

## SCAN Conference, 11<sup>th</sup> May 2007

### Tread Lightly: *Integrating Access with our Natural and Cultural Heritage*

#### Notes from morning plenary session

- David Breeze, HS*                      *What about limiting access for sustainability?*
- Stephen Wiseman, NTS      Carrying capacity is certainly something the National Trust for Scotland is working on. We need to realign pressures, perhaps by re-routing people after monitoring behaviour. Lack of promotion can also guard a site.
- Doreen Grove, HS                      In Orkney there is a problem with the volume of cruise ship visitors. At Skara Brae people were moved across paths which went across the top of the sites, and this was sold to them on conservation grounds. We introduced timed ticketing at Maes Howe, again a decision taken on conservation grounds rather than improving the visitor experience.
- Ian Findlay, PfAP*                      *There are lots of opportunities to make links between biodiversity and access, eg, meetings between LBAP and access officers during the core path planning process.*
- Stewart Pritchard, SNH      Yes, the local level is the best opportunity to do this, though a national meeting may raise the profile.
- Ken Taylor*                              *In an organised event, what is there to consider – could an organiser/landowner fall between the access and conservation requirements?*
- Stewart Pritchard, SNH      The organisers may be regarded as the competent authority and need to consider impacts on a Natura site. For SSSIs, they may need to apply for consent (this is done by the landowner).
- Doreen Grove, HS                      Damage is the issue, individuals can apply for consent but it's best to ask first.
- Dave Stubbs, PKC*                      *What about disturbance in Glencoe, etc?*
- Stephen Wiseman, NTS      NTS wants to be part of the "outdoor capital" promotion, but we are very aware of any event. Early consultation is critical. Upland path work undertaken by NTS is not about enabling access but protecting against erosion, protecting species, etc.
- Robert Balfour, ADMG      If you are organising an event, please come to landowners early on so they can integrate it with their land uses.
- Pete Mayhew, RSPB*                      *What is the appropriate assessment? The science on events is very limited.*

Stewart Pritchard, SNH	SNH needs to be consulted if the event affects a Natura site, so we will give advice. The onus is on organisers to demonstrate that their event won't have an impact.
<i>Mike Dales, SCA</i>	<i>With regard to event planning, there is SCA guidance on our website and we say "plan in advance". The provision of information on the Hillphones website that Robert mentioned is great, but we still need local information provision, eg, signage.</i>
Robert Balfour, ADMG	We recognise that signage is an issue and the current Hillphones system is out of date.
<i>Alison Irvine, Fife C</i>	<i>The cumulative effect of access at a local level is very important, eg, dog walkers on field margins. How to balance access and biodiversity at path level is an issue.</i>
Robert Balfour, ADMG	It is difficult to manage, but ranger services can help. Perhaps there is a need to have a few sacrificial areas.
Stephen Wiseman, NTS	We are looking at the different categories of people and how to manage them, plus different levels of interpretation needed.
Stewart Pritchard, SNH	Biodiversity is very wide and goes beyond a single species. Most species can cope with some disturbance.
<i>David Warnock</i>	<i>It is important to remember that access is about enjoyment, getting people out there!</i>
Robert Balfour	We have a pilot project in the Lomond Hills where shepherds are involved and land managers are getting paid, and this has changed attitudes to access.
<i>Phil Clarke, PfAP</i>	<i>I'd just like to point out that planning path work can give land managers the opportunity to take people away from sensitive areas and reduce numbers on other routes.</i>
<i>Ken Taylor</i>	<i>Where is the Public Access and Land Management project?</i>
Rob Garner, SNH	It is almost ready to go. If reckless damage is caused by an event, the organiser may be charged. SNHi on our website gives GIS maps of all designations so it will be easy to check for events.
Peter Scott	Are we getting to the stage where there will be no new paths in an SPA site as there "might" be disturbance? We can't afford to do surveys all the time.
Stewart Pritchard, SNH	SNH will give guidance on the appropriate assessment. If sensitivities in that area, it does depend on how many people are likely to be using that path. The level of use/level of impact is the critical judgement.