 4.1 Nick had contacted Marek Mackowiak from the Planning Team who had sent a brief update about progress with LDP2;
 - Local Development Plan Evidence Report submitted to Scottish Government for Gatecheck in October.
 - Call for Sites closed in September – over 120 sites submitted. These will be assessed by the Policy Team with help from internal consultees.
 - Registered Local Place Plans sites also to be assessed.
 - Targeted community engagement on areas to be covered in the proposed LDP in spring/summer 2025.
 - Policy Team working with Jennifer Lothian on the Open Space Strategy – this work overlaps with the proposed LDP.
 - LPPs - 2 registered so far and possibly another 7 coming for registration at some point in 2024/25.
 - Proposed LDP target date end of 2025.
- 4.2 Thomas asked that the Local Development Plan remain on the agenda for the next few meetings. He has also asked someone from a law firm if they could talk to the LAF at a future meeting about what can be asked from developers.
- 4.3 Shona suggested that the LAF should put together a form of words in response to the LDP consultation asking for stronger powers to ensure good path connections within and from new developments. It was agreed that independent advice would be useful.
- 4.4 Constance was meeting with Midlothian Council that evening as she is keen to find out who sets the costs and contributions that developers have to provide. It was acknowledged that much of this is governed by Scottish Legislation, but possibly the LDP can set the formula for developer contributions.

- 4.5 Shona said that the Scottish Government are consulting on a proposed levy for developers to give to Local Authorities for the provision of infrastructure. Unfortunately it is now closed for comments, but interesting to read: [Infrastructure levy for Scotland: discussion paper - gov.scot](#)
- 4.6 Jo said that she thought that the rates for Section 75 contributions are set nationally, but they don't keep up with inflation and can only be used for new infrastructure, rather than refurbishment. The Council's Planning Obligations Officer, Shirley Curran would know more.
- 4.7 Martin said Section 75s are a bit of a minefield. Often the Local Authority isn't the lead agency, so it can fall to Scottish Water or another agency to take the lead.

5. ACCESS OFFICER'S UPDATE

This was circulated in advance of the meeting and Nick ran through it.

- 5.1 Mark asked the reason for the tarmac at the top of the slope at Winterfield Golf Course. This was actually required to get the dumper truck up and down the slope with materials, as it risked tipping over when it was loaded. Steps can't be used on the slope because grass cutting machinery has to use that route.
- 5.2 Shona was concerned about the lack of funding for paths when the ever-expanding road network is being maintained. She felt it was indicative that paths are less valued.
- 5.3 Nick has learned that Ramblers Scotland have small grants available for access projects, so he will investigate if they can fund a sign for the Tynninghame to Binning Wood path. NM
- 5.4 Thomas asked how the value of the coastal car park app can be assessed. Nick replied that in the last two years with the poor weather most of the car parks have been quiet, so it is difficult to justify the expense. However, if we had another summer like 2021 then it would be very useful. Shona suggested that it could promote public transport and cycling, rather than car use.
- 5.5 John said that the person who collates the Path Warden reports had put a shout out for projects for team tasks. Many of the suggestions have been on paths that have been damaged by the wet weather and which need drainage improvements.
- 5.6 Shona mentioned that the Climate Ready Scotland is looking for testimonies from people who have noticed changes in the weather and its impacts. [Have Your Say Today - Climate Ready South East Scotland - Commonplace](#)
- 5.7 Nick mentioned that the Scottish Outdoor Access Network is having a networking day next month focussing on Climate Change and Paths. [SOAN Annual Conference – 14th November 2024 | Scottish Outdoor Access Network](#)

6. FORUM FACEBOOK

- 6.1 Nick has put up three posts since the last meeting. However, he noted that they are not receiving many "likes", so possibly are not being seen by many people. He wondered if he posted more regularly then the posts may be seen by more people.

