

National Access Forum Update –September 2017

Summary of main topics - National Access Forum meeting 27th September 2017

Core Paths and Ordnance Survey mapping –

The NAF sub group met twice since the last Forum. A paper setting out the case for mapping Core paths on OS maps had been prepared. However there are still issues about the consistency and quality of the Core path data set that means that mapping on paper maps was some way off. Options for making the data set available through public portals where the Core path data could be viewed against the OS backdrop would be investigated in the short term. Other technical issues would continue to be explored with OS. The overall aim is to capitalise on the public investment in Core paths and to promote use of this network. The Forum also raised the issue of maintaining core paths and raising their profile.

Mountain Biking and Enduro Activity -

There was a report from the first meeting of the NAF sub group where there had been a wide ranging discussion outlining the nature of the problems arising from the increasing prevalence of unofficial trail building for mountain biking. Potential ways forward are likely to involve engagement with user groups and trail builders, and learning lessons from successful initiatives (e.g. LEADER funded work in the Tweed Valley). The sub group meets again in November to discuss potential management models, a communication plan including key positive messages, the sharing of potential case studies and liability questions.

Update on Your Park camping management byelaws in LLTNP -

The Forum discussed a paper prepared by the National Park on the first six months of the operation of its new camping management byelaws. The paper outlined the high visitor numbers, use of the permit and booking system, completion of the signage of the management zone, proposals for improving facilities, proactive messaging through the 'Camping in the National Park' leaflet and arrangements for gathering feedback. Six byelaw cases had been reported to the Procurator Fiscal.

In response the Forum raised the following questions for further consideration by LLTNP before it reports to Ministers later in the year:

- How the Park was identifying potential displacement effects,
- Progress on installing improved facilities for the collection and removal of litter and human waste from camping areas,
- The nature of the alleged byelaw offences,
- Was the permit system having a discriminatory effect on people who wish to experiencing camping for the first time or are less able to afford the costs,
- What criteria would be used to measure success or otherwise of the byelaws?

Parking Issues and Access

The Forum debated issues about parking associated with the use of access rights. A paper provided context to the discussion, outlining the number of outdoor visits made by car (106 million in 2013/14), the relevant sections of the Scottish Outdoor Access code, the Highway Code, Road Traffic Acts and Scottish Government consultation on *Improving Parking in Scotland*. It also highlighted some examples of particular issues and possible solutions, and included detailed comments from Mountaineering Scotland

There was general agreement that facilitating greater access to the countryside generally needs adequate parking provision, and that problems can arise unless this is planned for in advance. While such problems usually require local solutions, there appears to be a lack of

clarity about who should take an overview of this issue. The Forum heard of past successes in resolving problems, e.g. with landowners providing the land and the public sector providing funding. Looking ahead, new resources and creative funding mechanisms would be required: ideas included challenge funds and partnerships with e.g. outdoor access trusts. Other issues include:

- the disconnect between transport teams and those managing access and recreation and conservation,
- issues of liability for landowners from irresponsible parking,
- the effect of an increase in tourism without the requisite increase in parking provision,
- charging: any fees should be proportionate and modest, with good communication about use of income for path or conservation work.
- overnight parking, e.g. by those who are on short camping expeditions.
- the need for a more joined up policy approach.

Ticked Off – Lyme disease and Tick awareness -

The Forum heard about the Forestry Commission's campaign to raise awareness about ticks and Lyme disease, both the public facing and their internal campaigns. The following public video focuses on encouraging people to 'check for ticks' as the most effective method of reducing the likelihood of contracting Lyme disease. There was discussion about the apparent increase in cases of Lyme disease and the focus on hot spot areas. Members were encouraged to share the information as widely as possible. <https://youtu.be/Quoh5YFVsX0>

National Walking and Cycling Network (NWCN) –

The Convenor welcomed Bridget Jones to her new job in SNH which includes taking forward the NWCN. The network is designed for shared use and consists of 6,000 km of paths with SNH overseeing the development of the network and monitoring use. Development is very much a partnership approach as described in the video link.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PWAD0GqzNOk>

Emerging Issues and Communications -

The Forum heard about SNH's work on responsible camping (23,000 leaflets distributed), ongoing work on responsible dog walking and a partnership approach to refresh the sheep worrying campaign. A new Ramblers campaign 'Out there' was due to start in October. An information note about a proposed study into access and deer stalking was tabled, and some concerns were raised about the appropriateness of the case study area (in Glen Lyon); this will be discussed further at the next meeting.

Review of National Access Forum Membership –

As outlined in the operating principles the Forum membership was due for review. Full and corresponding members representing the recreation bodies, land management bodies and public bodies would be approached shortly about this; the review of "other" bodies would take place subsequently, early next year.

Future NAF meetings –

The next Forum meeting will take place at Battleby on Wednesday 7th February 2018 followed by the Annual Joint NAF/LAF meeting on Friday 16th March 2018 and the subsequent Forum meeting on Wednesday 16th May 2018.

For more information or comment on any of the above topics, please contact the NAF Secretary – Janice Winning (NAFsec@snh.gov.uk ; 0131 316 2639). Further information can be found on the National Access Forum pages at <http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com/access-forum/>.