

## Harperrig Reservoir - Proposed Local Nature Reserve Designation

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### Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee

18<sup>th</sup> December 2009

#### Purpose of report

- 1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee of the outcome of the public consultation in summer 2009 on the proposed Local Nature Reserve (LNR) at Harperrig Reservoir and to provide an update about progress towards designation.

#### Main report

##### Background

- 2 Harperrig Reservoir lies north of the Pentland Hills, near the A70 to the south west of Kirknewton.
- 3 The management group for Harperrig Reservoir has finalised a management plan for this large public asset that has recently changed from Scottish Water ownership to City of Edinburgh Council as part of the Water of Leith Flood Prevention Scheme. The production of a management plan is part of the process involved in designating the reservoir, and its adjacent wildlife refuge, as a local nature reserve (LNR). This would be the second local nature reserve in West Lothian after Easter Inch Moss and Seafield Law, situated between Blackburn and Seafield village, which was designated in 2007.
- 4 The Harperrig Reservoir LNR management group consists of local farmers (Cairns Farm), land owners (Dalmahoy Estate), nearby residents and Harperrig Fishery, along with officers from West Lothian Council, Pentland Hills Regional Park Ranger Service, City of Edinburgh Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission and Scottish Water.

##### Process of local nature reserve designation

- 5 A local nature reserve is a protected area of land designated by a local authority because of its special natural interest and / or educational value. The local nature reserve process encourages community involvement in the management of locally important open spaces, along with conserving and enhancing their wildlife, developing

educational opportunities and managing recreational uses. Local communities can determine the future of such sites, their management needs, the resolution of and other stakeholders and partners.

- 6 Part of the designation process requires a minute of a formal meeting of the Council that contains a resolution of the council to promote a local nature reserve. West Lothian Council's Environment Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel will therefore be invited to recommend to the Council Executive that it approves the finalised management plan and agrees to promote the declaration of a designation of a local nature reserve at Harperrig Reservoir. A further recommendation will be that an agreement is entered into with the reservoir owners, City of Edinburgh. City of Edinburgh Council is part of the local management group, both in its capacity as operational managers of the reservoir and as the managing authority for the Pentland Hills Regional Park.

### **Harperrig Reservoir Local Nature Reserve Management Plan: public consultation**

- 7 The finalised management plan was drawn up with input from the various local land managers and residents, along with officers from both West Lothian and City of Edinburgh Councils and Scottish Natural Heritage.
- 8 The finalised LNR Management Plan for Harperrig Reservoir was issued for public consultation to Kirknewton Community Council, along with Balerno Community Council within the City of Edinburgh Council administrative area. The Management Group identified around 30 local residents, land managers and farmers in the vicinity that were sent a copy of the finalised management plan for comment. The consultation occurred over an eight-week period between the end of May and end of July 2009.
- 9 There was only one formal written response from a local resident who supported the principles and ambition to create a local nature reservoir at Harperrig Reservoir. He raised three minor points relating to management of the different resources, monitoring, and specific measures to re-establish the reservoir black-headed gull colony. Scottish Natural Heritage is investigating what these bird measure could entail and will discuss them with the Management Group. The management plan and local group acts as a forum to help address any potential conflicts of the various interests in the reservoir. Overall, these points can be addressed within the management plan without any changes.

### **Access and Woodland Improvements**

- 10 The Management Group are working with the Central Scotland Forest Trust and a local landowner on access and planting improvements around the south side of the reservoir as proposed within the Management Plan. This will use a combination of West Lothian Council's existing access budget for 2009/10 and seek to secure Scottish Rural Development Programme grant, and / or LEADER rural programme funding.
- 11 Some footpath improvement works were carried out on the West Lothian section of the nearby Cauldstane Slap route in spring 2009. The northern section runs from Little Vantage car park on the A70, across the Water of Leith (that flows out of the east end of Harperrig Reservoir), and turns southwards into the Pentland foothills. It is also proposed to continue some of the other essential maintenance works on the northern section in 2009/10 funded by West Lothian Council's access budget, but overseen by the Pentland Hills Regional Park Ranger Service.

### Financial Implications


- 12 The LNR designation will allow the Harperrig Management Group to apply for funds that are not available to local authorities to implement projects within the Management Plan. Access improvement works in 2009/2010 are funded from West Lothian Council's access budget and not from the Regional Park Budget.

### Environmental Impact

- 13 The LNR designation reflects the existing high environmental quality of Harperrig Reservoir and will provide a mechanism to carry out further habitat and access improvements to the benefit of wildlife, visitors and residents.

### Recommendations

- 14 It is recommended that the Joint Committee:
- a) notes to outcome of the public consultation on the Harperrig Reservoir Finalised Management Plan that accompanies the proposed Local Nature Reserve (LNR) designation; and
  - b) notes the intention of West Lothian Council (subject to Committee Approval) to progress the formal declaration of a Local Nature Reserve order.

  
**David Jamieson**  
Parks & Greenspace Manager

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Appendices	None
Contact/tel/Email	David Jamieson (Parks and Greenspace Manager, 0131 529 7055) Keith Logie (Parks Development Manager, 0131 529 7916) Alan McGregor (Acting Regional Park Manager, 0131 445 3383)
Wards affected	All
Single Outcome Agreement	Supports National Outcome 12 – We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect and enhance it for future generations.
Background Papers	a) Scottish Natural Heritage - Local Nature Reserves in Scotland: a guide to their selection and declaration, 2000. b) Harperrig Reservoir Finalised Local Nature Reserve Management Plan, December 2009