

**DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 20 APRIL 2021 AT 1.30 PM
ONLINE, MICROSOFT TEAMS MEETING**

Present:	Peter Ross (Chair)	DGOAT / Health Walks
	Jonathan Barrett	DGC Galloway Glens LPS
	John Blaikie	Water Access
	Teresa Dougall	NFUS
	Cllr Katie Hagmann	DGC Elected Member
	June Hay	DGOAT / Cycling
	Catherine Makepeace	Wigtownshire Ramblers
	Richard Masters	DGC Access Officer
	John Nelson	Land Manager
	William Oakes	DGOAT / Scotways and Dog Walking
	Richard Smith	NHS D&G Public Health
	Ronald Turnbull	DGOAT
	Beverley Vaux	BHS

In Attendance:	Sheila Adams	Minutes
	Tom Henry	DGC Southern Upland Way Ranger
	Jane McDowall	BHS D&G

Apologies:	Janette Steel	Forest and Land Scotland
	Bryan Scott	DGC Rhins of Galloway Coast Path

Peter welcomed a good turnout to the online meeting and apologised for having to postpone the meeting from March, due to other pressures on time.

1. Minutes of the last Forum Meeting of 8 December 2020

Beverley pointed out one correction to the Minutes – on page 4, Loch Rannoch should read Loch **Grannoch**.

With the above amendment, the Minutes of the meeting of 8 December 2020 were approved as a true record and were proposed as such by Cllr Katie Hagmann and seconded by John Blaikie.

2. Matters Arising and Update on Action Points

1. Beverley had taken photos of the locked gate at Loch Whinyeon, Map 56, Core Path Plan 2013, which were circulated. Richard M will investigate further – carry forward 1.
2. Richard M to investigate overgrown brambles and gorse and lack of signage on the Core Path from Isle of Whithorn to Garlieston – carry forward 2.
3. Richard M to pursue Service Level Agreement with DGC and DGOAT with Simon Fieldhouse – carry forward 3.
4. Peter apologised for forgetting to send Katie the letter from Roseanna Cunningham MSP on funding for core path maintenance. This was no longer required – action discharged.
5. Peter apologised for not sending Ronald an electronic copy of Dumfries and Galloway Access Strategy document – carry forward 4.
6. Ross to send Ronald and Action Group in Penpont waymarking discs in the post - carry forward 5, check with Ross if this has been done.

7. Katie will email the consultation form for Balloch Wood to anyone who wants to respond – the consultation had been circulated locally and there was good community involvement and feedback. The community is keen to be involved with the Plan. The consultation is now closed – action discharged.

3. Questions on Reports

3a. Access Officer's Report

The Access Officer's Report was circulated with the meeting papers and questions were invited.

Carnsalloch

Ronald referred to a bridge at Carnsalloch which is not shown on the Core Path map and asked how he can find out where the Core Path goes. Richard M advised that this is an old vehicle bridge and not the Council's responsibility. He described the route of the Core Path. It was noted that the Community Council have waymarkers up to promote local walks but these are not part of the Core Path network.

Action 6 – Ronald to send Richard M a map of Carnsalloch to reconcile on the Council's mapping system, once Richard M is allowed access to the office when lockdown restrictions ease.

Beckfoot

Peter had received an email requesting a visit to discuss new access issues. Richard M advised that the issues relate to anti-social behaviour, which is a criminal act, which access regulations are not responsible for. The issues are not unique and are common to many farms across the region. The Council can only assist with education and signage, with other agencies dealing with the relevant regulations. John N was happy to accompany Peter on a site visit to understand the issues raised. Peter advised that a Scotways representative had raised this at the National Access Forum and official complaints received blame access but less than 1% is access related with most complaints being criminal damage. Police Scotland appears to be taking more interest and an Inspector has been appointed to look at the overall access scene. Theresa had spoken to the landowner on a number of occasions and the number of irresponsible access issues at Beckfoot appear to be increasing. Unfortunately this is not high on Police priority lists due to resource issues. Theresa suggested a joint meeting of relevant agencies – Local Authority, Police, NatureScot and representatives of the Access Forum. Richard M would be happy to attend a meeting but is unsure what more the Council or Access Forum can do. A new path was constructed to avoid the right of way on the property. The core path does not seem to be the problem, but anti-social behaviour taking place on the land is causing stress. Theresa noted that NFUS received a large number of calls from across the region last year but issues anticipated are not being seen as lockdown eases and perhaps people are becoming more educated or more tolerant.

Action 7 – Peter, Richard M, John N and Theresa to discuss further offline, prior to arranging a site meeting.

