

Committee Minutes

Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee

**Regional Park Headquarters, Biggar Road,
Edinburgh**

Edinburgh, 25 November 2004

Present:-

Members:-

The City of Edinburgh Council – Councillors O'Donnell (Chair) and Laing.

Midlothian Council – Councillors Jenkins, Fletcher and McIntosh.

Scottish Natural Heritage – J Winning.

In Attendance:- C Houston (Acting Regional Park Manager); L Denholm (Midlothian Council), Dr J Sheldon (West Lothian Council), I Park and D Emerson (City of Edinburgh Council).

1 Appointment of Vice-Chair

The Committee appointed Councillor Jenkins (Midlothian Council) as Vice-Chair to replace Councillor Aitchison who had retired from the Committee.

2 Minute

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting of the Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee held on 29 March 2004 as a correct record.

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3 Regional Park Minute of Agreement – Progress

At the last meeting, the Joint Committee had approved a revised Minute of Agreement which had thereafter been referred to the three local authorities for approval.

The Acting Regional Park Manager reported that the revised minute was still with the three local authorities for signature, upon which formal adoption would be assumed.

Decision

To note that the revised Minute of Agreement was still being considered by the City of Edinburgh, Midlothian and West Lothian Councils but following signature, formal adoption of agreement would be assumed.

(Reference – report by the Acting Regional Park Manager 16 November 2004, submitted).

4 New Headquarters Proposal - Flotterstone

The Head of Parks (City of Edinburgh Council) reported on outline proposals to develop new headquarters for the Regional Park incorporating a visitor centre at Flotterstone, Midlothian. The proposed site for the new building was adjacent to the small interpretative centre already located within the car park at Flotterstone. A feasibility study had yet to be carried out.

Midlothian Council had indicated that they were willing to rent the land to the City of Edinburgh Council on a long lease at a minimal rent. Discussions were ongoing between legal services and estates departments in Edinburgh and Midlothian.

It was the intention that the new building should have interpretative facilities for visitors as well as a teaching room for educational purposes. The National Union of Farmers had also expressed an interest in the possibility of using some of the space in connection with development of the Pentland Hills produce plans.

The cost of the new building had not been ascertained as yet. However, the costs of construction would be met from the City of Edinburgh Council's Culture and Leisure Department's capital programme, together with anticipated grant aid from Scottish Natural Heritage, Midlothian Council's Leader Plus Programme, and the sale of various properties within the Regional Park.

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Mrs J Winning added that SNH would wish to be advised as early as possible on likely costs of the project, to assist with budget preparatory work.

Decision

- 1) To agree in principle to provision of a new headquarters and visitor centre building for the Pentland Hills Regional Park at the site at Flotterstone.
- 2) To agree that officers from the City of Edinburgh and Midlothian Councils work together to draw up design proposals for the building, and involve the Planning Department of Midlothian Council at the earliest stage.
- 3) To refer the proposal to the City of Edinburgh, Midlothian and West Lothian Councils for their approval.

(Reference – report by Acting Parks Manager (City of Edinburgh Council) 25 November 2004, submitted).

**5 Pentland Hills Regional Park Advisory Group –
Reorganisation**

Following the discussions at the last meeting of the Joint Committee regarding the future arrangements for the Pentland Hills Regional Park Advisory Committee, the officer management group had been asked to consider the proposal further and report back to the Joint Committee.

Dr J Sheldon, chair of the officer management group now reported on the proposals for re-structuring and against the backdrop of changes to the manner in which the Regional Park now operated. It was thought that a reorganisation of the Advisory Group would re-focus and reinvigorate its role. In particular it was being suggested that the community and recreational interests representatives should be expanded to allow better liaison with those particular groups.

The officer group, in drawing up the recommendations, had looked at similar types of structures in regional and national parks elsewhere in the United Kingdom, some of which were guided by legislation (national parks) and others by their own guidelines and interpretation of best practice. Other factors taken into account were the advent of electronic communications (website and emails etc) which offered new potential for informing and engaging local people and user groups in dialogue about park activities.

