

Scottish Borders Access Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 21st January 2020

Present:

William Davidson (Chair)
Lesley Muirden (British Horse Society)
David Langworth (Melrose Paths Group)
Keith Robeson (SBC Senior Ranger)
Erica Niven (SBC Access Ranger – West)
Douglas Wright (Central Tweeddale Paths and Scottish Rights of Way Society)
Ian Aitchison (Scottish Land & Estates)
Trevor Bryant (Cycling)
Katie Jarvis (Forestry and Land Scotland)
Walter Douglas (NFU Scotland)
PC Nick Walker (Police Scotland)
Denise Brydon (SBC Access and Transport Assistant)

Apologies

Councillor Mark Rowley (Executive Member for Community Planning).
Councillor Sandy Scott
Denise Carmichael, Walk It

Introduction

PC Nick Walker, Crime Prevention & Architectural Liaison Officer was welcomed to the Forum following the membership invitation as agreed at the last meeting.

Minutes of last meeting of the Access Forum

Amendments were agreed to Area Reports and AOB in the previous minutes. Subject to these amendments being made, the minutes were accepted as a true reflection.

Matters arising

- Will be dealt with as agenda items.

Walking Festival update

- Galashiels Weekend Walking Festival 2020 – KR reported that this is scheduled for 24th to 26th April 2020 and planning is ongoing. The Ranger service will be leading walks.

- Scottish Borders Walking Festival 2020 – Jedburgh & Ancrum is scheduled for 5th to 12th September 2020. A local committee has now been established to take this forward. DW asked if funding was obtained by each Walking Festival Group and KR confirmed that this is correct. TB asked if the walking festival groups were constituted – KR agreed to provide information. The forum discussed how walk leader training, first aid training and liability insurance for walking festivals have been provided in the past.
- Scottish Borders Walking Festival 2021 to 2023 - KR advised that location planning for future festivals is ongoing. Letters have been sent to Community Councils and nominations are due in by 20th March 2020. A report will then be made to the Scottish Borders Council to decide on the locations for 2021 to 2023.

Paths to Health report

- The latest edition of the Walk It newsletter was circulated. This is available in electronic form and members can receive this on a quarterly basis. WD recorded appreciation of the Walk It programme ongoing.

Walking update

- It was noted that the SBC Rangers reports would continue to be made to the May and October meetings.

Cycling update

- KR reported that in Graeme Johnstone's secondment, cycling, active travel and multi-use paths are now being covered by KR with assistance from DB. KR advised that the new Kelso to Sprouston multi-use path has been largely completed by SB Contracts- some final snagging issues are in hand. An opening Event is planned for April 2020. KR and DB are also attending the Delivery Group Meetings with Peebles Community Trust/ Sustrans for the proposed Eddleston Water Path. A discussion was held on the plans/design and the upcoming community consultation process was noted. The Forum held a discussion on sharing issues on the Tweed Valley Railway Path between users and noted that these can be reduced if multi-use paths are designed with enough width. EN reported on positive feedback on shared use of the TVRP. TB asked about a shut gate on the new section and EN advised that this had been closed due to sheep but was now open and had been for approximately six months.

Equestrian update

- LM raised the issue of horse dung on multi-use paths and on paths close to towns e.g. the Traquair link path. EN advised that the Access Team promotes and stocks the British Horse Society Dung Guidance leaflet. The Forum agreed to contact the BHS regarding a formal policy.

- DW recorded instances of positive horse riding behaviours particularly from younger riders. NW reported on horse safety and safe vehicle overtaking initiatives that are ongoing with Police Scotland within the Scottish Borders.
- LM requested that the horse access issue on Route 8, Paths around Duns be dealt with by the access team after the lambing season.

Access issues updates

- Tweedsmuir – EN reported on an access issue in the Tweedsmuir area.
- Threipwood and the Girthgate – EN reported on an ordnance survey error for this area which has now been corrected. DW complimented EN on her handling of this unusual issue and the Chair recorded thanks from the Forum.

Tweed Valley Forests

- KJ circulated maps showing the work in progress in the Tweed Valley Forest areas. These clearly show the preferred use areas for each site in the Tweed Valley Forests. This does not include motorised use. There will be no unauthorised motor bike or motor vehicle access on the National Forest Estate. A full discussion was held regarding the map which shows the composite plan of the Valley and has been drawn up following the consultations which started in 2017 on the land management use. Unauthorised trail building, access and tackling dangerous exit points were discussed. EN asked if the map took SBC promoted routes into account and KJ confirmed that this is the case. Events within the TVF were discussed. It was noted that this the start of the process and there had been a lot of consultation on trail building and the Forum welcomed the maps. KJ agreed to share the map with TB and LM for the Borders Access Development Group.

Membership

- Membership of the Forum was considered and it was agreed that the current membership is appropriate but that there is opportunity for other groups to attend for specific items by invitation ongoing. It was noted that most members disseminate information from the Forum within their groups or organisations. The lack of a water access user group representative was also raised and it was agreed to carry over discussion on membership to the next meeting.
- The minutes of the Forum are available once approved on SBC website – https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/downloads/download/378/minutes_of_local_access_forum

Any Other Business

- W Douglas raised the National Access Forum High Level Message regarding dogs and livestock. Following a full discussion, the Forum felt that the wording was unclear and disappointing - the Forum agreed to feedback the views on the wording to the NAF.

Date of next meeting

Tuesday 26th May 2020 in the William Hill Room, Melrose - provisional date to be confirmed.