

**DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM  
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 3RD DECEMBER 2019 AT 1.30 PM  
LESSER HALL, TOWN HALL, 5 ST ANDREW STREET, CASTLE DOUGLAS, DG7 1DE**

<b>Present:</b>	Peter Ross (Chair)	Health Walks
	John Blaikie	Water Access
	Catherine Makepeace	Wigtownshire Ramblers
	Richard Masters	DGC Access Officer
	John Nelson	Land Manager
	William Oakes	Scotways and Dog Walking
	Tim Oliver	Forest and Land Scotland
	Richard Smith	NHS D&G Public Health
	Janette Steel	Forest and Land Scotland
	Beverley Vaux	BHS

<b>In Attendance:</b>	Sheila Adams	Minutes
	Roland Chaplain	Public
	Tom Henry	DGC
	Margaret Peck	Public
	Bryan Scott	DGC

<b>Apologies:</b>	Jonathan Barrett	DGC Galloway Glens LPS
	Ross Gemmell	DGC
	Katie Hagmann	DGC Elected Member
	June Hay	Cycling
	Katie Jarvis	Forest and Land Scotland

### 1. Welcome, Introductions, Apologies, Declarations of Interest

Peter welcomed everyone to the meeting and was pleased to see some new faces. Introductions were made around the table. Peter advised of the running order for the meetings, with the Forum meeting taking place first, followed by the Annual General Meeting of D&G Outdoor Access Trust, which Forum members are not obliged to attend, but are very welcome to.

Peter started the meeting by reminding everyone that the Forum is a statutory organisation and due to the upcoming general election, no political statements of any kind should be made.

There were no general Declarations of Interest. Peter advised that any specific interests in relation to an Agenda item or discussion, should be declared at that time.

### 2. Minutes of the last Forum Meeting of 3rd September 2019

The Minutes of the meeting of 3rd September 2019 were approved as a true record and were proposed as such by Richard Smith and seconded by Beverley Vaux.

On Page 4 of the Minutes, Catherine advised that Wigtownshire Ramblers does not have its own dedicated website but Wigtownshire walks can be found by searching for Wigtown on the general Ramblers website.

### 3. Matters Arising and Update on Action Points

1. Peter had spoken with Teresa Dougall who agreed that NFUS should continue to be represented on the Forum and would liaise with one or two people to take this forward - carry forward.

2. Peter had contacted Sallie Ballie and representatives from Forest and Land Scotland were present at the meeting - discharged.
3. Beverley to check if the gate at Loch Whinyeon, Map 56, Core Path Plan 2013, is still locked and advise Richard M if investigation of ownership is still required – carry forward.
4. Peter to circulate Minutes of the national Pilgrim Way Steering Group meeting to Members for information, when available – Peter had not yet attended a meeting – carry forward.
5. Peter had been unable to draft a response to the Forestry Corporate Plan Consultation, on behalf of the Forum in the timescale required - discharged.
6. Katie to invite Cllr Ros Surtees to the next Forum meeting – carry forward.
7. Peter had posted an appeal for new members on the Facebook page and in an autumn newsletter on the website – discharged.
8. Richard M to investigate overgrown and lack of signage on the Core Path from Isle of Whithorn to Garlieston – carry forward.
9. Richard M to pursue Service Level Agreement with DGC and DGOAT with Simon Fieldhouse – carry forward.
10. Katie to write 200 words on the South West Scotland Cycle Route for Peter to promote on the website – carry forward.
11. Peter had forwarded the Forum members group photo to Jonathan for Galloway Glens website - discharged.
12. Meeting dates for 2020 included in meeting papers – discharged.

#### 4. Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 Part 1:

##### **Draft Revised Guidance for Local Authorities and National Park Authorities 2019**

This weighty document had been circulated by email and a couple of paper copies were available at the meeting. The deadline for responses has been extended to 13th January 2020. Peter had read the document and noted that the response should come from DGC's Chief Executive. All to read the document and feed back any comments to Peter by 31st December to be collated and forwarded to Richard and Bryan for inclusion in DGC's response.

**ACTION 8 ALL**

#### 5. Dumfries and Galloway Council Access Update

Bryan updated that the Criffel (CP103) works will be overseen by himself, not the Galloway Glens Team, in conjunction with Southern Uplands Partnership (SUP). SUP will procure suitable contractors. Phase 2 of the works involves approx. 1-2 km of the upper slope of Criffel which will be carried out using upland path technique. The works are being funded by VisitScotland, through the Government's Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund. It is hoped that work will start in March 2020 and be completed by September 2020.

Richard M summarised the Council's Access update – see report appended to Minutes.

Tim Oliver and Janette Steele, FLS, entered the meeting and introductions around the table were made for their benefit. Peter advised that a Core Path Review of the 1,800 km of core paths in Dumfries and Galloway is due and FLS input to this will be essential.

In respect of Nether Crae, Laurieston, Roland declared an interest and explained the history and possible major transfer of forestry land. The property was bought by new owners two years ago who did not realise how well used the route is. This is very complex and multi-dimensional, further complicated by other neighbours, and there appears to be an impasse currently. Roland proposed a round table meeting of interested parties. Richard advised that negotiations had failed and having had an alternative route agreed, this was subsequently rejected. He is meeting with the Council's Legal Team to discuss further. Beverley asked that access suitable for horses be included in any proposals. Bryan noted that there are many examples of investigations of this type where routes meet the criteria for being rights of way. If resources permitted, Rights of Way should be included in the Core Paths Review as they tend to cause the most issues and not all rights of way are mapped.

This causes problems when there are new owners and the rights of way are not recorded. Property searches by lawyers should include access rights, core paths and rights of way. Claimed rights of way are not legal and there are only five asserted rights of way in Dumfries and Galloway. Peter had asked for clarity on this from Scotways which claims there are a large number of rights of way but he had not yet received a response. He will discuss this with Richard M and Bryan and raise this issue at the National Access Forum meeting in March 2020. While it looked like this case may end up being tested in court, with major cost implications for all concerned, Peter noted the Access Forum's role of 'arbiter / honest broker' and asked if it should offer to facilitate a meeting. Richard M noted that some local Elected Members had offered to assist in this regard but he needed to first establish the views of the Council's Legal Team and would feed back to the next meeting. **ACTION 9 RM** Peter urged Officers to keep in touch between meetings and let him know if the Forum could assist with resolving the issue.

Catherine noted that there is a bull and locked gate at Glenwhan, CP362. Richard M has written to the farmer and understands that the stock has gone. Peter offered to speak to the farmer personally.