River Cree Riverbank

Katie referred to a meeting regarding the Flood Defence Scheme which is likely to take 3-4 years before completion and concerns were raised that the footpath will not last that long. This is a core path which is frequently and heavily used. She requested that the Forum writes to the Council asking that the path is saved. b M had discussed this with Simon Fieldhouse and Bryan Scott. The riverbank and flooding is an infrastructure issue but a core path runs alongside. The Council does not have the resources to repair the embankment and would have to divert the path. This is a cycle path and a busy route but is an infrastructure issue, not an access issue. Katie noted that it is a cycle path and was funded by Sustrans. It was designated a core path in 2013. Richard M pointed out another issue of who has responsibility for repairing Sustrans Cycle Paths built in the 2000s. Katie advised that core paths now come under the Council's Economy and Resources budget, not Communities.

Action 8 – Peter to write to Simon Fieldhouse, Environment Manager, copying in Michael Smith, Brian Templeton and Katie, expressing the concerns of the Forum.

Whithorn – Garlieston

Katie noted that sections of the path are being washed away by storms and high tides, due to climate change. The Shore Line Management Plan consultation closes on 21 April 2021. The core path on the shore line is very vulnerable and in danger of being lost and Katie asked if there was anything that the Forum could do. Peter noted that he was part of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere's Climate Change Group and SEPA was quite dismissive.

Action 9 – Peter to respond to the Shore Line Management Plan consultation.

Devil's Beef Tub / Corehead

Katie had been asked to raise concerns over deer fencing and future access issues around Borders Forest Trust's planting scheme at Devil's Beef Tub / Corehead. Members' experiences of BFT was that it is well aware of the access needs of walkers and there have been no issues to date. Beverley reminded members that multi-purpose access is required, for horses and disabled users, etc.

Action 10 – Peter to email BFT on behalf of the Forum seeking reassurances for access.

3b. Southern Upland Way (SUW) Report

Tom advised that the SUW Annual Report had not yet been written as the timeframe is April – March. Ross has been doing a lot of work replacing stiles with gates and improving boggy areas. Tom has been updating the website and leaflets. Availability of accommodation is proving to be an issue as some establishments will not reopen when lockdown restrictions end. Others no longer do single night stays due to the additional measures required to be Covid safe. Peter suggested trying to set up a facility for receiving donations and gift aid. Ronald noted that this is an issue for the whole SUW, which is an unattractive prospect for anyone without a tent. Tom advised that SUW is being promoted as multi-use and not just for walkers.

Action 11 – DGOAT is a member of the South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA) and will raise the issue of accommodation with the Alliance and try to facilitate a meeting between SSDA and the SUW Rangers.

Loch Trool

Katie had received complaints regarding Loch Trool being closed due to Forest and Land Scotland (FLS) harvesting with very little or no notice. This is a very popular walk in the area, with the Merrick Car Park often being busy and chaotic and she wondered if works could be done in winter. Tom confirmed that the SUW Team had not received notice but an email advising of closure and had to rush to arrange a diversion. The SUW Team is seeking a meeting with FLS as it was not happy with the timing or lack of notice. Ronald believed it to be contrary to the Scottish Access Code to arbitrarily close off access for an indefinite period. Richard M confirmed that a core path can only be closed by an Exemption Notice or Bylaw, which FLS should be well aware of.

Action 12 – Peter to write to FLS regarding lack of notice and timing of works at Loch Trool.

Katie advised that the Council is working with tourist attractions and accommodation providers across Dumfries and Galloway and with VisitSouthWestScotland and national bodies, trying to ensure the best visitor package and support Covid recovery in a managed way and asked if the SUW Team had been involved in this. Tom had not been involved and would like contacts.

Action 13 – Katie to forward contact details to Tom and Ross.

Ronald asked who is responsible for improvements and increasing car parking at Loch Trool. Peter advised that this was discussed at the National Access Forum and there are attempts to address this with funding from NatureScot. Ronald suggested that there was a 'quick fix' at Caldons Campsite. Katie suggested that car parking and this site are separate issues but the Covid Recovery Team could look at options as there are concerns regarding an influx in numbers and how the region opens up again.

Action 14 – Peter to circulate presentation and Minutes from the National Access Forum.

3c. Rhins of Galloway Coastal Path

Written report to follow.

3d. Galloway Glens LPS Paths Update

Jonathan advised that the bridge in the New Galloway Link Path is now completed. The Pack Road is holding up very well. The section from Carsphairn to Polmaddy was filmed by Border Life. A second phase from Polmaddy to Carsfad is being discussed. Funding is required for Phase 3 from Carsfad – Polharrow – Earlston Power Station to link up with the SUW.

3e. National Access Forum Report

The report was issued with the meeting papers. The last meeting saw six presentations of 20 minutes each and lasted over 3 hours.

Action 14 – Peter to circulate presentations and Minutes from the last National Access Forum meeting.

June left the meeting at 2.45 pm.

4. Dumfries and Galloway Outdoor Access Trust

Peter advised that the Trust should have held an Annual General Meeting in March but this had been delayed due to lockdown restrictions. The Peninsular Tourism project has been completed. Discussions with landowners on The Rhins of Galloway have been protracted and delayed by Covid.

