

MONIMAIL and LETHAM
PATH NETWORK
DEVELOPMENT REPORT
for
MONIMAIL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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MONIMAIL and LETHAM **PATH NETWORK DEVELOPMENT**

1. INTRODUCTION

In October, 2003, Monimail Community Council circulated a questionnaire seeking local people's views on a number of environmental initiatives for the area. Part of the questionnaire was focussed upon local access needs with responses suggesting a desire for an improved network providing links between the settlements of Monimail, Letham, Bow of Fife and Fernie.

In September, 2004, following a tender process, Bell Ingram were appointed by the Community Council with funding from Scottish Natural Heritage to develop the ideas for access to enable the Community Council to make a funding bid to implement the first stage of a path network.

2. APPROACH TO THE STUDY

Set out below are the key tasks undertaken by Bell Ingram as part of the study.

- A consultation workshop meeting held at Letham Village Hall, which explored the needs and concerns of local people in relation to access and to assist in the setting of priorities.
- An audit of all the path opportunities identified both through the Community Council's early consultation and those arising through the consultation workshop.
- Sifting of the information gathered to prepare a path network for the Community Council area reflecting local needs and accommodating landowner's concerns.
- Preparation of detailed route specifications and bills of quantities for two selected projects.

3. CONSULTATION WORKSHOP

A consultation workshop was held at Letham Village Hall on 27 October 2004. Comments on local needs and priorities were also gathered by phone and through contact with Letham Primary School. The workshop was publicised with posters and fliers, which were distributed round the area by the Community Council. Approximately 25 people attended the event, including a number of local landowners and farmers. The meeting was run on an informal basis with individuals encouraged to work in small groups highlighting existing access opportunities and desired access opportunities on maps. Those landowners and farmers present were also asked to identify any sensitive areas or access problems.

Towards the end of the meeting, ideas were gathered together for key priorities with a simple voting system used to rank these ideas.

Map M33/1 highlights the access opportunities arising both out of the Community Council questionnaire and the consultation workshop. It should be stressed routes that the routes shown on the map do not form part of an official map of access opportunities nor should it be used to assert a right of way.

Map M33/2 highlights the priorities identified both through the consultation workshop and in early discussions with the Community Council. The opportunities have been ranked in order of the priority identified at the consultation workshop.

From discussion with the Community Council and from information arising out of the community workshop, it is clear that most of the access needs in the area relate to walking with only limited needs for horse riding and cycling. In addition it is clear that there is strong demand for paths that link together the different settlements with the Community Council, i.e. Letham, Monimail, Bow of Fife and Fernie. Access to Mountcastle Quarry, which has been partially restored to a nature park, also forms a key community desire.

4. AUDIT

All the ideas arising through the consultation process were then subject to a walk over audit to establish the feasibility of the idea, identify an outline cost, to gauge an initial reaction from the landowner affected and to assess which of the ideas should be included in a path network.

Through the audit process a number of access ideas were excluded from further consideration. In particular:-

- Those routes more distant from areas of population, where the level of use is likely to be low.
- Route ideas where use is likely to be low and where there is no existing track.
- Routes that had no obvious link to the overall network.

Whilst these routes were excluded from the proposals for a formal path network, it should be noted that in many occasions there is likely to be a right of responsible access under part 1 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.

In addition we excluded a route through Melville House on the grounds that it was unacceptable to the owner and because a public right of access is unlikely under part 1 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.

Map M33/3 shows the base network arising out of the audit process and represents those routes that are already in use to some extent and where the landowners are comfortable with the existing level of access being taken. Appendix One contains notes on the audited routes and provides an outlying cost for each opportunity.

5. DEVELOPING A PATH NETWORK

Map M33/3 represents those routes in the area that are currently used for access and accepted by landowners as at October 2004. In order to complete a network that meets needs expressed through the consultation process a number of upgrades of the existing network are required together with some new routes. These are highlighted on Map M33/4 and are summarised as follows:-

