Abstract: The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 places a duty on the Council to establish a Local Access Forum. This report advises members of progress with setting up a Local Access Forum and proposes a way forward.

1 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee:-

(a) notes the response from preparatory meetings;
(b) agrees to the proposed way forward as outlined in this report.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 places a duty upon the Council to establish a Local Access Forum (report No. 656/03).

2.2 Members were advised of a planned preparatory seminar and follow up workshop at the 2 September 2004 meeting of Infrastructure Services Committee (report No. 656/03 refers).

3 FEEDBACK FROM PREPARATORY MEETINGS

3.1 The introductory seminar held on 23 September 2004 was attended by 65 individuals, representing a broad range of interests. Feedback from the question and answer session was generally positive and supportive of the Council’s initiative to establish a Local Access Forum.

3.2 The workshop on 28 October 2004 was attended by 39 individuals, again representing a broad range of interests. Delegates were advised that the Council intended to set up a single Local Access Forum for Angus and that consideration was being given to establishing this along the lines of the ‘Paths for All’ model set out in national guidance (see Appendix 1). Delegates were then split into five discussion groups and asked to give the Council feedback on six key questions relating to establishing a Local Access Forum. Groups were not asked to come to a conclusion, but to give the full range of views aired by the group. These group responses are outlined in Appendix 2.

4 A PROPOSED WAY FORWARD

4.1 A single Local Access Forum should be established for Angus except for that part which is within the Cairngorms National Park. A separate Forum will be established by the CNPA.
4.2 The following recommendations are based on feedback from the workshop group discussions, as outlined in Appendix 2.

4.3 The Local Access Forum should comprise of the four interest groups outlined in the ‘Paths for All’ guidance i.e. Users, Land Managers, Community Interests and Public Agencies.

4.4 The Forum should comprise of between 16 and 20 individuals. A decision on the final number will be taken following a peer selection meeting, as discussed in Appendix 2.

4.5 Public Agencies – Scottish Natural Heritage and the Forestry Commission will be asked to nominated representatives. A third agency place will be taken up by Angus Council. A view has still to be taken on whether the Angus Council representative should be an officer or an elected member. It is proposed that the Council representative will initially chair the Forum, but that the Forum will elect a chair in due course.

4.6 Prospective members of the three remaining interest groups will be invited to submit a written application for consideration at a peer selection meeting. A shortlist of candidates within each interest group will be established by a voting process at the peer selection meeting. Where possible the candidates receiving the most votes will be appointed to the Forum. The Council will however review the make up of each group and if necessary select from the shortlists to ensure that the range of interests within each group is adequately represented, as outlined in Appendix 2.

4.7 It is anticipated that the peer selection meeting will take place early in 2005, with a view to the first meeting of the Forum being held in the spring.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 As previously reported the task of setting up and acting as secretariat to the Local Access Forum will fall to staff of the Planning & Transport Department. It is expected that this task can be undertaken by existing staff.

5.2 There will be a small cost involved in hiring venues for the peer selection meeting and possibly subsequent meetings of the Forum. These will be met from the Planning & Transport Revenue Budget. There may also be a small cost associated with assisting the LAF to disseminate information (see Q5 of Appendix 2) but again this will be met from the Planning & Transport Revenue Budget.

6 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no human rights implications arising from this report.
7 CONSULTATION

7.1 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/KW
17 November 2004

Alex Anderson
Director of Planning and Transport
Local Access Forum
Local Access Forum - Workshop Discussion Topics
Summary and Recommendations

**Question 1**
The *Paths for All Partnership* model recommends that the LAF should comprise four different groups – land managers, recreational groups, community and agencies. Do you feel that this achieves an even balance of interests?

**Summary** - There was general agreement that the four user group categories are probably the best initial basis on which to work. There was some concern with regard to the balance between the four categories and that agencies and organizations (who may have national rather than local views) may be over represented and swamp non professionals with local views. Some people considered it important that members have a spread of relevant interests to ensure that a full range of interests was represented in each group.

**Recommendations**
The LAF will be made up of the four different user groups as recommended in the Paths For All model.

**Question 2**
The model also recommends that there should be around 16 places on the LAF i.e. 4 from each interest group. Do you feel that this is about right?

**Summary** - There was general agreement that 16 places on the forum would be about right. As in question 1 there was some concern that the range of interests within some of the groups (in particularly the users) may not be adequately represented by four individuals. Representation on some of the groups could be increased but the LAF should not exceed 20

**Recommendations**
That the LAF should comprise 16-20 members. The decision on the final number will be taken following a peer selection meeting.

**Question 3**
*How can Angus Council achieve community involvement in the LAF?* Is this best done through formal organizations e.g. Community Councils, Community Planning Partnerships etc and, if not, how can the wider public be represented?

**Summary** – There was no clear consensus on how community involvement could be achieved.

There were views that Community Councils should be represented, but equally it was felt by some that they were not necessarily representative of the wider community. Some people
suggested that members of the forum need to be prepared to get out and meet people to try to overcome apathy. Some people felt strongly that youth involvement should be encouraged. One group felt that the meeting of the LAF should move around Angus to help it engage with different communities. There was also a view that there would be some community representation through members representing other interest groups.

**Recommendations**

It is important that appointed individuals represent broad community interests across Angus rather than local geographical areas. This will be difficult to achieve but further consideration will be given to this prior to the peer selection process.

**Question 4**

*Experience elsewhere suggests that members of the LAF should be selected by their peers rather than by a selection panel or by Angus Council. Do you feel this is the best method and if not what method would you suggest?*

**Summary** – It was generally agreed that peer selection would be the best option.

It was felt by some that the peer groups should be given criteria on which to base their selection. Several people suggested that prospective members should submit a written application for consideration by the peer group. There was some concern that a workshop type of selection process may exclude people who were suitable qualified but unable to attend the meeting. It was felt by some that Angus Council should make an increased effort to raise awareness among potential members.

**Recommendations**

Director of Planning & Transport will write to all those on the database explaining the role and responsibilities of LAF membership and ask those who still wish to be considered for membership to submit a short written statement explaining their interests and abilities and to identify which interest group they represent. This will be used to assist the peer groups in short listing candidates for the Forum.

**Question 5**

*How could the LAF best communicate with interest groups and the wider public and vice versa?*

**Summary** - There was a general view that the Council should assist with disseminating information through mechanisms such as newsletters, mailing lists and websites.

It was felt that the forum should hold an annual public meeting to communicate with the wider body of interested individuals. There was also a view that the other meetings should move around the burghs and be open to the public for part of the time. Local sub groups were also considered as a mechanism for disseminating information and, equally importantly, gathering feedback.

**Recommendations**

Angus council should take the lead in disseminating information by providing pages on its website, publishing a newsletter on the forum’s behalf and distributing this to
all those on its Outdoor access database. The Council should make the database available to all members of the Forum (subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act) so that members can make contact with each other more readily.

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<th>Question 6</th>
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<td>Is it important that there is an even geographical spread of members of the LAF across Angus? If so, how can this best be achieved?</td>
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**Summary** - There was general consensus that, though very desirable, a geographic spread is not essential, it was considered more important to have people with the right skills and qualities.

One group strongly disagreed with this view and considered geographical spread to be essential. It was also suggested that sub groups of the forum could take on issues specific to a particular area.

**Recommendations**

If a particular geographical area is not represented and this is likely to lead to problems in addressing that area’s needs then the Director of Planning & Transport may adjust the membership of the Forum by selecting from the elected shortlists to cover this shortfall.