

# Local Access Forums

A guide to good practice

Second Edition



## A new phase.....

The Land Reform Act has come into force; Local Access Forums have moved from a voluntary to a statutory basis, their functions now clearly and definitively prescribed in law; rapid expansion has seen Forums set up in every access authority in Scotland; and the National Access Forum has been reconstituted to give a national lead. These are landmark events that project us into a new and exciting phase of Local Access Forum development.

## Ambitious aims.....

Local Access Forums have a key role to play in Scotland's distinctive approach to managing outdoor access, and there are high aspirations for them. It is hoped that they will become valued new local institutions - independent, expert and trusted - that help access authorities, their staff, land managers and all who want to enjoy Scotland's outdoors make a success of the new legislation. So it's time to take stock and make sure we are aiming high enough.



## Continual evolution.....

Since the first Local Access Forums were set up in 1997, access authority staff and volunteer Forum members have invested a lot of effort and imagination to convert theory into practice. One clear lesson is that achieving the ideal Forum is neither straightforward nor easy. Forum development is best envisaged as a cyclical process rather than as a linear series of steps. By continually revisiting the phases of the cycle, Local Access Forums - **no matter their present stage of development** - can evolve and progress over time.

## Fresh guidance.....

This guidance **replaces** the first edition, which was published in 2002, before most Local Access Forums had been set up. It aims to meet the needs of the new phase and is intended for:

- **members** of Local Access Forums
- **participants** in outdoor access who may become members of their Local Access Forum, or who may have dealings with it, or who belong to a local paths group which needs to operate on similar principles
- **the interested public**, including **land managers**, who want to understand how this new local institution will work to improve opportunities for getting out and about in their local area and promote the better management of outdoor access
- **professional staff** and **access authority members** who have the responsibility for setting up, guiding and servicing Local Access Forums.



## Acknowledgements

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## Enjoying the outdoors: the Scottish approach

Over the past decade, Scotland has developed an approach to outdoor access that is distinctive and different from the rest of Britain - one that depends on **management** rather than prescription.

The approach is underpinned by three key principles:

- **respect** for the interests of others
- **care** for the environment
- **responsibility** for one's own actions

The approach is characterised by two defining features:

- maximising **participation** to optimise decisions
- seeking **consensus** to change conflict into cooperation

The central mechanism for translating these ideals into practical action is the **Local Access Forum** - an advisory body with a balanced representation of land managers, participants in outdoor access, communities and public agencies.

## Foundations of the Scottish approach - the Act and the Code

Part 1 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003<sup>1</sup> establishes a general right of access to virtually all land and inland water. This right applies on, over or under the surface, and includes **all** types of non-motorised movement - walking, horse riding, cycling, canoeing, sailing, climbing, skiing, hang gliding, caving, etc.

At the same time, however, the Act imposes the obligation of **responsible behaviour** on those who take access to land or water and on those who own or occupy the land or water. In effect, it requires all those involved to have respect for each other's interests and to take care of the environment.

The Scottish Outdoor Access Code<sup>1</sup>, approved by Parliament, establishes the three key principles of respect, care and responsibility, and gives guidance on what constitutes responsible behaviour in any given situation.

The Scottish system should therefore be seen as a **balanced package of rights and responsibilities** which needs to be managed with intelligence and pragmatism.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A

## Local Access Forums - their role and status

The Act gives the lead management role to Scotland's 32 local authorities and 2 national park authorities (collectively known as 'access authorities'), but it also requires each authority to set up at least one Local Access Forum to advise it, and any other person or body who asks for advice, on issues that arise in relation to the management of outdoor access. The range of tasks that a Local Access Forum can be involved in is very wide:

Local Access Forum Roles	Section of the Act
<b>Carrying out its own statutory functions:</b>	
Advising the access authority and any other person or body who consults it on:	s25
(i) the exercise of access rights	
(ii) the existence and delineation of rights of way	
(iii) the drawing up and adoption of the Core Paths Plan	
Offering and, where accepted, giving advice to parties in dispute about:	s25
(i) the exercise of access rights	
(ii) the existence and delineation of rights of way	
(iii) the drawing up and adoption of the Core Paths Plan	
(iv) the use of core paths	
<b>Acting as a statutory consultee on:</b>	
Proposed Exemption Orders lasting 6 or more days	s11
Proposed Byelaws	s12
Proposed Core Paths Plans	s18
<b>Helping the access authority perform <i>its</i> functions:</b>	
Publicising the Scottish Outdoor Access Code	s10
Deciding the need for Byelaws	s12
Upholding access rights	s13
Dealing with prohibition signs, obstructions, impediments, etc	s14
Measures for safety, protection, guidance and assistance	s15



Local Access Forum Roles	Section of the Act
<b>Helping the access authority perform <i>its</i> functions:</b>	
Acquisition of land to facilitate the exercise of access rights	s16
Preparing the Core Paths Plan	s17
Maintaining core paths	s19
Reviewing and amending the Core Paths Plan	s20
Making path agreements	s21
Making path orders	s22
Restoring rights of way or core paths after ploughing	s23
<b>Offering local leadership</b>	
Raising awareness and widening involvement	-
Promoting better communication between disparate groups	-
Sharing good practice, experience and information	-
Helping shape the Outdoor Access Strategy	-
Advising on projects, e.g., path building, signage, priorities, etc	-
Liaising with local communities and police on path design and management issues in relation to community safety	-
<b>Contributing to the national access effort</b>	
Responding to consultations, e.g., on land management contracts, forestry strategy, etc	-
Informing the National Access Forum and SNH of significant issues requiring national action, e.g., the effectiveness of the Code.	-

Local Access Forums thus have a challenging and valuable role to play. By giving impartial, well-informed and practical advice, they can help ensure the system works as intended - for the benefit of **all** parties.

Local Access Forums are an important innovation, based on long experience (see Chapter 1), and intended to facilitate a radical change in the way access issues are dealt with. Although composed mostly of volunteers, they are **statutory** bodies with **statutory** functions set out in the Act (see Chapter 4).

## Underpinning the role - training and resources

The development of effective Forums must therefore be taken seriously, both by those who serve on them and by the access authorities who establish and support them. There are two main implications - **training** and **resources**.

The volunteer members of Local Access Forums will clearly need training to help them discharge an unfamiliar role successfully (see Chapters 3 and 5). Perhaps less obviously, the professional staff of access authorities and other public agencies may also need training to enable them to engage appropriately with this new feature in their operational 'landscape'.

Forum members will incur expenses of various kinds while Forums will have a wide range of operational costs and need operational support (see Chapter 4). In other words, Forums need resources appropriate to their role.

Local Access Forums thus have a special kind of relationship with their respective access authorities. Charged with giving independent advice to the authority and any other person or body who asks, they are nevertheless closely involved with the authority and dependent on it for operational support. This balancing act between partnership and independence is explored in Chapter 6. One way of dealing with this is to see the role of Local Access Forums in the context of Community Planning (see Chapters 1 and 8).

**The statutory duty to set up a Forum clearly implies a duty on access authorities to ensure that the training and resources essential for effectiveness are in place.**

## Helping build a better Scotland

Making a success of the new approach to managing outdoor access is central to the attainment of key national policy objectives:

- **Health and wellbeing:** increasing the amount of regular physical activity is the most powerful way to improve the health - both physical and mental - of Scotland's people.
- **Sustainable transport:** providing the means and the motivation for people to use the car less and walk and cycle more makes a key contribution to caring for our environment.
- **Community:** getting people out and about, for everyday business as well as for pleasure, increases social interaction and makes for safe and vibrant communities.
- **Development:** maximising the potential for the enjoyment of Scotland's wonderful environment is a key factor in building tourism and attracting investment for the benefit of the economy.

Some information about how these national policy agendas are being taken forward is given in Appendix C. The important point is that outdoor access *matters*, and not just in the countryside but in the towns and cities where most of us live our daily lives. By bringing their blend and balance of experience to bear, Local Access Forums have the potential to be a force for change in Scottish society.



## The emergence of the idea

In 1994, a National Access Forum was established, comprising a balanced representation of land management interests, recreational groups, and relevant public agencies. The idea was that face-to-face contact could foster improved understanding, build mutual respect and trust, and so engender a spirit of teamwork that would produce a consensus about how to manage outdoor access in the interests of everyone.

The idea was successful. It produced the proposal for a 'balanced package of rights and responsibilities' which became the basis for the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. Another key recommendation was that local authorities should establish Local Access Forums in the image of the National Access Forum to repeat its success in consensus-building at local level.

The idea was quickly taken up. The earliest Local Access Forums date from 1997, and others followed at a steady pace. Long before the law required access authorities to set them up, many saw the value of doing so, and many people whose interests were affected by access issues saw the value of giving up their time to get involved.

## The wider context: Community Planning

Local Access Forums are simply a special case of the general trend towards more open and participative government. The most important feature of this trend has been Community Planning. Strikingly, this idea emerged at roughly the same time as Local Access Forums, followed a similar pattern of informal and experimental development, and was finally made a statutory requirement at the same time - in the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003<sup>1</sup>.

Aspirations for better outdoor access typically emerge high in the lists of priorities generated by community planning exercises. Local Access Forums and Community Planning Partnerships therefore have overlapping agendas, and need to develop linkages so as to avoid duplicating consultation exercises or producing different recommendations for action. In some areas, the Local Access Forum has actually been integrated into the structure and processes of the local Community Planning Partnership. This represents an ideal to aim for.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A

**Example 1.1:** Shetland Community Planning Board has a Cultural Strategy with 3 main themes. Each theme is broken down into a number of aims, and each aim has an action plan signed up to by community organisations, trusts, public agencies or Council departments, either singly or (more usually) working in partnership. A Strategy Implementation Group monitors progress and reports back to the Board.

Within this set-up, the Access Strategy and Access Forum effectively constitute an action plan and its corresponding implementation partnership. The role which this plan and partnership play in the delivery of the Cultural Strategy – namely the creation of the infrastructure which enables people to access and enjoy the rich cultural heritage of Shetland – is recognised and supported by the Community Planning Board and all partner organisations. This ensures cross-agency and cross organisation support for outdoor access.

**Example 1.2:** Scottish Borders has similar arrangements, in which the Access Strategy is linked to the Community Plan by being presented under the same thematic headings.

**National Standards for Community Engagement**<sup>1</sup> were developed by Communities Scotland and published in 2005 to help achieve effective public involvement in local decision-making. They set the broader context for the activities of Local Access Forums.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A



## The national dimension

In 2004, the National Access Forum was reconstituted to assist with the implementation of the new access rights. Its role is to:

- advise on national access issues, in particular where these relate to the legislation
- advise on best practice in access provision and management
- assist SNH in keeping the Access Code under review

These tasks all require ongoing liaison with local Access Officers and Forums, both to identify emerging issues requiring action at national level and to disseminate guidance to those at the coal face. The national and local Forums communicate in various ways, including:

- an annual joint meeting
- circulation of National Access Forum papers to local Forums
- liaison via the representatives of recreation, land management or access authorities on the National Forum.

All meetings of the National Forum are held in public and papers are available at **[www.outdooraccess-scotland.com](http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com)**. Local Forum members and members of the public can also make comments or representations on the papers directly through the National Forum Secretariat (see Appendix B).

## An idea that works

Why was the idea of Local Access Forums taken up so widely in advance of the legislation? Quite simply because it worked. Forums provided a channel of communication that had not previously existed between people who needed to improve their knowledge and understanding of one another's activities and concerns. With improved understanding came the motivation - and the capacity - to devise practical courses of action that brought benefits to all.

A lot of valuable experience has now been gained in making this unique innovation work in practice. Example 1.3 gives a flavour of what a Local Access Forum can achieve.

**Example 1.3:** Falkirk Access Forum was one of the first to be set up - in 1997. From the outset, it enjoyed strong cross-departmental support from the local authority, land management interests took a pro-active leading role, and there was effective engagement with community and recreational organisations. This led to the early development of a strategic vision supported by all the key interests and agencies and so laid the foundation for a culture of partnership working. That culture has combined ambition with pragmatism to achieve a consistent track record of major access developments while maintaining a high level of satisfaction with the quality of access management. In 2001, Falkirk Council won a prestigious 'Quality in Planning' award from the Scottish Executive in association with the Royal Town Planning Institute for its Denny Path Network, which successfully married the recreational needs of town dwellers with the operational requirements of nearby farmers.

## A worthwhile investment

This shows the valuable contribution that an effective Local Access Forum can make. The **access authority** can be confident that its decisions are based on the best available information and advice, achieving a balance between the needs and interests of all parties. **Land managers** can be confident they will be given a formative role, rather than just a reactive one, and that their operational needs will be understood and addressed. **Participants** and **communities** can be confident that the whole range of access needs - for all ages and levels of ability, for all types of activity, and for everyday getting about as well as recreation - are being taken into account.

These are the preconditions for good decision-making, effective use of scarce resources, and maximisation of public benefit - outcomes that justify the investment of significant resources by the access authority to develop, support and maintain an effective Local Access Forum.



## The effective Forum: independent, expert, trusted

An effective Local Access Forum will be widely recognised as being both **independent** and **expert**, and for this reason it will enjoy the **trust** of all those whose interests are affected by access rights and their management. Only when these 3 criteria have all been met can a Local Access Forum be considered fully mature and become a valued local institution.

