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CAIRNGORMS LOCAL OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM

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- Title:** Review of the 2008 Annual Outdoor Access Event
- Prepared by:** Fran Potheary, Outdoor Access Officer
- Purpose:** The purpose of the paper is to feedback the comments received from the public on the success of the Annual Event and reflect on how the event might be structured in the future.

### Advice Sought

The Forum is invited to consider the comments made and advise on the structure and contents of future events.

### Background

1. The Outdoor Access Annual Event was held on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> September at the Braemar Village Hall. Attendance was as follows:

<b>Attendance</b>	<b>No.</b>
Public	<b>27</b>
LOAF members	<b>14</b>
Staff	<b>6</b>
Board members	<b>2</b>
Other leaders and speakers	<b>4</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>53</b>

2. Fifteen feedback forms and one emailed feedback were received by 31<sup>st</sup> October – approximately half of the members of public attending responded.

### REASONS FOR ATTENDING

3. The most popular reason for attending the event was to network with other people (13 responses). The next most popular was to listen to presentations and ask questions (10 responses). Nine people cited the opportunity to discuss specific access problems and to attend workshops and site visits. Eight people cited coming to hear the keynote speaker and seven to find out about the Forum and meet Forum members.

## LOGISTICS

4. This included location, timing, venue and information and the comments ranged from Good to Excellent. There was one thought that the panoramic banner was a bit 'OTT'; and that the event could have incorporated a social aspect such as an evening meal.

## EXPECTATIONS

5. Expectations that **were** met were cited as – to hear local concerns; to find out more about access and hear the talks; to hear from those with responsibility for access and to discuss specific issues such as camping and deer management
6. Expectations that **weren't** met were cited as – wanting to hear from Mike Rumbles where access was going next politically; and to hear about the role of the Forum

## CHANGES TO THE EVENT

7. **The following changes were suggested**
  - a. Make the event bi-annual and look at an evening event – for example a midsummer walk
  - b. Explain role of the LOAF
  - c. Ensure the main speaker is involved later in the event or there is enough time for questions
  - d. Have a time for questions after each speaker
  - e. Use a professional facilitator to help more reserved people to have their say
  - f. Summarise the key issues at the end of the day
  - g. Try to avoid the 'airing' of pet subjects
  - h. Incorporate a social aspect – such as a dinner and evening session
  - i. Encourage more young people to attend – for example, ask pupils to do a presentation on their learning experience in the Park
  - j. Address the marketing of the event to get more public attendance e.g. posters; extend the invite to Aberdeenshire walking/climbing clubs
  - k. Provide more prior information on purpose of event
  - l. Provide more details about the workshops in advance
  - m. Clarify terms and acronyms early in the event – and avoid jargon
  - n. Supply other options to tea and coffee
  - o. Too much time on 'bikes and horses' issue

## DISCUSSION

8. The main issue concerning the event is public attendance. Despite good marketing and media interest – better this year than any other – there is still only a small number of members of the public who attend.
9. One of the problems identified is that maybe a day on outdoor access issues simply isn't 'sexy' enough to tempt people away for a weekend day – and that the lack of specific topic deters some people (although this year we did focus the event on "recreational access in the uplands"). If the event is too general, some people aren't attracted as they don't see their specific interest being represented; if it is too specific, some people's interest won't be represented. It is extremely difficult to get people to travel across the Park and therefore our attempts to make the event "Park wide" are rarely matched in terms of the audience attending.

### Advice sought

10. Our evaluation of the three Annual Events to date is that, whilst the events receive largely positive feedback, the relatively low attendance is increasingly hard to justify in terms of the human and financial resources outputs involved. Therefore the Park Authority is open to ideas about other mechanisms for communicating with the general public.

Forum members are asked their views on the following:

- A.** Are there alternatives to the Annual Event that meet the objectives of communicating with the public about outdoor access issues and giving a forum for discussion?
- B.** Should event(s) be 'themed' more tightly? Do you have ideas for future themes?
- C.** Should there be *more* events of a *smaller* scale on each side of the Park maybe every other year?
- D.** Are there other ways of attracting people to conference/workshop type of events?

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