

Scottish Borders Access Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 25th January 2022

Present:

William Davidson (Chair)
Beryl Masson (British Horse Society)
Keith Robeson (SBC Senior Ranger)
Trevor Bryant, (Cycling)
PC Nick Walker (Police Scotland)
Councillor Mark Rowley (Executive Member for Community Planning)
David Langworth (Melrose Paths Group)
Douglas Wright, (Central Tweeddale Paths and Scottish Rights of Way Society)
Simon Ovenden (Scottish Land and Estates)
Andy Pearson (Water Access)

Denise Brydon (SBC Access and Transport Assistant)

Apologies

Walter Douglas (NFU Scotland)
Michael Paton, (Bowhill)

Introduction

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting especially Simon Ovenden and Andy Pearson who were attending for the first time.

Minutes of last meeting of the Access Forum

The minutes of 28th September 2021 were accepted as a true reflection and will now be posted to the SBC website.

https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/download/378/minutes_of_local_access_forum

Matters arising

Will be dealt with as agenda items.

SBC Access Rangers Update

KR presented a summary of the Access Rangers report – a copy will be circulated with these minutes. In summary, the scale of the challenge of maintaining over 2800km of paths was recorded. In addition to normal maintenance there has been the huge impact of Storm Arwen which appears to be the biggest storm since the path network was created. Storm Arwen damage has impacted on many routes with some areas of extensive damage and the team have been working with landowners and other SBC teams to clear paths. We are aware that there are unreported issues

which will be picked up on surveys and by the public. We are encouraging the public to report issues and recording alone has been a significant task. KR also reported on felling licences and demand for machinery and contractors throughout the area. DL asked how the work is being prioritised and KR advised re immediate health and safety risks and the criteria. BM asked regarding reporting storm damage on Forestry and Land Scotland property, KR asked BM to pass on reports to FLS and copy Outdoor Access Team in. DW asked about an issue at Peebles and this will be checked. The Team is still working from home.

The Forum noted the works completed before Storm Arwen at Smailholm, Ancrum and Lowood.

WD reported on some of the recorded storm data at Eyemouth and Crystal Rig which was badly hit.

Other Interest Updates

Cycling

TB report noted.

DB presented a summary of the cycling update – a copy will be circulated with these minutes. Current projects were detailed including construction of the Eddleston Water Path. Discussion took place around the potential Eastern Borders Green Route.

DW asked about the Broughton route – KR advised that this may be covered in the Destination Tweed project. DW noted regret that former railway lines were not protected for active travel.

BM asked about potential surfaces for active travel routes and the Destination Tweed project. KR noted that Destination Tweed is primarily a walking route with sections suitable for cycling or horse riding but the topography impacts the use. It was noted that the Kelso – Sprouston route surface is very suitable for shared use.

Equestrian

BM had nothing specific to report on equestrian issues. Some issues with blocked routes will be passed onto KR.

Paths to Health report

KR presented a summary of the Walk It update provided by Denise Carmichael – a copy will be circulated with these minutes. The Forum welcomed the Walk It project and noted that there are now 37 active walks. Training remains online and is very popular. DC is also supporting the Walking Festival by providing training.

W Davidson recorded appreciation of the Walk It programme and the work of the Co-Ordinator ongoing particularly during Covid and hoped it would continue from strength to strength.

Water Access

Andy Pearson will now represent water access on the Forum and gave some background details on his interests and roles. A full discussion on water access was held and it was noted that the Tweed is the principal area in the Scottish Borders. KR noted the water access points contained within the Core Path Plan and it was agreed to circulate the link with these minutes.

MR noted that this could be promoted by Destination South of Scotland.

Scottish Water guidance on access to reservoirs for swimming was noted.

An access issue at Leaderfoot and SEPA guidance for cattle access to rivers was discussed. SO advised on discussions at the NAF. It was agreed that SEPA should be invited to the next meeting and AP will ask at the SCA too.

- [Water access points | Scottish Borders Council \(scotborders.gov.uk\)](https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/water-access-points)

Walking Festival update

Plans are underway to hold the Scottish Borders Walking Festival in Galashiels in September 2022. Kelso will host the event in 2023.

Access issues updates

KR provided an overview of current issues. It was agreed to seek clarification for the next meeting from MP re Bowhill Estate charging for access on part of their estate..

Any Other Business

Off Road Motorcycles

NW provided an update on off – road motorcyclists who had received fixed penalty tickets and the Forum noted his advice that it is vital that any incidents are reported at the time.

Livestock Protection

The Forum welcomed a report by NW on the Livestock Protection Act 2021 and on SBPARC. NFU Scotland will have a campaign running through the lambing season on the new measures of the Act.

Wild Camping and Over Tourism

The Forum welcomed reports by SO and MR on national and government consultations on these issues.

Ramblers Scotland Mapping

Concern on the unverified routes being promoted on Ramblers Scotland open street map was noted. SO advised on this at the National Access Forum.

Access Resources

DL asked about resources for the access team at a time when more people are taking access and the access team have one ranger post vacant. MR noted that there is an awareness of the need for ongoing maintenance of the network.

Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next online meeting would be held on Wednesday 25th May at 2pm. A hold the date invite will be issued now.