*Bryan left the meeting at 2.40 pm.*

William asked the outcome of the restricted access on MoD land at Kirkcudbright and understood that the legal position was that access was denied when the red flag is flying, which has been the position since before the war. Peter sat on the West Freugh Steering Group and had assurances that access would not be restricted unless there was military activity. Richard added that the restrictions are due to additional testing and there is no issue with access, with the closed path being re-routed.

## 6. DGOAT Report

Peter had written a newsletter article on the access legislation definition of paths and people's perception of this. This is available on DGOAT's website and Facebook page.

For the benefit of the new attendees at the meeting, Peter explained the background to the formation of the Trust. The Trust had purchased the Beehive Bothy, owned by the Council, to preserve this and had received positive feedback.

Peter had applied to Dumfries and Galloway LEADER Programme for funding for a learning journey to the Vale of Glamorgan, South Wales, to learn lessons and help inform the 20 year Sustainability Plan for the Rhins Valley. It was slightly disappointing that only two members of the Steering Group attended this learning journey (Peter and Bryan). It is hoped to also visit Donegal or Kerry in the new year.

Peter is to meet with SPENS regarding Clauchrie Windfarm and the possibility of funding for a tourism project. It was noted that Kilgallioch Windfarm contributed £50k for the SUW Rangers. An application to Robin Rigg Windfarm is being made for Borgue.

The Trust is still looking to recruit new Trustees to strengthen its position as pressure builds on both the Outdoor Access Trust and the Forum due to the disarray within the Council. Roland expressed an interest in becoming a Director of the Trust. Peter undertook to check the Code of Conduct in respect of the relationship with another Trustee.

William is in the process of finalising the Trust's Accounts for the year ended October 2019. These have to be lodged with OSCR before July 2020. There was little activity in the year to report to OSCR.

The Round Table session followed a short comfort break.

## 7. Round Table

John B reported that it is still hoped to go ahead with the Canoe Trail but this is not a priority.

Tom reported that himself and Ross are developing a five year Southern Upland Way Route Plan which is 36 pages. This is a working document and will be regularly updated. Tom had circulated by email a six page summary of the Plan and welcomed any questions or feedback on this. Peter had read the Plan and commended it and the excellent work by Tom and Ross. Beverley noted that there was no mention of horses in the Action Plan. Tom advised that routes in the Action Plan should be multi-use accessible. Ross had emailed BHS with regard to replacing stiles with gates. It is intended to write short guides for different users – walkers, cyclists, horse riders, etc. Peter extended an open invitation to Tom and Ross to attend Forum meetings.

Tim and Janette reported that FLS is working closely with VisitScotland as a partner in the See South Scotland campaign. FLS hopes to add waterfalls in the year of Coast and Water 2020. FLS is also a partner in the Galloway Glens pathworks project at Polmaddie. FLS had inherited the 'toilet block project' in Galloway Forest Park and undertook to include the Access Forum as a stakeholder in the Galloway Forest Park Visitor Experience Plan. This is being written by Consultants, the recommendations of which will form an Action Plan. The Borderlands Initiative contains a 7Stanes element, which involves more than cycling and has wider benefits. Scottish Borders Council is more proactive on this and Chris Travis is leading on behalf of SBC and DGC. Peter noted that figures had been mooted publicly at the Borderlands Conference the previous week and noted that Stranraer Waterfront Focus Group were promoting 'active travel' with opportunities to link the south of Scotland. Tim noted that the Borderlands has an excellent website.

Roland appreciated the speed of action by DGC and noted that cycling had increased. He reiterated the enthusiasm of FLS. Peter noted the large network of single track roads which are unused assets and not marketed enough. Catherine noted that there were yellow arrows and signs for the Whithorn Way. William noted that some of the signs on the A75 had been vandalised and some were dirty while some had been washed.

Richard S noted that SWESTRANS is keen to get cyclists to the south of Scotland but there is not enough access for trains and they would like to see more people using Dumfries and Lockerbie Stations. He was aware of a bike bus in Peebles. Peter pointed out that D&G was the first Local Authority to have a dedicated cycle track to Dumfries Station, from Macie.

Beverley referred to a post on the BHS Facebook page which showed kite surfing on Sandhead Beach. Richard M was aware of this event, which was a one-off, with non-mechanically powered kites and no stewards or signs. Beverley commended Richard M's efficiency and helpfulness in responding to queries when she has asked for help.

Following a discussion with Mark Gibson, Craigengillan Estate, Beverley asked Janette about the track from Loch Doon to Back Hill of Bush which does not join up. It is understood that this is now joined but Janette will investigate further. **ACTION 10 JS**

Peter advised that he chairs the Rhins Coastal Path Steering Group. A heritage section has been opened within Kirkcolm School. Contractors have been approved and work is progressing as well as can be expected. There is some interest in the Facebook page, with 101 people liking the page, 111 followers and 9 friends.

## 8. Any Other Business

There were no other items of business.

## 9. Proposed Meeting Dates for 2020

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday 3rd March 2020**. A Sub Group may meet beforehand if required.

Meetings for the remainder of 2020 will be held on:

Tuesday 9th June 2020

Tuesday 8th September 2020

Tuesday 8th December 2020

Richard M will book the rooms with the Town Hall but change the room from the Conference Room to the Lesser Hall to give more space, in the hope that more people will regularly attend.

Tim offered to host meetings in FLS venues if required.

Peter thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting closed at 3.47 pm. He invited everyone to stay and attend D&G Outdoor Access Trust's Annual General Meeting.

**DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM  
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 3RD DECEMBER 2019 AT 1.30 PM  
LESSER HALL, TOWN HALL, 5 ST ANDREW STREET, CASTLE DOUGLAS, DG7 1DE**

**SUMMARY OF ACTIONS**

1. Peter had spoken with Teresa Dougall who agreed that NFUS should be represented on the Forum and would liaise with one or two people from NFUS to take this forward - carry forward.
2. Beverley to check if the gate at Loch Whinyeon, Map 56, Core Path Plan 2013, is still locked and advise Richard M if investigation of ownership is still required – carry forward.
3. Peter to circulate Minutes of the national Pilgrim Way Steering Group meeting to Members for information, when available – Peter had not yet attended a meeting – carry forward.
4. Katie to invite Cllr Ros Surtees to a Forum meeting – carry forward.
5. Richard M to investigate overgrown and lack of signage on the Core Path from Isle of Whithorn to Garlieston – carry forward.
6. Richard M to pursue Service Level Agreement with DGC and DGOAT with Simon Fieldhouse – carry forward.
7. Katie to write 200 words on the South West Scotland Cycle Route for Peter to promote on the website – carry forward.
8. All to feed back any comments on the ‘Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 Part 1: Draft Revised Guidance for Local Authorities and National Park Authorities 2019’ to Peter by 31st December 2019 to collate and forward to DGC for inclusion in formal response from DGC.
9. Richard M to seek views of DGC Legal Team on Nether Crae, Laurieston.
10. Janette to investigate track from Loch Doon to Back Hill of Bush to see if this now joins up.

