

EAST LoTHIAN COUNCIL

PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNITY SERVICES

Minutes of the meeting of the **EAST LoTHIAN LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**
held on **20th October 2021** via Teams.

PRESENT:

Jon Swift (Chair).....AELCC	Martin Andrews..... Wemyss & March
Mark JamesCycling UK	Sue Kempson..... ELC Councillor
Constance NewbouldBHSS	Ken Reid..... Independent co-optee
Thomas Stanley.....Landowners	James Wyllie NFUS

ATTENDING:

Neil Clark.....ELC Countryside	Jill Mackay ELC Communications
Nick MorganELC Countryside	Iain Reid ELC Roads

APOLOGIES:

Paul Armour.....Dunbar Golf Club	Claire Grant National Trust Scot.
Eamon John.....ELC SCL Manager	John McMillan ELC Councillor
Andrew RaltonScotways	Alasdair Sangster..... Scottish Forestry

ACTION

Jon welcomed Martin Andrews to the Forum and introduced the other members.

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING held on 28th July 2021.

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

2. MATTERS ARISING

- 2.1 Nick has been in touch with Scottish Forestry and Alasdair Sangster has now taken that position on the Forum. Unfortunately, Alasdair had had to give his apologies for this meeting. Nick also contacted the SRUC, but has not had a response.
- 2.2 Nick contacted the manager at Fox Lake to ask if he could arrange a meeting with the landowner. After no response to that, Nick e-mailed the landowner, but still no response, so he has now written a letter. James offered to help to contact the landowner if there is no response from the letter. NM
- 2.3 Jon reported that he regularly walks in the Lammermuirs and since the last meeting has noticed a reduction in the number of people he sees walking and cycling there. Ken also reported that he thought everywhere was quieter now that alternative options are re-opening.

- 2.4 Nick hasn't yet sent a plan of the proposed path at Tynninghame to members, as a couple of options are being considered. As soon as he gets confirmation from the factors he will circulate a plan to members of the Forum.
- 2.5 Ken hasn't received information to post on Facebook about ticks. Andrew sent information to Nick, which he will see if he can forward to Ken. **NM**

3. FORUM FACEBOOK

- 3.1 Ken reported that one more joint post between ELC, the Rangers and the Forum had been produced, this time about Wild Camping. It has been widely distributed and seen by over 2,700 people. There have been no abusive comments, so possibly the message is getting through to people.
- 3.2 Ken had also shared a BBC story about Carnethy Running Club which managed to get someone to the top of every Munro in Scotland on the same day. One of the people involved was Keith Burns, the former Chair of the Forum.
- 3.3 There are now 482 followers of the Forum's Facebook page. Ken asked members to think of posts that can be shared, or topics that can be covered. **All**

4 ACCESS OFFICER'S UPDATE

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

- 4.1 James was frustrated by the slow progress of the extension of the Railway Walk through the Community Hospital ground. He said that Sustrans had responsibility for walking and not just cycling.
- 4.2 Ken suggested that there is a potential alternative route to Tantallon from North Berwick along a track a few hundred metres south of the road. Nick had heard from the farmer that he may be prepared to upgrade this in the future.
- 4.3 Iain gave a further update on the Cement Works path. Tarmac have agreed with their tenants a continuation of the route behind the Battle of Dunbar monument along towards the Whitesands road. Iain is talking to Sustrans about potential funding. The path should be open before the end of the year.
- 4.4 Martin encouraged everyone to check the Ramblers' map of Scottish paths that they have just produced [Scottish Paths Map - Ramblers](#) . There are a number of routes shown that either don't exist or where access rights don't apply. Nick has heard from other landowners and access authorities of their concerns about the maps.
- 4.5 Iain said that Graeme Brown is producing a new Car Parking Strategy and there are to be counters on various roads around the county. He wanted to ensure that Graeme was aware of the coastal carpark app. Ken wondered whether the app would result in people racing along the coast to available parking spaces.
- 4.6 Thomas was pleased to hear that Planners are aware of access rights and the impacts that some developments could have. James raised his concerns about the huts that are being built in Bolton Muir Woods and the impact they could have on access rights. They will completely change the character of the woodland and set a precedent for similar development in other woodland.

