

## EAST LoTHIAN COUNCIL

### PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNITY SERVICES

Minutes of the meeting of the **EAST LoTHIAN LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**  
held on **27<sup>th</sup> January 2021** via Skype.

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#### **PRESENT:**

Jon Swift (Chair).....AELCC	Mark James ..... Cycling UK
Sue Kempson .....ELC Councillor	John McMillan ..... ELC Councillor
Constance Newbould .....BHSS (from item 3)	Ken Reid..... Independent co-optee
Thomas Stanley.....Landowners	James Wyllie ..... NFUS

#### **ATTENDING:**

Neil Clark.....ELC Countryside	Jill Mackay ..... ELC Coms.
Nick Morgan .....ELC Countryside	

#### **APOLOGIES:**

Elaine Carmichael.....ELC	Francis Hepburne Scott . Scottish Forestry
Eamon John.....ELC SCL Manager	Andrew Ralton ..... Scotways
Iain Reid.....ELC Roads	

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#### **ACTION**

#### **1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING held on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2020.**

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

#### **2. MATTERS ARISING**

- 2.1 Nick and Ken had produced a post about the issues that the NTS had been having with dog fouling and their hay crop and put it on the LAF Facebook page.
- 2.2 Jill had been in contact with Claire from the NTS and she had put out messages on social media, which had been shared with the NTS. They are continuing to share messages and the Community Wardens are doing extra patrols in the area.
- 2.3 Neil talked about the draft Land Management Rules that are intended to help the Countryside Team cope with the expected influx of campers. Neil is also involved in a national working group with NatureScot and Visit Scotland which reports to the Scottish Government. The NAF have produced draft guidance on camping, which ELC have commented on. Nick will send a link to the consultation on the draft Land Management Rules and the Countryside Team's report about the 2020 Covid summer to everyone. Ken will share the link on Facebook. **NM/KR**
- 2.4 Nick has been in touch with Paul Chandler, who isn't a member of any organisation, but he is still keen to be a member of the LAF.

- 2.5 Nick has sent information to Councillors McMillan and Kempson for them to forward to potential candidates.
- 2.6 Neil has a contractor lined up to repair the carpark at Crossgatehall, but because of the lockdown can't instruct any work unless it is essential.
- 2.7 No ideas have been sent in for walker and cyclist friendly roads. This will be carried forward. Any ideas to be sent to Nick. **All**

### **3. MEMBERSHIP**

- 3.1 There are still vacancies on the Forum for two land management organisations and a user group.
- 3.2 John had suggested that Martin Andrews would make a good member, as he is the factor of Wemyss and March Estate and they have a golf club, the Bothy as well as the estate. Jon will write to Martin to give him information about the Local Access Forum and ask him if he is interested in becoming a member. **JS**
- 3.3 Sue suggested Yvonne Wemyss who is on Dunbar Harbour Trust and who is involved in accessibility. Nick had sent her details about the LAF.
- 3.4 Nick will contact the National Trust for Scotland and ask if they will provide a replacement for Paul Chandler on the LAF. **NM**
- 3.5 Nick to ask Paul Armour from Dunbar Golf Club if he can give a short presentation at the next LAF meeting. **NM**
- 3.6 John suggested representation from the Path Warden Volunteers.

### **4. FACEBOOK**

- 4.1 Ken reported that there had been three new posts since the last meeting about the Forth to Farne Way, the award received for the Giant Hogweed eradication project and Newhailes dog fouling and antisocial behaviour. This last one was shared and seen by over 25,000 people.
- 4.2 It had been noted that over the last nine months there had been a lot of feedback about people's behaviour when outdoors that needs to be addressed. It has been decided that the Local Access Forum, East Lothian Council and the Countryside Rangers will work together to produce a series of Facebook posts about how to behave responsibly when out and about.
- 4.3 John was pleased to hear about the posts on responsible behaviour, as there have been a number of complaints brought up at Community Council meetings, particularly dog fouling recently.
- 4.4 Sue suggested a post reminding cyclists that walkers can't always hear them approaching from behind. It was also suggested that an article about responsible behaviour should be written for the Courier.
- 4.5 Jon thanked Ken for the work that he puts into producing material for Facebook.

