Abstract: The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 places a duty on the Council to establish a Local Access Forum. This report advises members of a programme for setting up a forum.

1 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee agrees to note the contents of this report.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 was reported to the Infrastructure Services Committee on 12 June 2003 (report No. 656/03 refers).

2.2 Part 1, Section 25 of the Act requires that “Each Local Authority shall establish for its area a body known as the ‘Local Access Forum…”

2.3 The functions of the forum are:-

(a) to advise the local authority and others on matters relating to access rights, rights of way and core paths; and

(b) to offer assistance in any disputes on such matters.

2.4 The local authority are responsible for appointing members of the Local Access Forum and for ensuring that it contains a reasonable balance of interests.

2.5 This Committee agreed to setting up a Local Access Forum on 12 June 2003. At that time it was anticipated that access rights would come into effect early in 2004. Timescales for producing the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and the subsequent implementation of the Act have since slipped. The Code has now been approved by the Scottish Executive and it is expected that access rights will come into effect at some time during November 2004. It is therefore now considered appropriate to begin the process of establishing a Local Access Forum for Angus.

3 A PROGRAMME FOR ESTABLISHING A FORUM

3.1 As a first step it is proposed to host a seminar at which speakers will outline the role of the Local Access Forum together with background information on the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, and current access developments in Angus. This seminar will be open to all interested individuals and organisations. Specific invitations will be sent to individuals who are known to have an interest in access, as well as appropriate statutory bodies and organisations.
representing land managers and recreational interests. This seminar will be held at Angus College, Arbroath at 7.00 p.m. on Thursday 23 September.

3.2 It is proposed to hold a follow up workshop to discuss aspects of setting up the forum in more detail. People will also be asked at this stage to express an interest in serving on a Core Group of the Forum. This will be held at Angus College, Arbroath at 7.00 p.m. on Thursday 28 October.

3.3 Good practice guidance suggests that Local Access Forums work most effectively if they consist of a core group of no more than 10-15 individuals who meet on a regular basis. Depending on the outcome of workshop discussions it is anticipated that the Council would begin to appoint members to this group after the workshop with a view to the group holding its first meeting early in 2005.

3.4 It is envisaged that the wider body of interested individuals could meet on an annual basis at a conference. They would be kept updated by the core group and given the opportunity to provide feedback.

3.5 The Cairngorms National Park Authority are holding a workshop in the Inglis Memorial Hall, Edzell at 7.00 pm. on Tuesday 7 September to discuss setting up a Local Access Forum for the National Park. This meeting will be used as an opportunity to publicise the programme for setting up an Angus Forum.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The task of setting up the Angus Local Access Forum and acting as Secretariat will fall to staff of the Planning and Transport Department. It is expected that this task can be undertaken by existing staff.

4.2 There will be a small cost involved in hiring venues for the initial meetings of the forum. These will be met from the Planning and Transport Revenue Budget for 2004/05.

5 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

6 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Chief Executive and the Directors of Law & Administration, Finance, Leisure Services and Roads have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

NOTE

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

AA/PC/IAL
23 August 2004

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