**DGC Access Officer's Report      3rd December 2019****Glencaple – Kingholm Quay Bridge CP37**

Our Council's Engineering Team have looked at the site and reported that the proposed location would not be suitable, as the ground conditions are too soft to support a bridge of the desired size. If the bridge was constructed there is no guarantee how long it would last. In November a survey was undertaken to assess the possibility of an alternative route around the merse. Regrettably the survey was unable to identify a suitable route due to the ground conditions. The cost of constructing a new route would be in excess of the cost of replacing the bridge. A decision will now be made at the Core Paths Plan review as to the future viability of this route.

**Newton Stewart Riverside Path Repairs CP427**

Erosion of the riverbank and damage to the core path occurred over the winter months and has steadily been deteriorating. Funding from the Core Paths budget may be used to carry out reinstatement of the riverbank and repairs to the Core Path. Site meetings have taken place with SEPA to investigate the most suitable method of repair. It has been agreed that repairs should be carried out using timber revetment, which does not require specific licences from SEPA and could be carried out in a shorter timescale. Estimates are now being gathered from suitable contractors.

**Investigations**

Various access investigations ongoing:

**Beckfoot – Annan** – Court Case underway – Proof hearing planned for February 2020

**Gatehouse Right of Way** – Letter has now been sent to the landowner's Solicitor requesting any obstructions to access are removed. Details of the Evidence of Use survey will be shared with the landowner's Solicitor – awaiting response.

**Dunskey Estate** – landowner has been in contact to say that they will carry out the proposed amended route for the Core Path.

**Airds Farm, Crossmichael** – request for information received from Findlay Carson MSP and a response has been sent stating the Council's opinion.

**Nether Crae, Laurieston** – no alternative route for the path has been identified. Meeting to take place with Council Legal Services Team to identify way forward – likely to be an Evidence of Use survey undertaken, although with existing limited resources this may take time to complete.

**Alton Road to Archbank, Moffat** – locked gate – Evidence of Use survey undertaken – very limited response to the request for information. Information gathered will be assessed.

**Kirkcudbright MoD Training Range** – reports that access is being altered and access rights restricted. Investigations so far would indicate that the new restrictions are due to increased weapons testing for a limited period. New fencing and gates are being installed. Alternative access routes are being investigated by the MoD Access and Recreation Officer to provide other access points to the site. Access to the site will remain possible when red flags are not flying. No action proposed.

**Public Road to Ross Bay** – reports received that field gates have been erected across the road down to Ross Bay. Issue to be investigated by the Roads Management Team and any impact on the use of the Core Path will be investigated. Farmer at Ross Bay claims to have erected the gates to assist with the movement of his cattle across the road. Roads Team have advised that this is acceptable but that the gates should not be closed at any other times as this will be a breach of highways legislation.

**Core Paths Vegetation control**

No decision on Core Path vegetation control for 2020 – depends on new budget.

**Rhins of Galloway Coastal Path** – Bryan/Karen to provide update report.

**Southern Upland Way** – Ross/Tom to provide update report.



**DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM  
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 3RD MARCH 2020 AT 1.30 PM  
LESSER HALL, TOWN HALL, 5 ST ANDREW STREET, CASTLE DOUGLAS, DG7 1DE**

<b>Present:</b>	Peter Ross (Chair) Jonathan Barrett John Blaikie Teresa Dougall Katie Hagmann June Hay Richard Masters William Oakes Beverley Vaux	DGOAT / Health Walks DGC Galloway Glens LPS Water Access NFUS DGC Elected Member DGOAT / Cycling DGC Access Officer DGOAT / Scotways and Dog Walking BHS
<b>In Attendance:</b>	Sheila Adams Roland Chaplain Ross Gemmell Geoff Monk	Minutes Public DGC Public / Balmaghie Community Council
<b>Apologies:</b>	Bryan Scott Richard Smith Janette Steel	DGC NHS D&G Public Health Forest and Land Scotland

**1. Welcome, Introductions, Apologies, Declarations of Interest**

Peter welcomed everyone to the meeting. Introductions were made around the table.

There were no general Declarations of Interest. Peter advised that any specific interests in relation to an Agenda item or discussion should be declared at that time.

Peter started by the meeting by advising of new guidance – ‘A Guide to Good Practice for Local Access Forums’, from which he read the role and status of a Local Access Forum. Peter will forward an electronic copy of the document by email.

Peter suggested that the D&G Local Access Forum needed to think about where it is at in terms of the guidance and perhaps schedule an event day to discuss where the Forum is going, what is has not done and what it would like to do.

**2. Minutes of the last Forum Meeting of 3rd December 2019**

The Minutes of the meeting of 3rd December 2019 were approved as a true record and were proposed as such by William Oakes and seconded by John Blaikie.

**3. Matters Arising and Update on Action Points**

1. Teresa was present at the meeting and would try to send a representative from NFUS to meetings that she is unable to attend personally – discharged.
2. Beverley to check if the gate at Loch Whinyeon, Map 56, Core Path Plan 2013, is still locked and advise Richard M if investigation of ownership is still required – carry forward.
3. Peter to circulate Minutes of the national Pilgrim Way Steering Group meeting to Members for information, when available – Peter had not yet attended a meeting – carry forward.

For information, Katie advised that the Whithorn Trust Board is being restructured. The new Board will be formed by an application process and it is hoped to have it in place by 1st April. Katie has resigned from the Board and William is no longer Company Secretary of the Whithorn Trust.



4. Katie to invite Cllr Ros Surtees to the next Forum meeting – there is a standard invite to all Councillors to attend meetings – discharged.
5. Richard M to investigate overgrown brambles and gorse and lack of signage on the Core Path from Isle of Whithorn to Garlieston – carry forward.
6. Richard M to pursue Service Level Agreement with DGC and DGOAT with Simon Fieldhouse – carry forward.
7. Katie and June to write piece on the South West Scotland Cycle Route for Peter to promote on the website / Facebook page – carry forward.
8. All to feed back any comments on the ‘Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 Part 1: Draft Revised Guidance for Local Authorities and National Park Authorities 2019’ consultation for inclusion in formal response from DGC – discharged.
9. Richard M to seek views of DGC Legal Team on Nether Crae, Laurieston – Agenda item.
10. Janette to investigate track from Loch Doon to Back Hill of Bush to see if this now joins up – Janette was not present at the meeting but it was understood that there was only ½ km which was not joined up, which was not suitable for horses but the rest is – discharged.
11. Tom Henry to circulate electronic version of the Southern Upland Way Route Plan and Summary – carry forward.