Being **independent** means having an identity that is clearly separate from the access authority or any other interest or group of interests, i.e., it means having the capacity to be impartial.

Being **expert** means including a balanced representation of all the relevant interests and having the knowledge to represent those interests fully, i.e., it means knowing what the issues are and how to address them.

Being **trusted** is what happens when a Local Access Forum has shown that it knows what the issues are, approaches them in a practical way, and produces impartial and effective advice.

## A process not an event

This doesn't happen overnight. Local Access Forums need time to follow a learning curve and grow into the role of valued local institution. And like any other institution, they can go through cycles of fluctuating effectiveness and need periodic renewal or refreshment.

So setting up a Local Access Forum and achieving effectiveness is a process rather than an event. This process has 3 phases:

### PEOPLE

**Get the right people together and establish a culture of participation**

### ORGANISATION

**Set up the right organisation and develop a culture of consensus**

### WORK

**Tackle the work, establish a clear role, and keep the process under review**

Chapters 2 to 7 suggest how a Local Access Forum can successfully handle these 3 phases of development. Since most Forums already exist, it may seem redundant to devote much space to the first two phases. The emphasis, it might be thought, should be on the third phase - how to do the work.

Quite apart from the fact that new Forums will still be set up, there are more fundamental reasons for dealing in detail with all three phases. On the one hand, personalities, circumstances and issues all

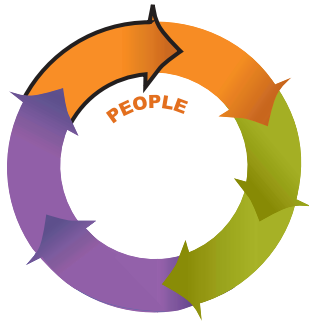


change. Yet, at the same time, it is the natural tendency of all human institutions to become set in their ways. This means that Forum effectiveness can only be maintained by regular reviews that **revisit all three phases**, critically assess current arrangements, and make adjustments as necessary.

Local Access Forum development is never finished. The development process is a *cyclical* one, in which regular reviews should support continual evolution towards ideal effectiveness.

Diagram 1: Local Access Forum Development





## Laying sound foundations

The early stages in the life of a Local Access Forum are crucial to its later growth and development. It is important to recognise three distinct phases and take the time to go through them in sequence. They are:

- the preliminary stages - contacting, informing and motivating people
- the formative stage - agreeing a structure for the Forum
- the final stage - choosing representatives

These stages inevitably entail a heavy investment of time and effort, but the temptation to short-circuit them should be resisted – it risks building the Forum on weak foundations that will only be exposed later.

## An inclusive approach to involvement

**Everyone** with an interest in outdoor access should be contacted, made aware of the fact that a Local Access Forum is being set up, and invited to find out more about the range of ways in which they can be involved. The broader the range of people who can be attracted to get involved, the better the chances of finding the right people to serve on the Forum.

Section 25(4) of the Act specifies how a Local Access Forum should be made up, but in broad terms the aim is a balanced representation of **four** interest groups or 'constituencies of interest':

- land managers
- participants in outdoor access
- relevant public agencies
- interested people in local communities



So these are the four main target audiences which the access authority must reach and engage in the process of setting up the Forum. A range of techniques will be needed to suit the different needs of these audiences:

- Many **land managers** can be reached through representative organisations (see Appendix B), but best practice is to assemble a database of local land managers and write to each personally (see Practice Note 2, Paths for All Partnership<sup>1</sup>).
- **Public agencies** (see Appendix B) can simply be written to, but care must be taken to target the most appropriate officer(s) in each.
- Many **participants** in outdoor access will belong to recreational organisations (see Appendix B) which can be contacted by letter, but most will belong to no organisation and thus need to be reached by publicity.
- **Local communities** can only really be reached by publicity, although it is certainly worthwhile writing to Community Councils, Housing Associations, and other local organisations (see Appendix B) to seek their assistance.

The following are some of the publicity techniques that can be used:

- The local press will usually give prominent coverage to the setting up of a Local Access Forum and any associated public meetings.
- Leaflets can be produced to explain what a Forum is and give notice of public meetings.
- The leaflets can be placed in shops, gyms, libraries and public buildings to reach the general public, and they can be included with letters sent to land managers, public agencies and recreational and community organisations.
- Posters can be displayed on paths and in parks, and they can be placed in shops, gyms, libraries and public buildings, to reach the general public.
- Posters in veterinary surgeries will reach dog walkers.
- Posters in agricultural suppliers will reach land managers and horse riders.
- A dedicated page should be created on the access authority's web site, with a prominent link from the home page, to give details of how the Forum will be set up and, in time, to become the Forum's own web page.

Further information on techniques can be found in the Partnership's manual on 'Promoting Paths for People'<sup>1</sup>. All techniques used should emphasise the important role the Forum will play, in order to attract the interest of the best people.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A

## Ensuring a common understanding



Having contacted everyone with an interest, the next step is to ensure that they all share the same core knowledge about outdoor access in general and the functions of a Local Access Forum in particular. The challenge is to convey a lot of quite dry information while still motivating people to want to be part of it. The information which needs to be covered includes:

- The origins and evolution of the outdoor access agenda
- The access rights, and access authority duties and powers, laid down in the Act
- The Scottish Executive Guidance on the Act<sup>1</sup>
- The functions laid down in the Act for Local Access Forums
- The development and content of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code
- The constitution and role of the National Access Forum

A lot of this information can be included in the leaflets or web pages mentioned above, or in briefing papers supplied on request to those who ask for more detail. But since Local Access Forums are all about bringing people together, it is best practice to start as it is meant to go on, and hold meetings. Three types of meeting can be used:

- **public meetings open to all:** these are obviously the most inclusive, but may attract people with widely varying levels of interest, and could be frustrating for those whose interest is serious.
- **meetings by invitation to all who expressed an interest:** these have the merit of immediately bringing all four interest groups together, but communication may be difficult if there is a history of conflict.
- **meetings by invitation to interested parties in each interest group:** these allow information to be tailored to specific audiences, and may be the best way to start if there is a history of conflict, but continuing too long in this way could reinforce sectional attitudes.

Circumstances must dictate what is appropriate. It could often be the case that a combination of two, or even all three, types of meeting are needed.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A

## Clarifying the role and responsibilities of representatives

Local Access Forum members are appointed to represent constituencies of interest. This is an unfamiliar role for many people. Making sure they grasp what it means is crucial to the effective operation of the Local Access Forum.

For example, members representing recreational interests are there to speak for everyone, not to reflect the concerns of their own recreational group. Land management representatives must think beyond their own land holdings and express the views of the land management community. Key points that must be grasped by all members are:

- Members are **not** on the Forum to express their own views, pursue their own enthusiasms or pet projects, or resolve personal issues
- Members who belong to a particular organisation are **not** on the Forum to express or promote the views of that organisation
- Members must take active steps to stay in touch with the constituency they represent so that they can convey **its** views to the Forum

Being an enthusiast with a capacity to generate ideas, or being a committed member of an organisation and having experience gained from involvement in its activities, are the kinds of thing that give people **the potential** to be useful Forum members. Their past experience is the base from which they start – valuable, but only a start.

**The potential will only be realised if people consciously see membership of the Local Access Forum as stepping up to a new and more sophisticated kind of activity requiring further development of their skills and capabilities.**

This learning curve in the role and responsibilities of a representative can be encouraged by:

- drawing up a 'person specification' and/or 'job specification' for prospective Forum members
- drawing up a Code of Practice for current Forum members
- ensuring consistency of representation by appointing 'substitutes' who can fill in for members who are temporarily unavailable
- insisting on regular attendance and taking appropriate steps when this **isn't** happening
- publicising agendas and minutes, perhaps on the web site, to encourage people to feed their views to their representatives
- providing opportunities for members to meet people or groups from the constituencies they represent to discuss matters of interest

The growth of a 'representative culture' might also be helped by setting the term of appointment for Local Access Forum members at, say, 3 years. Allowing for re-appointment would then provide an opportunity to strike a balance between the value of continuity and experience on the one hand, and the need for new ideas and fresh energy on the other. Arranging staggered terms of appointment is another possible approach.

**Example 2.1:** Perth and Kinross Access Forum has a Code of Practice for its members, whose terms of appointment are staggered in the interests of continuity. There are substitutes to cover for members who are unavailable, and these substitutes attend one meeting a year (even if not required) and participate in training events. The Council maintains a 'reserve list' of people interested in becoming Forum members.

**Example 2.2:** Fife Council has drawn up person and job specifications for the information and guidance of those interested in becoming Forum members.

Finally, there needs to be a sanction if the attainment and continued practice of a representative culture is to be taken seriously. It should be understood that the Local Access Forum will request the access authority to terminate a member's appointment if they:

- repeatedly fail to attend meetings without sending a substitute
- fail to reflect the views of their constituency
- act against the interests of the Local Access Forum.

Only when a sound foundation has been laid by conveying all the background information and explaining the role of the representative is the way clear to move forward to consider the linked issues of Forum structure and member selection.



## Motivating people to stay involved and find a role

Motivation is a key concern in these early stages. The background information can be somewhat dry and the duties of a representative rather intimidating. On top of that, it can be difficult for those who have expressed an interest to see how it is going to work and how they can fit in. These problems can be countered by:

- splitting the preliminary meetings into 'business' and 'motivational' parts, inviting speakers who can talk about real issues, how they were tackled, and the difference it made
- having the staff who organise and lead the preliminary meetings display a suitably positive attitude and assure those present that there is a role for everyone
- presenting a model Forum structure that demonstrates how everyone can find a role

A model Forum structure has to address three issues - **numbers**, **geography** and **capacity**.

## Balancing numbers and inclusion

Effective measures to attract interested parties seldom draw less than 50 people, and can easily draw over 100. This is far too many for an effective Local Access Forum. Opportunities for participation would be limited and there would be no chance of developing a team spirit. In fact, research shows that:

- 5 to 7 is the most effective size for **any** team
- As numbers rise above 10 to 12, effectiveness drops off rapidly

So a Local Access Forum needs to be large enough to be inclusive, but small enough to be a team. The ideal maximum is 12, but in practice most Forums have 12 to 20.

**Issue 1:** If publicity attracts 50 to 100 interested parties, while only 12 to 20 can find places on the Local Access Forum, this raises the question of what kind of involvement can be offered to the rest.

## Taking account of geography

Numbers are not the only enemy of inclusion. Where the access authority covers a large area or includes many inhabited islands, travelling times and distances to a central meeting point can be a barrier to attendance, and the need to address geographical variations can place extra demands on the Local Access Forum.

**Issue 2:** This raises the question of whether a single Local Access Forum can always meet the needs of the whole of an access authority's area, or whether more than one Forum may sometimes be needed.



## Ensuring sufficient capacity

While small numbers are essential for team spirit, there has to be sufficient capacity to handle the work. The volume of work a Forum will be called on to perform is hard to predict, but could easily exceed the capacity of 12 to 20 people whose formal meetings may be infrequent.

**Issue 3:** This raises the question of how an element of flexibility can be introduced to let the Forum draw on extra resources when needed to meet the expectations of the access authority and the public.

## Forum structure - a flexible model

The key to resolving these three issues is structure. It is far better for this to be debated by interested parties rather than imposed by the access authority – it can be an important formative experience and give everyone ownership of the outcome. The following model can act as a basis for discussion.



Diagram 2: **Local Access Forum Structure**



**This model illustrates 3 levels of involvement – each with a distinctive function – which will allow everyone with an interest in access a useful way to contribute.**

### Local Access Forum - representative and advisory function

This is the statutory body appointed by the access authority to achieve the aims set out in the Act, namely a balanced representation of access interests and advice and assistance to the access authority, and to others on request (see Chapter 4).

### Working Groups - specialist input function

These create opportunities for wider active involvement in the work of the Forum, enable the use of specialist skills and knowledge, and provide the flexibility to meet whatever demands are made on the Forum. They can draw their members from the Forum itself, from the Contact Group, and indeed from the population at large.

They can be either topic or area based, time-limited or permanent. For example, a working group could be assigned to advise on a signage strategy for the whole access authority area or a path network for a particular locality, and then disband. Alternatively, it could represent access interests in one part of a large access authority area on a permanent basis.

Working groups should have a clear remit, terms of reference and expected lifespan from the outset. This provides group members with a clear indication of their time commitment and avoids too many groups being formed.

### Contact Group - networking function

This is quite simply the database of *all* those who have expressed an interest and subsequently authorised the access authority to retain their contact details and keep them informed, whether they are currently members of the Forum itself or a working group, or not.

This group represents a reservoir of interest, goodwill and capabilities that can be drawn on from time to time. Active efforts should be made to keep this group 'in the loop', e.g. by circulation of Local Access Forum minutes and a regular newsletter.

Contact Group members should be encouraged to network, and at least once a year, an event should be arranged to review progress, share ideas and provide feedback.

This model should not be seen as static. Over time, any one individual could shuffle back and forth between the 3 levels of involvement, depending on personal circumstances, the needs of the Forum, and other factors.

So here is a model with the flexibility to give everyone with an interest a useful way to contribute, and the capacity – through Area Working Groups – to cope with geography.

**Example 2.3:** In East Ayrshire, six permanent Area Working Groups cover the 'zones' identified in the Access Strategy, handling local issues on their own initiative, and feeding into the main Forum when necessary.

