

**EAST LoTHIAN COUNCIL**

**PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNITY SERVICES**

Minutes of the meeting of the **EAST LoTHIAN LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**  
held on **24<sup>th</sup> April** via Teams.

---

**PRESENT:**

Thomas Stanley (Chair) ... Landowners	Martin Andrews ..... Wemyss & March
Peter Hildrew ..... Scotways	Mark James ..... Cycling UK
Shona McIntosh ..... ELC Councillor	Constance Newbould .. BHSS

**ATTENDING:**

Chris Milne ..... ELC Active Travel	Nick Morgan ..... ELC Countryside
-------------------------------------	-----------------------------------

**APOLOGIES:**

Eamon John..... ELC SCL Manager	Jenny Hargreaves ..... ELC Countryside
Gordon Stewart ..... National Trust Scot.	James Wyllie ..... NFUS

---

**ACTION**

Nick informed the meeting that Jill Mackay from ELC’s Communications Team has left the Council and we are not sure if the post will be re-filled. Cheyne Hamm is the Council’s new Climate Change Officer. He is keen to attend and report to future meetings. It was also noted that we don’t have a member representing people with disabilities. Shona will contact someone she knows to see if she can recommend anyone.

**SM**

**1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING held on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024.**

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

**2. MATTERS ARISING**

- 2.1 Mark said that the Dunbar Local Place Plan makes a note that the JMW needs repair, but he will contact the people producing it to recommend that a bolder project in that area should be considered. **MJ**
- 2.2 Nick hasn’t managed to organise a photo shoot at the Letham Bridge due to lack of time. Thomas said he was keen to see it, so would try to arrange pictures of the bridge with him in them. **TS**
- 2.3 Nick put together a note of the Forum members’ views and has sent it to the person at Sustrans involved with the project to potentially upgrade the railway walk.

- 2.4 Nick contacted Economic Development about having advertising on the app to help pay for its continuation. They are keen to keep it ad-free if they can, but may consider this option in the future if necessary.
- 2.5 Thomas attended a Path Warden Team Task on the outskirts of Athelstaneford, cutting back gorse and reinstating steps. He was very impressed with how Dave Wild (the Countryside Officer) runs these events. (Great cake too!) He will write a short bit for Facebook. **TS**
- 2.6 Nick put together a note about the function of the Local Access Forum, which was circulated to the Path Wardens. It was agreed that it would be appropriate for a Path Warden to attend a future meeting, or join the LAF if any of them are interested. It was noted what a great resource the Path Wardens are for the area. Mark pointed out that the scheme was also of great value to the participants. Shona wanted to pass on her thanks to the Path Wardens for all they do. **NM**
- 2.7 James has provided a post about lambing and dogs for Facebook.
- 2.8 Nick has been in touch with a couple of Planners and it is hoped that someone from Planning will be able to attend the next meeting to talk about the LDP, LPPs and how to get more paths out of developers when new housing is built.
- 2.9 There has been further serious erosion at JMCP, so the planned work on the bridges over the saltmarsh is having to be reconsidered. There are already limited routes for horse riders because of the trees that came down during Storm Arwen, which the landowner is currently clearing. Also, an angry llama, which runs at the fence on the only route past the Family Park.

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

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

- 3.1 Martin was concerned to hear about the plight of the John Muir Trust. He is very supportive of the John Muir Award and is interested to know how much funding this requires. Nick will try to find out. **NM**
- 3.2 Shona said that she thought there was a strong sense that the public were against a sealed surface for the Railway Walk. Nick said this had been the case when we had conducted a consultation about 10 years ago. He felt the more recent consultation by Sustrans was flawed in that it didn't mention other possible options apart from tarmac and Flexipave.
- 3.3 Chris confirmed that Sustrans can't commit to funding for maintenance because they receive the funding from the Scottish Government on an annual basis. Shona had been told that Local Authorities should change their maintenance priorities in the future from roads to paths.
- 3.4 Thomas asked about plastics from a farm blowing onto a path. Nick asked him to send the details over and possibly one of the Countryside Rangers could have a polite word with the farmer. **TS**
- 3.5 Nick will send a copy of the map to members showing the area that the Section 11 Order will cover for the mediaeval re-enactment event. **NM**