- a) **Cunnoquhie Link.** This would provide a short length of new path linking an existing farm track at Letham Farm to the Cunnoquhie Farm Road. The landowner has indicated that he is happy for people to walk the route but further consultation with him is required to gain his support for the construction of a new path. An option to shortcut this route across a field edge south of Cunnoquhie towards the main Fernie Hotel entrance should also be considered.
- b) **A92 Trunk.** A new all abilities path is proposed in the wide verge of the A92 linking Letham Cross to Fernie. Discussions with Bear (Scotland) as agents for the Scottish Executive are required to establish the feasibility of this route.
- c) **Fernie Castle Link.** This project involves using existing paths through Fernie Castle grounds and the short section of field margin together with the upgrade of a track through existing woodland. The landowners have been approached but have not given a definitive answer and further consultation with them is required.
- d) **Mountcastle Quarry.** An opportunity exists to secure an important element of a path network linking Letham to Bow of Fife through Mountcastle Quarry as it enters its restoration stage in approximately 5 years time. This would link in with existing path networks already constructed as part of earlier restoration work. The quarry manager has indicated his willingness to co-operate and further consultation with him over restoration plans are recommended.
- e) **Bow of Fife Link.** A linking path from Bow of Fife into the restored quarry and onwards to Letham can be secured by developing a path through a field headland and through a woodland strip. Both landowners have been consulted and have indicated a willingness in principle to the proposals.
- f) **Nisbetfield Link.** This would involve creating a new path along a field margin linking the cemetery at Monimail with Nisbetfield Farm and with onward links to Letham using existing farm tracks. Whilst the landowner is comfortable with the current level of access being taken on this route he does not wish a path to be developed at this stage. Further consultation will therefore be required.
- g) **Melville Woods.** A link between Monimail and the restored areas of Mountcastle Quarry through Melville Woods was identified as a priority. Due to concerns over privacy the owners of Melville House are not willing to allow access through their grounds. An alternative is available using an existing track through Melville Home Farm onto existing tracks within Melville Wood together with a short section of new path and a

crossing of the A92. The owners of Melville Wood have been approached and would require further consultation to secure their consent. Bear (Scotland) have indicated that the section of A92 from the Melville Roundabout to Letham Cross is due to be resurfaced in the next 12 months presenting an ideal opportunity to secure the necessary infrastructure for a road crossing. A final short section of path will also be required through Mountcastle Quarry.

In addition to the upgrades and new links described above the network would benefit from the provision of new access infrastructure. This would include:-

- Access gates on field boundaries so that users of the path can gain access through field boundaries without the need to open heavy agricultural gates.
- Signage, including Scotways metal type signs for key routes, together with wooden fingerposts and waymarkers to help orientate users around the network.
- Rest areas comprising seats or benches.
- Environmental works such as minor tree planting or woodland management opportunities to improve the appearance of the network.

During our discussions with the various landowners the issue of the path network infrastructure was raised as an issue but as no specific proposals had been worked up at that stage no consents were sought. Further consultation with landowners would be required. To help in the process Map M33/5 has been prepared as a draft signage and access infrastructure plan.

6. DELIVERING THE NETWORK

From our previous experience it is rarely possible to deliver a complete path network in one attempt. Securing landowner consents takes time particularly where there is a need to co-ordinate the network development with other land use changes.

In this respect Monimail is no different. We have spoken with the majority of landowners and farmers in the area, and whilst most are comfortable with the level of access being taken at present there is a general concern that developing a path network, with the provision of signs, will lead to a big increase in the number of people on their land. From our experience elsewhere this is unlikely, however there is a need to work with local landowners and farmers in order to gain their confidence.

Furthermore, whilst there is an excellent opportunity to expand the network as part of the restoration of Mountcastle Quarry, this is likely to take up to 5 years.

The opportunities to upgrade the access facility alongside the A92 will have to be co-ordinated with Bear (Scotland). It might be possible to secure a road crossing close to the Melville roundabout as part of resurfacing proposals scheduled for next summer. However the provision of a new path between Letham Cross and Fernie is likely to take longer to secure and the demonstration of community demand will be required.

The Community Council should also be aware of the need to have sufficient means to maintain the path network and to cover any liabilities that might arise out of any facilities provided. In many cases it is well worth having the facilities taken over by Fife Council for the purposes of maintenance and management.

Given these constraints, we believe the network will take up to 5 years to complete. Work will involve both facilitative and practical work which might be delivered in 3 possible phases as follows:-

Phase I.

- Negotiate landowner consent for the Cunnoquhie Link. Subject to consent, funding and construction.
- Commence dialogue with owners of Melville Home Farm, Melville Woods, Bear (Scotland) and Quarry Manager to secure in principle agreement for Melville Woods route.
- Commence dialogue with Quarry Manager and two adjacent landowners to secure long term plans for paths through Mountcastle Quarry.
- Commence dialogue with other landowners and farmers to gain their support for the long term aims of the Community Council.
- Discuss arrangements for long term maintenance with Fife Council.
- Open discussion with Bear (Scotland) for the A92 route.