#### **4. Dumfries and Galloway Council Access Update**

Richard M summarised the Council’s Access update: see report below covering Newton Stewart Riverside Path Repairs CP427; Moffat Riverside Path Repairs CP439 Annandale Way; Investigations – Beckfoot, Annan; Gatehouse Right of Way; Nether Crae, Laurieston; Core Paths Maintenance / Vegetation Control.

##### **Glencaple – Kingholm Quay Bridge CP37**

There is no safe alternative route and re-establishing the existing route is not practical or financially viable. It is recommended that the route is downgraded from Core Path but access rights will still apply.

##### **Dunskey Estate**

The landowner has agreed to carry out diversions and the path and fencing work is almost complete. An amendment will be made to the Core Plan.

##### **Nether Crae, Laurieston**

Richard explained the current position with Nether Crae in more detail. Forest and Land Scotland is unable to accept an alternate route which would increase its public liability. The Community Council’s formal position is that the existing route should be enforced. An ‘evidence of use’ survey will be undertaken and information and evidence collated, with the decision eventually being made by a Sheriff, in line with Scottish Rights of Way law. The whole route (4.5km) will have to be proven to be a right of way. Richard explained the consultation process. Mr Chaplain and Mr Monk explained some of the background. Peter reminded everyone that the role of the Access Forum is to independently support the Access Team.

##### **Alton Road to Archbank, Moffat**

An ‘evidence of use’ survey was carried out, with a limited response but the gate was unlocked over the Christmas period.

##### **Core Paths Maintenance / Vegetation Control**

The Core Paths budget has not yet been set but this has been discussed in the Council. Peter reiterated that DGOAT can help with fundraising if required. Peter also offered to raise this as an issue at the National Access Forum.

## **Southern Upland Way Update**

Ross advised that Tom is leading on the community role – doing activities with Groups and Schools and engaging with Community Councils. He is working with a small group to create a road bike version of the SUW, which will be digital, not waymarked. This will be tested over the summer and promoted on the SUW website.

Ross had sourced a grant from BHS for multi-use path improvements and waymarking discs showing alternatives for horses and cyclists. The paths were created as walking routes but the sections funded by BHS will be horse accessible. Katie encouraged Ross to contact Gowan Miller at Southern Uplands Partnership who is leading on the Ride Scottish Borders project, which it is hoped to extend into D&G. Ross confirmed that he had met with Gowan.

Ross described some of the work that he had been doing, including waymarking improvements and general drainage works. He had built an enormous boardwalk across a bog at Waterside Hill, Dalry. It was noted that some controversial tree planting is being proposed on Waterside Hill but this is the landowner, not DGC. The Facilities pages of the SUW website has been updated showing businesses on the SUW – shops, pubs, cafes, bothies, etc.

## **5. DGOAT Report**

The Trust has been working with the Council on the path from Kirkandrews to Knockbrenn, Borgue. Peter had successfully applied for funds from the Coe Palace and Robin Rigg Windfarm. Volunteers through the PLACE project (run by Southern Uplands Partnership) had cut away the ivy and gorse. An expression of interest for a small grant has been submitted for the path, interpretation panel and seating.

Peter chairs the Rhins of Galloway Coastal Path Steering Group. He secured funding from LEADER for a cooperation project, visiting Kerry and Vale of Glamorgan. Peter invited any interested members to a meeting to discuss a Sustainability Action Plan for the Coastal Path, on 16th March from 11.00 am – 3.00 pm at the Harbour Master's Office, Stranraer. June expressed an interest in attending this meeting.

## **6. Round Table**

Jonathan gave an update on Galloway Glens projects. Works on Blackpark – Threave CP155 were complete. 3.5km to Lamb Island had been upgraded with a new length of path making the whole route very popular and being well used by the public. 7km of the Pack Road from Carsphairn to Polmaddie CP164 is complete. Feedback was positive with an increased awareness of the good work being done. Ideally there will be a Phase 2 of Pack Road but further funding will have to be secured. 1100m of Torrs Point Cliff Path has been completed to give access to a wider range of abilities. Working in partnership with FLS, the toilet block refurbishment at the Otter Pool is almost complete and a 150m new length of riverside walk. There is now a new gate instead of stile to prevent falls. A proposed design is being developed for Cairn Edward Link Road but further fundraising is required.

Beverley referred to the Old Covenanters Route and historic drovers' road which is heaving with archaeology but this is not within the Galloway Glens LPS operating area. Beverley mentioned a historic dispute between Isle of Whithorn and Garlieston which has not been resolved. Ross is investigating this.

Katie had been contacted about trees being down from the car park to St Ninian's Cave and asked whose responsibility this is. Ross had received an email regarding this and was dealing with it. There are also trees down at Balloch Wood, Creetown.

*Ross Gemmell left the meeting at 3.00 pm.*

Teresa advised that the 'Control Your Dog on Farmland' campaign started last year would continue this year. NFUS is working with D&G Partnership in Rural Crime and running a Schools competition. There are also videos on livestock worrying. Across Scotland, fly-tipping is back up the agenda. The NFUS National Day of Celebration will take place on 23rd May with a Food and Farming event in the nine regions in Scotland. William asked if there were any dog issues. Teresa advised that the number of queries on access, dogs and livestock worrying had decreased but this is likely to increase at this time of year.

## 7. Any Other Business

*Peter declared an interest as a Trustee of Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere Partnership Board. Katie expressed an interest as a Trustee of Southern Uplands Partnership.*

Peter advised members that Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere (GSAB) is seeking collaboration and asked if DGOAF / DGOAT would be interested in becoming a 'Proud Supporter' of the Biosphere. This involves signing up to the principles of the Biosphere which are:

- Help to conserve the natural resources of the Biosphere
- Support the economy to benefit people and nature
- Promote cultural heritage and local products
- Contribute to the health and well-being of the community
- Develop knowledge, understanding and promote research
- Raise awareness of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere

Members unanimously agreed to support this. Katie pointed out that individuals can also sign up as Proud Supporters and further information is available on the GSAB website <https://www.gsabiosphere.org.uk/>.

Peter had provided information on the consultation on National Planning Framework (NPF) 4 and encouraged members to take leaflets away with them. He asked members to either respond online or send him feedback to collate a response.

