

**DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 18 JANUARY 2022 AT 1.30 PM
ONLINE, MICROSOFT TEAMS MEETING**

Present:	Peter Ross (Chair) Jonathan Barrett John Blaikie Richard Clarke Teresa Dougall June Hay Catherine Makepeace Margaret Peck Bryan Scott Richard Smith Beverley Vaux	DGOAT Trustee / Health Walks DGOAT Trustee / DGC Galloway Glens LPS Water Access SUP South West Scotland Coastal Path NFUS DGOAT Trustee / Cycling Wigtownshire Ramblers DGOAT Trustee / Walker / Rambler DGC Rhins of Galloway Coast Path NHS D&G Public Health Horse Interests
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In Attendance:	Sheila Adams	Minutes
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Apologies:	Ross Gemmell Cllr Katie Hagmann Tom Henry Richard Masters John Nelson William Oakes Martin Page Vacancy (Amea Hood left)	DGC Southern Upland Way Ranger DGC Elected Member DGC Southern Uplands Way Ranger DGC Access Officer Land Manager DGOAT Trustee / Scotways and Dog Walking Forestry and Land Scotland NatureScot
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1. Welcome, Apologies, Declarations of Interest

The apologies above were read out. Peter welcomed everyone to the online meeting. He wished everyone all the best for 2022 and apologised for postponing the December meeting, due to several people having other commitments and work pressures. There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of the last Forum Meeting of 7 September 2021

The Minutes of the meeting of 7 September 2021 were approved as a true record and were proposed as such by Teresa Dougall and seconded by June Hay.

3. 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 had investigated and advised that this was not on a core path. He would try to investigate ownership – carry forward.
2. 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 – this had not yet happened due to Covid restrictions and capacity - carry forward.
3. Katie to email relevant DGC Officer requesting that Access Forum Minutes are available on DGC's website – Katie had emailed regarding this and was awaiting feedback from DGC Officer investigating this – carry forward.
4. Peter to email Forum members with a view to setting up a Working Group to consider shovel ready projects and funding bids – not done yet due to capacity – carry forward.

5. 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.
6. Katie to email Richard M to request GSAB membership or occasional attendance from a GSAB representative at Forum meetings – it was not known if this had been done – carry forward. Peter had completed a form regarding DGC Elected representatives.
7. Peter to write to DGC and NAF to suggest the provision of self-cleaning toilet pods to encourage visitors – carry forward.
8. Bryan/Richard to write to Hensol Estate again to explain access rights – Richard M had written but had not yet received a response.

On behalf of Katie, June raised concerns about the inaccessibility to the beach at Kirkmabreck Quarry Quay and the dangerous situation for walkers. Bryan advised that retrospective planning consent had been granted for the fence. Richard M had advised Planners that Access Officers were not consulted on the retrospective application. Katie had missed the very short deadline for the very brief consultation period and was discussing with Legal Services how to reach a compromise. The site has been used for access to the coast for decades. It is not known when or if any development will take place and the landowner will be asked to allow responsible access to the coast.

4. Questions on Reports

4a. Access Officer's Report

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

Richard M was not able to be present at the meeting to due an urgent dental appointment. Peter suggested that any questions on the report were emailed to Richard directly.

4b. Southern Upland Way (SUW) Report

The SUW report was circulated with the meeting papers and there were no questions thereon.

4c. Rhins of Galloway Coastal Path Report (Verbal)

Bryan apologised for not providing a written report, which he will send on after the meeting. Infrastructure improvements on the route are ongoing. The project is officially due to complete in September 2022. The infrastructure improvements should be complete by September but time will be needed for embedding and completing publicity and marketing. A formal request will be submitted to National Lottery Heritage Fund to extend it to March 2023. Works have concentrated on the North Rhins: Stranraer – Portpatrick. The west coast is about to start, with Dunskey Estate and the Southern Upland Way section. Gaps are starting to be filled in and Bryan shared his screen to show what is accessible and what is not. A specialist interpretation and signage Company has been appointed for the signage and waymarking on the route. It is intended to have an end feature at Stranraer Old Harbour Masters Office weighbridge to give a distinctive identity. The whole route is 139km or 86 miles, including the Mull of Galloway Trail. To date, 106km or 66 miles is accessible, with 33km or 20 miles still to do. The North Rhins section will be open and accessible by late spring, with the South section being ready in September 2022.

Additional funding has been secured from Improving Public Access Grants for two landholdings in difficult sections – West Cairngarroch, Stoneykirk and Meikle Float, Sandhead.

Beverley asked if members could be notified of any activities taking place. Bryan undertook to email a link to members and advised that all activities are advertised on Facebook and the website [DG Trails](http://dgtrails.org) (dgtrails.org) which includes the Southern Uplands Way, Annandale Way and Rhins of Galloway Coast Path.

Bryan advised that discussions are taking place with the owner of Float Bay to try and resolve a locked gate. At Portmaghie, the inlet at Killantringan Lighthouse, signs are discouraging access to the beach, which Richard M is investigating.

Peter advised that he will lead a coastal walk during Newton Stewart Walking Festival.

4d. Galloway Glens LPS Paths Report (Verbal)

Jonathan updated that a speculative application for an Improving Public Access grant was approved, which will see a loop of CP155 Kelton Mains – Threave Castle path reconstructed. Jonathan showed on a map, a plan which is being worked on to link Ken Bridge at the bottom end of New Galloway, taking users off the main road. A round of maintenance has been done on the Pack Road.

Bryan asked if Ken Bridge was a Core path and how flooding was managed. Jonathan advised that the first part is and it is a surfaced path with the potential to add a culvert under the path to help drainage. Jonathan will send Bryan information. Bryan asked how this is being funded. It was hoped that this will be through round four of the Improving Public Access grants but this has not been confirmed.