Phase II.

- Negotiate consent for the Melville Woods route. Subject to consent, funding and construction.
- Continue dialogue with other landowners and farmers.
- Continue dialogue with Mountcastle Quarry.
- Establish consent timetable and funding for A92 route.

Phase III.

- Negotiate consent for Mountcastle Quarry link. Subject to consent, funding and construction.
- Negotiate consent for Nisbetfield link and Fernie Castle link. Subject to consent, funding and construction.

- Negotiate consent for wider signage and access infrastructure project. Subject to consent, funding and construction.

7. **FUNDING**

There are several potential sources of funding for delivering projects such as path networks. Most of the funding agencies will only fund a proportion of the cost and will expect the applicant to demonstrate partnership funding from other sources. The main sources of funding for path network projects in Fife are as follows:-

Fife Environment Trust. The Trust is funded through the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme and aim to help fund local community groups to protect and enhance the environment of Fife. Path projects would be considered appropriate. A small grant scheme for projects between £500 and £5,000 is operated on a rolling basis with a larger grant programme from £5,000 to £20,000 operate on a half yearly basis with the deadline for applications being the end of March and end of September. Further information is available from:-

Patricia Galfskiy,
Tel. No. 01592-413124,
e.mail patricia.galfskiy@fife.gov.uk
web site fifeenvironmenttrust.org.uk.

East Fife Leader Plus Programme. The programme might provide 50% of funding for path development. However, due to a significant number of path projects, the programme now limit funding to projects which meet the following criteria.

- They do not include the maintenance of existing path networks.
- They are small scale (due to the limited funds available to the Programme).
- They demonstrate a high level of innovation and are unique to the East Fife area.
- They demonstrate significant benefits to support the rural development of the local areas.
- Value for money is demonstrated, including the collaboration between projects to share resources if practical.
- Consideration has been given to the on-going maintenance and development of the project one LEADER+ support has ended through the development of an exit or sustainability strategy.
- The potential exists for spin-off benefits such as an Action 2 project.

For further information contact:-

Barbara Solway
Tel. No. 01592-416350
e-mail Barbara.solway@fife.gov.uk

Scottish Natural Heritage.

SNH operate a grant scheme to assist community groups in developing access opportunities. They would expect funding to come from other sources and for the applicant to show good local support as well as support from Fife Council. Early indications suggest any grant application would fall into next financial year (after April, 2005). Through discussion with SNH they are now aware of potential grant application from the Community Council and have flagged up a possible pre-application sum of £10,000. It should be noted that this does not constitute a binding commitment at this stage.

For further information contact:-

Lisa Duggan,
Tel. No. 01334-654038,
e-mail lisa.duggan@snh.gulf.uk

Transforming Your Space.

This is funded through the Big Lottery Fund and will provide support for larger projects with a minimum grant being £20,000. The fund is due to be wound up and two further application dates are available on 19 January and 31 March, 2005.

It is likely that further lottery money will be made available to support such projects but a detailed successor is not yet known. For further information contact:-

Ian Roxburgh,
Tel. No. 0141-222-5630
e-mail enquiries@fresh-futures.org.uk

Hanson Environment Fund Community Grants Scheme.

Hanson operate the Mountcastle Quarry. The fund operates as a community grant scheme providing grants between £250 and £4,000. The fund also operate a mains grant scheme providing grants between £4,000 and £250,000. Early discussions at a local level suggest that the fund would support an application for the community grants scheme. For further information contact:-

Tel. No. 0870036100
e-mail grants@rsnc.cix.co.uk

Paths for All Partnership.

The Paths for All Partnership are currently operating a Path to Health small grants award. The maximum award is £5,000 and all funds must be spent by March, 2005. The grant is targeted principally at increasing levels of exercise to increase health benefits and therefore is generally targeted at promotion of access such as the setting up of a local walking group or producing a leaflet. Path infrastructure is unlikely to be considered appropriate.

Paths to Health already fund an initiative in Fife known as “Bums Off Seats” who organise 21 organised walks per week. It might be possible to link up with this group to encourage more walking activity in the Letham area. “Bums Off Seats” can be contacted via Janice Meehan (Tel. No. 01592-414300).

For more intimation from Paths to Health contact:-

Angie Hawkins

Tel. No. 01259-218855

e-mail angela.Hawkins@pathstohealth.org.uk.