A licence is required from NatureScot for the Borgue Coast SSSI. The Officer has been helpful and supportive but NatureScot stopped sending a representative to Forum meetings 5-6 years ago. Peter suggested it would be beneficial for NatureScot to attend Forum meetings, or at least have liaison meetings once or twice annually and this has been taken back to NatureScot.

5. Round Table Discussion Updates

Beverley advised that BHS had met with a group which was very active and keen. She will keep the Forum updated.

Beverley left the meeting at 2.55 pm.

Peter introduced Jane McDowall, BHS D&G. Jane was pleased to support Beverley and had enjoyed observing the meeting.

There had been some discussion offline over the Access Forum Minutes of meetings not being available on the Council's website. This also caused an issue for the National Access Forum as DGC's Minutes are not available on DGC's website. Peter can post Minutes of Access Forum meetings on the Trust's website but did not wish to step on any toes. Katie advised that the quality and content of the Council's website had been raised at the Audit Risk and Scrutiny Committee.

Action 15 – Katie to email relevant DGC Officer requesting that Access Forum Minutes are available on DGC's website.

Richard S was pleased to be back at the meeting and back to his own job, having been deployed to the Covid Tracing Team for nine months. He encouraged everyone to keep staying two metres apart to keep safe.

Catherine updated that the Ramblers Association go out in groups of 15, with walks being ticketed and bookable in advance for contact tracing, which seems to be working well.

John N commented that he rents a field between his village and the river and there seems to be a big increase in the number of dogs. Peter noted new legislation that sees increased fines and penalties for dog misbehaviour.

6. Any Other Business

There were no other items of business raised.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday 8 June 2021** on the Microsoft Teams platform. The meeting closed at 3.00 pm.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

1. Beverley had taken photos of the locked gate at Loch Whinyeon, Map 56, Core Path Plan 2013. Richard M will investigate further.
2. Richard M to investigate overgrown brambles and gorse and lack of signage on the Core Path from Isle of Whithorn to Garlieston.
3. Richard M to pursue Service Level Agreement with DGC and DGOAT with Simon Fieldhouse.
4. Peter to send Ronald an electronic copy of Dumfries and Galloway Access Strategy document.
5. Ross to send Ronald and Action Group in Penpont waymarking discs in the post.
6. Ronald to send Richard M a map of Carnsalloch to reconcile on the Council's mapping system, once Richard M is allowed access to the office when lockdown restrictions ease.
7. Peter, Richard M, John N and Theresa to discuss Beckfoot offline, prior to arranging a site meeting.
8. Peter to write to Simon Fieldhouse, Environment Manager, copying in Michael Smith, Brian Templeton and Katie, expressing the concerns of the Forum in relation to the footpath at River Cree.
9. Peter to respond to the Shore Line Management Plan consultation.
10. Peter to email BFT on behalf of the Forum seeking reassurances for access in relation to planting at Devil's Beeftub / Corehead.
11. DGOAT is a member of the South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA) and will raise the issue of accommodation with the Alliance and try to facilitate a meeting between SSDA and the SUW Rangers.
12. Peter to write to FLS regarding lack of notice and timing of works at Loch Trool.
13. Katie to forward contact details for the Council's Covid Recovery Team to Tom and Ross.
14. Peter to circulate presentations and Minutes from the last National Access Forum meeting.
15. Katie to email relevant DGC Officer requesting that Access Forum Minutes are available on DGC's website.

**DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 8 JUNE 2021 AT 1.30 PM
ONLINE, MICROSOFT TEAMS MEETING**

Present:	Peter Ross (Chair)	DGOAT / Health Walks
	Jonathan Barrett	DGC Galloway Glens LPS
	Teresa Dougall	NFUS
	Cllr Katie Hagmann	DGC Elected Member
	June Hay	DGOAT / Cycling
	Tom Henry	DGC Southern Upland Way Ranger
	Catherine Makepeace	Wigtownshire Ramblers
	Richard Masters	DGC Access Officer
	Bryan Scott	DGC Rhins of Galloway Coast Path
	Richard Smith	NHS D&G Public Health

In Attendance:	Sheila Adams	Minutes
	Amee Hood	NatureScot
	Jane McDowall	BHS D&G

Apologies:	John Blaikie	Water Access
	Ross Gemmell	DGC Southern Upland Way Ranger
	John Nelson	Land Manager
	William Oakes	DGOAT / Scotways and Dog Walking
	Ronald Turnbull	DGOAT
	Beverley Vaux	BHS

Peter welcomed everyone to the online meeting. He was delighted to welcome Amee Hood, Area Officer Southern Scotland, NatureScot, who is the lead for Improving Public Access enquiries. Amee introduced herself and her background. All present introduced themselves.

1. Minutes of the last Forum Meeting of 20 April 2021

The Minutes of the meeting of 20 April 2021 were approved as a true record and were proposed as such by June Hay and seconded by Richard Smith.