## 8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday 9th June 2020**.

*June Hay, Mr Monk and Mr Chaplain left the meeting at 3.15 pm.*

A further item of Any Other Business was dealt with privately in respect of Mr Chaplain's request to join DGOAT as a Trustee and become a member of the Access Forum. Mr Chaplain has been heavily involved with Nether Crae, Laurieston, and was quoted in the Daily Record as representing DGOAT as a Trustee, which is not the case. The Chair had received a large amount of email correspondence on this subject from Mr Chaplain. Katie asked if the Forum has a policy on the issuing of Press statements and suggested that a review of performance and guidance is required. Due to the lack of capacity, it was agreed that over the next year to March 2021, the Forum would undertake a review of its purposes, procedures and membership, taking one topic at each meeting over the course of the financial year. It was unanimously agreed that Mr Chaplain did not meet the criteria for becoming a member of DGOAT / DGOAF and the Chair will write to advise Mr Chaplain of this decision.

The meeting closed at 3.35 pm.

**DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM  
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 3RD MARCH 2020 AT 1.30 PM  
LESSER HALL, TOWN HALL, 5 ST ANDREW STREET, CASTLE DOUGLAS, DG7 1DE**

**SUMMARY OF ACTIONS**

1. Beverley to check if the gate at Loch Whinyeon, Map 56, Core Path Plan 2013, is still locked and advise Richard M if investigation of ownership is still required – carry forward.
2. Peter to circulate Minutes of the national Pilgrim Way Steering Group meeting to Members for information, when available – Peter had not yet attended a meeting – carry forward.
3. Richard M to investigate overgrown brambles and gorse and lack of signage on the Core Path from Isle of Whithorn to Garlieston – carry forward.
4. Richard M to pursue Service Level Agreement with DGC and DGOAT with Simon Fieldhouse – carry forward.
5. Katie and June to write piece on the South West Scotland Cycle Route for Peter to promote on the website / Facebook page – carry forward.
6. Tom Henry to circulate electronic version of the Southern Upland Way Route Plan and Summary – carry forward.
7. Peter to circulate 'A Guide to Good Practice for Local Access Forums' to members by email.
8. Feedback on NPF4 to be sent to Peter to collate a response to the consultation.

### **Newton Stewart Riverside Path Repairs CP427**

Erosion of the riverbank and damage to the core path occurred over the winter months and has steadily been deteriorating. Funding has been identified from the access budget for the repairs to be carried out. This will take place between June and September when we can enter the river under SEPA regulations. The repairs will be made using timber revetment work to rebuild the riverbank and surface dressing to the path.

### **Moffat Riverside Path repairs CP439 Annandale Way**

A section of the path has been damaged by winter floods. The section, near the Hope Johnstone recreation ground, just North of the town, has been undermined by the river and subsequently the riverbank has collapsed into the river taking the path with it. Safety fencing has been erected on site and estimates are being gathered for the repairs. It is hoped funding will be available later this year to undertake the work. The path is accessible with care.

### **Investigations**

Various access investigations ongoing:

**Beckfoot, Annan** – The landowner at Beckfoot has offered to create a new path through adjacent woodland on the farm. Site meetings and discussions are underway to agree a suitable specification for the new path which must be capable of supporting all access users. The new path will be constructed by the landowner at the landowner's expense. The Sherriff has agreed a 6month suspension of the case to allow progress to be made on the new path. Should the new path not be constructed, or agreement not reached on the specification, the case will be recalled back to court.

**Gatehouse Right of Way** – No further progress has been made with this case.

**Nether Crae, Laurieston** – Following feedback from a recent Community Meeting in Laurieston, the local community felt that an alternative route, bypassing the property at Nether Crae would not be suitable for providing access. The Community wish to pursue the original route past the property as they feel this has historical significance and is more accessible. An evidence of use survey will be undertaken on this route (once the Covid19 restrictions have been lifted). The survey was due to start on 23rd March but has now been postponed. With the current restrictions in place it was felt it would be difficult for evidence to be submitted. The evidence gathered will be assessed against the criteria required for the route to be a Right of Way.

### **Core Paths Maintenance / Vegetation Control**

No decision has been made with regard to this issue for 2020. At the time of writing Council Budgets for 2020 had not been set.

**DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM  
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 2.00 PM  
ONLINE, MICROSOFT TEAMS MEETING**

<b>Present:</b>	Peter Ross (Chair) Jonathan Barrett Teresa Dougall Cllr Katie Hagmann June Hay John Nelson William Oakes Janette Steel Beverley Vaux	DGOAT / Health Walks DGC Galloway Glens LPS NFUS Dumfries and Galloway Council DGOAT / Cycling Land Manager DGOAT / Scotways and Dog Walking Forest and Land Scotland BHS
-----------------	--	---

<b>In Attendance:</b>	Sheila Adams Bryan Scott	Minutes DGC Rhins of Galloway Coast Path
-----------------------	-----------------------------	---

<b>Apologies:</b>	Catherine Makepeace Ross Gemmell Richard Masters Bryan Scott	Wigtownshire Ramblers DGC Southern Upland Way Ranger DGC Access Officer DGC Rhins of Galloway Coastal Path
-------------------	---	---

**1. Minutes of the last Forum Meeting of 7 July 2020**

The Minutes of the meeting of 7 July 2020 were approved as a true record and were proposed as such by Jonathan Barrett and seconded by William Oakes.

Katie apologised for missing the last meeting due to a Council meeting over running.

**2. Matters Arising and Update on Action Points**

1. Beverley to check if the gate at Loch Whinyeon, Map 56, Core Path Plan 2013, is still locked and advise Richard M if investigation of ownership is still required. Beverley had not been well enough to do this since falling but hoped to be able to do it before the next meeting. June had recently done a circular walk round the lower core path. Beverley and June will discuss outwith the meeting – 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. Katie and June to write piece on the South West Scotland Cycle Route for Peter to promote on the website / Facebook page – carry forward 4.
5. Peter to check with Richard M on the responsibility and timescale for removing the Covid-19 ‘visitors not welcome’ signs from towns and villages in D&G – Richard had written letter - discharged.
6. Knockbex to Kirkandrews path works – Peter to investigate the siting of the existing bridge in a private garden with Richard M – will be updated during agenda item.

**3. Questions on Reports**

**Access Officer’s Report**

Richard M was not present at the meeting but Peter offered to take back any questions on the good background report provided by Richard.

