

Falkirk Outdoor Access Forum

Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday, 23 September 2008

Falkirk Council, Municipal Buildings, Falkirk

Present

Guy Wedderburn – SRPBA / Callendar Estate
Sheila Hall – BHS and FARAG
Bob Smith – Airth Parish Community Council
Lisa Duggan – SNH
Mike Ewart – CSFT
Hugh Lyon – CTC
Emma Stewart – Forestry Commission
Alasdair Finlayson – British Waterways
Peter Rowe – Shopmobility

Present on Behalf of Falkirk Council

Angus Duncan – Access Officer
Mandy Brown – Access Officer
Richard Broadley – Environment Officer

Also Present as Observers

Mr & Mrs Barr – Quarryhead Farm, Sheildhill
Mr & Mrs Johnston – Bensfield Farm, Carronshore

Apologies

John Ferguson – Ramblers
John Davidson – Scotways
Jamie Smart – NFUS
Stuart McAllister – Bo'ness Community Council
Colin Ward – Paths for All Partnership
Maria Montinaro – Sheildhill & California Community Council
Lynn Slavin – Falkirk Council, Transport Planning
Craig Dinwoodie – Forestry Commission
Dave Bennet – Lionthorn Community Woodland

1 Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 19 June 2008 were previously circulated and were approved.

2 Core Paths Planning – Review of Former Objections

Guy Wedderburn summarised the work undertaken by the Forum to assess the objections referred to the Forum in relation to the proposed Core Paths Plan.

In summary

A subgroup made up of a balance of representative interests within the forum was set up to carry out a site inspection and to report back to the main forum. The subgroup comprised

Guy Wedderburn, RSPBA
Jamie Smart, NFUS
John Davidson, Scotways
John Ferguson, Ramblers
Sheila Hall, FARAG

The subgroup carried out site inspections of all the paths relating to the objections on 23 and 24 July 2008. The objectors were contacted prior to these site inspections and were provided an opportunity to meet with the subgroup and to outline the nature of their objection. Due to personal commitments not every member of the subgroup was able to attend all the site visits. Details of which member of the subgroup attended which site visit is detailed in schedule 1 to this minute.

A third meeting on the subgroup was held on 26 August 2008 to discuss the process by which the objections should be assessed and to present the subgroups preliminary advice to the Forum.

The assessment of the objections proposed by the subgroup, and subsequently endorsed by the Forum is as follows:

1. Does the general right of access apply to the proposed core path, i.e. does the path run through open countryside, through the curtilage of buildings or through a quarry, etc.
2. How does the path match up to the Council's Core Paths criteria:
 - i. Is the path fit for multiuse?
 - ii. Does it create or enhance routes, preferably loops, in and around settlements and centres of population?
 - iii. Does the route allow people access to, and appreciation of visitor attractions, historic or natural heritage sites?
 - iv. Does it contribute to the network of routes varying lengths around settlements/attractions?
 - v. Does the path help create links between settlements, facilities (e.g. shops, banks, schools, transport links and attractions)?
3. Objections raised:
 - i. Has the objector raised issues that question the general right of access or the validity of the path against the criteria. If so does the Forum agree or disagree?

- ii. Does the objector raise issues that have more to do with the management of the path, in terms of its design, routing or maintenance. If so what advice can the Forum give?
- iii. Does the objector raise issues that lie outwith the scope of the Access Legislation, i.e. issues of illegal behaviour. If so what advice can we give to Falkirk Council?

Guy Wedderburn reported back the recommendations of the subgroup and following a debate the Forum's advice to Falkirk Council is contained in Schedule 1 to this minute.

3. Any Other Business

- i. Issue of the steps at Sunnyside/Mungo Burn has still not been resolved. It was noted that this matter is being dealt with by Falkirk Council's Transportation Service, who were not present at the meeting and an update would be provided at a subsequent Forum meeting.
- ii. Hugh Lyons requested confirmation whether the railway underpass at the Boyd Street diversion, Laurieston would be upgraded following the installation of a cycle crossing. Again it was noted that this was a transportation issue and an update would be provided at the next meeting
- iii. Old Denny Road. It was pointed out that the Old Denny Road, which provides the only link between Denny and Larbert is in poor condition. With the development of the new hospital at Larbert this route will become potentially more important. An update was requested as to whether there were any plans to improve the route. Mandy Brown confirmed that the Falkirk Council Ranger Service had been to look at the condition of the track with a view to approaching the landowners to discuss a possible upgrade.
- iv. Bob Smith pointed out that there had still been no progress in installing a footpath between the Lightberry and the Bowtrees Roundabout, despite suggestions that this would be installed as part of the road upgrade. As this is a transportation issue an update would be provided at the next meeting.
- v. Emma Stewart flagged up the fact that the Forestry Commission will shortly be commencing a review of the recreational facilities within in their woodland sites in the Falkirk District and that there would be an opportunity for the Forum to input into this.
- vi. Emma Stewart also reported on issues relating to mountain biking within Callendar Wood following discussions with Scott Gerard.

She pointed out that local youths had constructed an extreme downhill cycle track including significant jumps and severe obstacles. The Forestry Commission have clear guidelines for the method of construction and maintenance of mountain biking tracks built up through experience with the 7 stanes sites. Following a review with their expert they took the view that the course, which had been constructed without consultation was not appropriate given the other access users within Callendar Wood and indeed could put non experienced cyclists using the course at significant risk. Accordingly, the Forestry Commission has taken steps to have the course removed.

- vii. Alister Finlayson noted that BWB is particularly interested in working with the Forum to identify opportunities to link the Forth & Clyde Canal and Union Canal to the wider path network. Any such project should be brought to his attention.
- viii. A suggestion had been made that future meetings of the Access Forum should be held in public. It was agreed that this should be debated at the next meeting.

4 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, 18 December at 2pm in the Municipal Buildings in Falkirk.