

West Lothian Local Access Forum
24 April 2019 at Sutherland Building, Beecraigs Country Park

Present:	Name	Representing
	Beverly Stirling (BS)	West Lothian Council (WLC)
	Eirwen Hopwood (EH)	West Lothian Council (WLC)
	Tracey Smith (TS)	West Lothian Council (WLC)
	Chris Alcorn (CA)	West Lothian Council (WLC)
	Alastair Morrison (AM)	Scottish Rights of Way Society (Scotways)
	Andy Gibbs (AG)	Independent Member representing landowners in Bathgate Hills
	Carol Campbell (CC)	Central Scotland Green Network Trust (CSGNT)
	Donald Noble (DN)	Scottish Land & Estates
	Gill Brittle (GB)	British Horse Society (BHS)
	Gordon Alan (GA)	Ecclesmachan & Threemiletown Community Council and rural Community Councils in WL
	Jamie Smart (JS)	National Farmers Union Scotland - Livestock (NFUS)
	Marsie Ewing (ME)	Chair of Torphichen Community Council
	Richard Toleman (RT)	Representing cycle users

Present – Part: Councillor Tom Conn West Lothian Council, Executive Cllr for Environment

Action

1. Appointment of Chair for this meeting, Taking of Minutes, Apologies

Eirwen Hopwood volunteered to Chair the meeting.
 Carol Campbell volunteered to take notes.
 Apologies were received from Malcolm Hill (NFUS) and Nick Porter (WTS).
 Note that Tara Fraser would soon join Woodland Trust Scotland (WTS) and be invited to future meetings.
 Welcome to Marsie Ewing, Chair of Torphichen Community Council.
 The Forum was informed that Cllr Tom Conn would join the meeting later.

2. Minutes and Actions arising from 15/11/18

Proposed link to Blackridge Train Station from NCN 75 to south – CA updated Forum -

- Sustrans very willing to support. Access to south platform designed & redesigned but landowner still not agreeable (was unaware of burden on deeds when he purchased). Council now exploring Compulsory Purchase Order. Will inform landowner of Council's CPO intentions and try to discuss again with landowner to reach compromise.

Bathgate Train Station Link – CA reported no further action due to lack of resources.

Torphichen to Cairnpapple Route – TS still to visit site to review.

TS

Review of role, function & membership of WLAF to be progressed – no progress by BS & EH due to other work commitments.

All

Livery addresses – CA confirmed that he had a list of liveries that he would circulate and then forward to GB, who is using this list to contact riders to find out where they ride in West Lothian (to then as noted below, pull together a recommended riding routes map for West Lothian). GB will note general horse riders access issues that may be raised and encourage riders to log any concerns.

CA

Note: Access issues/enquiries should be logged through the main Council contact - **01506 280000 / online at the "Report It" section**. Enquiries are then forwarded to the appropriate service/officer which may be Parks & Woodland/Ranger. If deemed necessary, a sub-group of LAF members could meet to discuss/resolve a particular issue.

Action

GB updated that she is currently looking at mapping the local horse riding routes in West Lothian (rather than long distance routes) and then once done, there is the opportunity to identify landowners and discuss working together to encourage responsible access and possibly promote once agreed.

GB

CA suggested a short informal survey of the dozen livery businesses identified on routes and issues and offered to draft a joint letter with BHS, then issue and hopefully circulate the results to the next Forum meeting.

CA

Volunteer Warden guidelines – GB had good discussion with Angus Duncan of Falkirk Council about guidelines, recruitment process and management process. Health and safety, lone working policy, training and allocation of path routes all discussed. GB intends now on contacting other such groups to find out how they run their path warden schemes and will contact groups such as River Forth Trust, “Friends of” groups such as in East Lothian, Sustrans. If anyone has information about volunteer programmes elsewhere to feed back to GB. GB to supply email address to Forum. GB to update at next meeting and liaise with Rangers if needed.

GB to go back to Angus to enquire about how they secure funding to support volunteer groups.

