

Committee Minutes

Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum

Midlothian House, Dalkeith, 4 September 2009

Present:-

The City of Edinburgh Council – Councillor Paisley (in the Chair).

West Lothian Council – Councillor Carl John.

Fairmilehead Community Council – Alison Elfick.

Damhead Community Council – Lorna Goudie.

Kirknewton Community Council – Hugh Hunter Gordon.

Walkers – Johanna Carrie.

British Horse Society – Constance Newbould.

Farming – Bob Barr.

Friends of the Pentlands – John Stirling.

SportScotland – Campbell Gerrard.

Scottish Wildlife Trust – Ken Knowles.

Ministry of Defence Estates – Mark Johnson.

Landowning – Anthony Whale.

Harperrig Management Group – Graham Hamilton.

Orienteering – Janet Clark.

In Attendance – Alan McGregor (Acting Regional Park Manager), L Denholm (Midlothian Council), C Alcorn (West Lothian Council), V Partridge (Rangers Service) and D Emerson (Committee Services, City of Edinburgh Council).

Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum
4 September 2009

Apologies:- Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillor Owen Thomson (Midlothian Council), Drew Jamieson (Scottish Angling Society), Alan Fail (Scottish Water) and Alan Laing (Balerno Conservation and Development Group).

1 Minutes

1.1 Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum of 13 March 2009

The minutes of the meeting of the Consultative Forum were approved as a correct record.

1.2 Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee of 21 August 2009

The minutes of the meeting of the Joint Committee were noted.

2 Midlothian Council – Notice of Intention to Withdraw from Minute of Agreement – Update

Linn Denholm (Midlothian Council) gave an update in regard to Midlothian Council's decision to withdraw from the Minute of Agreement with effect from 31 March 2010. At the present time senior officials of Midlothian Council and the managing authority (City of Edinburgh Council) were discussing the implications of the decision and, importantly, the question of whether TUPE regulations (protection of employment rights) would apply. At the present time, the decision of Midlothian Council still stood but officers were working to try to resolve some of the issues. A final decision on the matter would require to be taken by his Council by 18 December 2009.

Decision

To note the position.

(References – minute of meeting of the Regional Park Joint Committee 21 August 2009 (item 2); report by the Parks and Greenspace Manager 21 August 2009, submitted.)

3 “Fit For Future” – SWOT Analysis

The Regional Park authority was in the process of conducting a SWOT analysis to look at how the Regional Park's aims and objectives fitted with those of the constituent authorities, through the 'single outcome agreements' and more generally in terms of national priorities. Members of the Consultative Forum were now asked for their own views on the strengths and weaknesses of the Regional Park, and where priorities should lie.

Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum
4 September 2009

(Members now engaged in a SWOT exercise with the Acting Regional Park Manager – and gave their views on the strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/threats to the Regional Park and where resources should be best targeted.)

The points made by the members were recorded by the Acting Regional Park Manager.

Decision

To note the points made with a view to informing the ongoing analysis of Regional Park objectives.

4 “Protecting Scotland’s Regional Parks” - Consultation on Proposed Bill

The Regional Park authority had been invited to comment on a draft bill by Kenneth Gibson MSP, entitled “Protecting Scotland’s Regional Parks”. The draft Bill was accompanied by a consultation paper on which comments were invited by 31 August 2009.

The Regional Park authority had had discussions with the authorities responsible for the three other regional parks in Scotland and the two national parks. Following this, a draft response had been agreed by the Joint Committee at its meeting on 21 August 2009. In general it was felt that the Bill might present an opportunity to heighten the profile of the regional parks and help secure their position as designated areas in Scotland. The main thrust of the paper, in seeking to prohibit wind farms and other industrial development, however, perhaps ran the risk of “fossilising” regional parks.

Bob Barr (Farming) referred to the original decision by the Secretary of State, when designating the Pentland Hills as a Regional Park, that there was to be no detriment to development rights and indeed this had been one of the main conditions of the designation. The National Farmers Union were looking at the proposals and in general would be against any legislation perceived as hindering development, particularly at a time when the farming industry was being encouraged by the government to diversify. Other members were in general agreement, mentioning that small scale initiatives on ‘renewables’ were to be encouraged e.g. single turbines attached to private dwellings or businesses and which were consistent with the “green” agenda. The existing planning legislation was perhaps sufficient for control of development deemed as inappropriate.