## Deciding when to go for multiple Forums

When the geography is very challenging, however, even this model may not be adequate. It may be necessary to consider having more than one Forum. This is not a step to be taken lightly. It increases the burden on the access authority and introduces the potential for inconsistent practice. Alternatives such as video conferencing or venue rotation should be seriously considered first. So what **are** the indicators that multiple Forums may be justified?

First, if the attempt to agree a structure creates irresistible pressure for more than 20 members, this may well be the result of trying to offer representation to all parts of a large access authority area.

Second, if the access authority itself has created area structures – such as Area Committees or Community Planning Area Groups – for the discharge of its own business, this may suggest that a similar approach would be appropriate for the Local Access Forum, and it may offer benefits from aligning the activities of the Forum with the decision-making processes of the authority.

**Example 2.4:** Highland Council area is so large that it is divided into administrative areas each served by an Area Committee. The Council has established 6 Local Access Forums broadly corresponding to the administrative areas, appointed 6 Access Officers, and commenced the preparation of 6 Core Paths Plans. An annual ‘pan-Highland’ Forum meeting is held to ensure communication and consistency between the Local Access Forums.

**Example 2.5:** Argyll and Bute Council area is also very large, and there are 4 Area Committees. The Council cannot commit the resources for more than a single Forum initially, but has built a geographic component into its structure, and recognises the possibility of long-term evolution into 4 Local Access Forums if and when resources permit.

## Agreeing the structure

The experience has been that new Local Access Forums expect to be guided as to structure by the access authority. With so many new things to think about, an awareness of new challenges to tackle, and an impatience to get started, people tend to look to professional officers for guidance. It can therefore be a mistake to make too much of a meal of structure – it runs the risk of demotivating people by dwelling on what seems like an academic topic.

The relevant professional officers should try to develop a ‘feel’ for what will work during the preliminary meetings and circulate a proposal ahead of the meeting which will agree the structure. At the meeting, people’s views should be taken on board using participative techniques – splitting up into small groups to encourage the expression of views and reporting back to the full meeting.

There should be a willingness on all sides to be flexible. People should be reassured that the structure agreed will not be set in stone but open to review in the light of experience. The key thing is to agree something workable and get started.

Established Local Access Forums are different – they will have views based on experience. Changes can therefore be developed from within, perhaps using a Working Group to prepare ideas for debate and agreement at the annual general meeting.

Some important points to consider concerning structure:

- It must achieve a **balance** of interests, but exact numerical equality is not important because issues will be decided by **consensus** not votes.
- Members of the access authority can be appointed to serve on the Forum. This provides a useful link to the political process and can raise the profile of access if the members in question are effective ‘access champions’. But it raises the need to be clear as to whether these members represent ‘public agency’ interests or ‘community’ interests.
- Access affects many local authority services and it is desirable to involve officers from all of them as well as the Access Officer. But none of these officers needs to be a member of the Forum, and care should be taken that too many officers attending at one time don’t dominate proceedings.
- Likewise, there are many public agencies that need to be involved in access, but they should not all have places on the Forum. It is not the function of a Local Access Forum to provide a partnership mechanism for public agencies – that is the function of Community Planning.
- It is often difficult to decide how to represent community interests. There is not always full coverage of Community Councils, they are not always viewed as

being truly representative, and there will not be a place for each of them on the Forum.

**Example 2.6:** In East Lothian, the Association of Community Councils provides representation on the Local Access Forum.

## Choosing representatives

There are a number of ways to choose representatives:

- Seek nominations from the 4 interest groups during or following the formative stage discussions
- Invite all interested parties to a plenary meeting, split up into the 4 interest groups, and have facilitators lead discussion to agree the appropriate number of nominations from each group
- Invite written applications for the appropriate number of places, and assess candidates on the basis of the skills and experience they can offer, perhaps backing up the written submissions with interviews.

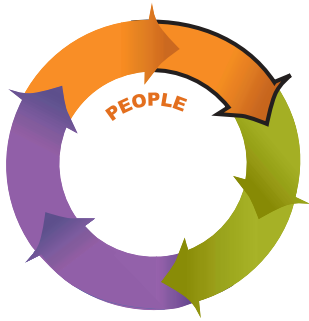
Each method has its merits, but none is a magic solution. If the time has not been taken to lay the groundwork thoroughly by explaining the functions of a Local Access Forum and the roles and responsibilities of Forum members, no selection process *in itself* can guarantee an effective Local Access Forum.



Whichever method is chosen, it helps to remind people that there are many ways to contribute, and that their turn on the Forum may come in the future if not now.

Strictly speaking, members are **appointed** to the Local Access Forum by the access authority. This means that the access authority needs to approve both the structure and the names proposed to fill that structure.

In practice, and in the spirit that will underpin the future relationship between authority and Forum, access authorities have shown themselves willing to endorse proposals arising out of open discussion amongst interested parties and recommended to them by their Access Officers.



## The importance of good leadership

Bringing a group of people together and calling them a Local Access Forum does not mean they will operate as an effective group or achieve the results they are supposed to. Good leadership is essential from the outset to:

- deal with the fact that most Forums will be well above the optimum size for effective group working
- drive the whole process of group development shown in Diagram 1
- inspire ambition and creativity in Forum activities
- establish and personify the independent role of the Forum

These are complex and challenging tasks that go well beyond the routine business of chairing meetings. Experience has been that this quality of leadership is hard to find, and it may be that insufficient attention has been given to this because so many other matters are claiming time and effort.

The result has been that many Forums may have remained for too long in the 'Council-led working party' mode of operation. This is at variance with the requirements of the Act, seriously limits the scope for group development, and risks losing the interest and commitment of the members.

**Good leadership should be recognised as a primary objective, not mistaken for an optional extra.**



## Developing leadership

It **can** happen that one or two people with experience and confidence stand out as 'obvious' leaders. Provided these people have real skills and can command the respect of the other members, the new Forum will be off to a swift start.

The much more normal situation is one where leadership capabilities have to be 'grown' or 'developed from within' as part of the developmental process of the Forum as a whole. This happens in new Forums because people are naturally reluctant to accept new roles – especially high-profile ones – before they've got the measure of a new and strange situation. But it can also recur in established Forums as a result of turnover in personnel.

In these circumstances, the onus will fall on the access authority to take the initiative. The best way forward is to encourage the early establishment of a culture of participation. The more engaged Forum members are, the quicker they will form personal bonds, build mutual trust, and develop confidence about the task ahead. When this 'sense of comfort' has been built up, potential leaders will be happier to offer themselves, and other Forum members will find it easier to choose.

**The achievement of good leadership and the development of a culture of participation are interdependent objectives.**



Until some leadership potential emerges, however, interim arrangements need to be made for chairing meetings in order to get started. The two most obvious possibilities are a member of the access authority, or an officer of the authority or one of the other public agencies.

These are the people who can be expected to have the basic organisational and chairing skills as a result of their political or professional experience. They can set a business-like tone which gets the Forum off to a good start. Having a member of the authority in the chair can also boost confidence by giving the Forum a good political profile and demonstrating the authority's commitment.

Another approach is to rotate the chair during the initial developmental period. This calms nerves (since each member is only committed for one meeting) and may let talent reveal itself. If this option is chosen, it would be good practice to make sure members from each of the four constituencies of interest take a turn. The CHAIR Pack<sup>1</sup>, published by SCVO, is a useful guide.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A

With temporary chairmanship in place, a strategy designed to grow leadership potential from within might feature the following strands:

- give Forum members tasks to perform so that their capabilities have a chance to emerge
- focus on small, achievable tasks at first to build confidence and motivation
- use group working so that potential leaders have a chance to 'cut their teeth' in less challenging situations

Interim arrangements may last for as long as a year, but ideally not longer than that. Attention should focus from the outset on reaching a point where the Chair (and any other leadership roles) can be assigned. All members of the Forum should be eligible for these roles, but if members of the access authority or officers are chosen, they must clearly **separate** their role in the Forum from their role within the authority or other public agency.

**Members of the access authority and officers of the authority or other public agencies are eligible for leadership roles in the Forum, but the issue of Forum independence needs to be carefully considered.**

While the search for leadership talent is under way, it is important to remember that leadership is more than just chairmanship, so that all the necessary leadership skills may not be found in one person. A good Chair must be organised, impartial and diplomatic, but may not necessarily also have the qualities of imagination, energy and drive that can make the Forum come alive, be fun to be part of, and effective in operation.

**Good leadership can be collective, with several people performing complementary roles.**

## Making participation possible

Whether one is talking about the Local Access Forum itself or the wider Contact Group as a whole, **participation** is a central, defining concept. The aim is to create a mechanism that works in a radically new and better way to identify community needs and optimise efforts to satisfy them.

If this aim is taken seriously, the resonance with the aims of Community Planning – and the relevance of the National Standards for Community Engagement drawn up by Communities Scotland – will be appreciated.

**Local Access Forums are meant to be qualitatively different from what has gone before. Like Community Planning, they really demand a step change in ways of working.**



A culture of participation will not happen automatically. The right conditions need to be created to foster it in meetings. The key factors are:

### Timing and Location

The timing of meetings will need to suit members' circumstances and take account of logistics such as travel times. Not all meetings need be indoors on weekday evenings. Some issues are best discussed on site, and there may be scope to do this on weekday evenings in summer or during the day at weekends any time of year.

Finding a central location that suits everyone equally can be difficult, especially in larger access authority areas. It may be necessary to rotate meetings around a number of locations, and this can be a positive benefit when meetings are to take place partly or wholly on-site. When choosing locations, think about access by public transport as well as by car!

### Comfort and Convenience

It is important to look after people. Some members may need assistance with transport or child minding. Venues should be accessible to those with mobility issues, and have an induction loop available for those with hearing difficulties. Rooms should be spacious, well-lit, and have good heating and ventilation. The setting shouldn't be too formal and forbidding. If meetings are early evening, there should be soup and sandwiches! Otherwise, tea and biscuits!

### Engagement and Equality

Rows of chairs arranged theatre-style facing a top table do not create the right ambience of collaboration between equals. Members should sit in a circle – or around four sides of a square of tables – facing in towards one another. This puts everyone on the same footing and makes it difficult for people to get left out of discussions.

### Information and Resources

People cannot participate fully – especially if they lack confidence – if they have not received agendas and briefing papers in plenty of time to let them gather their thoughts and talk to others. E-mail is the fastest and most efficient way, but care should be taken that those without access to it get hard copies in plenty of time.

Maps are essential for many discussions. The ideal is for the authority's electronic paths database to be available for projection onto a screen at all Forum meetings. At the very least, care should be taken to have on hand paper maps showing the localities or parts of the path network likely to arise in discussion at each meeting.

Forum members need to be aware of all the resources available to help them inform themselves and discharge their duties, and they need to have ready access to these resources. They consist of statutory documents and publications by Scottish Natural Heritage, Paths for All Partnership, and others – see the Paths for All Partnership's Factsheet 2.5<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A

Some of these resources – such as the Act and the Code – are so indispensable that Forum members need their own copies. With others, it will suffice that members know of their existence, and know how to access them when required. There can be merit in establishing a library of resources in hard copy form at some convenient central place. But many items can be read on line, so that it may suffice for members to have a note of the relevant web sites.

The list of resources should be kept permanently up-to-date and re-issued to members after every change.

## Achieving a culture of participation

Having created the pre-conditions for participation, the next step is to manage meetings in such a way as to ensure that it actually happens. The key factors are:

### Preparation

Opportunities should be offered for all the members to help compile agendas or raise items for discussion. If suggestions cannot find space on formal agendas, some other way should be found to deal with them. This will foster a sense of ownership of the business to be handled.

Agendas should not be over-loaded. Tackling a realistic and achievable volume of business will help build a satisfying sense of accomplishment. Aiming too high can lead to frustration and demotivation.

Careful attention should be paid to the order of business, to ensure that the most important items can definitely be concluded.

As already mentioned above, agendas and papers should be circulated well in advance of meetings.

### Chairing Techniques

The person chairing the meetings has the responsibility for making sure that **all** members are involved in discussions. This will mean taking active steps to restrain the confident, if there is a danger of them dominating proceedings, and to draw out the more reticent who might otherwise stay silent. There are some techniques that can be deployed:

- **Round Robins:** The Chair asks members to spend a few minutes thinking about an issue and jotting down notes and ideas. Putting simple questions can help to focus thoughts. The Chair then goes round the members asking each in turn for one idea, avoiding repetition, and recording the ideas on a flip chart. The process continues until everyone's ideas are recorded.
- **Brainstorming:** This is particularly useful in generating 'new angles' on a topic. Unlike 'round robins', one person's idea may spark off new thinking as another person picks up and develops the first idea. The technique relies on people's ability not to judge ideas until a later stage in the process. The Chair needs to ensure that some members do not monopolise

this kind of session, thereby defeating the purpose.

- **Planning for Real:** This is the same technique as that used at public consultation meetings. Members use maps and voting cards to contribute ideas without the need to explain and justify them verbally and while preserving their anonymity. It is only applicable to situations where physical proposals are being discussed.
- **Small Group Activities:** The Forum breaks up into smaller groups to discuss a particular topic and then report back later. This helps members who are happier speaking in small groups.

**Example 3.1:** East Lothian invented 8 access dispute scenarios and had its Local Access Forum discuss 2 per meeting over 4 successive meetings. This was an effective ‘ice-breaker’. It introduced members to the kinds of issue they were likely to find themselves dealing with, and gave them practice – in an informal context – in framing and expressing the views of the group they represented.

