

## **Scottish Borders Access Forum**

### **Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017**

#### **Present:**

William Davidson (Chair)  
Councillor Tom Miers (Executive Member for Planning and Building Standards)  
Councillor Mark Rowley (Executive Member for Community Planning)  
Douglas Wright (Central Tweeddale Paths and Scottish Rights of Way Society)  
Rory Powell (Buccleuch Estates Bowhill Ranger)  
Walter Douglas (National Farmers Union)  
Trevor Bryant (Cycling)  
Ian Aitchison (Scottish Land & Estates)  
Beryl Masson (British Horse Society)  
Katie Jarvis (Forest Enterprise Scotland)  
David Langworth (Melrose Paths Group)  
Ian Aikman (SBC Chief Planning Officer)  
Graeme Johnstone (SBC Lead Officer - Access and Transport)  
Keith Robeson (SBC Senior Ranger)  
Mike Marsh (SBC Access Ranger – East)

#### **Apologies**

Pip tabor (Southern Upland Partnership)

#### **Minutes of last meeting of the Access Forum**

Accepted as read.

#### **Matters arising**

Ladhope update – The local community are currently discussing a potential bid which may include MTB trails and an off-road link from Stow to Galashiels. It is hoped that feasibility work would be undertaken if the bid is successful and there will be an element of consultation as part of the project. TB offered to keep the group posted on developments.

BM indicated that new wooden gates have been provided in the Ladhope area which are much better for shared access.

Craik Forest update – TB had spoken to Graeme McLean, Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland who feels that Craik is still a viable mountain biking area, although there is no waymarking, bikers are welcome with some good trails available.

#### **Access Rangers' Area Reports**

KR circulated a report of work carried out by the Criminal Justice Team on behalf of the Countryside Access Team; some of these works were included in the Access Rangers' report. Highlights of the Ranger's Report covering the past 6 months (previously circulated) included:

- Replacement of a bridge on St Cuthbert's Way at Maxpoffle, Bowden;
- Surfacing of sections of track on the Borders Abbeys Way at Faldonside

Moor;

- Improvements to the Millennium Path in conjunction with Eckford and Crailing Community Council;
- Improvements to path and steps at Temple of the Muses, Dryburgh;
- Access advice in the event of Avian Influenza outbreak, Millennium Farm, Leadburn; and
- Coldingham Sands Beach Award and access improvement works.

DW was very grateful for the picnic benches which were installed on the Tweed Walk at Peebles.

Walkerburn ROW dispute – WD advised that the 1983 map referred to was drawn up after discussions with landowners and local people and was not a definitive map.

### **Southern Upland Way, Traquair – safety concerns update**

Further discussions have taken place with Jeremy Thomson regarding advice on the Woodlands In and Around Towns (WIAT) funding application to improve the path network around Traquair House and village. KR needs to identify another landowner who needs to be consulted in order to progress the application.

A key issue that is out-with the WIAT scheme is a potential off-road link from Innerleithen Tweed Bridge to the Forestry Commission MTB car park on Traquair Road. The potential costs associated with creating a new link could be relatively high due to the nature of the terrain, but the potential benefits could be significant.

### **Walking festivals update**

Galashiels Walking Weekend took place in April and was reasonably well attended, organisers have requested input from the Ranger Service for next year's event.

Scottish Borders Walking Festival in Peebles took place from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> September and was deemed to be very successful despite the weather. Over 600 walk places were booked involving over 200 people, many giving positive feedback. The Ranger service led 8 walks but a lot of thanks should go to the volunteers who led walks and especially to the organising committee, who put in a great deal of effort to ensure a successful week.

DW expressed his gratitude to GJ for the Council's additional funding (required due to SEStran deciding not to sponsor the event) and to the Scottish Mountaineering Trust who contributed £800. DW still awaiting some invoices but he is confident that the event will break even and that the £2500 float can be passed on to Hawick. The walks were nearly all sold out, however during the week there were a number of cancellations/ changes to bookings which took up a lot of time. DW was very impressed with the friendliness/ rapport between everyone with visitors attending from countries such as Malaysia, Finland, America, Netherlands as well as from all over the UK. DW was also grateful for the involvement and support of the Countryside Access Team, Erica for

organising many of the social events and the path wardens for installing the signage and some maintenance works required to paths.