*John N entered the meeting at 2.20 pm.*

Moss Yard Beach -

Beverley noted that Mossyard Beach and car park had been closed during lockdown to detract visitors but had not reopened and asked how long this was likely to be the case. This is very popular with locals who want to walk there. June had parked in a layby and walked and spoke to the owners, who were fair and trying to manage risk as the campsite was full. Beverley noted that some people are unable to walk down the hill and have to drive down to the car park, which is closed. Katie had received the same concerns from members of the public. The owners were concerned at the volume of traffic and requested that the Council adopt the road. She understood that the 'closed' sign had been removed and from a meeting of a colleague and the owners understood that it would reopen on 4 September. Confrontation between the farmer and people trying to park had been reported. Peter noted that this is on the Core Path Plan and access to the beach should be allowed. Peter will raise with Richard M but was unsure what could be done legally. Beverley noted that locals have been patient and understanding of the position but now that summer and the main tourist season is over, people should be able to use the car park. John noted that Sandgreen Beach car park had been closed 30 years ago and Beverley was keen to see the situation resolved so that this did not happen here. Katie noted that there is a charge (honesty box) for toilet cleaning and wondered if the community could take over ownership and running of the car park through a community buy-out, although it may not be for sale. Teresa advised that this would be very difficult and the community would have to have a purpose and reason for the takeover. Peter noted that the community did this at Crawick Multiverse which was praised by the National Access Forum (NAF) as a pragmatic approach.

**Action 5 – Peter to discuss the closure of Mossyard Beach / Car Park with Richard M.**

Nethercrae –

This appears to have been resolved as the previous occupants have moved out and the new occupants moved in. The new occupants are happy to talk about reinstating access to the right of way.

Beckfoot, Annan –

Peter thanked Richard M and Bryan for their patience and persistence in dealing with Beckfoot, which had been a long-running saga but had now been resolved.

### **Southern Upland Way Report**

Peter thanked Ross for the comprehensive report.

### **Rhins of Galloway Coastal Path**

On behalf of Bryan, who was unable to attend the meeting as he was attending a meeting regarding parking issues at Criffel, Peter advised that progress is continuing but slower than anticipated. The HLF is being asked to formally agree an extension to September 2022 to finish the works. Extra funding has also been requested, which is being considered.

### **Galloway Glens Paths**

June asked if there are maintenance issues with some peaty sections of the Polmaddy – Carsphairn route and asked if there was a plan and budget to address these. Jonathan advised that the design was deliberate and there is no funding for any further work or maintenance.

Teresa asked about Local Authority funding and how much has been spent on Covid and if there has been consideration and discussion by Local Authorities going forward on implementation of core paths. Peter noted that this had been raised at the NAF meeting and a letter sent to Roseanna Cunningham MSP. The disappointing reply was that this is part of the allocation to Local Authorities. DGC still has some capital budget available and DGOAT has been asked as a charity to make applications for funding, which can be matched by DGC. Maintenance still requires to be properly addressed. It is generally not a good position but there may be some new opportunities through South of Scotland Enterprise (SoSE).



Katie confirmed that the budget setting process was taking place at the start of Covid and maintenance of core paths etc was being considered but had to be put on hold because of Covid. She was reassured that the Council's Environment Champion was taking forward the role enthusiastically and while there is not currently the budget, this is on Members' agendas to take forward.

Teresa asked if the mapping exercise being undertaken by the Ramblers Association is happening in D&G and what the purpose of the exercise is and where the information will be displayed.

**Action 6 – Peter will investigate further and report back.**

Teresa advised that within Dumfries and Galloway concerns from farmers over access issues have decreased. However, there has been increased instances and reports of flytipping and micro rural crime. Farmers are very cautious as the region is still very much in Phase 3 of the Covid Recovery Timeframe and do not expect to enter Phase 4 as quickly as anticipated. There are major concerns within the farming community of Covid within farms or nearby, self-isolation issues and workers being unable to feed animals etc.

*Teresa left the meeting at 3.00 pm due to other commitments.*

#### **4. Dumfries and Galloway Outdoor Access Trust**

The written report circulated was self-explanatory.

With regard to the Cottage at Kirkandrews raised by Beverley at the last meeting, Peter will do a site visit and liaise with the owner to see if there are other options in respect of access to the footbridge. Beverley noted that the owners are willing to contribute financially to a resolution as an increase in people walking on the new path will increase the number of people going through their garden. Due to an underspend on the PLACE project, managed by GSAB / SUP, it will fund a community public consultation. A discussion will take place with Robin Rigg to determine if funding could be moved from community engagement to capital works for the footpath.

Peter had spent an hour on the phone with an assessor of ANCBC Fund in respect of application for the SUW for path improvements and marketing and community activity. Katie noted that she is at capacity in terms of workload but she sits on the Boards of GSAB and SUP and wondered if they may be able to offer assistance, or possibly SFP.

William noted the need for the Trust to recruit another Trustee as there are currently three, which meets OSCR's minimum requirement, but it is a requirement of the Constitution that there are four. Beverley offered to fill this position if there were no other takers.

#### **5. Round Table Discussion Updates**

Jonathan advised that Crossmichael Community Woodland Path had been completed three weeks ago and is being heavily used, with a nice picnic area.

John N had some sympathy with the owner of Moss Yard. A friend had recently visited the new Otterpool where one of the brand new tables has been burnt by a barbecue. John had recently noted an increase in dog poo bags being left lying, gates left open and sheep worrying and could understand the risks and reluctance of land owners. Janette confirmed that damage had been done at the Otterpool during lockdown but Forest and Land Scotland is now in receipt of replacement table tops and hot plates / iron to put in place to prevent burning again. Peter noted that new picnic seats made from local larch had been marked from barbecues within a week. June noted that the Raiders Road seems to be very busy and asked if there was a people counter in place. Janette advised that car counters are in place and FLS is waiting for new tablets to download the software. As a matter of interest, Jonathan had counted 55 cars two weekends earlier.

Clatteringshaws Café car park is often full and the Mull of Galloway car park is the same.

## **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 8th December 2020**. It will be determined nearer the time whether this can be face to face or will have to be online.

The meeting closed at 3.12 pm and was followed by a DGOAT meeting.

## **SUMMARY OF ACTIONS**

1. Beverley to check if the gate at Loch Whinyeon, Map 56, Core Path Plan 2013, is still locked and advise Richard M if investigation of ownership is still required – carry 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 – carry forward.
4. Katie and June to write piece on the South West Scotland Cycle Route for Peter to promote on the website / Facebook page – carry forward.
5. Peter to discuss the closure of Mossyard Beach / Car Park with Richard M.
6. Peter will investigate further the purpose and distribution of the mapping exercise being done by the Ramblers Association and report back.

**DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY OUTDOOR ACCESS FORUM  
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 8 DECEMBER 2020 AT 1.30 PM  
ONLINE, MICROSOFT TEAMS MEETING**

<b>Present:</b>	Peter Ross (Chair) John Blaikie Cllr Katie Hagmann June Hay Catherine Makepeace Richard Masters John Nelson William Oakes Janette Steel Ronald Turnbull Beverley Vaux	DGOAT / Health Walks Water Access DGC Elected Member DGOAT / Cycling Wigtownshire Ramblers DGC Access Officer Land Manager DGOAT / Scotways and Dog Walking Forest and Land Scotland DGOAT BHS
<b>In Attendance:</b>	Sheila Adams Ross Gemmell Bryan Scott	Minutes DGC Southern Upland Way Ranger DGC Rhins of Galloway Coast Path
<b>Apologies:</b>	Jonathan Barrett Teresa Dougall Katie Jarvis Richard Smith	DGC Galloway Glens LPS NFUS Forest and Land Scotland NHS D&G Public Health

Peter introduced new Trust member, Mr Ronald Turnbull, from Nithsdale. All present introduced themselves. Ronald gave a brief summary of his background and interests in outdoor walking and writing.

Peter asked everyone to 'accept' the invitation to the Microsoft Teams meetings and they would receive a reminder and link to log in to the meeting.

**1. Minutes of the last Forum Meeting of 8 September 2020**

The Minutes of the meeting of 8 September 2020 were approved as a true record and were proposed as such by Beverley Vaux and seconded by William Oakes.

June complimented Sheila on the quality of the Minutes.

**2. Matters Arising and Update on Action Points**

1. Beverley to check if the gate at Loch Whinyeon, Map 56, Core Path Plan 2013, is still locked and advise Richard M if investigation of ownership is still required. Beverley had not been well enough to do this since falling but hoped to be able to do it before the next meeting. Peter offered to accompany Beverley and they will arrange a suitable date – 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. Katie and June had met to discuss promotion of the South West Scotland Cycle Route. Katie had written a piece for the Trust Facebook page and has very limited capacity but undertook to post a photo or cycling post monthly – action discharged.
5. Peter to discuss the closure of Mossyard Beach / Car Park with Richard M – The car park has been opened and access resumed – action discharged.

6. Peter will investigate further the purpose and distribution of the mapping exercise being done by the Ramblers Association and report back – action discharged. Ronald pointed out that he had taken part in this exercise but it does not apply in Scotland, only in England and Wales.

Peter stressed that until the Minutes are approved at the next meeting and published on the Council's website, discussions within the meeting should remain confidential and detail should not be disclosed publicly.

### 3. Questions on Reports

#### Access Officer's Report

The Access Officer's Report was noted.

#### Southern Upland Way (SUW) Report

Ronald asked why the SUW has been diverted through Moffat. Ross advised that a large hole has been dug by the Roads Department due to a collapsed culvert just before the metal bridge. The road is likely to be closed for 8-12 weeks and has been diverted through Moffat. Ronald will email Ross for details to update the website.

#### Rhins of Galloway Coastal Path

Bryan apologised for not providing a written report in advance of the meeting and will circulate an update report by email. Works continue to be delayed by Covid restrictions but the northern loop is on track to open in summer 2021 and will connect to the SUW at Portpatrick. Access improvements at the Mull of Galloway are nearing completion. The Schools project is ongoing. Procurement for the tender for interpretation and signage will begin in the new year, which will provide branded fingerposts, entrance features, etc.

The DGTrails website is up and running ([DG Trails](#)), which features The Annandale Way, Southern Upland Way and Rhins of Galloway Coastal Path.

The Archaeology project is delivering a webinar on Mull of Galloway Earthworks, led by Graham Cavers, Archaeologist, on Thursday 10 December at 7.30 pm. Peter had circulated the link in an email for people to sign up. Bryan will resend the link with joining instructions to Catherine. William and Beverley had registered to attend.

In the last Minutes, it was reported that an extension to the project and additional funding had been requested from the HLF. This had been approved, with £76k awarded by the HLF and the project completion date extended to September 2022.

Katie noted that a full map was not yet on DGTrails website. She thought there could be volunteer opportunities here and the chance to link with young people, for example through the Duke of Edinburgh Awards or Scouts etc. Bryan advised that schools are engaging but Covid has affected many of the plans made. Online activities are being delivered, with the hope that on the ground activities can take place next year.

Katie had been led to believe that there were some issues with a landowner possibly erecting a gate to prevent vehicular access. Bryan advised that he is aware of a potential issue at Lady Bay where a gate has been erected across the car park but it has not yet been locked. It is believed that this is due to concerns about littering and wild camping. This is a very popular site and there would be a public outcry if the gate was locked. Bryan will keep an eye on the situation and any further concerns should be addressed to himself or Richard M.

#### Galloway Glens Paths

On behalf of Jonathan, who is in New Zealand until after the new year, Peter reported that a bridge is being designed for New Galloway Community Path, for which DGOAT has sourced funds.

#### 4. Dumfries and Galloway Outdoor Access Trust

Peter apologised for the mis-spelling of Ronald's name in the report.

The National Access Forum (NAF) is looking into issues of vandalism, bad parking, over-use of paths etc during lockdown. The Kirkandrews to Carrick Path (CP181) will start early in the new year. Some additions are to be confirmed, for which estimates from Contractors are required. A quote has been provided for the press for the Historic Environment Scotland grant. Moffat Southern Upland Way path upgrade has been awarded £7,691. Funding of £7,500 has been confirmed for the New Galloway Link Path, in collaboration with Galloway Glens. The Expression of Interest for £39k for the Rhins of Galloway Coast Path Sustainability Plan was rejected.

#### 5. Round Table Discussion Updates

Beverley asked for an update on the position at Ringford. Richard advised that it is not fully resolved yet. The Council has agreed to prune trees to widen the gap but the timing needs planned.

Colvend – Dalbeattie Forest is the subject of an Evidence of Use Survey which is open till February 2021. The landowner of the new property has provided a useful and viable alternative route to divert the core path but some residents still want to use the old route. The landowner could apply for formal diversion of the core path and access is still possible but it could be a long process. Katie advised that she had walked at Colvend at the weekend and lost the path. Peter advised that Roseanna Cunningham MSP had replied to the National Access Forum's letter regarding core path maintenance that it is the responsibility of the Local Authority. Katie asked Peter to forward a copy of this response to her.

**Action 4 – Peter to send Katie the letter from Roseanna Cunningham MSP.**

Beverley asked Richard about the core path at Gelston Castle but he has not visited this recently.

June had walked at Nether Crae where good progress is being made. Richard confirmed that this is almost resolved and the Community Council is pleased with the outcome.