Whatever techniques are employed, the Chair must pay close and constant attention to how well the group is working together. From time to time, it will be advisable to instigate a discussion which lets members air their views about how well things are going and whether they feel their involvement is worthwhile and enjoyable.

### Management of business

The Chair needs to keep an eye on the time and regulate discussion so as to make sure that meetings get through their agendas. Repeated failure to finish the business will undermine belief in the value of what the Forum does.

Care needs to be taken that discussions reach clear conclusions and/or stipulate clear actions to be taken, specifying who is responsible for taking matters forward.

There should be regular reporting back to the Forum about steps taken as a result of previous discussions and what the outcome was.

Pursuing the twin aims of achieving good leadership and developing a culture of participation is a challenging and complex task. Success will not be an overnight phenomenon, but rather the result of patiently negotiating a learning curve and applying consistent effort over an extended period of time. It is therefore important to guard against unrealistic expectations.

**It can easily take a full year of sustained effort to ‘grow’ good leadership and a culture of participation.**

## Extending participation to the whole Contact Group

It is important that members of the wider Contact Group do not feel excluded and unable to contribute to the work of the Forum. While not currently members of the Forum, some may be so in the future, and many will have specialist skills that can be factored in via Working Groups. This reservoir of energy needs to be carefully tended. There will be two key requirements – **information** and **opportunity**.

Information can be disseminated in a number of ways, and it will probably be necessary to use a combination of some or all of them to meet the various needs of all the members of the Contact Group. The key techniques are:

- **Briefing papers:** These can be issued after each Forum meeting, to cover only the main items discussed, but in more detail than minutes. For example, they can notify any decisions taken or advice given by the Forum, and explain the grounds on which they were based.
- **Newsletters:** These are likely to be more general and issued less often than briefing papers. They can be made available to the general public as part of the ongoing effort to generate awareness of the Forum and its work and attract new people into the Contact Group.
- **Information technology:** This is increasingly viable as a mainstream means of communication, and government policy is to maximise its use in public affairs, on grounds of

both efficiency and sustainability.

E-mail is fast and simple to use for routine communications, e-bulletins are a great way to keep people up to date, and on-line discussion forums facilitate networking.

Opportunities for involvement can be provided by:

- **Feedback mechanisms:** Feedback on the content of briefing papers, newsletters or e-mails can be facilitated by providing feedback forms, encouraging the use of on-line discussion forums or PO boxes, and nominating a Forum member to collect views expressed and report on them to the Forum.
- **Questionnaires:** These can be used to gather views on specific topics.
- **Working Groups:** These can be set up from time to time for specific purposes.
- **Annual Event:** At least once a year, there should be an event to bring all members of the Contact Group up to date, review progress, and discuss ideas for future work. The event can be open to the public, so as to raise awareness and attract new people into the Contact Group.

## A commitment to training

The best form of training for Forum members is regular participation in well-run Forum meetings that achieve tangible results. In other words, learning ‘on the job’! For this to happen, careful thought needs to be given to planning the Forum’s work programme. More will be said about this in Chapters 5 and 6.

Notwithstanding that, members may have specific training needs that can only be met by attendance at training courses. Many courses are run by Scottish Natural Heritage, Paths for All Partnership, and other bodies. Some of these are free, but many have a charge, albeit usually quite modest. Forum members should not be expected to meet these costs out of their own pockets – they are volunteers discharging a statutory function. There must therefore be a training budget provided by the access authority.

Another form of training occurs when Forum members attend events organised by the National Access Forum, or participate in cross-boundary meetings with

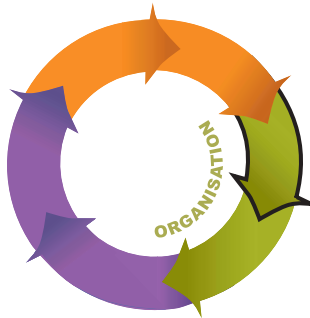
other Local Access Forums, or go on site visits to places of interest. Internal training events can be arranged by the Access Officer. Again, costs may be involved, and the access authority should provide a budget to defray these.

Only a well-planned programme of meetings, backed up by formal or informal training as required, can ensure that Forum members build up the skills that give them both the confidence and the ability to participate fully.

The responsibility for ensuring adequate training must rest with the access authorities, which need to take positive action through their Access Officers. Training needs must be constantly re-evaluated as membership changes.

**Access Officers should identify Forum member skills development as an ongoing key work objective.**





## Getting ready for business

During the early stages of development covered in Chapters 2 and 3, there will inevitably have been discussion about what the new Local Access Forum is **for**, and a general understanding should have been built up. Before normal business can really get under way, however, it is necessary to set down on paper what the Forum is going to do and how it is going to go about it.

Dry as these topics might seem, discussing and agreeing them is a valuable developmental activity for Forum members. Once again, members of a new Forum will probably look to professional officers to set the ball rolling, but it is important that the final outcome is agreed and accepted by all the Forum members – the first substantive test of their ability to reach consensus!

## The foundations - what the law requires

Formerly, Local Access Forums had a wide measure of freedom in specifying roles for themselves. Now, the functions laid down in section 25(2) of the Land Reform Act must be the foundation of any Forum's activities. These are:

1. to advise the access authority, and any other person or body consulting the Forum, on matters relating to:
  - (i) the exercise of access rights
  - (ii) the existence and delineation of rights of way
  - (iii) the drawing up and adoption of a plan for a system of core paths
2. to offer, and where accepted give, assistance to parties who are in dispute about:
  - (i) the exercise of access rights
  - (ii) the existence and delineation of rights of way
  - (iii) the drawing up and adoption of a plan for a system of core paths
  - (iv) the use of core paths



Other functions specified in the Act relate to acting as a statutory consultee on proposed Exemption Orders (section 11), Byelaws (section 12) and Core Paths Plans (section 18). A key point to note is that Forums are there to **give advice and offer assistance** – not to take decisions or adjudicate in disputes. They therefore have no liability for the decisions taken or settlements reached by the parties directly involved.

## Other roles

Notwithstanding the clear focus on statutory functions, Forums don't act in a vacuum. Public interest, political will, and the support of partners determine their capacity to succeed in practice, and these factors are affected by the perceived relevance of Forums and their activities to established policy priorities such as the four mentioned in the Introduction – **health and wellbeing, sustainable transport, community and development**. At the same time, Forum members need to be motivated – they need to feel that their contribution of time and energy is making a difference.

So it is legitimate for Forums to define broader roles for themselves, **provided** these are justified by the contribution they will make to the achievement of the core statutory functions. Some such roles were suggested in the table in the Introduction under the headings of 'helping the access authority perform its functions', 'offering local leadership', and 'contributing to the national access effort'.

## The implications for Forums old and new

In view of the greater freedom formerly enjoyed in defining roles, there are three aspects that Forums may need to examine or re-examine:

### Projects

Before the Act prescribed a statutory **advisory** function for Local Access Forums, a number of them found their desire to make a difference leading them into the management of projects. However, such a role involves gathering and holding money, entering into contracts with consultants and contractors, accepting liabilities, and discharging legal and financial obligations.

These are complex and onerous activities which are likely to deflect energy from the statutory functions now prescribed in law and discourage those unhappy with the obligations entailed from offering themselves as Forum members.

Project **management** should therefore not feature in statements of roles and remits, but Forums should expect to **advise** on projects, and there **are** ways in which Forums can have a connection with 'real' work on the ground – see Chapter 8.

### Formality

In the past, Forums with an active involvement in project work found that they needed to be formally constituted in order to receive cash from certain funders. Such formality can deter

potential members, and some public agency staff may be legally barred from constituted bodies.

If project work is avoided, all that is really needed is a simple statement of the ‘rules of the game’ to guide the smooth running of the Forum and be available for reference in case of need. Such statements can be called by whatever name people feel comfortable with – ‘remits’, ‘terms of reference’, or ‘partnership agreements’.

### Resources

Section 25(7) of the Act states that access authorities **may** pay Forum members such expenses and allowances as they see fit. The reality is that authorities will **require** to resource Forums adequately or risk failing to fulfil their own statutory duty. This will apply to both individual expenses and Forum operating costs. Accordingly, drawing up the remit is as good a time as any to agree with the authority the precise nature and degree of its support, and reflect the outcome in the terms of the document.

It may be useful to present this issue to the authority by using the analogy of the Service Level Agreement procedure that will already be familiar to it. Alternatively, there may be presentational value in calling the document a ‘partnership agreement’, thus emphasising the idea of mutual obligation. In this case, the partnership in question would operate not only between the members of the Forum, but also between the Forum and the authority.

## Agreeing the remit

With these basic principles in mind, the following section provides a checklist of items to consider and a point of departure for discussion:

### Name and Area

- Both usually obvious, but multiple Forums may call for careful thought to ensure it is clear to the public which areas they serve and how they interact.

### Equal Opportunities

- Many authorities consider it good practice to include a statement of intent, drawn up by legal staff, referring particularly to the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, and others as thought appropriate.

### Roles

- The basic content here should be drawn from section 25(2) of the Land Reform Act.
- Further clauses should be added to allow activities that promote better access, as per the table in the Introduction.

### Structure

- The number of representatives for each of the four interest groups mentioned at the start of Chapter 2 should be stated.
- Consideration should be given to allowing substitutes.
- There should be some reference to the Contact Group of all parties who have notified an interest and authorised their details to be kept, and to what



arrangements will be made to keep those details up-to-date.

- There should be a clause authorising the establishment of Working Groups if and when judged necessary.
- There should be provision for reviewing and changing the structure.

### Membership

- How potential members are to be nominated.
- How members are to be elected or re-elected, e.g., from the Contact Group at the Annual Event.
- The length of time for which members are elected or re-elected, e.g., 3 years.
- Provisions concerning turnover, e.g., do all retire at once, or are appointments to be staggered?
- Provisions concerning continuity, e.g., can members be re-elected repeatedly, or must there be gaps?
- Any special provisions relating to representatives of the access authority, e.g., do they change after elections or carry on?
- What office-bearers there are to be.
- How and when office-bearers are to be elected.
- Provisions relating to the length of tenure of office-bearers.
- Provisions relating to their eligibility for re-election.
- Action to be taken in respect of unsatisfactory attendance and/or behaviour by members and office-bearers.



### Meetings

- A statement concerning frequency of normal business meetings.
- Provision for other meetings, such as additional business meetings, site meetings, and visits.
- Provision for some or all meetings to be open to the public, along with rules concerning public involvement in meetings.
- Provision for an Annual General Meeting.
- A statement of how to get items on agendas, for both members and non-members, and what notice is required.
- A statement of notice required for meetings, and how it is to be given.
- Provision for the taking of minutes, and for making them available to the general public, the Contact Group, Forum members and the access authority.
- Provision for inviting non-members such as officers of the access authority or other public agencies to attend to assist or observe.
- A statement of the quorum for formal business to be transacted.

- A statement detailing circumstances in which disclosure of personal interests is required and how such situations should be handled.
- A statement that decisions will be by consensus **not** voting.

### Working Groups

- A statement that any Working Group can only act within the terms of a detailed remit approved by the Forum, and that all power of decision remains with the Forum.
- A statement concerning where membership is to be drawn from, e.g., only from the Contact Group, or from anywhere?
- If specific decisions have been taken, e.g., for the setting up of Area Working Groups, a formal statement can be included to that effect.

### Contact Group

- Provision for frequency of meetings, usually once or twice a year.
- Provision for an Annual Event, if desired.
- Statement of its role in elections to the Forum, if appropriate.
- Statement of its role in relation to meetings of the Forum, e.g., suggest agenda items, submit comments on current business, etc.
- Statement of its wider role, e.g., networking, community contact, attraction of new activists, etc.

### Communication Strategy

- Provision for a Communications Strategy to be drawn up.

- Many authorities consider it good practice to include a Freedom of Information statement drawn up by legal staff.

### Administration and Finance

- Provision for administrative support, accommodation, etc., usually by the access authority.
- Provision by the access authority for securing relevant training for Forum members and defraying associated expenses.
- Provision for the payment of expenses for attending meetings.
- Provision for opening a bank account, if the Forum is going to have a budget for running expenses, together with details of signatories.
- Provision for the disposal of cash and other assets in the event of dissolution of the Forum.

### Alterations to the Remit

- Statement of the procedure to be followed.

The remit will have to be approved by the access authority as well as the Forum, and it is in effect a **partnership agreement** between those two bodies, as suggested above in the context of resources. The terms agreed should be flexible enough to cope with foreseeable changes in the pattern of work facing the Forum, but they are not carved in tablets of stone – they can be changed from time to time if changing circumstances require it.

## Handling communications and public relations

Good communications are vital for the effective operation of the Forum, both as regards its own internal business and as regards its place in the mind of the public. So there is a need to systematically identify what communication needs exist, and then draw up an **action plan** which states:

- how those needs are going to be met
- who has responsibility for the various actions required
- what resources are needed and who will supply them

Once again, it is important that the Forum members debate these matters and come to an agreement, especially as some aspects affect personal privacy. The following checklist provides a basis for discussion.

