

Scottish Borders Access Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 17 September 2013 (6-8pm)

Scottish Borders Council,
Committee Room 4,
Council HQ,
Newtown St Boswells.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Bill Coombes (Forestry Commission Scotland); William Davidson (Chair); John Hall (SBC Outdoor Education); David Langworth (Melrose Paths Group); Neil Mackay (SBC Senior Access Officer); Beryl Masson (British Horse Society); Erica Niven (SBC Access Ranger); Douglas Wright (Central Tweeddale Paths)

2. Apologies / Absent

Cllr Stewart Bell; Denise Carmichael (Paths to Health coordinator); Helen Currie (Buccleuch Group); Pip Tabor (Southern Uplands Partnership)

3. Minutes of last meeting of Access Forum

3.1 Comments relating to the discussion concerning liaison with Forestry Commission Scotland during the Paths around Innerleithen and Walkerburn project were addressed by BC:

- FCS's waymarking policy is being discussed with all local authorities at the current time
- whether core paths should be signposted at either end or waymarked along the route is also creating a difference of opinion
- Another point of discussion is the standardising of quality and design of waymarkers
- FCS treat all users the same and expect them to be responsible for their behaviour

3.2 EN gives an update on the Paths around Innerleithen and Walkerburn booklet project:

- The booklet has been printed and distributed to some outlets
- The booklet includes the routes that wholly or partly go through FCS land
- The discussion at the previous LAF meeting was specifically about this project and whether the seven routes utilising FCS could be included in the booklet

3.3 DW checks the Tweed Trails signs in the Central Tweeddale area, he verified that some of these signs had been removed by FCS. He also thanked the chairman and BC for the interesting discussion.

4. Matters arising not otherwise on the agenda

4.1 the National Access Forum are looking for feedback from each of the local access forums

5. Access issues

5.1 **Carlops:** regarding the now misleading historic access by the former forester's cottage near Carlops. The group were given case notes, photographs and maps to understand the site and the issue. The following suggestions were made:

- Speak to Roger Oakes (right of way local rep) about history of use
- Find out if the forestry manager requires access for extraction of timber
- Are there any planning consents with a site boundary?

- The group suggest creating a minor diversion before the property is sold.

5.2 **Duns:** Discussion about the recent tragic death of a man walking his dog on what appears to be a former land management contract scheme path.

- Should the landowner put up temporal signage?
- Did that existence of the LMCS path increase the landowner's liability?
- Does the tenant know it was a well used path?
- Some research into other local authorities reaction to this type of fatality

6. Paths for health update

6.1 Update distributed, as attached. EN informed the group that DC was being given an award - Paths for All Volunteer Project Manager of the Year for the massive 330% increase to Walk It in the Scottish Borders. Only given to established projects part of the award considers not only the increase but also the stability of the project. Denise has been managing Walk It since December 2009.

7. A.O.B

7.1 A discussion about whether the number of LAF meetings should be reduced from 4 to 2 meetings a year brought forward the following points:

- Emailed access issues are not as easy to understand if the group cannot engage with the council officer presenting them and explaining the details
- Concerns that there is not always the same amount of matters to discuss as when the LRSA first came into force
- Another concern is the smaller number that now regularly attend the meetings
- WD wants to observe these factors from the next 3 monthly meeting, the LAF is a statutory requirement
- DW suggests we initially reduce the meetings to three a year and monitor the suitability of that number, making the fourth meeting an open meeting

7.2 John Hall announced his retirement and that his post would be filled. He wants the new post-holder to be invited to attend the meetings. He is concerned about the role of education in the LRSA. The LAF are still happy for JH to attend and represent water sports.

7.3 DW assumed that there had been a letter of thanks to the ranger service for their assistance with the walking festival held in Innerleithen and District this year. He wished to thank the ranger service personally for their efforts. EN wished to thank the many volunteers involved.

8. Date of next meeting 21 January 2013 (2pm Committee Room 4, Newtown St Boswells)