

## EAST LoTHIAN COUNCIL

### PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNITY SERVICES

Minutes of the meeting of the **EAST LoTHIAN LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**  
held on **26<sup>th</sup> October 2022** via Teams.

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#### **PRESENT:**

Jon Swift (Chair).....	AELCC	Maggie Allan .....	Scottish Ramblers
Martin Andrews .....	Wemyss & March	Claire Grant.....	NTS
Peter Hildrew .....	Scotways	Mark James .....	Cycling Scotland
Shona McIntosh .....	ELC Councillor	Constance Newbould ..	BHSS
James Wyllie.....	NFUS		

#### **ATTENDING:**

Neil Clark.....	ELC Countryside	Laura Douglas.....	ELC Ranger Service
Jill Mackay.....	ELC Comms.	Nick Morgan .....	ELC Countryside

#### **APOLOGIES:**

Eamon John.....	ELC SCL Manager	Chris Milne .....	ELC Sustainable Travel
Ken Reid .....	Independent co-optee	Thomas Stanley.....	Landowners

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#### **ACTION**

#### **1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING held on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2022.**

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

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

- 2.1 Jon has contacted the NAF leaving a phone message and e-mail asking if it is a national policy not to attend LAFs, or if it is a local situation. He is waiting for a response.
- 2.2 Constance contacted the horse rider to arrange a visit to look at the issues she had raised in the Danskine/Traprain area. A suitable date still hasn't been found. **CN**
- 2.3 Nick has twice chased up the Legal Team about the locked gate at Eweford since the last meeting, but they struggling with staffing capacity. Nick will keep up the pressure, as he has a number of items sitting with them just now.
- 2.4 Neil has a meeting with the landowner at Fox Lake next month about another matter, but will ask about getting past the locked entrance gate. **NC**
- 2.5 Nick replied to the Rural Payments Team to pass on the views of the members of the LAF about public access on grass margins. He hasn't received a response. He also e-mailed Bridget Jones at NatureScot, who he heard was producing some

guidance on the matter. He didn't receive a response about this, but heard from the Access Officer at BHS that she had received his comments.

- 2.6 Constance sent a picture of the Ulti-trec surface on the Pencaitland Railway Walk, which Ken published on Facebook.
- 2.7 The Countryside Ranger had visited Doon Hill to look for a fence blocking access to the Anglo Saxon hall. There is a fence around the monument with only one entrance. The official entrance is down quite a long track, but he didn't think there was anything that could be done to resolve this.

### **3. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

- 3.1 Jon explained that he had been contacted by the new owners of the Linn Mill in East Linton, who had been alarmed at the large number of youths who had been gathering next to the river there. Groups of up to 80 youths partying, making a lot of noise and leaving litter. It seems that they have been arriving by the busload from Dunbar, North Berwick, Edinburgh and even Bathgate.
- 3.2 Constance said that organisers should inform landowners of any organised event and she would always ask permission before organising a horse-riding event. However, it is difficult to know if an idea spread on social media is considered as organised.
- 3.3 James said that it is a great location if visitors are quiet and respectful. They are allowed to go there, but if anyone is causing a nuisance then it would be a police matter to resolve.
- 3.4 Jon said that the police have been informed and have responded, but it is difficult for them to do anything unless they see any particular behaviour. They have taken alcohol off under 18-year-olds.
- 3.5 Martin said that there are two locations on the estate where weekend raves are sometimes held. These tend to be organised informally through social media. They will always call the police as soon as they see one of these events starting. However, the police are reluctant to move people on once they have been drinking. He feels it is important to always call the police so that they have a record of the number of such incidents.
- 3.6 Claire said that Newhailes had suffered particularly badly during Covid with groups of youths having parties. There had been vandalism to outbuildings, windows broken on the house and break-ins to the community garden. Things have since improved and the estate engaged with the Community Police Officer every time there was an incident. Because there had been so many incidences the police have started patrolling the estate at night. This visible presence has made a difference. The National Trust for Scotland have undertaken a lot of community engagement since Covid, such as family events. This have given the community more of a sense of ownership. There have still been the odd gathering of youths, but they now are more inclined to pile up their rubbish than break bottles and leave a mess.
- 3.7 Claire continued that CCTV has been installed around the house and since then there have been no more incidences of windows being broken.
- 3.8 Martin said that there had been some damage at Gosford over the same period, but this was different from an access issue. He would recommend that any such police

matter should be reported. It is important that they are made aware of any regular issues. At Gosford it was possible to close up a number of the access points to allow better interaction with the public. It makes a big difference to have the community on your side.

