

## EAST LoTHIAN COUNCIL

### PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNITY SERVICES

Minutes of the meeting of the **EAST LoTHIAN LOCAL ACCESS FORUM**  
held on **31<sup>st</sup> January 2024** at Saltire Room 2, John Muir House, Haddington.

---

#### **PRESENT:**

Thomas Stanley (Chair) ... Landowners	Martin Andrews ..... Wemyss & March
Mark James ..... Cycling UK	Fraser Macdonald..... National Trust Scot.
Constance Newbould ..... BHSS	Gordon Stewart ..... National Trust Scot.
James Wyllie..... NFUS	

#### **ATTENDING:**

Jenny Hargreaves ..... ELC Countryside	Chris Milne ..... ELC Active Travel
Nick Morgan ..... ELC Countryside	

#### **APOLOGIES:**

John Barbour ..... Dunbar Golf Club	Eamon John..... ELC SCL Manager
Beth Leslie ..... Ramblers Scotland	Jill Mackay ..... ELC Comms.
Shona McIntosh ..... ELC Councillor	Peter Hildrew ..... Scotways

---

#### **ACTION**

Thomas welcomed Gordon Stewart and Fraser MacDonald from the National Trust for Scotland. Other new members, who had to give their apologies, are John Barbour and Jacky Montgomery, from Dunbar Golf Club. They are going to share the position representing golf clubs. Nick also mentioned that Jen Newcombe (Countryside Ranger) who had been taking minutes for us has successfully applied for the post of Biodiversity Officer for the Council, so will no longer attend LAF meetings. Also Hanna Lundstrom, the Climate Change Officer has left the Council. A new person has been appointed to that role and Nick will invite them to attend future LAF meetings. Nick will circulate a list of the current membership. **NM**

#### **1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING held on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2023.**

The minutes were agreed as a true reflection of the meeting. Proposed by Constance and seconded by Mark.

#### **2. MATTERS ARISING**

- 2.1 Nick has passed on the views of the LAF about different surfacing options for the Haddington to Longniddry Railway Walk.
- 2.2 After discussions with a Planner it was decided that this isn't the appropriate time to write to Community Councils to urge them to become engaged with the Local

Development Plan, particularly about paths. It would be more appropriate to write prior to the consultation on the Proposed Sites Consultation.

- 2.3 The Climate Change Officer, Hanna Lundstrom, left the Council in December. A new person has been appointed to that post and will hopefully be starting in March or April.

### **3. ACCESS OFFICER'S UPDATE**

This was circulated in advance of the meeting and Nick ran through it.

- 3.1 James was pleased that East Lothian Council will continue to be responsible for maintenance along the John Muir Way.
- 3.2 The forum members were keen to support the idea of a bigger, better project in Dunbar to sort out the landslip, making it into a more accessible destination. Mark will suggest to the Community Council that they should suggest this in their Local Place Plan. **MJ**
- 3.3 It was suggested that the new bridge at Letham should be featured in a Facebook post. Possibly a photoshoot with LAF members in it could be arranged. **NM**
- 3.4 The gates on the new path from Tynninghame to Binning Wood were being installed on the morning of the meeting.
- 3.5 Nick will chase up Sustrans about the final results of the consultation for the Haddington to Longniddry Railway Walk surfacing project and to ask when the next progress meeting will be. He will see if Sustrans are agreeable to fund just some parts of the work, such as the bridges. He will also put together a note of what the Local Access Forum feel would be acceptable work on the route and circulate it for approval. **NM**
- 3.6 A suggestion was made that advertising could contribute towards the cost of the Visit East Lothian app. Nick will suggest this to Economic Development. **NM**
- 3.7 Thomas was keen to join in with a Path Warden Team Task if possible. Nick to let him know when they are to be. **NM**
- 3.8 Mark asked if Path Wardens were aware of the LAF? Nick will send some information to the Countryside Officer to circulate to Path Wardens. **NM**

### **4. FORUM FACEBOOK**

- 4.1 Nick admitted that there had been very little activity on the Facebook page because of other work pressures. However, he will put up a post about the new bridge at Letham and the path from Tynninghame to Binning Wood.
- 4.2 Gordon suggested that it is worth putting a comment on a post, as that appears to attract more views.
- 4.3 It was suggested that the Path Warden posts that go onto the Rangers' Facebook page could be linked to the LAF page.
- 4.4 Any member with ideas for posts to go on the LAF page to send them to Nick. **All**

