

Prepared For All The Inhabitants Of Inverurie and Oldmeldrum



The Meldrum Meg Way Information Pack

Initial Report – 4th Final Draft

July 2012

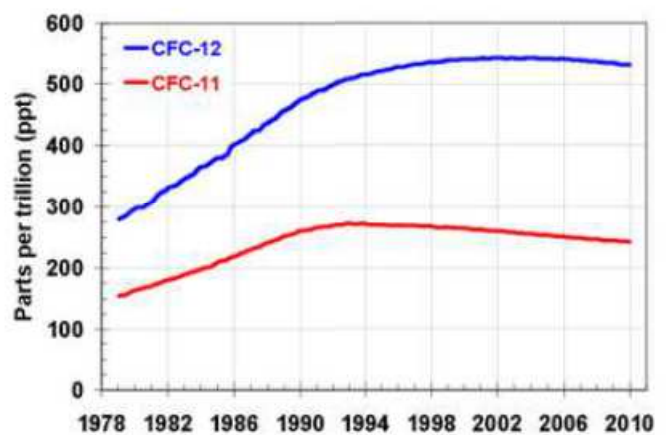
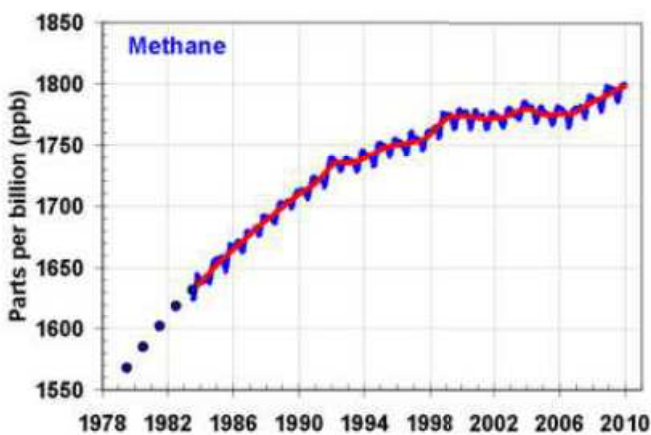
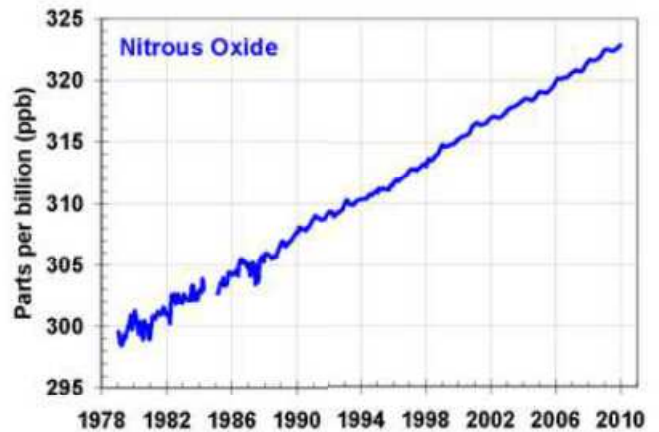
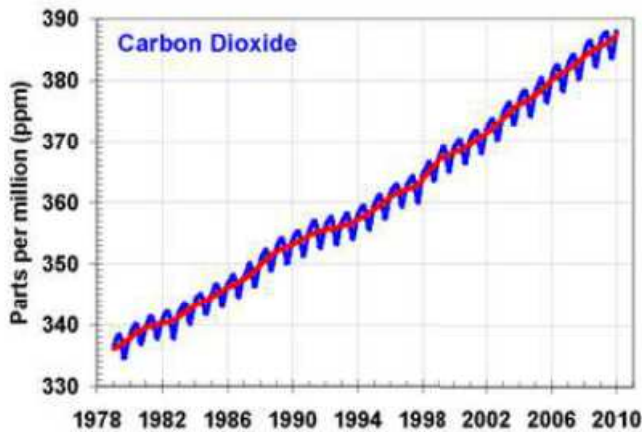
Author
R John Hughes



Foreword

We are living in a fast changing world and consuming the earth's resources in so many different ways at a rate not seen before. Some are on balance good for the environment but far too many are not.