### **5 ACCESS OFFICER'S UPDATE**

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

- 5.1 Hopes Estate. Nick mentioned that a number of countryside car parks have closed over the last couple of years (Whiteadder, Carberry and Saltoun Wood) because of various forms of irresponsible behaviour. The latest car park to close is at Hopes Reservoir, although the landowner is currently building a new car park and intends to introduce a permit system, with any money raised going to charity.
- 5.2 Jon reported that the landowner is planning to double the size of the car park and wonders if this would require planning permission. He also had concerns about issues surrounding the extent of the public road.
- 5.3 John said that he had been in the Lammermuirs during the summer and saw cars parked all along the road from Longyester. He wondered if Scottish Water could provide some space for parking. What the landowner is doing is within the letter of the law, although it isn't really in the spirit of the access legislation.
- 5.4 Ken said that the loss of parking at Hopes will put more pressure on other areas in the Lammermuirs.
- 5.5 Thomas suggested that charging for parking at Hopes was consistent with the Council charging at the coastal car parks. He would support landowners doing so, particularly with the current number of visitors.
- 5.6 Nick suggested that the current increase in visitors may only be a temporary concern as a result of the lockdown and it seems a shame to be restricting parking when things may soon return to normal.
- 5.7 Neil said that patterns have been changing over recent years. Butterdean Wood used to have four car parking spaces, but this was enlarged to 10 spaces ten years ago. Despite the woodland not being promoted the car park is now full every day and often there are up to 25 cars parked on the road verges. He noted that east of Dunbar the car parks are not so busy, but in the west of the county they are very busy. The overflow car parks are lined up for this summer and active travel to the sites is being promoted. It will be interesting to see if the increase in visitors will be long-term.
- 5.8 Mark is keen to encourage people to access the countryside by bike and is pleased to see all of the new cycle hoops in the countryside car parks.
- 5.9 Jon reported seeing over 50 cars parked at Binning Wood the previous Sunday.

## **6. ACCESS ISSUES UPDATE**

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

- 6.1 Although Nick reported an increase in access issues over the last few months, the figures shown in the summary do not reflect the number of concerns and enquiries that he received. Any complaints about issues that had previously been investigated are not recorded, if it had turned out that access rights didn't apply to a track or area. Also, the Hopes car park is not something that the Council have powers to do anything about. Nick has received many e-mails from members of the public about this and has contacted the landowner, so it has taken up a lot of time but there is little that can be done other than try to reassure the landowner.

## **7. MEMBERS' UPDATES**

- 7.1 Thomas said that a new bill on livestock worrying by dogs is going through parliament. This is pertinent with it coming up to lambing season.
- 7.2 Mark reported that the Scottish Government has introduced the Cycle Repair Scheme, which offers free repairs to bicycles up to the value of £50 to try to keep people mobile during the Covid crisis.
- 7.3 Mark also asked who should clear up, after the hedges are cut. Many a puncture in the countryside is caused by thorns after the field hedges have been cut. There is no obligation for anyone to clear up the clippings.
- 7.4 Jon had attended a Zoom meeting about the Papple Steading development. The owner is keen to develop a network of paths around the steading and is happy to liaise with the Local Access Forum.
- 7.5 Constance said that there wasn't much happening in the horse-riding world, in this snowy and muddy weather. She is still working on the idea of a windfarm route across to the Borders.
- 7.6 John said that there had been a number of planning applications to put huts in Bolton Muir Wood. This may have an impact on public access. One application is going to the Local Review Body on 10<sup>th</sup> March.

## **8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- 8.1 James has been putting up way marker discs on the Forth to Farne Way. He also reported that the Rucksack Readers guidebook for the route has now been published.

## **9. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2021

The meetings will be from 2pm until 4.30pm. It is likely we will have to continue to use Skype for meetings.