**Scottish Borders Access Forum**

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 22nd October 2019**

**Present:**

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| William Davidson (Chair)  Councillor Mark Rowley (Executive Member for Community Planning).  Councillor Sandy Scott  Beryl Masson (British Horse Society)  David Langworth (Melrose Paths Group) |

Keith Robeson (SBC Senior Ranger)

Susan Gray (SBC Access Ranger – South)

Douglas Wright (Central Tweeddale Paths and Scottish Rights of Way Society)

Ian Aitchison (Scottish Land & Estates)

Michael Paton (Buccleuch Estates Bowhill Ranger)

Trevor Bryant (Cycling)

Katie Jarvis (Forestry and Land Scotland)

Denise Carmichael (Walk It)

Denise Brydon (SBC Access and Transport Assistant)

Denise Douglas (SBC with Access Team)

Pete Laing (Laphope/ Langlee Trails) To Item 5 only

**Apologies**

Walter Douglas (NFU Scotland)

Graeme Johnstone (SBC Lead Officer - Access and Transport)

**Introduction**

KR introduced Pete Laing who is attending to report on Ladhope/ Langlee Trails.

KR also introduced Denise Brydon - a new member of the Access Team and Denise Douglas SBC – on work experience with the Access Team

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

Minutes accepted as a true reflection.

**Matters arising**

* Will be dealt with as agenda items.

**Ladhope Mountain Bike Trail Project update**

Pete Laing made a full presentation to the Forum regarding progress on the proposed mountain bike trails in Ladhope and Langlee woods. This also involved the Glendearg community woodland and a possible pump track by the Community Centre.PL also reported on the background and history of the project. PL’s role is to produce a report on the ideas and plans with costings to enable the project to progress to full planning and funding which will need to be driven by a Community Group. The project strategy is to initially improve parking at Ladhope and Langlee to provide low level family routes for walking cycling and running. The blue trails would provide opportunities for fitter families and the steep areas would provide descents for enthusiasts. PL also highlighted that there would be no changes to the existing paths and that the project would seek funding for new trails. The build plan would be low impact and mostly hand build.

The projected costs over the entire project which would be phased over several years is likely to be in the region of £2m.

The Forum had a lengthy discussion on the feedback which had been received via social media and the open forum. DW and BM highlighted the issues in the Glentress and Tweed Valley with horses and walkers on shared use paths and trails.

DW also advised that the National issue of unauthorised trail building is a huge concern for landowners and users. It was noted that the Tweed Valley Forest Users Group is discussing the issues of horse riders and walkers sharing trails and paths with mountain bikers particularly in regard to crossing tracks. PL and KJ advised on mitigations possible to resolve issues on shared use. TB expressed a positive view on the project and that the local benefits would be considerable - the size of the proposed site is a big area for all users to co-habit beneficially.

PL also advised on a possible link with Stow over existing routes.

The economic development potential and local benefits were also discussed with the Forum.

ID asked if there would be conflict with the Golf Course at Ladhope and PL advised that feedback about this and car parking at Ladhope is being taken into account.

The Chair thanked PL for the presentation and the Forum noted that this is a large project with some big issues to be resolved but with potential for an exciting new development which would need to be driven ongoing by a Community Group. PL left the meeting.

**Access Rangers’ Area Reports**

The Access Rangers’ report for 1 April to 30 September 2019 was circulated prior to meeting.

WD recorded that this is a comprehensive report and Councillor Rowley commended the team on the scale/ range of the work and issues dealt with.KR advised the forum that he would be happy to respond to any questions at the meeting or later by email:

* BM singled out Erica Niven Access Ranger – West for positive work on the gates installation and for the liaison with landowners for the horse friendly gates. Borders Horse Society Borders Committee has now ordered 4 more gates to donate. These gates are so much better than eg some of the new forestry gates which have an integral pedestrian access gate of 70cm which is not suitable for horses.

**Walking Festival update**

* Galashiels Weekend Walking Festival – this took place at the end of April and was well attended, next year’s event is being planned for April 2020
* Scottish Borders Walking Festival - Selkirk & The Valleys (Ettrick and Yarrow) 7th – 14th September. A very keen small committee met weekly to organise this event and the feedback was that it was very well organised and attended. Councillor Rowley recorded thanks to the Committee for this great festival and noted very positive images being shared on social media.
* The 2020 event will take place in Jedburgh and Ancrum subject to local volunteers. Councillor Scott reported on positive feedback from both Community Councils. Councillors Rowley and Scott offered to assist in promoting the Festival to recruit local volunteers if needed.
* KR advised that planning for future festivals is ongoing.