Carbon dioxide (CO_2 , with methane $\text{CH}_4 = 21 \times \text{CO}_2$ effect and nitrous oxide $\text{N}_2\text{O} = 310 \times \text{CO}_2$ effect) is a greenhouse gas that is affecting the planet in a serious way.



Typhoon above.

By 2050 serious consequences will be felt all over the globe no matter what we do. Hurricanes, typhoons, tornados on a massive destructive scale will be occurring far more frequently.

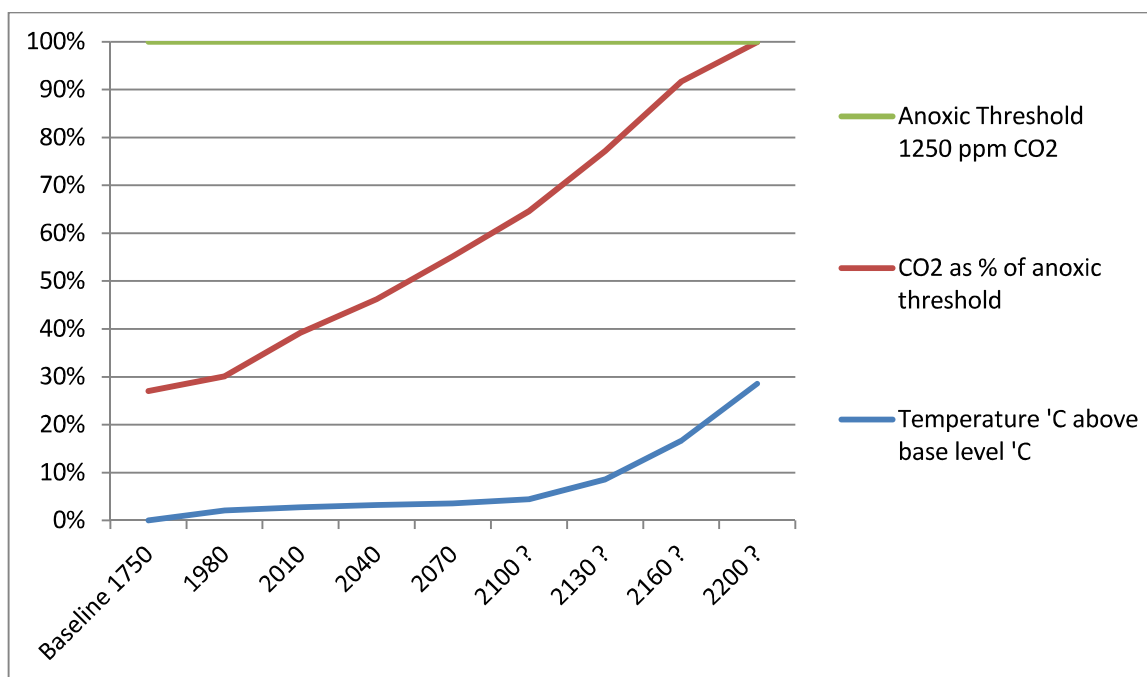
By 2100 climate change is sure to be such that without prompt action now and over the next 88 years the consequences will be a major loss of habitable areas adjacent to the sea. Major shifts in populations from places like Bangladesh, low lying islands across the globe and many areas across the equatorial belt will occur. Freshwater demand will far exceed supply without careful planning and use of dams being overseen by a worldwide organisation.

Loss of species and habitats already occurring will accelerate exponentially as will the human population. Food demand will increase and agricultural land fast dwindling across the globe due to drought and flooding will become scarcer. Forests will require to be conserved and grown in area to combat the CO₂ threat.

The threat to the oceans due to global warming is key to the survival of all species on earth, and the human population is included within the scope of species. Near total extinction of all life on earth has occurred before, millions of years ago as oceans warmed to the point that poisonous hydrogen sulphide H₂S was released into the atmosphere. Geologists use markers made by mass extinction of marine life to date events that occurred in the rock strata. This extinction process in the sea and on land occurred at 1000 to 1800 ppm of CO₂ in the atmosphere. As our marine life is under threat now from heavy metal poisoning and other chemicals caused by human pollution, this threshold in future is likely to be much lower than 1000 ppm of CO₂.