## **5 AGENDA ITEMS**

- 5.1 Thomas introduced this item. When LAFs were originally proposed there was a big emphasis on involvement in Core Paths Planning. The LAF is still a statutory consultee for many procedures such as core paths diversions and Section 11 Orders. Beyond that LAFs can set their own agenda. He was keen for members to suggest subjects for future agendas. He suggested that the LAF could become more involved in the planning process given that the new LDP is currently being developed.
- 5.2 Martin thought rather than focus on specific issues it would be better for the LAF to give more strategic advice. He is conscious that the LAF is here to support the Council which is struggling with resource issues at present and it would be good for the LAF to try to influence the LDP. He feels there is currently too much emphasis on house numbers and there are other things that are important. Thomas said that we need to consider how to make a meaningful contribution.
- 5.3 James sees the role of the Forum as supporting the Council to maintain the path network as it is and extending it where possible. He was also keen that we acknowledge that landowners have given up a lot of land in the past for paths. Constance agreed that people prefer to use paths rather than making their own way through wilderness.
- 5.4 Mark asked Thomas if he knew what landowners thought about paths and public access. Thomas said it would be interesting to gather their views.
- 5.5 Martin thought that the Local Place Plans were an opportunity for local communities to influence planning. Many Community Councils feel empowered by being involved with these.
- 5.6 The members thought it would be helpful to meet face to face with a Planner to find out more about the production of the new Local Development Plan. Nick will see if a Planner is able to attend a future meeting. **NM**

## **6. ACTIVE TRAVEL PROJECTS (this wasn't an agenda item, but I have minuted it as such)**

- 6.1 Chris Milne gave an update on a few of the Active Travel projects he has been involved with. He produces a written note for the Cycle Forum, so will distil out relevant projects to share with the LAF. Sustrans have considerable funds and have been asking the Council for active travel projects that they can fund.
- 6.2 One of these projects is to try to improve safety where the Pencaitland Railway Walk crosses the B6093 west of Pencaitland. It is proposed to put up some pedestrian activated signs to warn drivers where pedestrians, horses or cyclists are crossing the road.
- 6.3 Sustrans have offered some funding for barrier improvements on the cycle network. They have done an audit and we are now compiling a list of five or six locations (mostly residential) that can be re-surfaced or widened to improve access.
- 6.4 The A1 underpass at Meadowmill has always been unlit. New lighting has been installed by Bear and we are waiting for Scottish Power to provide a connection.
- 6.5 Sustrans are funding a consultant to undertake an options appraisal for improved cycle and pedestrian access between Levenhall and Prestonpans. This could be

along either side of the B1348, or possibly into Levenhall Links. They will undertake a feasibility study with estimated costs.

## **7. ACCESS ISSUES UPDATE**

A summary of access issues was circulated in advance of the meeting.

- 7.1 Nick reported that since sending out the update last week one more issue has been resolved, so in the last 12 months 11 access issues have been resolved and two remain ongoing.

## **8. MEMBERS' UPDATES**

- 8.1 Mark informed the meeting about the Love to Ride app [Home : Love to Ride UK](#) which encourages people to cycle, gives an opportunity to log your ride and join with communities.
- 8.2 James reported that it is now lambing season, so people should keep dogs under control, or preferably on a lead near fields of sheep. He will find a link. (Note from James attached.) **JW**
- 8.3 James has organised a spring meeting for all those involved with the River Tyne Giant Hogweed eradication programme. This is now in its sixth year and showing great results.
- 8.4 James is Chair of the volunteer group that has developed the Forth to Farne Way. They are currently building the web site, which it is hoped will be available in a month or so, which will contain downloadable maps. The route is way marked and a guide book has been produced.
- 8.5 Constance will discuss the bridges over the saltmarsh with the BHS committee. There is some quite serious erosion around these. Constance would support a boardwalk, but it would have to have rails along the side. Jenny will talk to the Countryside Officer about this. He is currently arranging emergency repairs to improve safety. **JH/CN**

## **9. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

Wednesday 24th April 2024 via Teams

Wednesday 31st July 2024 in Saltire Room 2, John Muir House, Haddington

Wednesday 30th October 2024 via Teams