

**MINUTE of the SECOND MEETING of the  
CNPA ACCESS WORKING GROUP  
held within the Nethy Bridge Village Hall  
on 5 December 2003 at 9.00 am**

**PRESENT**

**Willie McKenna  
Alastair MacLennan  
Bob Severn  
Joyce Simpson  
Stuart Black  
Richard Stroud**

**Interim Chair**

**In Attendance: Kristin Scott, Senior Access Officer**

**Summary of Action Points:**

- Obtain feedback from any preliminary consultations the four constituent Local Authorities may have had with stakeholders on the establishment of Local Access Forums. **Action : KS**
- Identify options, including the identification of potential stakeholders, interest groups or organisation and individuals who would could make a substantial contribution, for taking forward the key tasks of the Access Working Group. **Action : KS**

**2. APOLOGIES, MINUTES OF LAST MEETING & MATTERS ARISING**

The second meeting of the Access Working Group was held in the Nethy Bridge Village Hall on 5 December 2003. There were no apologies. The minutes of the first meeting were approved. The first two action points from the previous meeting were covered in a briefing paper on 'new burdens' and the Group's attention was drawn to further details on this in SNH's access newsletter 'Update'. Under matters arising, the group discussed the suitability of convening on Friday mornings prior to Board meetings. While the Group recognised that a pre-Board meeting potentially doesn't leave much time for discussion, it was agreed to proceed on this basis in the short term and then review the situation once external interests had been invited onto the Working Group.

**3. CONFIRMATION OF CHAIR**

Alastair MacLennan, who had been acting as interim Chair, indicated that he would not have the time to continue in this capacity owing to other commitments. Joyce Simpson was proposed as Chair, this received unanimous support and the Chair was accepted by Joyce Simpson.

**4. ACCESS STAFFING UPDATE**

KS provided the Group with an oral update on progress with recruitment. The Head of the Visitor Services & Recreation Group had been interviewed in the week beginning 1 December and the outcome of that was awaited. A job description and person specification for an Access Officer to assist with implementation of the access legislation had been drawn up and this post had recently been advertised in local and national newspapers. The recruitment exercise is underway, with interviews anticipated in January 2004.

There was a short discussion over the costs of implementation of the access legislation and Members expressed concern that insufficient funds had been bid for. KS explained that the Operational Plan bid could be re-visited once more is known about the tasks ahead. Another point made was that we expected some of the burden to fall to our partners and we should not lose sight of CNPA's enabling role, working

with and through others in terms of delivering on access. The access provision in and around Nethy Bridge was cited as a good example of partnership working to achieve a shared aim. It was noted that there are many other examples of similar sorts of initiatives within the Park area.

## **5. ACCESS LEGISLATION UPDATE**

A short briefing paper on the new burdens arising from the Land reform (Scotland) Act had been circulated prior to the meeting. This paper was for background information mainly but Members were invited to raise any questions. There was interest as to whether any of the Local Authorities had set up Local Access Forums yet. KS informed the group that while a number of Forums had already been established throughout Scotland, the four constituent Local authorities of the Park area had yet to do so. That said, all four Local Authorities have been doing some preparatory work and developmental thinking in terms of establishing Local Access Forums. For example, Aberdeenshire Council have held workshops with interested parties in their administrative areas. The need to obtain feedback from these preliminary consultations was stressed.

## **6. AGREEMENT OF ACCESS WORKING GROUP SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVES**

The Working Group had discussed at the previous meeting the short-term outputs of the Group, which had been agreed at the September Board meeting. A number of changes had been suggested, including a slight re-wording of the remit to reflect that the fact that the Access Working Group would not necessarily become the Local Access Forum, but rather would develop an approach and establish a Local Access Forum. Of the seven outputs proposed at the last meeting, KS recommended that the first and the last be dropped. The first pertained to developing an awareness and understanding of the statutory functions of the CNPA as access authority, the second to providing advice on staffing requirements for delivering these functions. The reason behind this was that the first is not really an output and the second is more an executive function for the Park Authority staff to decide on. The Group agreed the remainder of the short-term outputs which are as follows :

- a. to comment on Scottish Executive draft procedural guidance for access authorities on implementation of the access legislation. Draft a response for CNPA Board to sign-off. (March/April 2004, dependent on timing of SE consultation).
- b. to produce a report to CNPA Board by end of May 2004 for developing an approach for establishing one or more Local Access Forum and for delivering a Core Paths Plan.
- c. to agree and establish a mechanism for inviting external interests to join the Access Working Group.
- d. to develop a protocol for working in partnership with Local Authorities for implementation of the access legislation within the Park area.
- e. to develop an advisory role in casework arising through activities associated with access and recreation (e.g. the off-road route, CORC etc).

## **7. AGREEMENT OF CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF EXTERNAL INTERESTS TO JOIN ACCESS WORKING GROUP**

A paper had been circulated prior to the meeting essentially to stimulate discussion about how to bring in relevant partners as appropriate to assist the Access Working Group with its short-term outputs. Five key areas for discussion had been identified and these included; balancing size (of the Group) and inclusion; geography of the Park; cross-boundary links (in terms of developing thinking with the four Local Authorities), Council and community representation; managing expectations. The following is a summary of the key points to emerge from the discussion :

1. It was generally agreed, that to be effective, this Group would need to be kept fairly small in number. The Local Access Forum *Guide to Good Practice* indicates that as a group increases beyond 10 or 12, it becomes less effective.

2. There would be considerable interest in the work of the Access Working Group and a number of organisations have already indicated an interest in participating. Bearing in mind that it simply is not possible to invite all stakeholders onto the Working Group, an effective mechanism of communication would need to be established to let all interested parties know what the Access Working Group was doing.
3. An effective mechanism for balancing size and inclusion might be to look for people who can represent more than one interest, i.e. 'gluing' similar interests together and asking them to identify a representative. It would be important for them to be able to feed back effectively to all the respective interest groups they represented.
4. Selection does not necessarily need to be based on identifying interest groups, but could equally be based on identifying individuals who could make a significant contribution towards establishing a mechanism for setting up a Local Access Forum.
5. The National Access Forum has identified all the interest groups and this, together with suggestions contained in the *Guide to Good Practice* handbook, may provide indicators as to what sort of representation might be appropriate. However, this could be too inclusive at this stage and is perhaps more a consideration for the eventual establishment of one or more Local Access Forums.
6. A broad-based approach rather than a sectoral approach might be appropriate at this stage. One suggestion was that to help develop the Group's thinking on how to establish a Local Access Forum, then it might be appropriate to involve officials from the other access authorities, rather than representatives of interest groups. The other access authorities have a broad overview of implementation of the access legislation generally, including the establishment of Local Access Forums, and some work has already been done on this in the respective areas. SNH and the Paths for All Partnership were also cited as organisations with relevant expertise.

The Access Working Group agreed that further consideration would need to be given to the identification of relevant expertise to invite onto the group to assist with the key task of developing an approach for establishing one or more Local Access Forums. KS was asked to identify a number of options, including the identification of potential stakeholders, interest groups or organisation and individuals would could make a substantial contribution.

A proposals paper would need to be circulated to the Access Working Group by early January for comment and feedback and a decision would be taken at the next meeting of the Access Working Group.

**8. AOCB.** There was no other business

## **9. DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is scheduled for **Friday 16 January at 9.00 am in Braemar**. Confirmation of a venue will follow.