### General

- There should be a commitment to use electronics as much as possible to save paper and comply with government policy.
- Where paper has to be used, there should be a commitment to use recycled paper.
- With the exception of communication between Forum members and substitutes, the Access Officer should act as a gateway and filter to keep the flow of messages manageable and relevant.

### Communications within the Forum

- All Forum members, and their nominated substitutes where these exist, need to authorise the Access Officer to hold their contact details in a database, along with his or her own, and make this information available to everyone on the database.
- Communications will be faster, and the Forum will be able more effectively to take the initiative where desirable rather than react after the event, if members can be in touch via e-mail. This is increasingly a viable option, and should be encouraged.



### Communications with the Contact Group

- This aspect has already been covered in Chapter 3.
- Specific steps now need to be agreed concerning the use that will be made of briefing papers, newsletters, etc to convey information to the Contact Group, and the opportunities that will be provided for Group members to feed back via questionnaires and otherwise.
- Arrangements for allowing Contact Group members to see Forum agendas ahead of time and comment need to be specified.
- For these measures to be fully effective, Contact Group members will have to authorise the Access Officer to hold their contact details in a database.
- Provisions for holding an Annual Event, if appropriate, need to be stated.

### Communications with the access authority

- Routine arrangements for sending Forum agendas and minutes to the authority need to be set out.
- Protocols need to be worked out for how the authority will request advice from the Forum and how the Forum will respond, e.g., time periods for response, provision for emergency meetings, delegation to Chair in certain cases, etc.
- In particular, it would be good practice to agree a Procedure for the Resolution of Disputes with the authority.
- It may be appropriate to include statements about how the Forum will collaborate with the authority on preparation of the Core Paths Plan.

- It would be helpful to clarify how the Forum will transmit to the authority views or advice which it frames on its own initiative, e.g., via the Access Officer to the Convener of a named Committee.

### Communications with the media and public

- People who have volunteered to be members of the Forum must appreciate that they have signed up for a public role, and must therefore be available to the public in some sense.
- Nevertheless, there are legitimate concerns regarding personal privacy, and each Forum will have to decide how to reconcile these issues.
- It is desirable that the identities of Forum members, especially the Chair, are publicly known, in order to give the Forum a public profile.
- One possibility is for names and photographs to be released to the public via the web and press, while contact with members goes through the Access Officer, either directly or via an on-line PO box.
- Consideration should be given to establishing a Forum identity by designing a logo and letterhead for use in all formal communications.

**Example 4.1:** East Renfrewshire ran a schools competition to design a logo, with excellent results. There was a big entry which produced a superb logo. The winner received a mountain bike donated by a local bike shop!



- Protocols need to be established for issuing statements to the media on behalf of the Forum, or responding to requests from the media.
- Consideration needs to be given to establishing a Forum web site as a means of communication with the public at large. Setting up a web site imposes the burden of keeping it up to date and responding to communications that it attracts. This is usually more onerous than is initially realised, and Forums typically lack the necessary resources. For this reason, Forum 'web sites' tend to start off as pages on the host authority's web site, depending on the authority's staff for their maintenance. The development of an independent Forum web site can be a long-term project.
- Communications with the media and public is so important and so demanding that it is worth setting up a permanent Working Group dedicated to this function.

The viability of such a course would depend on the skills available within the Forum and Contact Group. Some guidance can be drawn from Paths for All Partnership's manual on 'Promoting Paths for People'<sup>1</sup> and from the 'Media Manual'<sup>1</sup> prepared as part of the Active Communities Initiative in Scotland. It would be ideal, however, if this could be supplemented with training by the authority's Public Relations staff.

**Example 4.2:** Cairngorms National Park has an excellent website, [www.cairngorms.co.uk](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk) with a section devoted to outdoor access, within which all Forum minutes can be found.

**Example 4.3:** East Dunbartonshire Access Forum has launched its own website, independent of the local authority, at [www.edaf.co.uk](http://www.edaf.co.uk).

**Example 4.4:** Fife Access Forum has a permanent Communications Working Group.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A



## Learning to work as a team

The challenge of building an effective Local Access Forum lies in moulding a disparate group of individuals into a cohesive **team**. The members need to experience a developmental process in which:

- The sectional loyalties they start out with are gradually replaced by a new group loyalty to the success of the Forum.
- An initial focus on sectional interests expands and matures into a collective concern for the access needs of the whole community.
- The members learn to value each other's capabilities and work together to build up a track record of good work.
- They evolve a distinctive way of doing things based on mutual respect and

collective pride, and achieve the transition to independent operation.

Steady progression through a developmental process like this will seldom be possible. There will typically be false starts and backsliding. Sustained effort, based on the ingredients of successful team building, will therefore be required.

**The early activities of the Forum must be consciously planned so as to facilitate the process of team building.**

**Example 5.1:** East Lothian Access Forum asked one member to give a talk at each meeting. This let members put across the views of the group they represent, increased mutual understanding, and brought people out of their shells. It helped the Forum to work as a team by ensuring that its members understand all sides of an issue.



The ingredients of successful team building are:

- **A stimulating programme**

Members need to feel they are doing something useful. Having an idea of where they might be, and what they may have achieved, at the end of the first year will help instil a sense of purpose and give members an appetite.

Care must be taken not to make inflexible arrangements or set unrealistic targets, but a tentative outline of a varied and meaningful programme of activities for the whole of the first year should be proposed.

- **An early momentum**

It will be difficult to achieve any real process of team building on the basis of four meetings a year. Frequent contact, in a variety of different contexts, is needed to bond new Forum members into a functioning unit.

The first year's programme should therefore contain a minimum of six and an ideal of eight to ten meetings. These should not all be about business or take place indoors. Some should be training events, and some should be chances for the Forum to get out and about, either at weekends or during summer evening daylight, to tackle some issues 'on the ground'. When the early learning curve has been successfully completed, the Forum can settle into a pattern of meetings appropriate to its circumstances.

New Forum members are usually all too aware of what it takes to build a team and keen to get on with it, but staff time is

often seen as a limiting factor. This is understandable, but short-sighted. Staff need not always be involved – indeed there may actually be merit in Forum members meeting without staff. In the long run, effective team building will *lessen* the burden on staff. Forum development needs to be recognised as a *prime work objective in its own right* for the staff involved rather than – as often happens – a diversion from 'real' access work.

- **Simple tasks first**

Early on, the priority is for people to discover their own skills and those of their new colleagues, and begin to establish a way of working together. Simple tasks, which can be completed quickly, allow members to put most of their energy into building working relationships and develop a sense that they are making progress.

Agreeing their own remit is probably the first task most Forums undertake. As suggested in Chapter 4, this *is* a worthwhile formative experience, but it is also an inward looking one. As soon as it is finished, the Forum should immediately tackle a task that lets the members feel they are 'getting to grips' with the real business.

Reviewing the Access Strategy can be a very useful first step, because it brings everyone up to a common level of understanding and stimulates discussion of aims and priorities, but it is not always appropriate. Direct involvement in a community consultation about access needs would be of great assistance to access staff *and* educational for Forum members.

- **Training integrated into activities**

There will always be a place for set-piece training, whether for individual members or the Forum as a whole. But it is desirable that the first year's programme is framed with the deliberate intention of involving members in activities that will lead them through a learning curve 'on the job'.

Exactly what this means will vary from case to case. An assessment of members' training needs must therefore be made at the outset, so that the programme can be shaped accordingly.

Some Forums invite speakers from the four interest groups. Site visits to locations where difficulties or disputes have arisen, visits to neighbouring Forums, 'hands-on' involvement in survey or consultation work – these are all valuable learning experiences.

- **Everyone's skills put to use**

Nothing is worse than motivating someone to join a Forum and then allowing them to feel left out or underused. Initial enthusiasm will quickly dissipate. Care must be taken to find out what people can contribute and give them a chance to make their input.

This can be easier said than done. Many people are wary of pushing themselves forward at first, and it may require a combination of gentle persuasion and trial-and-error to discover what they can do. But it **must** be done. People will still be demotivated, even if it is their own reticence that is keeping them on the sidelines.

- **Good feedback**

It's no good agreeing a programme and then ploughing ahead without pausing to check that everyone feels the activities are helping them build their capacity to tackle the serious access agenda successfully. During the first year, it would be good practice to ask members **at the end of every meeting** how valuable they felt it was, and what their views are about the activities planned for the rest of the year.

- **Real achievements**

It is highly desirable that members can look back at the end of the first year on some real work done. No-one expects to change the world in a single year, but members must be able to feel that they have travelled a distance, tackled some challenges, gelled as a team, and built up a momentum that will now carry them forward.

Achievements are of two kinds – organisational and functional. The organisational ones relate to the internal matters covered in Chapters 2, 3 and 4, and the aim should be to have completed these formative tasks to a high degree of satisfaction. Functional achievements relate to the external world, and here ambitions can be much more modest, provided there **is** something to show.





It should now be clear that good leadership and a culture of participation are an integral part of successful team building. This is why it is important to develop them **from the outset**. As they mature, so too will the Forum's effectiveness as a team. Leadership, participation and teamwork are interdependent objectives.

**The process of team building requires a high level of sustained effort. It needs to be supported as a prime work objective in its own right by the access authority and its staff.**

## Managing conflict within the Forum

Forum members bring with them different histories, interests, preferences, ways of communicating and experiences of decision-making. It is therefore likely that some conflict will arise as they try to merge their interests and devise new ways of looking at familiar issues. Learning how to manage and resolve this conflict is part of learning how to be a team. It is also part of learning how to help others resolve their disputes when they seek the advice of the Forum. The following principles should be followed:

- **Recognise conflict when it appears**  
 Conflict manifests itself in different ways. Sometimes it is overt and plainly stated. But some people go quiet when they have an unresolved issue, others may simply stop coming to meetings, and others get their feelings off their chest by attacking something peripheral. It is crucial to recognise the signs and draw out the causes so they can be dealt with. Responsibility for this must rest mainly with the Chair.
- **See it as an opportunity not a problem**  
 Conflict is not always a bad thing. Properly handled, it can be creative. Hearing alternative ideas can lead to better outcomes. Lack of conflict is not necessarily a good thing. If people don't say what they really think, issues get buried rather than resolved. They may then resurface just when it's least convenient.

- **Clarify the issues**

The priority must be to *listen* and *understand*. The power of people's feelings must not be ignored, but it is crucial to cut through the emotion and grasp the rational core of what is being said, especially distinguishing real and perceived issues. Only when the true nature and full details of the problem have been exposed can debate be joined. To allow debate before this point could be experienced as an attempt to silence or limit the expression of the problem.

- **Focus on issues not personalities**

When discussion starts, it must address the specific problem that has been raised and explore means for resolving it. Apportioning blame, or talking in terms of right and wrong, will personalise the issues. People may then feel that they – or some of their long-held beliefs – are under attack, and this is hardly conducive to open and constructive discussion. Conflict must not be about right and wrong – it must be about differences and their resolution.

- **Ensure full participation**

Everybody must be heard – not just those who are raising the problem and one or two who have a different view. The appearance of factions must be avoided at all costs. The defining characteristic of a Local Access Forum is its participative culture, and this must be brought into play when handling conflict.

Debate must be directed so as to achieve full participation. Circumstances may

dictate that someone other than the regular Chair is best placed to do this. In serious cases, an outside facilitator may even be needed. However it is done, the aim should be to demonstrate (i) that an issue for one is an issue for all, and (ii) that there is a collective will to find a solution.

- **Get a fresh perspective**

The merit of achieving full participation in discussions about conflicts is that someone is likely to come up with a way of looking at things or approaching a solution that hasn't occurred to those most intimately affected. Quite simply, many heads are better than one. Facing up to a conflict is an opportunity to encourage the creativity of the Forum.

- **Keep coming back to first principles**

If the going gets tough, Forum members need to remind themselves why they have come together – to give sound advice to the access authority and thereby serve the needs of the community as a whole. This role demands a commitment to invest the time and effort to work out disagreements and achieve results for the good of all.

Time may often be the key. If things are getting heated, and there is a danger of burning bridges, the best move may be to leave the issue and come back to it at a later date – provided this is not just procrastination, but rather a means of ensuring that everyone can continue to work together during and after the conflict.

## Building a culture of consensus

Consensus is what marketing people would call the USP (unique selling point) of Local Access Forums – it's what they are set up to achieve. Understanding what consensus is, and mastering the techniques for achieving it, are thus central to the success of any Forum.

Consensus is a method of problem solving or decision making in which **all** the members of a group actively participate, **all** commit themselves to finding a solution, and **all** can support the solution.

It effectively represents an extension to normal business of the techniques outlined above for handling episodes of conflict. When used in Local Access Forums, the merits of this method are:

- it automatically converts sectional issues into shared ones
- it thus focuses minds on working together for practical solutions
- it pools the knowledge and experience of all the members
- it values the contribution of each member
- it gives each member ownership of the process and outcome

The result of this approach is that all the members can support the outcome because they have all helped create it.

Consensus can be difficult to achieve and may consume more time than other methods of deciding an issue. But research shows that using energy to explore issues and seek consensus leads to significantly higher-quality outcomes than other methods of decision-making such as majority power or compromise.

Using majority power produces winners and losers. The tradition of losers being willing to accept outcomes because they recognise that voting is fair and practical is laudable. But acceptance is a long way short of active support, and people who are losers too often can simply feel excluded and demotivated.

