

EAST LoTHIAN COUNCIL

PARTNERSHIPS AND SERVICES FOR COMMUNITY

Minutes of the meeting of the **EAST LoTHIAN LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**
held on **26th April 2023** via Microsoft Teams.

PRESENT:

Jon Swift (Chair).....	AELCC	Martin Andrews	Wemyss & March
Peter Hildrew	Scotways	Mark James	Cycling UK
Shona McIntosh	ELC Councillor	Constance Newbould ..	BHS
Ken Reid	Independent co-optee	Thomas Stanley.....	Landowners
James Wyllie.....	NFUS		

ATTENDING:

Jenny Hargreaves	ELC Countryside	Hanna Lundstrom.....	ELC Climate Change
Nick Morgan	ELC Countryside	Jen Newcombe	ELC Countryside Ranger
Paul Zochowski.....	ELC Planning		

APOLOGIES:

Laura Douglas	ELC Ranger Service	Eamon John.....	ELC SCL Manager
Jill Mackay	ELC Comms.	Chris Milne	ELC Sustainable Travel
Parvine Woodger	ELC Ageing Well		

ACTION

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING held on 25th January 2023

It was noted that Mark James represents Cycling UK, not Cycling Scotland. The minutes were agreed as a true reflection of the meeting. Proposed by Constance and seconded by James.

2. MATTERS ARISING

- 2.1 Nick spoke to the planner about the Fox Lake planning application to see if a condition of consent for the new application could include not locking the carpark gate. Unfortunately, this would not be possible, because the new application didn't include the gate and would not impact on it. Members of the Forum asked Nick if he could now pass this issue to the Legal Team to pursue. **NM**
- 2.2 Jenny has had a look at the path beyond the A1 underpass near Knowes. It appears that work has started and the surface has been scraped. There is still some overhanging vegetation to be cut back
- 2.3 The Countryside Ranger has confirmed that the locked gate at Eweford is only unlocked during the working day for construction traffic to use the route.
- 2.4 Nick contacted the Roads Team and they have agreed to put an "Except cyclists" sign below the no entry sign on the closed road Wester Broomhouse.

- 2.5 Nick checked the motorcycle barrier on the River Tyne Path between Haddington and Abbey Bridge. It turns out that a small field gate has been installed adjacent to the barrier, which is held closed by a hook and chain, so it can be opened to allow access for mobility scooters and larger bikes.
- 2.6 Shona had spoken with Planners to see if maintenance of paths is something that can be included in the next Local Development Plan. The underpasses in question are currently the responsibility of the developer, but they will shortly be handed over to the Council.

3. PLANNING AND PATHS

- 3.1 Paul Zochowski, the Council's Policy and Projects Planner gave a presentation about processes involved in producing the next Local Development Plan (LDP) for East Lothian and the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4). It is anticipated that there will be a public consultation on East Lothian's next LDP this summer. NPF4 is already in force and it requires LDPs to enhance and expand existing green infrastructure. They should safeguard access rights and core paths and encourage new opportunities for access linked to wider networks.
- 3.2 Paul also showed talked about some examples of where he had tried to get developers to provide paths, but this often didn't prove to be easy if the adjacent land is owned by a third party.
- 3.3 Mark said that Sustaining Dunbar had received funding from Sustrans to identify missing paths within the Dunbar and West Barns area.
- 3.4 Paul also informed the meeting that a planning application had just come in for some affordable housing in Haddington adjacent to an old blocked close called Burleigh's Wa's. If the housing goes ahead the close will be reopened as part of this development.
- 3.5 Ken mentioned that many new paths extend from cul-de-sacs and often the roads in developments don't have separate pavements, which can be a bit difficult. He also said that desire lines are not accessible for many people and asked if there was a longer-term plan to formalise such routes.
- 3.6 Paul said that this was often not something that could happen through the planning process, but possible something that could be achieved through Nick's work. He hoped that formalising these routes may become easier under the new NPF4.
- 3.7 Ken asked what was meant by 20 minute neighbourhoods. By what means of transport?
- 3.8 Paul responded that it is intended that people would be able to reach most of their daily needs by active travel within 20 minutes, but in rural areas it could also include public transport.
- 3.9 Shona agreed that it is important to make sure all paths are accessible as possible and highlighted the need for dropped kerbs.
- 3.10 Thomas asked if there was any requirements for developers to show that they have spoken to adjacent landowners. Paul responded that it could be a requirement of a planning brief to provide a reasonable explanation of what meetings have taken place. It isn't always easy to know who all the neighbouring landowners are.