- 3.9 Jon said that the owners of the Linn Mill were considering fencing off the area, but it was agreed that this would not be allowed and would not solve the problem as it would likely only prevent legitimate users accessing the area. Constance mentioned fencing that had been put up in the Lammermuirs to prevent motorbikes accessing an area. All it had done was to prevent horse riders getting in and the motorcyclists broke the fence down! She suggested CCTV for the Linn Mill.
- 3.10 Laura concurred that engagement with the public and having conversations explaining the damage they could cause was the best solution. The Countryside Rangers try to speak to campers as they arrive at the site in order to try to prevent irresponsible behaviour before it happens and to reduce the impact for local visitors.
- 3.11 Nick said that it is important to consider if an activity is criminal, anti-social or not responsible. These would be dealt with in different ways. It is also worth considering the cumulative impact of a lot of people doing the same responsible activity and how that can be addressed.
- 3.12 Claire said that there had been a lot of incidents of dog fouling, dogs being off the lead and not under control and kids building mountain bike trails at Newhailes. In all such incidents engagement has been key and conversations with the public have improved such behaviour.
- 3.13 Mark thought that this was a good opportunity to engage with young people and educate them. He thought that East Lothian Countryside Ranger Service were a great example of how this is done.
- 3.14 Shona agreed with Mark, and said that although it is frustrating that a lot of people are travelling a distance to get to the Linn Rocks, they may not have anywhere nice to go more locally. It is good for people to go out into the countryside, but we need to ensure they do so responsibly.
- 3.15 Jon will contact the owners of the Linn Rocks and offer to meet with them and Nick to discuss this issue. **JS**

#### **4. FORUM FACEBOOK**

- 4.1 Ken hadn't managed to send in an update, but Nick noted that there tend to be more Facebook posts shortly after each meeting, but then people tend to forget to send in stories to Ken. If anyone has any interesting topics for a post, please send some text and a picture to Ken. **All**

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

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

- 5.1 Mark thought that tarmac blends in after time, but it is the hard surface that doesn't suit all users. Shona had heard that Flexi-pave is a good surface for runners and walkers.

- 5.2 Constance said that the British Horse Society had been planning an access away-day to look at different surfacing. However, it had been cancelled. She said that she had used scalplings on a path and it had lasted well and had remained well bedded down.
- 5.3 James reminded Nick to contact the landowner at Becky's strip before planning any work. **NM**
- 5.4 James was supportive of the proposal for the New Mains right of way.
- 5.5 Mark said that Sustaining Dunbar had a change in ambition for a Spott to Dunbar path. They have applied for Sustrans' Places for Everyone funding to look into having traffic lights under the Eweford tunnel.
- 5.6 Mark asked if a map could be produced showing the locations of each item in Nick's update. Nick to try this for the next meeting. **NM**

## **6. ACCESS ISSUES UPDATE**

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

- 6.1 There was a discussion about the motorcycle barrier on the access road from Smeaton Farm to the Smeaton Railway. This had originally been put in as part of the agreement with the landowner when they agreed that the link could be built. It was then vandalised and more recently replaced after a number of complaints were received from members of the public and the police about motorbikes using the route. There have also been concerns raised that it is restricting access for some bikes and mobility scooters. Shona suggested that the context may have changed since this was first installed. Someone from Sustrans has offered to meet Nick to discuss designs that could be used at this location.
- 6.2 Mark commented that there are some access issues that have been ongoing for some time, which are no longer counted on the summary sheet. Nick will include something about this in future updates. **NM**

## **7. MEMBERS' UPDATES**

- 7.1 Jon had contacted Nick when he had been told that work had appeared to have stopped on upgrading the right of way up to Pencraig. This had been a condition of the planning application. Nick was then in contact with the Planners, who chased this up and work is now underway on the path.
- 7.2 Maggie mentioned that there is a path that runs parallel to the drive to Spott House which hasn't been maintained in recent years. She contacted the Village Association who contacted Spott Estate and it has now been cut.
- 7.3 Mark had received a number of issues from Fiona Crombie. He will forward these to Nick. **NM**
- 7.4 Mark asked if the closed road at the A1 underpass near Knowes had been cleared. This should have been undertaken by the Community Payback Team. Neil will check. **NC**
- 7.5 Mark appreciated the loan of the scythes from the Countryside Rangers.

- 7.6 Martin reported a recent drop in visitor numbers to Gosford at the weekends, possibly due to the weather and darker nights.

## **8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- 8.1 Maggie reported that East Lothian Ramblers have appointed a new representative for the Local Access Forum. This will be confirmed at the AGM in November.
- 8.2 Jill let everyone know that this will be Neil's last Local Access Forum meeting, as he is retiring at the end of the year. The members all wanted to pass on their great appreciation for all he has achieved over the many years that he has worked with the Council and to thank him for all he has done over the years that he has attended the Local Access Forum meetings.

## **9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> January – live meeting in Saltire Room 1, John Muir House, Haddington.

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> April – via Teams.

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> July – live meeting.

Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> October – via Teams.