Discussion on how best such a group could be managed to ensure provision across the district, sustainable groups and agreed aims/objectives for such groups. JS suggested close liaison with landowners if programme starts in WL. EH suggested support info online for potential Friends groups, potentially linking groups to Community Councils, etc. so that local groups work in their own local areas. Agreed that initial detail gathered needs to then determine what is feasible / manageable in West Lothian, and after that determine if funding is available.

GB

Councillor Tom Conn joined meeting

CA updated that there has been no further progress with the Quiet Roads Initiative and that a reapplication for funding to Sustrans would be needed to enable this to progress. CA to speak to Chris Nicoll about Sustrans Programme – Many schemes still to be implemented.

CA

Bangour to Bathgate Hills update – Transportation section will use brief (prepared by CA) to discuss access with developer and contribution to design costs (to address missing link highlighted in Active Travel and Local Plan). Alternatively Sustrans could fund and CA to prepare application for June.

CA

3. NAF meeting update by BS –

JS, EH and BS attended. A number of presentations were made at NAF and were circulated around LAF.

Improvements to NAF/LAF network was the focus of the day, discussing how best to take LAF groups forward reflective of current needs. Different sessions discussed various aspects such as Local Access Forum “make-up”, what a LAF should do and how it functions. There are currently 39 LAFs in Scotland and 22 LAFs were represented at the NAF/LAF meeting (including West Lothian Access Forum). Many LAFs work very differently and the most successful were those that ran independently of the Local Authority (latter provided secretariat function and nominated attendance).

Examples of working LAFs were given e.g. Falkirk LAF ran through their Core Path Plan review process, criteria based to recommend amendments, Council liaised with landowners and then their LAF started the public consultation process.

Discussion on achievements of NAF and LAF groups including “Unauthorised Mountain Bike Trails” booklet newly published – copy

circulated, John O' Groats trail leaflet launched (local community initial – pros & cons), Pilgrim Way 55 mile trail to Kirkwall Cathedral (Orkney). Examples of leaflets from SNH, BHS (British Horse Society) and Paths for All (grants available) circulated.

WLAf members discussed the importance of ensuring routes can be maintained before publicising. DN agreed that this was a big issue with WL's new Shale Trail a good example but WLAf agreed that landowners need to work together to provide good access provision as a basic standard.

BS found Delegates List very useful for knowing who is who and potential contacts in future for advice.

Dumfries and Galloway (Peter Ross) had set up an independent Outdoor Access Trust to act as their Access Forum and apply for funding. CC queried how they were constituted. BS didn't know.

Rhona Gibb, Manager at Paths for All, suggested at the NAF that new guidance/support for LAFs would be useful. NAF also said that if LAFs thought that NAF could do more, to forward those suggestions to NAF (JS is our NAF contact).

CC reminded Forum about SOAN events which often looked at access issues from different perspectives. BS added they had a very good online discussion Forum called Knowledge Hub.

NAF urged ministers to prioritise access maintenance and provision through the SRDP (Scottish Rural Development Programme) grant process.

4. Protection of Livestock (Scotland) Bill Feb'19 & Pentland Hills livestock worrying information – for information.

Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum had done presentation, which CA attended, which focussed on access issues, livestock worrying, quad bikes, etc. The "Livestock Attacks" presentation highlighted that the number of actual incidents were higher than reported, the Police would attend incidents throughout the year on squad, the launch of the SPARC partnership campaign on 8th January 2019 and the Livestock (Scotland) Bill.

JS updated the Forum about SNH's response to "worrying" of livestock with SNH believing that the Scottish Outdoor Access Code didn't need updating. Proposed Protection of Livestock (Scotland) Bill by Emma Harper MSP was still open for comments (until the 15/05/19). DN queried if the Forum should make a formal response. All Forum members to review Bill

<https://www.parliament.scot/gettinginvolved/111027.aspx>

Collective email to be considered on behalf of Forum. JS and DN to collate and draft a formal reply to the questions, then send to Forum members so that an agreed response can be posted by EH & BS.