An anoxic event (poisoning by hydrogen sulphide H₂S) will occur again if we do not do all that we can to preserve life on earth, today, to-morrow and every day for the rest of our lives. This, for the sake of our children and descendants will be worth the efforts we make starting to-day.

THE PATH TO EXTINCTION IF WE DO NOT CHANGE

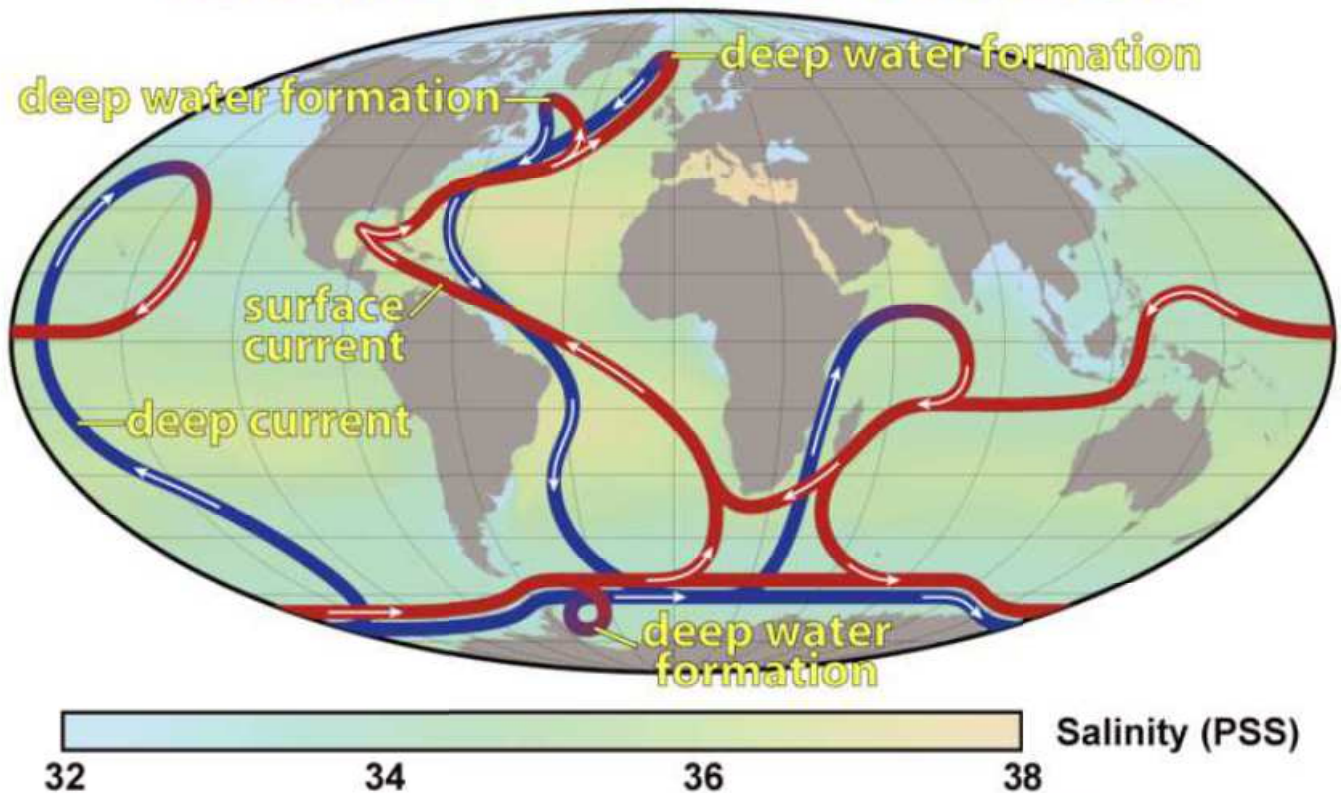


The graph is indicative as regards timescales, but by 2050 global CO₂ levels will be at 50% of the critical assumed anoxic threshold of 1000 ppm CO₂. By 2100, global temperatures are likely to have risen by 6° C globally with a big arctic meltdown underway.

Perversely Scotland for a period during the global warming will experience cooler temperatures. This is due to a slowing down of the marine current flows around the globe that encompass the warming gulf stream.

See diagram below.

Thermohaline Circulation



Nature tends to operate in an exponential growth pattern, eventually levelling off into an S curve. The above predictions are now regarded as certainties unless humans change the way we carry on.

