

### **Motion by Cllrs James and Duff**

The Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) gives detailed guidance for universal access to land. NatureScot (formerly Scottish Natural Heritage) were tasked with producing the code when formal rights of access were legislated via the Land Reform (Scotland ) Act 2003 to provide guidance for both access takers and Land managers on what would be considered as responsible behaviour.

Other than some minor technical changes incorporated in 2016 the SOAC has not been reviewed despite the ever-changing conditions, attitudes and challenging behaviour by visitors. The code is therefore in need of updating to ensure it is fit for purpose for both access takers and land managers.

We are privileged to be able to call Scotland our home. It is fast becoming a destination of choice by many citizens who chose to take their holidays at home rather than abroad and it is becoming a victim of its own popularity.

The influx of visitors to our lochs, parks and countryside is placing a strain on our resources, wildlife and infrastructure. Many of the rules that were laid down in 2003 are no longer as relevant as they were and many conditions are not catered for at all.

The SOAC is based on three principles as follows:

- Respect the interest of other people
- Care for the environment
- Take responsibility for your own actions.

We have and continue to experience incidents of vandalism and anti social behaviour in our countryside environment. If we do not act now to safeguard our future and that of our natural environment, it may be too late. Once the damage is done, it is often too late to rectify.

This Council calls upon the Leader of this Council to write to the Scottish Government to request that they instruct NatureScot to carry out an urgent review of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, to make it relevant and to future proof with assessments for further reviews timetabled for periods not exceeding five years in order to protect our beautiful countryside.