

Scottish Borders Access Forum

Approved Minutes of the Online Meeting held on 22nd January 2025 at 2pm

Present:

William Davidson, WD (Chair)
Walter Douglas, WalterD (NFU)
David Langworth, DL (Melrose Paths Group)
Trevor Bryant, TB (Cycling)
Lesley Muirden, LM (British Horse Society)
Deborah Hodgson, DH (SBC Active Travel Team Manager)
Denise Brydon, DB (SBC Active Travel Team)
Susan Gray, SG (SBC Access Ranger)
Douglas Wright, DW (Scotways)
Andy Pearson, AP (Online)
Rory Powell, RP (Buccleuch Estates)
Cara Gillespie, CG (SUP)
Aidan Nicol, AN (SUP)
Bruce Anderson, BA (Police Scotland)

Introduction

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Deborah Hodgson, Active Travel and Transport Manager

Apologies: Katie Jarvis, Clare Sturla.

Minutes of last meeting of the Access Forum

The minutes of 24th October 2023 were accepted as a true reflection of the meeting and will now be added to the SBC website.

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

Matters arising

SBC Active Travel and Access Report

The Chair thanked the Team for the Report which had been circulated and noted that the format was excellent and easy to follow.

Deborah Hodgson presented the report and it was noted that this provided a flavour of the restructuring and transformation of the Team with the internal move into

Economic Development. The plan for the new structure was detailed together with the progress on the Draft Active Travel Strategy. The Forum welcomed the update that the Forum will be a key stakeholder and that it is intended to discuss the Draft Active Travel Strategy at the next meeting (subject to Scottish Borders Council approval and timescales).

Deborah also provided a full update on funding, investment and priorities for increasing resources.

The Forum then had the opportunity to ask questions and provide initial feedback which was very helpful.

Susan Gray noted the date for the next meeting of the National Access Forum as 27th February 2025 and it was recorded that a representative from the Borders Access Forum will also attend.

Other Interest Updates

Cycling

- The Forum welcomed the update from Trevor Bryant on Just Cycle Project, Borders Greenway and Tweedbank Speedway project and developments.

Equestrian

- Lesley Muirden attended the Forum for the British Horse Society. The Forum recorded thanks to Beryl Masson for her many years of membership of the Forum. It was noted that Beryl will no longer attend. LM asked about Venlaw post Storm Arwen and SG agreed to follow up with FLS. LM reported that BHS are working with the Borders Greenway for the Reston to Chimside section. LM asked for an update on Haughhead Bridge partial closure for horses etc – DH updated. Finally noted that BHS have 3 gates in stock and are open to the location for these gates.

Paths Groups

- David Langworth reported on Melrose Paths Group and the spreadsheet of maintenance that he had shared with SG. The Forum noted the thanks to SG and the Path Warden Team and the Group will continue to work with SBC on maintenance and priorities – discussion on hedges maintenance was held. TB noted different vegetation control required for cycling routes.

Paths to Health report

- DB gave an update on the Walk It Project which has been successfully outsourced to Borders Wheels with support from the NHS Health Improvement Team and external SEStran/ Transport Scotland funding. The Forum welcomed this update.

Water Access

Andy Pearson gave an update on the reorganisation of the Scottish Canoe Association to Paddle Scotland. Noted no reported Water Access issues. AP also reported on the Tweed Canoe Trail which has been very well received and is going really well.

Southern Uplands Partnership

Cara introduced Aidan Nicol and updated on the work and role of the SUP including SBCAN and the Active Travel Links Forum. The Forum welcomed Aidan.

Access Issues

DH updated the Forum on the work planned to prioritise and resolve complex ongoing and new access issues.

A full discussion was held, and it was agreed that a future meeting of the Forum will be arranged to fully review a selection of access issues. This will include the Section 11 process.

Future Meetings Format

The Forum agreed to continue with 3 meetings per year planned as

January – online

May – in person with online link (Rory Powell offered to host at Bowhill). Now being held in June.

October – in person with online link.

LM agreed to join the Active Links Forum as the representative of the Borders Access Forum

Any Other Business

- Staffing – WD welcomed the update on staffing and the team restructure and thanked DH.
- Destination Tweed – following a question from LM, it was noted that DH is on the Board for the Destination Tweed River Tweed Trail and regular meetings with the Team will be held.
- Reporting of issues on roads – agreed to share the link for online reporting to Scottish Borders Council with the Forum.

Date of next meeting

Placeholder agreed as 2pm 28th May 2025 – Note this meeting was subsequently moved to 26th June 2025 to match the Draft Active Travel Strategy consultation dates.