No one knows what will happen in the future as it depends on what humans do.

By changing to cleaner energy, cycling and walking when we can instead of taking the car, working at home more and use of telecommunications to connect with others instead of travelling, are all ways that are helping the global picture.

We owe it to future generations to reduce our carbon footprint by making real footprints instead of travelling in the motor car, burning expensive, scarce fossil fuels and contributing to global warming. The Meldrum Meg Way will be primarily developed as a cycleway, but walkers, disabled mobility scooter users and horse rider needs are all catered for as well.

As it links two large settlements and surroundings with a total population of 20,000 adult people and children in addition, it will have an use as a cycle commuter route (as between Newmachar / Kingseat and Dyce), it will provide health benefits to users reducing the drain on the NHS as seen in other areas of the UK. It will be an educational resource for both communities with the potential to instil a real understanding of the environmental concerns all around us and of fresh farm food.

There is no safe cycling route from one's door to another settlement from either Oldmeldrum or Inverurie. The towns of Tarland and Aboyne have a cycle route that is well used.

We have come to the end of the road for the days, that to get the family out on their bikes and travel somewhere safe; one has first to strap them to the cycle carrier on the car (the bikes not the kids) and drive for miles.

Contributing to global warming for health and recreational purposes must be avoided or minimised whenever and wherever we can. The Meldrum Meg Way will allow residents of both towns to access a safe route from their front door on foot or on bikes.

The resultant benefit in trade to the settlement's available café's, distillery, shops, bars, garden centres, fisheries, mountain bike and electric cycle hire shops will be significant.

Farmers markets, will grow as it is explained to the community the health benefit of fresh produce with ZERO food miles on informative educational outings along the Meldrum Meg Way. Ware and salad potatoes, raspberries, strawberries, one can angle for trout, taste the best pork, beef, lamb, the best ice cream, milk, freshly laid eggs and no doubt a variety of vegetables are all on, or close to the Meldrum Meg Way.

We have a chance to change our ways to help preserve life on earth. This link path will help a little.

I have been asked how will it be funded and who will manage the path into perpetuity if built.

I have ascertained that there are funds available to improve community well being and help save the planet in so doing. There are public bodies in place to manage, as well as an army of willing volunteers who have started to sign up.

Firstly we need the landowners to sign up to the Meldrum Meg Cycleway and Walkway; to a step that will contribute in a little way to saving the globe.

Will they all sign up to help make it possible?

Inverurie and Oldmeldrum residents will be watching and hoping that they all do, and the sooner the better.

R John Hughes

B.Sc. Agricultural Science, BETA (Biodiversity and Environmental Trained Advisor), CAAP Central Aberdeenshire Access Panel, ALOAF (Aberdeenshire Local Outdoor Access Forum- elected member) , BOOTS Hillwalkers member, NEMT(North East Mountain trust Committee member) , BASIS (British Agrochemical Supply Industry Scheme Ltd.), FACTS Fertiliser Advisor, Sustrans Ranger 9970.

This is my gift to all the inhabitants of Inverurie, Oldmeldrum and surrounding districts living today and for all future generations who will survive the severe climatic changes ahead.

**For the sake of our children and children's children,
Please act NOW in whatever way you can to help.**

The views in the following report are mine alone, and does not represent the views of the Making Meldrum Better Charity, or the Meldrum Paths Group, to whom this report was presented as a hard copy.

No report on funding possibilities has been made but work has been carried out that shows this core path plan project has the backing of relevant fund awarding bodies.