Scottish Borders Walking Festival, Hawick 2018

Planning for next year's festival is well under way with a draft programme of walks already produced.

### **Paths for Health report**

Update report previously circulated. GJ noted that this project is very successful despite it being a part time post with 27 active Walk It walks taking place. GP referrals programme has proved to be very popular and Denise Carmichael has been very successful at attracting external funding to the project. The post is part-funded by the NHS and SBC but there are no specific guarantees that this funding will continue in the longer term, although the benefits are significant. WD asked that thanks from the Forum are passed on to Denise.

### **Walking update**

Connecting the Tweed Project - a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) was submitted by Tweed Forum in June - looking at various issues along the corridor of the Tweed, including access. Unfortunately the bid was unsuccessful but HLF thought the proposal had a lot of potential and therefore there is a possibility that a revised bid could be resubmitted next year.

LEADER Three Paths Project – Tyne Esk and Scottish Borders LEADER are keen to fund a cross boundary access project and have identified 3 projects:

- Dere Street – potential to create another one of Scotland's Great Trails through the Scottish Borders and Lothians, following the line of the Roman Road where possible;
- Herring Road, Lauder to Dunbar – extension from the north side of the Lammermuirs to Dunbar; and
- Lammermuir Cycle Path - east west route linking existing routes.

Members felt that the potential upgrading of parts of Dere Street was very important.

### **Cycling update**

GJ summarised his Cycling Report (as circulated) describing works at the following locations:

- Lauder to Oxton – phase 2 completed;
- Duns Schools link to existing surfaced path network;
- Innerleithen to Walkerburn – design work currently taking place. There is potential for phase 2 of the works to be carried out before the end of the current financial year;
- Hawick Flood Protection Scheme – Sustrans working with SBC to develop shared access routes through the town as part of the scheme;
- Clovenfords to Walkerburn – feasibility work completed, with the draft

report currently out to communities for comment;

- Peebles to Eddleston – A planning application for the shared access route is currently in progress;
- Sprouston – Kelso – Roxburgh - shared access route design work in progress;
- Earlston –Leaderfoot, design work for first phase of the project has been produced and now the challenge is to secure funding. TB asked if a plan could be made available for the Earlston Development Trust to have a look at – **GJ** to provide.

There was a discussion around tarmac versus whin dust paths and the preferences for different user types. It was noted that tarmac is generally good for cyclists, mobility vehicles and families but not necessarily for horses and some walkers – It is very difficult to cater for all in these circumstances.

### **Equestrian update**

Ride Scotland's Horse Country – project looking at the path network for horse riding and to market accommodation provision etc. for horse riders wanting to use the trails. BHS are being asked to survey the paths for suitability in terms of horse riding and will work with the access team and landowners. Funding has been secured and SUP hope to appoint a project coordinator in December. It is hoped that an update will be provided for our next forum meeting

### **Access issues updates**

Oxcleugh Haugh, St Mary's Loch – a public meeting was held involving the police and the Community Council to take forward a proposal to appoint a part time warden to be present on site to try and reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour.

East Lodge, Lilliesleaf – a conflict arose involving local people who have traditionally walked the banks of the Ale Water and the owners of the ground which is now used as a 'garden'. Part of the solution is for the Council to improve the condition of an adjacent track and path to make it more attractive to use – works to go ahead in November.

Dryburgh Mains – the fishing hut next to the Temple of the Muses has been repositioned further upstream and the landowner has blocked off access to the riverbank from that point on the north side of the suspension bridge and installed a new gate 250 metres further downstream for safety reasons.

The local community wish to see a gate reinstated nearer to the original location and a meeting on site looked at a number of options. The landowner is considering these options and we hope to have a resolution in the near future.

### **Cavers**

BM asked if the situation regarding the core path at Cavers, Hawick could be reviewed again in light of a local petition of over 200 signatories from people wishing to see it accessible for all users. **GJ and KR** agreed that they would look at this and report back at the next meeting.

### **Any Other Business**

WD highlighted the continuing issue regarding dogs and livestock, the Council will continue to try and educate the public through social media and press releases etc.

MM noted that Reston and Auchencrow paths group would like to install 4 bridle gates and wondered if BHS would be able to assist with funding. BM will make a request to BHS at their next meeting in November.

**Date of next meeting**

Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2018 at 2pm at Council HQ