**Paths to Health report**

A brief report was circulated prior to the meeting and DC attended to present the report. The Chair welcomed DC to the meeting and the Forum commended the successful programme.

* There are currently 30 active Walk It Walks in Borders Towns.
* 3 Walk Leader Training days have been held so far this year and one is being arranged for 30 January 2020. MP advised that the training is very worthwhile.
* There are currently 16 ‘Dementia Friendly’ Walk It walks and it is intended that will extend to all walks in 2020.
* The annual Borders Conference will be held in Melrose on 5 December 2019 and Paths for All hold an annual conference too.
* DC advised that there are spaces for Walk Leaders in Galashiels - Langlee, Walkerburn and Hawick- Burnfoot and she would welcome the Forum members sharing this on suitable networks.
* DC also recorded thanks to the armies of volunteers who enable the walks to happen. SG recorded that DC supports and maintains a very large network of 132 active leaders and many volunteers which is commendable.

WD recorded thanks from the Forum again to DC for all her hard work and thanked her for attending

**Walking update**

* DW reported that following the last meeting he had followed up the advice - Police Guidance on Farming Security by Police Scotland regarding locked gates with the National Access Forum and Scotways and had been in communication with Inspector Dron and the NFU Scotland. Inspector Dron specialises in rural crime prevention and will ensure that the guidance will take the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and Access legislation into account ongoing. It was suggested that PC Nick Walker be invited to join the BAF and KR agreed to invite.
* SG provided a report on the new Roberton Walks booklet which has been produced by the Community Trust in a similar format to the Ettrick and Yarrow booklet. Copies of the booklets were passed round and KJ confirmed that they had been consulted.SG advised that most of the paths are either on the Roman and Reivers Route or Rights of Way, but there are some new paths. The Forum discussed mapping, maintenance and signage of new paths. DW advised on Scotways resources for surveys and reviews of signage.
* SG also reported on Forestry Grant and felling licence applications and on the pilot scheme for Strategic Planning. There was a lengthy discussion on strategic planning and consultations relating to forestry and wind farms. Councillor Rowley provided advice on the pilot study and it was noted that another open day is scheduled.

**Cycling update**

* KR reported on the new Kelso to Sprouston multi use path which has been completed by SB Contracts. An opening Event is being arranged. BM noted that the shared use signage is very good.

**Equestrian update**

* BM provided a report on equestrian issues and the Forum noted the advice earlier in the meeting regarding the Tweed Valley Forest Users Group meeting to look for solutions to issues on shared paths and a further discussion on unauthorised trails took place.
* Ride Scottish Borders are investigating reinstating the Festival of the Horse and BM will update the Forum on progress.
* BM will contact KR re some local access issues.KR took this opportunity to advise of a change of staff within the Access Team. Mike Marsh has decided to retire and as Steve Fortune has already left the team there is a full time vacancy. In the meantime - East area access issues should be directed to KR.
* Councillor Scott reported that he has had positive feedback from horse riders who have completed the new President’s Route.

**Access issues updates**

* Cavers - Core Path 128

KR reported that proposed path works to provide an alternative route for horses is currently in abeyance.

* Selkirk and Borders Abbeys Way.

SG advised on a recent issue where a walker with a dog had encountered a bull in a field and had asked if SBC should have had warning signs on the route. The Forum discussed the issue and agreed with the Access Officer that this was not required in the circumstances.

* Jedfoot

There has been an ongoing issue between the owners of the garden ground and paddock near the track which was previously railway and the riverside path at Jedfoot. The issue also included vehicular access as walkers had parked behind the gate which was then locked. There were reported issues with dog fouling. SG had arranged a new bridle gate installation which seems to have resolved the access issue. This was noted by the Forum.

**Any Other Business**

* DW reported that there had been a Ramblers and Scotways Access Event in September which was attended by representatives from this Forum – DW, BM and DL.
* A discussion was held on the LAF and consultation input. Councillor Rowley advised that consultations are available on both Scottish Government and SBC websites. Agreed that links to be added to these minutes – see below

[Scottish Government Consultations](https://consult.gov.scot/) https://consult.gov.scot/

[Scottish Borders Council Consultations](https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/info/20016/have_your_say/278/consultations) https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/info/20016/have\_your\_say/278/consultations

* The frequency of meetings of this Forum was discussed and it was agreed to add a further meeting. Phasing now to be January, May and October ongoing.

**Date of next meeting**

Tuesday 21st January 2020 at 2pm in Committee Room 4, Council HQ