

Feedback from S Lanarkshire Local Access Forum Meeting 27/3/19

Background

The Local Access Forum is a body set up under the Land Reform Scotland Act (2003) to allow interested parties to raise issues related to the "Right to Roam" provisions of the Act. It comprises representatives of SLC, Community Councils, and a range of interested organisations e.g. Ramblers Scotland, the Scottish Canoe Association, and the National Farmers Union Scotland (NFUS).

Some of the issues raised at the meeting related to other parts of South Lanarkshire and are not covered in this report.

Issues in Biggar

* SLC are aware of a hole in the burnside path by the High School and are considering how it should be repaired. The SLC Access Officer was not aware that a barrier had been installed that was preventing access to the High School from the path. It was agreed that it would be better to block off the path between the High School entrance and the hole. The SLC Access Officer will request that the barrier is relocated.

* Biggar and District Community Heritage (BDCH) are working with SLC on a project to improve the local path network around Biggar. BDCH members have been surveying existing paths and noting issues. The first stage of the improvement project is likely to involve the path up Bizzyberry. It was noted that the recently-installed stile beyond the phone mast is not easily accessible for dogs.

* "Beware of the Bull" signs around Hillridge remain on display even when there are no bulls in the fields. These have been in place for several years, and bulls are rarely present in these fields. SLC will investigate whether this signage complies with good practice.

* SLC have required the removal of signs requesting that dogs to be kept on leads on paths at Biggar Common and Carmichael. Their view is that signs must explain why dogs should be kept on leads. They have suggested alternative but longer wording. SLC suggested that their wording was taken from guidance produced by SNH and Paths for All, although the templates in these guidance documents do not cover this specific issue.

Issues Close to Biggar

* Obstructed access at Kersewell near Carnwath. A gate in a fence had been removed by a landowner making it impossible for the public to cross a field to access a woodland area. After negotiation with the landowner SLC have provided a replacement gate.

* Irresponsible access at Carnwath Mill. Although not in the BCC area, this item created a lot of interest in a Facebook post about the Access Forum meeting. There has been a problem with irresponsible access being taken by an equestrian which has caused damage to a field. SLC have provided signage highlighting reminding specific groups such as equestrians and dog walkers how to behave responsibly when accessing this area.

* Upgrades to the Clyde Walkway are planned to improve accessibility e.g. replacing steps with ramps to improve access for wheelchairs, mobility scooters and buggies. SLC have some funding to progress this.

* Extension of the Clyde Walkway to link with the Southern Uplands Way (SUW) at Leadhills. This is a long-term aspiration. In the short term SLC are in discussion with Hopetoun Estates to improve the link between the SUW and the village. There is also an ambition for a link between the SUW and Elvanfoot.

General Items

* Development of new off-road paths and cycle routes. SLC have 2-3 new staff working on cycling and have funding for new cycle infrastructure. Grant funding is also available from Sustrans. A new map showing various types of cycle route in S Lan has been produced.

* Keeping dogs under control near livestock. The NFUS initiative was highlighted. This asks that dogs be kept on leads near sheep, but that owners be able to release a dog quickly near cattle in case the cattle charge the dog.

* The next Local Access Forum Meeting will be in June.

Requested Action BCC to note the content of this report.