2. Matters Arising and Update on Action Points

1. Beverley had taken photos of the locked gate at Loch Whinyeon, Map 56, Core Path Plan 2013. Richard M will investigate further – carried forward.
2. Richard M to investigate overgrown brambles and gorse and lack of signage on the Core Path from Isle of Whithorn to Garlieston – carry forward.
3. Richard M to pursue Service Level Agreement with DGC and DGOAT with Simon Fieldhouse – an SLA is not appropriate – need to think more about Mission Statement and way forward – remove action.
4. Peter to send Ronald an electronic copy of Dumfries and Galloway Access Strategy document – sent – discharged.
5. Ross to send Ronald and Action Group in Penpont waymarking discs in the post – sent – discharged.
6. Ronald to send Richard M a map of Carnsalloch to reconcile on the Council's mapping system, once Richard M is allowed access to the office when lockdown restrictions ease – done – discharged.
7. Peter, Richard M, John N and Theresa to discuss Beckfoot offline, prior to arranging a site meeting – meeting arranged for 14 June 2021.

8. Peter to write to Simon Fieldhouse, Environment Manager, copying in Michael Smith, Brian Templeton and Katie, expressing the concerns of the Forum in relation to the footpath at River Cree – letter sent but no response received to date. Peter to copy the letter to Katie.
9. Peter to respond to the Shore Line Management Plan consultation – done – discharged.
10. Peter to email BFT on behalf of the Forum seeking reassurances for access in relation to planting at Devil's Beeftub / Corehead – carry forward.
11. DGOAT is a member of the South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA) and will raise the issue of accommodation with the Alliance and try to facilitate a meeting between SSDA and the SUW Rangers – carry forward.
12. Peter to write to FLS regarding lack of notice and timing of works at Loch Trool – letter sent. Shortly after this a new sign appeared at Glentrool advising of alternative route. Response to letter advised of staff changes and invited representatives to a meeting. Peter and Richard M have discussed and will meet FLS with Bryan and Ross.
13. Katie to forward contact details for the Council's Covid Recovery Team to Tom and Ross – Tom had received details through other sources - discharged.
14. Peter to circulate presentations and Minutes from the last National Access Forum meeting – sent after meeting - discharged.
15. Katie to email relevant DGC Officer requesting that Access Forum Minutes are available on DGC's website – carry forward – Katie will keep pursuing this.

3. Questions on Reports

3a. Access Officer's Report

The Access Officer's Report was circulated with the meeting papers and questions were invited.

Creetown (Kirkmabreck Quarry Quay 'The Crusher') – Access Rights

Katie noted that a fence has been erected and sometimes the gates are locked and sometimes they are unlocked. It is not known who owns the site but believed that it is being marketed to be sold. Richard M will check with the Council's Enforcement Team for more information and to see if complaints have been received. Katie noted that nature has reclaimed the pier, with a huge amount of biodiversity (moths, bees, lichens) and a survey would be beneficial. The zoning of the land is not known.

Newton Stewart Riverside – Core Path 427 - River Cree Riverbank

Katie reiterated that the Community Council is really worried about safety concerns and that the path will disappear before the four-year timeframe for the Flood Scheme. Richard M advised that he has been pursuing this with the Infrastructure Team as a bigger Scheme is required than could be delivered by a small Environment Team. Peter noted that, if the experts are correct and weather conditions continue to deteriorate, riverbank paths will always be a problem and longer term solutions are required. Katie stressed that the path is heavily used, particularly since lockdown, and although it will form part of the new Flood Scheme, the community has serious concerns that it will not last that long. Bryan agreed with Richard and stressed that the Environment Team can only carry out small repairs but this is an infrastructure issue requiring a solution. The viability of core paths along riverbanks is a major concern and this also applies to coastal paths. The Access budget is insufficient to reinstate floodbanks and alternative routes would have to be given consideration.

Core Path Maintenance

Katie asked if the Council's procurement process for core path maintenance had been undertaken. Richard M advised that the process had taken three months through procurement and that the Invitation to Tender document had been issued that day, with a two week period for quotes. It is expected that the Contractor would be appointed at the end of June with works undertaken between July – October.

3b. Southern Upland Way (SUW) Report

Peter advised Tom that DGOAT is in the process of getting internet banking, which will allow a Paypal account to be set up to receive donations.

3c. Rhins of Galloway Coastal Path Report (Verbal)

Bryan apologised for not issuing a written report last time. The project is progressing and an extension has been granted to September 2022. Negotiations with landowners are taking longer than expected. Minor changes to the route are sometimes required. The DGTrails website has an embryonic Rhins of Galloway page, which will be populated over coming months. The Activities Programme has been curtailed by Covid restrictions. Working with Solway Firth Partnership, remote online talks and events are being held, with an ongoing online archaeology programme being well received, including reconstruction of Doon Castle Broch. Surveying activities will take place on site from the end of August, if Covid allows. An exhibition of clifftop wild flowers is in Logan Gardens till the end of June. Contractors work on infrastructure is ongoing.

