

Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum

Edinburgh, 30 November 2005

Present:-

The City of Edinburgh Council – Councillor Jack O'Donnell (Chair).

Midlothian Council – Councillor Robert Jenkins.

Farming – Robert Barr (NFU)

Historic Scotland – Nick Bridgeland

Disabled Users – Ingrid Campbell (Thistle Foundation)

SportScotland – Campbell Gerrard

Damhead Community Council – Lorna Goudie

Scottish Angling Society – Drew Jamieson (SANA)

Ministry of Defence – Mark Johnson

Pentland Produce – Alex Moir

Scottish Natural Heritage – Marion Mulholland

British Horse Society – Constance Newbold

Mountain Biking – Jim Riach

Water Sports - Cliff Smith (Scottish Canoe Association)

Friends of the Pentlands – John Stirling

Scottish Water - Emma Whinfield

In Attendance – C Huston (Acting Regional Park Manager); I Park, D Emerson and G King (City of Edinburgh Council), and L Denholm (Midlothian Council)

1 Minutes

Decision

- 1) The minutes of the meeting of the Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum of 20 June 2005 were approved as a correct record.

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- 2) The minutes of the Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee of 4 November 2005 were noted.

2 Regional Park – Manager’s Interim Report

Carol Huston, Acting Regional Park Manager, gave an interim report on activities undertaken over the period April to September 2005 within the Regional Park. The Ranger Team was now at full strength, with one senior ranger and five main grade rangers now in post. There were also further volunteer rangers currently undertaking training, in addition to the existing 21 volunteers.

A number of projects had been undertaken during the period, including a comprehensive visitor survey by outside consultants, an interim report on which was due in February 2006.

A list of projects involving improvement works was attached to the report, together with a note of progress on the various action plans for the areas of the park, and progress with educational activities.

Decision

To note the report.

(Reference – report by the Director of Culture and Leisure 28 October 2005, submitted.)

3 Integrated Management Strategy - Review

The guidance on the management of the Regional Park was currently provided through an integrated management strategy, as had been approved to cover the five-years 2000 to 2005. The strategy now required to be reviewed to provide a plan for the Regional Park for the next five-year period. The Acting Regional Park Manager had prepared an outline paper on the proposed scope of the review and the issues proposed to be covered. In particular it was suggested that there should be five key themes for Action Plans, as follows:-

- Landscape and Natural Heritage Plan
- Infrastructure and Access Plan
- Partnership and Communities Plan
- Communication and Development Plan
- Service Delivery Plan.

It was envisaged that the existing themes (enjoyment of the hills, economy of the hills, landscape, cultural and natural heritage, etc) would continue to be

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addressed but within the new subject areas. The planning policies adopted by the three local authorities for the various geographical areas would be identified within the various action plans and also include issues of economic development, social inclusion, health and lifelong learning.

An important matter that could affect the whole scope of the review, the time required to complete the exercise, and also costs, would be the issue of whether or not a 'strategic environmental assessment' was required, in terms of proposed Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (Scotland) Regulations. Advice on this matter was being sought from the Scottish Executive but the matter had not been determined as yet. In the meantime, a 'scoping report' was to be prepared in tandem with the review, for submission to the Scottish Executive.

The Acting Regional Park Manager reported that the whole process was now subject to delay, with the review not expected to be complete before 2008 rather than anticipated 2006.

The Pentland Hills Joint Committee had considered the report on the review and agreed the broad outline, subject to further consultation with the Consultative Forum, and with the issues of economic development and sustainability should be given higher priority within the themed action plans. The Joint Committee had also agreed that the officers group request a meeting with the planning officials of the constituent authorities, Historic Scotland, and SEPA, with a view to helping with any overlapping issues in relation to any strategic environmental assessment.

Members of the Consultative Forum were now asked for any views on the policies or general content of the review. Mr C Gerrard said it would have been useful for the Forum to have had more background as to the context of the plan within the legislative framework, noting that much of the policies were to do with areas beyond countryside recreation. Mr N Bridgeland (Historic Scotland) referred to the importance of retaining the cultural heritage issues within the plan, of which a number of aspects were of importance within the Regional Park area. On the objectives of 'peaceful enjoyment of the hills', members noted that specific papers could be brought forward on particular issues, for example motor-cycling.

Decision

To note the outline of the draft review and the points made regarding the policy issues.

(Reference – report by the Director of Culture and Leisure 28 October 2005, with Review report, submitted.)

4 Programme of Consultations for the Development of a New Plan

The Acting Regional Park Manager gave a presentation on the process of development of the new Park Plan and asked whether members wished to express any views on the consultation procedure in general.

In general members felt that whilst consultations with individual user groups (e.g. the farmers and landowners) could be carried out on a one-to-one basis by the Park Manager, there was a general need for a meeting of all the parties, via the Consultative Forum. Other specific theme-based groups could also be established as the need arose. The Park Manager would submit proposals for views, consider the comments made, and re-draft a policy for consideration by the group as a whole.

Decision

To note the presentation and the points made about the consultation process.

5 Date of Next Meeting

The Consultative Forum agreed to provisionally fix the next meeting as Friday 24 March 2006, at a venue and time to be arranged, but also agreed it be left to the Chair to call an earlier meeting if necessary to consider the new plan for the Regional Park.