CONTENTS

1	Introduction	Page 1
1.1.1	Background	
1.1.5	Early work	
1.1.9	Path reception, Problems ahead, and the need for a path	Page 2
1.1.19	The next steps and catering for the disabled	Page 3
2	Inspection of the route of the old railway line	Page 4
	Photographs on the website http://meldrummeg.jimdo.com	
2.1.1 to 2.1.13	Main points	
3	Land Ownership and Consultations	Page 5
3.1	Ground condition key for use with maps of route	Page 6
	Map of Complete route with Key to Landowner sections	Page 7
i	Allan Grant, Alford	Page 8
ii	Edwin Simmers, Bructor	Pages 9 & 10
iii	Donald Kent, Whitefield	Pages 9 & 10
iv	Euan Webster, Lochter Fishery	Pages 11 & 12
v	Patrick Sleigh, West Fingask	Pages 12 & 13
vi	Richard & A Stephen, Barra Farming Co.(Muirton of Barra)	Pages 13 & 14
vii	David & E Michie, Lochend of Barra	Pages 14 & 15
viii	Martin & D Sissons, Brooms, Lethenty	Pages 15 & 16
ix	James & C Green, Collyhill, Inverurie	Pages 16, 17 & 18
x	Iain Millership, Lethenty House	Pages 18 & 19
xi	Allan & E Maitland, Auchencleith, Daviot	Pages 18 & 19
xii	J Cassie, Portstown, Inverurie	Pages 19
xiii	Malcolm Allan, House builders, Castle Farm, Kintore	Pages 19,20 & 21
xiv	Robert Maitland, West Balhagardy, Harlaw.	Pages 19 & 22
xv	Barrat House builders	Pages 19,22 & 23
4	Other possible route and adjacent landowners	Page 25

5	Sustrans Standard DBM path with surface dressing	Page 26
6	Paths For All Granite Dust Path, Semi tray excavation	Page 27
7	Section by Section Construction Requirement of possible route	Page 28 – 31
8	Appendix 1 – Meldrum Meg Concerns and Possible Solutions	
	Lochter clay pigeon shooting	a1 Page 1
	A Maitland, conservation for shooting	a1 Page 2
	Ospreys nesting	a1 Page 3 – 5
	Flooding at Mill Of Bourtie	a1 Page 6 – 9
	Flood damage to repair	a1 Page 10
	Lethenty House field division	a1 Page 11
9	Appendix 2 – Possible Use of Farm stone Dumps	a2 Page 1-3
10	Appendix 3 – Possible roadside path compared with rail route	a3 Page 1- 13
	Comparing gradients	a3 Page 1
	OS Map possible roadside route	a3 Page 2
	OS Map possible near rail line route	a3 Page 3
	Managing dog waste	a3 Page 7
11	Appendix 4 – The Core Path Plan & Inverurie Relief Road	
	The Meldrum Meg Way is a core path	a4 Page 1 – 2
	The Inverurie relief road	a4 Page 3 – 4
12	The Probable Next Steps in the Process	Page 7

Introduction

1.1.1 Background

1.1.2 R John Hughes as a leading member of BOOTS (Body Of Oldmeldrum Trampers and Stompers) hill walkers, over many years had been approached by residents of Oldmeldrum enquiring about walks in the countryside around the town, and many had enquired about walking along the old railway.

1.1.3 This was made known in early July 2011 to Isabel Page of The Making Meldrum Better Charity. After discussion it was clear that an investigation into the possibility of a walkway and cycleway between Oldmeldrum and Inverurie should be undertaken by me.

1.1.4 As an agronomist I was familiar with many of the landowners along the route. As a Sustrans ranger, I was familiar with some aspects of cycleway / walkway construction and maintenance. As a trained BETA advisor (Biodiversity and Environmentally Trained Advisor) I was aware of the environmental considerations that require to be taken into account. As an ALOAF elected member I had necessary information about the 2003 Outdoor access code, the core path plan routes and connections in the council and elsewhere. As a photographer and familiar with a whole host of computer software, I have many skills required to report. Perhaps as I was /am in a position of having time to devote to the project for free, Isabel recognised a true bargain in me looking into the idea of an environmentally friendly, family safe link route between Oldmeldrum and Inverurie.

1.1.5 Between July 2011 and April 2012 I have worked on the project when time allowed. A survey of the route was carried out initially and many photographs taken. Private property was avoided as much as possible.

1.1.6 After the initial survey, a 50 page booklet (version 1) was prepared as a discussion document when discussing the possibilities of the project with landowners.

1.1.7 A website was set up for possible collation of responses to a limited localised information dissemination exercise. People would be made aware of the existence of the website from reading the "Communities Join - Building The SAFE 10 km Meldrum Meg Way Cycleway and Walkway - Together" booklets that were printed and distributed.