Peter was impressed with the exhibition at Logan Gardens and the big article in the Herald the previous week. The local Steering Group will be reformed in June. Amee asked Bryan if the Council has many IPA schemes planned. Bryan confirmed that the Council will be submitting IPA applications to extend budgets on the Rhins Coastal Path as things are costing more than anticipated. Amee offered assistance with guidance and documents but is unable to do site visits this year.

3d. Galloway Glens LPS Paths Report (Verbal)

Jonathan advised that tenders for the New Galloway Links Path are due back by 18 June. A funding bid has been submitted to The Land Trust and NatureScot. Torrs Point is being heavily used and Blackpark to Bridge of Dee is also being well used. Threave Estate Trim Trail is now open for the more energetic. The Pack Road is also enjoying good usage, with some grass growth through the path. Phases 2 and 3 of the Pack Road continue. Jonathan and Andrew Nicholson will be on Borderlife on 5 July on a programme about the Pack Road from Carsphairn to Polmaddy.

3e. National Access Forum Report

Peter commented that he had attended a mid-week funeral in North Argyll and noted that there were cars everywhere at Glencoe, in every possible parking space, with people inappropriately dressed. He suggested looking at the issue of car parking in general on future agendas. Amee had received an enquiry through the Green Recovery Fund for parking at St Ninian's Cave. This funding round has now closed but applications can still be made to the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund through VisitScotland. This funding is for infrastructure for car parks and can only be applied for by Councils and National Parks. Problems with campervans parking at Caerlaverock have been highlighted and NatureScot will liaise with the Council to work together. Amee will advise of any further grant updates. Katie noted that the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund is open till 13 August and felt it pertinent for the Access Forum to ask the Council to apply as there is a huge amount of money available in the short term. This funding would assist Officers who are being asked to do a huge amount of work with minimal budget and capacity. Katie suggested extending the coastal path as shovel ready projects would be required for the short term funding available. Bryan added that there are ambitions to form a coastal path for the whole south west Scotland from Gretna to Stranraer, much of which is designated as Core Path. Some sections are missing and paths have to be a specified standard to be regarded as a coast path. This would take time to be developed and costed up however.

Action 7 - Peter will email Forum members with a view to setting up a Working Group to consider shovel ready projects and funding bids.

On the subject of car parks, Bryan noted that this is a major issue right along the coast. Small car parks have evolved. Many agreements with landowners have now lapsed, relying on goodwill, which is unsatisfactory as car parks could be closed where agreements have lapsed.

It is vitally important for access to core paths to have car parking and associated infrastructure. Funding was applied for two years ago but there was insufficient evidence of use and problems. Investment, management and maintenance is essential. There has to be recognition that the Local Authority is the only organisation that is able to access resources. There is some disconnect in terms of Departmental responsibility for car parks but consistency is required. If the region is serious about improving the tourist offer in Dumfries and Galloway, a standard of even basic facilities (information, toilets, etc) needs to be maintained. Jonathan agreed with Bryan's points and noted that access to the coast is remarkably difficult with a huge maintenance backlog.

With regard to the increased use of motorhomes and campervans, Bryan noted that Highland Council is considering looking at the establishment of 'aires', which are common on the continent. There is a need to stop looking at problems and start looking at opportunities for the economy, looking at facilities and encouraging people to spend more time in the area. Peter noted that 'no overnight camping' signs are springing up in some areas (e.g. Portpatrick and Sandhead), while others are building campervan sites. Peter referred to the report by Luss Estates, discussed at the National Access Forum. After the meeting, Sheila circulated a report produced by Southern Uplands Partnership on Aires in the South of Scotland, funded by NatureScot [Aires-Report-final.pdf \(sup.org.uk\)](#). The BBC News Article on Highland Council's proposals for Aires can be found here [Highlands set for network of motorhome stopovers - BBC News](#).

3f. BHS Access Report

On behalf of Beverley, Jane referred to the electric cattle pads being laid across core paths at Arbigland. Beverley had sent photos to Richard M, who had taken it up with Highways in terms of health and safety and legalities. Richard had a meeting arranged with the Estate Manager of Arbigland to look at safer and better access and management of stock on the ground. Richard will feed back to Beverley and Jane.

With regard to access at Stroanfeggan, Peter noted that the Southern Upland Way goes up the boundary of FLS land, which is excessively steep. He had planted there in the 1970s and did not think that horses would be able to get up there. As a Director of Southern Uplands Partnership (SUP), Katie noted the first part of the report and the equestrian tourism project in the Borders. The ambition is to extend this into Dumfries and Galloway but it comes down to financial resources and capacity. Bryan noted that some issues for horse riders and trailers are just as pertinent to people on foot as a lot of areas can only be accessed by car. Facilities are required for pull ins, not just car parks. Informal car parks on the coast are well used by horse riders to get access to the beach. Jane pointed out the request in Beverley's report for support from the Access Forum for the Ken Cairn Equestrian Access Group.

