

Scottish Borders Access Forum

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 8th June 2021

Present:

William Davidson (Chair)
Beryl Masson (British Horse Society)
Walter Douglas (NFU Scotland)
Keith Robeson (SBC Senior Ranger)
Trevor Bryant, (Cycling)
Michael Paton, (Bowhill)

Denise Brydon (SBC Access and Transport Assistant)

Apologies

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)

Introduction

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Minutes of last meeting of the Access Forum

The minutes of 19th January 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, it continues to be an interesting and challenging period for the Access Team due to Covid-19 restrictions and a reduction in staff resource. The Team is still working from home.

The Forum noted the works completed at Coldingham, Eildons and Spittal Tower. KR also reported on the Destination Tweed Project – link to the project is here [Destination Tweed – Tweed Forum](#).

The Forum recorded positive feedback on the survey for the Project and KR agreed to pass this on at the Destination Tweed Trail Working Group. KR provided an update to questions regarding the route after Coldstream.

W Douglas noted that the registration of land ownership in Scotland is an intricate exercise and it will be 2-3 years before this is compulsory

WDavidson asked if the weather and erosion had impacted on the Team . KR advised that due to Covid restrictions the Team had been unable to survey routes over the winter and the Scottish Borders Council staff are still being encouraged to follow all Covid guidelines and avoid unnecessary site visits. BM asked about vehicles and sharing and KR updated.

The Forum welcomed the report by KR on our new Assistant Path Warden starting work as part of the Kickstart programme.

In terms of visitor management and access – the Forum noted details for Bowhill and St Marys Loch. KR advised that SOSE are looking at Visitor Management and sites for campervan stopovers. In other areas – it was noted that seasonal rangers are being appointed eg Highlands and East Lothian. WDouglas asked if the NAF had produced guidance and KR agreed to review and circulate.

TB raised e-scooters and the issues being raised in England and WDavidson advised that the NAF are taking a pragmatic approach and await findings to be considered at the November meeting

Other Interest Updates

Cycling

TB advised on Events and noted the increase in e-bikes. TB also reported on cycling some section of the SUW and KR noted that in 1984 this long distance route was primarily set up as a walking route.

It was noted that Cycling UK have appointed a Project Officer for the Scottish Borders - Emily Farquhar who will be invited to the next meeting. Contact details are emily.a.farquhar@cyclinguk.org

DB presented a summary of the cycling update – a copy will be circulated with these minutes. Current projects were detailed.

MP raised the issue of mountain bike trails on the Eildons and it was suggested that he discuss this with Katie Jarvis. For other Eildons projects MP will email EN for advice.

BM advised that DBMinS have produced good advice on sharing trails and have shared posts on social media for the “Do the Ride Thing” campaign and there is a video on sharing the forests. Link - [Developing Mountain Biking in Scotland \(dmbins.com\)](https://www.dmbins.com)

Equestrian

BM provided a full report on equestrian issues. There is a rideout for access fundraising for BHS Scotland planned on 18th July 2021 Covid restrictions permitting. BM reported on an incident with horses and a cyclist who had “squeaky brakes” It was agreed that BM would discuss training and sessions

with EF for habituation. An access issue for a ROW or Bridleway which had been ploughed was discussed and BM will continue to liaise with the farmer.

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 Groups restarting and the new walks / projects of Buddy Walks, Walk It Easy and recorded that Walk It continues to be a very valuable service.

W Davidson recorded appreciation of the Walk It programme and the work of the Co-Ordinator ongoing.

Walking Festival update

Galashiels Weekend Walking Festival – KR advised that the Access Team were not involved in the April 2021 walks but understood that this had been a good small local event.

Scottish Borders Walking Festival – Jedburgh & Ancrum was cancelled for 2021. There will be a mini festival in Galashiels from 10-12 September 2021. It is hoped that the full Festival can return to Galashiels in 2022 and then Kelso will host in 2023.

WDavidson welcomed this plan for the Festivals.

Access issues updates

KR provided an overview of current issues. The Forum noted that it might be useful to remind the BSPC of the legislation under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act. KR agreed to investigate.

Any Other Business

Membership of the Forum

KR raised the membership as there is a resignation from IA and JMcC is no longer receiving emails. It was noted that a representative would be sought from Scottish Land and Estates. WDouglas also agreed to raise the representation with the NFU Secretary. It was further agreed that a Water Interests representative should be sought.

Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next online meeting would be held on Tuesday 28th September 2021 at 2pm.