- 3.6 Nick is putting together a note about the Hopes parking situation to send to the Legal Team. Shona suggested also informing Planning to see if there were any breaches of planning conditions from the application for the other car park. **NM**
- 3.7 Thomas mentioned a recent planning application for a windfarm above Gifford. He said that he wasn't so much concerned about the turbines, but the local community were concerned about the local roads and private lanes that will be straightened and trees removed. Constance said that she would like to see horse-friendly gates and no cattle grids, because the tracks around wind farms can be good for riding. She would also like to see car parks created when windfarms are built. This could make up for the recent loss of parking options in the Lammermuirs.

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

- 4.1 Nick has put up about five posts since the last meeting. However, he hasn't managed to put up so much recently.
- 4.2 Nick noted that we get very few likes or view of our pages. For instance the post about the new path in Tynningame received a couple of likes, but when it was shared by the Countryside Rangers the post received 23 likes!
- 4.3 Any member with ideas for posts to go on the LAF page to send them to Nick. **All**

#### **5 ACTIVE TRAVEL**

- 5.1 Chris had already sent an update to members. Instead of going through it he specifically mentioned funding that is available for active travel projects.
- 5.2 All of the active travel budget he uses comes from external organisations such as Paths for All, Sustrans and the Scottish Government. This funding usually has conditions attached and he is still waiting to hear what will be available this financial year.
- 5.3 A very useful pot of funding has been the Accessibility Fund administered by Sustrans. This can be used for design or construction work to remove old physical barriers on or around the National Cycle Network. The Council received £25k last year, which was used to widen narrow chicanes, remove bollards and do a bit of surfacing work. Chris is looking into working with Network Rail to make some of their platforms more accessible and hopes to be able to formalise some desire lines, as well as remove other blockages on the network this year.
- 5.4 There is also a fund available from SEStran for auditing town centre accessibility problems and this can be used on route to school, etc. Martin asked if this would be suitable for looking into a crossing point in the west of Aberlady and Chris thought it would be, depending on the size of grants available.
- 5.5 There is the Ian Findlay Fund administered by Paths for All, but this is another fund that pushes for high standards, such as found in the Cycling by Design guidance.

#### **6. ACCESS ISSUES UPDATE**

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

- 6.1 Nick reported that two new issues have been received since the last meeting. In the last 12 months 10 access issues have been resolved and 4 are outstanding. Two of those being Dalkeith Estate issues.
- 6.2 The Council's Legal Team have written to Dalkeith Estate about the locked gates on the East Lothian side of the estate. The evidence previously supplied claiming that they have always charged for access is insufficient and there is no evidence of charging for accessing the East Lothian side of the estate. Peter pointed out that they didn't charge for two years during Covid which means they can't claim they have charged every year since 2000.

## **7. MEMBERS' UPDATES**

- 7.1 Constance has bought a bridle handle for a gate near New Winton, which should soon be delivered to the Council.
- 7.2 Constance is concerned about the storm damage at JMCP, meaning that the horse route to the beach has temporarily been closed. She is aware that the Council is working with Pam Dykes to try and find a solution.
- 7.3 Mark reported that applications have just closed for an East Lothian-wide Cycling Development Officer. Cycling UK will be employing the officer, funded by SEStran.
- 7.4 The future of the Connecting Dunbar project is looking uncertain at the moment due to funding issues.
- 7.5 Sustrans are looking at possibly re-routing the cycle network around Dunbar with their requirement for it to be suitable for an unaccompanied 12 year-old in mind.
- 7.6 Martin reported that the Aberlady Community Association are holding an open meeting tomorrow to review the Local Place Plan.
- 7.7 Martin reported that a couple of sheep had been lost due to sheep worrying on a farm near Longniddry.
- 7.8 Martin noted that it had been a very wet spring which had caused a lot of damage to the local path network. Estate staff had been working to resolve this.

## **8. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

**Please note new date for the summer meeting.**

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> August 2024 in Saltire Room 2, John Muir House, Haddington

Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2024 via Teams