Action 8 – Peter will discuss offline with Beverley and Jane the issue of additional wind turbines at Cornharrow Windfarm and how best to deal with this.

4. Dumfries and Galloway Outdoor Access Trust

Although the report was very short, the Trust had been very busy. The Coastal Path at Borgue which the Trust had taken on 18 months ago was taking up an inordinate amount of time. There is now just some waymarking to be completed. Working on an SSSI had been a long learning journey but a positive to come from this was meeting Anee and inviting her to attend Access Forum meetings. There has been no recent update on the St Ninian's Pilgrim Route. The Trust has provided letters of support for communities seeking funds. Additional Trustees / volunteers are still required. A Health Walker in Newton Stewart has been approached and is considering joining. Katie suggested advertising in Volunteering Scotland for Trustees. There is currently an appeal on the Trust's own website but this will be considered in future. Peter explained to Anee that the Trust is closely aligned to the Forum and acts as 'champion', raising funds and promoting access. Funding is being sought to employ a Project Officer.

5. Round Table Discussion Updates

Peter reiterated that he is delighted to have a NatureScot representative at Forum meetings and invited Ameer to attend any or all of the meetings. Ameer advised that she is trying to get an overview of issues across the south of Scotland and asked if there was any update on the South of Scotland Visitor Plan. Peter advised that he had contributed to the SSSDA Paths Plan and undertook to send Ameer an update if he finds out any more.

Bryan referred to the late report he had sent at lunch time on Criffel Knockendoch Core Path 103. The majority of path works are complete, with signage about to start. An agreed circular route will be signed to clarify. The farmer at Ardwell decided not to enter into a Legal Agreement so that he can keep full control and management of the car park but has extended the car park to accommodate up to 45 cars. There will be a formal 'opening' later in summer. Peter thanked and congratulated the team for the successful work on Criffel, which is a key route in Dumfries and Galloway and tourism draw.

For information, Bryan advised that the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) (Amendment) (Scotland) Act was passed in May 2021. This amendment is welcome and increases fines and penalties. NFUS posters have been seen on gates etc. This may become a bigger issue and agenda item going forward as the number of dogs increases. Jonathan added that he had been printing off NFUS resources from the website and laminating and putting up where appropriate as farmers are finding an increase in numbers. Theresa confirmed that there is a full section on the NFUS website on access, signage and guidance. There is also a guidance webinar for farmers on how to handle livestock attacks. Catherine asked if signage has to be put up on fields with bulls and if bulls can be in fields on core paths. Theresa confirmed that farmers are encouraged to display adequate signage but the onus is on the walker and responsible access to be aware of what is in a field. Peter noted that people are encouraged to read the Access Code but it would be better if this was easier to read and more accessibly available.

6. Any Other Business

There were no other items of business raised.

Peter thanked everyone for attending the meeting, which was very worthwhile and showed the need for quarterly meetings.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday 7 September 2021**. A decision on an in-person or Microsoft Teams meeting would be agreed nearer the time, or possibly a 'walk and talk' informal meeting. The meeting closed at 3.00 pm.

**DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM
MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 8 JUNE 2021**

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

1. Beverley had taken photos of the locked gate at Loch Whinyeon, Map 56, Core Path Plan 2013. Richard M will investigate further.
2. Richard M to investigate overgrown brambles and gorse and lack of signage on the Core Path from Isle of Whithorn to Garlieston.
3. Peter to send Katie a copy of the letter written to Simon Fieldhouse, Environment Manager, expressing the concerns of the Forum in relation to the footpath at River Cree.
4. Peter to email BFT on behalf of the Forum seeking reassurances for access in relation to planting at Devil's Beeftub / Corehead.
5. DGOAT is a member of the South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA) and will raise the issue of accommodation with the Alliance and try to facilitate a meeting between SSDA and the SUW Rangers.
6. Katie to email relevant DGC Officer requesting that Access Forum Minutes are available on DGC's website.
7. Peter to email Forum members with a view to setting up a Working Group to consider shovel ready projects and funding bids.
8. Peter to discuss offline with Beverley and Jane the issue of additional wind turbines at Cornharrow Windfarm and how best to deal with this.

**DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 7 SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 1.30 PM
ONLINE, MICROSOFT TEAMS MEETING**

Present:	Peter Ross (Chair)	DGOAT / Health Walks
	Jonathan Barrett	DGC Galloway Glens LPS
	Teresa Dougall	NFUS
	Cllr Katie Hagmann	DGC Elected Member
	June Hay	DGOAT / Cycling
	Catherine Makepeace	Wigtownshire Ramblers
	Richard Masters	DGC Access Officer
	John Nelson	Land Manager
	William Oakes	DGOAT / Scotways and Dog Walking
	Beverley Vaux	BHS

In Attendance:	Sheila Adams	Minutes
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Apologies:	John Blaikie	Water Access
	Ross Gemmell	DGC Southern Upland Way Ranger
	Tom Henry	DGC Southern Uplands Way Ranger
	Amee Hood	NatureScot
	Jane McDowall	BHS D&G
	Martin Page	Forestry and Land Scotland
	Margaret Peck	DGOAT
	Bryan Scott	DGC Rhins of Galloway Coast Path
	Richard Smith	NHS D&G Public Health

Peter welcomed everyone to the online meeting. There were some technical issues with screens.