4e. National Access Forum Report

Peter had attended an all day zoom meeting of the National Access Forum on 25 November 2021, which was hard-going with 70 people in attendance online. Highlights included mediation for access, for which a Guidance Note is to be issued. Peter had raised the question of drove roads but this is complicated and no response was received. Peter will forward any further information received.

4f. BHS D&G Report

Peter advised that the Beckfoot meetings had been supported by a BHS representative. It was agreed at the last site meeting that Peter was to have a one-to-one meeting with the landowners. The owner thought that if he moved sheep from low ground and moved cattle back to Waterbeck, it may be possible to manage the core path. Temporary closure during lambing season would be time bound. There has been no further communication since then.

5. Dumfries and Galloway Outdoor Access Trust Report

The DGOAT Report was circulated with the meeting papers.

The target date for the transfer of oversight of the Mull of Galloway Trail from Stranraer Rotary is 31 March 2022. The Rotary is to recommend that remaining funds of £3-4k are also transferred to DGOAT. The transfer of the website is the most complicated aspect. The Trust continues to work with the Galloway Glens Team on path works. Thanks to Galloway Glens funding, a Support Worker for DGOAT will be employed 1 day/wk. Four people should have been interviewed on 17 January but this had to be rescheduled. The post is not just admin and book-keeping but also involves project support. Sheila will continue to take the Minutes of Forum meetings for the timebeing. An AGM will be arranged once the employee is in post.

Bryan referred to ongoing hosting and maintenance costs for the Mull of Galloway Trail website and suggested there may be merit in including it in the dgtrails website.

Action – Peter and Bryan to discuss options for future of Mull of Galloway Trail website.

6. Round Table Discussion Updates

Richard S advised that the NHS is running a virtual NC500 Walking Challenge in February. It is open to all and teams of five can sign up free of charge to walk and log their steps during February. Richard will circulate a flyer by email after the meeting.

On behalf of Katie, June raised the public consultation on mineral exploration in Galloway Forest, including Dalry and New Galloway. Permission has been given by Crown Estates to JDH Exploration Ltd and more information is available on Katie's Facebook page. Peter had sight of a paper published by the British Geographic Society 35-40 years ago which said that it was not economic to extract (at that time, although it may be now). Galloway Forest is rich in minerals.

Bryan updated that all infrastructure improvements on Criffel have been completed. There has been no reporting of erosion and the improvements are holding up well. There is new signage incorporating the circular route at Knockendoch, New Abbey. New gates are to be put in and there will be an official opening in spring. The parking situation is still to be resolved. The landowner at Ardwell has increased parking spaces but has retained ownership and decided not to enter into a legal agreement with DGC. An 'honesty box' is in the car park, with proceeds being donated to Moffat Mountain Rescue. Peter offered his congratulations to the team for getting this important project completed.

John B noted that Richard M had written to Hensol Estates regarding access at Woodhall Loch, which is popular for pike fishing.

Beverley advised that the situation with the BHS locally had changed. The local Committee no longer exists as an entity as there was no Chair and Jane McDowall retired from the Committee. Julie Hannah, Central Manager, has taken over. Beverley still represents horse interests but not the BHS. Peter advised that Beckfoot was still unresolved. This had not been mentioned to Teresa when she last spoke to the owner but she was aware of a couple of incidents of sheep worrying, which had been reported to Police. Peter summarised the situation for the benefit of new attendees. This involved long-standing access issues on a farm near Annan, mainly involving horse riders. The situation had got heated and some serious allegations were made. Peter, John N, Teresa and Richard M had attended a meeting with the landowner.

Action – Teresa and Peter to find out where letters between Beckfoot and DGC have got to before meeting again.

Catherine noted that someone from Elrig had contacted DGC regarding complaints from a farm owner and notices on a core path saying 'responsible access'. She wanted the Forum to know that this had now been resolved and thanked DGC.

Catherine referred to unnecessary signs at Cairnholy, Kirkdale, saying 'no access to foreshore, private, no admittance'. This is on the track down to the beach about 20-30 yards away, implying that people cannot walk on the beach.

Action – Beverley offered to investigate the sign on the track to the beach at Cairnholy, Kirkdale, and discuss with landowner.

Beverley asked if the issues at Arbigland had been resolved. Bryan believed that this was resolved an agreement made with the landowner.

Bryan referred to erosion mentioned in Richard M's report south of Garlieston, where the core path has disappeared. He stressed that this needs carefully considered when doing repairs in future.

The path has had comprehensive repairs done three times but a managed retreat from the incoming tide would be more effective. Peter could not see a possible inland alternative. Bryan noted that this is a popular section and will need consideration.

Action – Peter to look at the erosion on the path at Garlieston before the next meeting.

7. Any Other Business

Peter invited Richard C to comment on his first meeting. Richard introduced himself as South West Scotland Coastal Trail Development Officer, employed by Southern Uplands Partnership. He thanked Forum members for the opportunity to observe the meeting. He had just started in post the pervious day but was sure he would have more questions and input at the April meeting. Peter encouraged Richard to email members directly if required.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday 5 April 2022**. A decision on online or face-to-face meeting will be made nearer the time. While online meetings are not ideal, they are better than nothing.

The meeting closed at 3.00 pm.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

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9. Peter and Bryan to discuss options for future of Mull of Galloway Trail website.
10. Teresa and Peter to find out where letters between Beckfoot and DGC have got to before meeting again.
11. Beverley to investigate the sign on the track to the beach at Cairnholy, Kirkdale, and discuss with landowner.
12. Peter to look at the erosion on the path at Garlieston before the next meeting.