An ability to compromise is usually considered a virtue. When the alternatives are serious – industrial action, political upheaval, military conflict – this is undoubtedly true. In more mundane situations, compromise can just mean not bothering to invest the time and effort to talk through differences until a better understanding is achieved, i.e., being content with second-rate decisions.

**Consensus is neither the will of the majority nor mere compromise. It is the result of an active commitment to take the time to find best outcomes. Decisions reached by consensus are high quality decisions.**

## Techniques for achieving consensus

In the decision-by-consensus process, each member is asked to:

- Prepare their own position prior to the meeting, while realising that missing pieces will be supplied by other members.
- Recognise an obligation to express their view and explain it fully, so that everyone has the benefit of all members' thoughts.
- Listen to the views of all the other members, and be ready to modify their own position on the basis of logic and understanding.
- Avoid conflict-reducing techniques such as voting, compromising, or giving in 'to keep the peace'.
- Realise that differences of opinion are helpful because, in exploring differences, the best course of action will become apparent.

The process stops when a solution emerges that everyone can not just accept but actively support. It will often be obvious, from body language and the words people choose to express their agreement, when this point has been reached. When the issue has been a difficult one, however, care needs to be taken to be sure people are really all of one mind.

Simply asking people to say 'yes' or 'no' to a proposal effectively constitutes a reversion to majority voting, and runs the risk of producing second best decisions, because these simplistic answers do not reveal the true nature of people's thoughts. One way of helping reveal where Forum members really stand on a difficult issue is to use a gradient of agreement scale like that opposite.



Table 5.1: Gradient of Agreement

Level	Position	Typical Statement	Where are you?
1	Endorsement	'I like it'	
2	Agreement with minor reservations	'I basically like it'	
3	Agreement with stronger reservations	'I can live with it'	
4	Abstention	'I have no opinion'	
5	Minor disagreement	'I don't like this, but I don't want to hold up the group'	
6	Formal disagreement but willing to go with majority	'I want my disagreement noted, but I'll support the decision'	
7	Formal disagreement with request to be absolved of responsibility	'I don't want to stop anyone else, but I don't want to have anything to do with it'	
8	Opposition	'I would veto this proposal'	

Using a table like this allows members a wider range of expression than a simple 'yes' or 'no'. According to the distribution of members along the gradient, the Forum can decide how to proceed.

The first 3 levels indicate agreement, with varying degrees of enthusiasm. If all the members place themselves in this zone, the Forum will probably feel able to conclude that an acceptable level of consensus has been reached.

Level 4 is non-committal, while levels 5 and 6 indicate some unhappiness, but not enough to stop members supporting the decision. If most members place themselves in the top 3 levels and only a few place themselves here, it may still be judged possible to go ahead. If most members place themselves here and only a few in the top 3 levels, the conclusion will almost certainly be that more talk is needed.

Levels 7 and 8 unequivocally represent lack of agreement. If **any** members place themselves here, it will not be possible to say that consensus has been reached.

Some factors that will influence the judgements made using the gradient of agreement scale are:

- the overall importance of the outcome
- the expected longevity of the decision
- the complexity of the issue
- the need for stakeholder support
- the stage reached in building group cohesion

**Reaching high-quality decisions by consensus requires an investment of time and effort, and the exercise of judgement, but it is a powerful way to build team cohesion.**

## The value of diversity

Building consensus is the core stock-in-trade of Local Access Forums, but not all situations call for the investment of time and energy entailed. The Forum's basic function is to help **others** reach decisions. Sometimes, the best way to help is simply to transmit information and a range of opinions, without actually making a recommendation.

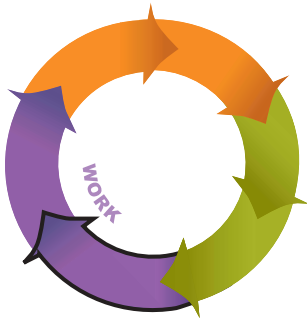
## The transition to independence

When team spirit and a culture of consensus have been built up on the foundations of good leadership and a culture of participation, the moment has arrived when the new Forum can take full charge of its own affairs. It will still require the administrative support of the access authority, but it will set its own agenda, conduct its own business in its own way, develop its own values and reach its own conclusions.

This is a crucial moment of transition. In Chapter 1, an effective Forum was characterised as one that is seen to be independent, expert and trusted. This is the moment when the first of these three criteria has been satisfied.

**The access authority and its staff should identify the transition to independence as a key milestone in the development of their Local Access Forum(s) and direct their efforts to that end.**





## Creating a clear role

When issues relating to **people** and **organisation** have been brought to the point where the Forum is capable of operating independently, the focus can switch to the question of the **work** it will do. The Forum needs to consider how it will claim a role for itself in the local scheme of things, build up a reputation based on performance, and so satisfy the other two criteria for effectiveness by becoming expert and trusted.

Success in this final phase of development will establish the Forum as the 'valued local institution' mentioned in Chapter 1. A key characteristic of such a body will be its ability to:

- See itself as one institution operating in field where many others have overlapping interests and objectives.
- Know how to relate to, and collaborate with, those other bodies.

In other words, the concept of **partnership** is one that must be firmly grasped by Forum members.

**The partnership between a Local Access Forum and its access authority is the central aspect of its existence.**

The point was made in Chapter 2 that people are not appointed to the Local Access Forum in order to promote personal or organisational interests, but rather so as to use their contacts, knowledge and experience to help develop sound advice on access issues. The principal customer for the Forum's advice is the access authority, because it has most of the statutory duties laid down in the Land Reform Act. Furthermore, the access





authority deserves to receive good advice from the Forum in return for its administrative support.

It follows that there is no place in a Forum for those who only want a platform from which to criticise the authority or an opportunity to indulge their sense of dissatisfaction with it. There is a serious – and constructive – job of work to be done to ensure that the authority can take its decisions on the basis of the best possible advice. Forum members must therefore concentrate on doing **their own** job well, and develop a relationship with the access authority which is characterised by active engagement rather than critical distance.

It may seem that the ideas of partnership and independence are at variance with one another. In fact, independence is a pre-condition for partnership. A Forum that was seen as the tame servant of the access authority would have nothing to offer the authority. Independence and expertise are precisely the contributions an access authority needs from its Local Access Forum.

So it is a mistake to suppose that partnership means agreeing about everything. Rather, it means agreeing to collaborate on shared objectives. To collaborate well, partners need to understand each other. If a Local Access Forum wants to maximise the influence it has on its access authority, it needs to understand the authority's overall objectives, the role access can play in achieving them, and the resources available. This is why involvement in

preparing or reviewing the Outdoor Access Strategy is such a valuable activity for a Forum – precisely because the process relates access to the authority's objectives and resources. Equally, if an access authority wants useful advice from its Local Access Forum, it needs to be open with the Forum on the question of resources available for access development.

Its role as 'access champion' may generate some tension between a Local Access Forum and its access authority. If a spirit of partnership prevails, however, the tension can be creative – the Forum being challenged to frame advice that is realistic and relevant, while the authority is 'kept on its toes'. It is not the function of a Local Access Forum to simply provide a channel for unachievable access demands.

**The spirit of partnership requires a Local Access Forum to inhabit the same reality as that faced by its access authority while acting as an access champion.**

Other public agencies, land managers, access organisations and the public at large are also customers for the Forum's advice. In respect of each of these groups, essentially the same points can be made about the Forum needing to understand objectives and engage constructively in a spirit of partnership.

**The Forum should consider how best to engage with the 'customers' for its services.**

Clearly, this level of constructive engagement must be underpinned by a good flow of information. Communications have already been covered in a general way in Chapter 4, but a specific element

that must now be recognised is the role the Access Officer should play in facilitating partnership by channelling flows of information and advice.

Diagram 3: Local Access Forum Linkages



This diagram suggests how a Local Access Forum might define its role and organise its linkages, in relation to the other players in the access field.

## Approaching the task

The work which a Local Access Forum will be called on to perform will be of two kinds – **pro-active** and **re-active**. The most obvious example of the pro-active kind is contributing to the preparation of the Core Paths Plan. Clearly, this is a task which is capable of being planned in advance, so that the Forum can timetable its input to a very large extent. Responding to requests for advice about the exercise of access rights, whether from land managers, the public or the access authority, is clearly re-active and thus difficult to plan for ahead of time.

The response to this challenge should have three strands:

- draw up a work programme to handle the pro-active tasks and allow for the others
- take steps to anticipate the re-active tasks so far as possible
- create mechanisms for responding to the unpredictable

## Programming the work

Some kind of work programme is essential. Without it, Forum business can become arbitrary and unprioritised, leading to inefficient use of the Forum's limited resources.

The work programme should not be dictated by the access authority or its Access Officer. The duties facing the authority will of course have a huge influence on the work programme of the Forum. But a judgement needs to be made as to the most productive way for Forum members to use their limited time.

For example, in an area which is experiencing a lot of disputes, time spent on the Core Paths Plan **might** generate solutions. But it might be better to deal directly with the disputes, thus reducing conflict and improving the atmosphere for **all** future access work, including the Core Paths Plan. Circumstances will vary, from area to area, and from time to time.

Independence means the Forum must control its own agenda. Partnership calls for it to engage constructively with its access authority. The practical response to this dilemma is for the Forum Chair to work closely with the Access Officer to agree the priorities they will jointly recommend to the Forum.

### Anticipating trends

Not all requests for advice should come as a surprise. Forum members should bring with them a fair amount of local knowledge about access issues and their history. This can be supplemented with information from questionnaires or from consultations carried out in connection with Core Paths Plans.

The aim should be to spot patterns or trends, so that the Forum can take a view about where disputes are likely to arise and plan accordingly. Basic principles should be established for dealing with recurring issues of similar type. A key concern is to avoid getting bogged down in single issues of limited relevance to the wider access picture. Again, the Forum Chair and Access Officer should collaborate closely.

### Getting ready to react

For all those situations which are genuinely unpredictable, procedures must be put in place to allow the Forum to respond promptly, without waiting for the next scheduled meeting. This may involve a range of measures in which the Chair, or named members, or a Working Group set up for the purpose are given some level of delegated authority to act for the Forum.

As before, all the options will share the common feature that both requests and responses are channelled through the Forum Chair and Access Officer working in unison.

Working Groups are a potential feature of all three strands of action. In addition to helping with quick response situations, they can:

- Mobilise additional resources from the Contact Group to tackle labour-intensive tasks such as carrying out effective consultation for Core Paths Plans or gathering information about points of conflict.
- Bring specialist knowledge to bear on topics such as horse riding, canoeing or caving which sometimes get less attention than they merit.
- Give a geographic aspect to the Forum where that seems appropriate.

Working Groups can be made up entirely of Forum members or involve people from the Contact Group. In the latter case, they should be chaired by a Forum member and be answerable through that member to the Forum. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Working Groups should always have a clear remit from the Forum.

**Example 6.1:** Perth and Kinross Access Forum has found it worthwhile to set up a Water Sub-Group to deal with issues, notably the interaction between angling and paddlesports, that can arise in relation to the enjoyment of access to water.

## Fulfilling the statutory functions

The work of the Forum will consist mainly of giving advice and helping resolve disputes in relation to the three subjects stipulated in section 25(2) of the Act:

### Core Paths Plans

Giving advice on the preparation of the Core Paths Plan is a crucial aspect of the work of a Local Access Forum. As indicated in 'Core Paths Plans: A guide to good practice'<sup>1</sup>, it is extremely important that the Forum has a pro-active role from the start of the informal consultation stage rather than just a re-active role at the formal consultation stage.

Ideally, Forum members should have a **hands-on** role in the consultation process. This will strengthen their knowledge of access issues and how these are perceived by the different constituencies of interest, and put them in the best position to help with disputes that arise, whether in relation to the making of the Plan or any other issue.

**Active involvement in Core Paths Plan preparation can be a powerful learning experience for Forum members, help fit them to fulfil their duties, and establish a public profile for the Forum.**

**Example 6.2:** North and East Ayrshire Councils have collaborated to create a 'Core Paths Planning Toolkit' for use by Forum members and the wider public. The toolkit is literally a large cardboard box containing all the guidance and other materials that are needed to carry out effective consultation with the various constituencies of interest. Forum members have been trained in the use of the toolkit and will cascade this to the interest groups they represent. In this way, a significant element of the Core Paths Plan consultation process has been 'delegated' to Forum members, who are taking – **and being seen to take** – a leading and formative role in shaping the future of outdoor access.

### Access rights and core paths

Involvement with Core Paths Plans will go through peaks and troughs as plans are first made and then left for a while before being reviewed. But giving advice on the exercise of access rights and helping with disputes arising out of the exercise of access rights in general or the use of core paths in particular are likely to form the staple fare of Local Access Forums over the long term.

It needs to be said that this is a challenging role requiring knowledge, good judgement and diplomacy. No matter how gifted Forum members are, they will need to grow into

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A

the role, perhaps feeling their way tentatively at first. This might lead a Forum to take soundings on issues referred to it from the constituencies of interest to help it 'get its eye in'. After an initial learning curve, of course, a Forum should be able to respond directly.

**Example 6.3:** Clackmannanshire Council was experiencing difficulties in securing agreement with a land manager in relation to a bridge construction project until three members of the Local Access Forum – an NFUS member, a Community Councillor, and a local community activist – met the land manager at the site and were able to break the deadlock. The key factor in this success was the land manager's ability to see the Forum members as independent and impartial.