1. Minutes of the last Forum Meeting of 8 June 2021

The Minutes of the meeting of 8 June 2021 were approved as a true record and were proposed as such by Teresa Dougall and seconded by June Hay.

2. Matters Arising and Update on Action Points

1. Beverley had taken photos of the locked gate at Loch Whinyeon, Map 56, Core Path Plan 2013. Richard M will investigate when time allows – still on ‘to do’ list– carried forward.
2. Richard M will ask Ross to check position on overgrown brambles and gorse and lack of signage on the Core Path from Isle of Whithorn to Garlieston and deal with as appropriate. Remove from Actions List and include update in report.
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8. Peter to discuss offline with Beverley and Jane the issue of additional wind turbines at Cornharrow Windfarm and how best to deal with this – not done yet – carry forward.

Peter advised that Ronald Turnbull had resigned as a Trustee of DGOAT.

3. Questions on Reports

3a. Access Officer's Report

The Access Officer's Report was circulated with the meeting papers.

Creetown (Kirkmabreck Quarry Quay 'The Crusher') – Access Rights
DGC's Enforcement Officer has been in touch with the owner and requested submission of a retrospective planning application. The owner says fencing was erected to prevent the site being occupied as parking for motorhomes etc. Katie noted that there had always been big boulders on the site and no caravans that she was aware of. Katie is trying to assist constituents and has passed on Peter's details to raise directly with the Access Forum if residents so wish.

Core Path Maintenance

Complaints regarding core paths have reduced. Contractors are working across the region from east to west. There is some flexibility within the contract to move the order of work areas if required.

Peter noted that Glenwhan Gates are now open.

3b. Southern Upland Way (SUW) Report

There was no written report received and Ross and Tom were not present at the meeting. Peter reported that Ross was busy working on the SUW. Peter had visited the Bothy, where the only negative comment in the Visitor Book was regarding midgies. All others were positive and complimentary.

3c. Rhins of Galloway Coastal Path Report (Verbal)

There was no written report received and Bryan was not present at the meeting. Peter updated that works were continuing, with some landowner issues still to resolve. Peter has been asked to make contact to try and take forward. The Company doing the interpretation is currently on site doing a recce.

Katie was aware that Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere (GSAB) was looking at other coastal path areas to develop and suggested using existing works as learning. GSAB is carrying out a consultation on including the Rhins in the Biosphere and Katie asked if it would be appropriate to invite a representative of GSAB to join the Forum and encourage working in partnership. Peter advised that he chairs the Rhins Coastal Path Steering Group and GSAB has a seat on this Group. Jonathan advised that he spoken to Andrew Tait of GSAB, who has a background in access and would be the most appropriate person from GSAB. Peter noted that the Access Forum is a statutory body and it is for DGC to decide on the membership. Richard saw no harm in inviting a GSAB representative to talk and update the Forum occasionally. Peter suggested extending an invitation to GSAB as a one-off. Katie declared an interest as a member of GSAB Board, sitting on both Groups as a Council appointed representative.

Action – Katie to email Richard M to request GSAB membership or occasional attendance of a GSAB representative at Forum meetings.

3d. Galloway Glens LPS Paths Report (Verbal)

The Galloway Glens LPS Path Update Report was circulated with meeting papers.

Jonathan was enthused by the completion of the New Galloway Link Path. The inaugural walk was on 19 August and the path is proving to be very popular. A grant application has been submitted to NatureScot for upgrading and rebuilding CP155 Threave Island/Kelton Mains route, which is likely to attract more usage and needs modernised. Two guided walks on the Pack Road in August were fully subscribed. Pioneering explanatory work is taking place on the route from Polmaddy to Carsfad (phase 2) and Polharrow Bridge to Earlstoun Power Station (phase 3) if funding can be sourced to deliver this over the next few years.

Beverley asked if Carsphairn to Polmaddy is fully open. Jonathan confirmed that it is. Peter was pleased to see 25 people present at the opening.

3e. National Access Forum Report

No update.

3f. BHS D&G Report

Beverley advised that one issue near Newton Stewart had been resolved.

3g. Ramblers Association

Peter had included the link the Ramblers Scottish Paths Map, which had come through Paths for All. Volunteer surveyors are being sought. Some paths are indicative rather than surveyed.

4. Dumfries and Galloway Outdoor Access Trust Report

The DGOAT Report was circulated with the meeting papers.