(Friends of the Pentlands had made a submission direct to the author of the consultation, a copy of which was circulated for information.)

Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum
4 September 2009

Decision

To note the report and that members could submit additional responses on the paper.

(References – Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee 21 August 2009 (item 4); report by the Parks and Greenspace Manager 21 August 2009, submitted.)

5 Harperrigg Local Nature Reserve – Designation

Chris Alcorn (West Lothian Council) reported on the intention by West Lothian Council to designate Harperrigg as a local nature reserve. The designation was the culmination of a number of years work by the bodies involved, particularly by the Harperrigg Management Group.

The Council had earlier consulted widely with landowners and interested parties and no major objections were received. The Scottish Wildlife Trust and Kirknewton Community Council were very supportive of the proposals. A limited amount of money could be available from West Lothian Council to support some new developments at Harperrigg, including a new car parking area (adjacent to the existing car park at the Fishery), new signage and some money to assist with work on Cauldstane Slap.

Decision

To note and welcome the proposal to designate Harperrigg Reservoir as a local nature reserve.

6 Events in the Pentland Hills – Guidance for Organisers

The Acting Regional Park Manager reported on proposed draft guidance for people proposing to organise events within the Regional Park. The proposals were out for consultation at the moment and due to be considered by the Access Forums of the constituent authorities. The intention was to give more guidance on issues to be taken into consideration e.g. seasonal periods when landowners, farmers, had particular priorities such as lambing or shooting.

Bob Barr (Farming) suggested that a “calendar” be included to draw attention to the particular sensitivities of activities and their locations over the course of a year. Mark Johnson (Ministry of Defence Estates) thanked the Rangers for their assistance in previous years; the matter of event regulation was a significant issue and the Ministry of Defence reserved its right to licence any users, to charge, and to require insurance where necessary.

Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum
4 September 2009

Campbell Gerrard (SportScotland) said that it was to be noted that the Access Forums, on a national basis, were currently looking to provide guidance for event organisers for the regional and national parks.

Decision

To welcome the production of the draft guidance for event organisers and to note the points made by members.

(Reference – draft guidance issued by Acting Regional Park Manager 4 September 2009, submitted.)

7 Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour

V Partridge (Senior Ranger) gave a presentation on issues of anti-social behaviour within the Regional Park. He said that, in general, this summer had probably been the worst for some time, with irresponsible camping in particular being a problem. The Rangers tackled the problem, firstly, by clearing up the litter and damage caused, and secondly by speaking to campers and other people to impress upon them the need for responsibility in the Regional Park.

The Rangers were working in association with Lothian and Borders Police and the Community Safety Team to try to regulate the situation; the police had patrolled “hotspot” locations every weekend during August and several people had been spoken to about their conduct. The Community Safety Team had agreed that the Pentland Hills (South-East Area) would be targeted next year, in view of the problems that had been noted this summer. The Rangers were also working closely with the Environmental Wardens of the City of Edinburgh Council.

Decision

- 1) To note the measures being taken by the Regional Park Authority to address problems of anti-social behaviour.
- 2) To agree that farmers and landowners and interested parties should be provided with a note of procedures and contact telephone numbers, to be followed in event of encountering problems on their land.

Pentland Hills Regional Park Consultative Forum
4 September 2009

8 EUROPARC Conference 3/4 November 2009

The EUROPARC Federation was holding a conference in Edinburgh from 3 to 4 November 2009 on "Managing Landscapes' - More Outcomes, Less Outputs?". As part of their programme, the Pentland Hills Regional Park was hosting a site visit. Members of the authority had also been invited to attend the Federation's dinner during the conference.

Decision

To note the information.

(Reference – EUROPARC Conference Programme, submitted.)

9 Forum Members' Updates

John Stirling (Friends of the Pentlands) gave an update on their ongoing work with the Rangers, particularly the assistance with biodiversity matters including wild flower planting and litter picking. The Group had undertaken a number of major litter picking operations, concentrating on the Bonaly Country Park and other areas.

Campbell Gerrard (SportScotland) reported on the issue of his organisation's new policy document "Out There?".

Noted.

10 Date of Next Meeting

Friday, 15 January 2010 (2.00 pm).