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In summary, the recommendations were as follows:-

- That the Advisory Group be reconstituted as the "Pentlands Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum".
- That the Consultative Forum be available to offer views in relation to the achievement of regional park aims and offer matters for consideration by the Joint Committee.
- That the distinction between members and observer members be removed.
- That the three local authorities nominate elected members to the Forum.
- That the Forum be serviced by the City of Edinburgh Council as the managing authority for the Regional Park.
- That the chair of the Consultative Forum be the chair of the Joint Committee.
- That the Joint Committee continue to invite members to the Forum as described in the Minute of Agreement.
- That the Consultative Forum be made up of members from predominantly local interest and to include land owners/farming, community councils, recreation, bio-diversity, cultural heritage, tourism and economic/rural development. (The specific representation proposals are listed in the appendix to this minute).
- That new standing orders for the roles and procedures of the Consultative Forum be drawn up.
- That the use of electronic communications be developed as a means of engaging the members of the Consultative Forum in issues relevant to the Regional Park and that formal meetings be held only as required but with a minimum of one meeting per annum.
- That the Consultative Forum meetings be issue focused, with opportunities for solution driven discussion.
- The new arrangements continue for the duration of the current Minute of Agreement for the Regional Park; the members to contribute to development of processes and procedures and to enable the Regional Park authority to monitor the performance of the Forum and report back to the Joint Committee in due course.

5 *Could you please change
(then e-mail to me)*

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*Thank you
David*

Decision

- 1) To approve the proposals for reconstituting the Advisory Group as the Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum as outlined in the report.
- 2) To agree that the proposals be referred to the next meeting of the Pentlands Regional Park Advisory Group on 10 December 2004 for discussion and approval.

(Reference – report by the Acting Regional Park Manager 16 November 2004, submitted).

6 Pentland Hills Regional Park – Interim Report 2004

The Acting Regional Park Manager submitted an interim report on the activities of the Regional Park over the period April to October 2004.

The report outlined the main activities of the Regional Park over the period, including a number of high profile projects such as the resurfacing of the Maidens Cleuch footpath (constructed with the monies provided through the City of Edinburgh Council's access strategy and other grant aid at a total cost of £25,000). Reference was also made to proposals that would affect the future ownership of the three reservoirs that fed into the Water of Leith.

The report summarised the activities of the park and the work planning processes and had been submitted to the Scottish Natural Heritage for their interest. SNH were satisfied with the report.

Decision

- 1) To note the interim report on the activities of the Regional Park and congratulate the Regional Park staff on the good report and work done over this period.
- 2) To note that the Park authority would try to get all schools involved in the 'Inspirations' competition.

(Reference – report by Acting Regional Park Manager 16 November 2004, submitted)

7 Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that a meeting of the Joint Committee be held in March 2005, the timing to be left to the Clerk in consultation with the Chair of the Joint Committee. The Clerk was also requested to draw up a programme of meeting dates for the Committee.

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APPENDIX

**PENTLAND HILLS REGIONAL PARK CONSULTATIVE FORUM
(DRAFT MEMBERSHIP PROPOSALS)**

- Farming local NFU member in Regional Park – 1
- Pentland Produce – 1
- Landowning (Scottish Rural Property and Business Association) – 1
- Ministry of Defence – 1
- Scottish Wildlife Trust – 1
- Friends of the Pentlands – 1
- Community Councils – 3
- Local Management groups representative – 1
- Walkers representative – 1
- British Horse Society – 1
- Scottish Hill Runners – 1
- Mountain Biking representative – 1
- Disabled Users representative – 1
- Scottish Angling Society – 1
- Water Sports representative – 1
- Orienteers – 1
- Scottish Water – 1
- Scottish Natural Heritage – 1
- Historic Scotland (Archaeology) – 1
- Economic/Rural Development (Scottish Executive) – 1
- Visit Scotland (or equivalent) – 1
- Local authority elected members – 3
- Local authority officers
- Park Manager