Margaret Peck had joined DGOAT as a Trustee but was unable to join the meeting due to IT issues. One more Trustee is still required for the Trust. Jonathan volunteered to be a Trustee. Peter would be pleased to have Jonathan on board but asked him to check with DGC as employer that this is acceptable.

Peter met with Galloway Glens team to discuss funding and a legacy project. Peter thanked William for submitting the Trust's annual report and accounts to OSCR. Trust members will need to have a meeting in autumn.

A Sub Group had met three times to try and help resolve the issues at Beckfoot. One solution would be to move the cattle to another farm and put sheep at Beckfoot, requesting temporary closure during lambing operations. Richard advised that a core path cannot be closed but correctly worded signage could be used discouraging access during lambing. Discussions are ongoing to find an acceptable conclusion. The gist of the Beckfoot complaint was some horse riders. Other path options had been considered but the landowner was not in favour. Jane had spoken to BHS nationally and offered to run a publicity campaign on responsible horse riding and access. She offered to post this to members and increase publicity. It was agreed that Jane should be asked to proceed with this. The legal outcome of an objection to designation as a core path is awaited. If objections are not withdrawn, this will go to the Scottish Government for Public Inquiry. Peter suggested that the Sub Group meets again in October, with Jane setting the BHS publicity in motion in the meantime. Beverley offered to help with this. Teresa is waiting for the landowner to provide information for NFUS to take forward.

5. Round Table Discussion Updates

John referred to the discussion on aires in the Minutes of the last meeting. Loch Ken Trust has been experiencing problems with fouling and more public toilets or self-cleaning toilet pods around the area are required. Peter noted that a NatureScot Grant Scheme for temporary toilets was raised at the National Access Forum meeting. New Zealand has banned campervans without internal sanitary facilities. John thought it was an increase in the number of wild campers causing the problems, rather than campervans. Self-cleaning toilet systems could be linked to provision for campervans. Richard agreed that facilities on the ground are required to encourage visitors.

Action – Peter to write to DGC and NAF to suggest the provision of self-cleaning toilet pods to encourage visitors.

June referred to an issue at Woodhall Loch where local people were challenged by Hensol estate representatives and were unable to launch canoes. There was a sign with a charge for wild camping but this had been removed. Richard advised that Bryan had been contacted by Balmaghie Community Council as Hensol Estates has a designated campsite and does not want people camping in other parts of the estate.

Action – Bryan/Richard to write to Hensol Estate again to explain access rights.

Teresa reported on a recent meeting with D&G Partnership Against Rural Crime at which the number of reported rural crimes was down but the cost of thefts has increased through organised criminality from over the border coming to D&G. Livestock attacks have decreased this year. Teresa is back working in the region full-time and will be working on visitor management. Next year she hopes to be out and about raising awareness and looking again at FarmWatch which may help with access issues on farms. It was noted that a very valuable tractor/digger part had recently been stolen from Hensol Estate, which could have affected their judgement.

6. Any Other Business

Peter advised that he and Richard M had met with Martin Page, Forestry and Land Scotland, at Ae. He is the new South of Scotland Regional Officer and it was a very welcoming discussion. Martin is very keen to contribute to the Forum and will attend meetings when he can. Martin was unable to attend this meeting but has offered to catch up with members on any specific items.

Beverley referred to the action carried forward in respect of Cornharrow Windfarm and advised that the issue is in the transporting of the turbines and the problems for horse riders if they meet a lorry with a turbine. Peter noted that the Access Authority is in a difficult position if the Windfarm has been approved by full Council.

June asked when it would be possible to meet again in person. Peter hoped that this would be at the next meeting but Covid numbers in the region are increasing and he knows of people who have been affected or isolating as close contacts. Peter advised that the LEADER Local Action Group has hired two rooms at the Crichton to meet in person but windows will be open and attendees will be required to take a lateral flow test on the day. While online meetings are not ideal, they are better than no meetings at all and do save on travelling. Richard confirmed that the Forum is still fulfilling its statutory duties by meeting online and he thought it unlikely that meetings would return in person before 2022 as Council buildings remain closed. Katie referred to the size of the region and asked if it would be possible to do hybrid meetings when physical meetings do resume and asked that IT requirements for this are borne in mind when arranging meeting venues, to ensure that as many people as possible can attend, either in person or online. Peter suggested that funding could be applied for to employ a professional facilitator for the first couple of meetings. Katie pointed out that the Forum is a statutory body and DGC has training available on chairing remote and hybrid meetings.

Peter was pleased to note that Ross had sorted the gate on Borgue path. He had been threatened in a meeting and he asked who owns the artefacts that go on access paths. Richard advised that furniture that is installed by DGC is owned by DGC. There is still some work to be done on educating people on the Land Reform Act and responsible access. Katie added that anyone can put a request to DGC to organise ward events or 'community conversations'. She suggested for the year ahead that the Forum gets support from DGC for a ward event on access.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday 7 December 2021.**

*This was subsequently postponed for various reasons to **Tuesday 18 January 2022.***

The meeting closed at 3.00 pm.

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