5. ACCESS ISSUES UPDATE

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

- 5.1 Jon walks at Biel Estate about twice a week and hasn't come across the individual who has been approaching people and causing concerns. He said there is an active shoot there and the keeper once asked him to avoid a particular woodland after the pheasants had been released, which he felt was reasonable.
- 5.2 Jon had had an issue with a keeper elsewhere near Kamehill. This had escalated to a police matter.
- 5.3 Members of the Forum were encouraged to note that the number of issues has reduced in recent months as the lockdown has been lifted.

6. MEMBERS' UPDATES

- 6.1 Constance raised concerns that she had been told about by a horse-rider regarding kissing gates near Danskine that she can't get through with her horse. One of these has had to be made cattle-proof because there had been incidents of someone deliberately letting the cattle out onto a road. Nick will talk to the landowner and see if something can be done about the other gate. NM
- 6.2 James is Chair of the Forth to Farne Way steering group. The group recently met with pilgrims from Holland and Sweden who were walking to the COP 26 conference.
- 6.3 James is also the Co-ordinator for the River Tyne Giant Hogweed project. The projects involves volunteers spotting plants and landowners spraying them. Any plants that are in flower are removed manually. This is the end of the third year of the project and it is believed that there are no flowering plants along the entire length of the Tyne. James will send a link to the map on the East Lothian Countryside Volunteers web site to Ken for the Facebook page. A similar scheme has just started up on the River Esk. JW
- 6.4 Councillor Kempson had met the Countryside Officer, Jenny Hargreaves in relation to a pony on Traprain. She was very impressed with the project and Jenny's knowledge.
- 6.5 Martin has noticed the number of visitors to the countryside has been reducing, which is taking the pressure off in a number of hotspots.
- 6.6 Iain said that the Council is consulting on the Spaces for People measures that were implemented to make walking more attractive during the Covid lockdown. These included 20mph speed limits and widening pavements. The results of the consultation may result in some of these measures being made permanent. [Future Spaces for People in East Lothian - East Lothian Council - Citizen Space \(eastlothianconsultations.co.uk\)](https://www.eastlothianconsultations.co.uk)
- 6.7 Constance reported that the Lothian Region of the British Horse Society will be hosting a Ride Out UK event at Pinkerton on 30th October.
- 6.8 Neil reported that things are quietening down along the coast. This year it is estimated there were 4 million visitors to the coast and the Rangers spoke to 3,400 campers. Things were made a lot easier because we received 100% grant funding

for 8 Seasonal Rangers. The poor weather in August helped limit the number of visitors. We are currently planning for 2022. Consultants have been appointed to write a Visitor Management Plan. It is hoped that there may be better provision for motorhomes and we would like to be able to control overnight parking. There was a national meeting last week including all the hot spot authorities. All said that they needed Seasonal Rangers next year. It is hoped that NatureScot, Visit Scotland and the Scottish Government will take that on board. We would certainly be keen to start our Seasonal Rangers earlier in the year.

- 6.9 Jon was disappointed to hear that many IPA applications had not been successful. He also wanted to pass on his thanks to all of the volunteers doing such great work around East Lothian.
- 6.10 Thomas had just had a look at the Ramblers Scotland maps and seen a number of errors. He feels that these will translate into a number of access issues.
- 6.11 Jill had shared a Facebook post from the District Salmon Fisheries Board, which reported that a net had been found on the River Tyne. Anyone seeing one should not touch it, but report it to the police.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 7.1 Jon suggested that car parking linked to walking and public access should be an agenda item for the next meeting. He suggested a full update on what the Council are doing, private car parks, the impact of Covid and what could be done better. Ken suggested that poor parking wasn't just an issue in rural areas and there had been a lot of poor parking in towns during lockdown. Martin said that he had experienced a lot of unreasonable behaviour during lockdown and many landowners were overwhelmed by this. In the Borders some parking areas were taken over by campers and camper vans. He felt that this is a national issue and better definitions are required in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. Neil was asked to give a presentation at the next meeting. **NC**
- 7.2 Jon said that it was good to see so many people out and about during lockdown, but the numbers were a bit extreme and we were a bit caught out by the number of visitors to the countryside. It seems that people are understanding their responsibilities a bit better now, but it can only benefit everyone if we can make everyone appreciate what we have and how to behave appropriately.

8. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Wednesday 26th January 2022

Wednesday 27th April 2022

Wednesday 27th July 2022

Wednesday 26th October 2022

It is hoped that the next meeting can be held in person, possibly in East Linton.