In the interests of transparency, accountability and consistency, a Local Access Forum should from the outset establish a standard procedure for responding to requests for advice or assistance with disputes. The key features of such a procedure should be as follows:

- **Requests to be made through Access Officer and Chair:** There are two considerations here. First, the way for people to ask the Forum for assistance must be widely known and simple. The Access Officer is the obvious point of contact. Second, judgements will need to be made on priorities, on possible wider implications, on whether to involve the whole Forum or only certain members, and other details. This 'sieving' process is best done by the Chair and Access Officer together.
- **Requests to be in writing:** The value of personal relationships and informal networking should not be underestimated, but a Local Access Forum is a public body carrying out statutory functions. Transparency and accountability are therefore central concerns, and a degree of formality is inescapable when the assistance of the Forum is sought.
- **Establishing the facts to be the first step:** A key contribution which a Forum can make, especially where disputes are involved, is to bring a calm mind and a clear eye to the situation, separating perceived from actual reality, and playing the 'honest broker'. Establishing the facts is likely to mean site visits and/or meetings with the parties involved. For

both personal safety and effectiveness, it is best if these are not carried out by a single person. Ideally, an appropriate Forum member should accompany the Access Officer. So, for example, when the meeting is with a land manager, a land management representative should go along.

- **Appropriate debate to be ensured:** Care must be taken that the facts established and issues raised are debated well enough to ensure the advice given by the Forum is sound. At the same time, it is important to make optimum use of the limited time Forum members can afford to contribute. The appropriate response could vary from case to case. Sometimes, the Access Officer and Chair might be able to handle the matter. Sometimes, a group of Forum members might be best. Often, debate by the full Forum will be indispensable.
- **Responses to be in writing:** Again, transparency and accountability require a degree of formality.
- **Records to be kept:** Another reason for all transactions being in writing is so that a record can be kept and a 'casebook' built up. This will be a valuable resource for the Forum, helping ensure consistency.
- **Records of Forum advice to be publicised:** The casebook should also be a public resource, available on-line and perhaps in hard copy for the guidance of the land managers, participants in outdoor access and the general public.
- **Anonymity to be preserved:** While it is crucial that a Local Access Forum's proceedings be open to public scrutiny, it is neither necessary nor desirable that the actual identities of those consulting the Forum be made public. Trust is indispensable to the effective operation of a Local Access Forum, and people must be able to feel that they can consult it without embarrassment.



## Rights of Way

Notwithstanding the new access rights provided by the Land Reform Act, rights of way will continue to be an important strand in the management of access for the indefinite future. Where rights of way exist or can be readily asserted, they offer unqualified access regardless of whether the new access rights apply.

At the same time, a key aim of the Act was to enable a move away from the sterile conflict that has sometimes surrounded rights of way towards a management approach that benefits everyone. The process of Core Paths Plan preparation offers the opportunity to discuss right of way alignments that have been problematic for land managers or local communities, explore the scope for new alignments, and incorporate some rights of way into core path networks. The role of Local Access Forums should be to encourage a creative and consensual approach to rights of way.

The Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society (Scotways) has published updated guidance on access rights and rights of way<sup>1</sup>.

In **all** their formal dealings, whether in relation to Land Reform Act functions or Rights of Way, Local Access Forums will need to be aware of the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Advice from the access authority's legal staff will be essential.



## Promoting a wider perspective

Many important outdoor access initiatives, such as long distance routes (LDRs) and canal regeneration schemes, predate the Land Reform Act. They typically have their own partnership structures, management arrangements and funding packages. Nevertheless, they are a key part of the national access resource, and sections of them may be appropriate for incorporation within local core path networks. Local Access Forums should help focus attention on the scope they offer for joining up local networks into a national network, from the point of view of both safe everyday movement between settlements and the development of tourism and recreation.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A



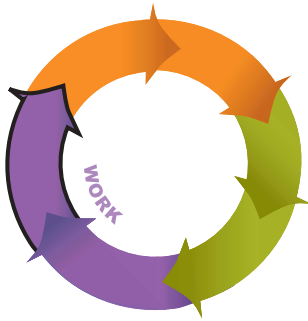
## Building on experience

Limitations of space have precluded detailed treatment of each of the many tasks a Local Access Forum could find itself tackling, and this guidance has necessarily concentrated on broad principles. It will therefore be important that mechanisms are in place to capture and disseminate the lessons of experience and examples of good practice. Such mechanisms will include:

- **Networking:** The National Access Forum, Scottish Natural Heritage, Paths for All Partnership and Scottish Countryside Access Network all have a role to play in facilitating networking events where Forums can learn from one another. On-line discussion forums can be another useful tool.
- **Practice Notes:** Paths for All Partnership publishes Practice Notes on its website to spread awareness of good practice, and will henceforth place a special emphasis on Local Access Forum activity.
- **Ongoing Training:** Unfolding experience will throw up the need for formal training on specific issues. For example, effective liaison with the police on community safety issues would benefit from training by police Architectural Liaison Officers on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). It will be important that such ongoing training needs are identified and that the resources to meet them are in place. Paths for All Partnership and Scottish Natural Heritage will have key roles to play. They can offer training or other support tailored to needs.

## Making a difference

Only when a Local Access Forum has assessed the needs of the local situation, shaped its own activities to address those needs, and shown tangible evidence that its activities have made a difference, is it actually beginning to mature. This is a target to aim for, because making a difference shows that the Forum is on the way to becoming **expert** in its role – the second criterion for an effective Forum.



## Celebrating achievement

After all the hard work put in by Forum members, it is important to take time to acknowledge their efforts and recognise the results achieved. This reinforces the motivation of individual members, while simultaneously giving a powerful boost to their sense of team spirit. When achievements are significant enough, a celebration is called for.

**Example 7.1:** The development of the River Ayr Way was a major undertaking resulting in the creation of the first ‘source to sea’ route. In order to recognise the scale of the achievement, a high-profile launch involving a whole weekend of events was staged. There were concerts, laser light shows, and a mass walk of the entire route. The involvement of radio and TV personality Fred McAulay helped ensure excellent media coverage. And all the land managers involved were invited to a special lunch as a gesture of thanks.

## Strengthening the role and profile of the Forum

Important as motivation and team spirit are, they are not enough to ensure the continued success of the Forum.

Achievements also matter because they:

- are an opportunity to recognise the contributions of partners, share the credit, and thus build stronger working relationships which will deliver benefits in the future
- demonstrate effectiveness, establish the credibility of the Forum, and so justify the support it has received – and hopes to go on receiving – from a whole range of people, organisations and agencies
- can be used to raise public awareness of access, strengthen the public profile of the Forum, and move access up the political agenda
- can deliver tangible benefits or catch people’s imagination and so motivate new people to get involved, thereby increasing the pool of skills and experience available to the Forum in the future.

Newsletters, annual reports, annual conferences, press releases and launch events are all means of promoting the role and profile of the Forum through its achievements.

Building a close relationship with the local Community Planning Partnership is another powerful way of promoting the role and profile of the Forum, because the whole purpose of Community Planning – as described in the Introduction – is to link different policy agendas.

## Reviewing performance

While recognising and celebrating achievements, it is essential to undertake a rigorous critique of activities and progress in order to make sure the successes continue. The Forum should do this by going back to the cyclical development process illustrated in Diagram 1 and asking itself questions like those below about its performance in the stages of that process:

### Involvement and Representation

- Have we got everyone interested in access in our Contact Group?
- Are all access interests adequately represented in the Forum?
- Do we need more skills or experience in the Forum or Contact Group?

### Leadership and Participation

- Have we developed independent leadership from within the Forum?
- Does everyone participate equally in the meetings?
- Are our approaches to ensuring wider participation working?

### Role and Remit

- Have our procedures worked effectively?
- Are our resources sufficient for our activities?

### Teamwork and Consensus

- Are we focused on collective effort to improve access for all?
- Have we had conflict and how well did we handle it?

- Have we mastered the skill of decision-making by consensus?

### Partnership and Progress

- Do we work well with the access authority? If not, why not?
- Have we established a clear role for the Forum in the local scene?
- Have we achieved what we set out to achieve? If not, why not?
- Have we achieved something else?

### Profile and Direction

- Is the Forum independent, respected and trusted?
- Does it have a close relationship with Community Planning?
- What changed over the last period, either locally or in the wider scene?
- What changes can we see ahead?
- How do these affect our priorities and programme?

Reviews can be undertaken in response to specific circumstances, such as a significant change or the completion of a significant activity. It is good practice, however, to have regular annual reviews which are key items on the agenda of the Annual General Meeting and/or Annual Event.

**Local Access Forums should build regular annual reviews into their programme of activities.**

## Keeping it dynamic

When a review procedure indicates the need for changes, these should be implemented as soon as possible in order to renew the life of the Forum in accordance with the cyclical process suggested in Diagram 1. The changes could come at any point on the wheel:

### Involvement and Representation

Member rotation is an issue which is bound to come up sooner or later. There will be a tension between keeping together a successful team that has taken much effort to build and bringing in new blood to freshen things up and give others a chance.

It should be remembered that people who leave the Forum don't have to be banished to the outer darkness. There are two other levels of involvement available – in Working Groups or in the Contact Group.

Likewise, while it will not be desirable to tinker incessantly with the structure of the Forum, it is necessary to ensure that the scheme of representation agreed at the outset is still appropriate.



### Leadership and Participation

If a strong culture of participation has been built up, there should be several people capable of being Chair or assuming other leadership roles. Again, stability is a consideration, but not an over-riding one. There is everything to be gained by encouraging Forum members to tackle more ambitious roles and thereby expand their skills.

### Role and Remit

It is quite likely that members will want to revisit their roles in the light of experience, and this is an important developmental activity. While less important, it may be useful to tweak the remit if it seems necessary to improve the smooth running of Forum business.

### Teamwork and Consensus

This could be a crucial area where a review might suggest changes to working practices, if difficulties have been experienced in the preceding period. If so, it will be particularly important for members to face up to lessons learned and renew their commitment to the collective success of the Forum.

### Partnership and Progress

The changes that might come here will be dictated by the level of satisfaction that members have with their activities in the preceding period and their sense as to whether the Forum has established a clear role for itself in the local scene.

### Profile and Direction

Achieving and maintaining a high profile for access is notoriously difficult. It all too easily seems like an optional extra to be considered after the serious stuff has been taken care of. It may be, therefore, that few Forums will be content with their level of success on this front. Changes to achieve more effective public relations, both to influence decision makers and to keep access in the public mind, might therefore be quite a standard review outcome.

And so back to the beginning of the cyclical process. The challenge of running a Local Access Forum is a never-ending one. One can never rest on one's laurels! But showing a willingness to be self-critical is what will add the final element of an effective Local Access Forum - ***trust***.

Chapters 2 to 7 have attempted to give guidance on how a Local Access Forum can be created and developed in order to carry out the statutory functions laid down for it in Part 1 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. These functions are challenging enough, and it has been stressed that a substantial investment of time and sustained effort is required to master these core tasks. Diversions of energy onto non-essential tasks should therefore be avoided until the Forum has fully matured.

Nevertheless, the fact that Forum members are volunteers rather than paid staff means that a rigid focus on statutory requirements is neither reasonable nor practicable. Members of the public will only be motivated to offer themselves as Forum members and sustain their involvement over time if they find the experience satisfying and worthwhile.

In the short term, the statutory functions are sufficiently novel that most Forum members will probably derive adequate stimulation and satisfaction from learning to master them. As time goes by, however, it would only be natural for people's appetites to be whetted for something more ambitious. They might increasingly need to see the time and effort they volunteer as contributing in a distinctive way to higher or more tangible ends.

It is therefore suggested that there are three 'higher-order' roles that Local Access Forums might set before themselves as aspirations.



## The Forum as an example of excellence

By becoming *independent*, *expert* and *trusted*, a Local Access Forum is itself an example of excellence to all those engaged in managing access. It can set standards of conduct simply by the force of its own example, and has a position of authority from which it can promote Paths for All values and best practice as opportunities present themselves.

The connections between Local Access Forums and Community Planning were mentioned in Chapter 1. A mature and effective Forum can contribute to the success of Community Planning by making appropriate links to the Community Planning Partnership and acting as a training ground for community activists.

## The Forum as a hub of activity

It was acknowledged in Chapter 4 that some Forum members might develop an appetite for direct involvement in access projects, but it was stated that Forums should avoid the legal, financial and contractual entanglements they entail. This does not mean that Forums can play no part in promoting 'real' work.

The most obvious way to satisfy an appetite for projects is to set up a parallel Community-Based Trust that is constituted to handle the legal, financial and contractual niceties the Forum should steer clear of. Guidance on how to do this can be got from a number of sources listed in Appendix A. Those Forum members who are keen might also be members of the Trust, or else the Trust might be something members progress to when they feel they have spent enough time on the Forum.

**Example 8.1:** Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust (established 1997) and Fife Coast and Countryside Trust (established 1999) are examples of mechanisms set up to secure funding and implement projects. They facilitate partnerships with relevant agencies and organisations, and provide an outlet for individuals whose interest in projects equals or exceeds their interest in policy.

The really distinctive thing a community-based Trust can do is raise money from funding sources that would not be open to the access authority and difficult for local path groups to bid to successfully on their own. A Trust can either raise money for projects it intends to implement itself, or else act as an agent for local path groups.