Ronald asked when the Core Path Review is due. Richard advised that this had been planned but has been delayed by Covid and affected by resources. Bryan added that there is still time to fulfil this statutory duty but due to resources could not say when this would be. He clarified that the purpose of the review is to look at how the existing network works and identify any redundant parts, missing links or candidates to join the network and ensure that the Core Path Network is 'fit for purpose'. Peter reminded members that the Review involves a long consultative process. The Forum undertook this between 2005 – 2012 for the full Plan to emerge. Some paths are 'wishlists' and there is no legal requirement on the Access Authority to lay these out as planned paths. As people start using paths, or not, the Plan evolves and the Forum has had to be reactive rather than proactive. Katie asked if there was a statutory duty to consult the public on the legislation under review. Bryan confirmed that consultation is required but emphasised this would be light touch. It took a long time to establish the Core Paths Network and there is a strategic undertaking to review where routes are working. He noted that Loch Lomond and the Trossachs have undertaken the consultation process online. Katie considered that the Council is good at community engagement and suggested engaging with the Council and wider community for wider support. Peter noted that the Core Path Review would be subject to the standard 13-week consultation period.

Ronald pointed out that the link to the Outdoor Access Forum Strategy on the Outdoor Access Forum website is broken and asked if this is Dumfries and Galloway Council's Access Strategy. Richard confirmed that this document does exist but requires review. Bryan added that some documents were lost when the Council's website was updated but the document is available in pdf format.

**Action 5 – Peter to send Ronald an electronic copy of Dumfries and Galloway Access Strategy document.**

Ronald noted that the Core Path Map contains various errors and offered support in addressing this. He noted that on some paths there is 400-500m difference between what is on the map and what is on the ground. Richard advised that he is the only person able to access the external database programme, which is dependent on him having the time and being in the office as this does not fall within the remit of IT technicians. Peter noted that the routes are indicative and Officers can only react when the resources are available. Ronald noted that there are insufficient funds to resource this but did not think that waymarkers were sufficient or errors on core path maps acceptable. Peter advised that Officers had had to adopt a reactive and pragmatic approach and this was the first 'formal' complaint received. He added that the Council is not legally obliged to waymark the paths and there is a need to exercise patience. Bryan added that Dumfries and Galloway has the second largest network of core paths, with 1800km. It was suggested that Ronald marked up details on maps of any issues which arose. Richard confirmed that Ronald had sent him inaccuracies which is very helpful. Minor amendments can be made, when time resources allow, but larger amendments may require consultation if there is a different landowner.

**Action 6 – Ross to send Ronald and Action Group in Penpont waymarking discs in the post.**

Katie advised that Forest and Land Scotland is consulting on Balloch Wood, Creetown, but she was not informed of the consultation, despite being Elected Member for the area and a local resident. The consultation will now close in February 2021 instead of November 2020. Balloch Wood is very heavily used and the trees are too big for existing machinery. Peter noted that the Core Path is recognised and Forest and Land Scotland is aware of the regulations and its obligations.

**Action 7 – Katie will email the consultation form for Balloch Wood to anyone who wants to respond.**

Peter reminded members that he sits on the Whithorn Way Steering Group but does not lead on this. The Steering Group issued a note which Peter had circulated and welcomed comment on. The Group has asked Alex Haswell, Chair of The Whithorn Trust, to engage with the Whithorn Way Steering Group and work together. Katie is a Trustee of The Whithorn Trust. Katie also referred to separate organisations 'All Roads Lead to Whithorn' and the Community Council, which have also been asked to pull projects together. Alex Haswell is to arrange a meeting to encourage all groups in the area to work together. Katie asked for clarity on where the Whithorn Way Steering Group sits with the Pilgrim Way Forum. Peter advised that the Whithorn Way Steering Group is affiliated to the Pilgrim Way Charity but local Steering Groups were formed.

Bryan updated on the Criffel Core Paths works, which is not yet complete but Contractors are working steadily on the site and is hoped that the summit path will be finished in late January / early February. Bryan shared his screen with members and showed a map of the route and explained the work being carried out. The Council is also looking at Mid Glen to Knockendoch to encourage a circular walk. The increased popularity of Criffel has caused some issues with parking and problems for farmers and residents. An arrangement has been reached with the landowner at Ardwell and negotiations are taking place in respect of leasing additional land to increase the parking provision, which has Council Committee approval. Approval has also been given for improving a section of Knockendoch connected path. Members congratulated Council Officers on the improved path works at Criffel which looks fantastic.

Beverley had not been to Loch Rannoch for a while but had heard of litter issues and the Army taking over the Lodge. Peter had done this as part of the Newton Stewart Walking Festival and did not think it was too bad although there were signs of people having been there. The Lodge was empty. Beverley thought that the gates had appeared locked at one stage and asked the arrangements between Forest and Land Scotland and the Army. Janette confirmed that the Army had taken over the Lodge and locked the gates accordingly.

She did not know the detail but she was aware of big issues with littering and antisocial behaviour. Beverley had tried to walk across the viaduct which is now virtually impassable but would make a lovely circular walk if funds are ever available. Bryan reminded members that the Viaduct had been discussed previously and was the subject of a meeting two years ago with owners, Sustrans, the Council and NatureScot. Options were looked at and Sustrans wanted the Council or NatureScot to take ownership but nothing further came of it. Ronald suggested trying to get the Viaduct listed which would be more effective than a core path. Beverley thought it unlikely that this would be feasible as there is now brick round it so it has lost its integrity.

Peter recalled that Glenluce Development Trust tried to find the ownership and listing of Glenluce Viaduct in the 1990s, which was offered to the community for £1.00. This would have required a Civil and Structural Engineers Report every year and access was closed off from the community because of the liability.

Bryan advised that he had been approached by NatureScot which is looking at the creation of more strategic routes on former railway lines. The feasibility of connecting Castle Douglas, Dalbeattie and Dumfries following the old railway line is being considered and a survey of part of the route as a core path has been done.

## 6. Any Other Business

There were no other items of business raised.

Peter thanked everyone for attending and apologised for the poor connections in parts, due to the nature of rurality. This meeting should have included DGOAT's Annual General Meeting but this will be held in March 2021.

## 7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on **Tuesday 2nd March 2021**. It will be determined nearer the time whether this can be face to face or will have to be online. If the meeting is on the Microsoft Teams platform, Peter asked that people accept the invitation which will provide them with the link to log in to the meeting. The meeting closed at 3.15 pm.

## SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

1. Beverley to check if the gate at Loch Whinyeon, Map 56, Core Path Plan 2013, is still locked and advise Richard M if investigation of ownership is still required – carry 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 – carry forward.
4. Peter to send Katie the letter from Roseanna Cunningham MSP on funding for core path maintenance.
5. Peter to send Ronald an electronic copy of Dumfries and Galloway Access Strategy document.
6. Ross to send Ronald and Action Group in Penpont waymarking discs in the post.
7. Katie will email the consultation form for Balloch Wood to anyone who wants to respond.