- 3.11 Nick said that he was aware of many examples of the impacts of developments on neighbouring landowners. It is sometimes difficult to anticipate where people from new developments will start walking and often there is no method of providing paths through the planning system. It is very difficult to resolve the issues retrospectively. Funding is only available for active travel routes and it isn't always appropriate for a path to be 3.5 metres wide tarmac.

4. ACCESS OFFICER'S UPDATE

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

- 4.1 Mark said that the Type 1 path around Winterfield Golf Course was uncomfortable to walk on. Constance and James thought it should compact down in time. Nick will monitor this and see if it requires to be rolled again. **NM**
- 4.2 Nick urged the members of the Forum to take a look at the section of Flexipave that has been laid on the Haddington to Longniddry Railway Walk. Constance had taken a look at the route and felt that all that is needed is better drainage in places. She said that the British Horse Society recommend Flexipave as an alternative to tarmac.
- 4.3 There followed a conversation about shared use on the Railway Walk. Constance found that everyone is very considerate when she is riding her horse, with cyclists giving warning in plenty of time. Ken found that not all cyclists use their bells and some are very quiet when passing. It was agreed that cyclists may react differently to different users.
- 4.4 James asked if East Linton Station can open prior to Markle level crossing being closed. This is something that could happen but it is aimed to try to avoid this as it would result in very lengthy periods when the barrier is down at the crossing.
- 4.5 Constance suggested diagonal drains on the Fa'side right of way. She is not keen on concrete. Shona suggested talking to the NTS or someone experienced in hill tracks. Ken was concerned that the diagonal stone drains used on hill tracks can be quite a hazard, particularly for people with visual impairments.
- 4.6 Jon said there had been a recent article in the Courier about the Hopes carpark. He asked if the road verges belonged to the Council. Shona responded that they are under the management of the Roads Team, who are looking into possible obstructions on the verges.

5. FORUM FACEBOOK

- 5.1 Ken updated the Forum about the Facebook page. Recent posts have included sheep worrying, as it is lambing season and another post about motorcycles accessing footpaths and barriers to try to prevent them that may cause restrictions for legitimate users. Neither has received much response.
- 5.2 Ken asked Nick to send him a picture and details about the coastal carpark app to go onto Facebook. **NM**
- 5.3 Ken announced that after 14 years he has decided to step down from the Forum. He asked if someone could therefore take over the Facebook page as he felt it important to keep it going. **All**

- 5.4 The members of the Forum all thanked Ken for the time he had spent on the Forum and for his company and input. It was agreed that Ken had brought a lot to the meetings and the members had all learned a lot from him, particularly about some of the difficulties that people with disabilities face in the outdoors. He has also put a lot of effort into creating and maintaining the Forum's Facebook page.

6. ACCESS ISSUES UPDATE

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

- 6.1 Ken said that he had been made aware of signage at Chrystal Rig and Aikengall windfarms which say something like, "No access for unauthorised people". Constance was surprised as the windfarms had seemed positive when she had been in touch in the past and Whitelees has a visitor centre and hundreds of walkers and cyclists visiting.

7. MEMBERS' UPDATES

- 7.1 Jon reported that the path up to Pencraig in the Orchard Field development in East Linton has now been surfaced.
- 7.2 Constance mentioned that the British Horse Society were looking at the bridges on the access to the beach at John Muir Country Park. They are hoping to help with design and funding of replacement bridges.
- 7.3 James just wanted to remind everyone that it is lambing season, so please pass on the message to keep dogs under control. There are increased penalties now in place for anyone whose dog has been worrying sheep.
- 7.4 Thomas will be organising the Countryside Tent at the Haddington Show again this July. The theme will be being active in the countryside, so if any members of the Forum want to be involved please let Thomas know. **All**

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 8.1 James said that this is the second year of the River Esk Giant Hogweed project and they are now looking at the more industrial areas and trying to establish land ownership. He is grateful to Midlothian and East Lothian Councils for their help.

9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Wednesday 26th July – Saltire Room 1, John Muir House, Haddington.

Wednesday 25th October – via Teams.

Meetings will be from 2pm until 4pm.