- 6.2 Nick has received text from Thomas about a Path Warden Team Task and another post from Mark about the “Going Dutch” meeting in Haddington, which he will put up.
- 6.3 Other suggestions for posts are the new path at Winterfield, any Local Development Plan updates, advertising the next Cycle Forum and a post about dog poo bags and not hanging them in trees!
- 6.4 Any other pictures or text for a Facebook post would be gratefully received. **All**

7 ACTIVE TRAVEL

- 7.1 Chris said that this year has been particularly difficult due to uncertainties around funding. The Council receives the majority of its active travel funding from external sources. SEStran gave out their funding early in the financial year, which was useful. The block grant received from Transport Scotland was delayed by three or four months, which has held up project planning and will make it difficult to deliver projects on time. Sustrans have been hit hard, so it is uncertain what projects can be delivered with their funding. Hopefully things will be a bit clearer by the next Cycle Forum meeting, so Chris will send out an update then, which can be forwarded onto member of the LAF.
- 7.2 A consultancy has produced a concept design for an active travel route from Levenhall to Prestonpans. They will be undertaking a public consultation over the next few months.
- 7.3 Work is underway on the crossing point of the Pencaitland Railway Walk over the A6093 west of Pencaitland. This involves slight realignment of the crossing and installation of flashing signs to warn motorists when cyclists and pedestrians are approaching the crossing.
- 7.4 A lot of work has happened and is being planned to improve accessibility on the cycle network. This includes the removal of old redundant bollards, etc. Further auditing is planned for Tranent town centre and it is hoped to work with local communities to find any restrictions on local networks.
- 7.5 It is hoped to do a number of improvements to the National Cycle Network in Musselburgh, Whitecraig and at QMU. We are still waiting to hear from Sustrans.
- 7.6 It is planned to install bike racks at a number of community locations such as Preston Tower and St Mary’s in Haddington. Shona mentioned that the bike racks at Tesco in Musselburgh are very awkward and could be improved. She will also send Chris a photo of bike storage with a living roof that she saw in Glasgow. **SM**

8. ACCESS ISSUES UPDATE

A summary of access issues was circulated in advance of the meeting.

- 8.1 Nick reported that only three new issues has been received since the last meeting. In the last 12 months 9 access issues have been resolved and 2 are outstanding.
- 8.2 The Legal Team have written again to Buccleuch Estates about Dalkeith Country Park. This time they have received an acknowledgement and the promise of a response. In the meantime, Shona had been involved with a protest at the Monkton Gate. About 30 people met there one Saturday morning, when interestingly the gate

was found to be open. She also has learned that Buccleuch Estates hold community drop in events, so she is hoping to attend one in the future. James suggested that regular protests are needed to keep the pressure on the Estate.

- 8.3 Nick has also had a complaint about a gate being locked at the Linn Rocks in East Linton. There has been a lot of anti-social behaviour there in the past and Nick's understanding was that a gate had been put in, but it would never be locked. It was agreed that this one would have to be treated with some sensitivity, but that the gate should not be locked.
- 8.4 Mark had contacted Nick to say that the locked gate over the core path at Eweford Farm is currently open because the route is being used by the neighbouring property developers. Nick will keep an eye on it to see if it remains open after the building work has finished.
- 8.5 Nick noted that he had recently been contacted by a solicitor asking if their client who lives in Aberlady can block off a path that goes through her garden. This route has been used for years and he thinks it would likely prove to be a right of way if challenged, so has advised the home owner not to block it off. The solicitor had said it hadn't come up as a right of way on any searches. It brings to light the fact that there are likely many routes across East Lothian that are not recorded as rights of way, but which could prove to be if challenged, such as we discovered at Dirleton New Mains.

9. MEMBERS' UPDATES

- 9.1 John will ask members of the East Lothian Countryside Volunteers to send relevant pictures to Nick to go onto Facebook.
- 9.2 Mark reported that the Connecting Dunbar report is completed and can be viewed on the Sustaining Dunbar web site. [Connecting Dunbar – Sustaining Dunbar](#)
- 9.3 Angie Kinghorn, the Cycling UK Cycling Development Officer has interacted with over 300 people already. She has access to a number of bikes and electric bikes that people can borrow.
- 9.4 Gordon reported that the National Trust are going to be replacing the sleeper bridge at Preston Mill, which may result in it being closed for a couple of days. He will publicise this before it happens.
- 9.5 Nick has been made aware that Dunbar Golf Club will be putting in a short diversion on the John Muir Link while drainage work is completed. It is likely to last for 6 weeks and an alternative route will be provided.

10. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Wednesday 29th January 2025 – via Teams.

Wednesday 30th April 2025 – Saltire Room 2, Haddington.

Wednesday 30th July 2025 – Saltire Room 2, Haddington.

Wednesday 29th October 2025 – via Teams.