1.1.8 Printed booklets costing £6 to print were distributed or handed out to landowners as follows:-

John Penny Snr, Jadoshah, Mill of Bourtie. 1 (To be shared with neighbour)
Hoodles – Anna & Richard Stephen. 2 first copy Richard, second copy left (on checking the second copy did not appear to be available to public or had been taken home by a visitor)
Mitchells Dairy , Inverurie – 1(suspected a café visitor took it home)
Inverurie Library – 1 – Responses have been received from Inverurie voicing keen interest
Oldmeldrum Community Café – 2 – One copy got sodden with condensation. Responses have been good.

Oldmeldrum Library – 1 – Again responses have been fair to good.
Lochter – 1 – as at Hoodles on checking did not appear to be available to the public.
Councillor John Loveday – 1 – well received.

- 1.1.9 There has been widespread enthusiasm for the walkway and cycleway idea. Talk about it has all been positive in the town of Oldmeldrum and amongst the few that know of it in Inverurie. Number of willing volunteers that have signed up to help in a practical way is about 30 and continues to grow.
- 1.1.10 All landowners had been informed of the viability exercise by around October, but some could not meet me before February 2012.
- 1.1.11 As the study progressed, it became clear that at the Inverurie end the planned Urie Housing Development and the Inverurie Relief Road could have a major impact on the project.
- 1.1.12 Flooding is a major concern to be taken into account along the route. This will be discussed in much more detail in the individual sections of the route reports.
- 1.1.13 Environmentally, ospreys, ground nesting birds, old badger sets, wetlands and safe river crossings are all factors that have to be addressed.
- 1.1.14 As landowners concerns became known, alternative routes were sought. Where landowners have been coy about sharing all of their concerns it has not been possible to clarify the problems that require to be addressed.
- 1.1.15 A SAFE route for families with young cyclists is seen as a necessity for both towns. Road links are dangerous and as well as many car accidents (some fatal) there have been pedestrian deaths on the linking roads.
- 1.1.16 As fuel costs soar and as the need to reduce CO₂ emission is urgent; society is looking at being able to get on their bikes and cycle safely. To put the cycle carrier on the car as some landowners are suggesting and travel miles to cycle safely alone or with the family is not an environmentally friendly option and must be weighed against any wildlife issues along a possible route with due priority. Presently both Inverurie and Oldmeldrum residents have no option but to use the car to access SAFE cycling routes.
- 1.1.17 Enough progress had been made by November 2011 to identify that grants were still available and that interest in the need for a good path was high. An invite to the interested 30 volunteers who had signed up on the website, to come along to an ALOAF meeting held at the Oldmeldrum academy in March was made. Interested parties did come. Many of the interested parties present decided to set up the Meldrum Paths Group, after listening to a presentation by Fiona McNally of Paths for All, Linda Mathieson, Aberdeenshire Council (ALOAF) and Banchory Paths Group members.
- 1.1.18 The need for link paths in and around Oldmeldrum and off the Meldrum Meg Way is recognised by the Group and these will be worked on as separate projects. Some are walked already.

1.1.19 A questionnaire for residents of Oldmeldrum and Inverurie is seen as the next step.

1.1.20 A feasibility study with a set scope by a professional body is also seen to be a next stage.

1.1.21 As well as cyclists and walkers, being on the committee of the Central Aberdeenshire Access Panel (CAAP) and being married to a mobility buggy user, many disabled users would use a suitable SAFE path to travel between the two towns I have been reliably informed.

1.1.22 A step you can take right now if you have internet access is to Like the Facebook page, and ask all your friends to do so as well. See <http://www.facebook.com/meldrumpathgroup>

1.1.23 A website for the Meldrum Paths Group is under construction and a questionnaire link will appear shortly to fulfil 1.1.19 above. Hopefully a hard copy can be distributed to residents of Oldmeldrum and Inverurie by the local magazines.

