

## National Access Forum Update – September 2019

### Summary of main topics - National Access Forum meeting 20 September 2019

#### ***Active Nation Commissioner-***

Lee Craigie outlined her work as the Active Nation Commissioner for Scotland. Her main aim is to encourage people out of their cars to walk and cycle, thereby improving their physical and mental health. The work is funded from health and transport budgets and involves seeking both behavioural and infrastructure changes. Lee has been meeting relevant stake holders, including community groups. Forum members highlighted the need to invest in walking as well as cycling for active travel; the importance of recreational walking; the value of developing and maintaining whole networks (e.g. NWCN and local paths); and concerns over multi-use of single-track roads, with the need for better information to raise both motorists' awareness of cyclists and horse riders, and (e.g.) cyclists' awareness of farm traffic requirements. Lee welcomed the discussion and looked forward to further involvement with Forum members.

#### ***E- Bikes -***

The Forum discussed a short paper highlighting the rapid growth in use of e- bikes, related opportunities, and challenges (such as easier access to sensitive habitats). E-bikes are classed as "electrically assisted pedal cycles" for the purposes of road traffic legislation and may not be 'motorised vehicles' under the access legislation, in which case access rights would apply; however, this position has not been tested in the courts. Despite this uncertainty over the legal position, the Forum recognised that, with increasing numbers of people owning e-bikes, it is important to consider access issues arising from this new activity. Forestry and Land Scotland and Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland are currently undertaking work on this (together with organisations in the rest of the UK) and agreed to report back on their findings at the January meeting.

#### ***Informal Camping –***

Forum members discussed the rise in irresponsible behaviour associated with informal camping and the corresponding increase in press activity incorrectly referring to this as 'wild camping'. This issue had been raised by a number of Local Access Fora and Mountaineering Scotland. Existing SOAC guidance and additional guidance on what constitutes responsible camping and its effectiveness was discussed. There was general agreement of the need to raise awareness of what is responsible camping and provide targeted messages and promotion for specific audiences and locations. A small group of forum members agreed to take this work forward.

#### ***SOAC Messages for target groups –***

SNH provided an update on the work to improve SOAC messages to a number of target audiences. A small group of Forum members are working on options for improving messaging about dogs and livestock based on the current advice in the Code, with a meeting planned in early October. SNH's co design work with Young Scot to develop SOAC messages for young people is progressing. An online questionnaire showed that awareness of the Code amongst young people is equivalent to that of the general public, but highlighted gaps in knowledge in relation to access with dogs, camping, fires and access in and around urban/peri-urban areas. The responses suggest that preferred modes of messaging are social media and visual approaches, including Instagram and videos.

#### ***Forestry and Land Scotland –***

Phil Whitfield (National Visitor Service Manager, Forestry and Land Scotland) outlined some aspects of the access-related work of this new agency and highlighted the Borderlands

Initiative, work with VisitScotland on campervans and way marking the path network to focus on shorter rather than longer routes.

### ***'Scotland's on a roll'***

The Forum viewed a short animation produced by SNH to promote headline messages from the latest 2017/18 Scotland's People and Nature Survey. This revealed an increase in the number of people visiting the outdoors each week. Collective effort is still required to reach underrepresented groups and the animation is intended to stimulate joint working to achieve this. (See <https://youtu.be/DD5E-2BhNdo> and <https://youtu.be/DMgtenjrir4>.)

### ***Mediation -***

The Forum discussed a paper outlining recommendations from the NAF subgroup on mediation. Feedback from Local Authorities and others had revealed general support for the proposal that NAF should develop guidance on the use of professional mediation in difficult access cases. The Forum agreed that the sub group should now produce a draft guidance note, for consideration at the January NAF meeting.

### ***Review of IPA -***

SNH provided an update on the review of the 'Improving Public Access' (IPA) scheme. Consultation with applicants, access authorities and stakeholders is now underway and issues raised at a meeting with the NAF sub group had included long term maintenance, cash flows, planning for better quality paths and connectivity. Forum members also highlighted the importance of IPA schemes in peri-urban areas and the need to fund improved access across enclosed farmland to hill land. Draft findings from the review will be presented to the January NAF meeting.

### ***Path Mapping –***

Ramblers Scotland provided a brief update to Forum members on early progress with their path mapping project. Luke Phillips has been appointed as the project manager, a Steering group has been set up and a test area identified in west central Scotland. Criteria to determine which paths are to be mapped is being developed. Forum members raised issues around ground truthing of paths and how the data set of mapped paths would be maintained and updated. A progress report to NAF will be provided at the May meeting.

### ***Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 – Revised Guidance for Local Authorities and National Park Authorities 2019***

The Forum welcomed the current Scottish Government consultation and individual members were encouraged to respond.

### ***NAF/LAF Joint meeting 2020 –***

Forum members agreed to repeat the interactive approach for the joint NAF/LAF meeting in late March 2020, where topics for discussion will be invited from the LAFs. A small group of Forum members will meet in December to prepare a draft programme.

### ***Future NAF meetings –***

The next Forum meetings are; NAF: **Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2020** at Battleby, Joint NAF/LAF meeting on **Friday 20<sup>th</sup> or Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2020** tbc, NAF: **Friday 5 June 2020** at Oatridge College (tbc).

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