JS suggested that a response to NAF on review of Scottish Outdoor Access Code be considered, in relation to deterring livestock worrying. JS to produce notes for Forum's consideration.

JS & DN / All

EH & BS

JS

5. Ranger Service Access Issues reported since last LAF meeting –

Bridgend Bing - Section 14 procedure started - Re-inspection due after 01/05/19

LW143 (north of Easter Carribber linking Bowden Cottage and Avondale Cottage) - Alastair Morrison attempted to walk this ROW and reported that it had been deliberately blocked near the start next to houses. Alastair provided detailed notes and an annotated map and Tracey and Hannah investigated. This route was difficult to find as houses have been built next to it. After following Alastair's map and notes we were able to join it but did not see the deliberate blockage that he has seen, we did find it blocked further down by the farmer with palettes/fencing and barbed wire, we felt this was more about controlling livestock than trying to stop people accessing it. We also thought the alternative route close to the River Avon was a nicer and easier walk and would require less work to make usable.

Craigengall Crofts - Kirsty is pursuing with CA/Planning to find out specifics of title deeds to see if they will contact 'crofters' to explain their duties to keep access open, unrestricted and possibly maintained. CA to draft letter to crofters. TS queried if letter could go to all crofts. CA said that LEADER funding had been secured to look at lowland crofting policy and discuss policy with all remaining landowners in eligible area. This could be discussed at a proposed landowner workshop proposed in November 2019. CA to progress.

CA

Linlithgow Link - enquiry about new signs in Linlithgow saying "Linlithgow Link" and facing the wrong direction. The signs were misinterpreted by the public, and are correct. They were funded by Linlithgow Town Centre Management Group to promote the spur path into the town for services and transport links. Agreed that we would monitor if signs cause further confusion.

Linburn Estate - new path installed. GB is now liaising with the landowner on advice but GB was satisfied that it was suitable for riders.

E. Whitburn to Stoneyburn (WL19) – complaint with regards to flooding on the route and deteriorating condition. WLC Transportation have commissioned a consultant to prepare upgrade designs / costs for a Sustrans application. Active Travel route proposed an upgrade for this route in next few years so no plans to carry out work on this route at present. Route is still useable but will need drainage work in the future. Land may be subject Compulsory Purchase if agreement cannot be met with landowner.

Armadale Around Town Walk (WL21 and adjoining footpath) - Developer (Avant) is restricting access to local users by churning up the route where large machines are crossing the adjoining footpath. On inspection, the red pedestrian gates installed by the developer were closed for no known reason (no vehicles on site). No safety or explanatory signage on either path. Rangers spoke with Planning who have passed onto Planning Enforcement to deal with issue.

Blackridge Cycleway R75 (loop around back of train station) - Report received of flooding on cycleway. On inspection, route is flooded in a number of places but one area is particularly bad. Unsure if Council are responsible for management on this section but have contacted Sustrans to find out, who have ended their lease on this section of the route. The proposal for the connection to new south platform would remove this section and return it to landowner.

Fivestanks Place, Uphall - Community concerns with regards to irresponsible access (vehicles, motorbikes, cycles) through housing estate, along footpath links developed as part of the housing network. Site visit concluding that improvements steps such as plantings, bollards, etc. need to be installed by the developer.

Lady Park, Linlithgow Loch - Pot hole in tarmac now infilled.

Gavieside Housing Development Plan, west Livingston - Comments on access provision, biodiversity and woodland management submitted by Parks & Woodland.

Note: WLAF members encouraged to check and respond to any planning applications they are concerned would affect public access routes or have now considered provision for public access.

TS

Greenburn Golf Course, Fauldhouse - Provision of steps and waymarker posts near completion, to encourage access along agreed route.

LW140 Winchburgh - enquiry about fences across this path put there by construction company. The path is B9080 at Winchburgh petrol station heading towards canal and Hopetoun, locally known as Lady's Walk. TS to schedule a visit and update.