The success of a community-based Trust in winning funds will depend on its ability to use its relationship with the Local Access Forum to assure potential funders as to consultation, community need, compliance with strategy, and benefits expected. This will only be possible if the Local Access Forum has the kind of relationship with activists on the ground that enables it to speak authoritatively on these matters.

**This implies a Local Access Forum working in partnership with its access authority to bring some kind of co-ordination to the local volunteer path development effort.**

## The Forum as a force for change

Finally, it is worth remembering that the ultimate aim and objective is a more physically active, healthy, sustainable, happy and prosperous Scotland. By being 'access champions', linking access into the policy agendas of local and national government, and playing a leadership role in access management, Local Access Forums can acquire the prominence, legitimacy and influence to help build a better Scotland.





## Documents

### Introduction

*The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, Part 1*, The Stationery Office Ltd, 2003  
[www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

*The Scottish Outdoor Access Code*, Scottish Natural Heritage, 2005  
[www.outdooraccess-scotland.com](http://www.outdooraccess-scotland.com)

### Chapter 1

*The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, Part 2: Community Planning*, The Stationery Office Ltd, 2003  
[www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

*National Standards for Community Engagement*, Communities Scotland, 2005  
[www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk](http://www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk)

*Capacity Building for Community Planning: A Report to the Community Planning Task Force*, The Stationery Office Ltd, 2002  
[www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

### Chapter 2

*Practice Note 2: Involving Land Managers in Core Paths Planning*, Paths for All Partnership, 2005  
[www.pathsforall.org.uk](http://www.pathsforall.org.uk)

*Promoting Paths for People, Paths for All Partnership, 2004* - see especially Toolkits 10,14,15,18,20 and 21  
[www.pathsforall.org.uk](http://www.pathsforall.org.uk)

*Part 1 Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003: Guidance for Local Authorities and National Park Authorities*, The Scottish Executive, 2005  
[www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

### Chapter 3

*CHAIR Pack*, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations  
- for details follow [www.scvo.org.uk /Services and Resources/Publications](http://www.scvo.org.uk/ServicesandResources/Publications)

*Factsheet 2.5: Directory of Resources for Local Access Forum Members*, Paths for All Partnership, 2004  
[www.pathsforall.org.uk](http://www.pathsforall.org.uk)

*The Guide to Effective Participation*, David Wilcox, 1994  
[www.partnerships.org.uk/ guide/index.htm](http://www.partnerships.org.uk/guide/index.htm)

*Participation Works!*, New Economics Foundation, 1998  
[www.neweconomics.org](http://www.neweconomics.org)

### Chapter 4

*Promoting Paths for People, Paths for All Partnership, 2004* - see especially Toolkit 15: Working with the Media  
[www.pathsforall.org.uk](http://www.pathsforall.org.uk)

*The Media Manual*, Active Communities Initiative in Scotland  
[www.mediaguide.org.uk](http://www.mediaguide.org.uk)

## Chapter 6

*Outdoor Access Strategies: A guide to good practice*, Paths for All Partnership and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2004  
[www.pathsforall.org.uk](http://www.pathsforall.org.uk)

*Core Paths Plans: A guide to good practice*, Paths for All Partnership and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2005  
[www.pathsforall.org.uk](http://www.pathsforall.org.uk)

*Access Rights and Rights of Way: A Guide to the Law in Scotland*, Professor R.R.M. Paisley, for the Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society, 2006  
 - for details see [www.scotways.com](http://www.scotways.com)

## Chapter 8

*The Guide to Development Trusts and Partnerships*, David Wilcox, 1998  
[www.partnerships.org.uk/pguide/fulltext.htm](http://www.partnerships.org.uk/pguide/fulltext.htm)

*SCVO Guide to Constitutions and Charitable Status*, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations  
 - for details follow [www.scvo.org.uk /Services and Resources/Publications](http://www.scvo.org.uk/ServicesandResources/Publications)

*How to Raise Funds: A Guide for Scottish Voluntary Organisations*, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations  
 - for details follow [www.scvo.org.uk /Services and Resources/Publications](http://www.scvo.org.uk/ServicesandResources/Publications)

Directory of Grants and Funds for Scotland 2004, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations  
 - for details follow [www.scvo.org.uk /Services and Resources/Publications](http://www.scvo.org.uk/ServicesandResources/Publications)

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p17: SRPBA

p49: SRPBA

## National organisations

### Scottish Executive

Environment and Rural Affairs Department,  
Countryside and Natural Heritage Unit, Area 1J  
South, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ  
t: 0131 244 4439  
www.scotland.gov.uk

### Scottish Natural Heritage

Recreation and Access Group, Great Glen House,  
Leachkin Road, Inverness, IV3 8NW  
t: 01463 725000  
e: recreationandaccess@snh.gov.uk  
www.snh.org.uk

### Paths for All Partnership

Inglewood House, Tullibody Road,  
Alloa, FK10 2HU  
t: 01259 218888  
www.pathsforall.org.uk

### National Access Forum

c/o Scottish Natural Heritage, Great Glen House,  
Leachkin Road, Inverness, IV3 8NW  
t: 01463 725000

### Communities Scotland

Thistle House, 91 Haymarket Terrace,  
Edinburgh, EH12 5HE  
t: 0131 313 0044  
www.communitiesscotland.gov.uk - see web  
for area offices

### Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)

Mansfield Traquair Centre, 15 Mansfield Place,  
Edinburgh, EH3 6BB  
t: 0131 556 3882  
www.scvo.org.uk - see web for area offices

### Development Trusts Association Scotland

54 Manor Place, Edinburgh, EH3 7EH  
t: 0131 220 2456  
www.dtascot.org.uk

### Scottish Countryside Access Network (SCAN)

c/o Aberdeenshire Council, Planning &  
Environmental Services (Environmental Section),  
Gordon House, Blackhall Road,  
Inverurie, ABN51 3WA.  
www.scottishcountrynet.org

## Land Managers

### National Farmers Union Scotland

Rural Centre, Ingliston, Edinburgh, EH28 8LT  
t: 0131 472 4000  
www.nfus.org.uk

### The Scottish Rural Property and Business Association (SRPBA)

Stuart House, Eskmills Business Park,  
Musselburgh, EH21 7PB  
t: 0131 653 5400  
www.srpba.com

### The Scottish Crofting Foundation

The Steading, Balmacara Square, Balmacara,  
Kyle of Lochalsh, IV40 8DJ  
t: 01520 722891  
www.croftingfoundation.co.uk

### Association of Deer Management Groups

Dalhousie Estates Office, Brechin,  
Angus, DD9 6SG  
t: 01356 624566  
www.deer-management.co.uk

### The Waterways Trust Scotland

The Old Basin, Applecross Street,  
Hamiltonhill, Glasgow, G4 9SP  
t: 0141 354 7540  
www.thewaterwaystrust.org.uk/scotland.shtml

### Scottish Water

Castle House, 6 Castle Drive,  
Carnegie Campus, Dunfermline, KY11 8GG  
www.scottishwater.co.uk

### Scottish Golf Union

PO Box 29212, St. Andrews, Fife, KY16 0YG  
t: 01382 549500  
www.scottishgolfunion.org - see website for local  
golf clubs

## Participants in Outdoor Access

### The Scottish Disability Equality Forum

12 Enterprise House,  
Springkerse Business Park, Stirling, FK7 7UF  
t: 01786 446456  
www.sdef.org.uk

### Cyclists' Touring Club

c/o John Taylor, Monksmill,  
Castle Douglas, DG7 2NY  
t: 01556 670395  
www.ctc.org.uk

### SUSTRANS

16a Randolph Terrace, Edinburgh, EH3 7TT  
t: 0131 539 8122  
www.sustrans.org.uk

**Cycling Scotland**

24 Blythswood Square, Glasgow, G2 4BG  
t: 0141 229 5350  
www.cyclingscotland.org

**The Ramblers' Association Scotland**

Kingfisher House, Auld Mart Business Park,  
Milnathort, KY13 9DA  
t: 01577 861222  
www.ramblers.org.uk/scotland

**The Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society (Scotways)**

24 Annandale Street, Edinburgh, EH7 4AN  
t: 0131 558 1222  
www.scotways.com

**The Scottish Orienteering Association**

c/o 20 Leman Drive, Houston,  
by Johnstone, PA6 7LN  
t: 01505 613094  
www.scottish-orienteering.org

**The Mountaineering Council of Scotland**

The Old Granary, West Mill Street,  
Perth, PH1 5QP  
t: 01738 638227  
www.mountaineering-scotland.org.uk

**The British Horse Society**

c/o Pat Somerville, Access Officer  
t: 01294 270891  
www.bhs.org.uk

**The Scottish Canoe Association**

Caledonia House, South Gyle,  
Edinburgh, EH12 9DQ  
t: 0131 317 7314  
www.scot-canoe.org

**The Royal Yachting Association Scotland**

Caledonia House, South Gyle,  
Edinburgh, EH12 9DQ  
t: 0131 317 7388  
www.ryascotland.org.uk

**Scottish Association of Local Sports Councils**

www.salsc.org.uk - see website for directory of  
Local Sports Councils

**SportScotland**

Caledonia House, South Gyle,  
Edinburgh, EH12 9DQ.  
t: 0131 317 7200  
www.sportscotland.org.uk

**Fieldfare Trust**

Volunteer House, 69 Crossgate, Cupar,  
Fife, KY15 5AS.  
t: 01334 657708  
www.fieldfare.org.uk

**Local commercial outdoor centres** - see Yellow  
Pages on www.yell.com

**Public Agencies****Forestry Commission Scotland**

Silvan House, 231 Corstorphine Road,  
Edinburgh, EH12 7AT  
t: 0131 334 0303  
www.forestry.gov.uk/scotland - see website for  
district offices

**Local Community Planning Partnership** - see  
local authority websites

**Relevant Access Authority Departments** - see  
local authority websites

**Local Enterprise Company** - see www.scottish-  
enterprise.com for those in the Scottish Enterprise  
network and www.hie.co.uk for those in the  
Highlands and Islands Enterprise network

**Local Health Board** - see www.show.scot.nhs.uk

**Local VisitScotland Office** - see  
www.visitscotland.org

**Scottish Natural Heritage** - see www.snh.gov.uk  
for local Area Offices

**Local Police** - see www.scottish.police.uk

**Local Communities**

**Community Councils** - see local authority  
websites

**Housing Associations** - see www.sfha.co.uk - for  
local Housing Associations

**Tenants Associations** - refer to the register  
maintained by the relevant local authority or  
Housing Association (but note that registration is  
not compulsory)

**Residents Associations** - many may be  
registered with the local authority or Housing  
Association (but those with no public sector  
tenants will not be)

**Path Groups** - consult local library or see  
'voluntary organisations' below

**Environmental Groups** - consult local library or  
see 'voluntary organisations' below

**Civic or Heritage Societies** - consult local library  
or see 'voluntary organisations' below

**Voluntary Organisations** - see www.scvo.org.uk  
- select the 'information' tab and go to the  
'voluntary sector database' for listings of voluntary  
organisations

**Paths to Health Groups** - see  
www.pathsforall.org.uk/pth for local groups

**Local Chamber of Commerce** - see  
www.chamberonline.co.uk

## 72 APPENDIX C: THE NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT

Reference was made in the Introduction to 4 key areas of national policy where outdoor access, and hence Local Access Forums, can make an important contribution. The following list, which is not exhaustive, gives an indication of how these policy agendas are being taken forward.

For further information, follow the references where given or consult your local Access Officer.

### Health and Wellbeing

- Improving Health in Scotland
- The National Physical Activity Strategy - see [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk) and select topics/health/improving Scotland's health/physical activity
- Paths to Health - see [www.pathsforall.org.uk/pth](http://www.pathsforall.org.uk/pth)

### Sustainable Transport

- Promotion of walking and cycling - see [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk) and select topics/transport/sustainable transport, then see walking, cycling, safe routes to school, and home zones
- Green Travel Plans
- Sustrans - see [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk), especially 'Sustrans Projects'
- Transport Scotland and the National Transport Strategy
- Regional Transport Partnerships and Strategies

### Community

- Community Safety - try typing 'community safety' into the search window of your local authority's website
- Living Streets - see [www.livingstreets.org.uk](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk)
- Greenspace Scotland - see [www.greenspacescotland.org.uk](http://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk)
- Crime Prevention through Environmental Design - refer to the Architectural Liaison Officer of local police
- Community Planning - see your local authority's website

### Development

- Tourism development - see [www.visitscotland.org](http://www.visitscotland.org)
- Economic development - see [www.scottish-enterprise.com](http://www.scottish-enterprise.com) and [www.hie.co.uk](http://www.hie.co.uk)





**Paths for All Partnership**

Inglewood House  
Tullibody Road  
Alloa FK10 2HU

Tel: **01259 218 888**

Fax: 01259 218 488

Email: [info@pathsforall.org.uk](mailto:info@pathsforall.org.uk)

[www.pathsforall.org.uk](http://www.pathsforall.org.uk)

**SCOTTISH  
NATURAL  
HERITAGE**



**Scottish Natural Heritage**

Recreation and Access Group  
Great Glen House  
Leachkin Road  
Inverness IV3 8NW

Tel: **01463 725 000**

Email: [recreationandaccess@snh.gov.uk](mailto:recreationandaccess@snh.gov.uk)

[www.snh.org.uk](http://www.snh.org.uk)