2 Inspection Of The route Of The Old Railway Line July 2011

2.1. Main Points

- 2.1.1 The section from Oldmeldrum station as it was to Lochter Fishery is no more. An alternative route to the original track will be required. Either the route marked on the core path plan to Lochter, joining up with the old rail route or along the burn from Garioch Glazing. It was this latter route that was first walked.
- 2.1.2 No usable bridges across many necessary Lochter burn crossings are in place.
- 2.1.3 John Penny Snr. built across the route of the line and has sold a plot with kennels to his now neighbour Gary
- 2.1.4 A large section from the Muirton Of Barra farm road entrance (N) to Mill Of Bourtie is in excellent condition, is used and has been used as a path for many years. An offshoot walk to badger wood exists.
- 2.1.5 From where the path from Lethenty meets a cultivated field, to the remains of a bridge near the kennel run at Mill Of Bourtie, the line of the track has been cultivated and a detour around the side of the field will be required.
- 2.1.6 The platform remains intact bridging the river at Lethenty, but the old rail bridge is away. A road crossing here will become safer once the Inverurie relief road is built. As currently much traffic uses it to achieve what the relief road will do.
- 2.1.7 The missing bridge joining East Balhagardy ground to Portstown ground has damage to the walls protecting the bridge supports. SEPA will require to be informed before any repairs are made which look urgent before next winter. See "The water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011".
- 2.1.8 Drainage of the track below an over bridge below Portstown Farm is required. This will presumably be a part of the path development from here to Inverurie.
- 2.1.9 A bridge between Portstown ground and West Balhagardy ground is missing and will be a wide span arched, 2m wide X 12m+ long.
- 2.1.10 The existing road bridge is completely unsafe for pedestrians not to mention cyclists.
- 2.1.11 The pavement on the existing rail bridge is too narrow for modern prams, cyclists and disability buggies. It requires to be widened, or a separate bridge built.
- 2.1.12 On the website <http://meldrummeg.jimdo.com> a series of photographs detailing the state of the route of the old rail track in July 2011 can be viewed. Available on © CD. Contact RJH.
- 2.1.12 As the Uriebank development comes about in a better economic climate, and demand for housing grows again, planning gain may fund much or all, of the path costs from the planned relief road to Inverurie alongside the improved Rothienorman to Inverurie road link.

How long this will take to complete, will impact on how quickly the path link can be put in place. This requires to be investigated on an ongoing basis.

2.1.13 The need for a SAFE underpass under the planned relief road was recognised early on, and the council road planners have been advised of the proposed/planned Meldrum Meg Way. They will be kept informed of progress.

2.1.14 The inclusion of a path along the working railway to the train station and garden centre requires to be discussed with Barrats, the retail centre body and Network rail. Network rail have had a site visit with MPG (Meldrum paths Group), and Sustrans representative Graeme Brown. To facilitate passage east of the signal box, a request for space from the retail park will need to be made.

3 Land Ownership and Consultations

3.1 From my employment in the agricultural industry over 28 yrs in the area, most of the landowners were known to me before I started the viability study.








To check on ownership, the BRB (Residuary) Ltd was contacted and a reply received in October 2011. colin.dickson@brbr.co.uk confirmed that 14 different sections had been sold off to a list of landowners (list supplied) between 26/4/1972 and the final section on 20/12/1988. The majority of purchases occurred in 1974. A map of the sections was also supplied.

This map has been updated to reflect today’s owners and preferred / possible routes following initial discussions with landowners. See next page.

A Key explaining the different type of soil conditions encountered along the various possible route is provided as an added feature to the maps. Google Earth images are used as a map template for information only.