EH updated the Forum that a number of Section 11 exclusion notices have now been issued by the P&W team (e.g, Cockleroy, SXC Cycle Race).

6. **Update on review of West Lothian's Core Paths Plan – Tracey Smith**
The Rangers are still working on their "aspirational path plan" to improve the

connectivity of core paths, rights of way and other access routes across West Lothian. Focus has been on north-south links, missing links and links to neighbouring authorities. TS shared the current draft map and a discussion was had on the next steps of the process, with regards to the review of West Lothian's existing Core Path Plan (adopted in 2013).

Discussion was had on the process Falkirk have followed and that criteria would need to be confirmed to ensure that alterations to the Plan adhered to the criteria. The criteria which would "qualify" them as Core Path is going to be reviewed and once drafted would be shared with the WLAF to finalise.

So far the intention is that any proposals drafted by the Ranger team on a revised Core Path Plan would be run past Planning first, then consultation with landowners, then discussion with WLAF on the proposals, before lastly consultation with the general public.

JS & DN stated that maintenance responsibilities should already have been considered prior to approaching landowner.

7. Planning Access issues update October 2018 - April 2019 – Chris Alcorn

- Local Development Plan – adopted by WLC in September 2018.
- West Lothian Shale Trail - £200k secured from LEADER and £100k from The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Led by Lothians and Fife Green Network Partnership. Uses existing trails and paths over 15 miles, between West Calder and Winchburgh via Almond Valley Heritage Centre. Includes on the ground trail and on-line interpretation. Steering group and project officer appointed.
- Pentland Paths Project – Potential £3M Heritage Lottery Fund project developing path routes across the Pentland Hills. Discussion with Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland (OATS) for 10year management plan under preparation for Regional Park to include the PPP scheme to allow TNLHF to consider funding.
- Sustrans schemes – Stoneyburn Future Vision Group are concerned the village is isolated from link to surrounding villages. Feasibility being done to scope route to west of Stoneyburn to Fauldhouse.
- Ecclesmachan to Threemiletown Active Travel connection – GA concerned that recent planning application by gas station (at Tar Hill) for an extension would affect the community council's plans for the above Active Travel routes. GA to keep WLAF advised. CA to take up with WLC Development Management and apply to Sustrans for funds to work up design / costs on back of CSGNT study and keep GA in the loop.

CA

8. Other West Lothian access updates

ME informed Forum that Torphichen Community Council had been contacted to inform them about funding for community events. This is part of The Big Bike Revival. Further information from Esmond.Sage@cyclingsuk.org
JS requested that anyone holding an event could spend a few minutes educating participants about access responsible access around tractors, horses, etc.

9. Any Other Business

For information:

- Scotways Publication – The Law of Access to Land in Scotland now available.
- Spokes guide published. BS reminded Forum these can be purchased from WL Country Park Visitor Centres at Beecraigs and Almondell & Calderwood.

AM reminded Forum that Scotways has a volunteer programme.

JS – discussion on current planning application around Linlithgow Loch and the effect this would have at Lady Park (his family is the current tenant). JS disappointed that Council has not discussed this formally with them.

EH stated that the proposal was to move the path creating a larger biodiversity area/wildlife strip at loch side, then extend path width to match works already completed by Historic Environment Scotland. Discussion between Cllr Conn and JS and planning application continued at recent Development Management Committee for further consideration (not minuted as ongoing).

Clear from discussion that further stakeholder consultation required to enable this project to move forward.

BS stated that Ranger Service no longer got a copy of the planning application list. CA responded by suggesting that this was due to General Data Protection Regulations.

JS suggested “signing up” to receive these however this is no longer possible.

The onus is now on the public to check the list themselves. CA will check with Member Services as to how members of WLAF can be sent current planning application list to consider and comment on.

CA

Date of next National Access Forum meeting is 29 May 2019.

Date of next West Lothian Local Access Forum is 23 October 2019 at 3pm in Sutherland Building, Becraigs.