Fife Council.

Fife Council are unlikely to be able to make any significant grant available other than very minor amounts perhaps in support of the preparation of a leaflet.

Fife Council might also be a potential organisation to take over maintenance responsibilities in respect of any paths built. However early indications suggest that a strong case would have to be made if Fife Council were to be convinced that they should maintain any path network. There are a number of potential departments that might play this role, including Community Services, Countryside Services as well as Roads and Transportation. In the first instance contact should be made with the Access Officer, Alison Irvine. For further information contact:-

Alison Irvine

Tel. No. 01592-748334

e-mail alison.irvine@fife.gov.uk

8. DESIGN STAGE

In discussion with the Community Council and taking into account the audit information and the community priorities, it was decided to take the following two projects forward to the design stage.

- Letham - Monimail via Nisbetfield
- Letham - Fernie via Cunnoquhie

Letham to Monimail via Nisbetfield

A well used farm track of good build leads from the top of the School Brae in Letham to Nisbetfield Farm. The path then goes through the farm steading to join a narrow arable field endrigg which it follows into Monimail, arriving adjacent to the cemetery.

The project has been sub-divided into three phases. Phase 2 and phase 3, each builds on the previous phases(s).

Phase 1 This consists of route clearance of tripping hazards, etc., with path signage. This will help give the local community confidence to use the field endrigg and farm tracks that link Monimail to Letham via Nisbetfield Farm. To assist the farmer and help with negotiations it is suggested that the existing field boundary fence from the farm to the cemetery could be replaced as a project accommodation works item.

Phase 2 Upgrades the previous phase to a whin dust surfaced (or similar) path, between Monimail and Nisbetfield Farm.

Phase 3 Involves the erection of a fence some 3 to 4m from the line of the existing fence to segregate the path from agricultural treatments on the section between Monimail and Nisbetfield.

Cost

Bill 1	general contract conditions for delivering all 3 phases of the project	£2,100
Phase 1	Bill 2 + Bill 3	£4,200
Phase 2	Bill 4 + Bill 5	£6,100
Phase 3	Bill 6	£1,600
Annual Maintenance Schedule : Bill 7		£ 275

All costs exclude VAT.

Letham to Fernie via Cunnoquhie.

The path leaves Letham Cross to the east through Letham Farm steading and continues north east along a well used farm track of good build until it reaches the Fernie Burn. A sleeper bridge takes the route across the burn, from this point the route crosses a grass field edge used for the exercise of racehorses until it joins the link drive from Cantyhill to Cunnoquhie. The route then follows this Cunnoquhie farm drive east and south-east until it joins the A92(T) at Cunnoquhie Lodge midway between the Fernie and Fernie Castle junctions. From a point 30m. north and opposite the Castle entrance a field boundary can be followed to rejoin the above path midway between Letham and the Fernie Burn.

The project has been divided into 3 parts:

Part 1 - Signage which will give the local community confidence to use the route.

Part 2 - Upgrade to field edge path Cunnoquhie west.

Phase 2 involves the construction of a bridge over the Fernie Burn and a surfaced path along the field edge. Repairs would need to be carried out to the wall, which might assist with landowner negotiations.

Phase 3 involves the erection of a fence some 4m. from the wall to segregate the path from agricultural treatments.

Part 3 - New path - Cunnoquhie south to Fernie Castle.

Phase 2 involves the opening up for access by signpost and gates at either end including accommodation.

Phase 3 involves the formation of a surfaced link.

Phase 4 involves the erection of a fence some 3-4m. from the existing fence line to segregate the path from agricultural treatments.

Cost

Bill 1 - general contract conditions for delivering the full project. £ 4,500

Part 1 - signage, Bill 2 £ 1,270

Part 2 - Upgrade Path
- Phase 2, Bill 3 + Bill 5 £13,200
- Phase 3, Bill 6 £ 1,600

Part 3 - New Path
- Phase 2, Bill 7 + Bill 8 £ 3,500
- Phase 3, Bill 9 + Bill 10 £ 8,700
- Phase 4, Bill 11 £ 2,150

Annual Maintenance Schedule - Bill £ 530
All costs exclude VAT.

MONIMAIL and LETHAM
PATH DEVELOPMENT REPORT
MAPS

MONIMAIL and LETHAM
PATH DEVELOPMENT REPORT
AUDIT REPORT

See also Map M33/2

MONIMAIL and LETHAM
PATH DEVELOPMENT REPORT
SPECIFICATION