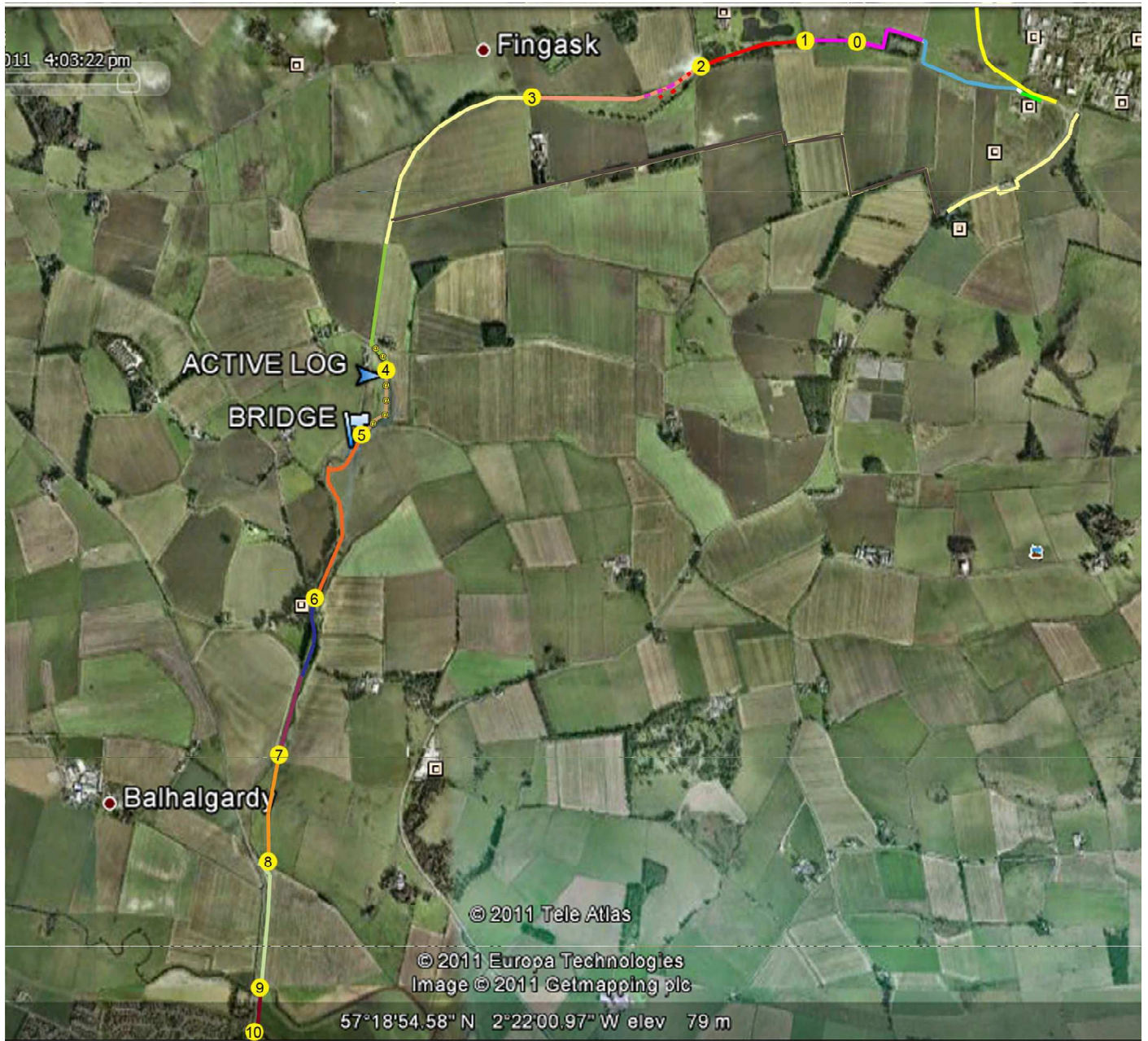
No in depth discussions have taken place, as this is seen to be best carried out by professional bodies. This is a major feasibility remit for any such appointed body. Agreeing on the route in detail and following on from this, having detailed specifications for different sections and different bridge construction is a major first part of what is expected of anyone appointed to carry out the Feasibility study.

The following list is compiled by adhering as close as possible to the line of the old railway. Deviations onto adjoining land would possibly add 1 or 2 names to the list. Where discussions have taken place, the result of these is documented below.

Key To Underlying Soil Conditions	
Free draining heavy loam	
Poorly drained heavy loam	
Wetland on heavy loam	
Old railway soil on hardcore	
Clay loam	
Partly made track with tar?	
Dug out hardcore, wet, mud	

Key for use with following maps of sections of the route.

Yellow routes marked = CPR = core path route 



Landowners Of Proposed Route A3

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|--------------------------|
| | Aberdeenshire Council | | Martin Sissons, Brooms |
| | Allan Grant Dev. Alford | | James Green, Collyhill |
| | Edwin Simmers, Bructor | | A Maitland, E Balhagardy |
| | Donald Kent, Whitefield | | R Maitland, W Balhagardy |
| | Ewen Webster, Lochter | | J Cassie, Portstown |
| | Patrick Sleigh, West Fingask | | Lethenty House |
| | D & E Michie, Lochend Of Barra | | |
| | Barra Farming Company, R Stephen, M of Barra | | |
- Bridge river crossing not clear if shared or 1 owner of river